



## PROFICIENCY TESTING AUSTRALIA

### Soils Customer Survey Summary of Results

## Introduction

Proficiency Testing Australia (PTA) conducted a survey of companies involved in the Soils Construction Material Testing proficiency testing program.

The survey was conducted in February - March 2010 by PTA's Quality – Business Development Manager, Frances Ward.

Graphical summaries for each of the questions in the survey are presented below. Where a question was unanswered by a respondent, the response for that question was recorded as "Unknown". This differs from the response "Not sure", which was an option for some of the questions in the survey. The response "N/A" is an abbreviation for "Not Applicable"

## Methods

The survey consisted of 24 questions, arranged around five sections (Organisation, Statistical Analysis, Technical Validity, Laboratory Performance and Follow Up and General). The majority of the response categories were a ranking from Excellent to Poor.

A copy of the survey sheet is given in Appendix 1.

Participant results were transcribed into Excel. Count data was converted to percentages.

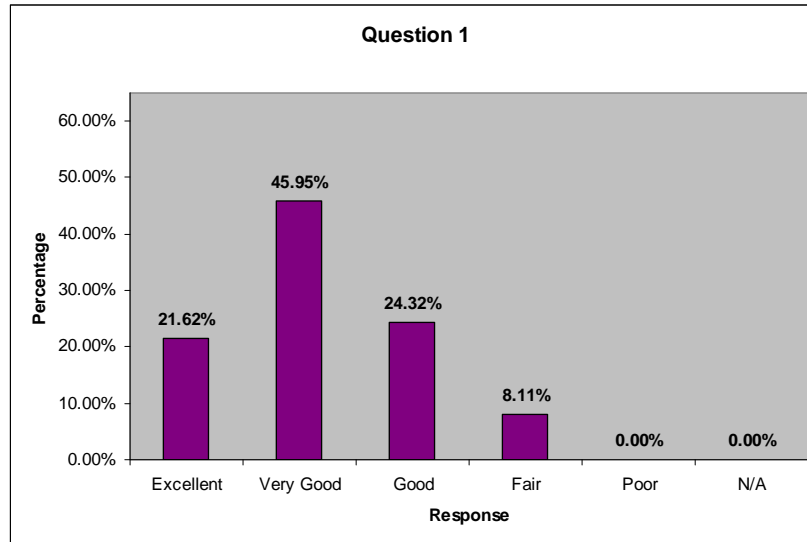
## Results

Surveys were sent to a total of 84 laboratories. Of these, 37 were returned. This represents a 44% response rate.

## PART 1 - ORGANISATION

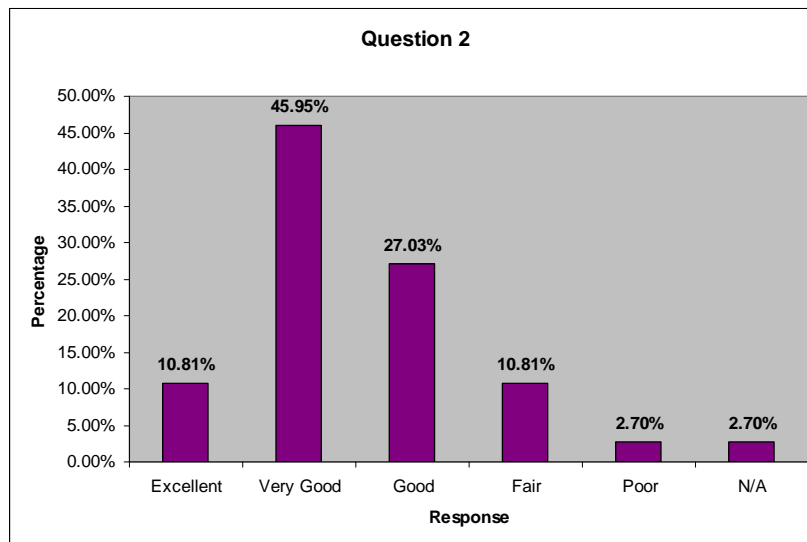
### Question 1

*Based on your past participation, how do you rate the overall quality of these programs?*



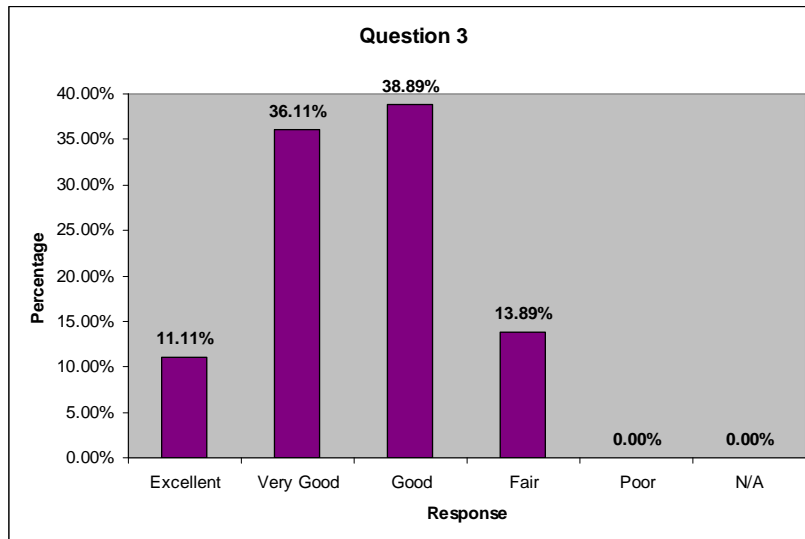
### Question 2

*How useful is the program registration process in nominating your participation?*



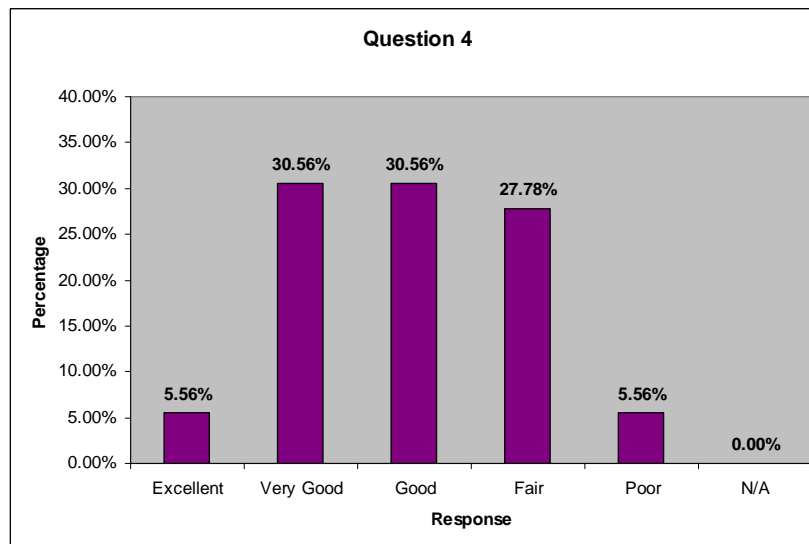
**Question 3**

*How would you rate your sample receipt based on the advised program schedule?*



**Question 4**

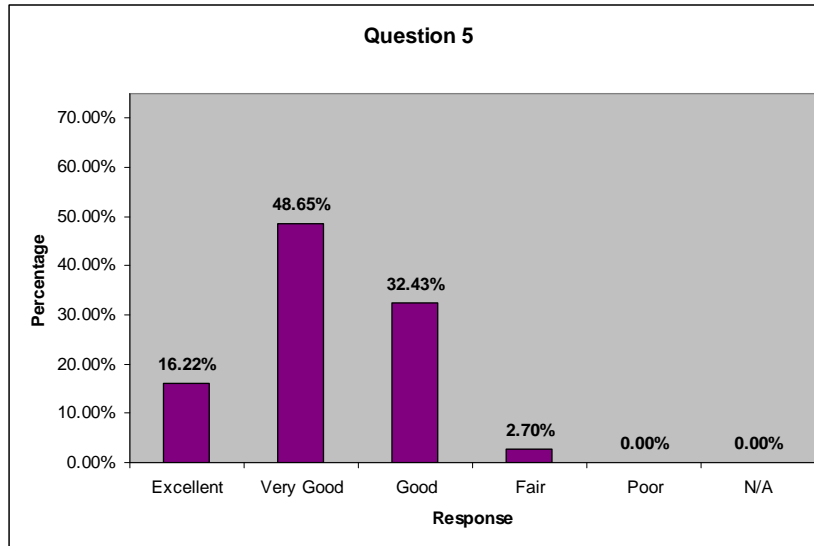
*How would you rate the timeliness of the issue of the final reports?*



## PART 2 - STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

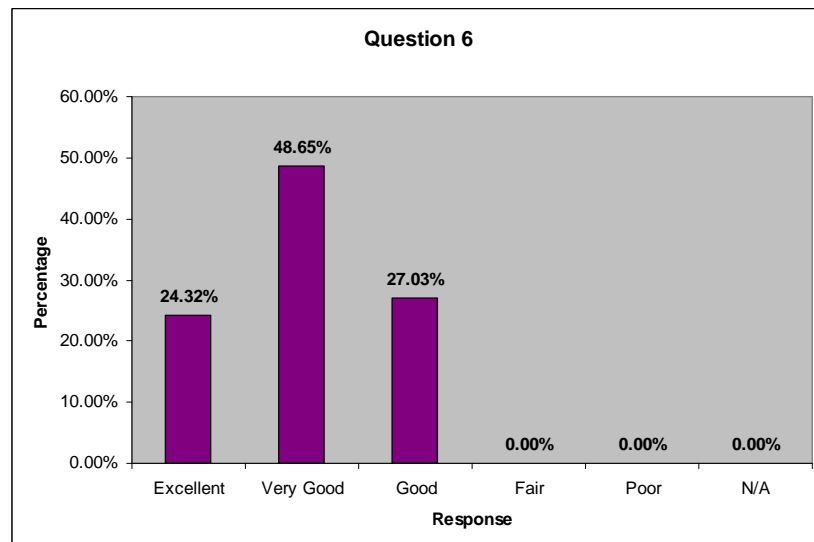
### Question 5

*How would you rate the content of the reports in providing your laboratory with an evaluation of your testing performance?*



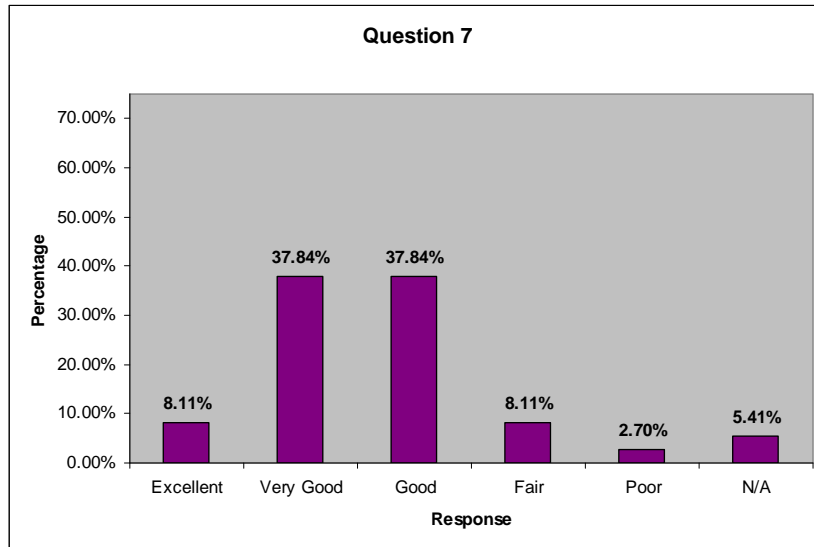
### Question 6

*How useful are the individual summary sheets provided with the final reports?*



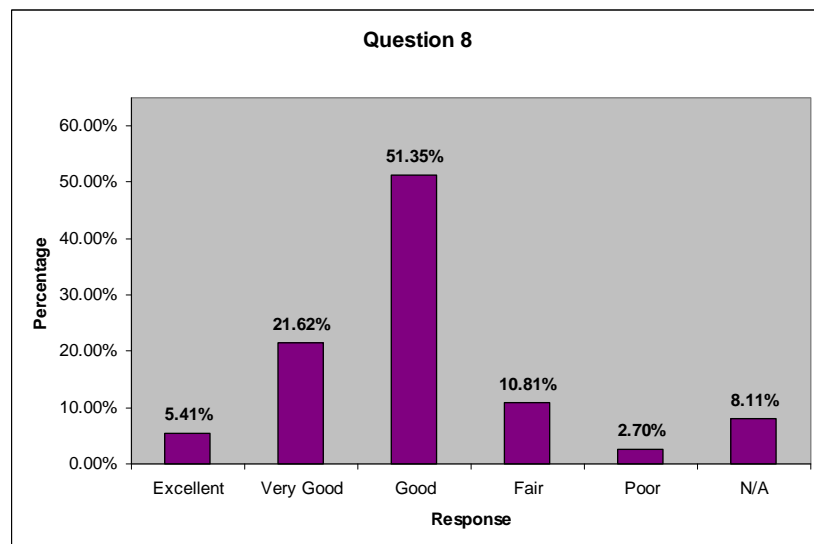
**Question 7**

*How useful do you find the graphical displays of data such as Youden diagrams and z-score bar charts?*



**Question 8**

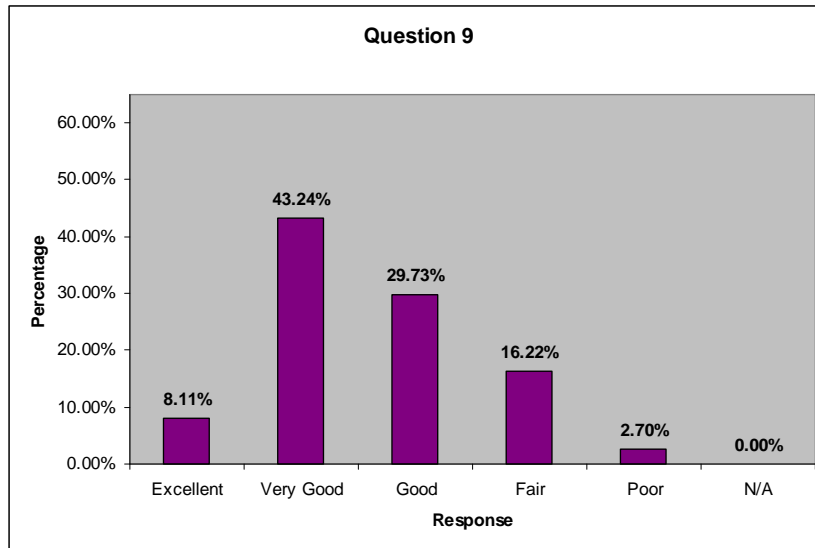
*How useful do you find the reference document "Guide to Proficiency Testing Australia" to interpret the final reports?*



### PART 3 - TECHNICAL VALIDITY

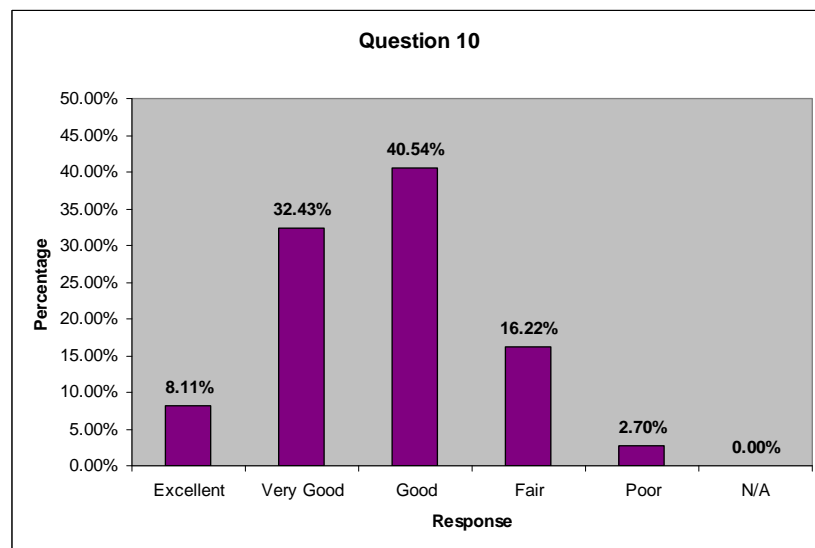
#### Question 9

*How do you rate the selection of determinations in meeting the needs of your laboratory?*



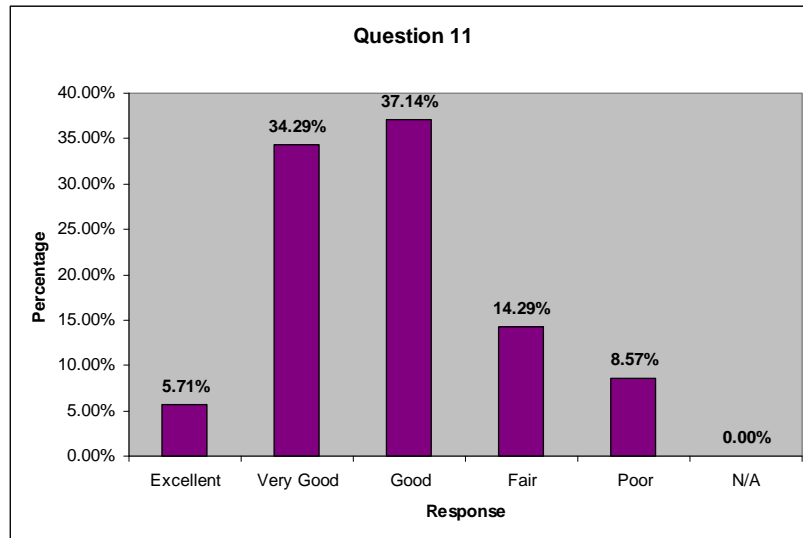
#### Question 10

*How do you rate the concentration levels in meeting the needs of your laboratory?*



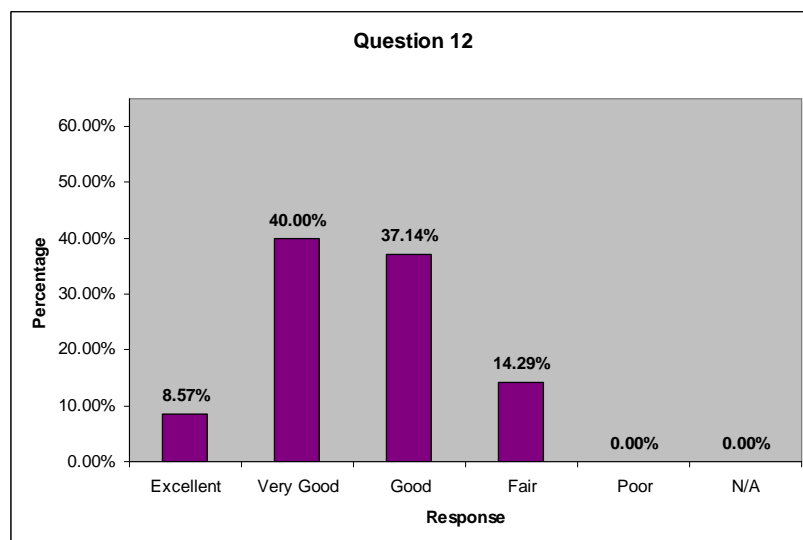
**Question 11**

*How do you rate the types of samples chosen to meet the needs of your laboratory?*



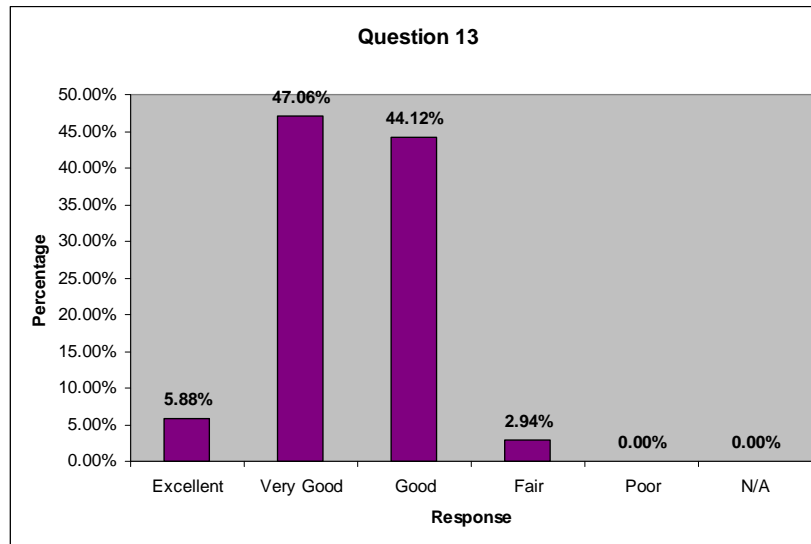
**Question 12**

*How useful and easy to follow are the program instructions and results sheets?*



**Question 13**

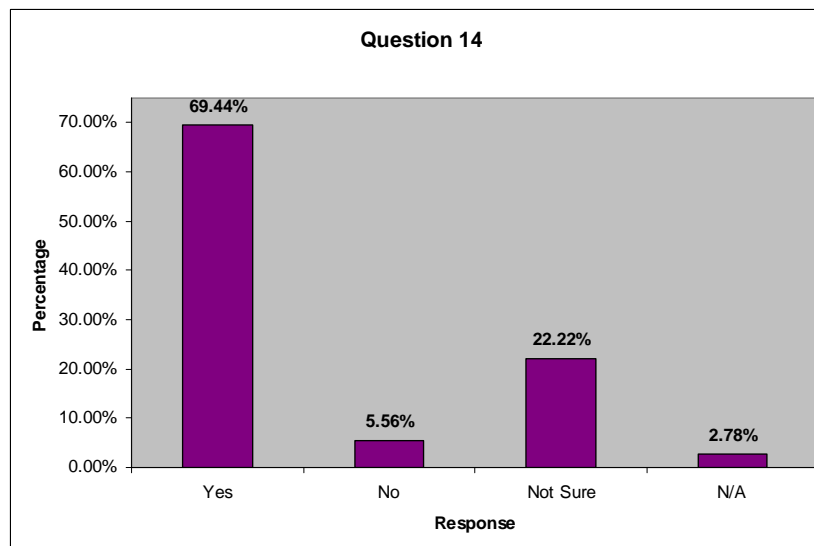
*How do you rate the technical commentaries included in the final report?*



**PART 4 - LABORATORY PERFORMANCE AND FOLLOW UP**

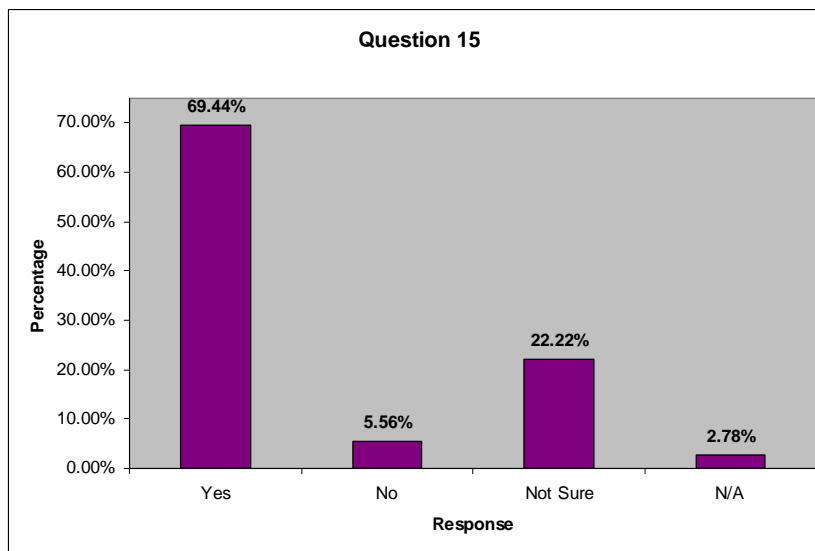
**Question 14**

*Would you be able to explain the range of results reported in a typical program to interested bodies?*



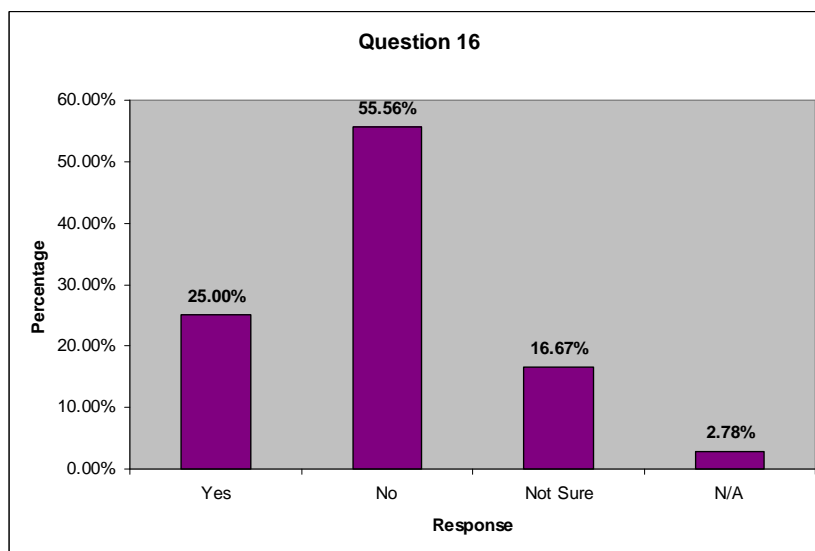
**Question 15**

*Would you have sufficient documentation to support your explanation (for question 14)?*



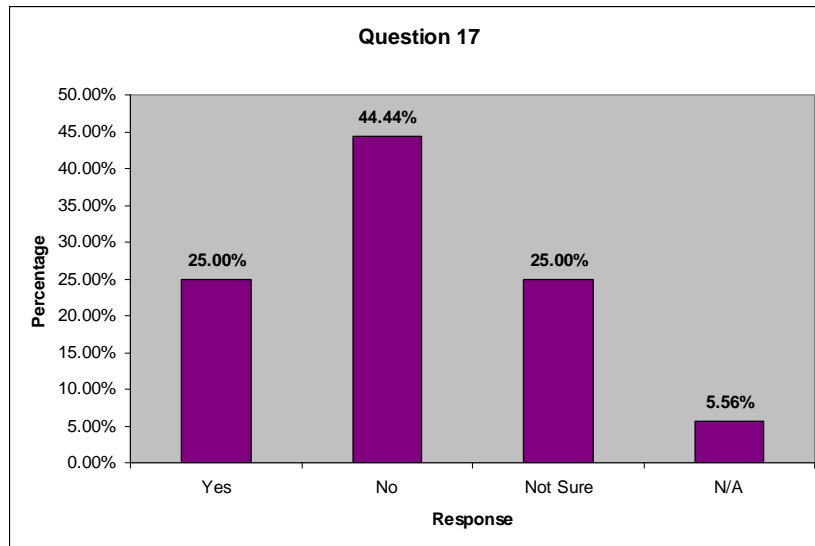
**Question 16**

*Would you be interested in purchasing additional or reference samples for corrective action purposes?*



**Question 17**

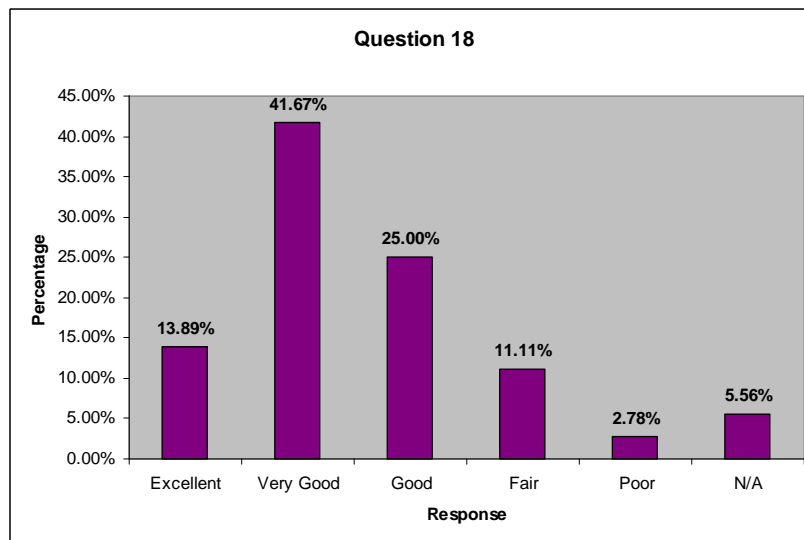
*Would you be interested in having corrective action results analysed?*



**PART 5 GENERAL**

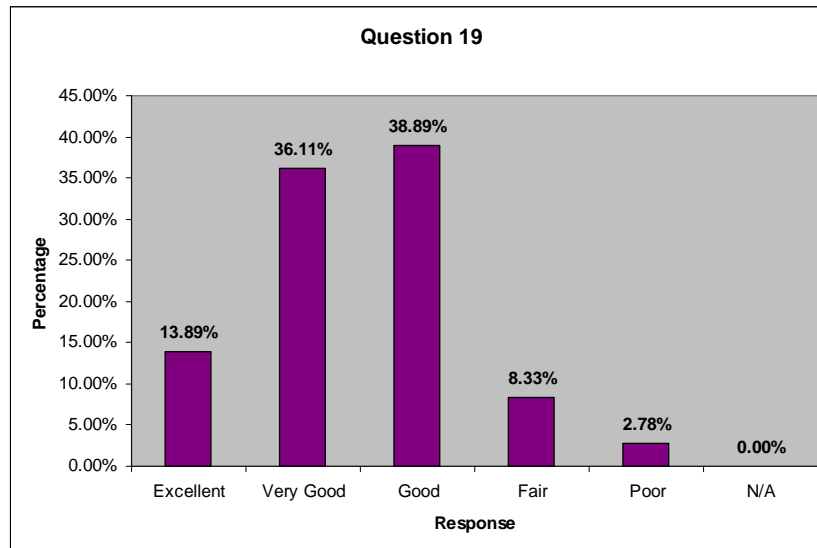
**Question 18**

*How useful have you found the programs in demonstrating your testing performance to other bodies?*



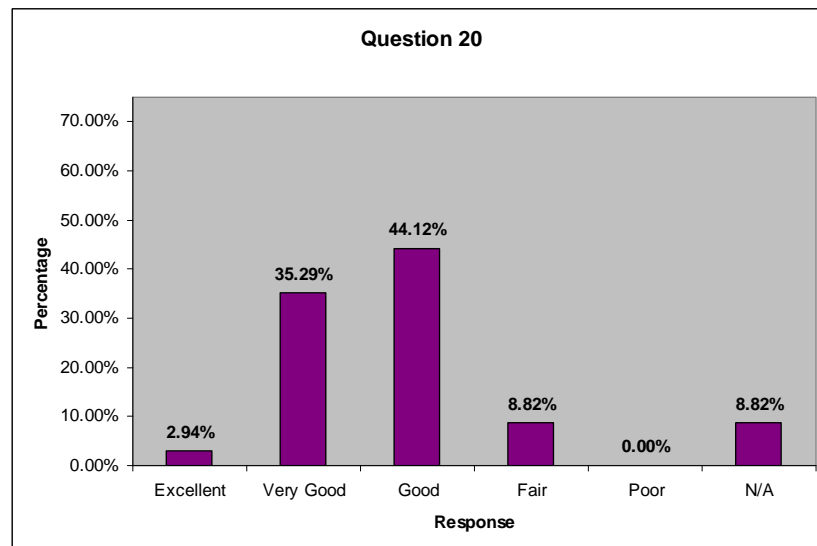
**Question 19**

*How do you rate the frequency of the programs to meet the needs of your laboratory?*



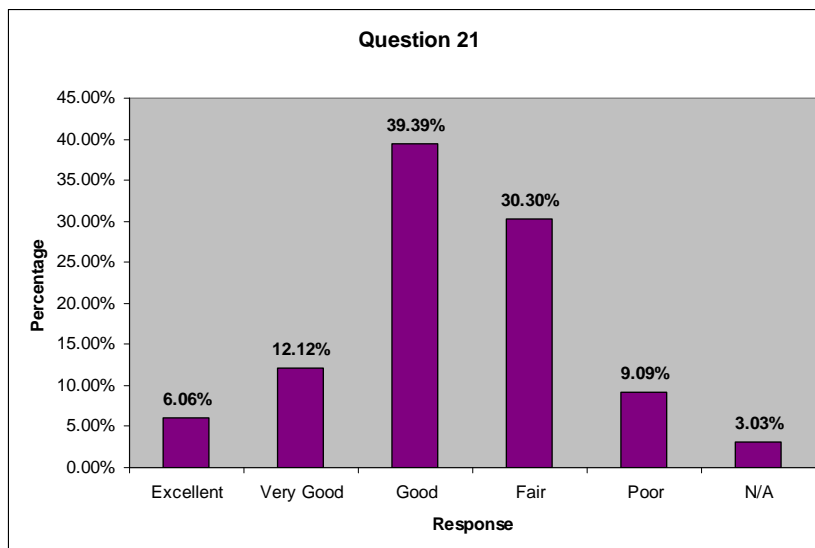
**Question 20**

*How do you rate the information on the PTA website?*



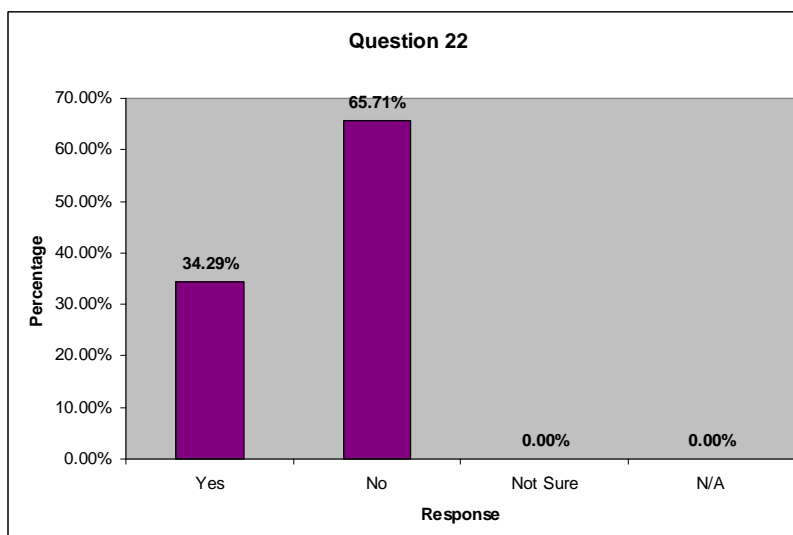
Question 21

*How do you rate these programs for value for money?*



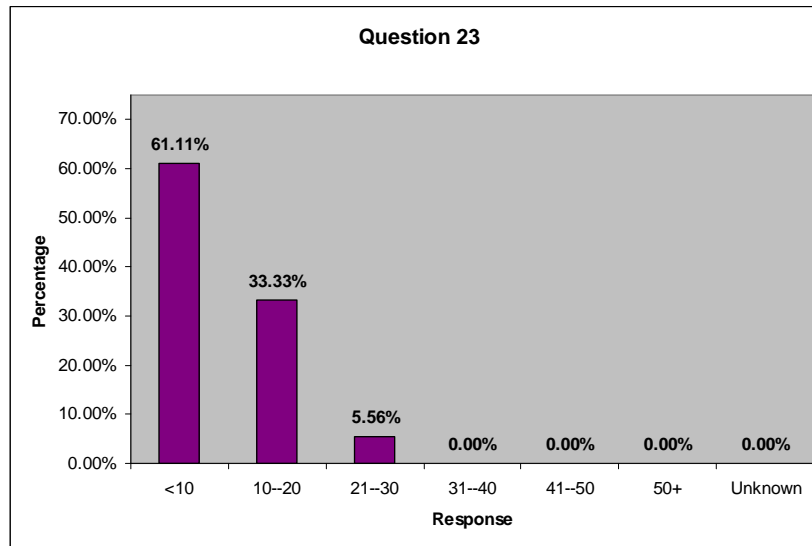
Question 22

*Have you recommended participation in PTA programs to other laboratories?*



### Question 23

*In how many PTA programs has your laboratory participated?*



### Question 24

*Why did your organisation participate in this program? (Note: if participation was to comply with industry regulations, please specify who the regulators are).*

The majority of respondents (84%) indicated that their main reason for participation in the Soils proficiency testing program was to comply with NATA or international standard (i.e. ISO/IEC 17025). Other reasons included:

- Assuring the quality of test results;
- Corrective action purposes;
- To meet organisational requirements; and
- The participant acted as a sample supplier.

### **Customer comments**

Customers were invited to give feedback comments. Feedback topics are summarised below:

- Overlap with other proficiency testing providers.
- Graphs based on raw test results should be supplied.
- Report turn-around-time improving.
- Duplication of tests occurring.
- Laboratories are using in-house methods rather than Australian standards.
- Expensive participation fees.
- Summary sheets provide all the required information.
- Insufficient sample provided, with written requirements to be consistent with the test method.
- The limited diversity of construction material testing programs.

The feedback provided will be considered when planning for upcoming Construction Material Testing programs.

### **Identification of laboratories**

There was an optional section at the end of the questionnaire where laboratories could identify themselves. A total of 24 of the 37 respondents (65%) chose to identify themselves. The remainder preferred to stay anonymous.

### **Discussion**

Customer satisfaction with the PTA Soils program appears to fall within the “good” to “very good” categories.

An area for improvement was noted in Question 4 (*How would you rate the timeliness of the issue of the final reports?*). Whilst the majority of participants indicated their response as “very good” and “good,” a significant number indicated their response as “fair” (28%). This area has been a targeted area of improvement for some time in PTA. PTA had altered its procedure to try to address this area, in the distribution of summary sheets to participants prior to the issue of the final report, allowing participants to obtain information on their performance.

Regarding Questions 9 (*How do you rate the selection of determinations in meeting the needs of your laboratory?*), 10 (*How do you rate the concentration levels in meeting the needs of your laboratory?*), 11 (*How do you rate the types of samples chosen to meet the needs of your laboratory?*) and 12 (*How useful and easy to follow are the program instructions and results sheets?*), a number of participants indicated their response as fair (14.29% - 16.22%). In the planning for proficiency testing rounds, PTA, in consultation with Technical Advisors and suppliers, endeavour to ensure that the types of samples, the determinations and the concentration levels are relevant to industry practice and meet the requirements for the majority of participants. Unfortunately, due to the variety in testing performed in some industries, it is impossible to meet all the proficiency testing needs for every laboratory. PTA will continue to endeavour to produce programs that are beneficial to participants and satisfy their proficiency testing requirements. Instructions and Results sheets will continue to be reviewed for technical content and ease of use.

Regarding Question 21 (*How do you rate these programs for value for money?*), the majority of participants indicated their response as “good”, however, a significant number indicated their response as “fair” (30%). PTA aims to meet the requirements of Australian laboratories for the provision of appropriate, comprehensive and regular proficiency testing programs. Offering such variety in a proficiency testing program increases the cost of production of the samples, pre-testing, shipping and data analysis. PTA operates programs on an independent not-for-profit basis, with the participation fee set to allow the program to be self-supporting.

## Action Plan

An Action Plan has been draw up by PTA management to improve areas where substantial percentages of response were received in the “Fair” to “Poor” categories, or where potential improvements are identified.

- Action 1 – Report turn-around-times will continue to be closely monitored by PTA management as a key performance objective. In-house systems have been put in place in response to this issue, and will continue to be developed.
- Action 2 – PTA will review the frequency of the Soils program to potentially add an additional round over the next 12 month period. This will provide a greater level of coverage and frequency of determinations.

# APPENDIX 1



# PROFICIENCY TESTING AUSTRALIA

## SOILS PROFICIENCY TESTING QUESTIONNAIRE

Please return the questionnaire no later than **Friday 19 March 2010** to:

Frances Ward  
 Quality - Business Development Manager  
 Proficiency Testing Australia  
 PO Box 7507  
 SILVERWATER NSW 2128  
 Fax: (02) 9743 6664  
 Phone: (02) 9736 8397

<b>PART 1 ORGANISATION</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Question 1 Based on your past participation, how do you rate the overall quality of these programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Question 2 How useful is the program registration process in nominating your participation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Question 3 How would you rate your sample receipt based on the advised program schedule?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Question 4 How would you rate the timeliness of the issue of the final reports?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PART 2 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Question 5 How would you rate the content of the reports in providing your laboratory with an evaluation of your testing performance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Question 6 How useful are the individual summary sheets provided with the final reports?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Question 7 How useful do you find the graphical displays of data such as Youden diagrams and z-score bar charts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Question 8 How useful do you find the reference document "Guide to Proficiency Testing Australia" to interpret the final reports?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PART 3 TECHNICAL VALIDITY</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Question 9 How do you rate the selection of determinations in meeting the needs of your laboratory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Question 10 How do you rate the concentration levels in meeting the needs of your laboratory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Question 11 How do you rate the types of samples chosen to meet the needs of your laboratory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Question 12 How useful and easy to follow are the program instructions and results sheets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 13 How do you rate the technical commentaries included in the final report?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**PART 4 LABORATORY PERFORMANCE AND FOLLOW UP**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Question 14 Would you be able to explain the range of results reported in a typical program to interested bodies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 15 Would you have sufficient documentation to support your explanation (for question 14)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 16 Would you be interested in purchasing additional or reference samples for corrective action purposes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 17 Would you be interested in having corrective action results analysed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**PART 5 GENERAL**

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Question 18 How useful have you found the programs in demonstrating your testing performance to other bodies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 19 How do you rate the frequency of the programs to meet the needs of your laboratory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 20 How do you rate the information on the PTA website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Question 21 How do you rate these programs for value for money?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Question 22 Have you recommended participation in PTA programs to other laboratories?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<b>&lt;10</b>	<b>10-20</b>	<b>21-30</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>50+</b>
Question 23 In how many PTA programs has your laboratory participated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 24  
Why did your organisation participate in this program? (Note: if participation was to comply with industry regulations, please specify who the regulators are) \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER COMMENTS (Attach extra page if necessary)**

**OPTIONAL**

**Laboratory details:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_