

Power to the people: Aussies expect more from their local leaders

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About two-thirds of Australians believe local governments should have more power than they currently do, according to a new study from The Australian National University (ANU).

The [national survey](#) of 1,350 people also found that 86% of respondents believe local government should actively shape local identity and culture. The survey is published in two separate papers in [Urban Affairs Review](#) and [Urban Policy and Research](#).

Associate Professor Mark Chou, from the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy, said the survey highlights that Aussies expect their local council to reflect their interests and values, while also providing an increasingly diverse range of social services and initiatives.

"The survey found the vast majority of Australians believe local government should play a more active role in a range of community issues," Associate Professor Chou said.

"Aussies now expect their local leaders to deliver more than just the basic services of roads, rates, and rubbish, also known as the Three Rs.

"Sixty-six percent of Australians think local councils should have more power than they currently do to be able to deliver on critical services that benefit the community."

The survey asked participants to rank the types of local government services and initiatives they value the most. Respondents were asked what community issues are "extremely or very important to them" or "not important at all."

"Sixty-one percent of people believe local governments should be focusing more time and resources to address climate change," Associate Professor Chou said.

"Just over half, 52%, of [respondents](#) believe reconciliation and Indigenous issues are extremely or very important issues for local councils to address.

"Meantime, only 45% of Aussies think [local governments](#) should be doing more to offer support to refugees.

"The survey also found one-in-five Aussies, or 20%, think LGBTQIA plus support and advocacy is not an important issue for local councils to focus on."

More information: Mark Chou et al, From the Three Rs to the "Culture Wars"? How Australians Perceive Local Government Action on Climate Change, Indigenous Reconciliation, and LGBTQIA + Advocacy, *Urban Affairs Review* (2024). [DOI: 10.1177/10780874241242049](#)

Rachel Busbridge et al, The Three Rs and Beyond: Public Perceptions on the Role of Australian Local Government Today, *Urban Policy and Research* (2024). [DOI: 10.1080/08111146.2024.2320637](#)

Provided by Australian National University

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