



Liverpool Plains Shire Council

Special Rate Variation Research

Prepared by: Micromex Research

Date: December 2013





Background



Background & Objective

Background

Liverpool Plains Shire Council is facing the challenge of balancing community expectations with future financial sustainability, and as such has determined that it needs to apply for a Special Rate Variation in order to fund future services, facilities, programs and initiatives for its residents.

Research Objectives

As part of the application process, Liverpool Plains Shire Council requested Micromex Research conduct a robust community research survey in order to:

1. Measure community support for the introduction of a special rate levy
2. Provide an avenue for feedback in order for residents to express their views on the proposed SRV



Interviewing & Sample Size Implications

Interviewing

A random telephone survey of 200 residents was conducted from 2nd to 5th December 2013.

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with IQCA (Interviewer Quality Control Australia) Standards and the Market Research Society Code of Professional Conduct.

Sampling Size Implication

A random community sample size of 200 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 6.93% at 95% confidence.

This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of n=200 Liverpool Plains Shire residents, 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 6.93%.

Therefore, the research findings documented in this report should be interpreted by Liverpool Plains Shire Council and IPART as not just the opinions of 200 residents, but as an accurate and robust measure of the entire Liverpool Plains Shire Council community's attitudes.

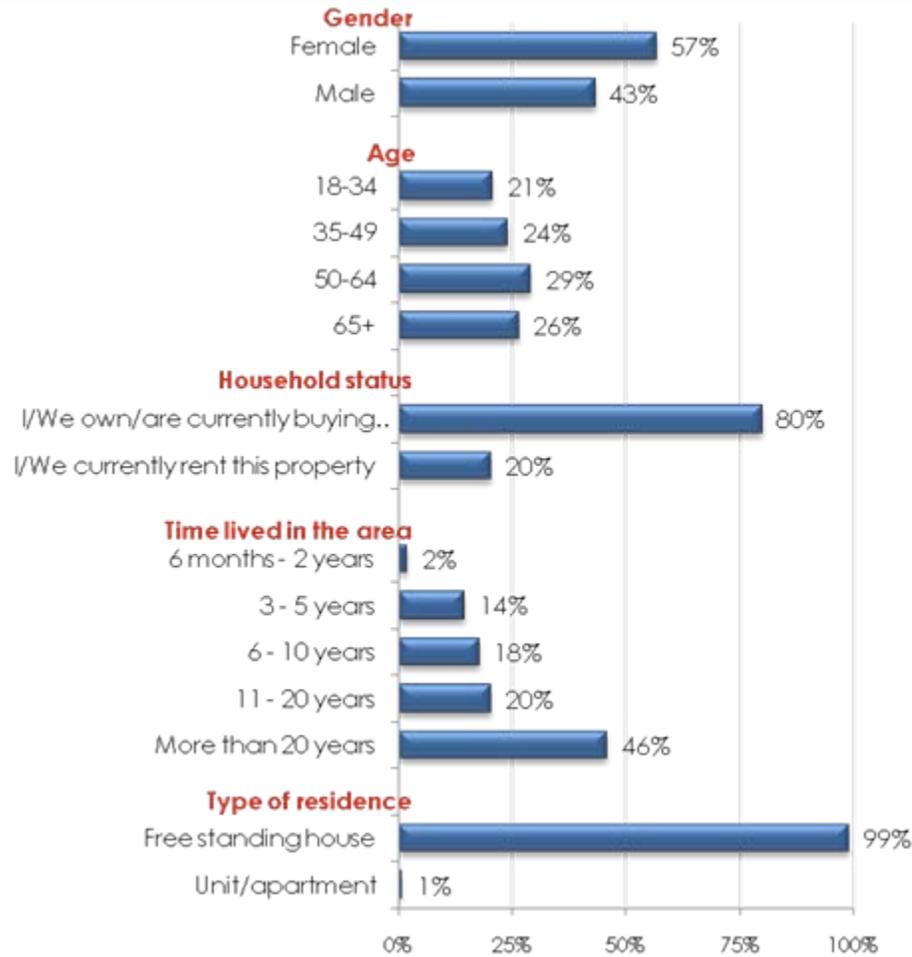
- The questionnaire, of approximately 10 minutes in duration, was designed to establish current attitudes and explore community response to the proposed resource strategies

Questionnaire Structure

- QA. Before we start, I would like to check whether you work for Liverpool Plains Shire Council?
- QB. Please stop me when I read out your age bracket.
- QC. How long have you lived in the Liverpool Plains Shire Council area?
- QD. In which area of the Shire do you live?
- Q1. How satisfied are you with the quality of local infrastructure currently being provided by Council in your local area?
- Q2. How satisfied are you with the quality of long term planning for local infrastructure being provided by Council?
- Q3. How important do you believe it is for Council to implement plans and programs that will maintain/renew community infrastructure in the Liverpool Plains Shire Council area?
- Q4. Are you aware of the existing Special Rate Variation of 6.5% that is included in your rates?
- READ CONCEPT
- Q5a. How supportive are you of continuing the current 6.5% rate increase?
- Q5b. Why do you say that?
- READ CONCEPT
- Q6a. How supportive are you of Council increasing rates by 19% (includes the 6.5%) to fund additional road and community infrastructure?
- Q6b. Why do you say that?
- Q7. Which of the following best describes the house where you are currently living?
- Q8. Do you live in a:
- Q9. Gender.



Sample Profile



Base: 200

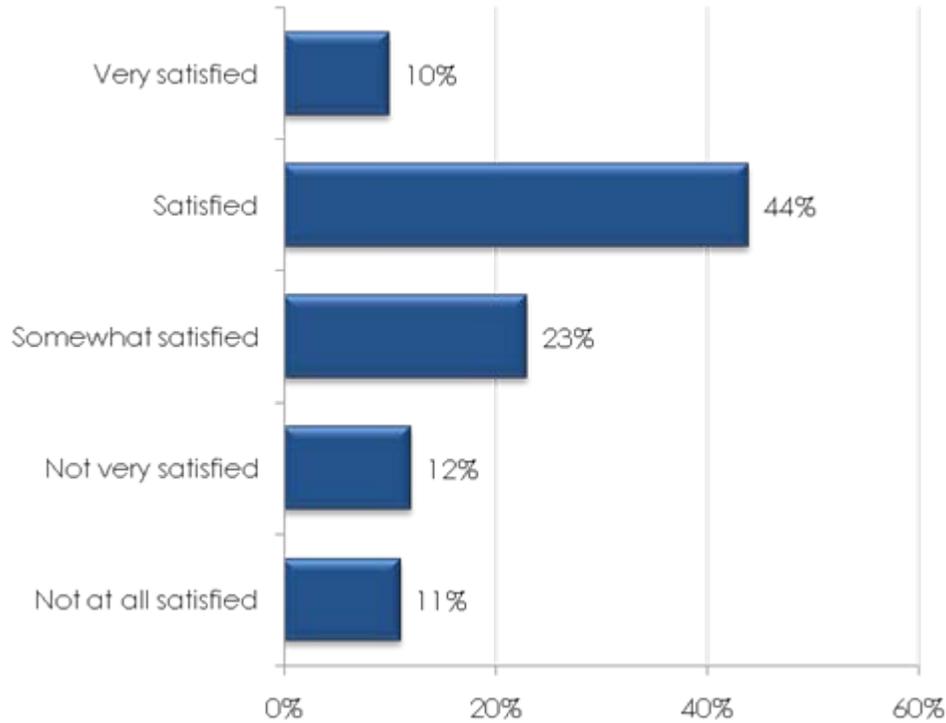
The sample has been weighted to reflect ABS Census data



Key Findings

77% Were At Least Somewhat Satisfied With The Quality Of Local Infrastructure

Q1. How satisfied are you with the quality of local infrastructure currently being provided by Council in your local area?



Mean ratings	Male	Female	Own	Rent
	3.30	3.31	3.20	3.78
Overall: 3.31				
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	3.58	3.29	3.06	3.39

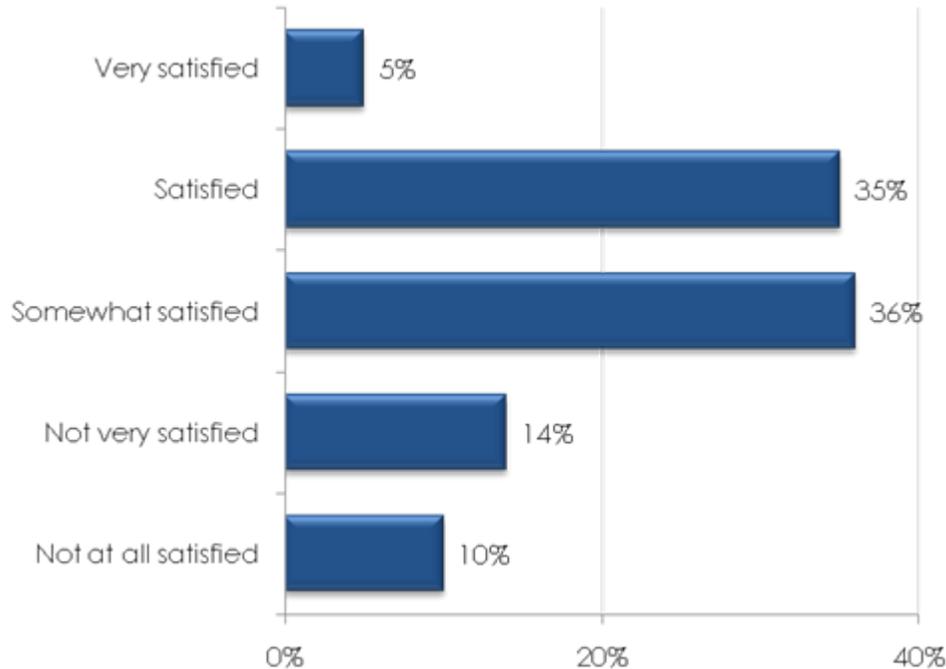
Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

Base: 200

Ratepayers have lower levels of satisfaction than do renters

76% Were At Least Somewhat Satisfied With The Quality Of Long Term Planning For Local Infrastructure

Q2. How satisfied are you with the quality of long term planning for local infrastructure being provided by Council?



Mean ratings	Male	Female	Own	Rent
	3.10	3.11	3.02	3.46
Overall: 3.10				
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	3.00	3.13	3.11	3.15

Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

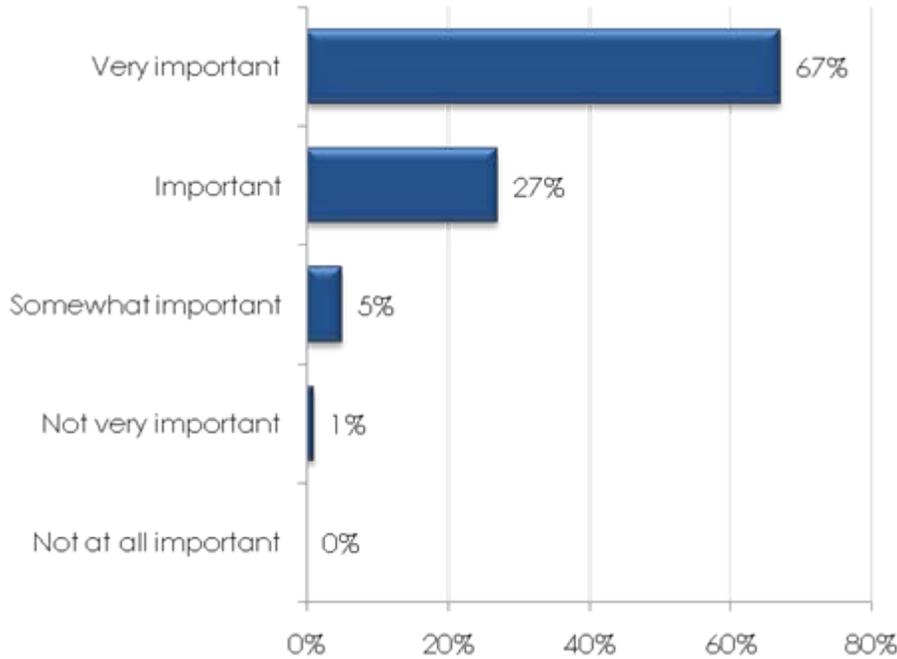
Base: 200

Almost ¼ of residents indicated dissatisfaction with Council's long term infrastructure planning



94% Indicated It Is Important For Council To Implement Plans And Programs That Will Maintain/Renew Community Infrastructure

Q3. How important do you believe it is for Council to implement plans and programs that will maintain/renew community infrastructure in the Liverpool Plains Shire Council Area?



Mean ratings	Male	Female	Own	Rent
	4.60	4.61	4.54	4.87
Overall: 4.60				
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	4.42	4.85▲	4.67	4.46

Scale: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important

▲▼ = significantly higher/lower level compared to the overall rating

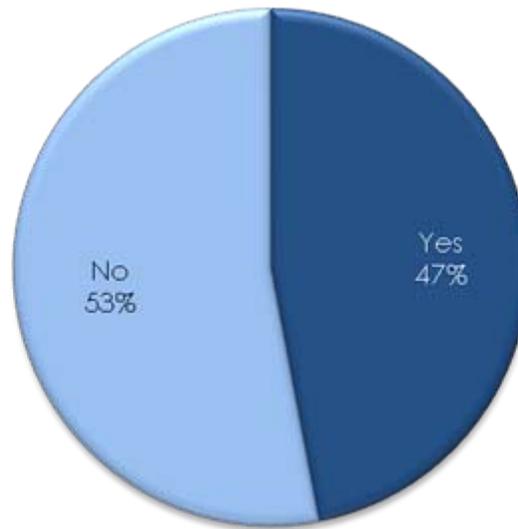
Base: 200



A good indication that residents want things to improve

Almost Half The Residents Are Aware Of The Existing Special Rate Variation Of 6.5%

Q4. Are you aware of the existing Special Rate Variation of 6.5% that is included in your rates?



Base: 200

Read Concept

Council is seeking your support for a Special Rate Variation application it is making to the State Government.

For the past 5 years, Liverpool Plains Shire Council ratepayers have been paying a special rate variation of 6.5% to fund additional road and drainage infrastructure renewal works. The objective with this program is to greatly reduce the backlog of ageing infrastructure without compromising existing services to ratepayers.

Funds collected over the past 5 years have been allocated entirely to road and drainage reconstruction projects and Council wishes to continue levying this 6.5% indefinitely.

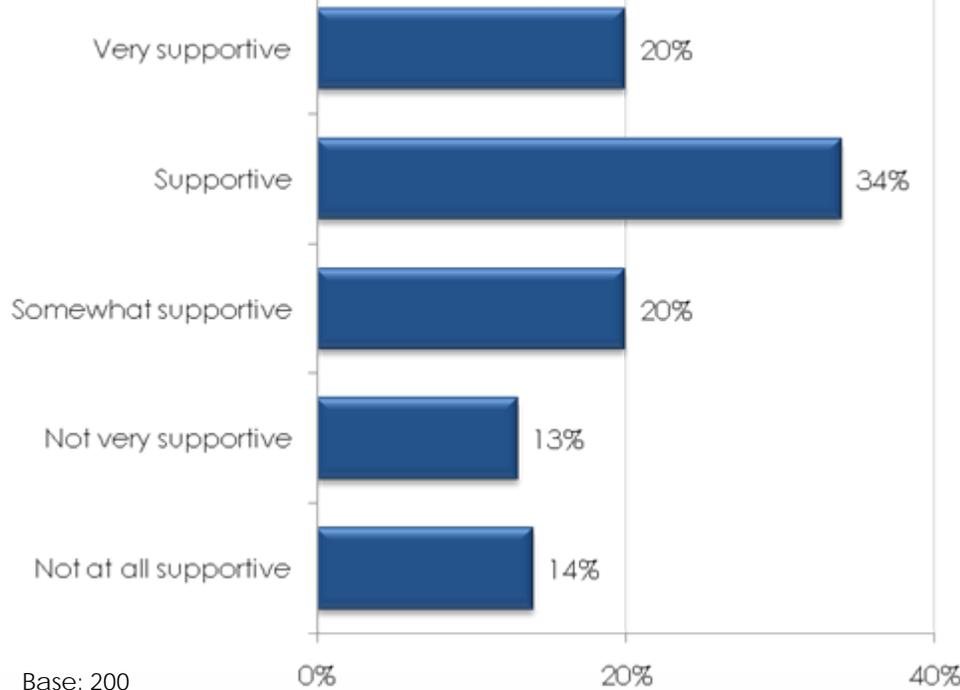
Currently this levy is approximately \$35 per year to the average rate paying household, however, it will expire at the end of this financial year in June 2014. If this levy is not continued, residential rates would decrease by an average of \$35 in 2014/15, even with the annual rate pegging increase, estimated at 2.5%.

74% Of Residents Were At Least Somewhat Supportive Of Continuing The Current 6.5% Rate Increase

Q5a. How supportive are you of continuing the current 6.5% rate increase?

Mean ratings	Male	Female	Own	Rent
	3.38	3.29	3.27	3.56
Overall: 3.33				
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	2.83	3.58	3.45	3.34

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = very supportive



Supportive (54%)	
Infrastructure needs to be maintained	13%
Infrastructure needs improvement	12%
It is an affordable increase	9%
Somewhat supportive (20%)	
Haven't seen enough/any improvements from Council	4%
Councils need to ensure funds are spent in the required areas	3%
Infrastructure needs improvement	2%
Happy to continue at the current rate	2%
Not supportive (27%)	
The rate is too high	8%
I have not seen any improvements	6%
Werris Creek has not had any improvements	5%

The feedback from those who were not supportive is that the rate is too high or they haven't noticed any improvements from the 6.5% already in place

Read Concept

In addition to continuing the 6.5% levy, Council is proposing to increase rates a further 12.5% including the annual rate pegging allowance, estimated at 2.5%, making a total special rate variation of 19% or an additional \$103 per annum for the average residential household. It is proposed to make this increase permanent to ensure that Council is financially sustainable into the future and to address required infrastructure maintenance and construction.

Council, over the last 3 years, has had operating losses and requires increased revenue to reduce these deficits and ensure it can fund ongoing services, renew community infrastructure and remain financially sustainable in the long term.

The estimated additional \$1m per annum above the rate pegging limit generated from this proposed special rate increase will be spent entirely on road upgrades and community infrastructure.

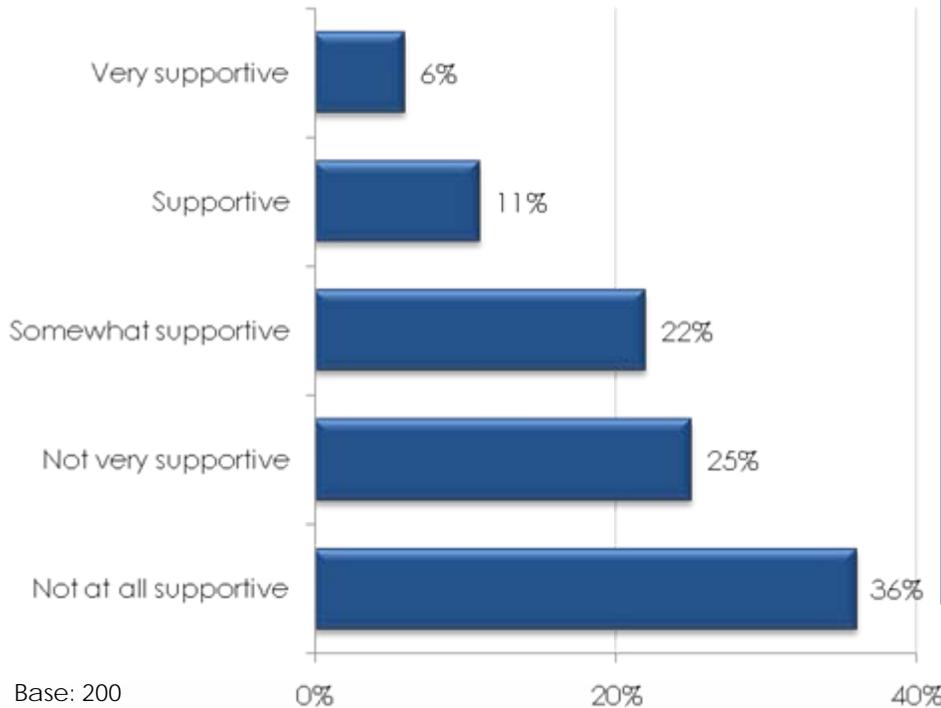
The purpose of this proposed increase is to ensure the future financial sustainability of the Council and to ensure that Liverpool Plains remains a great place to live.

Just Under 40% Were At Least Somewhat Supportive Of The 19% Increase

Q6a. How supportive are you of Council increasing rates by 19% (includes the 6.5%) to fund additional road and community infrastructure?

Mean ratings	Male	Female	Own	Rent
	2.24	2.28	2.14	2.70
Overall: 2.26				
Mean ratings	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	2.08	2.38	2.15	2.41

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = very supportive



Supportive (17%)	
Council need the additional funds to enhance the community	6%
Roads need improvement	5%
Somewhat supportive (22%)	
Increase is too high	8%
Infrastructure needs improvement	2%
Not supportive (61%)	
Increase is too high	26%
Have not seen enough/any improvements from the current rates	6%
Council mismanages funds	5%
Funds are currently not being distributed to areas in need	4%

The predominant reason residents gave for lack of support was the amount of the increase



Conclusion

Residents indicated they believe it is extremely important for Council to continue to improve facilities and services.

As such, it is of little surprise that residents are generally supportive of continuing the current 6.5% rate variation.

- 74% of residents were at least 'somewhat supportive' of Liverpool Plains Shire Council continuing the Special Rate Variation

The scale of the increase under the 19% option was a challenge for residents

- 39% of residents were 'somewhat supportive of Liverpool Plains Shire Council proceeding with the increased Special Rate Variation
- 61% of residents were 'not very' to 'not at all' supportive of Liverpool Plains Shire Council proceeding with the 19% increase

micromex research

The logo features the word "micromex" in a bold, black, lowercase sans-serif font. The letter "o" is replaced by a stylized compass rose with a red needle pointing upwards. Below "micromex", the word "research" is written in a smaller, grey, lowercase sans-serif font.

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