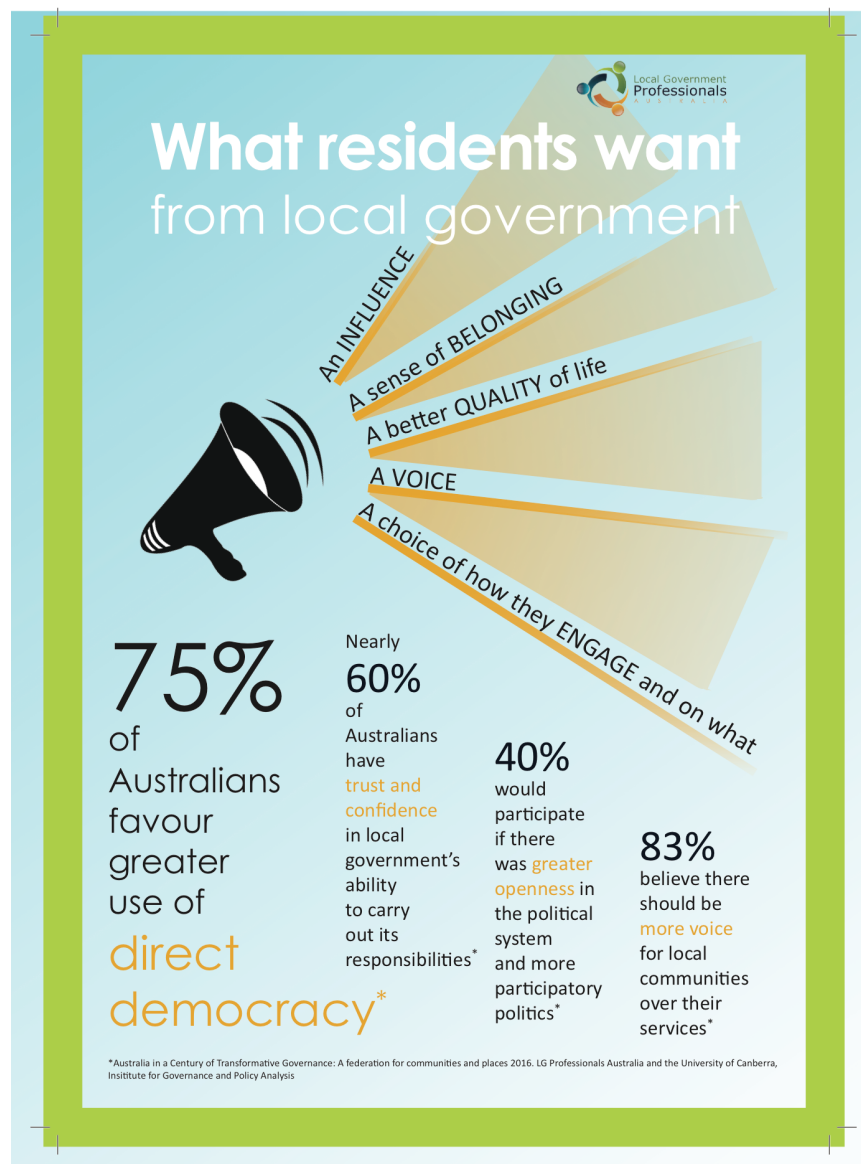


# Community alignment is local government's greatest strength

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When people talk about government in Australia, they typically refer to the Federal and State Governments. However, a new report, *Australia in a Century of Transformative Governance: A Federation for Communities and Places*, released by LG Professionals Australia and the University of Canberra's Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis, calls for a greater role for local government within our three-tiered system. The report suggests that local knowledge and connections within their communities, that councils around Australia intrinsically possess, are key to unlocking innovative approaches and unexpected collaborations – that if allowed to flourish, will deliver the best possible quality of life to residents.



## Engaging democracy

Even at the most basic level, proximity works in local government's favour. While democracy is valued very highly by most Australians, many of our citizens don't feel like they participate in our democracy at a national level in any meaningful way – except for voting every three years at federal elections. Local-level democracy on the other hand, gives people a very real and immediate sense of having a voice in what happens in their community. People care about their 'own backyards' and feel both informed enough and invested enough to want to have their say and have real input.

## Multi-functional and place-based

As councils deal with a small (typically) geographical area, but have oversight of the wide spectrum of challenges and opportunities within that area, the understanding councils can develop is wholistic rather than siloed – taking history, cause and effect, and wider impact into account.



For instance, a council supporting an aging population may be able to invoke support across a range of provisions such as accessibility modifications on buildings and outdoor spaces, zoning and planning, accommodation, parks, gym equipment, swimming pools and exercise areas, language services, in-home support, transport, group activities, libraries, museums, community events and social cohesion initiatives. Some of these services might be specifically for the aging population; and others might be general, but with thought and design to include access, time and space for older residents.

Resident expectations have already changed – the old view of local government as simply the administrators of rates, roads and rubbish is long gone. Ultimately, it comes down to this: changing communities need new and better outcomes; local government is in position to deliver unique solutions that reflect the specific issues and advantages of the communities they serve. If that potential can be maximised, especially in needs analysis and service delivery, with the two other tiers of government, the wealth of experience and local know-how can be used to make our communities better than ever. After all, according to Griffith Constitutional Values Survey 2014, more than 90% of Australian citizens think it desirable that ‘different levels of government be able to collaborate on solutions to problems’.

***Australia in a Century of Transformative Governance: A Federation for Communities and Places*** was released by LG Professionals Australia and the University of Canberra's Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis in March, 2016. [Click here to download the report.](#)

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