

Eurobodalla Shire Council

Special Rate Variation

Prepared by: Micromex Research
Date: November 2014

Context & Methodology

Objectives

Eurobodalla Council has conducted community research survey, with the following key objectives:

1. To measure community support for the implementation of a special rate levy
2. To provide an avenue for feedback in order for residents to express their views on the proposed SRV
3. Measure satisfaction with Council and Council servicing

Data collection

Micromex Research, together with Eurobodalla Shire Council, developed the questionnaire.

Data collection period

The telephone (CATI) interviews were conducted during the period 23rd October to 1st November 2014.

Sample

N=602 interviews were conducted, a sample size of 602 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.0% at 95% confidence.

This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of n=602 residents, that 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 4.0%.

Therefore, the research findings documented in this report should be interpreted by Eurobodalla Council and IPART as not just the opinions of 602 residents, but as an accurate and robust measure of the entire community's attitudes.



Background & Methodology

Interviewing

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with IQCA (Interviewer Quality Control Australia) Standards and the Market Research Society Code of Professional Conduct. Where applicable, the issues in each question were systematically rearranged for each respondent.

Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using Q Professional.

Percentages

All percentages are calculated to the nearest whole number and therefore the total may not exactly equal 100%.

Word Frequency Tagging

Verbatim responses for open questions were collated and entered into analytical software. This analysis 'counts' the number of times a particular word or phrase appears and, based on the frequency of that word or phrase, a font size is generated. The larger the font, the more frequently the word or sentiment is mentioned.





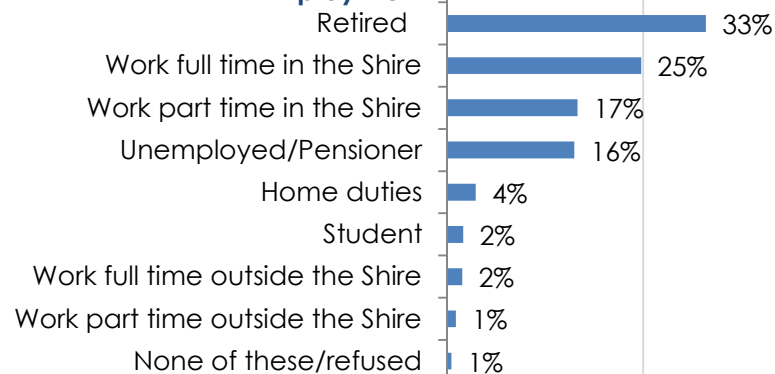
Data was weighted by age and gender using the most recent ABS census data, to ensure that all sub-groups contributed to the results in proportion to their characteristics

Sample Profile

Gender



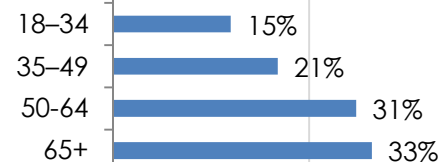
Employment



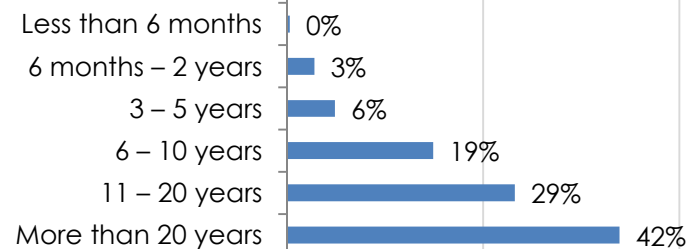
Ratepayer status



Age



Time lived in the LGA



0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

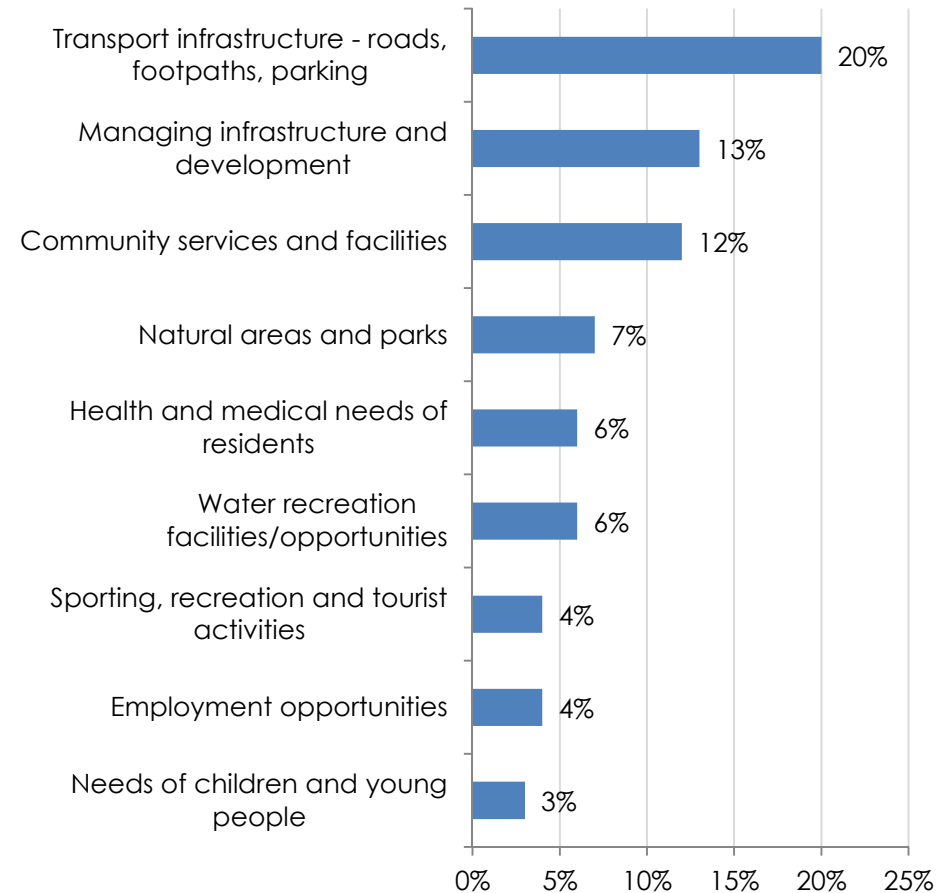
Base: n = 602

Detailed Findings



Key Priorities

Q2a. What are your key priorities for the local area? Why do you say that?



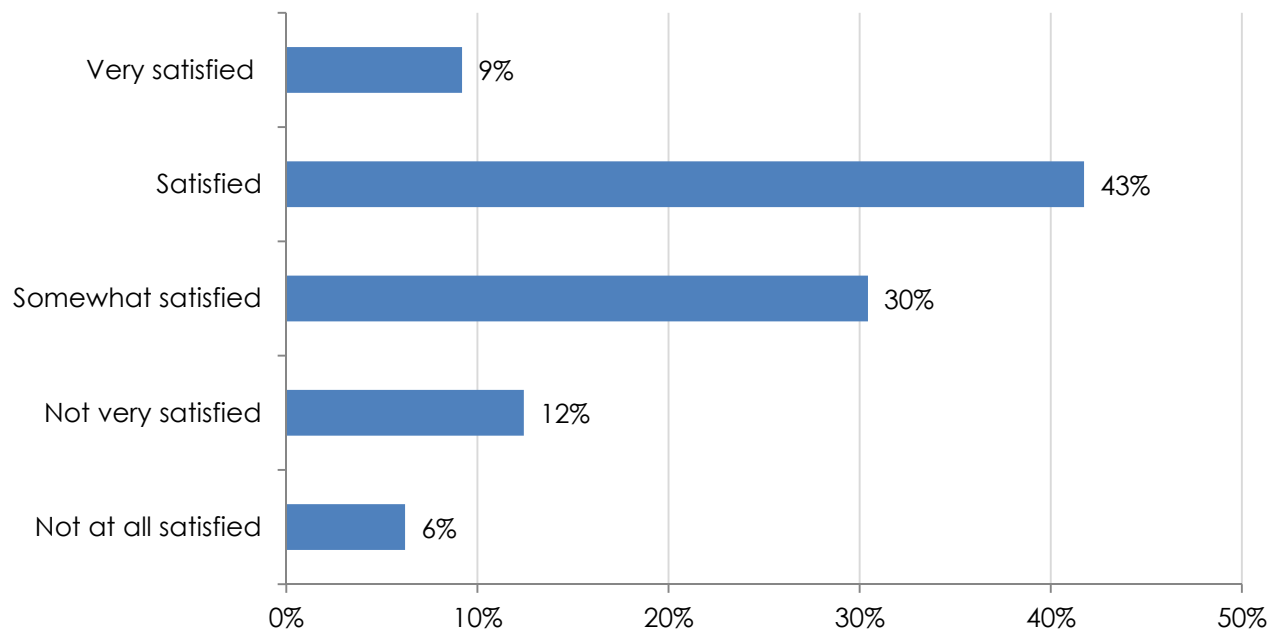
Base: n=



Transport, infrastructure and community services and facilities were the predominant priorities raised by residents for the local area

Overall Satisfaction with Council's Performance

Q2b. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues but a cross all responsibility areas?



2014 = 3.4
2012 = 3.3

NSW LGA norm = 3.3*
NSW Metro norm = 3.5*
NSW Regional norm = 3.2*

*NSW LGA BRANDING SURVEY APRIL 2012

	Overall	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non - Ratepayer
Base	602	90	126	187	199	289	313	532	70
Overall satisfaction	3.35	3.08	3.27	3.31	3.57▲	3.26	3.44	3.34	3.46

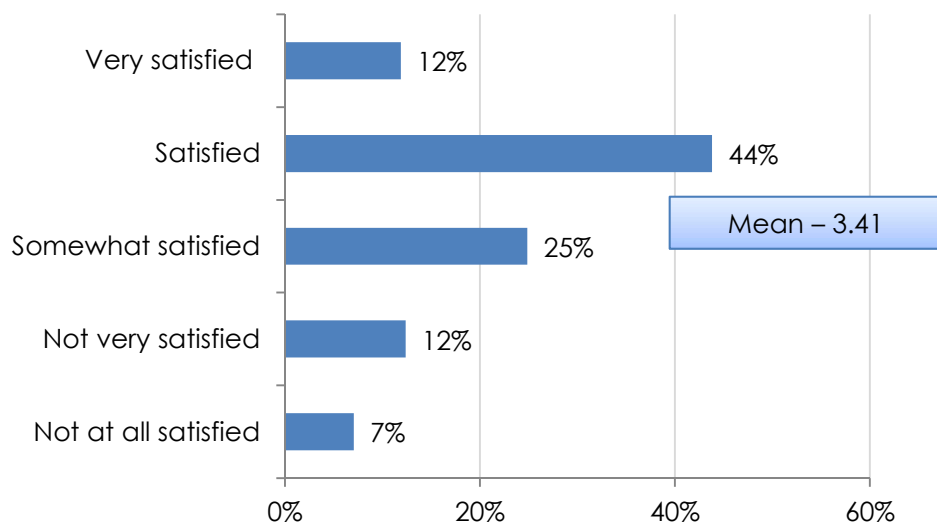
▲▼ Significantly higher/lower by group

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

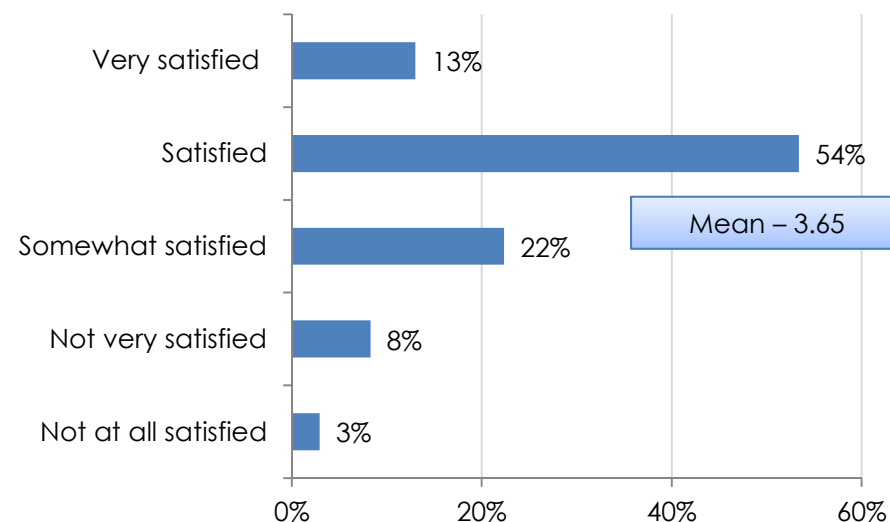
82% of residents are at least 'somewhat satisfied' with Council's performance
This result is significantly higher than our NSW Regional Benchmark

Satisfaction with Community and Transport Infrastructure, and with Council's Level of Service

Q. How satisfied are you with the level of community and transport infrastructure provided by Council in the local area?



Q. How satisfied are you with the level of service provided by Council in the local area?



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

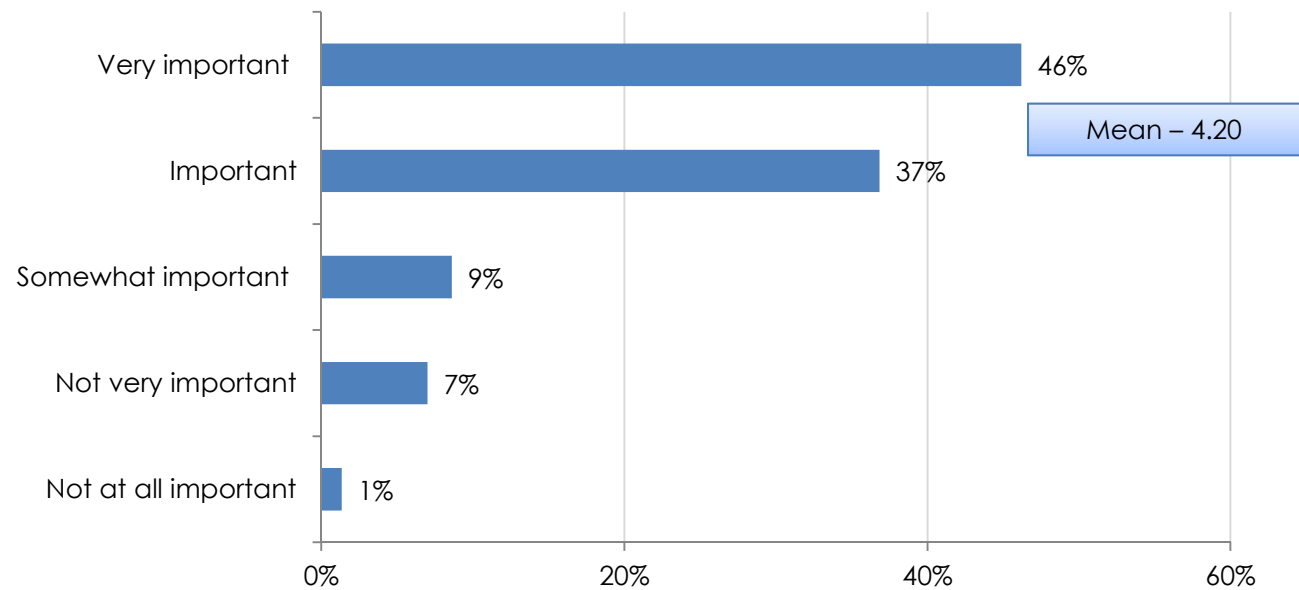
	Overall	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non - Ratepayer
Base	602	90	126	187	199	289	313	532	70
Satisfaction with the level of community & transport infrastructure	3.41	3.39	3.45	3.35	3.45	3.38	3.44	3.41	3.43
Satisfaction with the level of service provided by Council	3.65	3.50	3.74	3.56	3.75	3.61	3.69	3.65	3.70

81% of residents are at least 'somewhat satisfied' with the level of community and transport infrastructure provided by Council in the local area

89% are at least 'somewhat satisfied' with the level of service Council provides

Importance of Community & Transport Infrastructure

Q3e. How important is it for Council to improve community and transport infrastructure?



Scale: 1 = not at all important/strongly disagree, 5 = very important/strongly agree

	Overall	18–34	35–49	50–64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non - Ratepayer
Base	602	90	126	187	199	289	313	532	70
Importance of community and transport infrastructure	4.20	4.33	4.13	4.24	4.13	3.98	4.40▲	4.18	4.33



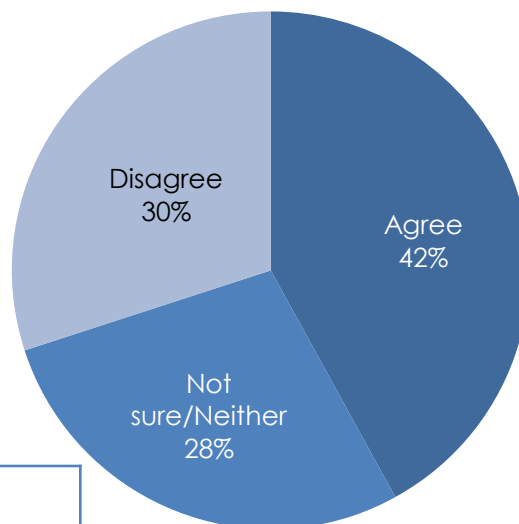
92% of residents stated that it was 'somewhat important' to 'very important' that Council improve community and transport infrastructure

Value for Rates of Community & Transport Infrastructure

Q3c. Do you currently think that the community and transport infrastructure provided by Council are good value for the rates you pay?

Q3d. What is your main reason for saying this?

Disagree - Strongly disagree (30%)	
Insufficient/poor standard of transport available	12%
Poor maintenance and provision of infrastructure - roads, footpaths, kerb and guttering, cycleways	7%
Current rates levels are too high considering the services provided	7%



Agree - Strongly agree (42%)	
Provision and maintenance of infrastructure is good	27%
Low rates/demographics of region mean Council services are acceptable	10%

Not sure/Neither (28%)	
Unable to judge value for money due to lack of knowledge of rates/transport infrastructure	17%

Please see the Appendix for the full list of reasons

	Overall	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non - Ratepayer
Base	602	90	126	187	199	289	313	532	70
Value for rates of community and transport infrastructure	3.08	2.97	3.03	3.02	3.23	3.09	3.08	3.08	3.12

Scale: 1 = not at all important/strongly disagree, 5 = very important/strongly agree



42% 'agree' to 'strongly agree' that this infrastructure is good value for the rates paid

Special Rate Variation



Concept Statement

Residents were read the following concept statement:

Financially, Council faces a number of challenges about how to continue to maintain, upgrade and build new community and transport infrastructure to a standard that meets community's expectations. The cost of managing this is increasing more than the annual rate peg increase every year, and Council faces a funding gap that grows every year.

Despite making considerable savings, and securing grants and external funds, Council is still not able to meet the needs of the community in the years ahead with its current rates income.

Council needs to make some decisions about how to meet the expectations of the community while planning for the future.

To help Council determine the best course of action, the community is being asked to have their say on the two funding options being put forward by Council.

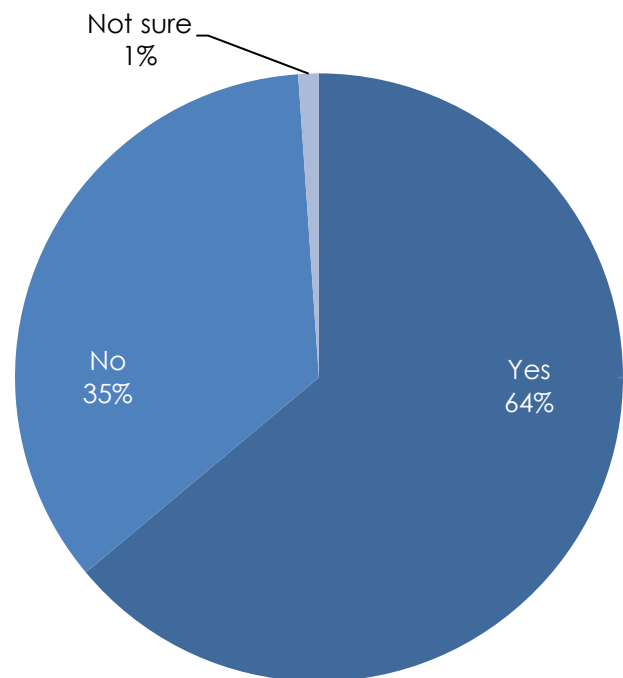
Option 1 – Continuation of current funding – No rate increase above rate peg of 3% over 3 years

Option 2 – A special rate variation – Rate increase of 5% above rate peg to 8% over 3 years

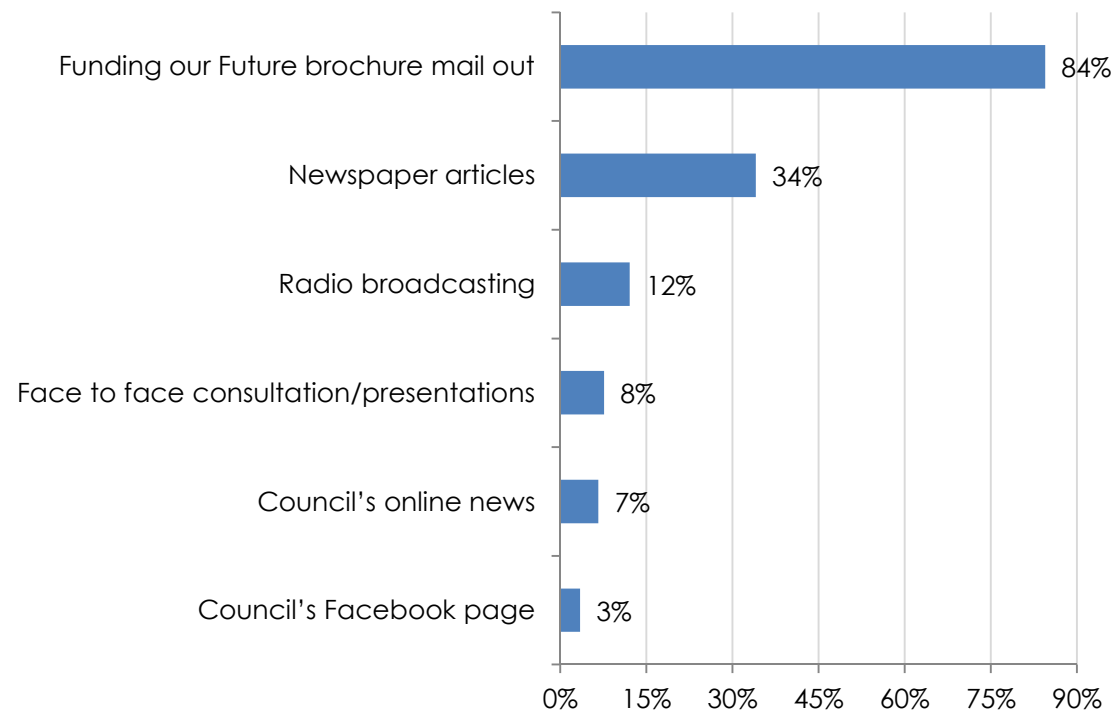


Awareness of the SRV

Q6a. Prior to this call were you aware that Council was exploring community feelings towards a Special Rate Variation?



Q6b. How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation?



Base: n=602

Base: n=405



64% of residents had prior awareness of Council's exploration of community feelings to the SRV

84% of these residents found this information in the 'Funding our Future brochure mail out'

Awareness of the SRV

Q6a. Prior to this call were you aware that Council was exploring community feelings towards a Special Rate Variation?

Q6b. How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation?

	Overall	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non - Ratepayer
Base	602	90	126	187	199	289	313	532	70
Prior awareness of the SRV									
Yes	64%	36% ▼	69% ▲	67% ▲	70% ▲	64%	64%	69% ▲	24% ▼
No	35%	64%	31%	31% ▲	27% ▼	36%	35%	30%	75%
Not sure	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Where information was attained	405	12	68	164	161	175	230	387	18
Funding our Future brochure mail out	84%	92%	76%	80%	91%	84%	85%	87%	33%
Newspaper articles	34%	17%	35%	35%	34%	40%	30%	34%	44%
Radio broadcasting	12%	8%	15%	16%	7%	17%	8%	11%	33%
Face to face consultation/presentations	8%	8%	12%	8%	6%	9%	7%	7%	11%
Council's online news	7%	0%	7%	9%	4%	8%	6%	7%	0%
Council's Facebook page	3%	17%	7%	2%	2%	2%	4%	3%	6%

64% of residents had prior awareness of Council's exploration of community feelings to the SRV

84% of these residents found this information in the 'Funding our Future brochure mail out'

Concept Statement

Option 1 Continuation of current funding – No rate increase above rate peg of 3% over 3 years

No rate increase above the State restricted level of around 3% per annum or 9.27% over three years. This means there would be a decline in the current standard of community and transport infrastructure and the infrastructure funding gap and backlog would remain and grow. Council would not be able provide new and upgraded infrastructure that the community has said it wants.

For the average residential ratepayer this would mean a total increase of \$75.88 over 3 years, the average farm ratepayer a total increase of \$118.66 over 3 years, and for the average business ratepayer a total increase of \$271.90 over 3 years.

Option 2 A special rate variation – Rate increase of 5% above rate peg to 8% per annum over 3 years

This option is about providing sufficient funds to:

- Reduce the annual gap in funding needed to look after our current community and transport infrastructure
- Provide a package of community and transport infrastructure projects and renewals that the community has asked us for. This includes having enough funds to maintain and plan to replace anything new built

In this option, rates would increase above the state restricted level of 3% to 8% per annum or 25.97% over three years. This increase is only on general rates so it is not applicable to water, sewerage or garbage rates.

For the average residential ratepayer this would mean a total increase of \$212.52 over 3 years, the average farm ratepayer a total increase of \$332.36 over 3 years, and for the average business ratepayer a total increase of \$761.55 over 3 years.



Concept Statement

Option 2 Continued

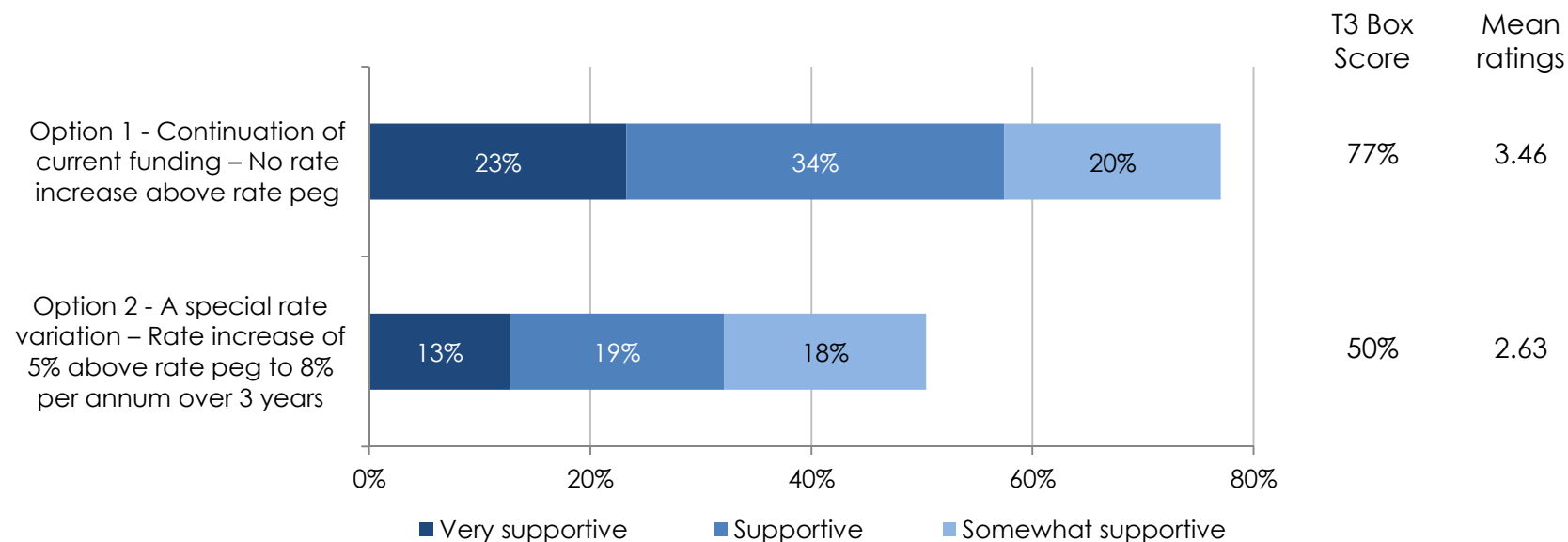
This option would allow Council to allocate:

- \$4M for upgrades and new infrastructure to sportsgrounds, local reserves and parks to improve amenities and increase year round use
- \$1.8M to create a multi-use exhibition space with meeting rooms at Moruya Library to increase community usage and support events
- \$1.25M to upgrade Batemans Bay CBD (North and Orient Street north) to increase town centre vitality
- \$560K to improve local community halls and improve amenities to increase year round use
- \$250K to upgrade Moruya airport terminal building, car park and plane holding area to improve accessibility and user amenity
- \$300K upgrade to Corrigan's Beach Reserve Batehaven, Gundary Oval Moruya and Rotary Park Narooma to include playgrounds with special accessibility elements
- \$325K for the provision of accessible toilets at high profile public sites across Eurobodalla
- \$325K for the provision of accessible viewing platforms and walks at high profile sites to improve visitor experiences and beach access
- \$6M for reconstruction and sealing of a number of higher trafficked gravel roads and upgrading of bridges and culverts
- Additionally around \$1.3M across Eurobodalla to look after community and transport infrastructure to ensure it remains in a satisfactory condition that meets community expectations



Level of Support for Options

Qs 4a & 4b. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with this option?



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

	Overall	18–34	35–49	50–64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non - Ratepayer
Base	602	90	126	187	199	289	313	532	70
Option 1	3.46	3.33	3.65	3.35	3.50	3.50	3.42	3.45	3.53
Option 2	2.63	2.77	2.39	2.65	2.71	2.48	2.77	2.58	3.04



On the whole the community were more supportive of Council adopting with Option 1, 'the continuation of current funding'

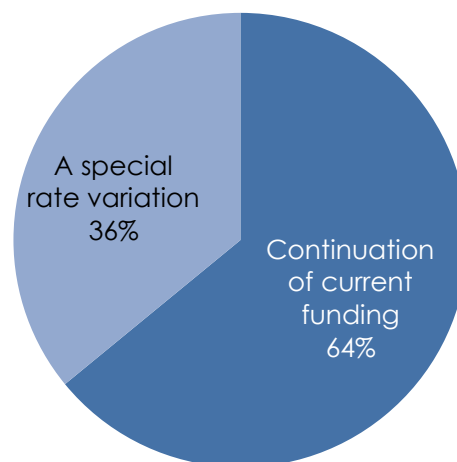
Level of Support for Options

Q5b. What is your main reason for choosing that option?

Option 2

Proposed increase is reasonable/affordable to pay for improvements	16%
Benefit to the community justifies an increase	12%
Current standard of infrastructure/services makes investment necessary	6%
Supportive of facility upgrades, but concerned about implementation/use of funds	3%

1st preference



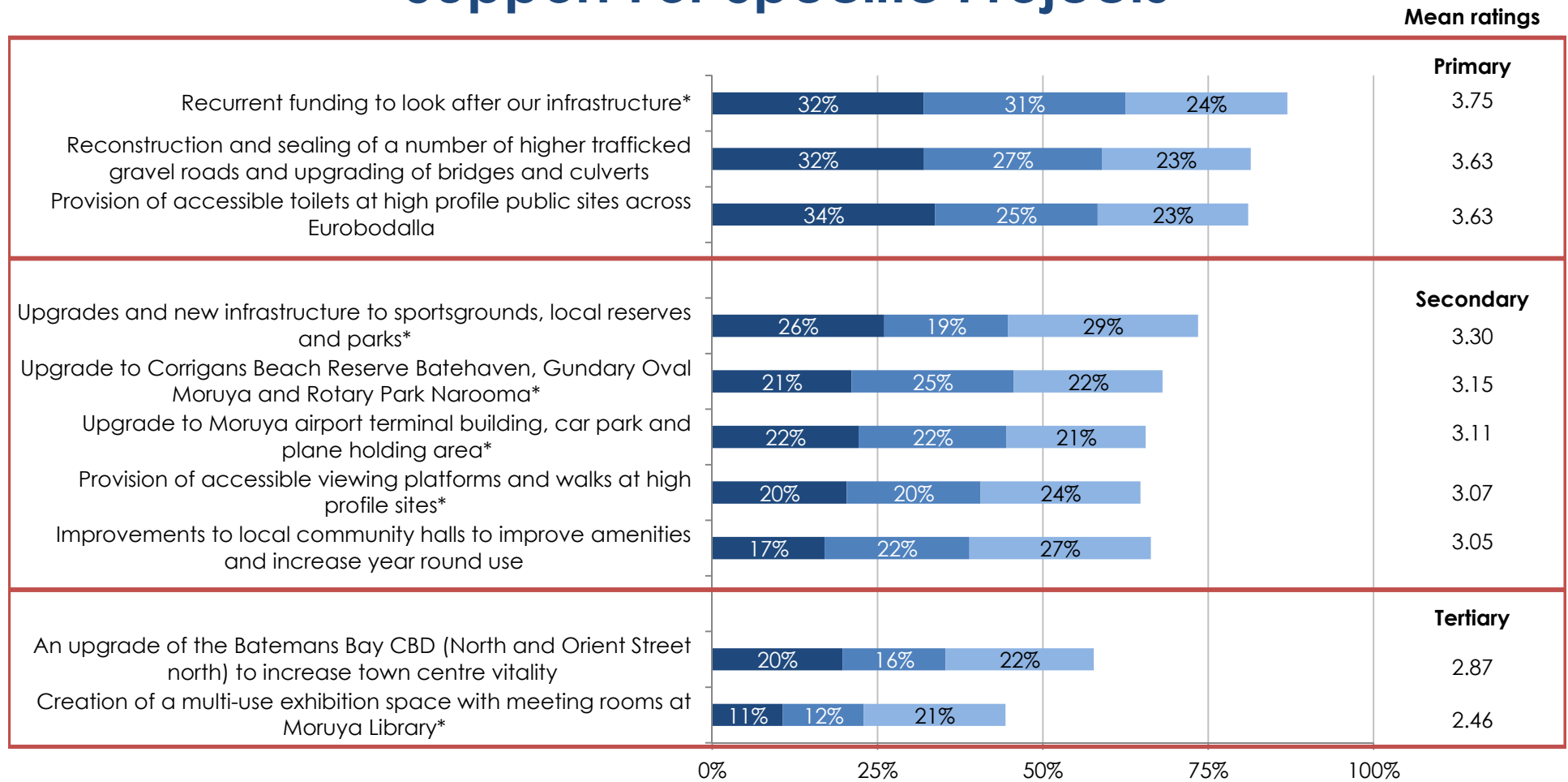
Option 1

Rate increases would not be affordable for many residents	28%
Council's financial management should improve to make rate increases unnecessary	21%
Proposed upgrades are unnecessary	7%
Existing rate levels are appropriate/too high	5%
Not convinced that proposed improvements would be made	4%
Alternative methods of increasing revenue should be explored	3%
Funding is not allocated evenly across the region	2%
Council communicates proposals poorly	1%

	Overall	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non - Ratepayer
Base	602	90	126	187	199	289	313	532	70
Option 1 as preferred selection	64%	68%	72%	61%	61%	67%	61%	65%	57%

Affordability of rate increases and improvements to Council's financial management were the predominant reasons for residents' preference for Option 1

Support For Specific Projects



*For the complete explanation of each criteria, please see the Appendix

Q6. Council would like to know if you support all, some or none of the projects identified in Option 2. How supportive are you of the following projects?

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



While Option 2 was not preferred there was clear support for a number of the components within the option

Conclusions



Conclusion & Recommendations

Residents have reasonably robust levels of satisfaction with the current levels of servicing and facilities provided by Council.

Residents indicated they believe it is very important that Council continues to improve its community and transport infrastructure.

64% of residents were aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a rate variation; the majority of whom were informed by Eurobodalla Council's mail out.

Residents were most supportive of Option 1 – Continuation of current funding

- ⇒ ***64% of residents selected Option 1 as their most preferred option as they feel rate increases would not be affordable for many residents and that Council's financial management should improve to make rate increases unnecessary***
- ⇒ ***36% selected Option 2 as their proposed option because the proposed increase is reasonable/affordable to pay for improvements and that it will benefit to the community justifies an increase***

The community was generally informed that Council was looking to explore options, however, is not convinced that rates should be increased above the rate peg to deliver the programs outlined in Option 2

- ⇒ ***Possibly an intermediate option between 1 & 2 would have more strongly resonated with residents as elements of Option 2, particularly those regarding infrastructure funding, roads and toilets were generally supported***



Appendix



Key Priorities

Verbatim responses

- "Better health care including dental"*
- "Better transport options required"*
- "Continued maintenance and improvements of local infrastructure"*
- "Desperately need public transport"*
- "Develop recreation areas such as sports fields and pools"*
- "Easy access to community shops, services and facilities"*
- "Having enough jobs in the local area to allow people to live and work in the area"*
- "Improve transport infrastructure"*
- "Improving management structures within council"*
- "Maintain infrastructure such as roads, walking paths and bike paths"*
- "Maintaining and improving all the roads and infrastructure"*
- "Maintaining the beaches and facilities"*
- "Maintenance of all services and facilities provided by Council"*
- "More footpaths around the Shire"*
- "Need to control the traffic in the area as the population continues to grow"*
- "Preservation of the natural environment"*
- "Roads and drainage around the road"*
- "Upgrading facilities and developments in the area"*
- "Would like to see community infrastructure upgraded"*



Satisfaction with Council's Performance

Satisfied - Very satisfied (52%)

N=600

Satisfactory performance - <i>good service/facility provision, well maintained transport infrastructure/public areas, proactive, helpful</i>	46%
Responsiveness to enquiries and community needs	3%
Overall performance is acceptable despite some operational issues	2%
Positive community atmosphere	1%
Positive attitude of Council staff	1%
Good environmental awareness	1%

Somewhat satisfied (30%)

Overall performance is acceptable despite some operational issues/potential to do more	11%
Poor financial management	6%
Lack of community consultation, responsiveness to community concerns	5%
Generally good provision of services and facilities	3%
Infrastructure maintenance has not been well managed	3%
Development application procedures should be improved	2%
Lack of transparency/integrity/communication within Council	1%
Overall provision of services has been poor	1%
Council staff not always capable/professional	1%

Not very satisfied - Not at all satisfied (18%)

Record of poor performance - <i>ineffective, bad planning, unfair decisions, failure to deliver on policies</i>	6%
Poor financial management	5%
Failure to maintain infrastructure/services - <i>footpaths, trees, public toilets, library, pool, kerb and guttering, roads, parks</i>	3%
Lack of community consultation	3%
Poor communication - <i>lack of response, inconsistent information, internal divisions</i>	1%
Excessive residential rates	1%
Lack of integrity/transparency	1%
Some suburbs/regions overlooked	1%
Lack of professionalism of Council staff	1%

Q2b. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues but across all responsibility areas?

Q2c. What is your main reason for saying this?



Value for Rates of Community & Transport Infrastructure

Agree - Strongly agree (42%)

N=602

Provision and maintenance of infrastructure is good	27%
Low rates/demographics of region mean Council services are acceptable	10%
Satisfied with standard of existing community services	4%
Currently satisfied due to lack of familiarity with Council/lack of obvious problems	1%
Value for money is achieved with room for improvement in some areas	1%

Not sure/Neither (28%)

Unable to judge value for money due to lack of knowledge of rates/transport infrastructure	17%
Service provision is usually acceptable but could be improved	4%
Greater maintenance/upgrades to infrastructure are required	3%
Rates are excessive/appropriate regardless of satisfaction with services	2%
Funding is not distributed evenly throughout the region	1%

Disagree - Strongly disagree (30%)

Insufficient/poor standard of transport available	12%
Poor maintenance and provision of infrastructure - <i>roads, footpaths, kerb and guttering, cycleways</i>	7%
Current rates levels are too high considering the services provided	7%
Revenue should be spent more efficiently/on other issues	2%
Unsatisfactory attitude/inflexible approach from Council	1%

Q3c. Do you currently think that the community and transport infrastructure provided by Council are good value for the rates you pay?

Q3d. What is your main reason for saying this?



Additional Information

	N=160
Council's financial management should improve to make rate increases unnecessary	41%
Greater community consultation is required	12%
Funding should be distributed more evenly through the region	9%
Proposed SRV is acceptable if carried out as described	9%
Transport infrastructure and services need improvement	9%
More recreation facilities should be provided	8%
Would be more supportive of rate increase if rise were lower/more confident in Council ability	7%
Rate increases would be unaffordable for many residents	6%
Council should work on expanding employment and local economy	5%
Positive response to this research project	5%
Satisfied with Council and its services	4%
Alternative sources of funding should be explored	4%
Dissatisfied with performance and effectiveness of Council	3%
More community facilities need to be developed	2%
More facilities for the elderly should be provided	2%
Council procedures need to be simplified	1%
More funding needs to be directed to parks and natural areas	1%
Proposed upgrades are unnecessary	1%

Q6c. Anything else you'd like to say about this subject?



Level of Support for Projects

Q6. Council would like to know if you support all, some or none of the projects identified in Option 2. How supportive are you of the following projects?

	Overall	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non - Ratepayer
Base	602	90	126	187	199	289	313	532	70
Recurrent funding to look after our infrastructure*	3.75	4.30▲	3.64	3.62	3.69	3.68	3.81	3.74	3.81
Reconstruction & sealing of a number of higher trafficked gravel roads and upgrading of bridges and culverts	3.63	3.96	3.60	3.65	3.48	3.57	3.69	3.59	3.94
Provision of accessible toilets at high profile public sites across Eurobodalla	3.63	3.65	3.63	3.71	3.54	3.49	3.75	3.60	3.85
Upgrades and new infrastructure to sportsgrounds, local reserves & parks*	3.30	3.83	3.58	3.25	2.91▼	3.19	3.40	3.25	3.67
Upgrade to Corrigans Beach Reserve Batehaven, Gundary Oval Moruya and Rotary Park Narooma*	3.15	3.61	3.31	3.14	2.86▼	3.02	3.28	3.11	3.50
Upgrade to Moruya airport terminal building, car park & plane holding area*	3.11	3.46	2.92	3.15	3.02	2.93	3.27	3.08	3.29
Provision of accessible viewing platforms & walks at high profile sites*	3.07	3.32	3.01	3.18	2.90	3.01	3.13	3.03	3.42
Improvements to local community halls to improve amenities and increase year round use	3.05	3.25	3.02	3.06	2.98	2.96	3.14	3.04	3.12
An upgrade of the Batemans Bay CBD (North and Orient Street north) to increase town centre vitality	2.87	3.45	2.98	2.77	2.64	2.64	3.09▲	2.81	3.34
Creation of a multi-use exhibition space with meeting rooms at Moruya Library*	2.46	2.69	2.32	2.48	2.43	2.31	2.60	2.42	2.75

▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower result by group

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





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