

14 LOCAL COUNCILS NOTIFY INTENTION TO VARY RATES

14 councils across NSW have notified the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of their intention to apply for a special variation to increase their general income above the rate peg in 2019-20.

Councils were asked to notify IPART by 30 November 2018. They have until 11 February 2019 to consult with their communities and submit their applications for a special variation increase.

The councils lodging notifications include seven from the Sydney metropolitan area and seven from rural and regional NSW.

The Sydney councils are Burwood, Camden, Hunters Hill, Ku-ring-gai, North Sydney, Randwick and Sutherland.

The regional and rural councils are Dungog, Kiama, Lithgow, Muswellbrook, Port Stephens, Richmond Valley, and Tamworth.

Special variations are the mechanism for councils to use if they want to increase their general income by more than the rate peg to fund items such as infrastructure or additional services, or to improve their financial sustainability.

Under the rate peg, all NSW councils are eligible to increase general income from rates by up to 2.7% in 2019-20 upon a vote by the elected Councillors. Councils seeking a larger increase must consult with their communities and seek IPART approval, before they are able to adopt higher rates.

IPART will begin assessing the applications against criteria set out in the Office of Local Government's guidelines from February 2019. These criteria include demonstrating the need for the additional income, evidence of adequate community awareness and an assessment of the reasonableness of the increase and impact on ratepayers.

Ratepayers and other stakeholders can have their say by contacting their council or lodging a submission to IPART. IPART will be accepting submissions from 11 February 2019.

Details about each council's proposal should be available from the council.

Full details about 2019-20 special variations, including how to make a submission to IPART, may be found on IPART's website www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.