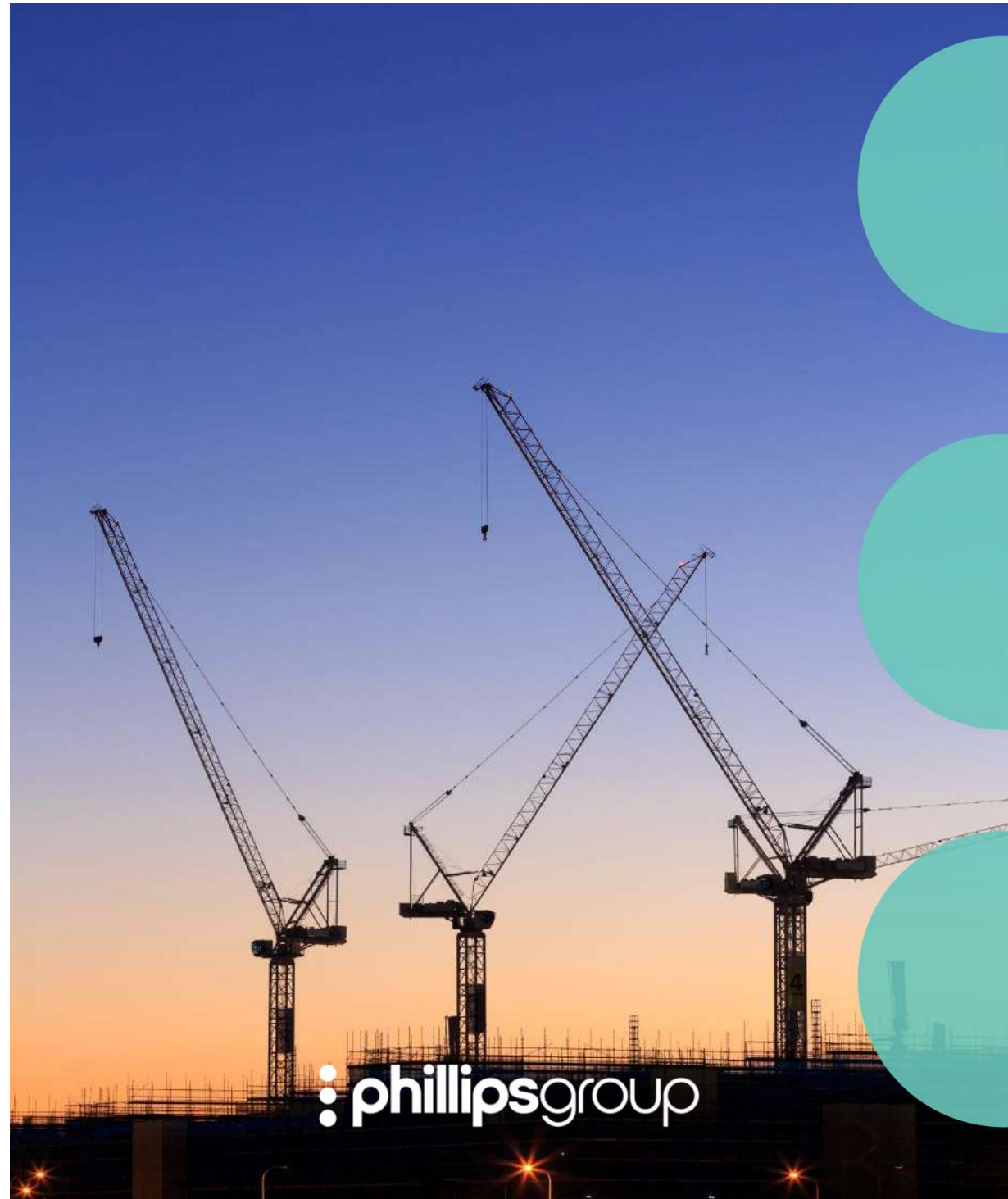# Stakeholder Sentiment Research Report

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning

January 2023

Contents

Background

The Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DSDILGP) is responsible for state development, economic development, major project impact assessment, strategic planning for priority industry sectors, capital works and program monitoring, integrated resort developments and global tourism hubs, urban growth, land use planning and local government.

The Department brings together a number of complementary functions under six core divisions, including:

- o Economic Development Queensland
- o Infrastructure and Regional Strategy
- o Local Government
- o Office of the Coordinator-General
- o Planning
- o State Development.

DSDILGP is often viewed as a central agency by its stakeholders, with a strong role in driving the economic prosperity of the state and ensuring Queensland maintains its reputation for liveability. Through the six core divisions, DSDILGP works with internal stakeholders, local governments, peak bodies and industry to:

- o lead, plan and prioritise state infrastructure
- o set the frameworks and approval regime for investment in projects and industries
- o determine the best approach to land use across the state, including precinct development
- o support the establishment and growth of key strategic industries.

The task

DSDILGP is focused on ensuring the Department is providing economic development and liveable communities through the effective balance of enabling and regulating of its stakeholders.

To support this, DSDILGP commissioned stakeholder sentiment research to determine their priorities, interests and concerns and move to improve itself towards its strategic purpose. Since the current format of the Department was established, no key stakeholder identification or mapping has been undertaken.

The response

Following a competitive tender process, DSDILGP appointed Phillips Group to design and deliver stakeholder sentiment research.

In collaboration with the Department's Strategic Communication team, this resulted in a combination of qualitative and quantitative research that was conducted between November and December 2022, providing a baseline measure of stakeholder sentiment of the Department as a whole and its core divisions.
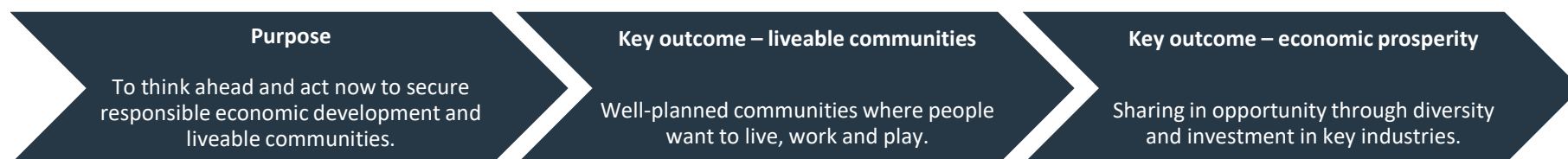
Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning Stakeholder sentiment research report

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Key findings

Key findings

Stakeholder sentiment

Overall

The Department achieved a significant response rate from stakeholders (196 quantitative research participants and 18 qualitative research participants), diversity in the types of organisations that contributed and balance of respondents from across different primary divisions of engagement (minimum of 14 and maximum of 66 participants per division). Based on the uptake of the quantitative survey, a margin of error of 5.8% was achieved for the Departmental analysis. The outcomes of the research indicated that the Department's stakeholders generally perceive the Department and its performance in a positive way.

Purpose	Key outcome – liveable communities	Key outcome – economic prosperity
To think ahead and act now to secure responsible economic development and liveable communities.	Well-planned communities where people want to live, work and play.	Sharing in opportunity through diversity and investment in key industries.

Strategic KPIs DSDILGP Strategic Plan 2022-26

Strategic KPIs

- The newly developed strategic purpose and outwards-facing key outcomes of economic prosperity and liveable communities received average scores between 6.69 and 6.97 out of 10 from stakeholders.

- There was a view from many respondents, particularly those representing developer and industry organisations, that the Department is too risk averse and takes too long to respond to enquiries.

- Respondents primarily engaging with Infrastructure and Regional Strategy provided scores at or above 7 out of 10 across all three measures and was the highest average for the liveable communities key outcome.

- Respondents from organisations operating outside of South East Queensland (SEQ) suggested there was disconnect from those working within SEQ when designing, approving and collaborating with regional stakeholders, particularly from regional councils. There was a view that policy is often shaped in a Brisbane-centric way and not adjusted for the individual needs of the regions when implemented.

Regulator versus enabler

- Common feedback across both the quantitative and qualitative research indicated mixed feeling towards the Department's efforts to achieve a balance between its regulatory and enabling functions. Roughly half of the respondents thought that an effective balance had been achieved, while 17.5% disagreed.

- Local councils suggested there was a need to focus more on engagement with local communities and not just with key stakeholders such as developers, industry and government. Ensuring that communities were developed with the goals of all stakeholders in mind was acknowledged as a delicate balancing act by all parties.

- The Director-General was noted by several participants as someone that is driving noticeable change within the organisation, specifically towards achieving the aim of balancing the Department's functions.

- Respondents primarily engaging with Economic Development Queensland were particularly positive, with at least 70% of these respondents agreeing that the Department was effectively performing both functions.

Key findings

Stakeholder sentiment

Departmental perceptions

- 70% of survey respondents identified the Department as a trusted working partner, which was reinforced throughout qualitative research. Respondents often suggested that the Department is working as well as or better than many other departments within the Queensland Government.

- When asked a series of questions regarding Departmental performance, the lowest result centered on how the Department provides advice on possible adaptations to proposals and how it explains the purpose of the regulatory requirements to stakeholders, with only 48% agreeing that this was sufficiently delivered.

- Qualitative research outcomes were generally positive towards the functioning of the Department. However, there were common themes relating to areas for improvement.

- There was a perception that the Department could do more to help stakeholders when they need to work across other departments within the Queensland Government, with stakeholders indicating that they felt left in the middle to navigate between departments.

Departmental representatives

- Three quarters of respondents felt that Departmental representatives work collaboratively with their organisations to find solutions to problems, when possible. Collaboration was a positive theme throughout, particularly for regional representatives, who were identified as good local advocates.

- When asked a series of questions regarding Departmental representatives, the highest level of disapproval (14%) focused on timeliness of action.

- Qualitative research participants held their Departmental contacts in high regard but were critical of the Department's bureaucratic nature and saw the process of approvals as needlessly complex, arduous and too lengthy.

- A combination of Departmental representatives' inexperience due to high turnover within the division/s, delayed communication from representatives and a perceived lack of empowerment to make decisions were common complaints that led to increased waiting times for approvals, advice and feedback. This was noted as impacting on stakeholder's costs, ability to deliver, and desire to work with the Department.

- Qualitative research participants were positive about the leadership within the Department and were often more critical of perceived political pressure placed on the Department and/or of the pressures of working with other departments or government agencies at the same time as DSDILGP.

Methodology

Methodology
Research approach

Repeated measures analysis

The research approach considered the objective of providing a baseline to measure future changes in sentiment using tracking surveys. It was therefore vital to ensure the data collected by the survey suited intended future research and repeated measures analysis.

To ensure that the desired depth of information was achieved, the use of both quantitative research, in the form of an online survey, and qualitative research, in the form of stakeholder interviews were utilised.

Response rate and statistical validity

In addition, it was critical to ensure an appropriate response rate that considered margins of error and statistical validity. To achieve this, a target of 135 participants was set.

The approach considered how incentivizing participation might be achieved. This was undertaken through consistent key messaging, use of decision makers in communication materials, and innovative approaches including sending posted letters to all potential participants with a KitKat to enjoy while completing the survey.

Question design

The question design considered the need to ascertain multiple types of information to produce an accurate baseline. This resulted in a survey structure of:

- Demographic information (sector, organisation size, role of participant)
- Communication methods (current approach, preferred approach)
- Strategic KPIs (understanding of the Department and its functions, the Department's alignment with purpose, performance of key outcomes, balance of functions)
- Departmental performance
- Department representative performance
- Key division (engagement by division, frequency of engagement, services used)
- Further feedback.

Methodology

Driving participation

A critical factor to the success of the research was ensuring the results of this round of research could be reliably compared to future performance and track growth of the Department and divisions over time.

To achieve this, a response rate of 135 stakeholders out of an estimated 600 was established. This would achieve a margin of error of less than 7.5% for Departmental reporting and remain as an achievable-while-challenging target.

Communication activities were planned to aid the uptake of the survey with the use of the Director-General as a sponsor for the initiative. The Director-General was the sender of all associated communication materials, along with featuring in a promotional video that was sent to target stakeholders.

Further, the Department committed to de-identifying all involvement in research initiatives.

The following communication activities helped to drive uptake:

- introductory email to database
- survey release email
- posted letters to database with KitKat chocolate
- reminder email

The KitKat postal campaign resulted in a spike of survey completions coinciding with their arrival, along with organic social media posts via LinkedIn with tags to the Director-General and the Department's account.
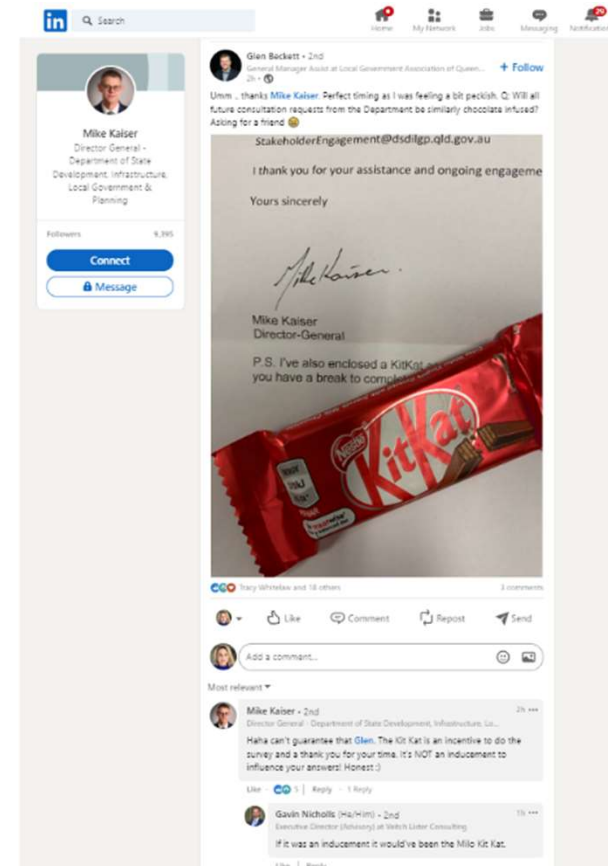

Figure 1: LGAQ LinkedIn post promoting the Director-General's letter with KitKat included.

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning Stakeholder sentiment research report

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Methodology

Research approach

Quantitative online survey

The purpose of the survey was to assess stakeholder sentiment across DSDILGP and its core divisions. The survey was delivered through the Qualtrics platform.

The survey was distributed to **644** stakeholder organisations, specifically targeting CEOs or equivalent.

Of the stakeholders who were contacted for the survey, **196** responses were gathered. The survey was available from 10 to 28 November 2022.

Based on the total number responses, a margin of error of 5.8% was achieved for the Departmental analysis (within a 95% confidence interval, based on 0.5 shared trait).

See Appendix D – Online survey for the individual questions asked.

Qualitative stakeholder interviews

Selected stakeholders were invited to participate in 30 to 45 minute qualitative research interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams.

A total of 20 organisations were invited to participate with a total of 18 interviews completed between 22 November and 22 December 2022.

During the virtual sessions, participants were asked similar questions to that of the online survey, with a desire to deep-dive into their feedback on these topics.

The topics included alignment with strategic direction, the balance between regulating and enabling, Departmental and Departmental representatives' performance, as well as trust in the Department.

The results gathered assisted in validating the findings from the quantitative research as well as translating them into actionable insights and/or deeper reflections into specific elements of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Demographics

Demographics

Variety of stakeholder groups

There was a wide variety of responses across the various organisational structures, representing the diversity of stakeholders that engage with the Department, as shown in Figure 2.

Stakeholder groups

Respondents (%)

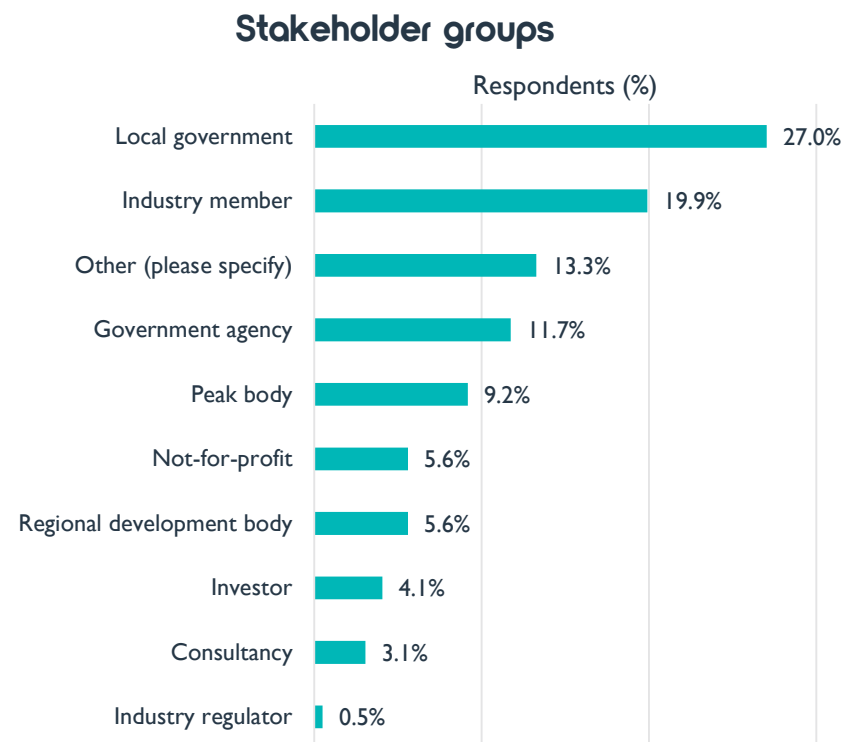| Stakeholder group	Respondents (%)
Local government	27.0%
Industry member	19.9%
Other (please specify)	13.3%
Government agency	11.7%
Peak body	9.2%
Not-for-profit	5.6%
Regional development body	5.6%
Investor	4.1%
Consultancy	3.1%
Industry regulator	0.5%

Figure 2: "Which of the following best describes your organisation?" n = 196

Respondents were most commonly from **local government** (27.0%) or **industry** (19.9%)

Demographics

Different organisational sizes

Organisational size by employee numbers

- 1-19: 21.43%
- 20-49: 9.18%
- 50-99: 11.73%
- 100-199: 12.76%
- 200-999: 20.92%
- 1000+: 23.98%

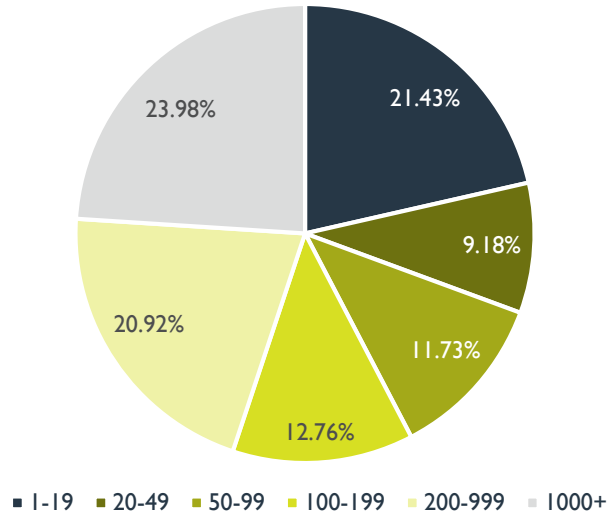■ 1-19 ■ 20-49 ■ 50-99 ■ 100-199 ■ 200-999 ■ 1000+

Figure 3: "What is the size of your organisation?" by number of employees. n = 196

Respondents varied in organisational sizes,
from **1-19 employees** (21.4%) to **1000+ employees** (24.0%)

Role of respondents

Most respondents were senior leaders of their organisations, with more than half of the respondents identifying themselves as CEOs or other senior executives (Figure 4).

Respondent's role

Respondents (%)

- Chief Executive Officer / senior executive: 58.7%
- Head or leader of department: 10.7%
- Other (please specify): 8.2%
- Mayor / elected representative: 8.2%
- Chair or board member: 7.7%
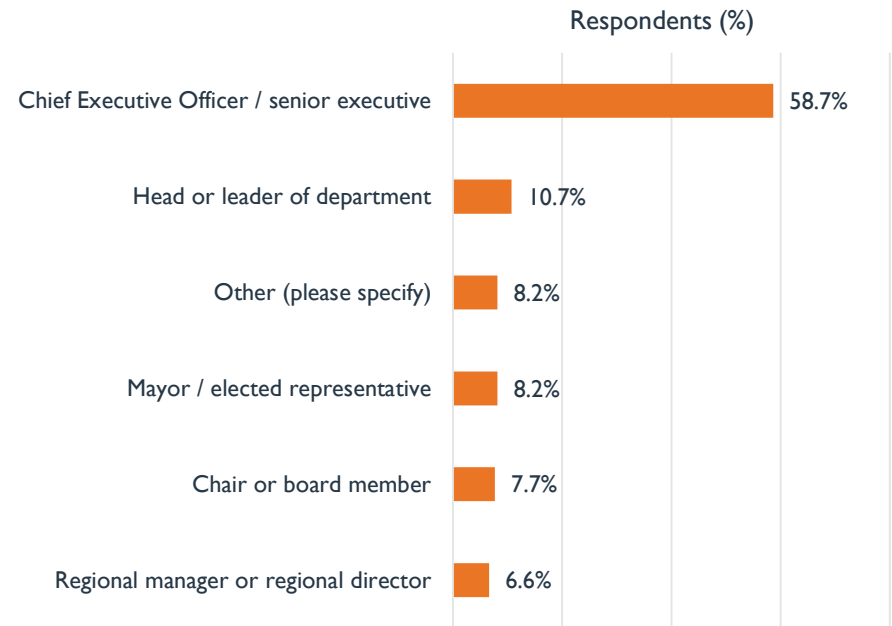- Regional manager or regional director: 6.6%

Figure 4: "Which of these options best describes your position within your organisation?" n = 196

Almost two-thirds of respondents were **senior executives**, with all other respondents occupying **high-level positions**
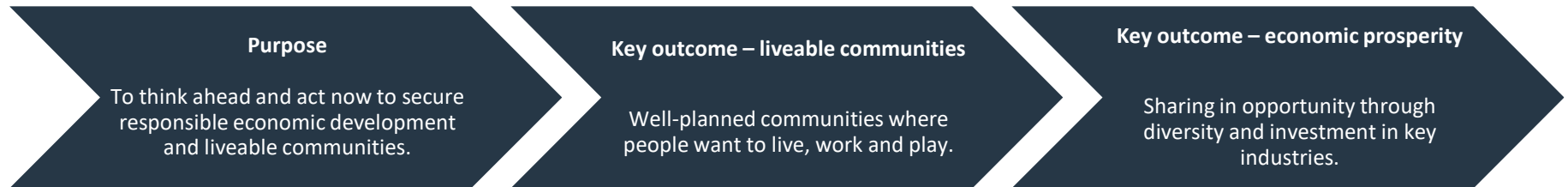
Department

Overview

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning

Purpose	Key outcome – liveable communities	Key outcome – economic prosperity
To think ahead and act now to secure responsible economic development and liveable communities.	Well-planned communities where people want to live, work and play.	Sharing in opportunity through diversity and investment in key industries.

- The **alignment of the Department** to the newly developed strategic purpose and key outcomes.
  - ➢ Respondents scored the Department between 6.69 and 6.97 out of 10 on average across the three areas.

- The **Department's performance as a regulator and enabler**, as well as the **balance of these two functions**.
  - ➢ 60% of respondents agreed that the Department was effectively performing its regulatory functions, and 64.7% agreed that the Department was effectively performing its enabling functions.
  - ➢ More than half agreed a good balance was struck, while 17.5% selected disagree or strongly disagree.

- How satisfied stakeholders are with the Department and Departmental representatives across several key performance areas.
  - ➢ All but one of the performance area was approved (agree/strongly agree) by at least half of the respondents, and none of the statements received more than 14% disagree/strongly disagree.

Overview

Understanding of the Department's functions

Overall, more than three quarters of respondents thought they had a **good understanding** of the various functions the Department delivers within the Queensland Government (Figure 5).

Understanding of the Department's role
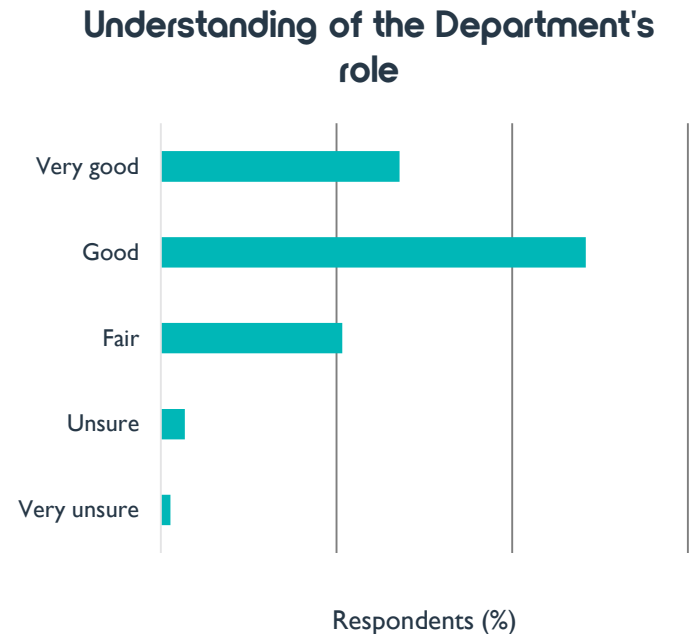

Respondents (%)

Figure 5: "Before we ask about the specific part of the Department you deal with regularly we want to understand your view of the Department as a whole. How would you rate your level of understanding of the role of the Department and its various functions?" n = 184.

Strategic KPIs

Strategic purpose

Overall, the Department received an average score of 6.97 out of 10 for its alignment with the strategic purpose. Respondents felt the Department was generally working well towards its strategic purpose.

- One in five respondents rated the Department's performance at a 6 or lower, while one in five were very positive, rating the Department at 9 or 10 out of 10 (Figure 6).

- Respondents that rated the performance as 6 or lower were asked a follow-up question: *"How do you think the Department could better embrace this purpose?"* There were common themes in these suggestions, particularly:
  - ➤ More proactive, direct engagement with stakeholders and the wider community.
  - ➤ Increasing the timeliness of action.
  - ➤ Improving interconnectivity between the Departmental divisions and other departments.

- These themes were echoed throughout the qualitative research, where stakeholders unanimously agreed that the Department's purpose is fit for purpose. However, there were mixed feelings towards the extent that the Department was living up to this purpose.

- Interviewees often indicated that the Department was good at thinking ahead but not necessarily acting now.
  - ➤ *"Be more proactive, less about box ticking and more strategic delivering impactful outcomes."*

Ranking of strategic purpose

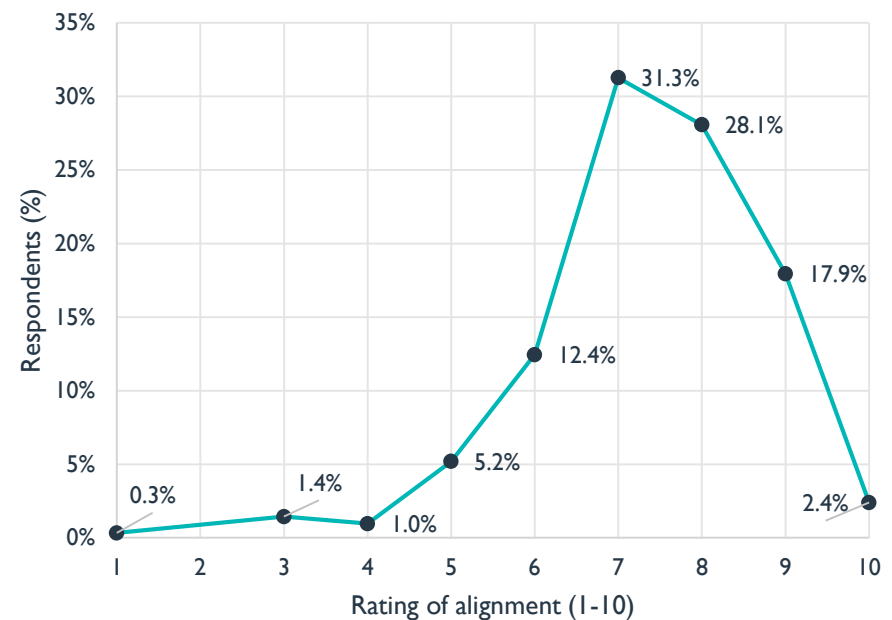**Figure 6:** *"How well do you think the Department is aligned to its purpose: To think ahead and act now, securing responsible and economic development and liveable communities?". Respondents ranked the alignment of the Department from 1 (not at all) to 10 (completely). n = 180.*

6.97/10

Strategic purpose:
"To think ahead and act now to secure responsible economic development and liveable communities."

Strategic KPIs

Economic prosperity

Figure 7 shows that respondents believe the Department is positively aligned to its key outcome of economic prosperity.

- 31.8% of respondents rated the Department as 6 or lower, further analysis shows the majority of whom represent industry and local government.

Respondents that rated the performance as 6 or lower were asked a follow-up question: *"How do you think the Department could better achieve this key outcome?"*

Survey respondents identified the following areas for improvement:

- More proactive engagement was seen as the key driver with many respondents feeling left out of the design and approval process.
- Having the Department take on more appropriate risk tailored to individual business cases.
- Making the approval process less bureaucratic.

There was also a feeling, particularly among developers and industry members, that processes, risk management and regulatory hurdles were too restrictive.

> ➢ *"When planning, thinking and acting around economic development, we are sometimes paralysed by waiting for 'perfect'. How do we just get started in the right direction?"*

Ranking of economic prosperity

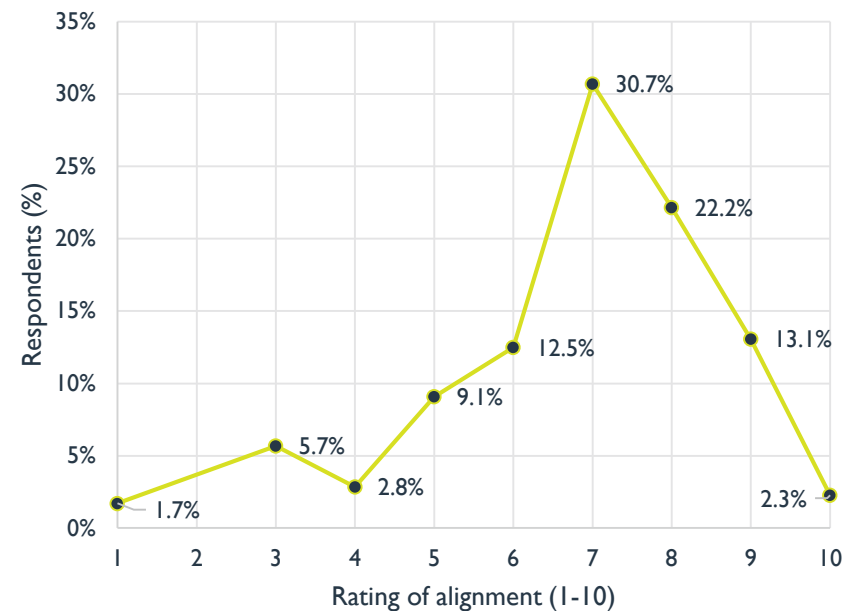**Figure 7:** "How well do you think the Department is aligned to its key outcome of economic prosperity: Sharing in opportunity through diversity and investment in key industries." Respondents ranked the alignment of the Department from 1 (not at all) to 10 (completely). n = 180.

6.83/10

Economic prosperity:
"Sharing in opportunity through diversity and investment in key industries."

Strategic KPIs

Liveable communities

With an average result of 6.69 out of 10, respondents were generally positive about the Department's alignment with its liveable communities key outcome (Figure 8).

- 32.4% of responses were either a 5 or 6, suggesting that while respondents are not negative towards the Department's performance, they are not seeing results that suggest the Department is doing all it can in this area.

As with the previous two strategic KPIs, respondents that rated the performance as 6 or lower were asked a follow-up question: "*How do you think the Department could better achieve this key outcome?*" Suggestions included:

- Proactive engagement, particularly towards gathering and implementing feedback from local governments and the community directly about their specific and amenities.

  ➢ *"Better stakeholder engagement with commitment to actually action feedback to deliver outcomes!"*

Qualitative research identified regional stakeholders felt as if the Department was too focused on delivering economic development tailored to the needs or conditions appropriate to the south-east of the state but did not consider the individual needs of the regions of Queensland well enough.

The subsequent impacts on communities was also noted with interviewees suggesting there is a need to think more broadly about what 'liveable communities' mean not just for urban centers, but for more remote citizens and in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Ranking of liveable communities
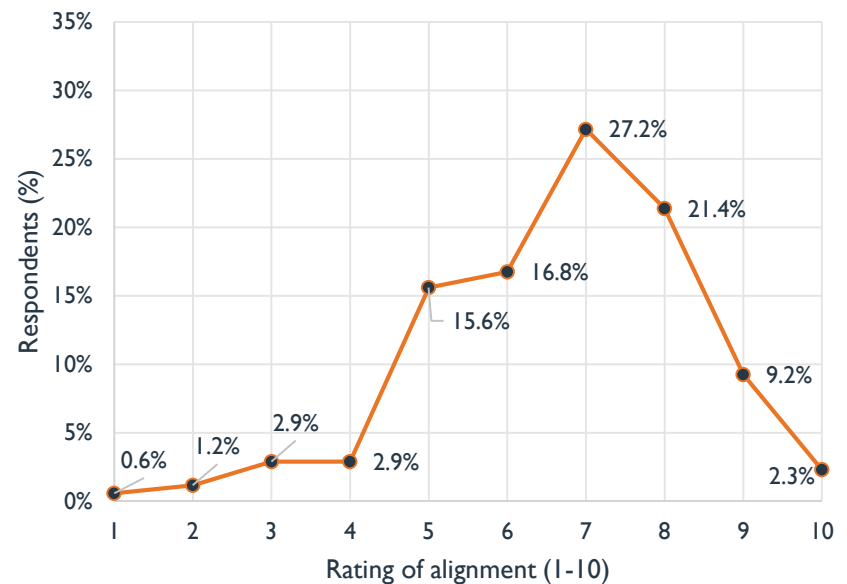

Figure 8: "How well do you think the Department is aligned to its key outcome of liveable communities: "Well-planned communities where people want to live, work and play." Respondents ranked the alignment of the Department from 1 (not at all) to 10 (completely). n = 173.

6.69/10

Liveable communities:
"Well-planned communities where people want to live, work and play."

Regulator versus enabler

Regulating

63.2% of respondents indicated they had engaged the Department in relation to its regulatory powers and duties.

- Investors had the highest rate of engagement for this function (85.7%), while peak bodies had the lowest (47.1%).

- Figure 9 highlights that while most respondents agree that the Department is an effective regulator there was also a neutral view from over a third of respondents.

Throughout the qualitative research, several stakeholders suggested they couldn't comment on this as they had not engaged the Department in this regard or didn't know much about the specifics of the broader Department, which may have contributed to the high neutral responses in the survey.

Stakeholders understood that the Department needs to use regulatory powers, but there was a split between respondents on how the current balance was viewed. Some believe the Department shies away from using such powers, while others indicated that in certain circumstances, they have overreached. The most frequently raised example that came up throughout the survey and interviews was Operation Belcarra.

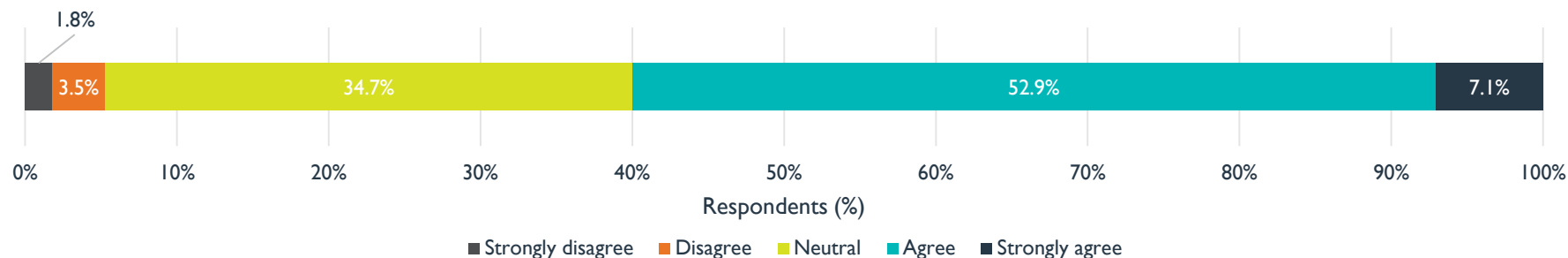### The Department effectively performs its role of using regulatory powers

Figure 9: "Based on your own experience and/or perception of the Department, the Department effectively performs its role of using regulatory powers?" n = 170.

Regulator versus enabler

Enabling

- 87.7% of respondents advised that they had engaged the Department for the purpose of enabling. Notably, government agencies (70%) had the lowest engagement rate of the different organisational types.
- While there was a positive view regarding the Department's efforts to enable economic and social development, 13% of respondents disagreed that the Department was effective in this regard, as seen in Figure 10.

Many interviewees felt that the Department is far too risk adverse, with feedback indicating that there is far too much timidity when making decisions. There was a feeling that the approvals process could be made more collaborative to account for individual cases in a more open and balanced approach.

➢ *"They need more autonomy and authority to make decisions."*

The Department effectively performs its role as an enabler of industry, economic development, and well-planned communities.

1.2% 11.8% 22.4% 51.8% 12.9%

Respondents (%)

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree
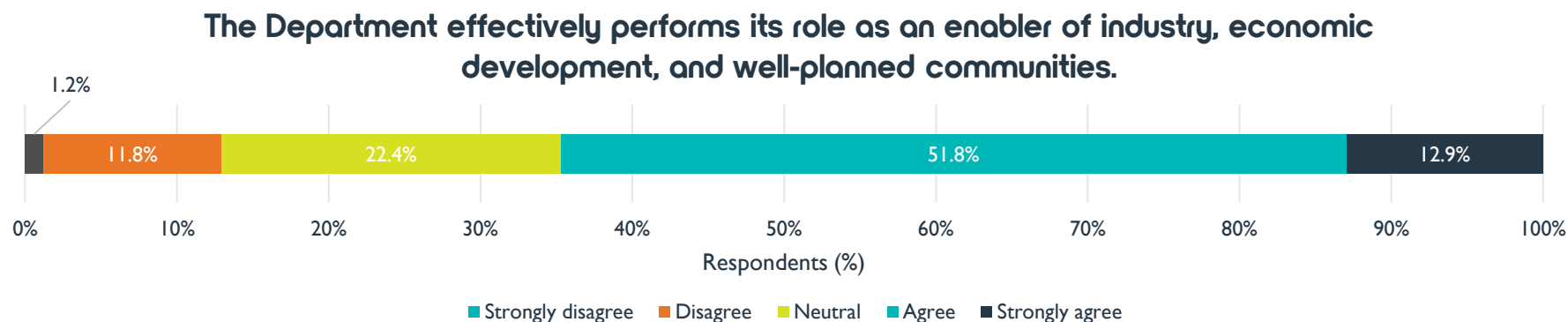
Figure 10: "Based on your own experience and/or perception of the Department, the Department effectively performs its role as an enabler of industry, economic development, and well-planned communities.?" n = 170.

Regulator versus enabler

Balance

Roughly half of the respondents agreed that the Department had struck an appropriate balance between its functions of regulating and enabling (Figure 11). This was mostly echoed through the interviews, too. Some interviewees felt there was too many regulatory constraints, while others felt that not enough was being done to ensure developments were balanced to the communities needs.

> ➤ *"It is a hard job as they are pulled in a lot of different directions."*

Regarding the negative responses, themes gathered throughout the survey suggested that there are stakeholders on both sides of the 'no' response.

- Industry members and investors felt that there was too much focus on reducing government risk in investment and following bureaucratic processes involved in approvals that shifted the balance too far towards regulation, ultimately stifling investment in communities and major projects.

- In contrast, there were several local governments and government agencies that felt the Department was not properly planning the long-term liveability of new development areas, sacrificing the needs of the community to enable developers to speed up their processes.

Multiple references to Director-General, Mike Kaiser were made by interviewees. There was a general feeling that he has attempted to prioritise achieving this balance within the Department and is recognised as making significant changes to further this goal.

> ➤ *"Probably have the best Director-General in Australia."*

Is there an appropriate balance between these two requirements?
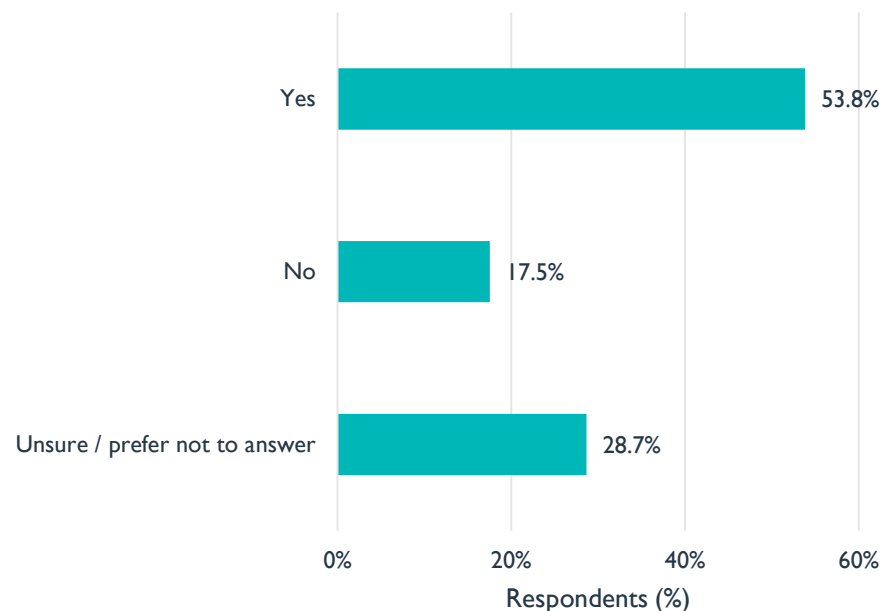

Figure 11: "Based on your own experience and/or perception of the Department, do you believe that a balance between these two requirements (the use of regulatory powers and fulfilment of its legislative duties as well as being an enabler of industry, economic development, and well-planned communities) has been achieved?" n = 171.

Departmental perceptions

Service KPIs

- Overall, the Department is generally viewed positively in its delivery of services (Figure 12). This sentiment was reflected throughout qualitative research:
  - ➢ *"DSDILGP is our favorite Department to deal with, but we want it to get better."*

- All but one of the statements (see Figure 12) were endorsed (*agree/strongly agree*) by at least half of the respondents. No statements received more than 14% disapproval (*disagree/strongly disagree*).

- Those that *disagreed/strongly disagreed* with any statement were asked a follow-up; "*Could you elaborate further about why you disagreed with the previous statement/s?*" Common themes include:
  - A lack of internal communication between divisions/departments hampered respondent's efforts to find relevant information or navigate between divisions, sometimes leading to conflicting information.
    - ➢ *"You often get conflicting advice from different Departmental staff."*
  - The Department did not provide advice that was tailored to the individual needs of stakeholders even when directly when requested to by respondents.
  - The Department did not provide enough rationale behind its regulatory decisions, leading to confusion from stakeholders as to how to improve outcomes both presently and in the future.

Based on your experience and broader perceptions, the Department:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Is easy to navigate and source information relevant to my organisation's areas of interest/need	2%	12%	30%	48%	8%
Explains their purpose and provides quality advice about possible adaptations to my organisation's proposal to meet compliance	1%	10%	41%	43%	5%
Is open and transparent about why a decision has been made	2%	10%	37%	42%	9%
Assists my organisation to navigate other departments within Queensland Government	3%	7%	27%	45%	18%
Operates in a way that is accountable and consistent to its policies	2%	3%	31%	55%	9%
Provides equitable and accessible services for all stakeholders	2%	8%	31%	50%	8%
Is a trusted working partner	3%	4%	23%	49%	21%
Provides clarity of its role and capabilities	4%	9%	28%	48%	10%
Operates with appropriate cultural awareness	2%	1%	25%	55%	17%

Respondents (%)

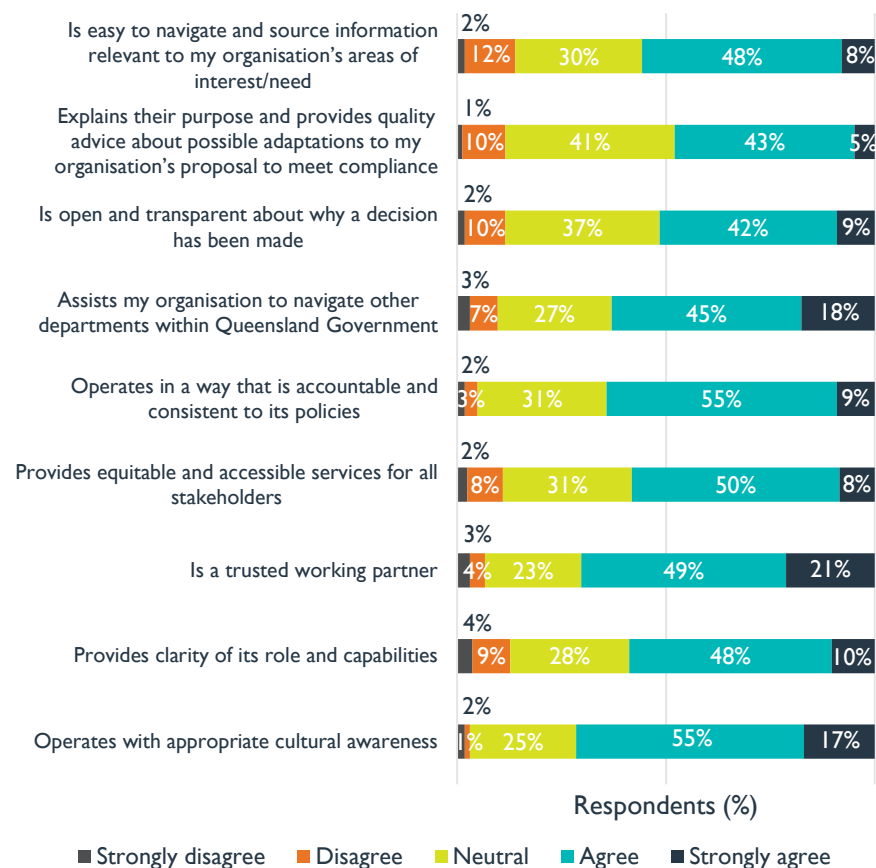■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Figure 12: "Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements based on your experience and broader perceptions of the Department." n = 165.

Departmental representatives

Service KPIs

Departmental representatives received positive feedback across all statements, seen in Figure 13.

- Overwhelmingly, the most common theme from both the survey and interviews was that staff took too long to respond to stakeholders. Many respondents said they did not receive answers at all, and felt the process was overwhelmingly bureaucratic.

  ➤ *"Speed to resolution should be a key success factor for the Department."*

  ➤ *"This causes delays in projects progressing and, in the current construction market environment, results in higher costs."*

- Many respondents noted that representatives at the officer level are not encouraged to think big or boldly enough, with this attributed to a lack of experience due to high staff turnover. In addition, a lack of relevant experience within respective disciplines, outside of the Department was noted.

  ➤ *"The depth in the Department is suffering and I think there is a degree of inexperience. Degree of timidity in decision making."*

- There was a small number of comments that staff were not excited or driven by their jobs, but this was contradicted by many interviewees and the high agreement from other respondents (74%). Those that did hold this view were typically developers and industry members.

  ➤ *"We don't see any of the passion for the business we see with other state equivalents in NSW, VIC and SA."*

Based on your experience and broader perceptions, Departmental representatives:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Provide accurate and consistent advice	2%	4%	19%	56%	18%
Work collaboratively with my organisation to find acceptable solutions, where possible	1%	4%	19%	47%	29%
Provide timely responses to enquiries and resolution to issues	4%	10%	21%	51%	14%
Are passionate about their work	1%	6%	19%	52%	22%
Have a bias for action	3%	9%	37%	40%	10%
Proactively communicate the support or services available to my organisation	2%	6%	31%	46%	15%
Demonstrate leadership when collaborating	2%	5%	31%	44%	18%
Are surprisingly helpful	2%	7%	36%	37%	18%

Respondents (%)

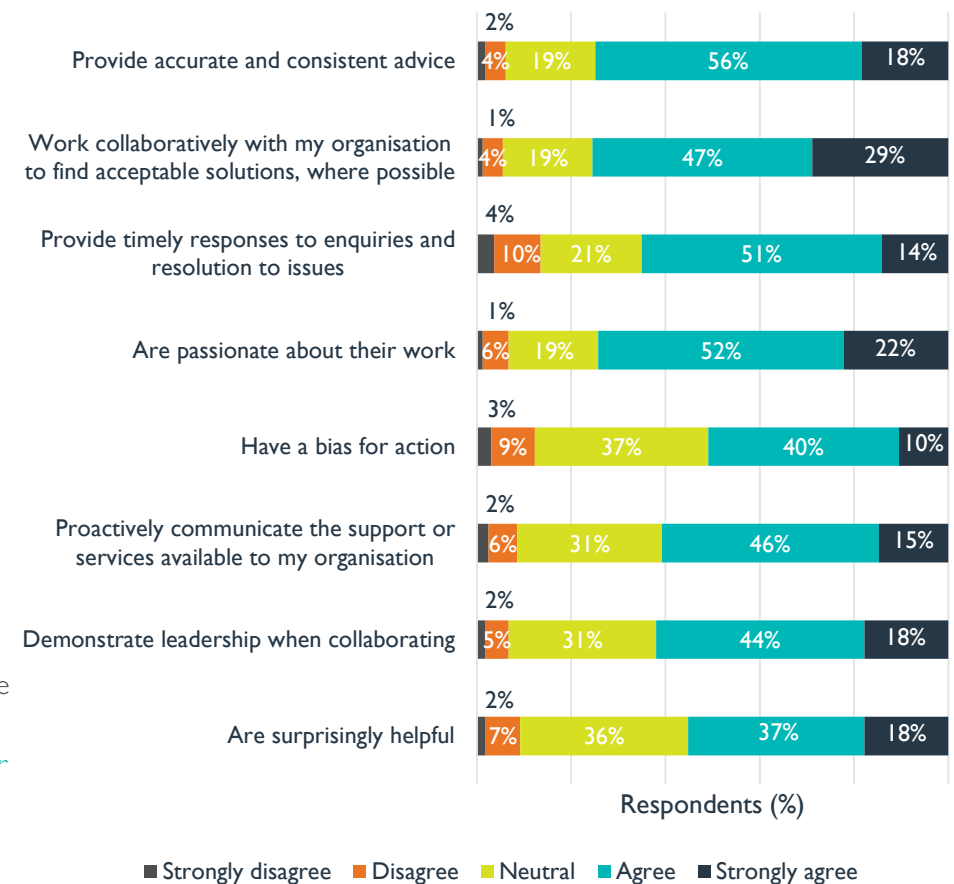■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Figure 13: "Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements based on your experience and broader perceptions of Departmental representatives." n = 163.