INDEPENDENT PRICING AND REGULATORY TRIBUNAL

(IPART)

Special Rate Variation Application

Wollongong City Council 2014-15

Attachment 1
Securing Our Future
Community Engagement Report
February 2014

OUR PLACE
our voice
OUR FUTURE

**Securing our Future
Financial Sustainability Review**

Community Engagement Report

February 2014

wollongong
city of innovation

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Executive Summary

Like most Councils in NSW, Wollongong Council is faced with the challenge of finding enough money to look after the city's assets into the future. Many of our assets, such as roads, bridges, building and drains are aging and require a growing amount of funding to fix or replace them.

Since 2008 Council has been actively working to reduce internal costs in order invest funds back into maintaining council assets such as roads, footpaths, buildings and other infrastructure. Council has been able to make savings of $20 million each year and has used this money to support the maintenance of assets. Nonetheless, Council still needs to find an additional $21million a year to maintain our assets. If we don't take steps now, we will start to lose assets.

Wollongong City Council is not alone in taking steps to secure financial sustainability: nearly half (70) the Councils across New South Wales have recently achieved rate rises or are actively considering them to address issues flagged in TCorp's (NSW Treasury Department) report Financial Sustainability of the New South Wales Local Government Sector released in April 2013.

In September 2013, Council commenced engaging the community in conversations about long-term financial sustainability. The conversations focused on options for improving financial security via a three tiered model of:
- operational and efficiency improvements,
- changes to service levels, and
- changes to funding sources.

Between September 2013 and February 2014, we actively engaged the community through four engagement processes:

- **Step 1:** Call for submissions to inform a Citizens Panel in making their recommendations including an online survey.
- **Step 2**: Convening a Citizens' Panel of randomly selected residents to review Council services, costs and revenue.
- **Step 3**: Exhibition of the Citizens' Panel's report on recommended changes.
- **Step 4**: Exhibition of 3 options based on financial scenarios, the revised draft Resourcing Strategy and revised draft Delivery Program.

We would like to thank the community for their participation and for providing Council with valuable feedback. The majority of community submissions expressed their passion for Wollongong and desire to see our city prosper.

Community awareness of this engagement process has been high throughout its 6 months. Hits on the specific engagement page for the project totalled more than 18 000. A community newsletter and brochure were distributed to more than 80 000 households in October 2013 and again in January 2014 as well as prominent advertisements in both local newspapers The Advertiser and Illawarra Mercury. Media coverage throughout the project was extensive in all key local media outlets including Illawarra Mercury, The Advertiser, ABC Radio and Win TV. One thousand one hundred (1,100) bookmarks were

distributed between September and January at retail and dining premises to increase awareness of the project and opportunities to become involved. During kiosks held in January 2014 the majority of community members approached stated that they were aware of the project having seen the brochure, newspaper advertisements or articles.

The community were given a number of opportunities to participate in each step of the engagement including online discussion, quick polls and surveys, and kiosks at community locations in each ward. Community members also sent letters, emails and petitions. Total participation in the project is outlined below.

Table 1: Participation in Engagement

Technique	Total
Web hits	18,521
Online discussion	759
Online quick poll	268
Participation in kiosks and panel workshop	217
Submissions	1,366
Petitions (N= signatures)	2,732

Note: Some community members may have participated in more than one engagement technique.

Basic demographics of age, gender and suburb are included in each section of the report. It must be noted that many participants did not choose to provide this information and indeed only online and paper survey forms asked for it. Therefore the demographics provided in Step 1, 3 and 4 are incomplete and inconclusive. Only the Citizens' Panel in step 2 includes a representative sample of the community. This technique was chosen in order to provide an opportunity to work deliberatively with a mini public that was representative of age, gender, suburb, ethnicity, home tenure and qualifications. By using a deliberative technique we ensured that detailed operational and financial data and community submissions could be considered without discussions being dominated by one participant, interest or pre-determined position. Deliberative techniques build community capacity as representatives are given access to a detailed understanding of organisational processes, constraints and can help create opportunities and varied solutions. They also offer the organisation an opportunity to learn what information the community feels is valuable and how opinions may change.

As the Panel membership needed to be representative of the Wollongong community Council prepared a social demographic profile and hired an independent agency, Taverner Research, to recruit between 30-40 residents. Taverner Research used the following indicators to ensure the panel was a mini-public, representing the broad demographics of the city. Current and former Councillors, state and federal MPs and current Council staff were the only exclusions from the panel. Neither Council staff nor Councillors selected the panel members.

The following section outlines community feedback on the three tiered model.

Summary of Participant Views on Three Tiered Model

Operational and efficiency improvements

A key element of the three tiered model is efficiency of Council operations. A large number of participants (N=152) in Step 4 commented that we needed to do more to improve our efficiency. Comments ranged from a perception of high overheads, staff wages, benefits such as cars and conferences, to concerns that workers are not efficient. Other comments were more specific in suggesting areas for us to work on such as benchmarking, financial auditing and better technology and work practices. There was a split between views that outsourcing would make us more efficient to assertions that using skilled, experienced workers already on staff is a more efficient practice.

Participants also expressed concern that State and Federal governments transfer responsibility for various operations onto local government and that we should concentrate more on core business. Improvements in sustainability and waste reduction also featured under this theme. A dissatisfaction with infrastructure choices (N=71 against/12 support) was also expressed by some participants who commented that we were spending money on the wrong things.

Council staff were also engaged in identifying ways to undertake Council business in a more efficient manner. Council has been undertaking service reviews over a number of years to identify and implement internal savings. In October 2013 a workshop was held with staff randomly selected to represent all divisions to continue to seek out operational efficiencies.

Changes to service levels

Council commenced community conversations around service levels with a high-level look at delivery streams in Step 1. The majority of the 178 submissions nominated that they preferred service levels to remain the same. Consistently participants in this Step and Step 3 expressed a desire that the following services are maintained at the same level: Aged and disability services; Aquatic services; Botanic Gardens and Nursery; Community facilities; Crematorium and cemeteries; Human resources; Library services; Leisure Services; Parks and Sports fields; and Waste management.

As part of the mix to achieve a $21 million per year surplus the Citizens' Panel recommended up to $4.351 million could be saved through changes to services. Twenty-five service changes were listed in the Panel's report. Proposed changes to Lakeside Leisure Centre, Unanderra Library and ocean rock pools elicited the most comment from the community. Removal of pensioner exemptions (rates), changes to Coalcliff/Scarborough beach lifeguard services, Community facilities – demolish Coalcliff hall, exit the Crematorium and halving the cadets, apprenticeships and trainee (CATs) program were also opposed by participants.

Table 2: Key themes on service changes

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree
Lakeside Leisure Centre, close and sell land	9	659
Unanderra Library – close	10	1,111
Ocean rock pools – run to fail 2-3	6	1,926
Coalcliff/Scarborough beach season reduce	4	214
Removal of pensioner exemptions (rates and waste)	1	66
Demolish Coalcliff Hall	0	59
Exit Cremator	5	28
Halve CATs program	4	69

Note: this data has been compiled from submissions and petitions to Steps 3 and 4, including late submissions to Step 3.

Changes to funding sources

Throughout these engagement steps we have talked to the community about changes to two possible funding sources: rates and fees and charges.

Fees and charges

The Citizens' Panel report recommended changes to a number of fees and charges and opportunities for additional review of up to $1.7 million per year. The top items the community commented on were a gold coin donation for community pools, increasing sports field fees and car parking fees. The majority of respondents were against these recommendations. During Step 4 when we asked the community to comment on three funding scenarios that suggested changes to fees and charges, responses focussed more broadly on user pays (N=53) with less comment on specific fees.

Rates

The Citizens' Panel report recommended a rate increase of between 7-7.5% over three years. Whilst a small number of participants wrote in to say they preferred a rate increase to losing services (N=24), a large number of form letters and other submissions (N=151) were received opposing any rates increase. During Step 4 engagement again provided the community with information about the problem we are facing of a backlog of ageing infrastructure. We prepared three options based on achieving a $12 million per year surplus to be spent on maintain our budgets. In responses to the scenarios presented in the Step 4 engagement the majority of participants expressed a willingness to pay higher rates: 78% of the 800 participants chose one of the three scenarios, whilst only 4% specified that they did not support any of the options presented. 10.25% specified a preference to pay higher rates and maintain or increase services.

Summary of Each Engagement Step

Step 1: Community survey and submissions (20 September to 8 October 2013)

Council wanted to have a conversation with the community around some options regarding efficiency savings, priority services, service levels and funding sources. Council's engagement webpage included an online survey form and a discussion forum. The comments were in response to the question: "what are the top two things you want the Citizens' Panel to think about?" The community also wrote open submissions to express their views.

Submissions received during September and October, to the Citizens' Panel included **11** open submissions, **14** participants in an online discussion forum and **167** online surveys.

Key themes included:

- The majority of survey participants indicated a preference for existing service categories to remain the same. In the instances of Environmental Services and Natural Area Management, there was a marked preference for increasing the level of service to these areas.

  - There was a secondary preference for an increase in service areas of: (i) aged and disability services; (ii) botanic gardens and nursery; (iii) community programs; (iv) cultural services; and (v) transport services to increase.

  - There was a secondary preference for a decrease in the following services: (i) city centre management; (ii) corporate strategy; (iii) financial services; (iv) governance and administration; (v) human resources; (vi) leisure services; (vii) public relations; and (viii) tourist parks.

- The open ended survey responses suggest there are mixed attitudes in the community towards: (i) streamlining staff efficiencies and projects; (ii) conditional rate rises; (iii) user pays; (iv) environmental sustainability; (v) cultural community and arts development; (vi) the tourism and visitor economy; (vii) commercialisation partnerships and linkages; (viii) maintaining or changing services and assets; (ix) the involvement of community in projects and communications; (x) State and Federal Government funding; and (xi) supporting and attracting local business and volunteers.

Step 2: Deliberative Citizens' Panel (26 September to 27 October 2013

Council convened a representative group of 34 randomly selected community members to participate in a deliberative Citizens' Panel. The Citizens' Panel met across two evenings and two weekends during September and October 2013. They were given access to comprehensive information about Council service levels, costs and revenue sources. The results of the Step 1 community survey and submissions process were presented to the panel. They were led through a deliberative process by engagement consultants from Straight Talk Consulting.

As the Panel membership needed to be representative of the Wollongong community Council prepared a social demographic profile and hired an independent agency, Taverner Research, to recruit between 30-40 residents. Taverner Research used the following indicators to ensure the panel was a mini-public, representing the broad demographics of the city. Current and former Councillors, state and federal MPs and current Council staff were the only exclusions from the panel. Neither Council staff nor Councillors selected the Panel members.

The overall engagement process and the community's opportunity to be involved were publicised through Council's website, through bookmarks distributed through Council facilities including libraries, leisure centres, pools, tourist parks, community and youth centres, as well as Neighbourhood Forums. Bookmarks were also made available in a wide variety of community meeting places across the local government area. Media briefings, media releases and Council's social media channels were used to broadly disseminate information. In early October 2013, a Council newsletter about the Securing our Future project was delivered to more than 80 000 households in the local government area. Advertisements were placed in The Advertiser throughout the project.

The engagement page on Council's website:
www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/securingourfuture
included survey and submission forms, background information, the fact sheets and community asset maps supplied to the panel participants and online discussion forums. During Step 1 and Step 2 engagement this page had **10,279** visits.

Step 3: Exhibition of Panel Report (5 to 20 November 2013)

Step 3 submissions **667** included **333** open submissions, **43** participants in an online discussion forum and **291** submissions via an online form. Four petitions were received with **600** (against closing Lakeside Leisure Centre), **13** (against closing Coalcliff Pool)**, 423** (against closing Unanderra Library), and **1416** (against closing Gentleman's Pool) signatories respectively.

Table 3: Step 3 Submission Key Themes

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree
Service level changes		
Lakeside leisure centre, close and sell land	3	39
Petition against:		600
Unanderra Library – close	4	55
Petitions against:		423
Coalcliff/Scarborough beach season reduce	4	190
Playgrounds, centralise	3	39
Community pools reduce season	3	31
Ocean rock pools – reduce and run to fail	3	401
Petition against closing Coalcliff Pool		13
Petition against closing Gentleman's Pool, Wollongong		1,416
Community facilities – demolish Coalcliff Hall	0	56
Efficiencies		
Russell Vale Golf Course - outsource	2	12
Tourism increase investment in assets/reduce marketing	6	13
GM & executive reduce	15	0
Human resources – reduce staffing levels	16	15
Library – shift to e-books and reduce book vote	7	17

Revenue sources	Agree	Disagree
Community pools – gold coin donation	9	23
Sports fields increase fees	5	19
Car parking increase fees	14	46
Rate rise	24	151

Note: this table incorporates late submissions that were not reported to Council in December 2013.

A number of participants N= 23 stated they would support a rate rise, in some instances higher than that proposed, as long as services were improved.

Step 4: Exhibition of options, draft Resourcing Strategy and draft Delivery Program (13 December 2013 to 5 February 2014)

Step 4 submissions totalled **800** which included **234** open submissions, **268** participants in an online quick poll, **20** hardcopy survey forms and **278** submissions via an online form. One (**1**) petition was received with **580** signatories.

Table 4: Step 4 Submission key themes

Support Option 1	Support Option 2	Support Option 3	Don't support any option	Don't specify an option
N= 178	N= 184	N= 260	N= 31	N= 141
22.5%	23%	32.5%	4%	18%
Themes			**Agree**	
Prefer to pay more rates to maintain services			82	
Support user pays			53	
Don't support a rate rise			70	
Support outsourcing			45	
Don't close Unanderra Library			53	
Don't close Lakeside Leisure Centre			20	
Keep rock pools			95	
Concerned about effect on employment			37	
Don't agree with Council's infrastructure choices			71	
Council needs to be more efficient			152	

Where to from here?

This Engagement Summary will form part of a report to Council at its meeting of 17 February 2014. If Councillors opt for a rate rise, Council will submit an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

Based on Council's decision, the draft Annual Plan, Capital Works program, Budget and Fees and Charges will be prepared and go on exhibition during April-May 2014.

Background to Project

Wollongong City Council commenced engaging with the community to create a Community Strategic Plan in June 2011. Through a comprehensive engagement process Council and the community held conversations around visions, goals and strategic objectives. We learnt about the community's priorities for their city, namely to make our city a vibrant, engaging and connected place that our community and visitors can enjoy and be proud of. The long-term vision reflected these goals and the community's love of place:

> *From the mountains to the sea, we value and protect our natural environment and we will be leaders in building an educated, creative and connected community.*

Our Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Resource Strategies were adopted in June 2012. We engaged more people in this process than ever before in a strategic management plan exhibition. The engagement process was varied and widespread and included:

- a community reference panel held in 2011 to understand how the community wanted to communicate and engage with Council;
- vision surveys of children and adults;
- community conversations at markets and fairs;
- a series of Town hall talks with experts on aspects of the quadruple bottom line to inspire thoughts of future change;
- a two day community summit where the vision was written and first draft goals prepared;
- refining workshops with community and agency representatives; and
- exhibition of the draft documents.

Through the 2012-2022 Resource Strategy we commenced a conversation around the next challenge we as an organisation and community need to meet: "to decide if we should, and can, provide enough funding to renew long lived assets used in providing existing levels of service." (*p6) We stated that if "not funded in this way, concession needs to be made that the existing services may not be possible in the future without significant impact on a future generation." (*p7)

Three scenarios were introduced in the Resource Strategy:

Scenario 1 – forecasts how to continue existing services and revenue as a base line.
Scenario 2 – includes rates increases to move to a targeted surplus operating budget.
Scenario 3 - suggests a mix of changes including rate and revenue increases, increased productivity savings program, sale of property and reductions in services. (*p13).

The exhibition of the Annual Plan 2013-14 engaged the community in confirming our actions in moving towards achieving the 5 year Delivery Program.

*Wollongong City Council, Resource Strategy 2012-2022 Summary

Through the engagement process which commenced in September 2013 Council is seeking to make a decision informed by community feedback, about how to deliver a sustainable financial position for Council.

A mix of operational and efficiency improvements, changes to service levels and changes to funding sources will be considered.
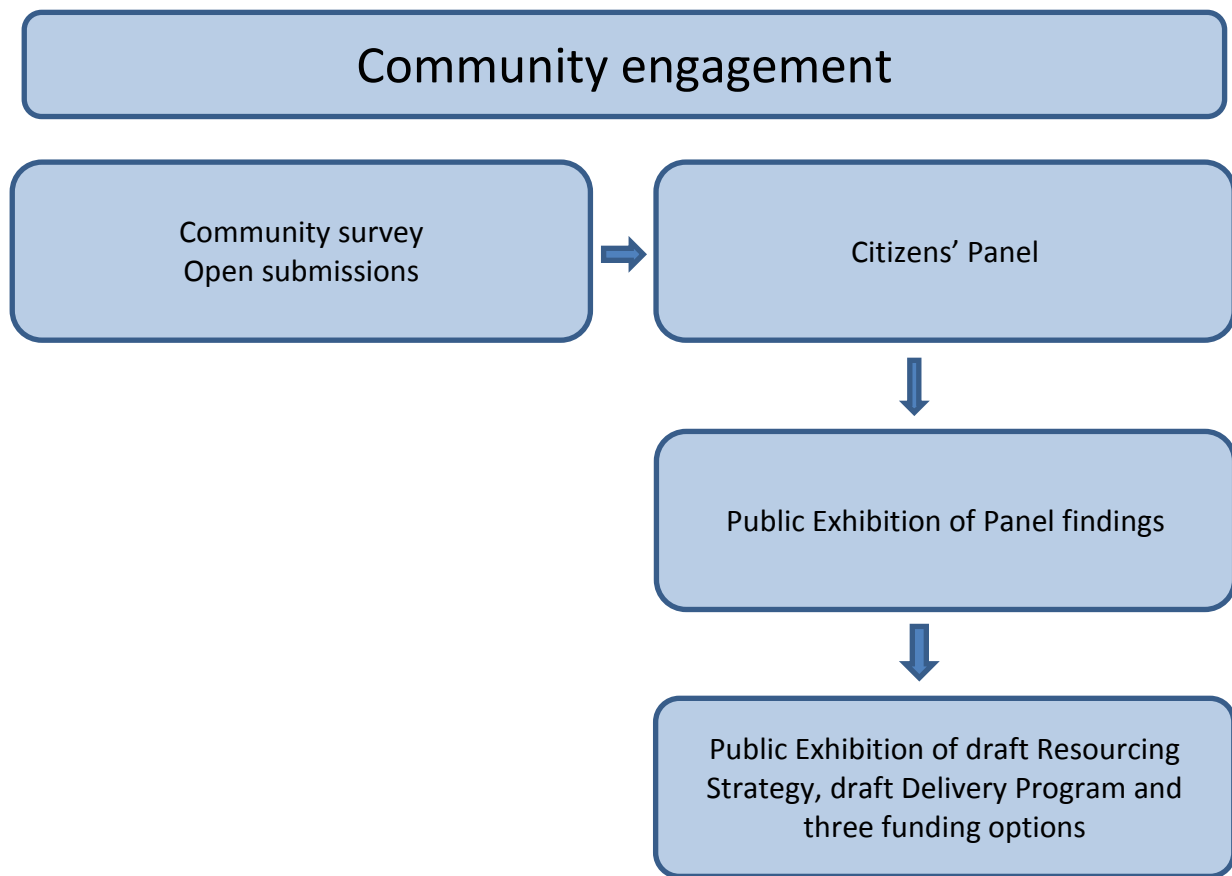
The community engagement objective in the Securing our Future Program is to:

- Seek feedback from the community in identifying priority services, service levels and funding sources.

The engagement process for Step 1 involved three groups of stakeholders:

1 The **community** of whom Council asked the following questions:
   a What are the priority services for Council to deliver and to what level should Council deliver these services? (Service and service level reviews)
   b How should Council fund the delivery of these services to the desired level? (Funding sources).

2 **Staff** of whom Council asked:
   a What are the opportunities to achieve operational and efficiency improvements?
   b What are the priority services for Council to deliver and to what level should Council deliver these services? (Service and service level reviews)
   c How should Council fund the delivery of these services to the desired level? (Funding sources)
   d What are the opportunities to increase Council revenue?

3 **Councillors** of whom Council asked:
   a What are the opportunities to achieve operational and efficiency improvements?
   b What are the priority services for Council to deliver and to what level should Council deliver these services? (Service and service level reviews)
   c How should Council fund the delivery of these services to the desired level? (Funding sources)
   d What are the opportunities to increase Council revenue?

Summary of Engagement Plan: Community

Community engagement

| Community survey Open submissions | → | Citizens' Panel |

↓

Public Exhibition of Panel findings

↓

Public Exhibition of draft Resourcing Strategy, draft Delivery Program and three funding options

Step 1 Engagement

Methodology – September & October, 2013

Council resolved to undertake a financial sustainability review to address Council's long term finances and the city's ageing infrastructure. In the past five years we have been able to improve Council's operational expenditure and put the $20.3 million we have saved into the improvement of assets like roads, footpaths, buildings and drains. However, this is not enough and, as some of our roads, footpaths, storm water drains and buildings get older, we need to fund renewal and replacement work.

Council wanted to have a conversation with the community around some options regarding efficiency savings, priority services, service levels and funding sources.

Table 5: Engagement activities Step 1

Activity	Target Audience	Schedule
Open submissions Online survey Online discussion forum	Residents	October 8, 2013 (closing date)

The community were asked to make submissions to the panel. The community could do this via open submissions, an online survey, and/or an open discussion forum. The survey asked participants to rate whether services should be maintained, reduced or increased. It also provided an opportunity to suggest efficiencies and possible ways to increase revenue. The online discussion board asked: "What are the top two things you want the Citizens Panel to think about?" All survey, forum and submission results were collated and given to the Citizens' Panel to help inform their discussions.

Stakeholders

The engagement strategy identified the key stakeholders of the project as: residents of the entire LGA, Neighbourhood Forums, community action groups, licenced community operators of Council owned facilities, Surf Life Saving Clubs, clubs and service organisations and Council Reference and Advisory Groups.

The call for submissions to the Citizens Panel opened on 20 September and closed on 8 October.

Promotional Materials
Information Package

Information packs were produced and distributed at a number of Council sites throughout the Local Government Area. The packs consisted of Frequently Asked Question Sheets and bookmarks that encouraged the community to view information about securing our future on the Council website.   The information packs were distributed to all Council libraries, Beaton Park and Lakeside Leisure Centres, Bulli, Corrimal, and Windang Tourist

Parks, Wollongong You Centre, council pools, and a range of Neighbourhood, Youth and Community Centres throughout the LGA. Neighbourhood Forum convenors met with Straight Talk around the Citizens panel and community submission process. They were shown the website and asked to pass out bookmarks.

Community Newsletter

Council's October newsletter was dedicated to the Securing our Future project with three of the pages outlining the engagement process in both text and diagrammatical form, why we are going through this review process, background information including statistics and results of the Community Survey 2012. This newsletter was distributed to more than 80, 000 households during the first week of October 2013.

Media Activities

Print and Broadcast Media

A media release was produced and sent through to local media outlets on 10 September announcing the Securing our Future project, and a further media release issued on 20 September launching a call for submissions to the Citizens Panel. Additionally, the call for submissions was promoted in the Council pages in *The Advertiser* on 25 September.

Online Media

The use of online media supported the engagement process. The Council website hosted a page for Securing Our Future and all promotional materials, including a survey, videos and discussions boards were available on the webpage. The link to the Securing our future webpage has been extensively shared and promoted via Council's Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Step 1 Results

The following section presents the results of the engagement strategies undertaken as part of Step 1. Table 6 below provides a summary of strategies and activities undertaken, participants involved, and the number of participants attending or interacting at each engagement activity.

Table 6: Submissions received Step 1

Engagement Focus	Activity	Stakeholders	Number of Participants (N)	Close Date
Submissions to the panel	Open submissions	Community	N=11	October 8
	Online survey	Community	N=167	October 8
	Online discussion forum	Community	N=14 (19 comments)	October 8

Open Submissions

There were 11 open submissions to the Citizens' Panel from forums or associates. All of these submissions were directly supplied to the Citizens' panel to help inform their discussions and decision making. The submissions were made by:

> Neighbourhood Forum 8;
> Neighbourhood Forum 4;
> Friends of the Botanical Gardens;
> Save our Services; and
> 7 individual members of the community.

Survey Submissions to the Panel

A community survey was created to gather data on resident and key stakeholders' ideas about the Securing our Future project. The survey was comprised of both rating scales in relation to the Council's services as well as three open ended questions. One hundred and sixty seven participants completed the survey. The results of the survey were given to the Citizens' panel to help inform their discussions and decision making. The following analysis is broken into quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Quantitative survey analysis
Participants could select only one option out of four as their response from: (i) do not run service at all; (ii) decrease the level of service; (iii) maintain the current level of service; and (iv) increase the level of service. Table 7 below outlines the percentage of participants who responded to each of the rating options.

Table 7: Survey ratings for level of service categories Step 1

Service Category	Do not run service at all %	Decrease the level of service %	Maintain the current level of service %	Increase the level of service %	No answer %
Aged and Disability Services	1.89	4.72	**51.42**	27.83	14.15
Aquatic Services	0.47	5.66	**66.04**	15.06	12.74
Botanic Gardens and Nursery	0.00	7.55	**52.83**	26.89	12.47
City Centre Management	1.89	23.58	**46.23**	16.04	12.26
Community Facilities	0.94	10.38	**57.08**	18.40	13.21
Community Programs	4.27	13.68	**44.81**	23.11	13.68
Corporate Strategy	3.30	23.11	**53.77**	5.19	14.62
Crematorium and Cemeteries	7.08	12.26	**63.21**	3.30	14.15
Cultural Services	3.77	17.45	**40.57**	24.53	13.68
Development Assessment and Certification	0.00	5.19	**66.51**	14.62	13.68
Economic Development	2.36	19.34	**46.23**	17.92	14.15
Emergency Management	0.94	8.02	**67.45**	8.49	15.09
Environment Services	0.94	5.19	35.85	**46.23**	11.79
Financial Services	1.89	20.75	**57.55**	3.30	16.51
Governance and Administration	1.42	27.36	**54.25**	2.36	14.62
Human resources	0.47	24.53	**54.72**	6.13	14.15
Information and Communications Technology	3.30	13.21	**61.79**	6.13	15.57
Infrastructure Planning and Support	1.42	14.62	**64.15**	4.72	15.09
Integrated Customer Service	0.47	13.68	**66.51**	4.25	15.09
Land Use Planning	0.00	6.60	**62.74**	17.45	13.21
Leisure Services	6.60	20.28	**46.23**	13.21	13.68
Library Services	0.94	11.32	**55.19**	18.87	13.68
Natural Area Management	0.47	5.66	33.02	**47.64**	13.21
Parks and Sports Fields	0.00	14.15	**60.38**	11.32	15.14
Public Health	0.94	4.72	**70.28**	8.96	15.09
Public Relations	2.36	33.49	**41.98**	5.66	16.51
Regulatory Controls	0.00	10.85	**57.08**	17.92	17.92
Stormwater Services	0.00	3.30	**63.21**	17.45	16.04
Tourist Parks	12.74	21.23	**44.34**	7.55	14.15
Transport Services	0.94	6.60	**53.30**	26.42	12.74
Waste Management	0.47	4.25	**65.09**	16.98	13.21
Youth Services	5.19	11.79	**46.70**	22.17	14.15

The participant rating data outlines the percentage of participants who rated each of the four options in their responses. Participants could choose only one option. In the table, the most common response across the four options is highlighted in bold font. For the most part, the most common rating for changes to services was to 'maintain the current level of service'. There were two exceptions to this, where the majority of participants selected to 'increase the level of service'. These two service categories were Environmental Services and Natural Area Management. What is interesting here, is the interrelated nature of these two service areas and the investment participants have in seeing an increase in the level of service for environmental protection.

Based on these results, what is also interesting and relevant to Securing our Future is where there were more responses scaled towards either increasing or reducing a particular service. This offers an indication as to how palatable changes may be in a more specific area. There are a few services with notable differences in participant preferences after the preferred option to maintain the service. Service areas with over 20% of support for increasing the level of service included:

- Aged and disability services (27.83%)
- Botanic gardens and nursery (26.89%)
- Community Programs (23.11%)
- Cultural Services (24.53)
- Transport services (26.42%).

Services that had 20% or more support for a decrease included:

- City Centre Management (25.38%)
- Corporate Strategy (23.11%)
- Financial Services (20.75%)
- Governance and Administration (27.36%)
- Human Resources (24.53%)
- Leisure Services (20.28%)
- Public Relations (33.49%)
- Tourist Parks (21.23%).

Qualitative survey analysis
There were three open-ended survey questions that prompted participants to consider in more detail their ideas for the efficiencies and services of Wollongong. These three questions are referred to as Q1, Q2 and Q3:

Q1. Do you have any ideas about how we can work smarter to improve any of the service areas listed above?

Q2. There are three possible funding sources for each service. These are rates, grants and user pays. Are there any reasonable opportunities for how council might increase funding for any of the 33 service areas listed in the previous section?

Q3. Do you have any additional comments about the Securing our Future project?

The following table provides an overview of the themes that emerged from the open ended survey responses. For Q1, 12 overarching themes emerged. The number of instances where a theme was mentioned across the participants' responses is captured in the right sided columns of the table. The number includes any references to the theme including varied attitudes and beliefs. For instance 'rates' includes both participants who were for or against a rate rise. Therefore the table provides an overview of the key areas that participants referred to in their responses rather than an indication of their preferences.

Table 8: Qualitative themes and number of responses per question Step 1

	Theme	Q1	Q2	Q3
1	Streamline processes, staff efficiency and projects	24	9	7
2	Rates (either increase or decrease)	4	21	6
3	User Pays (pro or against)	4	26	6
4	Environmental Sustainability	13	4	7
5	Cultural, Community and Arts Development	9	6	6
6	Tourism and visitor dollars	4	4	8
7	Commercialisation	15	12	8
8	Maintain or change services, assets or infrastructure	31	18	24
9	Communication and involvement of community in council projects and events	8	3	17
10	Relationships between local and State Governments	7	11	6
11	Local business support and employment	14	5	1
12	Other	13	12	20
13	Revenue Opportunities	0	40	12
14	Spending	0	5	0
15	Efficiencies	0	3	4
16	Questions	0	0	0

The responses of the table are now explored in more depth in relation to each of the three questions.

Table 9: Do you have any ideas about how we can work smarter to improve any of the service areas listed above?

Overarching Code	Thematic Codes	Examples and key themes and improvements	No. of overall responses
Streamline processes, staff efficiency and projects	Administration, staff and project efficiencies and spending	- Communication between management and councillors - Coordination of departments and units - New skills and strategies, consolidate middle management positions - Rationalise similar services, manage projects within budget - Reduce costs and waste - Reduction in upper middle management pay - Respond to community questions faster	19
	Other	- Linkages to local businesses - Merge communications on projects e.g. council clean up and resource recovery	2
Rates	Yes	- In favour of a rate rise	3
	No	- Preference for user pays	1
User Pays	Yes	- For pools, child care and beaches - For developers and subdivision fees	3
Environmental sustainability	Environmental protection	- Strategic regeneration of bushland areas - Reduce landfill - Energy efficient buildings - Management of natural resources and areas - Stormwater management - Bushcare and natural area restoration	11
	Long-term planning	- Always consider long-term implications - 'Be visionary'	3

Overarching Code	Thematic Codes	Examples and key themes and improvements	No. of overall responses
Cultural, Community and Arts Development	Community and cultural development	- Celebrate cultural diversity - Good urban design, people friendly facilities - Create more community spaces - Collaborative vibrant city centre - Sporting and cultural events	8
	Public art	- Encourage local artists	1
Tourism and Visitor Dollars	Attract tourism	- New events interest in the city - Grand Pacific Drive - Attract more tourism	4
	User pays	- Parking and beach usage	2
Commercialisation	Partnerships and linkages	- Increase linkages with local businesses - Licence facilities to communities and groups - Have paid concerts at the Botanical Gardens and on public sites	8
	Outsourcing and contracting	- Contract outdoor work - Contract all non-core services - Provide tenders to Wollongong based companies	5
	Privatisation	- Lease recreational assets to private companies	1

Overarching Code	Thematic Codes	Examples and key themes and improvements	No. of overall responses
Maintain or change services, assets or infrastructure	Maintain or enhance	- Access to council funded gyms and youth services - Maintenance of assets including Mt Keira - Community liaison and neighbourhood forums - Bike paths, dog beaches, community halls - Funding of arts - City facelift - Good design and publicity for Wollongong - Transport hubs and cycling facilities - Community spaces - Assistance to retail sector - Beach rubbish removal on the weekends	20
	Cut or reduce services and/or funding	- Care, culture leisure and health - Golf clubs - Street cleaning - Mall updates - Upgrade of shopfronts - Council car fleet - Cultural services - High risk shares - CCTV cameras - Underutilised services	17
Communication and involvement of community in projects	Improvements to communications	- Improve communication between council and rate payers - Modernise PR practices - Take advice from neighbourhood forums - Improve the representation of council - Advertising of events ahead of time	9
Relationship between Local and State Governments	Funding from State or Federal governments	- Reduce duplication with State and Federal governments - Reduce services that are better provided by other levels of government - Don't spend on big projects that should be State funded	6
	Local government	- Merge with Shellharbour	1

Overarching Code	Thematic Codes	Examples and key themes and improvements	No. of overall responses
		council	
Local business support and employment	Attract local business	- Outsource some services to local business - Attract business to the area - Support small businesses - Support ethical and local businesses - Employ more citizens	8
	Utilise volunteers	- Leverage volunteer grants - Contract to volunteers - Employ local disadvantaged groups	6
Other	Ideas & Comments	- Follow Sydney City Council in waste collection and renewable energy systems - Invest in a positive story about Wollongong - Future fund for assets	13

Table 10: There are three possible funding sources for each service. These are rates, grants and user pays. Are there any reasonable opportunities for how council might increase funding for any of the 33 service areas listed in the previous section?

Overarching Code	Thematic Code	Examples and key themes	No. of responses
Streamline processes, staff efficiency and projects (n=24)	Administration and project efficiencies and spending	- Services and project delivery costing - Reduce labour costs - More accurate project cost estimations - Run construction more effectively	9
Rates	Yes	- Indexed to CPI - Small rate rise (n=4) - Rates should provide for services rather than cut	12
	No	- Rates already too high - Should be user pays	5
	Conditional	- Higher rates for tourism providers and business - Rates specific to property services - For developers and high income earners	6
User Pays	Yes	- Libraries, beaches, pools (leisure services) - Only for non-residents	16
	No	- Already too high - Impacts equitable access	5
	Conditional	- For leisure services - Not youth services or services that benefit lower-socio-economic groups. - Carefully selected services - Parking and camping areas - Rubbish dumping and tree removal - Income relative - Non-resident parking - Commercial fitness providers	15
Environmental sustainability	Environmental protection	- Developers should be responsible for environmental costs - Natural area management - Reduce household waste	4

Overarching Code	Thematic Code	Examples and key themes	No. of responses
Cultural, Community and Arts Development	Community and cultural development	- Run youth services - Assist community involvement - Assist local clubs and organisations	4
	Public art	- Support art and placemaking	1
Tourism and Visitor Dollars	Attract tourism	- Assist marketing to bring tourism to the area	1
	User pays	- User pays non-resident parking	3
Commercialisation	Partnerships and linkages	- Join with Landcare - Community based agriculture and local food production - Commercial retail sector gains - Rates for tourism providers	4
	Outsourcing and contracting	- Council owned assets and tourist parks - Leisure services	3
	Privatisation	- Sell caravan parks	3
	Resistance	- Limit consultants and outsourcing	1
Maintain or change services, assets or infrastructure	Maintain and enhance	- Pools (non-fee paying) (N=4) - Maintain what are exceptional services and increase rates - Creek lines and reserves - Community groups - Council youth services - Public art and place making - Equitable access - Environmental sustainability	11
	Cut or reduce services and funding	- Cultural and sporting activities - Low priority services - New projects such as the Blue Mile or projects not within budget - Caravan parks - Shopfront upgrades - Underutilised libraries and services	8

Overarching Code	Thematic Code	Examples and key themes	No. of responses
Communication and involvement of community in projects	Yes	- Community partnerships - Communicate improvements and community benefits in proportion to rate increase - Mobilise community responsibility and decision making	3
Relationship between Local and State Governments	State and Federal Governments	- Refuse to fund projects that are State or Federal governments responsibilities - Limit cost shifting from State government - Community groups awareness of state and federal funding	8
	Other	- Better alignment in grant priorities - Apply for grants for NGOs	3
Local business support and employment	Assist community groups and grants	- Encourage community and volunteer groups - Assist community groups	4
Revenue Opportunities	Opportunities	- Increase rates for larger businesses - Income relative user pays - Developers charged for environmental costs - User pays for waste services - Fines for illegal dumping - Sell caravan parks - Charge commercial public fitness providers more - Outsources services and tourist parks	30
	Grants	- Apply for more grant funding - Federal and State Government funding	11
	User pays	- User pays for businesses - Small amount - Services usage	5
	Rates increase	- Small or minimal rate rise - One off rate for infrastructure upgrades	9

Overarching Code	Thematic Code	Examples and key themes	No. of responses
Spending	Ideas	- More for volunteer programs - Environmental levies - Use section 94 for public art - Assist groups that apply for grants that benefit council services and facilities	5
Other	Ideas & Comments	- Need for equitable access to services - Deploy fundraisers for specific projects - No need to increase funding for any WCC service	9

Table 11: Do you have any additional comments about the Securing Our Future project?

Overarching Code	Thematic Code	Examples and key themes	No. of responses
Streamline processes, staff efficiency and projects (n=24)	Administration and project efficiencies and spending	- Better communication between divisions and units - Reduce staffing	7
Rates	Yes	- Wouldn't want to change services	3
	No	- Against rate increase	1
	Conditional	- As a last resort - Based on what the owner can afford rather than land value - Resent rates going to services	3
User Pays	Yes	- In preference to a rate rise	1
	No		0
	Conditional	- Weekend beach visitors parking - Port businesses - Parking fines	5
Environmental sustainability	Environmental protection	- Ecological outcomes maintained - Creek lines and natural area management - Integrate environmentally sustainable practices	4
	Long-term planning		2

Overarching Code	Thematic Code	Examples and key themes	No. of responses
Cultural, Community and Arts Development	Community and cultural development	- Creative and sustainable city cannot be compromised - Thriving city centre, accommodation and dining venues	6
	Public art		1
Tourism and Visitor Dollars	Attract tourism	- Upgrade Mt Keira lookout - Thriving city, beaches and parks and gardens to attract visitors - Commercial opportunities for tourism	7
	User pays	- Charge beach visitors	1
Commercialisation	Partnerships and linkages	- More accommodation and dining options in the Illawarra	1
	Outsourcing and contracting	- External financial review	1
	Privatisation	- Generate new revenue from tourism - Sell off properties - Lease gateway centre	3
	Resistance	- Use existing staff knowledge rather than outsourcing	3
Maintain or change services, assets or infrastructure	Maintain and/or enhance	- Local government functions and infrastructure - Managed funds and shares - Creek lines and natural areas - Development of a strong and vibrant community - Services delivering ecological outcomes - Community, youth and arts/ culture - Commercial confidence in Wollongong - Public facilities, pools, lakes and gardens - Community consultation - Environmentally sustainable practices - Equitable distribution of resources and services - Maintain assets - Upgrade Mt Keira lookout and natural attributes	19

Overarching Code	Thematic Code	Examples and key themes	No. of responses
	Reduce and/ or cut services	- Extra or new projects - Services that run at a loss - Items that are not 'core business' - Big projects such as the Mall and Blue Mile - Car fleet (lease or buy smaller cars)	10
Communication and involvement of community in projects	Yes	- Appreciation for asking for opinions and the quality of the consultation (n=6). - Consider the extensive consultation of the Community Strategic Plan - Ambitious project and possibly too few people to support it - Make decisions within council rather than non-experts - Panel review places stress on the public -	17
Relationship between Local and State Governments	State and Federal Governments	- Lobby State and Federal funding - -Turn responsibilities to State government	2
	Other	- Cooperate with other councils - Obtain grants where possible	2
Local business support and employment	Local jobs	- Create more jobs in the Illawarra	1
Revenue Opportunities	Opportunities	- Beachside parking fees for non-residents - Selling off property - Attract tourism and the visitor dollar (N=5)	11
Other	Ideas & Comments	- Appreciation for Council's efforts and foresighted approach to Securing our Future and asking community for their opinions - Detailed process that is difficult for public to digest - Reductions in wages including Councillors and Lord Mayor	19

Demographic Data

The final part of the survey asked participants for their demographic data including gender, age bracket and suburb of residence. These were non-compulsory survey questions. The responses are presented in Tables 12 to 14:

Table 12: Gender of Participants (%) Step 1
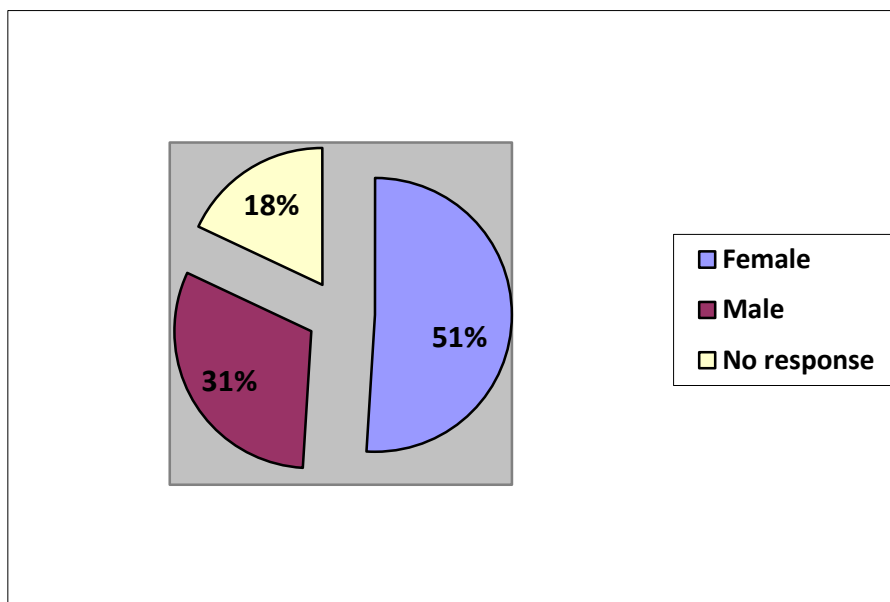
Table 13: Age of participants Step 1
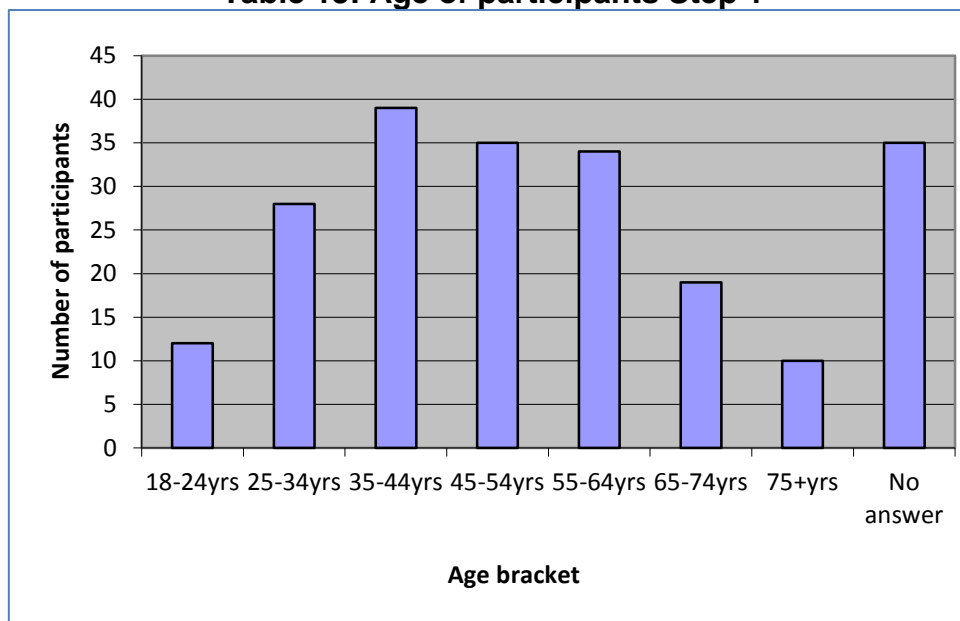
Table 14: Participants' Suburb of Residence Step 1

Ward 1 - Suburb	Number	Ward 2 – Suburb	Number	Ward 3 - Suburb	Number
Austinmer	5	Coniston	1	Berkeley	3
Balgownie	5	Cordeaux Heights	0	Brownsville	0
Bellambi	2	Cringila	0	Dapto	5
Bulli	9	Fairy Meadow	5	Flinders	1
Coalcliff	1	Farmborough Heights	4	Horsley	2
Coledale	7	Figtree	8	Kanahooka	1
Corrimal	9	Gwynneville	0	Koonawarra	0
Fern Hill	0	Keiraville	8	Lake Heights	1
Helensburgh	1	Mangerton	6	Penrose	0
Otford	1	Mt Keira	1	Port Kembla	3
Russell Vale	1	Mt Kembla	0	Primbee	0
Scarborough	0	Mt Ousley	3	Warilla	0
Stanwell Park	0	Mt Pleasant	2	Warrawong	0
Stanwell Tops	0	Mt St Thomas		Windang	0
Tarrawanna	0	North Wollongong	2		
Thirroul	8	Unanderra	4		
Towradgi	1	West Wollongong	2		
Wombarra	3	Wollongong	12		
Woonona	12				
TOTAL number of participants per ward	**65**		**58**		**16**
TOTAL % of population per ward	**46.8**		**41.7**		**11.5**

Online Discussion Forum

As well as the online surveys there was the opportunity for community members to write a comment on the public discussion forum. The comments were in response to the question: "what are the top two things you want the Citizens' Panel to think about?" Nineteen comments were submitted from fourteen people. The comments are summarised below in Table 15. The number of online users who clicked on the 'agree' or 'disagree' button is captured in the right columns.

Table 15: Online discussion forum comments and popularity Step 1

	Summarised comment	Agree	Disagree
1	Operational efficiencies and accountability for performance.	4	0
2	Property asset sales.	4	0
3	Criticism of Council employees as 'rats'.	2	3
4	Grow small business and a vibrant engaged community. The mall refurbishment does not contribute to this.	1	3
5	New vision for Wollongong in 20yrs. Make tourism more appealing through artwork at the information centre.	0	3
6	Mall was too expensive and ugly.	1	2
7	Individuals with a background of civic activity should be selected for engagement rather than a randomised community panel.	1	4
8	Serviceability of assets is understated and commercial and aesthetic considerations of lifecycle should be taken into account. Redirect any new capital works projects funding to asset renewal.	2	1
9	Invest in green infrastructure e.g. street lights. Reduce golf courses.	2	0
10	Northern Lagoon and Creek at Stanwell Park was poorly modified and blocked the creek.	3	1
11	Commercialise Bulli Tops.	3	1
12	Sell Council assets.	3	0
13	Businesses that lease near Lagoon should be responsible for maintaining area.	0	0
14	Secure local employment opportunities.	0	0
15	Expand Wollongong as a tourist destination, save legal fees by employing lawyers, investment in commercialisation of assets such as light house and kiosk.	0	2
16	Citizens panel is a good idea and should not attract so much criticism.	0	0
17	Maintain public assets as public assets and resist privatisation.	0	1
Total agree and disagree clicks		N=26	N=21
Total number of page views			N=469

Step 2 Engagement

Methodology – September & October, 2013

In September, a Citizens' Panel was formed to deliberate over the issues and provide recommendations on how Council could manage the financial gap into the future.

Deliberative engagement is a process whereby participants develop a position over time as a group, through learning about the technical aspects of the topic and hearing differing perspectives from 'expert' stakeholders and other participants. It differs from other forms of engagement where participants assert the view they already hold.

Deliberative processes seek value in collective wisdom. Deliberative engagement seeks to work with a representative sample of the community that includes a variety of views so that all voices are heard and discussions are not dominated by one participant, interest or pre-determined position. Deliberative techniques are heavily structured in order to reduce conflict between different interests. They build community capacity as representatives are given access to a detailed understanding of organisational processes, constraints and can help create opportunities and varied solutions. They also offer the organisation an opportunity to learn what information the community feels is valuable and how opinions may change. Council chose to convene a Citizens' Panel as an internationally recognised deliberative technique.

As the Panel membership needed to be representative of the Wollongong community Council prepared a social demographic profile and hired an independent agency, Taverner Research, to recruit between 30-40 residents. Taverner Research used the following indicators to ensure the panel was a mini-public, representing the broad demographics of the city:

- Varied location by Ward (north, central, south) with equal representation from each area
- Income
- Gender
- Age
- Tenants and home owners
- Language other than English.

Current and former Councillors, State and Federal Members of Parliament and current Council staff were the only exclusions from the panel. Neither Council staff nor Councillors selected the Panel members.

Table 16: Demographic profile of panel membership

Categories	Description	Demographic profile	Participant profile	
		Percentage	Number	Percentage
Service age groups	18-24 years (Tertiary / independent)	**13.4% of 18 years+**	5	**13.9%**
	25-34 years (Young workforce)	**16.2%**	5	**13.9%**
	35-49 years (Parents / homebuilders)	**26.0%**	9	**25.0%**
	50-59 years (Older workers / pre-retirees)	**16.3%**	6	**16.7%**
	60-69 years (Empty nesters retirees)	**12.9%**	6	**16.7%**
	70+ years (Seniors / elderly)	**15.3%**	5	**13.9%**
Ward	**North – ward 1**	N/A – Council wanted the Panel to evenly represent all three wards	13	**36.1%**
	Central – ward 2		11	**30.6%**
	South – ward 3		12	**33.3%**
Home tenure	**Own/buying**	**64.4%**	27	**75.0%**
	Renting	**29.3%**	9	**25.0%**
Gender	**Male**	**49.5%**	21	**58.3%**
	Female	**50.5%**	15	**41.7%**
Ethnicity	**Speaks only English**	**79.4%**	28	**77.8%**
	Speaks another language (NESB) (and English well/ very well/ not well/ not at all)	**17.6%**	8	**22.2%**
Qualifications	**No education above high school**	**43.9%**	13	**36.1%**
	Advanced diploma / diploma / vocational certificate	**28.7%**	14	**38.9%**
	Bachelor / higher degree	**16.8%**	9	**25.0%**

- *This profile excerpted from the Citizens' Panel Report Appendix B*

Thirty-four Panel members met on four occasions to formulate, discuss and consider Council services, revenue and budget. The Panel was led by independent facilitator Lucy Cole-Edelstein of Straight Talk, who led a similar process for Canada Bay Council in 2012. The Panel members were given detailed information on each of Council's services. Presentations were heard from members of Council's Executive and Senior Management Teams. The Panel was presented with the results of the Step 1 engagement surveys and submissions to consider as part of their deliberations.

These submissions and the fact sheets and maps prepared by Council were made available to the community on Council's community engagement page.

Table 17: Engagement Activities Step 2

Engagement Activity	Audience	Timeframe
Citizens Panel	Selection of Citizens' representative of the wider WCC electorate.	26 September 2 October 12-13 October 26-27 October

Step 2 Results

The Citizens' Panel produced a report including demographics, methodology and recommendations against each of the key review areas: Service levels, Efficiencies and Revenue. This report was compiled by Straight Talk with input and direction from the Citizens' Panel to outline the Panel's recommendations for review by the community and Councillors.

The Panel report describes their process as follows:

"Members of the Panel were everyday citizens who committed to spend a significant amount of time learning about issues affecting Council's budget. They were no more, or less, politically motivated that average citizens and unlike active citizens or representatives of special-interest groups, who routinely lobby Council, they had no vested interests. They worked together as a group, and not as individuals, to identify recommendations that would serve the common good and minimise impact on the community as a whole."

A full copy of the Report is attached as Appendix B.

Step 3 Engagement

Methodology – 5-20 November, 2013

Following the release of the Citizens' Panel final report on 5 November 2013, the report was placed on exhibition from the 5 November 2013 to the 20 November 2013. The Citizens' Panel final report included the Citizens' Panel overall findings and recommendations, and highlighted that such recommendations were necessary in order to secure future financial sustainaibility. Specific recommendations were made in three areas; service level changes, efficiencies and revenue sources. The community was asked to provide feedback on the report generally, and the recommendations specifically.

The key engagement tool for Step 3 engagement was an online submission form on the 'Have your say' website. This survey invited feedback from community members regarding: the overview of the Citizens' panel findings and recommendations, recommended service level changes, recommended efficiencies and recommended revenue sources. The online submission closes with an option to provide any other feedback.

Community members were also invited to email or write to Council to provide feedback. While these submissions did discuss a number of Citizen Panel recommendations, they also often discussed issues or concerns that were not part of the Citizens' Panel report. These issues and concerns were registered and included in 'other comments'.

On the 7 November 2013 Council staff convened a meeting with Neighbourhood Forum Convenors to discuss the process of the Citizens' Panel and their report, requesting members consider the recommendations and provide feedback.

Council staff were at Viva La Gong on Saturday 9 November 2013 to distribute promotional material, answer questions and invite further feedback.

Table 18: Engagement Activities for Step 3

Activity	Distribution	Target Audience	Schedule
Step 3	Information kiosk at Viva • Distributed promotional material • Provided opportunity for feedback & information to stakeholders.	Community	9 November 2013, 11.00am-1pm
	Neighbourhood Forum Convenors meeting • Information sharing session	Neighbourhood Forums Community	7 November, 6-7.30pm
	Information pack Consisted of a cover sheet explaining background and how to have a say, the Citizens' Panel report, poster and promotional bookmarks. • Distributed to all Council libraries, community centres, Youth Centre, leisure centres & tourist parks.	Residents Service users	Distributed by 6 November 2013

Stakeholders

The engagement strategy identified the key stakeholders of the project as: residents of the entire Local Government Area, all members of Council's Reference Groups, members of health services, community, sporting, education, business and surf lifesaving groups, and Neighbourhood Forums. Internal stakeholders were identified in order to maximise distribution of the report and promotion of the exhibition period to networks throughout the Wollongong area. Email lists and databases developed through ongoing engagement processes, including community groups and networks were used to promote the engagement and online opportunity to have a say.

Promotional Materials
Information Package

Information packs were produced and distributed at a number of Council sites throughout the Local Government Area. The packs consisted of a cover sheet explaining the background to the project and how to have your say, the Citizens' Panel's report, a poster and promotional bookmarks. The information pack was distributed to all Council Libraries, Beaton Park and Lakeside Leisure Centres, Bulli, Corrimal and Windang Tourist Parks, Wollonong Youth Centre, Council pools and a range of other youth and community centres throughout the local government area.

Media Activities
Print and Broadcast Media

A media release was produced and sent through to local media outlets on 5 November. Advertisement inviting the community to read the Citizens' Panel Report and make a submission to Council appeared on 6, 13 and 20 November in The Advertiser.

A number of news articles have appeared in both print and broadcast media during the exhibition period, including use of the Illawarra Mercury's online comments facility.

Online Media

The use of online media supported the engagement process during the exhibition period. The Securing our Future webpage was updated with messages about the process of the Citizens' panel as well as copies of key documents, a discussion form and submission process. The link to the Securing our future webpage has been extensively shared and promoted via Council's Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Step 3 Results

The following section presents the results of the various engagement strategies undertaken, detailing the responses gained from the results of the survey. Table 19 below provides a summary of strategies and activities undertaken, participants involved, and the number of participants attending or interacting at each engagement activity.

Table 19: Attendance at Engagement Activities

Activity	Stakeholders	Number of Participants (N)	Date
Information Kiosk at Viva	General community	65	9 November
Neighbourhood Forum convenors information session	Neighbourhood Forum members	7	7 November
Online discussion forum	General community	745	24 - 28 June
Web hits	General community	10,279	21 November

Table 20: Number of submissions received

Type	Number of Submissions (N)
Online submission form	292
Open letters or emails	333
Petition 1: Don't close Lakeside Leisure Centre	488
Petition 2: Don't close Coalcliff pool	13
Petition 3: Don't close Unanderra library	423

Open Submissions

There were 15 open submissions to the Step 3 engagement from forums or groups.

The submissions were made by:

> Coalcliff Community Association
> Illawarra Cricket Association
> Multicultural Reference Group
> National Trust, Illawarra Shoalhaven Branch
> Neighbourhood Forum 3
> Neighbourhood Forum 5/6
> Neighbourhood Forum 8
> Nutrition Australia NSW Division
> Otford Protection Society
> Russell Vale Golf and Social Club
> Save our Services
> Scarborough-Wombarra Surf Life Saving Club
> Surf Life Saving Illawarra
> United Services Union
> Wollongong City Surf Life Saving Club
>
> 318 individual members of the community made open submissions.

Online discussion forum

An online discussion forum was launched on 5 November 2013 to provide an opportunity to engage in discussion with fellow community members and ask questions of Council. The following question framed the discussion:

> *Following four workshops and a process of intense deliberation the Citizens' Panel has prepared a report for Council on their recommendations. Do you have any comments on their recommendations?*

The forum provided an opportunity for community members to provide their own comments, as well as respond to other participants' comments. Table 21 summarises the comments posted, and whether other participants agreed or disagreed with such comments.

Table 21: Online Forum Participant Comments Step 3

	Summarised comment	Agree	Disagree
1	Have commercial tenants in Southern Gateway Centre Which pools will be 'run to fail?' - we need more pools Cut Viva La Gong	4	1
2	Questioning of the panel members and the spread of income level, suburb and gender Appalling suggestions to cut public services. Especially ocean pools as part of healthy communities	7	1
3	Consider land usage fees (for indigenous people)	2	7
4	*Unclear response*	0	2
5	Access to services that benefit the whole community (pools and libraries). Resistance to private usage	0	1
6	Do not cut tidal ocean pools servicing. All surf clubs use the tidal pools for training and they are needed for safe swimming.	12	0
7	Libraries can go, pools to stay.	0	1
8	Concerns about land use entitlements	0	0
9	*Extended response included as open submission instead*	3	1
10	Against rate increases. Mt Keira Rd needs urgent upgrade and Summit Park needs to be leased.	0	1
11	Wollongong has a brief to promote healthy lifestyle, promote tourism and bring jobs to the Illawarra - therefore maintain playgrounds, pools and libraries Rock pools are one of Wollongong's greatest assets – historically, socially and health giving	8	0
12	Closing children's playground is not a solution.	12	0
13	*Extended response included as open submission instead.*	2	5
14	Reduce waste on capital works and hours of labour e.g. weekends Close small parks that are underutilised Consolidate libraries but provide mobile access	5	0
15	Retain council management of Russell Vale Golf Club	0	2

	Summarised comment	Agree	Disagree
16	Do not charge access to healthy living facilities - they bring social, health and equal access to the community	10	0
17	Utilise green space opportunities	1	1
18	Generally happy with citizens panel (cp) recommendations Develop Puckey's Estate Reserve and lease out	3	3
19	Concern for the legitimacy of Citizens' panel. Changing services or assets in the community is a short sighted approach	8	1
20	Set affordable rates for rental of community halls.	0	1
21	Generally happy with CP recommendations Need lifecycle cost analysis for future projects Councillors need to report back to the panel Charities burdened already with illegal dumpers Divestment in council land assets	2	0
22	Council postage costs are $274,00 - therefore use email/ electronic forms instead	12	0
23	Leasing of property	0	0
24	*Unclear response*	0	0
25	*Unclear response*	0	0
26	*Unclear response*	0	0
27	Questions about the payment of Citizens' panel members	2	1
28	Lakeside Leisure Centre is important asset to a healthy and vibrant community as well as servicing the changing needs of the community	3	1
29	Sell Lakeside	0	1
30	Keep the rock pools - they are a unique asset to the Illawarra	6	0
31	The Bulli Pool is used as part of Bulli High's PE and sport programs and fundamental to this continuing	10	0
32	Pools are needed for children and lifesaving programs	10	0
33	Ocean pools are a national treasure and draw tourism	10	0
34	The pools are a unique asset to Wollongong – both egalitarian and positive for social wellbeing	6	0

	Summarised comment	Agree	Disagree
35	Criticism of council processes and promises about projects e.g. Bald Hill Concerns about tender processes and costs as well as road repair costs and management	5	0
36	Remove department inefficiencies	0	0
37	The ocean pools add considerable value to the Illawarra – locals and tourists.	6	0
38	*Unclear response*	1	0
39	While democratic, the CP does not represent the community	0	0
40	Have road levies for heavy rigid class trucks Undertake works that are community requested rather than imposed	2	0
41	Recreational and community assets are essential (pools, parks, beaches, libraries). Maintain beaches, parks and escarpment	1	0
42	Lack of trust that the comments from this forum will be taken notice of by Council	1	0
43	It is short sighted for ocean pools to disappear – they are unique and attract visitors Develop sustainable long term solutions	1	0
44	Question the integrity of the online survey process	1	0
45	Lakeside is essential to community health including seniors and disability classes	0	1
46	Contract all essential services to the private sector	1	0
47	User pays should be introduced for localised services	0	0
48	*Unclear response*	0	0
49	Send industry elsewhere	0	0
50	Businesses should be charged more	0	0
51	Efficiencies of council are questioned	0	0
	Total agree and disagree clicks	**N=156**	**N=32**
	Total number of page views	**N=745**	

Submissions

Feedback from both open and online submissions has been collated into the following tables. The tables are arranged by the headings provided in the Citizens' Panel Report. The Panel's recommendations have been summarised below so this section should be considered alongside a copy of the original report to ensure full clarity.

A strong response to the report was that participants felt that: there was insufficient detail in the Citizens Panel Report to comment on specific changes or recommendations; that the Step 3 engagement period was too short; that Panel members had done the work of elected representatives; and that there needed to be greater transparency and communication surrounding the process, the recommendations and the information used in the deliberative process.

While a number of participants provided highly emotive responses, there was quite a significant amount of detailed information provided in the submissions. Some of the more noteworthy comments were not specific to any of the recommendations, but instead took a large scale approach. Participants claimed that they had concerns around increased levels of unemployment that might arise from outsourcing and/or efficiencies, and that decreased staff levels could lead to poor service provision. There was disagreement between participants on whether the recommendations would work, and the extent to which Council should be able to make a profit from commercial services if they were run more efficiently.

The impact on the city, in terms of both cleanliness and image of Wollongong on the one hand, and tourism and economic development on the other, was highlighted in the responses from participants. Participants felt that without sufficient services, the city would become less attractive, and affect Wollongong's capacity for economic development. Tourism was highlighted as a potential growth area, but one that is underpinned by service delivery.

Finally, questions of social inclusivity, liveability and the health of the community were raised throughout the submissions. In this sense, a number of submissions asked that social costs be considered before economic costs.

Question 1: Do you have any comment on the Citizens' Panel's findings and recommendations?

While many participants did not provide comments on this section, there was positive support for the principles underpinning the Citizens' Panel process and report. In particular, N=26 supported that Council follow the principle 'spend the community's money wisely', and N=38 agreed that Council should do everything possible to avoid a rate rise, including tightening the belt via efficiencies and service level changes. In the context of support for such principles, N=125 disagreed with the recommended rate rise of a maximum of 7-75% over three years.

Table 22: Do you have any comments on the recommended Service Level Changes?

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Indicative Comments
Lakeside Leisure Centre – close and sell land	3	39	• Treat the same way as Beaton Park – increase income from third party operators. • Lakeside provides many services that other fitness centres don't such as child minding, squash, tennis, group classes. • Needs to be promoted better to increase utilisation.
			Note: Petition received against proposal, see below. N=488
Pensioner interest remove exemption	1	22	• It is a low act to hit pensioners with higher fees.
Unanderra Library – close	4	49	• The hours have recently been extended to meet community demand. • Service the area with a mobile instead. • This is a low-socio-economic area that needs a library.
			Note: Petition received against proposal, see below. N=423
Coalcliff/ Scarborough reduce beach season	4	185	• There is a strong risk of death if patrolled hours are reduced. • The beaches are remote and it will take too long for help to come if someone is in trouble. • Shift the patrolled time to later in the day out of the harshest sun in the middle of the day. • For much of the season, a three hour Lifeguard Service, from 1430 to 1730, would be sufficient at Coalcliff. A full service should be maintained from mid-December to mid-February.
Events reduce fireworks/ reduce Viva contribution	20	17	• These events bring tourist dollars to the area. • Wollongong needs more events, no less.
Urban renewal and civic improvement	2	7	• Out city looks old and tatty, we need it to be vibrant.

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Indicative Comments
Playgrounds – centralise and reduce small	3	39	• We need to be able to walk to a park, not just drive. • Larger parks are too crowded and small children can't enjoy the experience.
Community pools – reduce season	3	31	• What is being suggested here? • Is this in alignment with the pool users' survey? • It is hard to get to the pool when you work full-time.
Community pools Berkeley reduce hours	1	22	• Is this in alignment with the pool users' survey? • It is hard to get to the pool when you work full-time.
Ocean rock pools reduce	3	360	• The rock pools are icons and part of the Illawarra's cultural heritage. • These beaches are dangerous places to swim in the open oceans. The pools increase safety. • The pools are actively used by clubs, nippers and schools. • Reduce costs by multi-tasking staff – lifeguards could also clean the pool. • It doesn't make sense to close Coalcliff pool after upgrading the toilets. • These pools feature in all our tourism and advertising campaigns so surely that shows they are important. Note: 61 specifically opposed closing Coalcliff pool, and 126 specifically opposed closing Northern Beach's Tidal Pools
			Note: Petition received against closing Coalcliff Rock Pool N=13
Community facilities rationalise	5	19	• These are important community meeting places. • The community built them so they belong to us. • The fees are too high to encourage usage.

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Indicative Comments
Community facilities Coalcliff Hall demolish	0	51	• Treat the same way as Beaton Park – increase income from third party operators. • The fees are too high to encourage usage. • The hall is used as emergency accommodation. • Let the community run it instead.
Pensioner waste exemptions remove	0	19	• It is a low act to hit pensioners with higher fees. • This will encourage illegal dumping.
Charitable waste exemptions remove	2	13	• This will encourage illegal dumping
Learning and development reduce CATS program	4	23	• Council is a major employer in the area. This will affect training opportunities for young people.
Crematorium - exit	2	19	• Manage the business better to make a profit.
Parks reduce number of small	6	29	• Some parks are currently unusable because they are not maintained.
Mechanical street sweeping reduce	4	14	• I didn't know you did it now. • Consider the image of the city and its impact on tourist dollars.
Community engagement reduce	4	9	• This is unwise, we don't get enough now. • Residents need to be engaged more not less.
Crown Street façade – one off program	5	5	
Community development review	2	2	• What does this mean?
Environmental programs and partnerships review	2	4	• Yes, a review should take place • This is an excellent program.
Environmental assessment and compliance review	1	1	• With climate change, increased risk of bushfire and flood this should not be reduced.
Social planning reduce	2	1	• Agree.

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Indicative Comments
Footpaths expand lifespan	5	6	• People will hurt themselves.
Overall comments	N/A	N/A	• A lot of money seems to be spent on unnecessary projects. • Concern about cuts to services that affect families, the elderly and disabled. • The proposed cuts seem to be targeting people trying to be fit and healthy. • Council should spend money on parks, playgrounds and roads before upgrading shopping areas. • Consider the effect on tourism that downgrading and closing services will create. • Don't centralise services.

Note: the recommendation has been summarised in this table. Please refer to Citizens' Panel report for full recommendation and explanatory notes. Not all participants answered this question.

A number of participants expressed that they could not comment on specific service cuts as there was insufficient detail to formulate a view.

Petition to save Lakeside Leisure Centre

A petition of 488 signatures was received. The following statement was provided:

"*Wollongong City Council have decided to close Lakeside Leisure Centre in Dapto as a COST CUTTING MEASURE, There is NO other facility in our area that offers such a wide range of fitness services for young and old, Governments are constantly telling us how overweight and unfit we are….DON'T LET THEM CLOSE OUR CENTRE, Your voice can also be heard on the "COUNCILS HAVE YOUR SAY www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au"*

Petition to save Coalcliff Rock Pool

A petition of 13 signatories from Stanwell Park Primary School was received. The petition expressed their love of the pool and how upset they were to hear the pool may close.

Petition to save Unanderra Library

A petition of 423 signatories was received. The following statement was provided:

"Keep Unanderra Library open – please don't ignore our needs.
Unanderra residents implore Wollongong City Council to retain and maintain current operational hours and staff of Unanderra Library. This Library is a hub of local community who frequent this highly valued, hospitable and professional service, to gain access to information, resources and IT facilities and of course for GENERAL LOAN OF BOOKS. Failure to provide this service would deny access and equity to local community needs. Local transport precludes access to either Wollongong or Dapto libraries with NO DISABLED ACCESS at Unanderra station. This extends to aged, injured, parents with young children and prams, others with various mobility issues".

Table 23: Do you have any comments on the recommended efficiencies?

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Indicative Comments
Beaton Park increase income	6	1	• If you increase fees you will decrease usage. • Great idea, why isn't this idea applied to other services? • The fees are already higher than other places.
Russell Vale Golf Course outsource	2	12	• This is mostly run by volunteers already.
Tourist parks outsource	3	7	• You might save money but you will also lose revenue. • You should be able to run this at a profit. • Outsiders won't run these as well as staff do.
Supply management reduce	4	0	
Community development reduce production of directories	1	3	• It is online already.
Community safety and graffiti reduce staff	1	11	• Removing this would have a negative effect and increase unsightly areas of Wollongong. I am happy to pay higher rates to keep this service. • Couldn't Council use offenders to clean up graffiti?
Community development reduce/review	1	9	• What does this mean?
IPAC/Town Hall integrate management	5	3	• This shouldn't be considered Council business anyway.
Environment community programs review	2	3	• This is an excellent program that should be kept.
Legal services review	1	1	
Tourism increase investment in assets/reduce marketing	6	13	• We need to promote tourism more. • Consider the effects of other service decreases on tourism. • Are we going to make our city undesirable to tourists?

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Indicative Comments
Nursery reduce staff	0	6	• Provide positive support to the Botanical Gardens, an important space in Wollongong • Wollongong needs to be more green
Marketing, sign shop, printery outsource	3	3	• Sign shop offers potential for making money
Infrastructure information and systems support reduce, review	2	3	
Design and technical services reduce	1	2	
Roads and bridges outsource, reduce	3	5	• Job losses will increase the city's unemployment.
Customer service reduce	4	4	• Improve efficiencies.
Corporate and Councillor support reduce	3	1	• Apply an efficiency target.
Vehicles reduce/review	4	0	• Reducing operational vehicles is fine but keep community transport. • Wouldn't taxis be cheaper for short trips?
GM & executive reduce	15	0	• Cutting these wages would help lessen the burden on the community. • Consider cutting numbers and wages across middle management.
Human resources reduce	16	15	• Fewer staff dealing with more work won't improve services. • Council staff stand around anyway. • If outsourcing work to other companies can reduce costs, there is a problem with Council's management. • Retrain staff to multi task and fill vacancies. • This will increase Wollongong's unemployment problem. • Casuals and contractors are expensive because of turnover and having to retrain all the time.
Economic development reduce	2	1	

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Indicative Comments
Public toilets outsource cleaning	2	4	• They won't be kept as clean as now. • This will increase unemployment.
Enterprise agreement change	4	3	•
Library – reduce book vote, more e-books	7	17	• We still want paper books. • Not everyone has/can afford an e-reader. • E-books are expensive licences.

Note: the recommendation has been summarised in this table. Please refer to Citizens' Panel report for full recommendation and explanatory notes. Not all participants answered this question. A number of participants expressed that they did not believe that these changes would result in the projected savings.

Table 24: Do you have any comments on the recommended revenue?

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Indicative Comments
Commercial heated pools increase fees	6	15	• Raising fees will lower usage. • The community built these pools.
Community pools gold coin donation	9	23	• It will get stolen. • Charge visitors not locals. • No-staff at pools is a safety issue. • Administering the charges will out cost the donation. • We already pay rates. • Disadvantaged people won't be able to get exercise. • Apply this model to other programs and events, eg Gallery, Library activities.
Gleniffer Brae integrate with garden, seek rental return	6	5	• You couldn't rent it when you tried before. • It is the community's, not Council's.
City gallery reduce, increase revenue	3	6	• Gallery used to attract large amounts of sponsorship. • Needs better promotion and more travelling exhibitions.
Sports fields increase fees	5	19	• These important community services often have tight budgets. • Don't disadvantage kids and families. • They are important for our sense of community.

Recommendation	Agree	Disagree	Indicative Comments
Fitness trainers increase fees	9	6	• Fitness trainers should be charged an appropriate amount for using council facilities. • Charge large businesses but not small operators.
Youth services – revenue	1	3	• What does this mean?
Libraries – increase late fees	4	6	• That's a good idea. • People won't bring the books back.
Environmental assessment and compliance review, increase fees and charges	3	0	
Car parking, extend, increase fees	14	46	• Introduce parking meters at crowded beaches. • Ensure large developments put in adequate parking. • Increase parking infringement fines. • You will drive people away from the city. • Need more ranger patrols. • Move parking meters from the CBD to the hospital.
Rate rise	24	151	• Happy to pay a rate rise if services also improve N=22 online. • The rate rise should be for all, no exemptions. • Would rather pay a higher rate rise and not lose any services. • I don't accept a rate rise, you should have planned better.
Other suggestions			• Get rid of a number of council owned properties or lease them out. • Reduce money spent on receptions. • Seek more sponsorship/ business partnership opportunities. • Charge large companies like mines whose trucks damage the roads higher rates for the repair. • Look at internal savings first before reducing services.

Note: the recommendation has been summarised in this table. Please refer to Citizens' Panel report for full recommendation and explanatory notes. Not all participants answered this question.

Table 25: Do you have any other comments on the recommendations?

Theme	Participants	Indicative Comments
Step 3 Engagement Process	181	• Panel has done the work of, and/or replaced the role of the Councillors. • Lack of information pertaining to the process. • Engagement period needed to be longer for informed participation & submissions. • Panel doesn't reflect the demographics and diversity of the Wollongong community. • Panel lacked the necessary financial expertise to make such decisions and/or recommendations. • Information provided to the Panel needed to be publicly available to the community as well.
Focus on improved efficiencies and savings, before cutting services	55	• Council should prioritise improving planning, processes and waste reduction • Benchmark services to ensure greater efficiency • Focus on efficient use of rates • Use rates for existing asset renewal, rather than the development of large scale and new projects
Objection to selling, outsourcing & privatising	17	• Tenderlink doesn't improve efficiency. • Lowest tender creates a reduction in quality. • Introduce more efficient tendering processes. • Outsourcing causes more problems with delivery, and increases costs. • Selling assets reduces Council's capacity for revenue raising in the future. • Outsourcing can lead to a loss of jobs in the local area.
Happy to pay increased rates in order to maintain service levels	22	• Some participants claimed they would be happy to pay greater rates in order to maintain existing service delivery levels. • Other participants claimed they would be happy to pay higher rates or fees for a specific service, in order to maintain that specific service (in particular Ocean rock pools).

Note: the recommendation has been summarised in this table. Please refer to Citizens' Panel report for full recommendation and explanatory notes. Not all participants answered this question.

Open Submissions Received Late

A total of 32 open submissions were received late. These submissions were not included in the report presented to Council on 10 December 2013.

The submissions focused on the three key issues of services, efficiencies, and rates and revenue.

In terms of services, the results were as follows:

- N=18 spoke against the recommendation to close northern ocean pools.
- N=6 were against the closing of Unanderra library.
- N=2 were against the proposal to reduce lifeguard patrol hours at Coalcliff/Scarborough beach.
- N=1 submission spoke against the proposal to close the Coalcliff Community Hall.
- N=1 submission was supportive of the need to review services with low utilisation rates.

Additionally, 23 open submissions were received from the Stanwell Park Primary (Year 6 class). N=23 were against the closing of Coalcliff ocean pool, N=4 against the sale of the Coalcliff Community Hall and N=3 against the reduction of lifeguard patrol hours at Coalcliff-Scarborough beach.

Only 2 submissions focused on internal efficiencies with n=2 specifically mentioning the need to reduce or eliminate the car pool and n=1 suggesting a reduction in Lord Mayor and General Manager salaries. N=2 submissions spoke out against the Crown Street Mall redevelopment project.

With regard to rates and revenue, the following results were identified.
In terms of rates:

- N=1 in support of increasing rates in order to maintain existing service levels.
- N=1 indicated a lack of support for a rate rise.

In terms of revenue, the following results were found:

- N=1 submission spoke strongly against the introduction of fees to access Port Kembla pool.
- N=1 submission suggested ending the sister city program.
- N=1 submission showed support for outsourcing.

Petition to save Lakeside Leisure Centre

Additional late pages were received for the petition to save Lakeside Leisure Centre. The late pages contained a petition of 112 signatures, featuring the following statement:

> "*Wollongong City Council have decided to close Lakeside Leisure Centre in Dapto as a COST CUTTING MEASURE, There is NO other facility in our area that offers such a wide range of fitness services for young and old, Governments are constantly telling us how overweight and unfit we are….DON'T LET THEM CLOSE OUR CENTRE, Your voice can also be heard on the "COUNCILS HAVE YOUR SAY www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au"*

Petition to save Wollongong Rock Pool

A petition of 1,416 and 385 comments was received, via the online petition site change.org. The following statement was provided:

> "*Put an end to any ideas of demolishing the rock pool situated next to the Continental Baths in Wollongong*".

Demographic Data

Table 26: Participants' Suburb of Residence Step 3

Ward 1 - Suburb	No.	Ward 2 – Suburb	No.	Ward 3 - Suburb	No.	Outside LGA	No.
Austinmer	13	Coniston	3	Berkeley	2	Peakhurst	1
Balgownie	2	Cordeaux Heights	4	Brownsville	1	Engadine	1
Bellambi	0	Cringila	0	Dapto	11	Epping	1
Bulli	20	Fairy Meadow	5	Flinders	1	Randwick	1
Clifton	2	Farmborough Heights	1	Horsley	7	Berowra Heights	1
Coalcliff	45	Figtree	16	Kanahooka	8	Margaret River	1
Coledale	21	Figtree Heights	0	Koonawarra	1	Oak Flats	1
Corrimal	13	Gwynneville	0	Lake Heights	1		
East Corrimal	2	Keiraville	8	Penrose	1		
East Woonona	5	Mangerton	1	Port Kembla	3		
Fern Hill	2	Mt Keira	2	Primbee	1		
Helensburgh	19	Mt Kembla	4	Warilla	0		
Otford	11	Mt Ousley	1	Warrawong	0		
Russell Vale	1	Mt Pleasant	0	Windang	0		
Scarborough	11	Mt St Thomas	0				
Stanwell Park	20	North Wollongong	0				
Stanwell Tops	4	Unanderra	4				
Tarrawanna	0	West Wollongong	2				
Thirroul	12	Wollongong	15				
Towradgi	4						
Wombarra	27						
Woonona	13						
TOTAL number of participants per Ward	**247**		**66**		**37**		**7**

Step 4 Engagement

Methodology – December 2013-February 2014

On 9 December 2013 Council considered a report on the findings of the Step 1, 2 and 3 engagement and resolved to exhibit the draft Resourcing Strategy 2012-2022 (revised 1 December 2013) and draft Delivery Program 2012-17 (revised 1 December 2013) and options based on three financial scenarios. The exhibition commenced on 11 December 2013 and closed on 5 February 2014.

The community were asked to consider the options and indicate their preference as well as review and comment on the draft strategies which explain the impacts of each option. We explained to the community that the three options reflect the diversity of opinion obtained from the first round of consultation on the Panel's report.

We asked for feedback on different combinations of the following elements:

- ❖ Efficiencies including possible outsourcing and staff level changes
- ❖ Service changes including possible cuts, closures or privatisation
- ❖ Fees and charges increases
- ❖ Rates increases of varying levels.

The options are summarised on the survey as follows:

Option 1: Citizens' Panel recommendations including service cuts and outsourcing, moderate fee rise, small rate rise.

Option 2: Limited service cuts, moderate fee and rate rise, efficiencies including some outsourcing.

Option 3: More significant rate rise, efficiencies with low impact on services and staff.

The purpose of this Step 4 engagement was to measure both the community's views of acceptable levels of service, and community capacity and appetite for a potential rate rise.

Table 27: Step 4 Engagement Activities

Activity	Distribution	Target Audience	Schedule
Step 4	**Submissions** Open submissions Hard copy survey Online survey Online quick poll	Residents	5 Feb 2014 (closing date)
	Kiosks Friday markets, Crown Street Mall (Ward 2) Dapto Library and community centre (Ward 3) Thirroul Library and community centre (Ward 1) Friday markets, Crown Street Mall (Ward 2)	Residents by Ward	13 Dec 2013 20 Jan 2014 21 Jan 2014 24 Jan 2014

How to have your say?

The community were offered a number of ways to provide feedback to Council during this engagement process. A quick poll was available on Council's engagement hub asking participants to choose from the three Options on exhibition. A survey form was available online and in hard copy format asking participants to specify their preference for Options 1-3 and the reason for their choice. The form also asked for feedback on both the revised draft Resourcing Strategy and the revised draft Delivery Program. The community were also invited to provide feedback as emails, letters and phone calls.

Stakeholders

The engagement strategy identified the key stakeholders of the project as: residents of the entire LGA, Neighbourhood Forums, community action groups, licenced community operators of Council owned facilities, Surf Life Saving Clubs, clubs and service organisations and Council Reference and Advisory Groups.

Promotional Materials

Information Package
In addition to the exhibition materials for Steps 1, 2 and 3, Step 4 featured updated Frequently Asked Questions, an information brochure outlining options and how to have your say, and the draft Resourcing Strategy 2012-2022 (revised 1 December 2013) and draft Delivery Program 2012-17 (revised 1 December 2013).

Information packs were produced and distributed at a number of Council sites throughout the Local Government Area including all Council libraries and Customer Service Centre. All information has been made available on Council's engagement web page.

Brochure and Fact Sheet
The abovementioned brochure was distributed to more than 80,000 households in the Wollongong LGA commencing 13 January 2014. The brochure (Appendix C) outlined each of the three options including average rates impact per household, an outline of the problem Council is faced with and what we have done so far to find a solution. Finally the brochure explains the many ways the community can get involved in having their say and what happens when this Step concludes in early February.

A Fact Sheet was created in January and distributed at kiosks to explain in more depth what the rating options on exhibition mean. Comparative data is given from baseline and rate peg across each option. It also explains rating categories other than residential.

Media Activities

Print and Broadcast Media

A full page advertisement appeared in The Advertiser newspaper on 18 December 2013, 22 and 29 January 2014 and in the Illawarra Mercury on 18 January 2014. This detailed out spelt out the problem and the three options on exhibition.

Online Media

The use of online media supported the engagement process. The Council website hosted a page for Securing Our Future and all promotional materials, including a survey, videos and discussions boards were available on the webpage. The link to the Securing our future webpage has been extensively shared and promoted via Council's Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Community Information Kiosks

Four community information kiosks were held during the exhibition period, allowing for one kiosk for Ward 1 and Ward 3, with two kiosks held at the Crown Street Mall markets located in Ward 2, in the heart of the city. The kiosks were largely focused on the provision of information regarding the Securing our Future project to a wider range of residents throughout the Local Government Area. However, anecdotal conversations between Council officers and residents were significant in that they provided a sense of the community's response to the three options exhibited.

Across a number of conversations, Council officers ascertained that in order to maintain existing service levels community members were initially supportive of Option 3. However, interestingly, upon conversations with Council officers around the need to review services in terms of service delivery overlap, utilisation rates and community need, community members shifted support towards service review. Additionally, community members reflected that efficiencies within Council's internal operations were extremely important within the project at large, and in terms of ongoing financial sustainability.

Step 4 Results

The following section presents the results of the engagement strategies undertaken as part of Step 4. Table 28 below provides a summary of strategies and activities undertaken, participants involved, and the number of participants attending or interacting at each engagement activity.

Table 28: Engagement participation

Engagement Focus	Activity	Stakeholders	Number of Participants
Submissions	Open submissions	Community	234
	Hard copy surveys	Community	20
	Online survey	Community	278
	Online Quick poll	Community	268
Awareness	**Kiosks** Friday markets, Crown Street Mall, Dec Dapto Library & community centre, Jan Thirroul Library & community centre, Jan Friday markets, Crown Street Mall , Jan	Community	25 22 26 38
	Web hits	Community	8,242

One petition of **580** signatures against the closure of Unanderra Library was received.

Both online and hard copy surveys were made available to the community to make it easy to make a submission. The same questions were asked in both formats. The responses from both are summarised in Table 29 below.

Table 29: Feedback against funding options Step 4

Support Option 1	Support Option 2	Support Option 3	Don't support any option	Don't specify an option
N= 178	N= 184	N= 260	N= 31	N= 141
22.5%	23%	32.5%	4%	18%

Note participants were not asked if they did not support any of the options. The numbers in the table above reflect where participant comment indicated a lack of support for options. The above table includes online feedback form, paper feedback form and open submission results. Note not all participants indicated a preference for any of the three options.

The following table summarises the key themes expressed in submissions received.

Table 30: Key themes from submissions Step 4

Key themes		N=	Indicative Comments
Rate rises	Support minimal rate rise	**178**	• Rates are high enough, increase user pays. • We are being asked to pay higher rates because of inefficiency and poor management. • We need to make some tough decisions about services. • This option has the lesser increase in rates and focuses more on cutting waste and duplication of services based on tradition, development of efficiencies within council and that the user pays. • We already pay more than other areas.
	Support moderate rate rise	**184**	• Good balance between rates and other fee increases, good compromise. • It is fair to spread costs across rates and services.
	Prefer higher rate rise to keep services	**82**	• Tourism brings money, we need to provide good services and facilities to attract tourists. • Chose option 3 because it retains Lakeside Leisure Centre. • Maintaining services is very important as it enhances quality of life for citizens. • I want services expanded, not reduced. • Saves jobs and still provides services we need in Wollongong. • Best long-term plan. • My rates are already high yet I would prefer to pay more than see council sell off or outsource the running of assets, reduce its community investments and cut lifeguard hours. • Council services are mostly quite essential. They make for a healthy, more amenable place to live and visit.
	Do not support any rate rise	**70**	• Why can't Council manage with the rates they have now? • The cost of living is high enough without rates going up. • I can't see what Council does for us now.

Key themes	N=	Indicative Comments
Council should increase efficiency of its operations	**152**	• Invest in energy efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, and renewable energy generation.
Concerns about transparency, accountability and budget management	**18**	• Conduct a detailed analysis of Council business including financial audits and benchmarking.
Wasted resources in project management	**38**	• Council should only be involved in core-business. • Council should push back against the creep of business from State and Federal agencies.
Enterprise agreement – change Don't change	**7** **1**	• Cut overheads and mismanagement. • It appears that if one or two people make lots of noise requesting something the Council wastes lots of money on it!
Staff wages too high	**10**	• Council should cut spending and staff wages before raising rates.
Concerns about non-wage benefits	**11**	• Use more up-to-date technology and business practices.
Staff numbers – reduce Maintain skills	**20** **5**	• Keeping existing staff is more efficient than outsourcing.
Perceptions of productivity	**19**	• Perception that outdoor staff do not work hard or efficiently.
Benchmark for efficiency	**10**	
General comments supporting efficiency/efficiency targets	**6**	
Outsourcing Support Don't support	 **45** **12**	• I don't support outsourcing as all the evidence shows that it saves money largely by paying lower wages relative to direct employment of staff. • Competitive tendering is required for a range of council services. • On some occasions outsourcing to groups who specialise in services can be the most efficient and effective way to achieve outcomes. • I think outsourcing some services is a good idea. • Finding efficiencies in council through productivity gains and bench marking and out sourcing services that can be provided in a more financially sensible way is common sense. • Outsourcing of services is essential for the achievement of necessary efficiencies.

Key themes	N=	Indicative Comments
People can't afford to pay more	**25**	• Pensioners & people on fixed incomes have no way of increasing their income to pay the rate increase so if services have to be cut so be it. • Don't remove the Pensioner rebate.
User pays Support Don't support	 **53** **5**	• More "user -pay", smaller increase in rates per household system is fairer. • People need to understand things cost money. • It is always the residents/property owners of the municipality who should pay for these things when it is the actual users who should pay. • I use the pools and other facilities and have no problem with gold coin donation or other small fee. • Tourist and renters all use the services but only rate payers pay for their upkeep. • User pays means we don't have to pay for services we don't need. • Services aimed at tourists needs to be user-pays including tourist parks and car parking at beaches.
Don't impact employment rates	**46**	• Human resources are an invaluable asset for council and the retention of this valuable asset is a cost efficiency for Council from a financial and a risk management perspective. • Prefer option 3 because it does not impact jobs or the work that local people do. • Losing jobs in a town that is already overburdened with long term unemployment is bad. • There is efficiency involved in retaining experienced staff. • Do not wish to see the cadet, apprenticeship or trainee program halved as unemployment is already too high in this area, with opportunities for young people is very limited. In this economic climate I feel that public projects and maintenance should continue or increase to assist further employment.

Key themes	N=	Indicative Comments
Infrastructure choices Don't support Support	**71** **12**	• Don't agree with choices Council makes over renewing infrastructure for example Crown Street Mall, Blue Mile, Gateway Centre Bulli tops, Towradgi toilet block, footpaths are a mess. • Council shouldn't spend all its capital money in the city centre, but the whole Council area. • Can't stop development and capital works.

Specific services	**20**
	6
		Lakeside Leisure Centre
		  Keep open
		  Close

	95
	3
		Rock pools
		  Keep
		  Don't keep

	53
	580
	6
		Unanderra Library
		  Keep open
		  Petition to keep Unanderra Library open
		  Close

	9 **3**	Cremator Keep open Close
	5 **8**	Mechanical street sweeping Keep in place Reduce/rationalise

	16
	
	15
		Parking meters
		Increase fees
		    Place at beach and charge visitors (N=12)
		Don't increase fees
		    Don't want them in CBD (N=6)

	11
	13
		Crown Street Façade program
		  Continue
		  Discontinue

Additional comments

The following table outlines ideas raised in submissions for increasing revenue, saving money or adding new services.

Table 31: Additional ideas and comments from submissions Step 4

Build a multi-purpose hub including South Coast Writers Centre	N= 3
Introduce local currency as an economic development strategy	N= 1
Enhance the visitor economy	N= 5
Use volunteers at the Wollongong Art Gallery	N=1
Save money through increased sustainability	N=6
Sell land and building assets that are not needed	N=5
Pay for use of the Green Bus	N=1
Amalgamate with neighbouring Councils	N=4
Establish emergency housing	N=1
Set up Botanic Garden as commercial garden	N=1

Petitions

Petition Unanderra Library

A petition of **580** signatures was received. The following statement was provided:
Cause of Petition: KEEP UNANDERRA LIBRARY OPEN- DON'T IGNORE OUR NEEDS

Unanderra residents implore Wollongong City Council to retain and maintain current operational hours and staff of Unanderra Library. This Library is a hub of local community who frequent this highly valued, hospitable and professional.

Table 32: Quick Poll results Step 4

Online participants were asked: **Please indicate your preferred option for funding Wollongong's long-term financial sustainability.**

Option	Number of respondents
Option 1: Citizens' Panel recommendations including service cuts and outsourcing, moderate fee rise, small rate rise.	N= 78
Option 2: Limited service cuts, moderate fee and rate rise, efficiencies including some outsourcing.	N= 67
Option 3: More significant rate rise, efficiencies with low impact on services and staff.	N= 121

Open Submissions

There were 14 open submissions to the Step 2 engagement from forums or groups.

The submissions were made by:

Coalcliff Community Association
Environment and Sustainability Reference Group
IBC: Illawarra Business Chamber
Illawarra Forum
KU Childrens' Services
National Trust, Illawarra Shoalhaven Branch
Neighbourhood Forum 4
Neighbourhood Forum 5/6
Neighbourhood Forum 7
NIRAG: Northern Illawarra Residents Action Group
Property Council, NSW
Save our Services
Scarborough-Wombarra Surf Life Saving Club

220 individual members of the community made open submissions.

Demographic Data

The final part of the survey asked participants for their demographic data including gender, age bracket and suburb of residence. These were non-compulsory survey questions. The responses are presented in Tables 33 to 35 below.

Table 33: Gender of Participants (%)

Gender of Participants

Female 46%
Male 54%
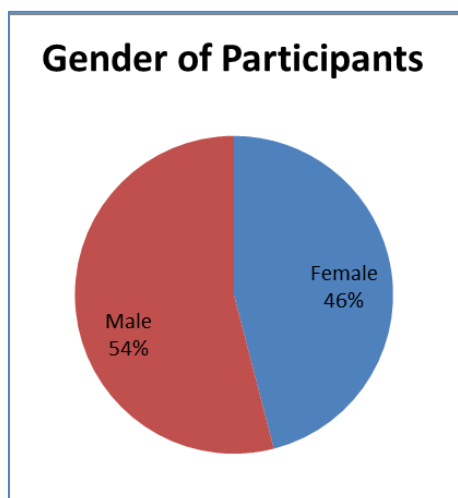
Table 34: Age of participants (%)

Age of participants

76+ 2%
18-25 6%
26-35 11%
36-45 17%
46-55 24%
56-65 27%
66-75 13%
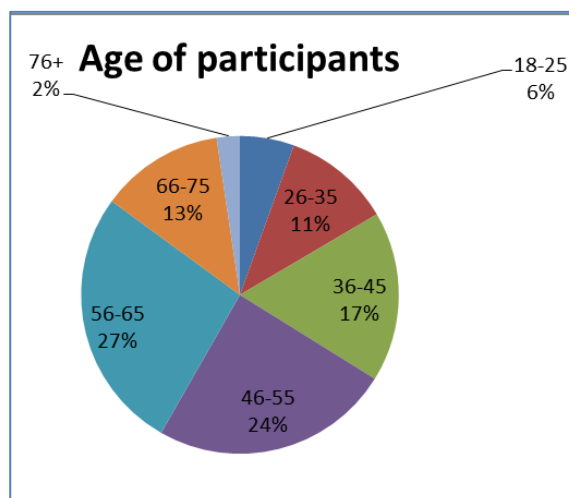
Table 35: Participants' Suburb of Residence

Ward 1 - Suburb	Number	Ward 2 – Suburb	Number	Ward 3 - Suburb	Number
Austinmer	11	Coniston	2	Berkeley	2
Balgownie	7	Cordeaux Heights	5	Brownsville	0
Bellambi	2	Cringila	0	Dapto	13
Bulli	16	Fairy Meadow	5	Flinders	0
Clifton	1	Farmborough Heights	4	Horsley	7
Coalcliff	3	Figtree	14	Kanahooka	7
Coledale	3	Figtree Heights	1	Koonawarra	0
Corrimal	16	Gwynneville	3	Lake Heights	2
East Corrimal	1	Keiraville	6	Penrose	0
East Woonona	1	Mangerton	5	Port Kembla	0
Fern Hill	1	Mt Keira	0	Primbee	1
Helensburgh	11	Mt Kembla	1	Warilla	0
Otford	1	Mt Ousley	5	Warrawong	0
Russell Vale	2	Mt Pleasant	1	Windang	2
Scarborough	2	Mt St Thomas	1		
Stanwell Park	3	North Wollongong	2		
Stanwell Tops	2	Unanderra	9		
Tarrawanna	2	West Wollongong	3		
Thirroul	19	Wollongong	37		
Towradgi	7				
Wombarra	8				
Woonona	22				
TOTAL number of participants per ward	**141**		**104**		**34**

Out of LGA submissions:
> Minnamurra = 1
> Oak Flats = 1

Appendices

Appendix A – Frequently Asked Questions

Securing Our Future - Frequently Asked Questions

This information was provided on the online engagement page.

What is financial sustainability all about?
Simply put, when we're talking about financial sustainability we're talking about ways to make sure Council can fund its services and responsibilities in the future.

Each year, we have to balance the books on a $243.6 million budget, and with much of our post-war infrastructure starting to show its age, we need to find a balance between funding our services as well as meeting the cost of the maintenance and renewal of assets.

By having this conversation now, we're able to plan ahead for the future.

Why is Council talking about this now?
This is not a new topic for Council. We've been speaking about our financial future for a number of years as part of our ongoing community consultation and planning. Finances, for example, formed a significant part of our Wollongong 2022 Community Strategic Plan.

The financial future of all NSW Councils was also discussed in the NSW Government's report 'Financial Sustainability of the New South Wales Local Government Sector'.
Right now, we're in a planning phase. We want to assure the community that we're not broke, and we're financially strong in the short term. However, in the long term, our financial sustainability isn't as rosy. In the past five years we have been able to improve Council's operational expenditure and put the $20.3 million we've saved into the improvement of assets like roads, footpaths, buildings and drains.

However, this is not enough and, as some of our roads, footpaths, storm water drains and buildings get older, we need to balance our books as well as fund renewal and replacement work. By asking you what you value, we're able to evaluate what are our priorities and to look for solutions to bridge this financial gap.

By working together we can decide if we should and can provide enough funding to renew ageing assets. Otherwise, all of our existing services may not be possible in the future without significant impact on a future generation.

Why does it concern me?
Council's responsibilities stretch far beyond the mantra of roads, rates and rubbish. The three 'R's' are a big part of what we do, but it's not all we do. As Council explores ways to improve our financial future, we want to know what you, as residents of our city, think.

We want your views on Council services such as libraries and community centres. We need to know how you rate programs offered through the Wollongong Botanic Gardens, Volunteering Illawarra or at Wollongong Youth Centre. All of these things are integral to what Council does, and are part of a broader discussion about our city's future.

Does this mean Council rates will rise?
It's too early to speculate about rate rises. Council rates are certainly one of the areas under evaluation, but this is joined by service levels, operational improvements in Council, or revenues and funding options.

What will happen next?
Over the coming weeks we will be talking with the community about the different forms of engagement this process will involve.

This includes the formation of a Citizens Panel, which will be independently selected and facilitated. We anticipate this Citizens Panel will meet several times in October.

We will be putting more information up on this site and be encouraging the community to make submissions which will be considered by the Citizens' Panel. We'll also be hosting online discussion forums.

The recommendations from the Citizens Panel will be provided to Council, and go back to the community for further comment and feedback later this year.

Appendix B – Citizens' Panel Recommendation Report

Wollongong City Council Financial Sustainability Review Citizens Panel Report

This report has been compiled by Straight Talk with input and direction from the Citizens Panel to outline the Panel's recommendations for review by the community and Councillors.

The sections of this report written in bold have been added by Straight Talk to provide further explanation for the Panel's recommendations.

This report will form the basis of consultation with the community during November. Submissions and comments on the Panel's recommendations will be considered by Councillors prior to making a decision about whether to adopt the recommendations or not.

Background and context

On 24 June 2013 Wollongong City Council determined to undertake a financial sustainability review that included comprehensive community engagement. In August Council agreed to convene a Citizens Panel to provide advice to Councillors and the community on how to find $21 million a year to ensure Council is financially sustainable over the long term.

The Panel was tasked with providing recommendations in response to the following three questions:

1. What are the priority services for Council to deliver and to what level should Council deliver these services?
2. What are the opportunities to achieve operational improvements?
3. How should Council fund the delivery of these services to the desired level?

The Panel comprised 34 individuals who were randomly selected by a third party, Taverner Research, a specialist market research firm, to provide a representative sample of the Wollongong community in terms of age, gender, geography, level of education, cultural background and housing tenure.

Categories	Description	Demographic profile	Participant profile	
		Percentage	Number	Percentage
Service age groups	18-24 years (Tertiary / independent)	13.4% of 18 yrs+	5	13.9%
	25-34 years (Young workforce)	16.2%	5	13.9%
	35-49 years (Parents / homebuilders)	26.0%	9	25.0%
	50-59 years (Older workers / pre-retirees)	16.3%	6	16.7%
	60-69 years (Empty nesters retirees)	12.9%	6	16.7%
	70+ years (Seniors / elderly)	15.3%	5	13.9%
Ward	North – ward 1	N/A – Council wanted the Panel to evenly represent all three Wards	13	36.1%
	Central – ward 2		11	30.6%
	South – ward 3		12	33.3%
Home tenure	Own/buying	64.4%	27	75.0%
	Renting	29.3%	9	25.0%
Gender	Male	49.5%	21	58.3%
	Female	50.5%	15	41.7%
Ethnicity	Speaks only English	79.4%	28	77.8%
	Speaks another language (NESB) (and English well/ very well/ not well/ not at all)	17.6%	8	22.2%
Qualifications	No education above high school	43.9%	13	36.1%
	Advanced diploma / diploma / vocational certificate	28.7%	14	38.9%
	Bachelor / higher degree	16.8%	9	25.0%

The Panel met four times, as follows:

- Meeting 1 – 26 September 2013 (3 hours) – Focused on the group coming together to understand the task and the panel process
- Meeting 2 – 2 October 2013 (3 hours) – Focused on understanding the issues affecting Council's financial sustainability
- Meeting 3 – Weekend of 11 & 12 October 2013 (11 hours) – Focused on reviewing technical information and identifying preliminary recommendations
- Meeting 4 – Weekend of 26 & 27 October 2013 (11 hours) – Focused on reviewing and refining recommendations and reaching agreement as a group.

Panel meetings were independently facilitated by Straight Talk, a specialist community engagement firm.

Council's Executive team provided support and information to the Panel but did not lead any of the discussion sessions.

All information provided to the Panel has been made publicly available by Council and can be accessed from their Internet site (http://haveyoursaywollongong.com.au/projects/financial-sustainability). **Only one fact sheet was not provided publicly based on the commercial in confidence nature of the information it contained.**

Securing financial sustainability is an important public issue that will, to some extent, impact everyone in Wollongong, however, Council could not undertake in-depth consultation with the whole community. As part of an extensive community consultation program that involves multiple opportunities for the wider community to provide feedback, Council opted to appoint a smaller diverse, but representative, randomly selected group of citizens and give them time and support to review information and deliberate together to enable them to provide considered and informed feedback about service delivery and associated options for financial sustainability.

Members of the Panel were everyday citizens who committed to spend a significant amount of time learning about issues affecting Council's budget. They were no more, or less, politically motivated that average citizens and unlike active citizens or representatives of special-interest groups, who routinely lobby Council, they had no vested interests. They worked together as a group, and not as individuals, to identify recommendations that would serve the common good and minimise impact on the community as a whole.

Panel's findings and recommendations

We the Panel encourage the community to review the information located on Council's Have Your Say page, http://haveyoursaywollongong.com.au/projects/financial-sustainability in order to understand issues affecting Council's financial sustainability and our decisions.

We encourage the community to read our report and provide comment to Council on our recommendations.

We identified the following principles to guide us in making our decisions, and for Council to follow to ensure financial sustainability going forward:

- Spend the community's money wisely
- Do everything possible to avoid a rate rise – 'Tighten the belt' through efficiencies and service level changes
- Focus on maintaining existing assets before building new assets
- Focus investment on assets for highest and best use
- Make decisions that benefit the whole community over vested localised interests
- Make financially responsible decisions
- Ensure staff and Councillors are accountable to the community
- Ensure staff and Councillors are competent
- Ensure staff and Councillors do not engage in corruption.

Our decisions were made based on the information and time made available to us. Council staff and Straight Talk staff had no untoward influence over our decisions. We did everything possible to identify savings and efficiencies to minimise the impact on rates.

The Panel reached consensus on the following recommendations for changing the level of service, improving the efficiency and/or changing the way specific delivery streams are funded. They were aware that some of these recommendations may be unpopular and may impact groups in the community who use the services, but in reviewing services the Panel realised there is no easy way to find millions of dollars in savings without an impact. Accordingly, the Panel made its recommendations in an effort to minimise the impact on the least number of people and to mitigate the impact on rates.

Notwithstanding this, our recommendations include that Council:

- Implement a minimum of $10 million (of the $13 million identified by the Panel) of suggested savings within three years.
- Cap a rate rise at a maximum of 7-7.5% (excluding CPI), to be introduced over three years.
- Challenge Council to bridge the gap by stretching for further efficiencies and savings.

  The Panel recognise that there is a gap and have set this 'stretch target' so Council can continue to demonstrate to the community how it is doing its bit to minimise impacts of a rate rise on the wider community.

- Maintain good faith with the community and not renege on the Panel's recommendations or be influenced by special interest groups or political affiliations. **The Panel made its recommendations because it believed they were the fairest way for everyone to do their bit to ensure Council's long term financial sustainability.**

- Ensure they do not get into this position again:

  o Ensure that depreciation of capital expenditures is fully funded
  o Change the financial strategy to maintain the budget to break-even or better in each financial year.

- Communicate transparently to the community about the impact on rates – express the rate rise as a percentage and in dollars (both in terms of increase per year and per week) and clarify that the increase is on top of the expected Consumer Price Index (CPI) rise to be announced shortly by NSW Government.

- Negotiate a more cost effective Enterprise Agreement for new staff that is more in line with the market with regards to – wage/salary levels and terms/conditions.

- Ensure all savings and funds generated through the Panel's recommendations, and the rate rise, are fully directed to renewal of assets.

- Ensure Councillors are fully accountable and report back to the Panel on the implementation of recommendations and savings, in particular recommendations that are not implemented. **The Panel would like Councillors to meet with Panellists, as a group, if they are going to change or not implement any or all of its recommendations.**

We reviewed all of the services provided by Council including the 117 delivery streams. It should be noted that we have not eliminated any services outright, but instead have reviewed service levels in order to identify savings.

Specific recommendations and associated savings are listed below. In total the Panel identified approximately $13 million in savings through a mix of reduction to service levels, service delivery efficiencies and increased user fees and charges. It should be noted that the magnitude of savings is an estimate only and has not been tested or verified with detailed costing analysis. The estimates represent those amounts that were available to the Panel at the time.

<u>**Service level changes = anticipated up to $4.351 million (recurrent annually)**</u>
- Lakeside Leisure Centre – close centre and sell land $300,000 due to utilisation and availability of other providers
- Pensioner interest – remove interest exemption for full payment by May from Pensioner Policy $50,000
- Unanderra Library – close due to proximity to other services and level of utilisation $200,000
- Coalcliff/Scarborough beach season- due to level of visitation reduce from 7 to 3 hours per day $40,000
- Events- reduce to 1 night of fireworks per year $20,000, and reduce Viva La Gong contribution by $50,00
- Urban Renewal and Civic Improvement- halve the current program $300,000
- Playgrounds- move towards improved centralised facilities rather than lots of little ones - minimum 10% reduction across 151 playgrounds based on utilisation, location and condition $105,000
- Community Pools- reduce pool season by 2-4 weeks $67,000 - $133,000
- Community Pools- Berkeley pool reduce from 96 hours per week to 55 hours per week due to level of utilisation $60,000
- Ocean Rock Pools- reduce those close to other aquatic facilities and run to fail – Average $45,000 depreciation per pool $135,000 (2-3 pools)
- Community Facilities - rationalise 10-15% (reduce or sell) existing assets with a focus on those that are underutilised - move towards improved centralised facilities rather than lots of little ones, average $30,000 depreciation per building $120 – 150,000
- Community Facilities - Coalcliff Hall - due to level of utilisation demolish $33,000

- Pensioner waste exemptions – remove exemption $200,000
- Charitable waste exemptions – remove exemption $200,000
- Learning & Development- halve the Cadet, Apprenticeships and Trainee program $1 million
- Crematorium - exit
- Parks- divest in small parks – reduce number by 10% based on utilisation, location
- Mechanical Street Sweeping – reduce level of service
- Community Engagement - reduce $50,000
- Crown Street Façade - no further work beyond existing applications with current commitment $300,000 for 2 years (note: one off savings, not a recurrent program)
- Community Development - review
- Environmental Programs & Partnerships – review
- Environmental Assessment & Compliance – review
- Social Planning- reduce $25,000
- Footpaths- expand lifespan to 80 years saving $1 million.

Efficiencies- anticipated $7 million (recurrent annually)

*Direct budget minimum reduction across the organisation of 5% **of discretionary operational spend (excluding assets)** - which may include, or be in addition to the following:*

- Beaton Park- increase income from third party operators- $25,000
- Russell Vale Golf Course -outsource - $150,000 (temporary option to increase fees $33,000)
- Tourist Parks- lease- outsource all $1 million saving
- Supply Management- reduce- $600,000 and potential for further efficiency in service areas
- Community Development- reduce production of service directories $20,000
- Community Safety & Graffiti- reduce staff $50,000 reduction
- Cultural development- reduce/review spend $20,000 reduction
- IPAC/Town Hall - integrate management $50,000 saving
- Environment Community Programs & Partnerships- review- $20,000 mix of revenue and budget reduction
- Legal Services- review- $20,000 reduction
- Tourism – Increase investment in tourism assets but reduce tourism marketing $100,000
- Nursery- - conservation focus, reduce staff x 1 $80,000
- Marketing, sign shop, printing- outsource- requires market testing. Reduce $20,000 advertising
- Infrastructure Information & Systems Support- reduce staff numbers, cut waste- $80,000 reduce staff x 1 and review systems
- Design & Technical services - reduce staff - apply efficiency target

- Roads & bridges- outsource- reduce staff- apply efficiency target
- Customer Service – reduce - apply an efficiency target
- Corporate & Councillor support- reduce- apply an efficiency target
- Vehicles - reduce non-operational vehicles, explore hire vehicles
- General Manager & Executive- reduce – efficiency
- Human Resources - reduce staffing levels across the organisation (indoor and outdoor staff) – shift to more temporary less permanent staff, do not replace staff that exit the organisation - average cost per employee between $80,000 - $100,000
- Economic Development- reduce – efficiency
- Public Toilets - outsource cleaning
- Enterprise Agreement – change
- Library – shift to more electronic books - efficiency - reduce annual book vote contribution by $200,000.

Revenue sources-anticipated $1.7 million (recurrent annually)

- Commercial Heated Pools- Increase fees by 10% over next 3 years $44,000
- Community Pools – gold coin donation at entry (non-staffed) - $800,000
- Gleniffer Brae- integrate with Botanic Gardens- seek rental return on Gleniffer Brae - potential rental $50,000
- City Gallery- reduce- $20,000 increase in revenue- could also review
- Sports fields - 25% increase in fees $87,000
- Fitness Trainers - 25% increase fees
- Youth Services - revenue
- Libraries- increase late fees
- Environmental Assessment and Compliance- review- increase tree permit fees and charges $25,000
- Car parking- extend metered parking- all day Stewart Street car park $80,000, increase parking fees in City Centre by 50% $600,000.

$13.051 million/$21 million

None of the Panel welcomed a rate rise, but given that the magnitude of savings was not sufficient to ensure financial sustainability, the majority of Panellists accepted a maximum 7 – 7.5% rate rise over 3 years on condition that a minimum of $10 million in savings as identified by the Panel were achieved and that Council delivered further efficiencies. The rate rise would generate $8.4 million in additional funds. It was noted that City Centre and Heavy Industrial rate payers already pay high rates as a result of special levies and that they should be exempt from further rises given the current economic climate.

$13.051 million + $8.4 million = $21.451 million

Appendix C – Promotional Collateral

Promotional bookmark

Community newsletter October 2013

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW - THE PROCESS

Over the past five years, Council has been looking at ways to address our long term financial sustainability. Right now, our finances are in a good way, but we've got a lot of infrastructure such as roads, buildings and shared pathways that are getting older. The purpose of the Review is to ensure we've got the services and infrastructure they consider essential and highly valued, and what has less significance. That way, Council knows the decisions it makes through this Review are the right ones.

We've divided the Review into a four-stage process. The **First Phase** has already been completed. This is connected to the work that has been done by Council since 2008 to find savings and the preparation for the Financial Sustainability Review.

Phase Two is underway. There are multiple opportunities for the community to have a say during this phase. These include logging onto Council's community engagement pages on our website. These pages have essential information about the Review, discussion boards, and an online survey. We want to hear what you think of Council's services, where Council might improve its operations and how this work should be funded.

Phase Two also included the recruitment of a 25-40-member Citizens Panel led by an independent facilitator in September. This Panel is working throughout October to review community feedback and Council reports, and interview Council staff and other specialists. All up, the Citizens Panel will meet six times. At the end of the process they'll prepare a series of recommendations that will be provided to the community for comment.

Phase Three will start in November when the Citizens Panel's recommendations are put on public exhibition. The whole community will have their chance to review them, and provide further feedback. Council will advertise this exhibition on our website, and through social and in local media.

Phase Four starts in December. This is when the community feedback on the Panel's recommendations will be presented to Council for the review of our Councillors. At this time, any changes that may be required to Council's Delivery Program and Resource Strategy – as a result of this process – will also be presented to Council. These documents would also, once again, go out on exhibition for public comment.

PHASE ONE
PHASE TWO
PHASE THREE
PHASE FOUR
FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

THE BIG QUESTIONS

In this review, Council is looking to get answers to a couple of big questions. These are:

What are the priority services for Council to deliver and to what level should Council deliver these services?

How should Council fund the delivery of these services to the desired level?

What are the opportunities we have to achieve operational improvements?

Council has put some important background information on the website and also wants to hear your thoughts on our priorities. Go to www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au or scan the QR code above to find out more.

WHAT WE DO

Back in 1983 Council mostly looked after roads, rates and rubbish or what's otherwise known as the 'three r's'. These days we do so much more, including:

- Provide early childhood services and pre-school programs for parents, carers and children.
- Run facilities and support services for older people and people with disabilities.
- Manage seven libraries providing books e-books, dvds and magazines for loan, as well as school holiday activities and educational programs.
- Coordinate environmental services such as our Bushcare and Myna Bird Action programs.
- Maintain parks, reserves and sporting fields.
- Manage two leisure centres.
- Manage a crematorium, five cemeteries and three tourist parks.
- Assess development applications for buildings, renovations and demolitions.
- Put on cultural events including the annual Viva la Gong festival.
- Carry out health inspections in restaurants.

Council provides 34 delivery services which in turn provide over 130 delivery streams (or services and facilities) to our community. To find out more read our Annual Plan on Council's website.

Vital statistics

If you're wondering what your rates help fund, check out these statistics.
- 9 rock pools
- 16 Surf Lifesaving Club buildings
- 1252 hectares of natural landscaping areas
- 4 skate parks
- 3 tourist parks
- 897km roads
- 87km cycle and shared pathways
- 355 bus shelters
- 683km drainage pipes
- 717 buildings
- 169 playgrounds
- 151 sports courts
- 210 picnic shelters

Source: Resourcing Wollongong 2022 – Adopted by Council 25 June 2012.

WHAT YOU'VE SAID...

In our 2012 biannual Wollongong City Council Community Survey you had some interesting things to say about your satisfaction with Council's performance over the past 12 months.

- 34 per cent of people identified road maintenance as a main issue over the next three years. This was followed by the CBD and/or Crown Street Mall (17 per cent) and more or better parking (15 per cent).
- People said we needed to improve our roads, footpaths, children's playgrounds and parks.
- Our Australia Day celebrations were really important.
- The majority of people who contacted Council (48 per cent of residents in the past 12 months) did so for help with waste services for things such as booking in an On-Call Household Clean Up.

Source: Wollongong City Council Community Survey 2012. Management Report – Final.
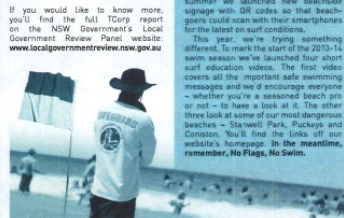
YOUR SAY

Everyone has an opinion about Council – what we do and how we do it. As part of this review, we want to hear these views. It doesn't matter whether they're good or bad. We just ask that they're constructive.

We regularly have staff out and about asking people's opinions on projects, events and plans for the city's future. We know some people love to share their opinions with us. These people really help us do our jobs and we appreciate the time they take. But if you're someone who has never got involved in Council's engagement activities before, now is the time.

While our current financial situation is okay, we need to keep doing what we're doing. Something has to change. The results of the review will impact all of us and so it's important you have a say. For the Panel to consider your ideas make sure you give us feedback by:

Tuesday 8 October 2013

THE TCORP REPORT

The TCorp Report into the Financial Sustainability of the New South Wales Local Government Sector was published in March 2013 and followed an extensive review of all councils in NSW. This report had a number of key findings about all councils' financial future, and has influenced our current Review. In its report our Council was rated moderate with a neutral outlook. This means we're managing within our means and our short-term future is okay. Other councils were found to be in financial difficulties now. However, this report highlighted that if we don't plan for our financial future now, we'll join those councils with a bleak outlook.

Some of the other key findings included:

- Two thirds of all NSW councils are reporting operating deficits – they do not have enough money to do everything they are doing now
- Public roads managed by local government are the major part of the $7.2 billion backlog in infrastructure
- Councils need to work with their communities in making the decisions about how to best address the financial stresses going forward.

If you would like to know more, you'll find the full TCorp report on the NSW Government's Local Government Review Panel website: www.localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au

Community Spirit

Do you know someone who goes above and beyond for our community? Council is calling for nominations for our annual Australia Day Awards. There are six categories: Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year, Cultural Award, Community Award, Sports Award and – new to 2014 – Senior Citizen of the Year. If you know someone who fits the award-winning bill, check out our website at www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/australiaday or contact Council's Customer Service team on (02) 4227 7111 for a nomination form. Nominations close Thursday 5 December.

SAFE SWIMMING

We take beach safety seriously. That's why our Lifeguard staff visit local schools and the University as part of our surf education program. It's also why last summer we launched new beachside signage with QR codes so that beachgoers could scan with their smartphones for the latest on surf conditions. This year, we're trying something different. To mark the start of the 2013-14 swim season we've launched four short surf education videos. The first video covers all the important safe swimming messages and we'd encourage everyone – whether you're a seasoned beach pro or not – to have a look at it. The other three look at some of our most dangerous beaches – Stanwell Park, Puckeys and Coniston. You'll find the links off our website's homepage. In the meantime, remember, No Flags, No Swim.

Advertisement and Fact sheet

Securing Our Future
We need your help to make some important decisions

The Problem

Like most NSW councils, a lot of our roads, footpaths, buildings and other community assets are getting old and need to be upgraded.

$21 MILLION

We need to find around $21 million more per year for this or we'll start losing assets as roads, playgrounds and pools reach the end of their useful life and fail. We've seen this in recent years with the Wollongong Town Hall, Darkes Rd Bridge, Bellambi Rock Pool and Mt Keira Rd all failing. If we don't take action this will get worse.

The Savings Challenge

TARGET: $41M

$21M HOW WILL WE SPEND THE $21 MILLION PER YEAR?

Some examples of what we could invest this money on:
- An extra 2.3km of footpath replacements per year
- An extra 6.9km of road resurfacing per year
- Austinmer Rock Pool reconstruction
- Commercial / Town Centre upgrades including Corrimal, Unanderra and Helensburgh.

$20M THE PROBLEM WAS WORSE BUT WE'VE ALREADY SAVED $20 MILLION ANNUALLY OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS

This has funded:
- Wollongong Town Hall renewal and reopening
- Woonona and Bellambi Rock Pool upgrade
- Replacement of the footpath on Crown Street, Wollongong, between New Dapto Road and Osborne Street
- Road resurfacing on Investigator Drive, Berkeley, between Nolan Street and Berkeley Road.

This means making some tough choices. Do we reduce some of the services Council provides? Or increase rates? Or a bit of both?

	OPTION 1 Citizen Panel's recommendations	OPTION 2 Modifications to Citizen Panel's recommendations based on community feedback	OPTION 3 Focus on income and improvements
Efficiency	$7 million	$5 million	$3.5 million
Services	$4 million	$2.3 million	$1 million
Fees & Charges	$1.6 million	$370,000	N/A
Rates	Additional $8.4 million	Additional $13.4 million	Additional $16.5 million
IMPACT AVERAGE PER HOUSEHOLD	$215.75 PER YEAR / $53.94 PER QUARTER	$279.76 PER YEAR / $69.94 PER QUARTER	$323.44 PER YEAR / $80.81 PER QUARTER
	Increase of 5.2%, 5.5%, 5.5% cumulative over 3 years including the rate peg.	Increase of 6.7%, 7%, 7% cumulative over 3 years including the rate peg.	Increase of 7.7%, 8%, 8% cumulative over 3 years including the rate peg.

Find out more: www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/securingourfuture

Securing Our Future
We need your help to make some important decisions

What the rating options mean –

As a result of the 'Securing our Future' community consultations on Council's long term financial sustainability, three options or scenarios were developed to free up funds for asset renewal. Achieving this allows us to become more financially secure into the future, and means we can continue to provide safe, accessible and appropriate community assets. These scenarios are currently on exhibition for community feedback (until 5 February 2014).

Each of the scenarios includes a rating increase at varying levels. Along with 36 other councils in NSW, Wollongong City Council is proposing to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) as part of the solution to secure additional funds. This Fact Sheet aims to show what each of the proposed rating options or scenarios mean for the average residential home and for businesses across the Wollongong LGA in greater detail.

For each scenario, the rating increase proposed is over a three year period. After the three years, the increase would remain and future increases would be inline with CPI (via rate peg).

Residential Rates

The table below provides a year by year breakdown of what the dollar increase would be for each year, in each of the scenarios, for the average residential household.

Rating Options: Average Residential Rate Increases - Baseline, Scenario 1, Scenario 2, Scenario 3

	Baseline		Scenario 1			Scenario 2			Scenario 3		
	Rate peg increase only		Includes rate peg SRV			Includes rate peg SRV			Includes rate peg SRV		
	Annual Rate increase	Annual Average Rate	Annual Rate increase	Annual Average Rate	Increase attributed to rate peg only	Annual Rate increase	Annual Average Rate	Increase attributed to rate peg only	Annual Rate increase	Annual Average Rate	Increase attributed to rate peg only
	%	$	%	$	$	%	$	$	%	$	$
Current Rate		1,175		1,175			1,175			1,175	
2014/15	2.7%	1,207	32	5.2%	1,236	29	6.7%	1,254	47	7.7%	1,265	59
2015/16	3.0%	1,243	68	5.5%	1,304	61	7.0%	1,341	99	8.0%	1,367	124
2016/17	3.0%	1,280	105	5.5%	1,376	96	7.0%	1,435	155	8.0%	1,476	196
Total % Increase	8.95%			17.09%			22.16%			25.62%		

Other Rates

The table below shows total rate increases for the rating categories other than residential at the end of the three year period for each option.

Rating Options: Average Business Rate Increases % - Baseline, Scenario 1, Scenario 2, Scenario 3

	Baseline	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
	Cents in the dollar 2013/14	Increase attributed to rate peg only	Total increase including Rate Peg + SRV	Total increase including Rate Peg + SRV	Total increase including Rate Peg + SRV
		%	%	%	%
Farmland	0.019886	8.95%	17.09%	22.16%	25.62%
Business	0.502653	8.95%	17.09%	22.16%	25.62%
Business - Light Industrial	1.264245	8.95%	17.09%	22.16%	25.62%
Business - Commercial	1.549898	8.95%	17.09%	22.16%	25.62%
Business - Heavy Industrial	1.811452	8.95%	17.09%	22.16%	25.62%
Business - Regional 3c	2.361820	8.95%	8.95%	8.95%	8.95%
Business - Heavy Industrial Activity 1	2.937984	8.95%	8.95%	8.95%	8.95%

Notes:
1. Average residential rate based on house and strata rates across the city.
2. Business and Industrial rates increases are shown in percentage increases as "average" rate information is not indicative due to the diverse nature and use of properties and the rates applicable.
3. The rate increase shown in each scenario for years 1, 2, and 3 is inclusive of an assumed 'rate peg' and additional rate adjustment (the SRV). The rate peg is the State Government's annual increase for rates that allows for inflation. Under requirements for the Special Rate Variation application, Council must include the assumed rate peg together with the SRV increase.
4. In all three scenarios, it assumed that only the rate peg estimate will apply for Regional 3c and Heavy Industrial Activity 1 Business sub categories. This is due to the substantially higher than average rates in the dollar already applied to the property values in these areas.
5. The special rates levy for Wollongong Mall and City Centre will only be subject to the estimated rate peg and not the special rate variation.
6. Council has not received the new valuations from the NSW State Government (Valuer General) to be applied for the 2014/15 rating period. The actual rating increases experienced by individual properties will vary based on the relative valuation changes between properties.

Brochure