



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES - PERFORMANCE

In last week’s column I talked about the how the performance of a Council General Manager is reviewed. In my column of 25th September, I talked about accountability and reporting, and we will have to wait for the Council Annual Reports in November to look in more detail at our local Councils’ performance in comparison to what they said they would do to work towards achieving the community’s priorities.



In the meantime, the Office of Local Government has brought out a new website ‘Your Council’ - <https://yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au/> so we can look at some data about our own councils and compare them with others, particularly similar types of councils.

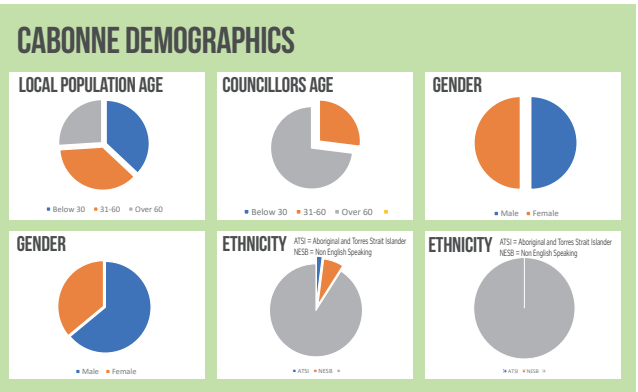
The information provided includes information like that below which is for Orange City Council compared with the average for the Group it is in (Group 4 Regional Town/City). Other councils in this group include Bathurst and Lithgow and there is a useful map of NSW Councils showing different comparisons:

Your Council - Orange	Result	Group Avg.*
Councillors (No.)	12	10
Population per Councillor (No.)	3,456	3,965
Equivalent Full Time Staff (EFT) (No.)	410	349
2017/18 Revenue (\$'000)	101,936	87,319
2017/18 Expenses (\$'000)	87,703	84,656
Residential Pensioner Rebates (%)	16.6	18.4
Population Density (residents per Km2)	146	34

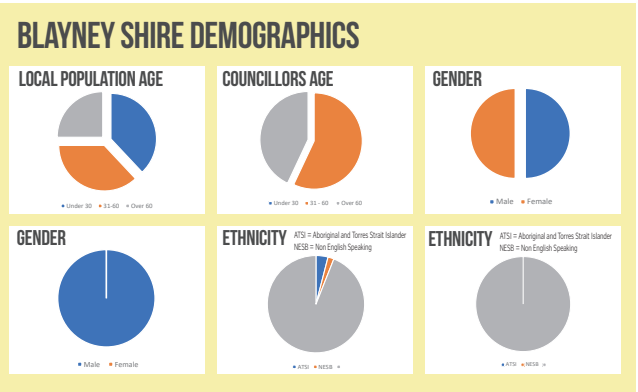
Other information provided includes demographics, community leadership, assets, finance and services. It’s well worth a look. What does it tell us?
Orange’s rates are high compared with the Group Average and the Average Ordinary Residential Rate went down by 1.9% between 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Your Council’s Rates & Charges - Orange	Result	Group Avg.
Avg Ordinary Residential Rate (\$)	1,254.39	1,044.62
Avg Ordinary Business Rate (\$)	6,336.15	3,751.02
Avg Ordinary Farmland Rate (\$)	1,824.32	2,294.47
Avg Ordinary Mining Rate (\$)	N/A	166,334.64
Total Land Value / Total Rate Revenue (\$)	101	159
Typical Residential Water & Sewer Bill (\$)	N/A	N/A
Avg Domestic Waste Charge (\$)	421.15	324.84

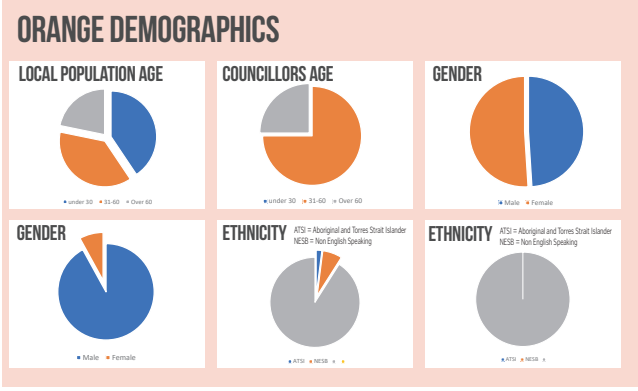
I am always fascinated by demographics and councils’ plans should drive and be driven by trends in demographics. The charts show the demographics of the local populations of our three Councils compared with the demographics of our Councillors.



Cabonne - The population of Cabonne is 13,615 and has grown by 0.9% over the last five years.



Blayney Shire - The population of Blayney Shire is 7,344 and has grown by 0.9% over the last 5 years.



Orange City - The population is 41,438 and the population has increased by 3.4% over the last 5 years

Help Yourself - This information can be found at:
<https://yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au/council-data/blayney-1560307491/>
<https://yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au/council-data/cabonne-1560307491/>
<https://yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au/council-data/orange-1560307491/>

Financial Performance

The Auditor-General of NSW has audited all councils since 2017 and there is a very useful interactive tool on the website that compares financial performance.

<https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/report-on-local-government-2018-interactive-data-tool>

I often hear people compare Orange and Bathurst Councils, so this tool is very useful for that kind of discussion. The two councils have similar number of population and households, but Bathurst Regional Council covers a much bigger area of 3,818 square kilometres compared with Orange City Council’s 284 square kilometres.

Most of the financial figures are very similar between the two Councils. Bathurst’s rates are lower than Orange’s, but the income derived from rates is around the same. Orange’s fees and user charges brought in \$10.4 million more than Bathurst’s in 2017/18.

Bathurst’s expenditure was \$10 million higher than Orange’s which meant that Bathurst has a lower operating surplus than Orange. Orange’s operating performance which measures how well Councils keep operating expenses within operating revenue at 14% compared with Bathurst at -6.9%. The Office of Local Government sets a benchmark greater than zero for this measure, and most of Orange’s financial health measures are much better than Bathurst’s. Orange’s Operating Performance Ratio has been positive and trending upwards over at least the last 3 years and Bathurst’s has been below zero and stable for at least the last 3 years. On the face of it this suggests that Orange is performing better than Bathurst, but there is information missing such as does Bathurst have higher service levels than Orange?

This website information should be compared with the Annual Reports that will show how Councils performed against what they said they would do. Many Councils also have Customer Satisfaction Surveys, but I cannot find anything on websites that shows our three Councils undertake such a survey.

What other types of performance are there?

I am happy to receive comments from readers about this column and other issues you would like me to cover so please either contact me at Orange City Life or aes@amandaspaldingconsulting.com