

Media Releases

Media Release



For release Tuesday 24 April

Have your say on the future of the Lithgow LGA

Lithgow City Council has endorsed its Draft 2018/19 Operational Plan and Schedule of Fees & Charges. We invite all residents of the Lithgow LGA to get involved and have their say on the future direction of the area.

"The Draft Operational Plan details the operational (recurrent or annual) activities, capital works and new initiatives to be undertaken in the 2018/19 financial year" said Mayor Lesslie. "Whilst the Schedule of Fees and Charges identifies the cost to hire Council facilities or services".

If you would like to know what works are planned to be undertaken in your area go to www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com where you can:

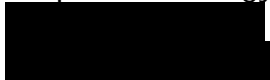
- View a video introducing the Draft 2018/19 Operational Plan
- View copies of the Draft 2018/19 Operational Plan and Schedule of Fees & Charges.
- Download fact sheets and key works programs such as Council's Roads and Infrastructure Program or Economic Development and Tourism Program.

"If you have any questions, come along to **Cook Street Plaza on Thursday 3 May between 11.30am and 2.30pm** to meet with Councillors and Council Officers to discuss the 2018/19 Draft Operational Plan and Schedule of Fees and Charges. (In the event of inclement weather, the session will be held in the Council Chambers, 180 Mort Street, Lithgow)" continued the Mayor.

The Draft 2018/19 Operational Plan and Schedule of Fees & Charges will be on exhibition until midnight, Monday 21 May. Following this, all submissions will be collated and reported to the June meeting of Council for consideration.

END

Contact: Deborah McGrath
Corporate Strategy & Communications Officer



Media Release



For release 31 July 2018

Investing in our future – Council Asset Management Survey

Members of the community are being invited to participate in an important Asset Management Study which will help Council to understand how we should prioritise expenditure on our different asset types.

Following on from the recent telephone survey undertaken by Micromex Research on behalf of Council, the survey is now available for interested members of the community to complete on the Have Your Say website.

Council provides a range of community assets including roads, bridges, parks, playgrounds and buildings. We want to understand your thoughts on how we should continue to look after these assets now and into the future. Community members are asked to download and read the Investing in Our Future – Asset Management Survey booklet on Council's asset classes and then answer a number of questions in the survey which will help us understand:

- Whether you are happy with the current quality of these assets
- What state you think these assets should be in
- What you believe are the asset funding priorities for future.

"We need a clear mandate for future spending, based on the community's views on acceptable asset conditions. This is why Council wants your thoughts on its

proposal to invest in the maintenance and renewal of our community assets and how this should be funded” said the Mayor, Councillor Lesslie.

Council will be applying to IPART for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 9% in 2019/20. This will extend the current SRV of 4.77% (which ends in 2018/19) with an increase of 4.23%. A new Special Rate Variation would improve Council’s financial sustainability, fund infrastructure renewals and fund asset maintenance. The proposed SRV will enable Council to meet all of the Fit for the Future measures during the 10 year term of the Long Term Financial Plan.

The only alternative to a Special Rate Variation is to make further cuts to services to deliver a balanced budget, consistent with ‘Fit for the Future’ requirements.

“Your feedback will directly influence Council’s future decision making on how we spend money on community assets such as roads, bridges, parks, playgrounds and buildings” concluded the Mayor.

If you would like to be involved and have your say, download and read the Investing in our Future – Asset Management Survey booklet and then complete the Survey online at www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com

END

Contact: Michael McGrath
Executive Manager, People & Services



Media Release



30 November 2018

COUNCIL NOTIFICATION TO IPART OF INTENT TO APPLY FOR SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

Council has notified its intention to IPART to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to commence in 2019/20.

At its meeting on 26 November, Lithgow City Council resolved to notify IPART of its intention to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV), above the normal rate peg, in our general rate income to commence in 2019/20.

“In January, Council will give consideration to an application to retain the current SRV of 4.77% and request an additional SRV of 4.23%. This would translate to a total SRV application of 9% in rates revenue (i.e. the current 4.77% SRV plus a new 4.23% SRV) plus the 2.7% (set by IPART for 2019/20) rate peg” noted the Mayor, “meaning that in 2019/20, the total SRV increase will be 11.7%”.

“Council understands that on first impressions this may seem like a large increase. Council currently spends approximately \$19 million on the maintenance and renewal of infrastructure assets each year, however, Council should be investing at least an additional \$1.1 million per year to keep assets safe and functioning.

“It is important to note that without an SRV, our assets would continue to decline with more assets in poor condition. The focus would be on managing risk, including the possible closure and removal of unsafe assets and reduction of services.

“In order for Council to maintain and manage current assets, ensure that delivers services are delivered in line with community expectations, and Council achieves financial sustainability into the future, we must carefully consider the option of a Special Rate Variation” concluded Mayor Thompson.

Information on the proposed special rate variation is available on www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com. Alternatively you can contact Council on 6354 9999 or call into the Council Administration Centre or Lithgow, Wallerawang and Portland Libraries where one of our friendly staff will be happy to assist you.

Written submissions quoting reference no. SRV19-20 will be accepted by Council until midnight on 11 January 2019. However, Council does encourage members of the community to visit the Have Your Say website or speak to a Council Officer first to ensure they are making an informed decision.

END

Contact: Deborah McGrath
Corporate Strategy & Communications Officer



Contact: Councilor Ray Thompson
Mayor



Media Release



4 December 2018

The Proposed Special Rate Variation –Has Council considered the community's capacity to pay?

Council is aware that many in the community may be concerned about the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) and their ability to afford this increase in their cost of living. So, how has Council considered the community's capacity and willingness to pay?

Council recognises that rate payers may at times experience difficulty paying rates and annual charges, irrespective of their income. Council has a financial hardship policy in place to provide assistance and support to community members who are experiencing financial stress and are unable pay their rates and charges on time.

In considering the community's capacity to pay a Special Rate Variation, Council has thoroughly researched its community's level of socio-economic disadvantage, its rating structure compared with neighbouring Councils, ratepayer income levels and changes in land values.

Council has recognised its relative socio-economic disadvantage by limiting the proposal to retain the current 4.77% SRV plus an additional Special Rate Variation of 4.23% increase (plus rate peg) thereby seeking only a one-off, single year increase of 9% which does not expire. In 2019/20, the total SRV increase will be 11.7% (inclusive of the 2.7% rate peg).

The Council has a Hardship Policy to accommodate the needs of those unable to pay their rates in full on time. The Council is committed to working with ratepayers to agree on affordable payment plans.

A web-based rates calculator tool has been developed and is available on www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com for ratepayers to compare their rates under the “no SRV” and “SRV” scenarios, based on their land valuation. The table below summarises the impact of the scenarios on average rates. If you don't have access to the internet, please contact the Council Administration Centre or call into one of the Libraries and our friendly staff will be happy to help you.

The impact of the proposed Special Rate Variation is on average only \$1 per week for residential ratepayers.

Impact on average rate	Average Rate 2018/19 \$	Average Rate 2019/20	Variance \$ per annum	Variance \$ per week
Residential Rates				
Scenario 1	763.00	747.00	-16.00	
Scenario 2	763.00	815.00	52.00	1.00
Business Rates				
Scenario 1	3,950.00	3,868.00	-82.00	
Scenario 2	3,950.00	4,225.00	275.00	5.29
Farmland Rates				
Scenario 1	1,439.00	1,410.00	-29.00	
Scenario 2	1,439.00	1,539.00	100.00	1.92
Mining Rates				
Scenario 1	160,461.00	157,139.00	-3,322.00	
Scenario 2	160,461.00	171,581.00	11,120	213.85

The only alternative to a Special Rate Variation application is to reduce services to deliver a balanced operating result, consistent with ‘Fit for the Future’ requirements. Council currently spends approximately \$19 million on asset maintenance and renewal each year, however; we should be investing an additional \$1.1 million per year to avoid deterioration of assets such as roads, building and stormwater drainage.

In May, Micromex Research were engaged to undertake a large scale community research project including a community survey and a report on findings. In summary, findings from the survey demonstrated that there are high levels of support for Council to increase investment in order to achieve better outcomes in regards to the quality of assets.

Results from the survey demonstrate that half of residents accept that they need to pay more, either indirectly via rates or directly via service fees and charges, in order for Council to have the required funding to increase investment in community assets.

The responses show that 52% of residents already accept that they need to pay more, directly (via rates 31%) or indirectly (via service charges and fees 38%) to allow council to improve the quality of community assets.

Council has engaged Micromex Consulting to undertake a second random telephone survey of residents within the Lithgow local government area during December to ascertain their level of understanding and support for the proposed Special Rate Variation.

Information on the proposed special rate variation is available on www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com. Alternatively you can contact Council on 6354 9999 or call into the Council Administration Centre or Lithgow, Wallerawang and Portland Libraries where one of our friendly staff will be happy to assist you.

Written submissions quoting reference no. SRV19-20 will be accepted by Council until midnight on 11 January 2019. However, Council does encourage members of the community to visit the Have Your Say website or speak to a Council Officer first to ensure they are making an informed decision.

END

Contact: Deborah McGrath
Corporate Strategy & Communications Officer



Contact: Councilor Ray Thompson
Mayor



Media Release



For Release – 10 December 2018

Have Your Say – Special Rate Variation Telephone Survey

Micromex Consulting will be contacting residents of the Lithgow local government area to have their say on the Proposed Special Rate Variation.

Residents of the Lithgow local government area are advised that Council has engaged Micromex Consulting to undertake a random telephone survey of residents within the Lithgow local government area during December to ascertain their level of support for the proposed Special Rate Variation.

If you are contacted, it would be appreciated if you could take the time to participate in this short survey; it should only take about 10-15 minutes.

However, please note, the calls may be early evening between 6-8pm as this is the best time to catch people at home. Although this may seem an inconvenience, your views are important to us and are greatly appreciated.

An online version of the telephone survey will be available for those ratepayers who do not live in the Lithgow LGA or who are not contacted by Council's

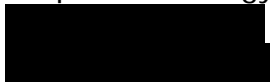
Consultants. The survey will be available online from 14 December 2018 to 11 January 2019 at www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com

Alternatively, written submissions quoting reference no. SRV19-20 will be accepted by Council until midnight on 11 January 2019 to Lithgow City Council, PO Box 19, LITHGOW 2790 or email council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au.

Written submissions may also be made to IPART in writing IPART, PO Box K35, Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240 or online at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

END

Contact: Deborah McGrath
Corporate Strategy & Communications Officer



Media Release



11 December 2018

Council's proposed works program for 2019/20 revealed

Council has developed its Draft Works Program for Transport, Buildings and Stormwater Drainage so that the community can make an informed decision with regard to the proposed special rate variation.

The projected total SRV income (from maintaining the current SRV plus adding the new SRV) is estimated at \$1.178 million for the 2019/20 year

- \$725,000 on Transport (sealed roads, unsealed roads, footpaths, cycleways, bridges and road drainage)
- \$100,000 on Stormwater Drainage
- \$250,000 on Buildings

Increasing the level of funding for these assets will allow Council to renew those which are currently in a poor condition. It will also ensure that the number of assets in poor condition does not continue to grow. It is essential that our community assets are safe, in working order and meet community expectations. The expenditure will ensure that the Fit for the Future asset benchmarks are met over time.

The remainder of the increased funding (approx. \$100,000 p.a.) will be spent on business improvement initiatives which will either generate additional revenue or reduce long-term costs. Examples of projects could include energy saving programs or technological solutions which would generate operating efficiencies.

Download a copy of the proposed Transport, Stormwater Drainage and Buildings Program for 2019/20 from www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com or call into the Council Administration Centre or the Libraries to pick up a copy. The draft works

program is subject to the consideration and approval of Council as part of the 2019/20 Operational Plan.

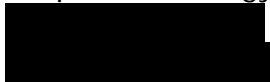
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END

Contact: Deborah McGrath
Corporate Strategy & Communications



Media Release



For Release 19 December 2018

Special Rate Variation – The Process

Lithgow City Council is one of 14 Councils' to notify their intention to apply to IPART for a special rate variation in 2019/20.

The following Councils have notified IPART of their intention to apply for a special rate variation in 2019//20: Burwood Council, Camden Council, Dungog Shire Council, Hunters Hill Council, Kiama Municipal Council, Ku-ring-Gai Council, Muswellbrook Council, North Sydney Council, Port Stephens Council, Randwick City Council, Richmond Valley Council, Sutherland Shire Council and Tamworth Regional Council. Their letters of notification detailing the proposed amount of their SRV and reasons for applying are able to be viewed at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

Lithgow Council will be holding an Extra Ordinary Meeting on Tuesday 29 January to review the application, submissions from the community and to decide whether to proceed with the application process. If Council votes to proceed, then the application needs to be lodged with IPART by 11 February 2019.

Council values your input and is inviting submissions from the community until Friday 11 January. The following steps are being taken to ensure that we give our Ratepayers as much information as possible so that you can make an

informed submission detailing your reasons for “supporting” or “not supporting” the application for the SRV:

- A Special Rate Variation webpage, www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com has been set up with fact sheets, supporting documents, and a rates calculator.
- Regular media releases are being sent to all local and regional media which are also published on Council's website www.council.lithgow.com and facebook page @LithgowCityCouncil.
- A letter from the Mayor has been sent to all Lithgow Local Government Area Ratepayers.
- Staff at the Council Administration Centre and Libraries are available to assist with enquiries and accessing information on www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com.
- Micromex Consulting have been engaged by Council to undertake a random telephone survey of residents of the Lithgow LGA to ascertain their level of support for the special rate variation.
- An online version of the telephone survey will be available for those ratepayers who do not live in the Lithgow LGA or who are not contacted by Council's Consultants. **The survey will be available online from 14 December 2018 to 11 January 2019.**
- Council has developed a Rates Calculator to enable ratepayers to see what the likely impact of the proposed special rates variation will be on their base rate.

Written submissions quoting reference no. SRV19-20 **will be accepted by Council until midnight on 11 January 2019** to Lithgow City Council, PO Box 19, LITHGOW 2790 or email council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au.

Written submissions may also be made to IPART in writing IPART, PO Box K35, Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240 or online at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

END

Contact: Deborah McGrath
Corporate Strategy & Communications Officer



Adverts in the Council Column of the Village Voice

Investing in our future – Council Asset Management Survey

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- Whether you are happy with the current quality of these assets
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Council will be applying to IPART for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 9% in 2019/20. This will extend the current SRV of 4.77% (which ends in 2018/19) with an increase of 4.23%. A new Special Rate Variation would improve Council's financial sustainability, fund infrastructure renewals and fund asset maintenance. The proposed SRV will enable Council to meet all of the Fit for the Future measures during the 10 year term of the Long Term Financial Plan.

The only alternative to a Special Rate Variation is to make further cuts to services to deliver a balanced budget, consistent with 'Fit for the Future' requirements.

If you would like to be involved and have your say, download and read the Investing in our Future – Asset Management Survey booklet and then complete the Survey online at www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com The Survey closes on Friday 10 August.

Proposal to apply for Special Rate Variation to commence

1 July 2019.

At its meeting on 26 November, Lithgow City Council resolved to notify IPART of its intention to apply for a permanent increase, above the normal rate peg, in our general rate income to commence in 2019/20. This process is called a Special Rate Variation (SRV) application.

Council proposes to apply to retain the current SRV of 4.77%. Council also plans to request an additional one-off SRV of 4.23%. The total SRV application will be for a 9% increase in rates revenue (i.e. the current 4.77% SRV plus a new 4.23% SRV) plus the 2.7% rate peg (set by IPART for 2019/20) will also be added.

A rates calculator has been developed and is available on the Have Your Say website so that you can see what the impact would be on your rates if Council is/isn't successful in obtaining a Special Rate Variation to commence on 1 July 2019.

For more information on the proposed Special Rate Variation visit www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com which is continually being updated with fact sheets, documents and information designed to answer all of the community's questions regarding the SRV.

Alternatively, you can call into the Council Administration Centre or Lithgow, Wallerawang or Portland Libraries where someone will be happy to assist you.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

An online survey to ascertain the community's level of support for the proposed Special Rate Variation can be completed on www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com. Submissions close midnight 11 January 2019.

Alternatively, you may make a submission in writing to:

- Lithgow City Council, PO Box 19, LITHGOW 2790 or email council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au quoting file reference: SRV19-20. Submissions will be accepted until midnight 11 January 2019.
- IPART, PO Box K35, Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240 or online at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

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Alternatively, you can call into the Council Administration Centre or Lithgow, Wallerawang or Portland Libraries where someone will be happy to assist you.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

Council wishes to advise that commencing 10 December, Micromex Consulting will be undertaking a random telephone survey to ascertain the community's level of support for the proposed Special Rate Variation. Please note that, calls will generally be during early evening when most people are at home and available to participate.

For those ratepayers who do not live in the Lithgow LGA or who are not contacted by Council's Consultants, **the survey will be available online at www.haveyoursay.lithgow.com** from 14 December 2018 to 11 January 2019.

Alternatively, you may make a submission in writing to:

- Lithgow City Council, PO Box 19, LITHGOW 2790 or email council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au quoting file reference: SRV19-20. Submissions will be accepted until midnight 11 January 2019.
- IPART, PO Box K35, Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240 or online at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au