



Special Variation Application Form Part B

Enter name of the council here

Application Form

2026-27

Local Government »

Acknowledgment of Country

IPART acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders both past and present.

We recognise the unique cultural and spiritual relationship and celebrate the contributions of First Nations peoples.

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The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

IPART's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Further information on IPART can be obtained from [IPART's website](#).

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Council Information

Please fill out the table below.

Council name	Central Coast Council
Date submitted to IPART	28 January 2026

1 About this application form

This application form is to be completed by councils applying for a special variation (SV) to general income for 2026-27 under section 508(2) or 508A of the *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act). The application form is in two parts:

1. Application Form [Part A](#) (separate Excel spreadsheet)
2. Special Variation Application Form Part B (this MS Word document)

The SV Application Form Part B collects:

- Description and Context information for the SV
- Evidence against:
 - Criterion 1: Need for the variation
 - Criterion 2: Community awareness and engagement
 - Criterion 3: Impact on ratepayers
 - Criterion 4: Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) documents
 - Criterion 5: Productivity improvements and cost containment strategies
 - Criterion 6: Other relevant matters
- Council certification and contact information

It also provides a List of attachments and checklist to assist councils.

When completing this Application Form, councils should refer to:

- The 'Apply for a SV or minimum rates (MR) increase' page of IPART's [website](#)
- The Office of Local Government (OLG) [Guidelines](#) issued in November 2020
- IPART's SV Guidance Booklet – *Special Variations: How to prepare and apply* available on our [website](#).

We encourage Councils to contact IPART early in their preparation to apply, or potentially apply, for an SV.

2 Description and Context

These questions seek information not tied to a specific criterion in the OLG guidelines.

Question 1: What type and size of SV is the council is applying for?

In Table 1, please use the checkboxes to indicate the type of SV the council is applying for. In Table 2, please provide, rounded to **1 decimal place**, unless otherwise specified in Table 3:

- the total percentage increase (including the rate peg) and,
- for a section 508A SV, the cumulative percentage increase over the SV period.

The percentage increases applied for should match any percentages specified in the council resolution to apply for an SV. That is, the council resolution should be specified to 1 decimal place unless the council specifically wants a different number of decimal places.

Should an SV be approved, the instrument will list the approved percentage(s) and the maximum permitted cumulative increase. If the cumulative increase is not specified in the council resolution, we will use 1 decimal place unless a different number of decimal places is specifically requested in Table 3.

If applying for a Crown Land Adjustment (CLA), please **do not** include the CLA percentage in Table 2. Information about CLAs is collected in Question 2 below.

In Table 3, please explain if the council would like its instrument issued to a different number of decimal places and if it has used an assumed rate peg that is not 2.5%.

Our [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) has an example of these questions completed.

Table 1 Type of special variation

What type of SV is this application for?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Section 508(2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Section 508A	
Are you applying for Permanent or Temporary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permanent	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary	<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent + Temporary

Table 2 The council's proposed special variation

	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33
Is this year in the SV period?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Percentage increase	12.8% inc. rate peg						
Rate peg	3.2%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%

	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33
Cumulative percentage increase over the SV period for s 508A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Indicate which years are permanent or temporary	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent

Table 3 Further questions

Question	The council's response
Does the council wish its potential SV instrument to be issued with a different number of decimal places?	No
If the council used an assumed rate peg that is not 2.5%, please briefly justify why it did so.	Council's current adopted Long Term Financial Plan (June 2025) has a rate peg assumption of 3.5% based on the change in rate peg methodology since 2024-25. Historically the BCC for 2024/25 was 3.9% and 3.6% for 2025/26.

Question 2: Is the council applying for a Crown Land Adjustment (CLA) in 2026-27?

Please fill out the table below if the council is also applying for a CLA, otherwise leave it blank.

Is the council also applying for a CLA?	No
If so, by what percentage?	X.X%
What is the dollar (\$) value for the CLA?	\$Click to enter amount
Who was the prior owner of the Crown Land?	Click or tap here to enter text.
Briefly outline the reason for the land becoming rateable.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Question 3: What is the key purpose of the requested SV?

In the text box below please summarise the key purpose(s) of the proposed SV.

Since establishment of Central Coast Council, a stormwater drainage service charge has been levied on most properties in the Council area. This charge has been levied via the *Water Management Act 2000* (WM Act) and regulated by IPART. The income generated from this charge is in the order of \$22M (estimated as at 2026/27, indexed each year). This charge provides funding for stormwater drainage services including floodplain risk management planning, asset planning, maintenance, and capital construction.

In the 2022 Determination of Water, Sewer and Stormwater Drainage, IPART resolved that they would not support the Stormwater Drainage Charge being levied under the WM Act beyond the current determination period ending 30 June 2026, and that this income would be better generated under the Local Government Act rating system. Subsequent legislative changes confirmed that Council would no longer be able to levy a Stormwater Drainage Charge under the WM Act, requiring Council to replace this income under the *Local Government Act* (LG Act), effective from 1 July 2026.

To maintain current funding for essential stormwater drainage services without adversely impacting service levels in other areas, Council proposes to apply a Drainage Charge to the rate notice under the *Local Government Act 1993* for ratepayers who currently pay the charge.

In accordance with s.508(2) of the LG Act, Council needs to apply to IPART for a Special Variation (SV) to increase Council's general income to accommodate the amount required to replace the revenue previously generated through the WM Act.

It is to be noted that Council will **not** receive additional income through the proposed increase to general income as defined in the LG Act and would simply maintain income levels. There is no proposed increase in rating income above the rate-pegging, and the income that is proposed to be levied via a Drainage Charge under the LG Act is at the same level that would have been generated through a Stormwater Drainage Charge under the WM Act.

The SV application process is the only mechanism available to Council to transfer the same income previously generated under the WM Act to being generated under the LG Act.

Council's reason for submitting the SV application reflects a unique situation and it would be considered appropriate that this is considered as important context to the various responses in this SV application.

Question 4: Is the council proposing to increase minimum rates in conjunction with the special variation?

Complete Table 4 if the council proposes to increase minimum ordinary rates and/or Table 5 if the council proposes to increase special rates in conjunction with the SV for 2026-27. Otherwise, leave it blank. IPART will also use data provided in Application Form [Part A](#) to understand the details of the proposed SV and minimum amounts of rates.

In some situations, a minimum rates increase will be subject to IPART approval. In these cases, councils will need to also complete *Minimum Rate Increase Application Form Part B 2026-27* (Word document) available on our [website](#). Please see Table 2.4 of the [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) for further information on when an additional MR increase application may be required. Councils do not need to submit another Application form Part A (Excel document).

Table 4 Minimum rates increase for ordinary rates

Does the council have an ordinary rate(s) subject to a minimum amount?	Yes
Does the council propose to increase the minimum rate(s) above the statutory limit for the first time? (If yes, you must complete a separate minimum rate increase application form.)	No
Does the council propose to increase the minimum rate(s) above the proposed SV percentage(s)? (If yes, you must complete a separate minimum rate increase application form, even if the council has been approved to increase its minimum rate above the statutory limit in the past.)	No
Has the council submitted an application for a minimum rate increase?	No

In the text box below, provide the council's proposed minimum rates increase (both in percentage and dollar terms) and to which rating category (or sub-category) the increase is to apply for each year (this can be in table form).

N/A

Worksheets 4, 5 and 7 (WS 4, 5 and 7) of the [Part A](#) application form collects more detailed information about the proposed minimum rates increase.

Table 5 Minimum rates increase for special rates

Does the council propose to increase the minimum amount of a special rate above the statutory limit?	No
What will the minimum amount of the special rate(s) be after the proposed increase?	\$Click to enter amount
Has the council submitted an application for a minimum rate increase?	No

The council must ensure that it has submitted [MR Increase Application Form Part B](#), if required. No separate Part A is required.

Question 5: Does the council have an expiring SV?

Complete the table below if the council has a temporary SV which is due to expire:

- on 30 June 2026, or
- at the end of any year in the period the requested SV would apply.

To calculate the amount to be removed from general income when the SV expires, councils must follow the terms of the relevant condition in the SV instrument. Councils may find the example in Attachment 1 to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) useful. The OLG's SV Guidelines also specify that councils must contact the OLG to confirm the calculation of this amount.

Does the council have an SV which is due to expire on 30 June 2026?	No
Does the council have one or more SV/s due to expire during the proposed SV period?	Yes
If Yes to either question: a. When does the SV expire?	30 June 2031
b. What is the percentage to be removed from the council's general income?	15%
c. What is the dollar amount to be removed from the council's general income?	Current estimate is \$30,955,028 based on a rate peg assumption of 3.5% from 2027-28 to 2030-31.

Has OLG confirmed the calculation of the amount to be removed?	SV expires 30 June 2031. The methodology Council is using to forecast the dollar amount to be removed from Council's general income has been confirmed by OLG.
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Attachments required:

- Instrument(s) approving any SV which expires at 30 June 2026 or during the period covered by the proposed SV. **Attachment 2 CC 2022-23 Instrument Temporary Special Variation 508(2)**
- OLG advice confirming calculation of the dollar amount to be removed from general income as a result of the expiring SV. **Attachment 3 CCC Review of estimates of Special Variation expiry**

Question 6: Does the council have an existing (ongoing) section 508A special variation which applies in 2026-27?

Complete this question if the council has an existing section 508A multi-year SV instrument which approves an increase to general income above the rate peg for 2026-27 and future years within the period covered by the council's SV application.

If the council has an ongoing section 508A SV and is seeking additional changes to general income during the term of that existing SV, IPART will need to vary the original instrument if the application is approved, rather than issuing a separate SV instrument to apply for 2026-27 (or later years).

Does the council have a section 508A multi-year SV instrument that applies in 2026-27?	No
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If yes to the above question, in the text box below:

- Specify the percentage increase(s) and duration of the SV
- Outline the council's actions in complying with conditions in the instrument approving the original SV
- Describe any significant changes relevant to the conditions in the instrument since it was issued.

Supporting documents could include extracts from annual reports or any other publications in which compliance with the terms of the SV has been reported to ratepayers.

Click here to enter text.

Attachments required:

- A declaration by the General Manager as to the council's compliance with the conditions specified in the SV instrument on the council's official letterhead.
- Supporting documents providing evidence of the council's actions to comply with the conditions in the instrument. For example, extracts from annual reports or any other publications in which compliance with the terms of the SV has been reported to ratepayers.

Question 7: Has IPART ever approved a special variation (including additional special variations in 2022-23)?

Complete this question if IPART has ever approved an SV for the council.

You **do not need** to complete the text box for this question if the relevant information has been provided in the council's response to Question 6.

Does the council have a section 508(2) or 508A SV which IPART has approved?	Yes
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If yes, in the text box below, for each SV approved by IPART, briefly:

- Specify the type of SV and the increase to general income approved.
- Outline the council's actions in complying with conditions in the SV instrument(s) or where the council has failed to comply with the conditions, provide reasons and list the corrective actions undertaken.
- Describe any *significant* changes relevant to the conditions in the SV instrument(s) since it was issued.

Supporting documents could include extracts from annual reports (or webpage hyperlinks to them) or any other publications in which compliance with the terms of the SV has been reported to ratepayers.

Under section 508(2) of the Act Council was approved for a 15.0% temporary increase in general income from 2021-22 rating year for 10 years. Council is required to reduce its general income in 2031-32.

Council has reported in its annual reports on the expenditure funded by the additional income. Annual Reports are available on Council's website - [Reporting | Central Coast Council](#)

[2021-22 annual report](#)

[2022-23 annual report](#)

[2023-24 annual report](#)

[2024-25 annual report](#)

Attachments required:

- A declaration by the General Manager as to the council's compliance with the conditions specified in the SV instrument(s). **Attachment 4 CCC Declaration of Compliance**
- Supporting documents providing evidence of the council's actions to comply with the conditions in the instrument(s). For example, extracts from annual reports or any other publications in which compliance with the conditions of the SV instrument has been reported to ratepayers. **Attachment 5 CCC Annual report Extracts 2021-22 to 2024-25**
- If applicable, supporting documents providing evidence of the corrective actions undertaken in the event of a failure to comply with the conditions in the SV instrument(s).

Question 8: Does the council have deferred general income increases available to it?

Complete the question box below if the council has decided not to apply the full percentage increases to general income available to it in one or more previous years under sections 506, 508(2) or 508A of the LG Act.

Does the council have deferred general income increases available to it from one or more previous years under section 511 of the LG Act?	No
If Yes, has the collection of this additional income been included in the Council's Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP)?	

In the text boxes also explain:

a. The quantum, rationale and timing of any deferred increases in general income.

N/A

b. When council plans to catch up on the deferred general income through the catch-up provisions and whether this been included in the LTFP.

N/A.

c. How does this deferred income impact on the council's need for the SV and its cumulative impact on ratepayers' capacity to pay? The council may also wish to further expand on this question in Table 6 in the OLG Criterion 1 section below.

N/A

3 OLG SV Criterion 1 – Financial need

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 3 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and material for completing this section.

In Table 6 below, please explain how the council met each component of Criterion 1. Please also provide a reference to evidence in the IP&R documents.

The [Part A](#) application form also collects information for this criterion in Worksheets 9 (WS 9 - Financial), 10 (WS 10 - LTFP) and 11 (WS 11 - Ratios).

Table 6 OLG Criterion 1 components

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
The need for, and purpose of, a different revenue path for the council's General Fund (as requested through the SV) is clearly articulated and identified in the council's IP&R documents	<p>This SV application seeks to retain the same level of total income achieved through rates and annual charges applicable from 2026/27.</p> <p>An SV application is the only mechanism available to Council to transfer income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge under the WM Act to this income being generated through a Drainage Charge under S501 of the LG Act.</p> <p>In its IP&R documents Council recognised the risk to Council's financial settings arising from the inability to continue to levy the Stormwater Drainage Charge under the WM Act from 2026/27.</p>	Central Coast Council Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035. - Adopted 10 Year LTFP (2025-26 to 2034-35)

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
	<p>Accordingly, in developing the 2025-2029 Delivery program and 10-year Long-Term Financial Plan, Council considered various scenarios reflecting different revenue assumptions and service levels, including retention and loss of income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge.</p> <p>Scenario settings included aggressive targets for efficiencies and income from sources other than rates and annual charges payable by ratepayers.</p> <p>As demonstrated in the various scenarios included within the Long-Term Financial Plan, continued financial sustainability requires retention of the same level of income currently levied from the Stormwater Drainage Charge. This is required to maintain current services and service levels, whilst achieving financial results necessary to remain financially sustainable. Loss of this income would require significant cuts to service levels, in addition to efficiencies and additional income from sources other than rates and charges payable by ratepayers.</p> <p>If Council was required to reduce current services and service levels this would need to include potential service reductions related to stormwater drainage – however the reduction must be carefully considered to ensure it does not generate a non-compliance with regulatory or Australian Standards, cause untenable public safety risks or increase the potential for catastrophic asset failure.</p> <p>Areas where there would be no scope to reduce service levels include dam safety compliance and drainage inspections. The drainage assets portfolio itself is unable to be rationalised due to the critical nature of the function it serves.</p>	

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
	<p>Refer to Attachment A for further details on the impact of service reduction in the Drainage service.</p> <p>As outlined in Part A of the SV application, and as included in the Long-Term Financial Plan, Council also has an expiring SV in 2031/32. This expiring SV carries its own significant risk to financial sustainability.</p> <p>Following exhibition of the draft IP&R document suite, including Long Term Financial Plan, Scenario 2 was adopted which included the retention of income to the value currently levied through the Stormwater Drainage Charge,</p>	
<p>In establishing need for the SV, the relevant IP&R documents should canvass alternatives to the rate rise.</p>	<p>This SV application is not seeking a rate rise above rate pegging.</p> <p>This SV application seeks to retain the same level of total income achieved through rates and annual charges applicable from 2026/27.</p> <p>An SV application is the only mechanism available to Council to transfer income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge under the WM Act to this income being generated through a Drainage Charge under S501 of the LG Act.</p> <p>S505 of the LG Act defines <i>general income</i> as income from ordinary rates, special rates and annual charges other than listed charges. Based on this definition, the proposed levying of an annual Drainage Charge under S501 of the LG Act will result in an increase in <i>general income</i>, thereby triggering the need for an SV application to satisfy S506 of the LG Act.</p>	<p>Central Coast Council Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035. - Adopted 10 Year LTFP (2025-26 to 2034-35)</p>

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
	<p>The SV proposal whilst proposing an increase in <i>general income</i> as defined in the LG Act does not increase Council's total income from rates and annual drainage charges received by Council and does not propose to increase the total rates and annual charges payable by ratepayers above the rate pegging.</p> <p>As outlined in the previous response, Council's Long Term Financial Plan includes the scenario whereby Council loses the income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge under the WM Act, and the associated impact to services, and Council's financial sustainability.</p> <p>Council at its meeting on 27 January considered a range of services and service levels that it would need to cut or reduce should the income level generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge not be retained in Council's income.</p> <p>Attachment 6 CCC Council Report SV Application to IPART Stormwater Drainage Charge Transfer</p>	
<p>In demonstrating this need, councils must indicate the financial impact in their LTFP by applying the baseline and special variation scenarios.</p>	<p>The financial impact on Council 's Long Term Financial Plan has been demonstrated through the baseline scenario (Scenario 1). This scenario assumes that no specific actions are taken by Council to change the current trajectory of its operating income and expenditure with income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage charges ceasing on 30 June 2026.</p>	<p>Central Coast Council Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035. - Adopted 10 Year LTFP (2025-26 to 2034-35)</p>

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
	<p>Under this scenario, because of ceasing income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage charges, Council would go into an immediate operating deficit of \$17M commencing in 2026/27, escalating to a deficit of \$29M in 2030/31. The impact on Council's unrestricted cash is a reduction equivalent to the stormwater drainage charge income lost being approximately \$22M cumulative year on year.</p> <p>Scenario's 2, 3a, 3c and 3c are based on the income level generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge being retained in line with this SV application, and the impact on financial results and ongoing sustainability.</p>	
Evidence of community need/desire for service levels/projects and limited council resourcing alternatives.	<p>Development of Council's full IP&R document suit in 2025, provided community feedback regarding expectation of services and infrastructure for the growing region.</p> <p>As part of the SV consultation process, Council tested the appetite for service reduction with the People's Panel. Following consideration of service reduction, the overall vote from the panel was to retain service levels and make the SV application. Details of the People's Panel engagement outcome is provided in the Community Engagement Report.</p>	Community Strategic Plan

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
Evidence could also include the analysis of the council's financial sustainability conducted by Government agencies	<p>The financial sustainability of councils in NSW has historically been assessed based on a set of Performance Measurement Indicators (financial benchmarks) set by the Office of Local Government and reported in the annual Financial Statements. These indicators assess financial sustainability based on operating results, operational liquidity, liability and debt management and infrastructure assets performance. Council's Long Term Financial Plan includes Council's performance against these indicators under each scenario.</p> <p>Under the baseline scenario (Scenario 1) of not retaining the income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge, Council will not meet all the benchmarks. Most importantly it would not meet the operating performance ratio, which is the key ratio historically used by government agencies to determine councils' financial sustainability.</p>	Central Coast Council Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035. - Adopted 10 Year LTFP (2025-26 to 2034-35)
If applicable, has the council not applied the full percentage increases available to it in one or more previous years under section 511 of the Local Government Act? If a council has a large amount of revenue yet to be caught up over the next several years, it should explain in its application how that impacts on its need for the SV.	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.

3.1 Additional information required for councils with an existing SV applying for an additional percentage increase

If the council has **an existing SV**, then explain the need for **a variation to that SV** to increase the annual percentage increases.

N/A as Council is not applying for a variation to the existing SV.

3.2 Any other factors that demonstrate the council's financial need (optional)

In the text box please give a brief explanation of any other factors not already mentioned that may be relevant to demonstrate the council's need.

For instance, the council may wish to discuss the impact of **non-rateable** properties.

This SV application is **not seeking to increase** Council's income from rates and annual drainage charges, but rather to **retain** this income. Should IPART not approve the amount sought, Council will immediately have a loss in operating income of \$22M annually from 2026/27, indexed each year.

NSW councils have been, and continue to be, required to apply for SV to increase income from rates and annual charges to maintain financial sustainability. There is no evidence of councils that were able to continue to operate after a significant reduction to income levels from rates and charges.

As per the industry financial performance measures, a minimum of 60% reliance on own source operating revenue is required. This is to ensure that Council has a secure recurrent income base that is not at risk of being lost. For Council part of this "secure" income has now become at risk due to a legislative change. This is contrary to the intent of this performance measure.

Council spends in the vicinity of \$29M annually on operating and capital expenditure associated with drainage infrastructure. The loss of income generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge of \$22M cannot be offset by an equivalent reduction in drainage expenditure.

Council applies the income generated through the charge to fund critical stormwater drainage services including floodplain risk management planning, asset planning, maintenance, and capital construction. A reduction in these activities will result in increased public safety risks, increased potential for community disruption / isolation. This is particularly relevant considering the increased incidents and intensity of flooding events impacting the Central Coast. An overview of specific drainage functions and activities and potential service level reductions is included in **Attachment 7 CCC Stormwater drainage service definitions and potential service level reductions**.

Accordingly, the impact of the SV application not being supported by IPART will result in Council being required to reduce various **existing** services and service levels, rather than simply not being able to increase them. This is a very distinct point of difference from the traditional purpose of an SV application submitted by councils.

Central Coast Council is the only council in NSW funded through a separate Stormwater Drainage Charge regulated by IPART. Unlike other NSW councils whereby drainage expenditure is funded through rating income, under the LG Act, Council has historically funded most of this expenditure (\$22M indexed each year) through the Stormwater Charge as determined by IPART, under the WM Act. Some councils have implemented the Stormwater Drainage Charge under S496A of the LG Act, with this charge being fixed at \$25 per residential property. Due to the funding mechanism applicable to Council to date, Council's ordinary rates do not reflect the level of income required to fund essential drainage infrastructure expenditure. By comparison other councils would have funding required for drainage built in the level of their ordinary rates income. This SV proposal seeks to supplement this shortfall in Council's ordinary rates income with the levying of an annual Drainage Charge.

In the 2022 Determination of Water, Sewer and Stormwater Drainage IPART resolved that they would not support the Stormwater Drainage Charge being levied under the Water Management Act 2000 beyond the current determination period ending 30 June 2026.

IPART previously suggested that stormwater services provide benefits to the entire community not just specific customers and therefore should be funded through local government rates like other services that benefit the whole community such as maintaining public parks, roads and bridges. The report contemplated that Council may if needed, *"prepare a special variation application to IPART for any increase to local government rates revenue as a result or introduce a stormwater levy"*

Due to this situation being unique to Central Coast Council, alternative ways of resolving this situation were investigated. Engagement has been undertaken with senior representatives of IPART and the Minister for Local Government (and their office) as part of early consultation on the process and understanding Council's options, including exploring options that may not require a formal SV process.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting of 25 March 2025, Council resolved to write to the Minister for Local Government to request the Minister use their powers under Section 506 of the Local Government Act 1993 to vary Council's income to enable Council to levy a drainage charge under the Local Government Act 1993 from the 1 July 2026.

Council sent a letter to the Minister on 8 April 2025, outlining Council's unique position and requesting assistance with the process. Council received a response from the Minister on 15 September 2025 advising Council is required to apply to IPART for an SV to vary Council's general income.

Council acknowledges that the 2022 IPART Determination of Water, Sewer and Stormwater Drainage noted that *"stormwater services provide benefits to the whole community – not just to the individuals who currently pay stormwater bills. Stormwater services help people move around after heavy rain, for example, to go to the shops and do errands. Therefore, they should be funded through local government rates like other services that benefit the whole community – such as maintaining public parks and sportsgrounds and building roads and bridges"*.

At this time, Council has not taken the approach of applying the proposed stormwater charge to all rate payers, instead we have proposed to simply transfer the charge from one legislation to another applying the same rationale as to where the proposed drainage charge will apply.

This approach is deemed the most appropriate considering various factors:

- The transfer of an annual charge line item from the water bill to a distinct separate line item on the rate notice enables more transparent messaging reflecting the nature of the process being a transfer rather than an increase in the amount payable by the ratepayer.
- New land values based on the land revaluations undertaken by the NSW Valuer General will apply from the 2026/27 rating year. This means that ordinary rates for all ratepayers will change as the distribution of the rates income will be based on relative changes in property land values. Adding changes to ordinary rates arising from inclusion of the Stormwater Drainage income in the rating income would add significant complexity to ratepayers understanding changes to their 2026/27 ordinary rates. Council has no influence on the timing of the land revaluation undertaken by the NSW Valuer General.
- The period after the Minister's response provided limited opportunity to carry out the customary financial modelling and community engagement that would ordinarily accompany an SV based on increased ordinary rates income.

Worksheet 12 (WS 12) in the [Part A](#) Excel application form can also be used to provide additional data.

4 OLG SV Criterion 2 – Community awareness and engagement

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 4 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and materials for completing this section. Please also note that section 4 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) is the IPART fact sheet referred to in the OLG SV Guidelines under Criterion 2 that provides guidance to councils on the community awareness and engagement criterion for special variations.

4.1 How did the council engage with the community about the proposed special variation?

In Table 7 please provide evidence as to how the councils community engagement met Criterion 2.

Table 7 Evidence of the council's community engagement demonstrating Criterion 2

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion	Reference to application supporting documents
Evidence that the community is aware of the need for and extent of a rate rise.	<p>A community consultation campaign was conducted between 31 October 2025 and 11 January 2026, which sought community feedback on the proposal to apply for a Special Variation through IPART to facilitate the transfer the Stormwater Drainage Charge from the water bill to the rate notice.</p> <p>The following channels were utilised to inform community of the proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils Corporate Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) • Your Voice Our Coast – Project engagement page • Coast Connect News – print and online • Website banner and messaging • Direct mail to rate payers. <p>Community were invited to share their feedback by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completing the online submission form • writing to Council via email or post <p>In addition to the above a workshop was conducted with the existing People's Panel that was formed as part of the community engagement for Council's recent Water & Sewer Pricing Submission. The Peoples Panel workshop was held on Wednesday 10 December 2025.</p> <p>As a result of the engagement campaign, Council received a total of 1,313 submissions. 1099 via the online submission form, 193 via email, 5 via post and 16 via the people's panel.</p>	<p>Attachment 8 CCC Communications Report Attachment 9 CCC Community Engagement Report</p>

	The Communications and Community Engagement Reports are attached.	
The council need to communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed SV in percentage terms, and the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer, by rating category.	<p>Councils comprehensive project engagement page included detail of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full cumulative increase of proposed SV in percentage terms <i>"The transfer would result in a cumulative increase to Council's rate income of 12.67% (including 3.2% rate peg)."</i> Dollar and percentage impacts to average rates on each rate category Dollar and percentage impacts to minimum rates on each rate category 	Link to project engagement page: Stormwater Drainage Charge Transfer Your Voice Our Coast
The Delivery Program and LTFP should clearly set out the extent of the General Fund rate rise under the SV, for the average ratepayer, by rating category.	<p>Refer to response in Part 3 Table 6.</p> <p>This SV application is not seeking a rate rise above rate pegging.</p> <p>This SV application seeks to retain the same level of total income achieved through rates and annual charges applicable from 2026/27.</p> <p>An SV application is the only mechanism available to Council to transfer income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge under the WM Act to this income being generated through a Drainage Charge under S501 of the LG Act.</p> <p>The SV proposal does not impact ordinary rates.</p> <p>Accordingly, the average ordinary rates for all rating categories will not change because of the SV proposal.</p> <p>As per previous responses the impact of the stormwater drainage charge is reflected in the various LTFP models.</p>	Central Coast Council Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035. - Adopted 10 Year LTFP (2025-26 to 2034-35)
Council should include an overview of its ongoing efficiency measures and briefly discuss its progress against these measures, in its explanation of the need for the proposed SV.	<p>Specifically, regarding expenditure associated with drainage, Council's costs are prudent and efficient. IPART determined the Stormwater Drainage charges applicable until 30 June 2026, in their Water, Sewer and Drainage Pricing Determination May 2022. IPART's assessment of Council's pricing submission, and the consequent determination, was based on IPART being satisfied that the approved Stormwater Drainage charges reflect prudent and efficient expenditure. The SV proposal is based on transferring the same charge (subject to indexation based on the rate-peg increase).</p> <p>As detailed in previous responses, Council's Long Term Financial Plan includes various scenarios based on different assumptions, with the base scenario reflecting the loss of income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge. Council will not be able to maintain existing service levels whilst remaining financially sustainable. Scenarios 2, 3(a), 3(b) and 3(c) included in the Long-Term Financial Plan demonstrate that aggressive efficiency targets must be met, in addition to retention of the income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge.</p>	

	<p>In its Long-Term Financial Plan Council has included the following efficiency targets being expenditure reduced each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2.2M - 2026/27 • \$2.3M - 2027/28 • \$2.3M - 2028/29 • \$1.7M - 2029/30 • \$1.7M - 2030/31 • \$1.8M - 2031/32 <p>Ongoing at 0.75% of Materials and Services</p> <p>Decreases above are annual further decreases based on the already reduced amount in each previous year</p> <p>As detailed above Council's LTFP commits to significant efficiency targets in each year commencing in 2026/27 resulting in a reduction in operating expenditure which is forecasted as \$12.7M in 2031/32.</p> <p>Some examples of specific efficiency areas/additional revenue include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of commercial property strategy • Investment management strategy • Digital transformation program - In June 2025 Council has commenced a Digital Transformation Program which includes contemporary best practice systems and associated streamlined and efficient business processes. • Corporate services efficiencies (cost increases continue to be less than organisational growth) • Review of legal costs via Councillor working group • Service delivery reviews • Depot master planning (potential to reduce a depot) • DA improvement plan <p>In addition to efficiencies, the LTFP also includes targets for Increased income from sources (other than rates and annual charges) of \$5.7M over 4 years from 2026/27 to 2029/30, escalating to \$6.8M in 2031/32.</p>	
<p>The council's community engagement strategy for the SV must demonstrate an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness and input occur.</p>	<p>Councils project engagement encompassed, multiple communication channels including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) • Your Voice Our Coast – Project engagement page • Coast Connect News – print and online • Website banner and messaging • Direct mail to rate payers • In-person workshop with existing People's Panel. <p>All communications directed audience to the dedicated project engagement page. The Communications Report which provides detail of reach and impact of each communications channel is attached.</p>	<p>Attachment 8 CCC Communications Report</p>

<p>Explain the action, if any, the council took in response to feedback from the community</p>	<p>During the first half of the campaign, additional FAQs were added to the project engagement page in response to community questions received.</p> <p>All enquiries received which included specific questions for response were responded to directly.</p> <p>Of note, many respondents who cited perceived lack of stormwater infrastructure referenced their personal properties, but it is noted the Stormwater Infrastructure network provides broad community benefit and protects shared community assets, not just individual properties.</p> <p>Any further reduction in service provision, which would be required to offset a reduction in Council income should the transfer not occur, would reasonably be expected to exacerbate community dissatisfaction. It is also noted that the People's Panel workshop which involved consideration of potential service cuts, resulted in a majority support of the SV application to avoid any reduction of current services and service levels.</p> <p>Submissions in both support and opposition to the proposal advocated for greater transparency from Council regarding decision making and reporting of overall operational efficiencies. Accordingly, it is prudent that Council enhances transparency in reporting efficiencies being achieved and the measures in place to ensure value for money.</p> <p>While the majority of submissions opposed the proposal, in favour of passing on savings to rate payers, in making this application, Council has considered its ongoing financial sustainability (with evidence provided in this application) as well as community expectations regarding service levels.</p>	<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>
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In the text box below, provide any other details about the council's consultation strategy, timing or materials that were not captured in Table 7.

Council had contact with IPART to ensure our communication and consultation approach was appropriate.

The percentage calculation is based on the estimated income to be generated from the proposed annual drainage charge divided by the total proposed general income, being income from rates and proposed annual drainage charges.

The 12.67% used for community consultation was based on estimated permissible income as per the 2024-25 audited financial statements, refer to **Attachment 21 CCC 2024-25 Audited Financial Statements** page 128, and 2025-26 budgeted annual drainage charges both increased by Council's rate peg of 3.2%.

The 12.8% in Council's application is based on the latest number of charges billed in quarter 2 of 2025-26, which includes growth in the number of charges billed and the 2025-26 permissible income, both increased by Council's rate peg of 3.2%. The SV percentage has also been rounded to 1 decimal place.

Central Coast Council - Change in rate peg from 12.67% to 12.8%

	Calculation for 12.67%		Calculation for 12.80%		Difference
Total General Rates Levied 2025/26 (Permissible Income)	\$235,615,000	Permissible income as per 2024-25 audited financial statements	\$235,614,143	2025-26 Permissible Income	(\$857)
2026/27 Rate Peg	3.20%		3.20%		
2026/27 Rate Peg Increase	\$7,539,680		\$7,539,653		(\$27)
2026/27 Permissible Notional Yield (General Rates)	\$243,154,680		\$243,153,796		(\$884)
Drainage Charge Income 2025/26	\$21,630,509	2025-26 Budget	\$21,834,614	2025-26 Q2 number of charges billed includes growth	\$204,105
2026/27 Rate Peg	3.20%		3.20%		
2026/27 Rate Peg Increase	\$692,176		\$698,708		\$6,532
Drainage Charge Income 2026/27	\$22,322,685		\$22,533,322		\$210,637
Total Income - General Rates + Drainage 2026/27	\$265,477,365		\$265,687,118		\$209,753
Total Additional Income required including rate peg on rates	\$29,862,365		\$30,072,975		\$210,610
Total Rate Peg for SV application	12.67%	\$ 29,862,365	12.8%	\$ 30,072,975	
Additional % on top of rate-peg on general rates	9.47%	\$ 22,322,685	9.6%	\$ 22,533,322	

The change in the percentage is attributable to the change in the number of annual drainage charges.

The SV application does not propose any changes to rates. The increase to Council's general income is from the transfer of the Stormwater Drainage Charge from the Water Management Act 2000 to an annual Drainage Charge under the Local Government Act 1993. Consequently, the difference between the % increase used for consultation purposes and the % used in the SV application lodged with IPART, does not impact the average rates or drainage charges paid by ratepayers.

4.2 Proposed average rates outlined in the council's community consultation materials

Are the average rates provided in the council's community consultation materials the same as what has been inputted into Table 7.2, Worksheet 7 (WS 7) of the Part A application form?	No
If no, please explain why.	<p>As in previous responses, the average rates per rating category is not impacted by Council's SV application as the application relates to annual charges rather than ordinary rates.</p> <p>Average rates have been calculated using the information from the 2025/26 Operational Plan divided by the number of assessments in the rating category.</p>

	<p>For the 2026/27 estimated average rates for community consultation we indexed the 2025/26 information by the maximum rate peg.</p> <p>For the Part A Special Variation Application, we have used the most recent rating information to forecast the 2026/27 rating income by rating category including updated customer numbers.</p> <p>This has resulted in minor differences to the average rates with most of the average rates used for community engagement being slightly higher than the average rates included in Part A Special Variation Application. Other differences are small rounding differences. Refer to the Table A below.</p> <p>2025/26 Operational Plan is available from Council's website (page 143) - Adopted 2025-26 Operational Plan</p>
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Table A: Difference in average rates, per rating category, between community consultation materials and Part A Special Variation Application WS7 – Impact on Rates Table 7.2: Average Ordinary and Special Rates

Rating Category and Sub-Category	Unimproved Land Value	Community Consultation		Part A Application		Difference	
		2025-26 Average Ordinary Rates	2026-27 Estimated Average Ordinary Rates	2025-26 Average Ordinary Rates	2026-27 Estimated Average Ordinary Rates	2025-26 Average Ordinary Rates	2026-27 Estimated Average Ordinary Rates
Residential	Minimum Rates	\$645.59	\$666.25	\$645.59	\$666.25	\$0.00	\$0.00
Farmland / Business / Business - Local Retail	Minimum Rates	\$645.59	\$666.25	\$645.59	\$666.25	\$0.00	\$0.00
Residential	Average Rates	\$1,448.79	\$1,495.15	\$1,446.43	\$1,490.86	\$2.36	\$4.29
Farmland	Average Rates	\$2,387.21	\$2,463.60	\$2,385.51	\$2,461.86	\$1.70	\$1.74
Business	Average Rates	\$3,758.51	\$3,878.78	\$3,757.09	\$3,814.27	\$1.42	\$64.51
Business - Major Retail	Average Rates	\$96,579.00	\$99,669.53	\$96,579.00	\$99,669.60	\$0.00	(\$0.07)
Business - Local Retail	Average Rates	\$13,337.69	\$13,764.50	\$13,337.70	\$13,764.51	(\$0.01)	(\$0.01)
Mining	Average Rates	\$521,916.20	\$538,617.52	\$521,916.22	\$538,617.54	(\$0.02)	(\$0.02)

4.3 Additional information (optional)

In the text box below, please provide any other details about the community's involvement in, engagement with or support of or opposition to the proposed SV not captured in Table 7.

Council engaged a peoples panel for the comprehensive Water & Sewer pricing submission. This panel participated in extensive education regarding Council Services. With the charge currently sitting within the water bill it was appropriate to invite this established People's Panel to explore in more detail the proposed SV to enable the transfer of the Stormwater Drainage Charge and the alternative options of service reduction.

Please list out any other attachments in Table 8 that the council has relied on to respond to Criterion 2 that was not otherwise outlined in Table 7.

Table 8 Other Criterion 2 attachments

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references

5 OLG SV Criterion 3 – Impact on ratepayers

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 5 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and material for completing this section. The [Part A](#) application form also collects information for this criterion in Worksheet 7 (WS 7 - Impact on Rates).

5.1 How did the council clearly show the impact of any rate rises on the community?

Please articulate in the text box below how the council demonstrated this question.

In your response, please include references to the Delivery Program, LTFP and relevant community consultation materials to support the council's claims.

This SV application seeks to increase Council's general income through the **transfer** of a Drainage Charge (**not a rate rise**) levied through the rate notice to offset the loss of income resulting from the discontinued Stormwater Drainage Charge currently levied through the water bill.

5.2 How has the council considered affordability and the community's capacity and willingness to pay?

Please articulate in the text box below how the council demonstrated this question.

In your response, please provide references to the Delivery Program, LTFP and community consultation materials where the council has considered the affordability and the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

This SV application is to enable the **transfer** of an **existing** charge.

This SV application seeks to increase Council's general income through the **transfer** of a Drainage Charge (**not a rate rise**) levied through the rate notice to offset the loss of income resulting from the discontinued Stormwater Drainage Charge currently levied through the water bill.

The same ratepayers that were subject to the Stormwater Drainage Charge levied under the WM Act will be subject to the proposed Drainage Charge under the LG Act. Ratepayers currently not paying the Stormwater Drainage Charge will not be subject to the proposed Drainage Charge under the LG Act.

The current Stormwater Drainage Charge annual increases have been based on a specified CPI each year. Comparatively, the Drainage Charge under the LG Act will increase annually in line with the rate-peg as determined by IPART. The annual rate-peg determined by IPART has historically generally been lower than CPI. It is therefore likely that annual rate peg increases to the Drainage Charge will be less than an annual CPI increase. There is therefore no adverse impact on the ratepayers' capacity to pay as a result of this SV proposal.

5.3 How has the council addressed (or intend to address) concerns about affordability?

Does the council have a hardship policy?	Yes
If yes, is an interest charge applied to late rate payments?	<p>As outlined in Council's hardship and debt recovery policy, in accordance with s566 of the Local Government Act 1993 Council charges interest on all rates and charges which remain unpaid after they become due and payable. Interest is calculated on a daily basis using the simple interest method.</p> <p>The rate of interest applied is the maximum rate as specified by the Minister for Local Government each year.</p> <p>In Council's Operational Plan the Statement of Revenue outlines interest on overdue rates and charges and refers to Council's hardship and debt recovery policy (pages 160 to 161) - Delivery Program 2025-2029 and Operational Plan 2025/26</p> <p>Council's hardship and debt recovery policy is available on Council's website - Hardship and debt recovery policy</p>

To inform our assessment, Worksheet 12 (WS 12) in the [Part A](#) application form also collects data on overdue notices, rates and annual charges outstanding/collectable, pensioner concessions and ratepayers subject to hardship provisions.

Please provide the council's response in the text boxes below.

a. Explain the measures the council proposes to use to reduce the impact of the proposed SV on vulnerable ratepayers, or alternatively, explain why no measures are proposed.

The proposed SV does not result in any individual ratepayer paying more than would have been applicable if the Stormwater Drainage Charge remained under the WM Act and regulated by IPART. For comparative purposes the CPI (being the indexation basis used by IPART in the water pricing determination) for the 12 months to November 2025 is 3.4% compared to Council's 2026/27 rate peg (being the indexation bases under the LG Act) of 3.2%.

Whilst the SV proposal does not adversely impact ratepayers, Council will continue to apply existing financial support measures in line with Council's Hardship and Debt Recovery Policy. The Policy will continue to apply to amounts relating to rates, annual charges, service charges and other charges.

Hardship assistance available to ratepayers experiencing temporary or ongoing financial difficulties includes flexible payment arrangements and other support options to assist customers who are unable to meet payment obligations as they fall due.

Eligible pensioners will continue to receive statutory rebates on their rate notice and water bills, reducing the amount payable.

b. Indicate whether the hardship policy or other measures are referenced in the council's IP&R documents (with relevant page reference or extract provided).

Council's hardship policy is referenced in our IP&R documents.

Page 161 of Council's 2025-2029 Delivery Program and 25/26 Operational Plan references: Hardship and Debt Recovery Policy.

Council recognises that residents may experience periods of hardship and a Debt Recovery and Hardship Policy is available on Council's website to assist: [Hardship and Debt Recovery Policy](#)

c. Please explain how the council makes its hardship policy or other measures known to ratepayers.

Council's hardship policy is referenced on the corporate website:
[Rebates and hardship assistance | Central Coast Council](#)

Council's rate notices and water bills provide information regarding payment options including periodical payment and encourage those experiencing financial hardship to contact Council.

5.4 Are there any other factors that may influence the impact of the council's proposed rate rise on ratepayers (optional)?

Describe the impact of any other anticipated changes in the rating structure (e.g. receipt of new valuations), or any changes to other annual ratepayer charges such as for domestic waste management services.

You may also explain how the number of **non-rateable properties** may impact the council's average rates, if relevant to your council.

You can provide additional data using Worksheet 12 (WS 12) in the [Part A](#) Excel application form. For instance, providing the number of non-rateable versus rateable properties.

This SV application is not seeking a rate rise above rate pegging.

An SV application is the only mechanism available to Council to transfer income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge under the WM Act to this income being generated through a Drainage Charge under S501 of the LG Act.

The SV proposal does not impact the overall ordinary rates and annual charges payable by any ratepayer (noting that for 2026/27 other factors i.e. land revaluations may change ordinary rates payable).

The proposed SV does not result in any individual ratepayer paying more than would have been applicable if the Stormwater Drainage Charge remained under the WM Act and regulated by IPART.

6 OLG SV Criterion 4 – Exhibition and adoption of IP&R documents

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 6 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and material for completing this section.

Table 9 seeks information which demonstrates that the council has met the formal requirements (where applicable) for the preparation, exhibition, adoption and publication of the current IP&R documents.

Table 9 IP&R documents

IP&R Document	Exhibition dates	Link to council minutes that outlines the resolution to publicly exhibit	Adoption date	Link to council minutes that outlines the resolution to adopt	Link to the adopted IP&R document on the council's website
Community Strategic Plan	Thursday 1 May to Monday 2 June 2025	Minutes 29 April 2025	23 June 2025	Minutes	Community Strategic Plan
Delivery Program	Thursday 1 May to Monday 2 June 2025	Minutes 29 April 2025	23 June 2025	Minutes	Delivery Program
Long Term Financial Plan	Thursday 1 May to Monday 2 June 2025	Minutes 29 April 2025	23 June 2025	Minutes	Long Term Financial Plan
Asset Management Plan (which contain long-term projections of asset maintenance, rehabilitation and replace, including forecast costs).	Thursday 1 May to Monday 2 June 2025	Minutes 29 April 2025	23 June 2025	Minutes	Asset Management Strategy

Note: The exhibition and adoption dates must match the dates recorded in the council resolution.

7 OLG SV Criterion 5 – Productivity improvements and cost-containment

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 7 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing for and completing this section.

7.1 What is the council's strategic approach to improving productivity in its operations and asset management?

Please provide the council's response in the text box below.

Council has an established Continuous Improvement Framework that comprises three primary streams:

Service Reviews: in accordance with the NSW OLG Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines and published within the four-year Delivery Program. This program considers the ongoing need for the service, levels of service and operating models.

Business Optimisation: focusing on streamlining systems, processes, procedures and resources to optimise operations

Better Ways: focusing on building a culture of continuous improvement.

The financial outcomes associated with the above-mentioned productivity improvement strategies are built into the LTFP as part of the efficiency targets, as detailed in previous responses in this application.

7.2 What outcomes has the council achieved from productivity improvements and cost containment strategies in past years?

Please provide the council's responses to the questions in in the text boxes below.

a. Explain initiatives undertaken and/or processes put in place in the past few years to improve productivity and contain costs.

In response to the financial crisis and the ensuing actions required a financial recovery plan was developed and the plan included the following reductions in costs:

- \$30M employee cost savings
- \$20M materials and services
- \$175M cap on capital expenditure
- \$60M in property sales

The above targets were fully delivered and Council's financial position was restored, but required ongoing further efficiencies to repay the emergency loans, and to address the ongoing challenge of cost escalation exceeding rate pegging. In each of the financial years since 2021/22 Council has delivered against the commitments in its annual operational plan, and responded to increasing community expectations with a minor budget surplus each year. Council was able to achieve this through ongoing efficiency reviews and actively seeking additional revenue sources.

By 2025/26 Council was also able to build up its cash position to repay the emergency loans. At the same time, based on retaining all existing income levels, Council has met key operating performance benchmarks and achieved unqualified audit reports. Like many NSW councils, Council continues to focus on increasing its investment in asset maintenance.

In 2023 Council transitioned its financial strategy to a forward looking Financial Sustainability Strategy, available on Council's website link here - Financial Sustainability Strategy (November 2023).

Specifically, regarding expenditure associated with drainage, Council's costs are prudent and efficient. IPART determined the Stormwater Drainage charges applicable until 30 June 2026, in their Water, Sewer and Drainage Pricing Determination May 2022. IPART's assessment of Council's pricing submission, and the consequent determination, was based on IPART being satisfied that the approved Stormwater Drainage charges reflect prudent and efficient expenditure. The SV proposal is based on transferring the same charge (subject to indexation based on the rate-peg increase).

During the 2022 IPART determination period for Council's stormwater drainage activities as a Water Authority, a number of efficiencies have been delivered to minimise the cost of drainage services, improve customer experience and operational efficiencies, and to ensure long term sustainability of service levels.

Efficiencies have been achieved in various areas including:

- drainage condition inspections,
- asset management strategy and capital works planning,
- investigations and works management,
- pipe patching, relining, repairs and renewal,
- emergency planning, and
- reporting and benchmarking.

Refer to **Attachment 10 CCC Drainage Service Levels and Efficiencies** for further details on efficiencies achieved in the Drainage service.

b. Outline the outcomes which have been achieved, including providing quantitative data where possible.

The following are some examples of estimated target efficiencies that have been worked towards since 2021/22, noting that costs in these and other areas, were also impacted by other factors impacting on overall savings:

- \$800,000 reduction in software costs from consolidating property & rating systems into one system.

- \$108,000 reduction in cost of printers from reducing the number of printers within Council's facilities
- \$337,000 in new ongoing revenue streams from temporary leasing of road reserves and Council land, advertising on illuminated street signs, new contract for advertising on bus shelters, recoup cost of replacing infrastructure following traffic crashes/vandalism and ongoing participation in the Energy Savings Certificate Program. Also \$600,000 one off new revenue from participation in the Energy Savings Certificate Program due to the LED Street Light Replacement Program
- \$1.6 million reduction in electricity costs from the newly negotiated energy contracts based on current electricity usage
- \$20,000 savings in water and electricity charges from telemetry added to floodlighting and irrigation at sporting facilities
- \$950,000 reduction in electricity and maintenance costs from the LED streetlight replacement program
- \$70,000 additional revenue from flood certificates with more detailed information contained in the flood certificates. Additional revenue from benchmarking against neighbouring LGAs

7.3 What productivity improvements and cost containment strategies are planned for future years?

The council should provide information that details initiatives planned for the next two years when requesting a one-year section 508(2) SV, or match the duration of the proposed SV.

The response should, wherever possible:

- estimate the financial impact of strategies intended to be implemented in the future
- present these as a percentage of operating expenditure
- indicate whether the proposed initiatives have been factored into the council's Long Term Financial Plan.

In the text boxes below:

a. Explain the initiatives which the council intends to implement and their financial impact.

As above, regarding expenditure associated with drainage Council's costs has previously been assessed by IPART as prudent and efficient. Future improvements will include programs of drainage specific actions and other items delivered as part of broader Council programs of work. This will include:

- improved asset data and data management capabilities;
- use of AI; and
- de-escalation of a declared dam

Refer to **Attachment 10 CCC Drainage Service Levels and Efficiencies** for further details on efficiencies planned in the Drainage service.

As also detailed in previous responses, Council's Long Term Financial Plan includes various scenarios based on different assumptions, with the base scenario reflecting the loss of income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge. Council will not be able to maintain existing service levels whilst remaining financially sustainable. Scenarios 2, 3(a), 3(b) and 3(c) included in the Long-Term Financial Plan demonstrate that aggressive efficiency targets must be met, in addition to retention of the income currently generated through the Stormwater Drainage Charge.

In its Long-Term Financial Plan Council has included the following efficiency targets being expenditure reduced each year:

- \$2.2M - 2026/27
- \$2.3M - 2027/28
- \$2.3M - 2028/29
- \$1.7M - 2029/30
- \$1.7M - 2030/31
- \$1.8M - 2031/32

Ongoing at 0.75% of Materials and Services

Decreases above are annual further decreases based on the already reduced amount in each previous year

As detailed above Council's LTFP commits to significant efficiency targets in each year commencing in 2026/27 resulting in a reduction in operating expenditure which is forecasted as \$12.7M in 2031/32.

Some examples of specific efficiency areas/additional revenue include:

- Review of commercial property strategy
- Investment management strategy
- Digital transformation program - In June 2025 Council has commenced a Digital Transformation Program which includes contemporary best practice systems and associated streamlined and efficient business processes.
- Corporate services efficiencies (cost increases continue to be less than organisational growth)
- Review of legal costs via Councillor working group
- Service delivery reviews
- Depot master planning (potential to reduce a depot)
- DA improvement plan

In addition to efficiencies, the LTFP also includes targets for Increased income from sources (other than rates and annual charges) of \$5.7M over 4 years from 2026/27 to 2029/30, escalating to \$6.8M in 2031/32.

To support the achievement of the above targets Council will undertake the following service reviews:

- Childcare (Early Education and Care)
- Leisure Centre Operations
- Property Portfolio (including property investment strategy)
- Waste Management Facility
- Customer Service

b. Indicate whether these have been incorporated in the council's Long Term Financial Plan, if not, explain why.

Yes, the above initiatives have been included in the Long-Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 adopted by Council in June 2025.

7.4 How has the council's levels of productivity and efficiency changed over time, and compared to similar councils?

In the text box, summarise data which demonstrates how the council has improved productivity and indicate its performance against that of comparable councils.

The information in the tables below is summarised from the OLG Time Series Data available here - Your Council Report – Office of Local Government NSW. 2023-24 is the most recent data available for comparative purposes.

The data demonstrates that Council compares well against other councils within Group 7 across various metrics. This performance also needs to be considered within the context specific to Council including:

- Large area and largest in Group 7
- Large population and largest in Group 7
- Large road length and largest in Group 7
- Large number of public swimming pools and largest in Group 7
- Large number of public halls and largest in Group 7
- Large number of public libraries – state libraries and largest in Group 7
- Only Council in Group 7 that offers Water and Sewer
- Only coastal council in Group 7

Key Metrics – to provide context

2023-24 Key Statistics	Council Area (km2)
Central Coast	1,681.0
Group 7 Average	695.8

Population	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	345,809	348,379	349,173	354,803
Group 7 Average	179,911	184,037	186,737	194,605
Group 7 Lowest - Blue Mountains	79,195	78,360	77,913	78,891
Group 7 Highest - Central Coast	345,809	348,379	349,173	354,803

Total Road Length (including local & regional roads) (km)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	2,260.4	2,259.2	2,263.3	2,269.7
Group 7 Average	1,050.6	1,057.7	1,062.3	1,068.8

Number of Public Swimming Pools (Including Tidal & Rock Pools)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
Group 7 Average	5.1	5.1	5.3	5.4

Number of Public Halls	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	116.0	116.0	116.0	116.0
Group 7 Average	39.4	39.4	39.6	39.6

Number of Public Libraries - State Libraries	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	11.0	12.0	12.0	10.0
Group 7 Average	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.9

Expenditure

Full Time Equivalent Staff	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	1,671	1,901	1,712	1,825
Group 7 Average	806	900	835	897

Note: The above table reflects staff resources that support all Council services including all operating activities and the delivery of capital works. In addition to Central Coast Council being the largest Council by population and area in the group, Council has resources to provide Water and Sewer services which the other Councils in Group 7 do not provide as the services are provided by Hunter Water or Sydney Water. In the 2023-24 out of the 1,825 FTE over 300 FTE relate to the provision of Water & Sewer services. Council also provides other services including a waste management facility, animal care facility, childcare services. It is further noted that Central Coast Council is the only coastal council within Group 7. Council resources a significant portion of its services through staff rather than external contracts. Council also resources some works on Transport for NSW roads. Council continually reviews efficacy of its resourcing levels through regular benchmarking and taking into consideration comparative costs to outsourcing.

To enable a comparison taking into account the population being serviced there is another ratio "Population/Equivalent Full Time Staff". Note: When the 2023/24 Population/Equivalent Full Time Staff ratio is adjusted for Water & Sewer staff then the population supported is 232.7, which is better than the Group 7 average.

Population/Equivalent Full Time Staff	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	206.95	183.26	203.96	192.84
Group 7 Average	234.29	222.01	238.00	227.67

Also available on the Office of Local Government (OLG) website is 2022/23 comparative information to Group 7 results. The information is available here - Central Coast - Your Council NSW.

Table B: 2022-23 Your Council Comparative Data for Central Coast Council in Group 7

Your Council's Services	Result	Group Avg.
Governance & Administration Expenditure per capita (\$)	65.80	194.56
Public Order, Safety & Health Expenditure per capita (\$)	89.15	63.46
Water Services Expenditure per Capita (\$)	250.95	250.95
Sewer Services Expenditure per Capita (\$)	252.03	252.03
Environmental Expenditure (including waste) per capita (\$)	365.17	293.32
Community Services, Education, Housing, Amenities Expenditure per capita (\$)	130.35	137.63
Recreation & Culture Expenditure per capita (\$)	262.33	239.77
Roads, Bridges & Footpaths Expenditure Per Capita (\$)	280.51	235.40
Other Services Expenditure per capita (\$)	109.65	107.59
Library Services Expenditure per capita (\$)	32.97	33.91
Library Circulation per capita (No.)	3.7	4
Recycling Rate (%)	43	49
Development Applications (average assessment days)	120	115
Development Applications determined (No.)	2,174	985
Companion Animals microchipped (No.)	209,008	93,828
Companion Animals microchipped & registered (%)	64.8	59.2

Table B above is a high-level summary of 2022/23 services expenditure for Central Coast Council in comparison to the Group 7 average. It should be noted that Council is the only council in Group 7 to provide water and sewer services to its LGA, as can be evidenced by the Council result equalling the group average. For the expenditure per capital comparisons Council has spent more per capital than the group average for all expenditure types except for:

- Governance & Administration
- Community Services, Education, Housing, Amenities
- Library Services

Council also determined more development applications than the Group 7 average and we have more microchipped Companion Animals.

Council's very low Governance and Administration expenditure per capita (at one third the average) highlights that Council directs more funds into direct service provision and operates at an efficient operational support service.

Investment in Infrastructure

Asset Maintenance Ratio (%)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	82.51	55.38	64.91	53.81
Group 7 Average	104.27	95.43	113.77	99.65

As can be seen in the table above, Council is currently below the Group 7 average and below the benchmark of 100%. Any adverse impact on Council's operating budget such as a reduction in operating income will further impact Council's ability to maintain its assets in the necessary condition.

Infrastructure Backlog Ratio	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	2.64	2.55	2.29	2.06
Group 7 Average	1.36	1.78	1.97	1.99

Through prudent management of its cash, Council has been able to invest in infrastructure renewal to address the infrastructure backlog and meet the applicable benchmark. Any adverse impact on Council's operating budget such as a reduction in operating income will result in Council to not be able to renew its assets as it deteriorates resulting in the accumulation of a backlog.

Average Residential Rates

Council's average ordinary residential rates are below the Group 7 average.

Average Residential Rates	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Central Coast	\$1,118.35	\$1,286.59	\$1,289.54	\$1,338.62
Group 7 Average	\$1,319.25	\$1,374.57	\$1,397.43	\$1,446.33
Group 7 Low - The Hills	\$1,080.94	\$1,086.06	\$1,103.73	\$1,136.69
Group 7 High - Blue Mountains	\$1,869.44	\$1,907.06	\$1,917.03	\$1,990.20

Taking into account the separate stormwater drainage charge on the water bill for Central Coast Council ratepayers, and the \$25 stormwater charge which other councils may have, will bring Council's average residential rates in line with the Group 7 average residential rates. Refer to the Table C - 2023/24 average ordinary rates and stormwater drainage charges comparison below. This Table includes some coastal councils for comparative purposes as in Group 7, Council is the only coastal council.

Table C: 2023/24 average ordinary rates and stormwater drainage charges comparison

Council	OLG Group	Classification	Residential Rates and Stormwater Drainage Charge	Business Rates and Stormwater Drainage Charge	Farmland Rate
Central Coast	7	Metropolitan Fringe	\$1,477.62	\$3,684.69	\$2,191.14
Hornsby	7	Metropolitan Fringe	\$1,383.73	\$3,466.94	\$2,227.56
The Hills	7	Metropolitan Fringe	\$1,161.69	\$2,275.24	\$1,306.12
Penrith	7	Metropolitan Fringe	\$1,514.60	\$9,540.70	\$16,029.80
Camden	7	Metropolitan Fringe	\$1,431.55	\$6,150.98	\$7,072.54
Campbelltown	7	Metropolitan Fringe	\$1,403.93	\$7,499.97	\$8,383.33
Newcastle	5	Regional Town/City	\$1,715.23	\$12,712.12	\$2,333.33
Lake Macquarie	5	Regional Town/City	\$1,584.17	\$5,033.53	\$2,270.27
Hawkesbury	6	Metropolitan Fringe	\$1,614.77	\$2,955.91	\$2,904.22
Wollongong	5	Regional Town/City	\$1,696.49	\$11,274.57	\$4,342.11
Shoalhaven	5	Regional Town/City	\$1,429.27	\$2,525.11	\$2,843.95
Blacktown	3	Metropolitan	\$1,124.93	\$10,964.29	\$2,281.25
Canterbury - Bankstown	3	Metropolitan	\$1,280.56	\$7,495.41	\$0.00
Northern Beaches	3	Metropolitan	\$1,642.36	\$4,071.52	\$2,285.71
Average			\$1,461.49	\$6,403.64	\$4,033.67

Council is broadly in line with the average rates and stormwater drainage charge and is lower than other coastal Councils. It should be noted that Northern Beaches and Shoalhaven Councils were approved for permanent cumulative rate increases in 2025/26 of 25.2% and 12.0% respectively which is not reflected in the table above.

Table 10 Criterion 5 attachments

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references
10	Attachment 10 CCC Drainage Service Levels and Efficiencies	Pages 33 and 34.

8 Council certification and contact information

Councils must submit a declaration in the specified form. It should be completed by the General Manager and the Responsible Accounting Officer.



8.1 Certification of application and declaration

Prepare a document in the form indicated below. Please sign (electronic signature is also acceptable), scan and submit it with your application.

This is to be completed by General Manager and Responsible Accounting Officer.

Name of the council:	Central Coast Council
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We certify that to the best of our knowledge the information provided in the Part A application form and this SV Part B application form is correct and complete. We have completed the checklist for the Part A and B application forms and also provided all relevant attachments as requested (see Table 11, Table 12 and Table 13).

General Manager (name):	David Farmer
Signature and Date:	 28/01/2026
Responsible Accounting Officer (name):	Emma Galea
Signature and Date:	 28/01/2026

Note: These signatures will be redacted before publication of the application.

8.2 Council contact information

IPART's formal contact with the council will be with the General Manager.

During the assessment period, IPART officers are likely to contact the council with detailed queries about the application and supporting documents. Councils should provide direct contact details of the primary contact for such inquiries where this person is a council officer who is not the General Manager. Council officer direct contact details will be redacted before publication of this application.

General Manager

General Manager contact phone	[REDACTED]
General Manager contact email	[REDACTED]

Note: These contact details will be redacted before publication of the application.

Primary council contact

Council contact phone	[REDACTED]
Council contact email	[REDACTED]
Council email for inquiries about the SV application	[REDACTED]

Note: These contact details will be redacted before publication of the application.

Secondary council contact

Council contact phone	[REDACTED]
Council contact email	[REDACTED]
Council email for inquiries about the SV application	[REDACTED]

Note: These contact details will be redacted before publication of the application.

9 List of required attachments

To complete (adding rows as necessary):

- Name each document.
- Check the box to indicate that the document is being submitted with the application.

Table 11 Required attachments checklist

Name of attachment	The document is included	The document is not applicable
Mandatory forms/attachments:		
Application Form Part A (Excel spreadsheet)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Application Form Part B (this Word document)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Council resolution to apply for the special variation Attachment 11 CCC Council resolution to apply for the SV OM 27 Jan 2026	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Completed certification and declaration (see 8.1) Attachment 12 CCC SV Application Certification and Declaration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
If applicable, to support the responses provided in Question 5 of Description and Context (see section 2) provide:		
Instrument for expiring special variation/s Attachment 2 CCC 2022-23 Instrument Temporary Special Variation 508(2)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OLG advice confirming calculation of amount to be removed from the council's general income Attachment 3 CCC Review of estimated of Special Variation expiry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If applicable, to support the responses provided in Questions 6 AND/OR 7 of Description and Context (see section 2) provide:		
Declaration of compliance with conditions in past instruments (if applicable) Attachment 4 CCC Declaration of Compliance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of compliance with conditions in past instruments (if applicable) Attachment 5 CCC Annual Report Extracts 2021-22 to 2024-25	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mandatory public supporting material (i.e. to be published on IPART's website):		
Community Strategic Plan Attachment 13 CCC Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Delivery Program Attachment 14 CCC 2025-2029 Delivery Program and 2025-26 Operational Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Name of attachment	The document is included	The document is not applicable
Long Term Financial Plan Attachment 15 CCC Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Asset Management Plan(s) (required if a key purpose of the SV is related to assets and capital expenditure) Attachment 16 CCC Asset Management Strategy 2025-2035	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation materials, e.g. copies of media releases, notices of public meetings, newspaper articles, fact sheets used to consult on rate increase and proposed special variation (combined into one document) Attachment 8 CCC Communications Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Community feedback (including surveys and results). Confidential information should be redacted, or the entire document marked as confidential. Attachment 9 CCC Community Engagement Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Willingness to pay study (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hardship policy Attachment 17 CCC Hardship and Debt Recovery Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Other public supporting materials:		
Government agency's report on financial sustainability e.g. NSW Treasury Corporation (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(List the additional documents)		
Attachment 1 CCC Explanatory Information Part A SV Application		
Attachment 6 CCC Council Report SV Application to IPART Stormwater Drainage Charge Transfer		
Attachment 7 CCC Stormwater drainage service definitions and potential service level reductions		
Attachment 10 CCC Drainage Service Levels and Efficiencies		
Attachment 18 CCC Ordinary Council Meeting 29 April 2025 Minutes		
Attachment 19 CCC Ordinary Council Meeting 23 June 2025 Minutes		
Attachment 20 CCC Letter from USU to CCC Mayor Clrs re SV Proposal 23 Jan 2026		
Confidential supporting material (i.e. not to be published on IPART's website):		
(List the documents)		

Name of attachment	The document is included	The document is not applicable

10 Checklists

We provide these checklists to ensure that submitted applications meet a minimum standard.

Meeting the requirements of these checklists **does not** guarantee a council will be approved for the SV it has applied for.

Table 12 Part A Application Form Checklist

Checklist items	Please indicate whether the items have been actioned
Data provided in Part A application (i.e. proposed SV%, rates amount etc) are consistent with those contained in Part B application.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Table 1.2 of "WS1-Application" lists all the tables in worksheets 1 -12 that council must complete, based on the nature of council's application. Please confirm that all the data requirements, as listed in table 1.2, have been completed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
All completed tables (values and units – i.e. \$ or \$'000) have been completed correctly and verified to source. Please pay attention to the units specified for each table in each worksheet.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
WS 10 - LTFP agrees to the council's provided (adopted) LTFP.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dollar numbers provided in "WS10 – LTFP" are in dollars (\$) not thousands (\$'000) or millions (\$M)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If the council has an expiring or existing SV, it has incorporated this when filling out WS 2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Annual and cumulative percentages are rounded to 1 decimal place.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that figures provided in WS 9 – Financials, WS 10 – LTFP and WS 11 – Ratios are at the General Fund level and <i>not</i> consolidated.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If the council proposes an SV with both permanent and temporary components, the council has discussed the relevant data and modelling requirements with IPART prior to submission.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indication whether optional tables in WS 12 has been completed.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 13 SV Part B Application Form Checklist

Checklist items	Please indicate whether the items have been actioned
All required text boxes and tables have been completed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
All applicable documents per the List of Attachments (Table 11) have been provided.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council has declared all SVs (including ASVs) approved since 2011-12 and provided annual reports that show compliance with the instrument reporting conditions, or explaining divergences.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council's LTFP includes both the baseline (no-SV) and the SV scenario it is applying for.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The proposed SV annual and cumulative percentages agree to those used in community consultation, or if they differ, the reason has been explained.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If applying for a multi-year SV, the council has correctly calculated the cumulative percentage and dollar impact of the proposed SV using compounding.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The council has referenced community consultation materials that <i>at minimum</i> show the cumulative percentage of the SV and average total dollar increase (cumulative) per rating category.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Figures presented in Application Form Part B are consistent, as relevant, with those in Application Form Part A.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council has submitted a Minimum Rates Part B Application Form, if required.	<input type="checkbox"/>
For OLG Criterion 5 (section 7), the council has provided concrete evidence and plans for past and future cost-containment and productivity strategies, as far as practicable.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Important information

Submitting online

Applications must be submitted through IPART's [LG Portal](#) by 05:00pm on Monday, 2 February 2026. Councils should note a file size limit of 150MB applies to any individual document uploaded in the portal.

Confidential content

IPART will publish all applications (excluding confidential content) on our website. Examples of confidential content are those parts of a document which disclose the personal identity or other personal information pertaining to a member of the public, a document such as a council working document that does not have formal status, or document which includes commercial-in-confidence content.

Councils should ensure supporting documents are redacted to remove confidential content where possible, or clearly marked as **CONFIDENTIAL**.

Publishing the council's application

Councils should also publish their application on their own website for the community to access.