

State Administrative Tribunal 2007 Party Survey

November 2007

Project: DOTAG/63

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Consultants: Anna Munday
Shauna Trafalski
Rian Caccianiga

Data Analysis Australia Pty Ltd
97 Broadway
Nedlands, Western Australia 6009
(PO Box 3258 Broadway, Nedlands 6009)
Website: www.daa.com.au
Phone: (08) 9386 3304
Facsimile: (08) 9386 3202
Email: daa@daa.com.au

A.C.N. 009 304 956
A.B.N. 68 009 304 956

Executive Summary

The State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) contracted Data Analysis Australia to conduct their 2007 Party Survey. This is a follow-up survey to one that was conducted in 2006 by the State Administrative Tribunal. The party survey aims to gauge the users' satisfaction level with regards to both the State Administrative Tribunals' services and the application process.

The survey was sent to 2,000 individuals and 43 government agencies who had been involved in a SAT matter between July 2006 and June 2007. The overall response rate was 23% with a total of 470 surveys completed. This is in line with response rates received in many self completion questionnaires with no follow-up measures in place and was higher than the 2006 Party Survey response rate. Out of the 470 surveys completed, a total of 47 respondents completed the survey online (10%) and 423 questionnaires were returned via a reply paid envelope (90%).

Both male and females were well represented in the survey and 71% of respondents were aged 41 years or over. A large proportion of the respondents were the applicant to the matter (73%), stated that this was a one off occasion in applying to SAT (67%) and represented themselves during the process (79%). The majority of respondents indicated that the matter had ended with a decision made by SAT after the final hearing.

In general, the levels of satisfaction with SAT and their staff were high. In particular, the SAT staff were helpful, had a polite and professional telephone manner, were efficient, informative and timely. SAT letters and notices were also deemed easy to follow and the hearing process was seen to be fair to all parties by most respondents. Most of the respondents stated that they had sufficient information to prepare for their hearing and felt that the length of notice given was appropriate.

Areas identified for possible improvement include:

- Reducing the time taken in processing the application from lodgement to completion. In particular, reducing this time to less than 12 weeks is recommended as there was a marked decrease in satisfaction with the length of proceedings for those respondents whose proceedings had lasted in excess of 12 weeks.
- Increasing the number of issues that get resolved during mediation and improving its effectiveness. Whilst the mediation process results in agreed outcomes between the parties and SAT are therefore not required to provide reasons for the decision, further explanation and clarification of the outcomes being discussed and their implications may also increase the feelings that the process is helpful and fair to both parties.

Whilst perhaps not an issue at present, it is important to continue focusing on providing a welcoming environment to the participants. In particular, a comfortable and well-signed waiting room and access to tea/coffee/water facilities would be advised.

In general, satisfaction ratings were higher than those given in last year's survey and most of the areas that were identified as 'negative' were shown to have increased in the level of satisfaction by respondents.

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1. Introduction

Data Analysis Australia was contracted to conduct the 2007 State Administrative Tribunal Party Survey. This is a follow-up survey to one that was conducted in 2006 by the State Administrative Tribunal. The party survey aims to gauge the community's satisfaction level with regards to both the State Administrative Tribunals services and the application process.

It is anticipated that the results of this survey will assist the State Administrative Tribunal in improving their standard of service to the community. Changes in community perceptions over time will be compared to the results of this study.

This report covers the methodology employed to analyse the survey and the results received.

2. Survey Design and Implementation

There are a number of differences between the 2006 survey and the 2007 survey. The 2007 survey was conducted by Data Analysis Australia on behalf of the State Administrative Tribunal. It was offered as both an online electronic survey and as a paper-based survey.

2.1 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was based on that developed by SAT and used for the 2006 survey. Whilst it is important to maintain consistency between questionnaires in order to make comparisons from year to year, it is also important to make changes where such changes will demonstrate a significant improvement to the quality or meaning of the survey responses or where additional information is required. Suggestions for improvement were made by Data Analysis Australia and the questionnaire was finalised in conjunction with SAT representatives.

In general, the changes made to the questionnaire included changes to the wording to ensure greater clarity, changes to the formatting, including more options for the respondent to choose from when answering some questions, the addition of skips to enable better navigation through the questionnaire and the responses were labelled with a numeric value to simplify the data entry process. In general, these changes will enable broad comparisons to be made between the two surveys.

The questionnaire was separated into three major sections – the respondent, SAT in general and the SAT process (based on the particular tribunal matter that the survey respondent was involved in). Questions relating to the respondent included demographic information, their role in the application

made to SAT (for example, whether they were the applicant, the respondent, a legal representative, an expert witness or other), how often the survey respondent makes applications to SAT and how their matter with SAT ended.

The section about SAT asked questions to obtain information on survey respondents' knowledge of SAT (including how they found out about it and whether they have used the SAT website) and general questions relating to the service received from SAT staff, facilities at SAT and the quality of information, documents and forms available from SAT.

The final section of the questionnaire asked for information regarding the SAT processes for the specific matter in which the survey respondent was involved with. This included collecting feedback on the hearings they may have attended, the timeliness of the SAT process and whether they would recommend SAT to others. Respondents were also given the opportunity to make suggestions on how to improve aspects of the service provided by SAT.

The results for these sections are discussed in Section 3. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B – The 2007 State Administrative Tribunal Survey.

2.2 Sample Selection

The State Administrative Tribunal distributed the survey to randomly selected government agencies and individuals who were involved in a tribunal case that occurred between July 2006 and June 2007.

In total, 43 government parties and 2000 individuals were contacted for this survey.

2.3 Survey Implementation

The survey was distributed via a mail-out in which reply paid envelopes were included (for those who preferred to complete a paper-based survey) and the password for the electronic survey was provided (for those who preferred to complete the survey online). The mail-out included a letter explaining the purpose of the survey and a copy of the questionnaire itself.

Initially the 2007 Party Survey was to be conducted from 27th July 2007 until the 3rd August 2007. However, many respondents did not receive their survey until the 1st August 2007 (due to timing issues during the mail out of the surveys) and, as a result, the survey was extended until the 15th August 2007.

2.4 Data Processing

Coded and verbatim responses were recorded automatically for the surveys completed online. The paper based surveys were data entered into Excel by Data Analysis Australia staff. The data management and analysis was carried

out in the computer statistical package SPSS. The survey results are contained in Section 3.

2.5 Data Quality

In general, the quality of the data was considered to be high. Data quality checks were implemented to check for out of range responses, blank or missing data items and duplicate responses.

One issue is that there were a number of 'blank' responses. These are associated with participants logging onto the online survey but not answering any questions and hence generating a blank record. There were also a high number of duplicate records in the dataset. Again, this is primarily due to those participants who completed the survey online – if the 'submit' button is hit multiple times it creates multiple records. These blank and duplicate responses were filtered out before the analysis.

The online survey did not allow the respondents to complete the survey during multiple sessions. Therefore, if they partially completed the survey in one sitting and returned to the survey at a later time to complete it, they were required to start from the beginning of the survey again. This issue could not be resolved, however it is unlikely that this affected many records (it may even not have arisen at all). As the number of responses received online was low, any effect of this possible occurrence would be low.

Any respondents who indicated in Question 18 that they had not attended a hearing at SAT but answered questions that they should have skipped (for example, by selecting the 'not applicable' option) were filtered out before the analysis. Also, the 'not applicable' option available in Question 18 itself was provided primarily to assist the respondents in completing the questionnaire rather than for analysis purposes. As such, any responses given as 'not applicable' for this question were also filtered out before the analysis.

Aside from the above minor issues, all questions were answered satisfactorily.

3. Survey Results

The results of the 2007 State Administrative Tribunal party survey are given in the following sections.

Note that in the following tables the percentages may not add precisely to the given total due to the rounding of percentages to one decimal place.

3.1 Response Rates

Overall the combined response rate for the survey (both paper-based and electronic) was 23% with a total of 470 surveys completed out of a possible

2,043. This is in line with response rates received in many self-completion questionnaires with no follow-up measures in place.

Out of the 470 surveys completed, a total of 47 respondents completed the survey online (10%) and 423 questionnaires were returned via a reply paid envelope (90%).

3.2 The Respondent

Both male and female respondents were well represented with 53% being male and 47% being female. Most of the respondents (71%) were aged 45 years and over. The majority of respondents had either finished secondary school (34%) or had a college or university degree (50%).

Q1. Are you?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|------------|-------|
| Male | 247 | 53.0% |
| Female | 219 | 47.0% |
| Total | 466 | |

Q2. How old are you?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|------------|-------|
| under 18 | 0 | 0.0% |
| 18 to 24 | 12 | 2.6% |
| 25 to 34 | 46 | 9.9% |
| 35 to 44 | 76 | 16.3% |
| 45 to 54 | 110 | 23.6% |
| 55 to 64 | 123 | 26.3% |
| over 64 | 100 | 21.4% |
| Total | 467 | |

Q3. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

| | Count | % |
|-----------------------|------------|-------|
| Primary school | 8 | 1.7% |
| Secondary school | 160 | 34.3% |
| TAFE | 44 | 9.4% |
| College/University | 234 | 50.2% |
| Never attended school | 3 | 0.6% |
| Other | 17 | 3.6% |
| Total | 466 | |

A large proportion of the respondents were the applicant (73%), whilst only 12% acted as the respondent to a matter. Due to the high proportion of applicants, most of the opinions throughout the remainder of the report belong primarily to the applicant.

The comments suggest that the role/s taken during the application process can be quite varied, from being the guardian to being the town planner acting on behalf of the applicant.

Q4. In the application made to SAT were you?

| | Count | % |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-------|
| The applicant | 335 | 72.7% |
| The respondent | 55 | 11.9% |
| Legal representative (for applicant) | 0 | 0.0% |
| Legal representative (for respondent) | 22 | 4.8% |
| Expert witness | 7 | 1.5% |
| Other - not specified | 6 | 1.3% |
| Other - specified | 36 | 7.8% |
| Total | 461 | |

The majority of respondents represented themselves during the process (79%), with only 21% being represented by an agent or solicitor.

Q5. If you were the applicant or the respondent, did you:

| | Count | % |
|---------------------------|------------|-------|
| Represent yourself | 294 | 78.8% |
| Have a solicitor or agent | 79 | 21.2% |
| Total | 373 | |

A large proportion of the respondents only made the one-off application to SAT (67%) and 16% of respondents made an application less than once a month.

Q6. How often do you make applications to SAT?

| | Count | % |
|------------------------|------------|-------|
| Once a week or more | 5 | 1.1% |
| Once a month | 17 | 3.8% |
| Less than once a month | 73 | 16.2% |
| Once off occasion | 300 | 66.7% |
| Never | 55 | 12.2% |
| Total | 450 | |

The majority of respondents live in Perth (80%) and, of those responses that were relevant to the application, 79% operated their business in Perth.

Q7. Where do you live?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Perth | 369 | 80.0% |
| Regional WA | 83 | 18.0% |
| Outside WA | 9 | 2.0% |
| Total | 461 | |

Q8. Where do you operate your business? (if relevant to the application)

| | Count | % |
|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Perth | 178 | 78.8% |
| Regional WA | 46 | 20.4% |
| Outside WA | 2 | 0.8% |
| Total | 226 | |
| Not relevant | 173 | |

For just under half of the respondents (44%) the matter ended after the final hearing in which a decision was made by SAT. The comments suggested that a decision was still pending on some applications, there were multiple outcomes in some cases and some respondents were unsuccessful with their application.

Q9. How did the matter end?

| | Count | % |
|---|--------------|----------|
| Application withdrawn no need for decision | 40 | 9.2% |
| Decision was made following mediation/compulsory conference | 56 | 13.0% |
| An agreement reached with other party without final hearing | 40 | 9.2% |
| A decision was made by SAT after final hearing | 189 | 43.9% |
| A decision was made by SAT on documents no need for final hearing | 85 | 19.7% |
| Other | 27 | 6.3% |
| Don't know | 12 | 2.8% |
| Total | 431 | |

A further breakdown of the 'other' responses is shown in the following table.

Q9. Comments regarding how the matter ended.

| | Count | % |
|------------------------|--------------|----------|
| Decision still pending | 9 | 33.3% |
| Multiple outcomes | 4 | 14.8% |
| Unsuccessful | 4 | 14.8% |
| Administrator | 2 | 7.4% |
| Other | 8 | 29.6% |
| Total | 27 | |

3.3 The State Administrative Tribunal

Survey respondents who were applicants for their tribunal matter were asked how they had found out about SAT. Just over a third (34%) were already aware of SAT. A number of respondents were advised by a decision maker of their rights and to seek a review of their decision in SAT (12%), told by legal aid or a community advice service (13%), or through a lawyer (13%). The other comments suggested that social workers were also a source for SAT.

Q10. If you were the applicant, how did you find out about SAT?

| | Count | % |
|---|--------------|----------|
| Decision maker advised me of rights to seek a review of their decision in SAT | 37 | 12.2% |
| I already knew about SAT | 102 | 33.7% |
| Through friend or relative | 21 | 6.9% |
| Legal aid or community advice service | 38 | 12.5% |
| SAT website | 7 | 2.3% |
| A lawyer | 39 | 12.9% |
| Through media | 6 | 2.0% |
| Other | 53 | 17.5% |
| Total | 303 | |

A further breakdown of the ‘other’ responses is shown in the following table.

Q10. Comments regarding how the respondent found out about SAT.

| | Count | % |
|---------------------|--------------|----------|
| Social worker | 13 | 25.0% |
| Medical personnel | 8 | 15.4% |
| Public trustee | 5 | 9.6% |
| Through advocate | 3 | 5.8% |
| Strata manager | 3 | 5.8% |
| In the forms | 3 | 5.8% |
| Local council/shire | 2 | 3.8% |
| Other | 15 | 28.8% |
| Total | 52 | |

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the satisfaction ratings given for the service the respondents received from the State Administrative Tribunal's staff (question 11).

Q11. Overall, how would you rate the service you received from SAT staff?

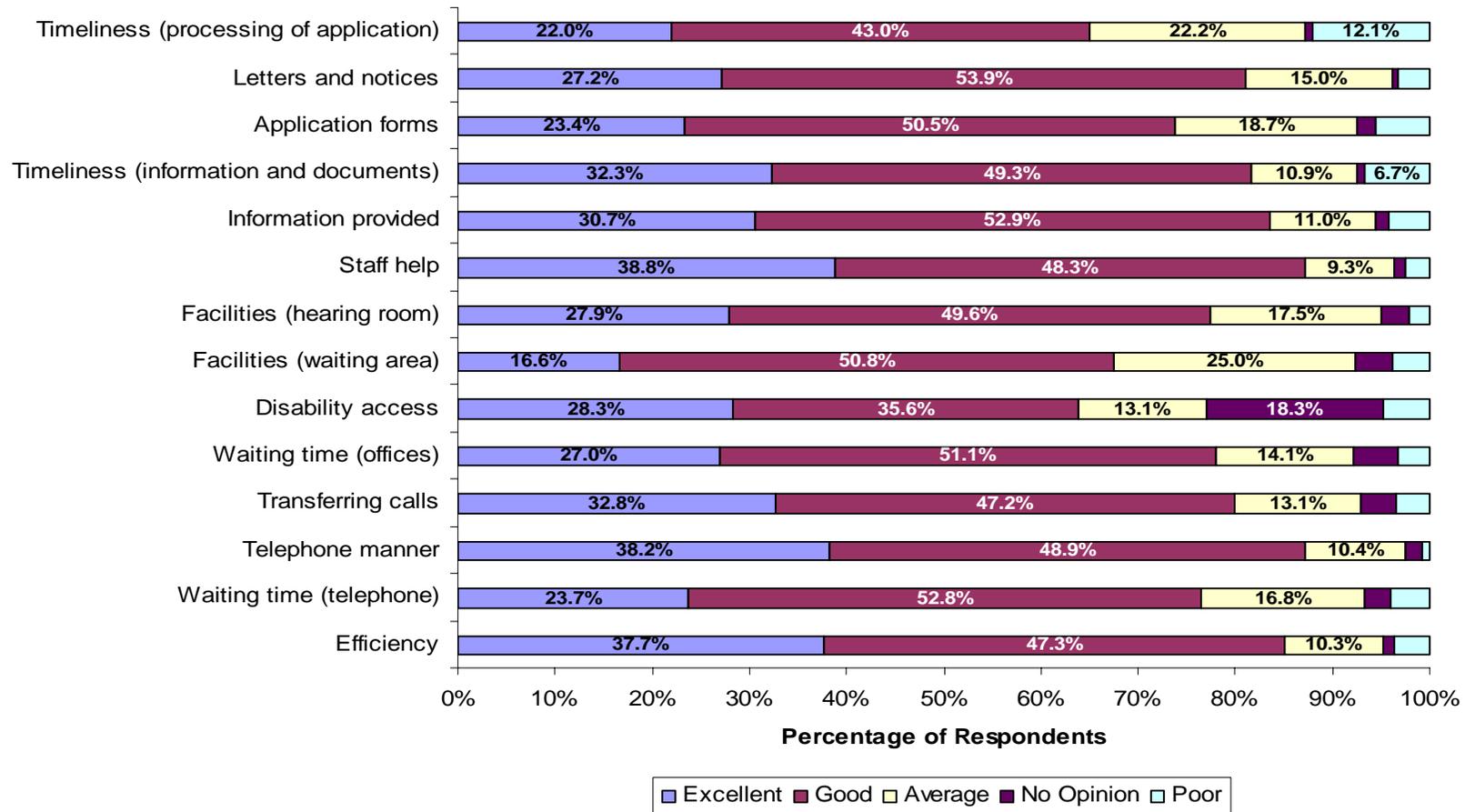


Figure 1. The satisfaction ratings for the service received (Q11).

The majority of respondents rated the service they received from SAT staff as either excellent or good (Figure 1). In particular, the percentage of respondents who rated each of the aspects of service as either excellent or good follow:

- help from staff (polite and professional) (87%);
- telephone manner of staff (polite and professional) (87%);
- the efficiency of SAT staff (85%);
- the information provided by staff (accurate and up to date) (84%);
- the information and SAT documents sent in a timely manner (82%);
- SAT letters and notices were easy to follow (81%);
- call transferred to correct person (80%);
- waiting time when visiting SAT offices (78%);
- facilities in the hearing room (78%);
- waiting time when telephoning SAT (77%);
- SAT application forms were easy to follow (74%); and
- disability services (64%), however 18% if the respondents had no opinion (rather than a negative opinion).

The statement that had the largest ‘poor’ response referred to the time taken in processing the application from lodgement to completion (12%). The tables for these results can be found in Appendix A – Additional Tables.

Over half of the respondents have not used the SAT website (59%). Of those that have used the website, the majority (80%) visit the website as the need arises, 79% were able to find the information they required, over three-quarters of the respondents found the website easy to navigate (76%) and 67% claim that they obtained their application form through the SAT website. Responses were mixed regarding lodging an application electronically if the option was available to the respondent, with 38% of respondents stating that they would.

Q12. Have you used our website at www.sat.justice.wa.gov.au?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|------------|-------|
| Yes | 190 | 41.0% |
| No | 273 | 59.0% |
| Total | 463 | |

Q13. How often do you visit our website?

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Never | 3 | 1.6% |
| Daily | 9 | 4.8% |
| Weekly | 12 | 6.4% |
| Monthly | 13 | 6.9% |
| As need arises | 151 | 80.3% |
| Total | 188 | |

Q14. Did you find our website easy to navigate?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Yes | 144 | 76.2% |
| No | 45 | 23.8% |
| Total | 189 | |

Q15. Was the information you required available on the website?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Yes | 149 | 78.8% |
| No | 21 | 11.1% |
| Not sure | 19 | 10.1% |
| Total | 189 | |

Q16. Did you obtain an application form through the Tribunals website?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Yes | 123 | 66.8% |
| No | 61 | 33.2% |
| Total | 184 | |

Q17. Would you lodge an application electronically (by email or the internet) if this option was available?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Yes | 168 | 38.1% |
| No | 138 | 31.3% |
| Maybe | 135 | 30.6% |
| Total | 441 | |

The following table shows that the majority of respondents who used the website would lodge an application electronically (66%) and similarly, that the majority of respondents who have not used the website would not lodge an application electronically (77%).

| Have you used our website? | Would you lodge an application electronically? | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | Yes | | No | | Maybe | |
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 111 | 66.1% | 32 | 23.2% | 43 | 31.9% |
| No | 57 | 33.9% | 106 | 76.8% | 92 | 68.1% |
| Total | 168 | | 138 | | 135 | |

3.4 The State Administrative Tribunal Process

The majority of respondents (86%) stated that they had attended a hearing at SAT. Just over half (54%) of the respondents who attended a directions hearing required more than one hearing, with compulsory conference and final hearing having the lowest number of responses. Less than 2% of the respondents needed all four hearing methods.

Q18. For this matter have you attended a hearing at SAT? (whether personally or by telephone)

| | Count | % |
|--------------|------------|-------|
| Yes | 388 | 85.8% |
| No | 64 | 14.2% |
| Total | 452 | |

a) Did you require more than one hearing?

| | Mediation | | Compulsory Conference | | Directions Hearing | | Final Hearing | |
|---------------|------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 66 | 43.7% | 32 | 36.8% | 77 | 53.5% | 45 | 24.2% |
| No | 85 | 56.3% | 55 | 63.2% | 67 | 46.5% | 141 | 75.8% |
| Total* | 151 | | 87 | | 144 | | 186 | |

* Not applicable and 'missing' responses were excluded from the question 18 tables.

For those who did require more than one hearing:

| | Count | % |
|--|--------------|----------|
| Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 22 | 5.7% |
| Mediation/Compulsory Conference/Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 6 | 1.5% |
| Remaining respondents who attended a SAT hearing | 360 | 92.8% |
| Total | 388 | |

Most respondents found that the hearing methods attended were helpful in their case. The majority of these responses were regarding the compulsory conference and final hearing (82% and 86% respectively), however less than 10% of the respondents attended both of these hearings. Just over a quarter of respondents stated that the mediation method was not helpful in their case (28%).

b) Did you find this hearing method helpful to your case?

| | Mediation | | Compulsory Conference | | Directions Hearing | | Final Hearing | |
|--------------|------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 94 | 71.8% | 59 | 81.9% | 106 | 79.7% | 139 | 85.8% |
| No | 37 | 28.2% | 13 | 18.1% | 27 | 20.3% | 23 | 14.2% |
| Total | 131 | | 72 | | 133 | | 162 | |

For those who did find the hearing method helpful to their case:

| | Count | % |
|--|--------------|----------|
| Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 35 | 9.1% |
| Mediation/Compulsory Conference/Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 5 | 1.3% |
| Remaining respondents who attended a SAT hearing | 348 | 89.7% |
| Total | 388 | |

The highest number of responses showed that the final hearing was the most effective (87%) at resolving matters (which is to be expected) and that the compulsory conference was also effective at resolving matters (65%). The directions hearing contained the most 'no' responses with 59%.

c) Was the matter resolved completely at this hearing?

| | Mediation | | Compulsory Conference | | Directions Hearing | | Final Hearing | |
|--------------|------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 62 | 48.4% | 45 | 65.2% | 46 | 40.7% | 155 | 86.6% |
| No | 66 | 51.6% | 24 | 34.8% | 67 | 59.3% | 24 | 13.4% |
| Total | 128 | | 69 | | 113 | | 179 | |

For those who had the matter resolved completely at a hearing:

| | Count | % |
|--|------------|-------|
| Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 9 | 2.3% |
| Mediation/Compulsory Conference/Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 6 | 1.5% |
| Remaining respondents who attended a SAT hearing | 373 | 96.1% |
| Total | 388 | |

Of those responses that stated that the hearing did not finalise the matter, 71% indicated that the final hearing did resolve some of the issues. The mediation hearing recorded the most responses for 'no' (42%).

d) If not, did the hearing resolve some of the issues?

| | Mediation | | Compulsory Conference | | Directions Hearing | | Final Hearing | |
|--------------|-----------|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 43 | 47.3% | 21 | 67.7% | 52 | 64.2% | 50 | 71.4% |
| No | 38 | 41.8% | 10 | 32.3% | 29 | 35.8% | 20 | 28.6% |
| Total | 91 | | 31 | | 81 | | 70 | |

For those respondents in which the hearing did resolve some of the issues:

| | Count | % |
|--|------------|-------|
| Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 23 | 5.9% |
| Mediation/Compulsory Conference/Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 6 | 1.5% |
| Remaining respondents who attended a SAT hearing | 359 | 92.5% |
| Total | 388 | |

The majority of the respondents believed that the hearing process is fair to all parties, with the compulsory conference having the highest number of

responses (84%). However, 24% of the responses indicated that the mediation hearing is not fair to all parties.

e) Do you believe the hearing process was fair to all parties?

| | Mediation | | Compulsory Conference | | Directions Hearing | | Final Hearing | |
|--------------|------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 94 | 76.4% | 54 | 84.4% | 92 | 78.6% | 143 | 80.8% |
| No | 29 | 23.6% | 10 | 15.6% | 25 | 21.4% | 34 | 19.2% |
| Total | 123 | | 64 | | 117 | | 177 | |

The majority of the responses indicated that a decision was handed down immediately or quite soon after the hearing. Both the final hearing and mediation method gave the highest 'no' response (19%) whilst compulsory conference recorded the least number of 'no' responses (11%). Less than 6% of the respondents had to attend both the directions hearing and the final hearing before receiving their decision.

f) Were you given a decision immediately or quite soon after the hearing?

| | Mediation | | Compulsory Conference | | Directions Hearing | | Final Hearing | |
|--------------|------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 89 | 80.9% | 55 | 88.7% | 86 | 82.7% | 146 | 80.7% |
| No | 21 | 19.1% | 7 | 11.3% | 18 | 17.3% | 35 | 19.3% |
| Total | 110 | | 62 | | 104 | | 181 | |

For those who were given a decision immediately or quite soon after the hearing:

| | Count | % |
|--|------------|-------|
| Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 22 | 5.7% |
| Mediation/Compulsory Conference/Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 5 | 1.3% |
| Remaining respondents who attended a SAT hearing | 361 | 93.0% |
| Total | 388 | |

A large proportion of respondents understood the final order of SAT with only a few responses given for 'no'. Less than 2% of the respondents had to attend all four hearing methods.

g) Did you understand the final order of SAT?

| | Mediation | | Compulsory Conference | | Directions Hearing | | Final Hearing | |
|--------------|------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 94 | 90.4% | 52 | 88.1% | 86 | 93.5% | 172 | 92.5% |
| No | 10 | 9.6% | 7 | 11.9% | 6 | 6.5% | 14 | 7.5% |
| Total | 104 | | 59 | | 92 | | 186 | |

For those who understood the final order of SAT:

| | Count | % |
|--|------------|-------|
| Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 18 | 4.6% |
| Mediation/Compulsory Conference/Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 6 | 1.5% |
| Remaining respondents who attended a SAT hearing | 364 | 93.8% |
| Total | 388 | |

The majority of respondents were given reasons for the decision made, particularly in the final hearing and directions hearing (89% and 91% respectively). Mediation had the highest percentage of respondents not having been given a reason for the decision made (19%). This is not surprising given that the mediation process results in outcomes that are agreed on by both parties and SAT are therefore not required to provide reasons for the decision.

h) Were you given reasons for the decision?

| | Mediation | | Compulsory Conference | | Directions Hearing | | Final Hearing | |
|--------------|-----------|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 77 | 81.1% | 47 | 88.7% | 76 | 90.5% | 161 | 89.4% |
| No | 18 | 18.8% | 6 | 11.3% | 8 | 9.5% | 19 | 10.6% |
| Total | 95 | | 53 | | 84 | | 180 | |

For those who were given reason for the decision:

| | Count | % |
|--|------------|-------|
| Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 17 | 4.4% |
| Mediation/Compulsory Conference/Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 3 | 0.8% |
| Remaining respondents who attended a SAT hearing | 368 | 94.8% |
| Total | 388 | |

Approximately 67% of the respondents indicated that SAT did not reserve their decision and hand it down later. Of these, less than 3% of the respondents attended both the directions hearing and a final hearing.

i) Did SAT reserve its decision and hand it down later?

| | Directions Hearing | | Final Hearing | |
|--------------|--------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Count | % | Count | % |
| Yes | 27 | 33.3% | 59 | 33.5% |
| No | 54 | 66.7% | 117 | 66.5% |
| Total | 81 | | 176 | |

For those respondents in which SAT reserved their decision and handed it down later:

| | Count | % |
|--|------------|-------|
| Yes - Directions/Final Hearing Combination | 10 | 2.6% |
| Remaining respondents who attended a SAT hearing | 378 | 97.4% |
| Total | 388 | |

The responses given regarding the aspects of the hearing were positive, with the majority of responses to all statements receiving either an excellent or good rating (Figure 2). Specifically:

- 91% of respondents thought that the courtesy of the SAT member was either excellent or good;
- the majority of the respondents found the hearing room with ease (89%);
- 86% of the respondents found that the layout of the hearing room was either excellent or good;
- the majority of the respondents were given an explanation about the hearing process (85%); and
- 85% of respondents felt that the knowledge of the SAT member was excellent or good.

The tables for these results can be found in Appendix A – Additional Tables.

Q19. Please rate the following aspects of the hearing.

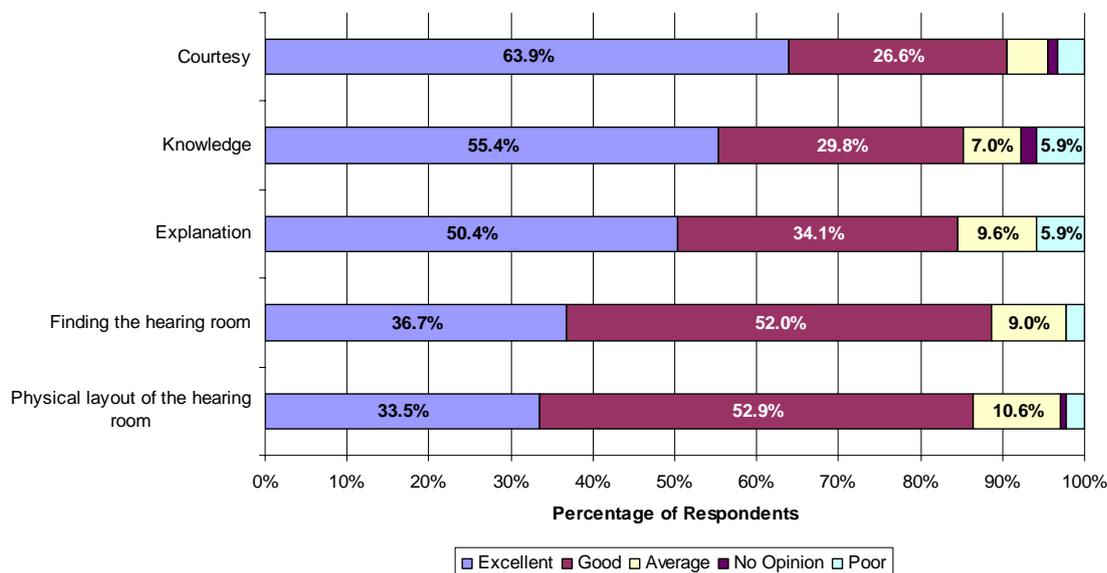


Figure 2. The satisfaction ratings for the service received (Q19).

The majority of respondents (90%) had sufficient information to prepare for the hearing, 85% of respondents felt that the length of notice given was appropriate and 71% of the respondents had two to less than six weeks notice of the hearing.

Q20. Did you have sufficient information to prepare for the hearing?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|------------|-------|
| Yes | 327 | 89.6% |
| No | 38 | 10.4% |
| Total | 365 | |
| N/A | 13 | |

Q21. How much notice of the hearing were you given?

| | Count | % |
|-------------------------|------------|-------|
| less than 2 weeks | 24 | 6.5% |
| 2 to less than 4 weeks | 106 | 28.5% |
| 4 to less than 6 weeks | 158 | 42.5% |
| 6 to less than 8 weeks | 44 | 11.8% |
| 8 to less than 10 weeks | 29 | 7.8% |
| 10 or more weeks | 11 | 3.0% |
| Total | 372 | |

Q22. What were your feelings regarding the length of notice you were given for this hearing?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|------------|-------|
| Too short | 15 | 4.0% |
| Appropriate | 316 | 84.5% |
| Too long | 43 | 11.5% |
| Total | 374 | |

Questions 21 and 22 can be further explored by comparing the length of notice with the feelings regarding this length of notice. This result is shown in the following table:

| How much notice of hearing were you given? | Feelings regarding the length of notice given | | | | | |
|--|---|-------|-------------|-------|----------|-------|
| | Too short | | Appropriate | | Too long | |
| | Count | % | Count | Count | % | Count |
| Less than 2 weeks | 5 | 20.8% | 19 | 79.2% | 0 | 0.0% |
| 2 to less than 4 weeks | 6 | 5.7% | 92 | 86.8% | 8 | 7.5% |
| 4 to less than 6 weeks | 2 | 1.3% | 138 | 89.0% | 15 | 9.7% |
| 6 to less than 8 weeks | 2 | 4.7% | 31 | 72.1% | 10 | 23.3% |
| 8 to less than 10 weeks | 0 | 0.0% | 21 | 75.0% | 7 | 25.0% |
| 10 or more weeks | 0 | 0.0% | 9 | 81.8% | 2 | 18.2% |

The majority of respondents thought that the length of notice given to them was appropriate (greater than 72% for all cases) with four to less than six weeks having the highest percentage of ‘appropriate’ responses (89%).

A total of 84% of the respondents took over four weeks from when they first became involved in the SAT proceedings to its final resolution. In particular 24% of respondents took over 12 weeks. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) stated that the proceedings took too long until completion, however 74% of the respondents stated that the length of the proceedings was appropriate.

Q23. Approximately how long did it take from when you first became involved in the SAT proceedings to its final resolution?

| | Count | % |
|-------------------------|------------|-------|
| Less than 4 weeks | 57 | 13.0% |
| 4 to less than 8 weeks | 136 | 31.1% |
| 8 to less than 12 weeks | 124 | 28.3% |
| 12 or more weeks | 106 | 24.2% |
| Still not resolved | 15 | 3.4% |
| Total | 438 | |

Q24. What were your feelings regarding the length of these proceedings?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|------------|-------|
| Too short | 8 | 1.8% |
| Appropriate | 326 | 73.8% |
| Too long | 108 | 24.4% |
| Total | 442 | |

Questions 23 and 24 can be further explored by comparing the length of the proceedings with the feelings regarding the length of the proceedings. This result is shown in the following table:

| How long until final resolution? | Feelings regarding length of proceedings | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|------|-------------|-------|----------|-------|
| | Too short | | Appropriate | | Too long | |
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| less than 4 weeks | 0 | 0.0% | 55 | 96.5% | 2 | 3.5% |
| 4 to less than 8 weeks | 5 | 3.7% | 116 | 86.6% | 13 | 9.7% |
| 8 to less than 12 weeks | 0 | 0.0% | 99 | 80.5% | 24 | 19.5% |
| 12 or more weeks | 1 | 1.0% | 43 | 41.7% | 59 | 57.3% |
| Still not resolved | 1 | 7.1% | 5 | 35.7% | 8 | 57.1% |

Most of those respondents who took less than 12 weeks for a resolution thought that the length of time was appropriate (greater than 80%). For those respondents in which the length of the proceedings took longer than 12 weeks (including those applications that are not yet resolved), over half thought that the time taken was too long (57% in both cases).

The majority of the respondents (63%) believed that they were the successful party, with only 18% of responses stating that neither party was successful.

Q25. Who do you believe was the successful party?

| | Count | % |
|-----------------|------------|-------|
| You | 215 | 62.5% |
| The other party | 66 | 19.2% |
| Neither party | 63 | 18.3% |
| Total | 344 | |

The majority of respondents (79%) indicated that they would recommend SAT to others in the future if they were having a similar dispute or question to resolve. The comments indicated that the main reason respondents would recommend SAT was due to the confidence they have in SAT's outcomes.

Q26. a) Would you recommend SAT to others in the future if having a similar dispute or question to resolve?

| | Count | % |
|--------------|------------|-------|
| Yes | 351 | 78.5% |
| No | 48 | 10.7% |
| Not sure | 48 | 10.7% |
| Total | 447 | |

b) Why would you/would you not recommend SAT to others?

| | Count | % |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Yes - confidence in service outcomes | 17 | 53.1% |
| Yes - happy with staff | 3 | 9.4% |
| Yes - Other | 4 | 12.5% |
| Yes - not applicable | 1 | 3.1% |
| No - too much prejudice | 2 | 6.3% |
| No - flawed processes | 1 | 3.1% |
| No - we were recommended ourselves | 1 | 3.1% |
| Not sure - No, not happy with service | 2 | 6.3% |
| Not sure - Undecided | 1 | 3.1% |
| Total | 32 | |

Of those respondents that would recommend SAT to others, the majority believed that they were the successful party (73%). Similarly, of those respondents that would not recommend SAT to others, the majority believed that the other party was successful in the application (64%).

| Who do you believe was the successful party? | Would you recommend SAT to others | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | Yes | | No | | Not sure | |
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| You | 225 | 73.3% | 2 | 4.8% | 20 | 45.5% |
| The other party | 32 | 10.4% | 27 | 64.3% | 13 | 29.5% |
| Neither party | 50 | 16.3% | 13 | 31.0% | 11 | 25.0% |
| Total | 307 | | 42 | | 44 | |

The final question of the survey gave respondents the opportunity to make any comments or suggestions on how to improve any aspects of the State Administrative Tribunal's service. Of the 132 respondents who provided a comment, a quarter of the respondents stated that they had no suggestions for improvement and that they were happy with the service that they had received (25%). Areas of improvement that were suggested relate to time frames (17%), paying more attention to detail (11%) and electronic services (10%).

Q27. Comments/Suggestions

| | Count | % |
|---|--------------|----------|
| No suggestions, happy with service | 33 | 25.0% |
| Time frames need work | 22 | 16.7% |
| SAT members should pay more attention to detail | 14 | 10.6% |
| Improve electronic services | 13 | 9.8% |
| Improve hearing processes | 6 | 4.5% |
| Greater clarification on what's going on | 5 | 3.8% |
| Remove bias among members | 4 | 3.0% |
| SAT members need to be better informed | 4 | 3.0% |
| Greater confidentiality | 3 | 2.3% |
| More mediation/discussions | 2 | 1.5% |
| Have SAT members in country areas | 1 | 0.8% |
| Other | 25 | 18.9% |
| Total | 132 | |

A further breakdown of the 'other' responses is shown in the following table.

Q27. Comments/Suggestions.

Signage at hearing room. There was no sign to direct people to wait in the hearing room. The security did not know if I could go in.

Often I complete applications on behalf of elderly spouses/family members who are unable to negotiate the completion of - particularly the administration application. I then am obligated to attend the hearing even though the application was completed on their behalf. Attending those hearings seems unnecessary.

Had very long hearing (5 hours) and no coffee/tea available.

Consider the hardship of outcomes to applicant.

Provide some free legal advice for people.

Personal touch - have fellow feelings for others, uncomplicate the administrator's roles.

Insist all parties be there rather than the use of the phone.

Stick to the Act and correct processes.

Better parking if possible.

When dealing with people who have cognitive impairment it would be good to have documents written in a language they understand, a much simpler use of words.

4. Comparison to the 2006 SAT Party Survey

This year's survey had a much higher response rate (from 14% in the 2006 survey to 23% in the 2007 survey). There were 29% more respondents who represented themselves in this year's survey (up from 55% in the 2006 survey) and 24% more respondents who made an application to SAT on the one-off occasion (up from 55% in the 2006 survey). More respondents stated that a decision was made by SAT after a final hearing when compared to last year's survey (from 29% in 2006 to 44% in the 2007 survey).

When compared to last year's survey, satisfaction response rates were higher across all areas of service received by SAT staff (see Figure 3). In particular, disability access, the waiting time when visiting SAT offices, the facilities in the waiting area and the timeliness of information and SAT documents showed the greatest increase in either an excellent or good satisfaction rating.

There was a substantial increase in the percentage of respondents who had used the website and found it easier to navigate (increased by 39%) when compared to the previous year's survey. However, the proportion of respondents was quite similar to last year's survey with regards to those that have visited the website. Also, 37% more respondents obtained their application via the website, yet there was a lower proportion of respondents who would lodge an application electronically (primarily due to the 'maybe' option that was introduced in the 2007 Party Survey).

In comparison to the 2006 survey, this year's survey had a lower percentage of 'yes' responses with respect to all facets when attending a hearing. Those aspects that were positive include: less respondents found that more than one hearing was required when attending a compulsory conference (from 73% in 2006 to 37% in 2007) and less people found that the final hearing required more than one hearing (from 75% in 2006 to 24% in 2007). Those aspects that were negative include: fewer respondents found the mediation method resolved some of the issues (from 98% in 2006 to 47% in 2007) and fewer respondents found that the directions hearing resolved the matter completely (from 90% in 2006 to 41% in 2007).

Those aspects of the hearing that showed an increase in either an excellent or good satisfaction rating were in the physical layout of the hearing room, finding the hearing room, and in the explanation of the hearing process (see Figure 4).

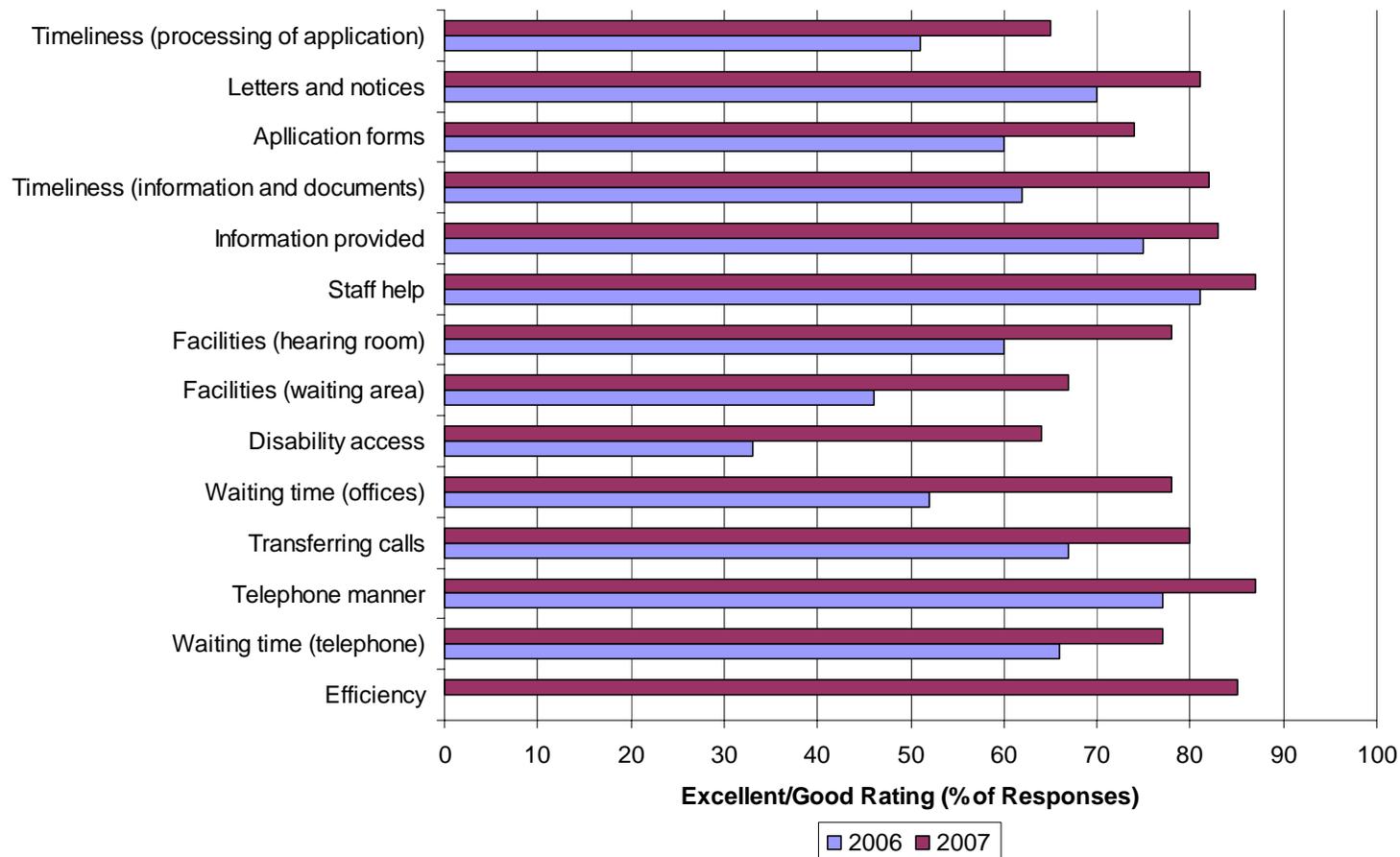


Figure 3. The excellent/good satisfaction ratings for the service received in the 2006 and 2007 party survey.

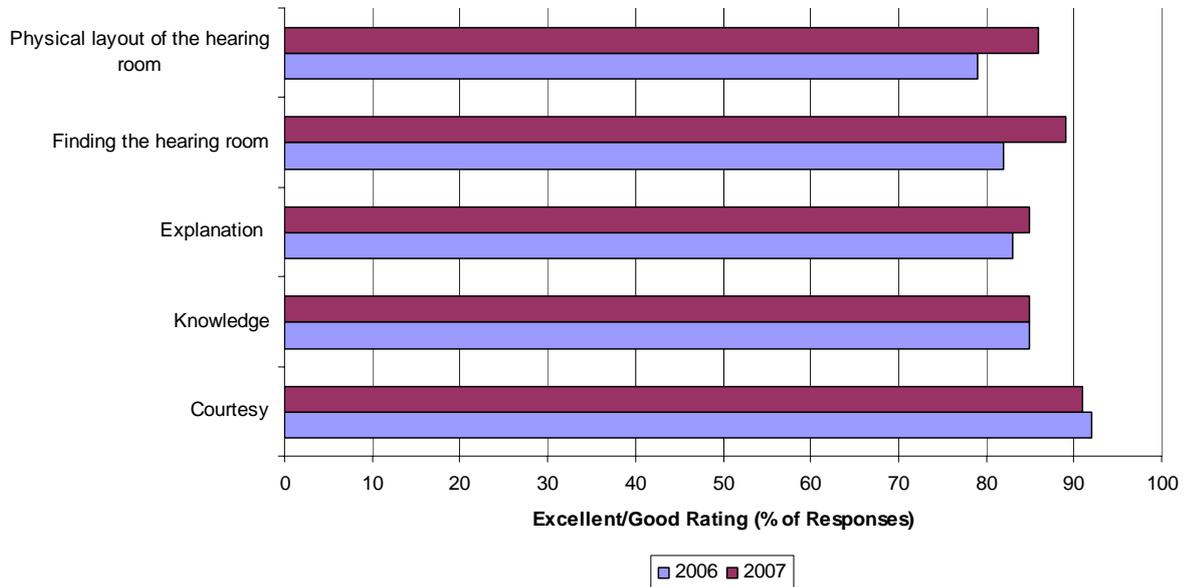


Figure 4. The excellent/good satisfaction ratings for the aspects of the hearing in the 2006 and 2007 party survey.

In general, respondents from the 2007 survey were given a longer length of notice of the hearing when compared to last year's survey, with most respondents in 2006 stating that they had received three to four weeks notice of the hearing (36%) and most respondents in this year's survey stating that they had received the notice four to less than six weeks prior to the hearing (43%). A greater percentage of respondents from the 2007 survey have spent more than four weeks from when they first became involved in SAT proceedings to its final resolution, in comparison to the 2006 survey (from 27% in the 2006 survey to 87% in the 2007 survey).

More respondents stated that they would recommend SAT to others in the future if they were having a similar dispute or question to resolve, when compared to last year's survey (up by 11% to 79% in 2007).

5. Conclusions

Both male and females were well represented in the survey and 71% of respondents were aged 41 years or over. A large proportion of the respondents were the applicant to the matter, stated that this was a one-off occasion and represented themselves during the process. The majority of responses indicated that the matter had ended with a decision made by SAT after the final hearing.

Key areas in which the State Administrative Tribunal is performing well and in which respondents were satisfied include:

- The service received from SAT staff. In particular, the SAT staff were helpful, had a polite and professional telephone manner, were efficient, informative and timely, and SAT letters and notices were easy to follow.
- The website was easy to navigate and respondents were able to find the information they required, including application forms.
- Compulsory conferences and final hearings are effective at completing an application.
- Very few respondents needed all four hearing methods or a combination of direction and final hearings.
- The hearing process was seen to be fair to all parties by most.
- The mediation and final hearing are effective in handing down a decision immediately.
- The final order given by SAT was understood by most.
- All aspects of the hearing were satisfactory, in particular the courtesy of the SAT member and the ease in finding the hearing room.
- Most of the respondents had sufficient information to prepare for the hearing and felt that the length of notice given was appropriate.
- Most of the respondents thought that the length of notice given was appropriate.
- The majority of respondents believed they were successful and would recommend SAT to others in the future, primarily due to the confidence they have in SAT's outcomes.
- A quarter of the respondents stated that they had no suggestions for improvement and that they were happy with the service that they had received.

Areas identified for possible improvement include:

- Reducing the time taken in processing the application from lodgement to completion. In particular, reducing this time to less than 12 weeks.

- Focusing on increasing the number of issues that get resolved during mediation and improving its effectiveness. Whilst the mediation process results in agreed outcomes between the parties and SAT are therefore not required to provide reasons for the decision, further explanation and clarification of the outcomes being discussed and their implications may also increase the feelings that the process is helpful and fair to both parties.
- The comments made suggest that time frames, attention to detail and electronic services could be improved.

Whilst perhaps not an issue at present, it is important to continue focusing on providing a welcoming environment to the participants. In particular, a comfortable and well-signed waiting room and access to tea/coffee/water facilities would be advised.

In general, satisfaction ratings were higher than those given in last year's survey and most of the areas that were identified as 'negative' were shown to have increased in the level of satisfaction by respondents. However, processing times from lodgement to finalisation and the resolution of issues during the mediation hearing method are still areas of concern.

6. Appendix A – Additional Tables

Q11. Overall, how would you rate the service you received from SAT staff?

a) Efficiency of SAT staff

| | Count | % |
|----------------|------------|-------|
| Excellent | 161 | 37.7% |
| Good | 202 | 47.3% |
| Average | 44 | 10.3% |
| Poor | 16 | 3.7% |
| No opinion | 4 | 1.0% |
| Not applicable | 16 | |
| Total | 427 | |

b) Waiting time when telephoning SAT

| | Count | % |
|----------------|------------|-------|
| Excellent | 93 | 23.7% |
| Good | 207 | 52.8% |
| Average | 66 | 16.8% |
| Poor | 16 | 4.1% |
| No opinion | 10 | 2.6% |
| Not applicable | 52 | |
| Total | 392 | |

c) Telephone manner of staff (polite and professional)

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 150 | 38.2% |
| Good | 192 | 48.9% |
| Average | 41 | 10.4% |
| Poor | 3 | 0.8% |
| No opinion | 7 | 1.7% |
| Not applicable | 50 | |
| Total | 393 | |

d) Call transferred to correct person

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 123 | 32.8% |
| Good | 177 | 47.2% |
| Average | 49 | 13.1% |
| Poor | 13 | 3.5% |
| No opinion | 13 | 3.5% |
| Not applicable | 63 | |
| Total | 375 | |

e) Waiting time when visiting SAT offices

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 94 | 27.0% |
| Good | 178 | 51.1% |
| Average | 49 | 14.1% |
| Poor | 11 | 3.2% |
| No opinion | 16 | 4.6% |
| Not applicable | 91 | |
| Total | 348 | |

f) Disability access to SAT

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 54 | 28.3% |
| Good | 68 | 35.6% |
| Average | 25 | 13.1% |
| Poor | 9 | 4.7% |
| No opinion | 35 | 18.3% |
| Not applicable | 214 | |
| Total | 191 | |

g) Facilities in the waiting room

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 61 | 16.6% |
| Good | 187 | 50.8% |
| Average | 92 | 25.0% |
| Poor | 14 | 3.8% |
| No opinion | 14 | 3.8% |
| Not applicable | 71 | |
| Total | 368 | |

h) Facilities in the hearing room

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 107 | 27.9% |
| Good | 190 | 49.6% |
| Average | 67 | 17.5% |
| Poor | 8 | 2.1% |
| No opinion | 11 | 2.9% |
| Not applicable | 62 | |
| Total | 383 | |

i) Staff help (polite and professional)

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 162 | 38.8% |
| Good | 202 | 48.3% |
| Average | 39 | 9.3% |
| Poor | 10 | 2.4% |
| No opinion | 5 | 1.2% |
| Not applicable | 26 | |
| Total | 418 | |

j) Information provided by staff (accurate and up to date)

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 129 | 30.7% |
| Good | 222 | 52.9% |
| Average | 46 | 11.0% |
| Poor | 18 | 4.3% |
| No opinion | 5 | 1.2% |
| Not applicable | 21 | |
| Total | 420 | |

k) Information and SAT documents sent in a timely manner

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 139 | 32.3% |
| Good | 212 | 49.3% |
| Average | 47 | 10.9% |
| Poor | 29 | 6.7% |
| No opinion | 3 | 0.7% |
| Not applicable | 11 | |
| Total | 430 | |

l) SAT application forms easy to follow

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 98 | 23.4% |
| Good | 211 | 50.5% |
| Average | 78 | 18.7% |
| Poor | 23 | 5.5% |
| No opinion | 8 | 1.9% |
| Not applicable | 26 | |
| Total | 418 | |

m) SAT letters and notices easy to follow

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 118 | 27.2% |
| Good | 234 | 53.9% |
| Average | 65 | 15.0% |
| Poor | 14 | 3.2% |
| No opinion | 3 | 0.7% |
| Not applicable | 11 | |
| Total | 434 | |

n) Time taken in processing of your application from lodgement to completion

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 91 | 22.0% |
| Good | 178 | 43.0% |
| Average | 92 | 22.2% |
| Poor | 50 | 12.1% |
| No opinion | 3 | 0.7% |
| Not applicable | 25 | |
| Total | 414 | |

Q19. Please rate the following aspects of the hearing.

a) Courtesy of the SAT member who conducted the proceedings

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 242 | 63.9% |
| Good | 101 | 26.6% |
| Average | 19 | 5.0% |
| Poor | 12 | 3.2% |
| No opinion | 5 | 1.3% |
| Not applicable | 4 | |
| Total | 379 | |

b) Knowledge of the SAT member who conducted the proceedings

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 206 | 55.4% |
| Good | 111 | 29.8% |
| Average | 26 | 7.0% |
| Poor | 22 | 5.9% |
| No opinion | 7 | 1.9% |
| Not applicable | 5 | |
| Total | 372 | |

c) Explanation about the hearing process

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 189 | 50.4% |
| Good | 128 | 34.1% |
| Average | 36 | 9.6% |
| Poor | 22 | 5.9% |
| No opinion | 0 | 0.0% |
| Not applicable | 5 | |
| Total | 375 | |

d) Finding the hearing room

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 127 | 36.7% |
| Good | 180 | 52.0% |
| Average | 31 | 9.0% |
| Poor | 8 | 2.3% |
| No opinion | 0 | 0.0% |
| Not applicable | 36 | |
| Total | 346 | |

e) Physical layout of the hearing room

| | Count | % |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| Excellent | 114 | 33.5% |
| Good | 180 | 52.9% |
| Average | 36 | 10.6% |
| Poor | 8 | 2.3% |
| No opinion | 2 | 0.6% |
| Not applicable | 36 | |
| Total | 340 | |

7. Appendix B – The 2007 State Administrative Tribunal Survey.