

Bellingen Shire Council – Special Rate Variation

ATTACHMENT C - SURVEY RESULTS ANALYSIS

Overview

Throughout December 2022 and January 2023, Bellingen Shire Council actively sought feedback regarding its Special Rate Variation proposal. A key part of the Council's engagement plan was a survey, which focused on better understanding the community's effectiveness of engagement methods.

A key function of the survey was to gather submissions on the proposal, with these comments captured through the open box feedback section. A full list of submissions can be found in Appendix C.

The survey gathered 86 responses. The survey was actively promoted through social media and was available to complete online through the Council's website. Alternatively, community members were able to complete a hardcopy version of the survey, with copies made available at Council's office, at each drop-in session and at the three community libraries in the Shire.

The breakdown of surveys collected was as follows:

TYPE	AMOUNT
ONLINE	73
HARDCOPY	13
TOTAL	86

Analysis

Bellingen Shire is home to 13,197 people (ABS ERP 2021), with 6154 rateable assessments. A combined total of submissions received including survey responses, email and mail submissions was 107. This equates to 1.74% of the ratepayer base.

In total, the survey consisted of 13 response fields, including four questions aimed at capturing demographics. These included name, suburb, age category and residential status. The name field was optional, providing community members with the ability to provide feedback anonymously.

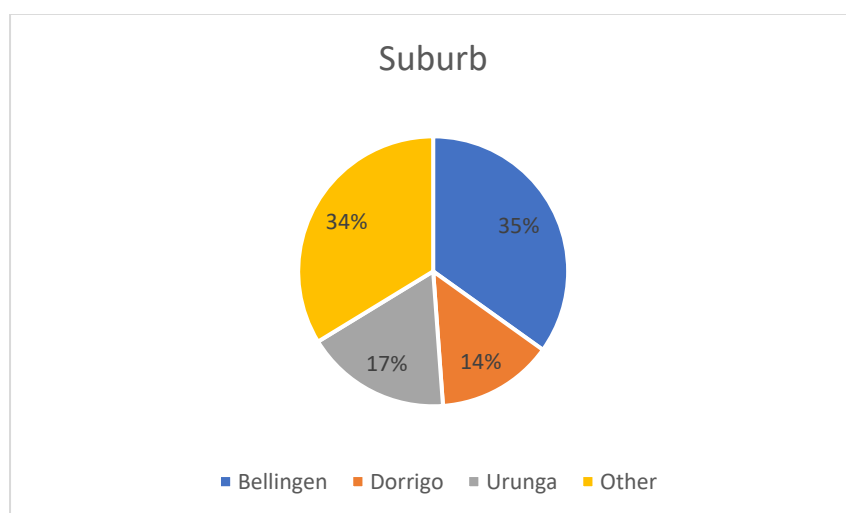
The following questions were included in the survey:

- Name
- Suburb
- Age Category
- Residential Status
- It is important that Council provides quality services to the community and maintains a broad range of assets in the Shire
- I have access to adequate information regarding the Special Rate Variation proposal

- I am aware of the reasons why Council is considering an application for a Special Rate Variation
- I understand how these changes will affect my own rate payments
- I would be willing to accept a reduction in the current level of council services and the overall quality of community assets to avoid the proposed Special Rate Variation
- Use the text box below to provide additional feedback on the Special Rate Variation proposal. (You can also email council@bellinghen.nsw.gov.au or call 02 6655 7300)
- As a community member, I have had the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed Special Rate Variation application
- How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation? (Please select all that apply).

A breakdown of the results of each question has been provided below.

Suburb



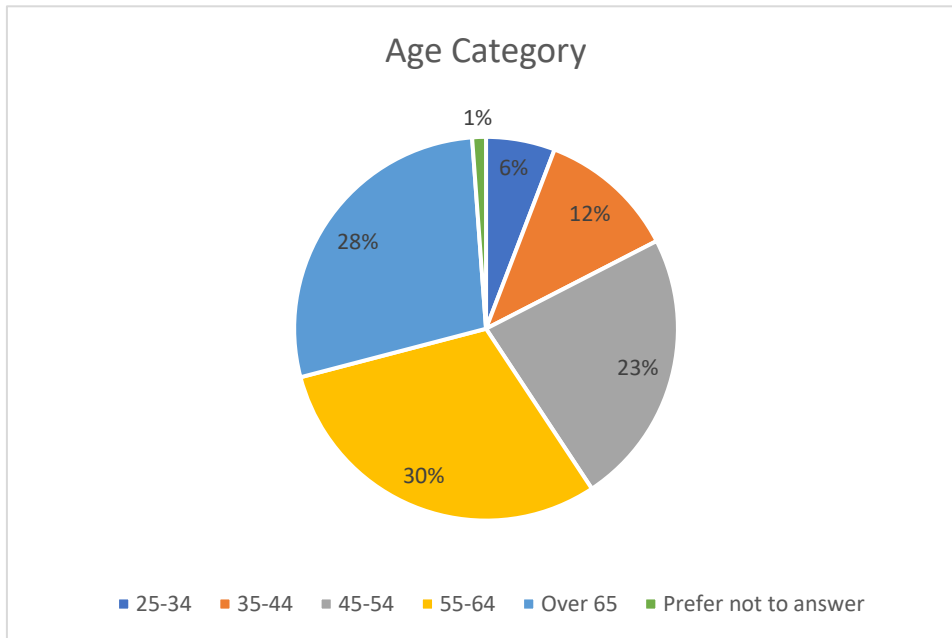
A key focus of Council's engagement strategy was ensuring the feedback received during the consultation period was from residents right across the Shire.

The three larger townships in the Bellinghen Shire – Bellinghen, Dorriggo and Urunga – made up 66% of respondents. 15 other suburbs were referenced in the survey results (27 responses), while two respondents did not respond to this field.

The following suburbs were referenced in the survey:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| • Bellinghen (30) | • Newry Island (1) |
| • Bielsdown Hills (3) | • North Bellinghen (2) |
| • Bostobrick (1) | • Outer Kalang (1) |
| • Brierfield (3) | • Raleigh (2) |
| • Dorriggo (12) | • Repton (3) |
| • Fernbrook (1) | • Tallowwood Ridge (1) |
| • Fernmount (3) | • Thora (1) |
| • Gleniffer (1) | • Urunga (15) |
| • Kalang (1) | • No response (2) |
| • Mylestom (3) | |

Age Category



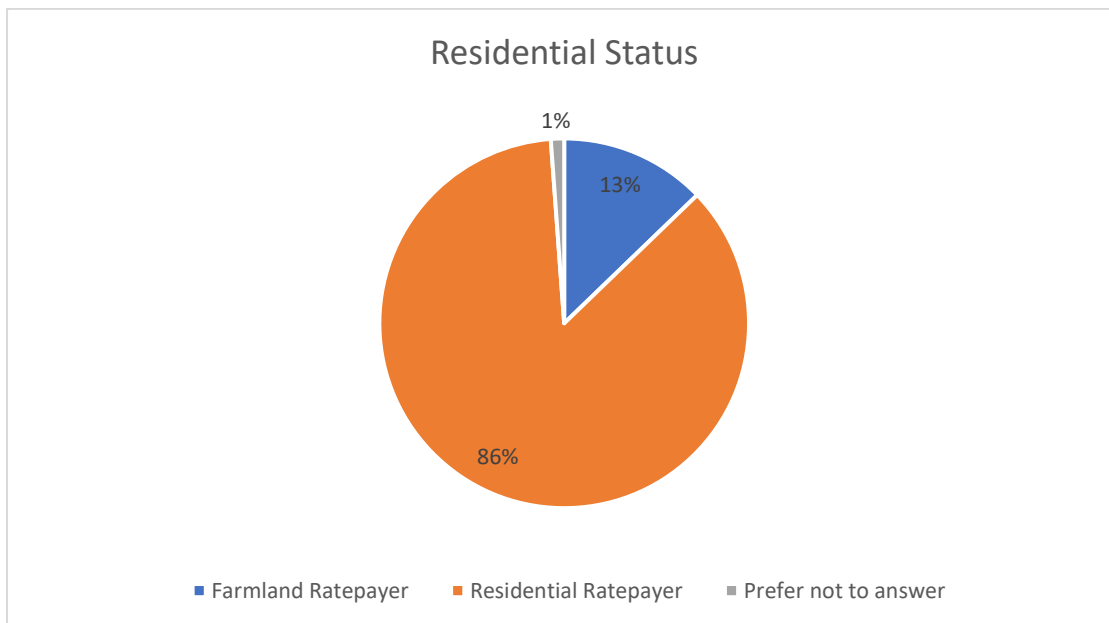
The highest number of responses gathered were from community members aged between 55-64 years (30%). This was closely followed by over 65 years (28%) and 45-54 years (23%).

Younger categories received slightly fewer votes, with 35-44 years making up 12% of responses, while 25-34 years received 6%.

The following age categories were referenced in the survey:

- 25-34 – (5)
- 35-44 – (10)
- 45-54 – (20)
- 55-64 – (26)
- Over 65 – (24)
- Prefer not to answer – (1)

Residential Status

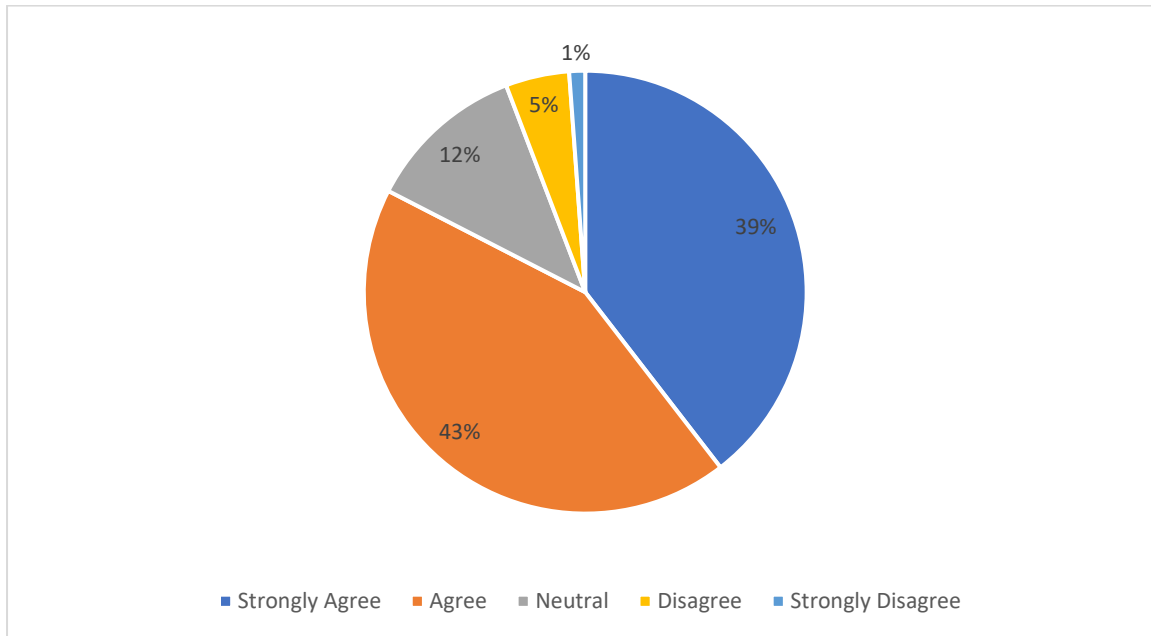


From the 86 respondents to the survey, the vast majority stated that they were residential ratepayers in the Bellinghen Shire. Farmland ratepayers made up 13% of respondents, while one survey stated they would prefer not to answer. It was also identified that no submissions were received from people identifying as Business Ratepayers.

The residential status breakdown is as follows:

- Farmland Ratepayer (11)
- Residential Ratepayer (74)
- Prefer not to answer (1)

It is important that Council provides quality services to the community and maintains a broad range of assets in the Shire.



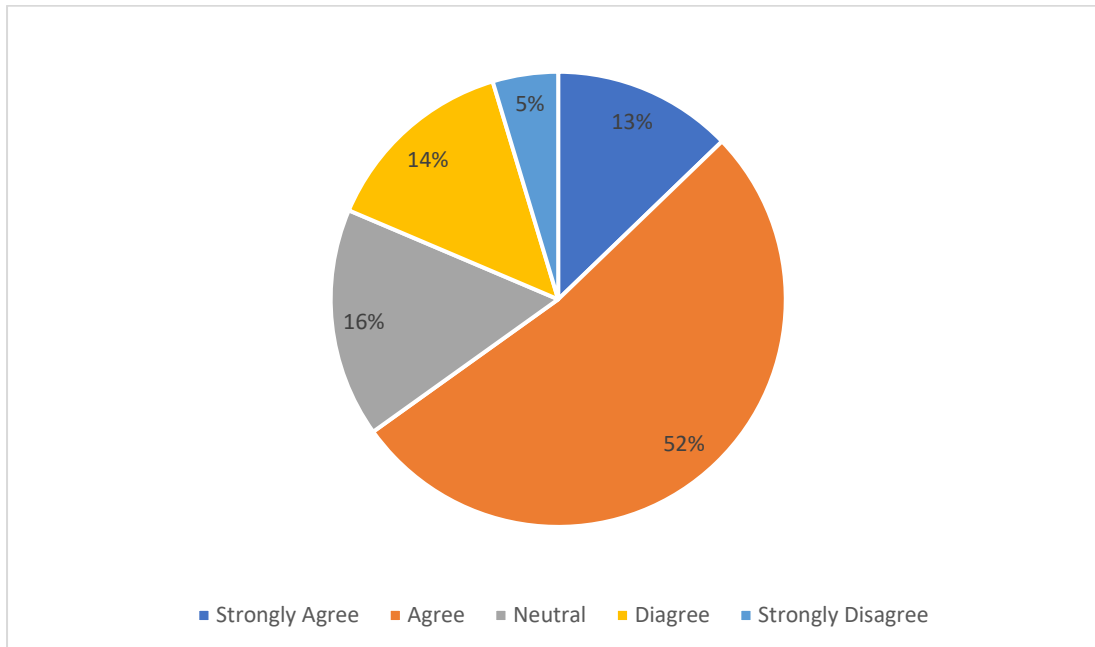
The clear majority of respondents agree that it is important for Bellingen Shire Council to provide quality services to the community and maintain a broad range of assets. 82% stated that they either strongly agree or agree with this statement.

Only 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 12% entered neutral.

The breakdown of responses to this statement is as follows:

- Strongly Agree (34)
- Agree (37)
- Neutral (10)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly Disagree (1)

I have access to adequate information regarding the Special Rate Variation proposal.



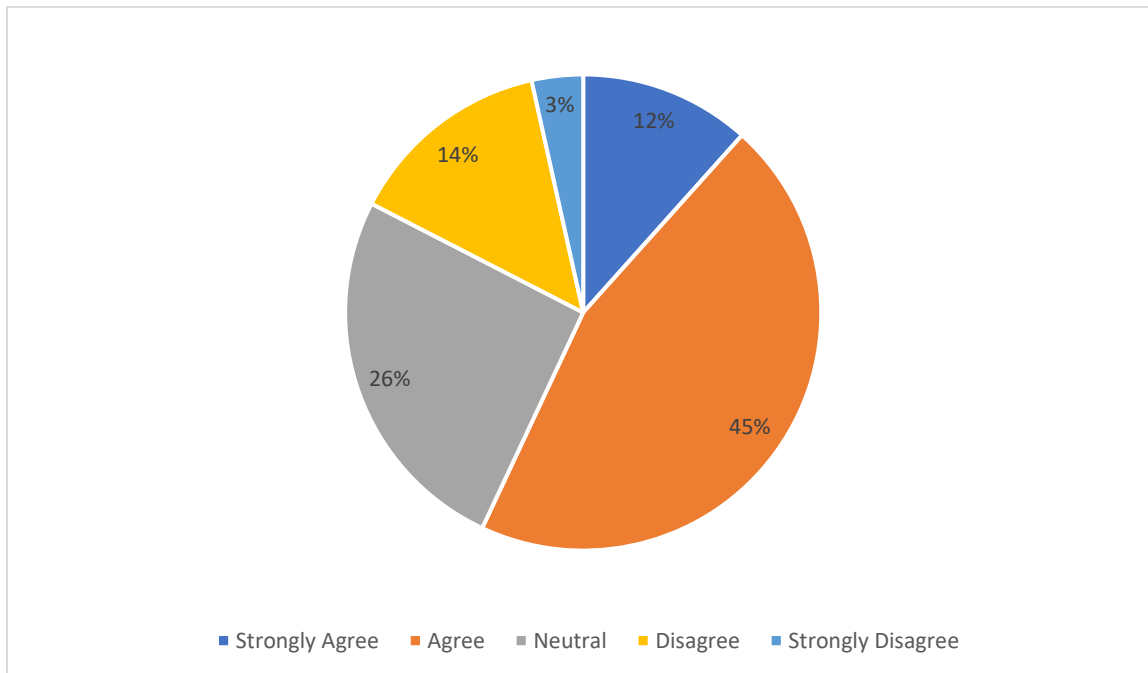
Bellinghen Shire Council aimed to ensure it provided clear and transparent information throughout its engagement process regarding the Special Rate Variation.

The results of the survey have indicated that adequate information was made available to the community, with 65% of survey respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the above statement. Just 19% of responses either strongly disagreed or disagreed, while 16% were neutral in response to the statement.

A breakdown of responses to this statement can be found below:

- Strongly Agree (11)
- Agree (45)
- Neutral (14)
- Disagree (12)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

I am aware of the reasons why Council is considering an application for a Special Rate Variation.

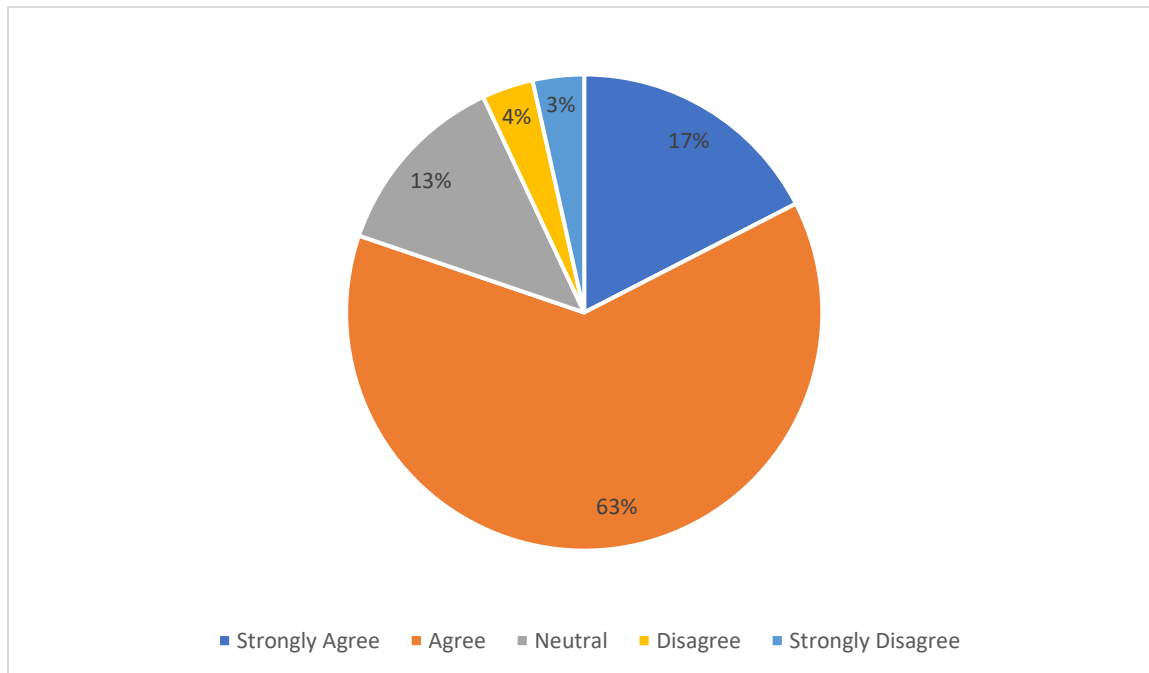


Over half of the respondents (57%) strongly agreed or agreed that they understood the reasons why Council is considering a Special Rate Variation application. The second most common response was neutral to this statement (26%), while just 17% either strongly disagreed or disagreed.

The following responses were collated in the survey:

- Strongly Agree (10)
- Agree (39)
- Neutral (22)
- Disagree (12)
- Strongly Disagree (3)

I understand how these changes will affect my own rate payments.

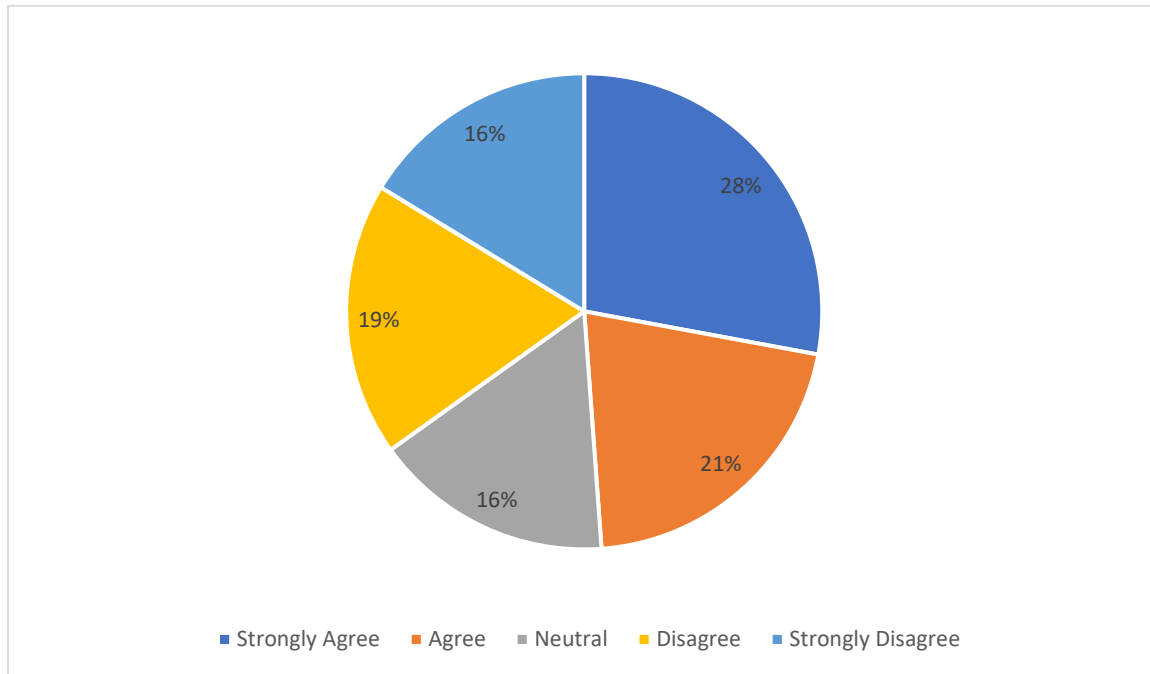


Council provided a range of information and resources for community members to help determine how a special rate variation may impact them. The rates calculator provided to be a popular method of assisting ratepayers in this area. This resource could be accessed through Council’s website, at drop-in sessions and at kiosks located at Council’s office.

The results of the survey show that these strategies proved to be effective, with 80% of respondents stating they either strongly agree or agree that they understand how the changes would impact their rates. Just 7% of responses disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 13% were neutral to this statement.

- Strongly Agree (15)
- Agree (54)
- Neutral (11)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (3)

I would be willing to accept a reduction in the current level of council services and the overall quality of community assets to avoid the proposed Special Rate Variation.



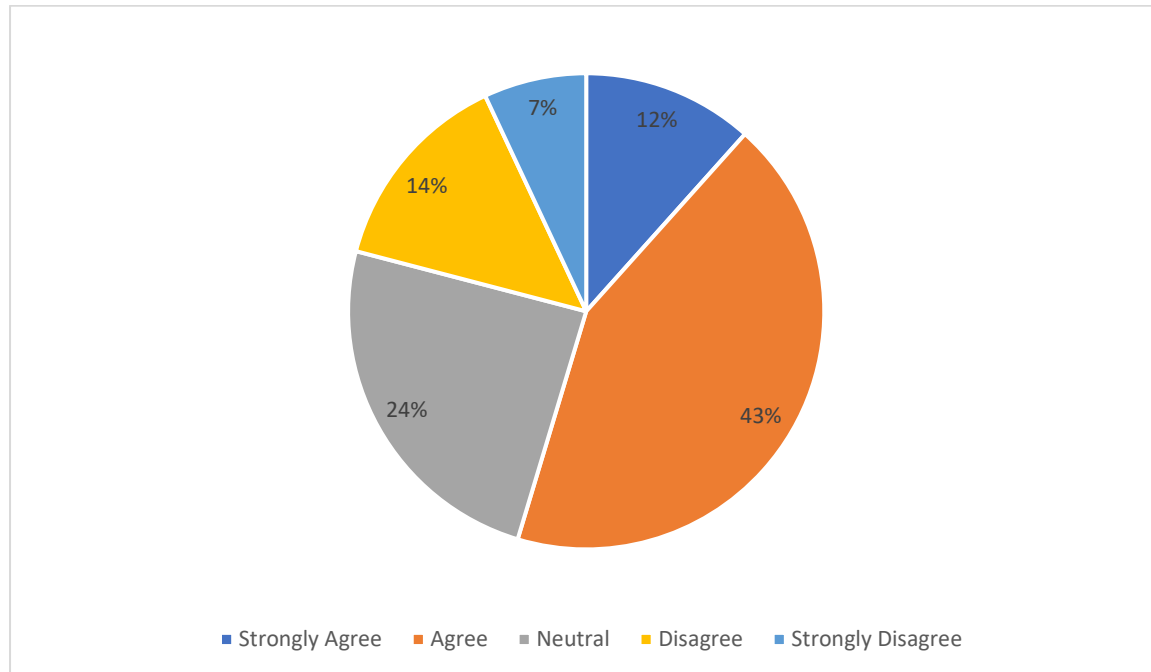
While the initial question showed that community members strongly valued Council delivering quality services and maintaining a range of assets, the feedback gathered from this question shows a more even split relating to services provided.

The five options received a fairly even spread of responses. Just under half of respondents (49%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they would be willing to accept a reduction in the current level of services Council provides to avoid a special rate rise. Other respondents disagreed, with 35% unwilling to accept a lower level of service and 16% neutral to the statement.

A breakdown of the responses to this question is as follows:

- Strongly Agree (24)
- Agree (18)
- Neutral (14)
- Disagree (16)
- Strongly Disagree (14)

As a community member, I have had the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed Special Rate Variation application.



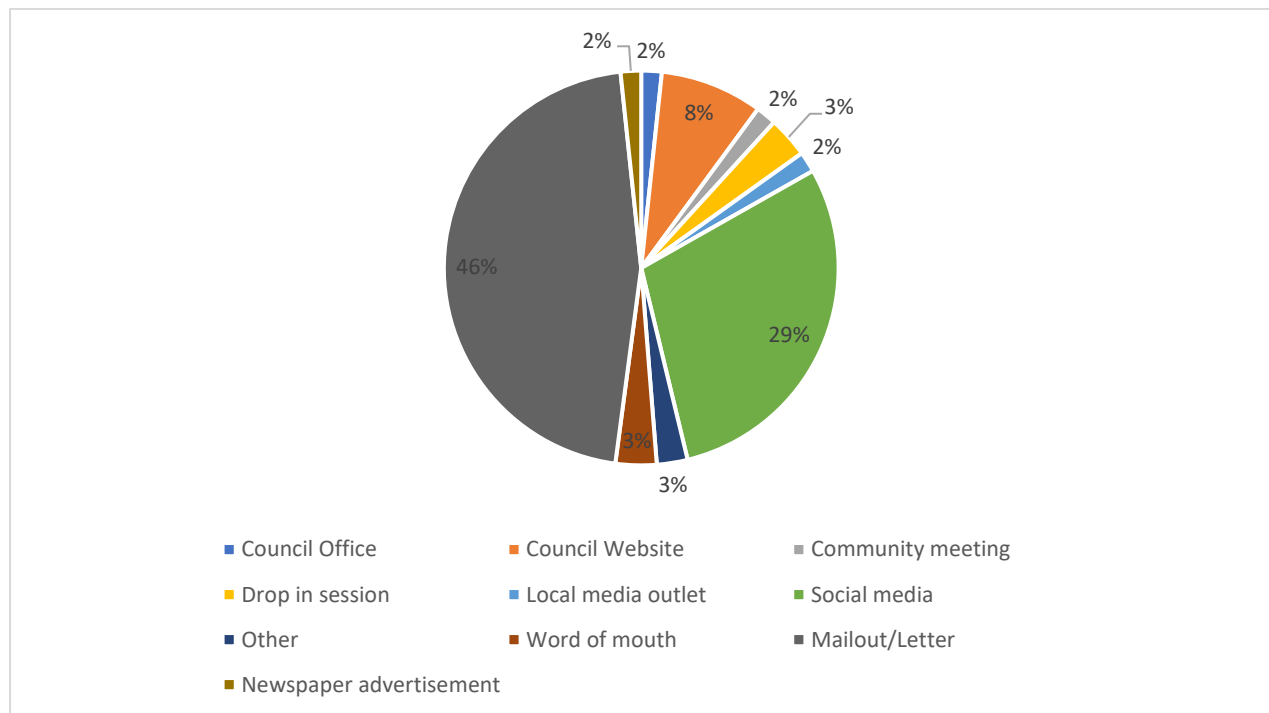
Bellinghen Shire Council aimed to ensure that community members were able to provide feedback on the Special Rate Variation process. Formal submissions were gathered through the survey and email, while community members were also able to speak directly with Councillors and Council staff throughout the consultation period.

The responses to this question show that these methods were effective, with 55% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing that they had the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed Special Rate Variation application. From the other responses, 24% felt neutral toward this statement, while 19% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The responses are broken down as follows:

- Strongly Agree (10)
- Agree (37)
- Neutral (21)
- Disagree (12)
- Strongly Disagree (6)

How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation? (Please select all that apply).



The majority of respondents to the survey stated they had been informed of the Special Rate Variation through the mailout from Council, which included the detailed brochure. Social media was the second highest-referenced form of engagement.

A range of other mediums were referenced in the responses, which shows the broad range of engagement methods used by Council.

The responses to this question are detailed below:

- Council Office (2)
- Council Website (10)
- Community meeting (2)
- Drop in session (4)
- Local media outlet (2)
- Social media (35)
- Other (3)
- Word of mouth (2)
- Talk in the street (1)
- Told by friends (1)
- Mailout/letter (55)
- Newspaper advertisement (2)