



Federation Ratepayers Incorporated

Registration No: INC2200720

**A ratepayer advocate group striving to achieve a well-managed,
transparent Federation Council that our community can be proud of**

Public Submission to IPART **AGAINST** Federation Council SRV Application for a cumulative increase of 69.94% over 2 years, (52.01% increase in 2025/26 and 11.80% increase in 2026/27.)

This submission outlines Council's failure to genuinely engage and communicate with all ratepayers about the magnitude of the proposed permanent increase in general rates. Council has also just had the benefit of a two year 39.23% cumulative temporary rate increase to get their house in order by rationalising, reviewing and creating efficiencies, but have done nothing. We also have significant doubt that Federation Council residents have any CURRENT capacity and willingness to pay any increase in general rates.

We encourage IPART to carefully consider the Federation Council's resolution regarding their Special Variation Application in the January 2025 Extraordinary Meeting. In the minutes, Item 5.1 titled Special Rate Variation 2025/26, **27/2025FC RESOLVED** on the motion of Councillors Rowena Black and Andrew Kennedy, "2. *THAT Council endorse the submission of the Special Rate Variation application to IPART for a permanent 69.94% increase to general rates over two years commencing 1 July 2025.*"

This Council Resolution failed to clearly and explicitly specify the increase in general rate income in each of the years 2025/26 and 2026/27 of the Special Rate Variation application to be applied for. This is a potential legislative failing that may jeopardise the legitimacy of the entire Special Rate Variation application. We urge IPART to seek legislative advice from OLG regarding this issue.

The adopted resolution to apply to IPART for a 69.94% SRV was not unanimous by all 9 Councillors. The vote was split, 6 Councillors *For* the motion and 3 Councillors *Against* the motion.

In March 2025 Federation Ratepayers Inc (FRI) conducted four separate townhall information sessions over four evenings. Our information sessions were well attended with over 250 people participating across the four townships. As part of the night, FRI conducted a short one-page survey. Respondents in all four townships overwhelmingly

opposed Councils SRV application (Figure 1. Question 6: Do you support Councils SRV application?) 94% of all respondents did not support Councils SRV application.

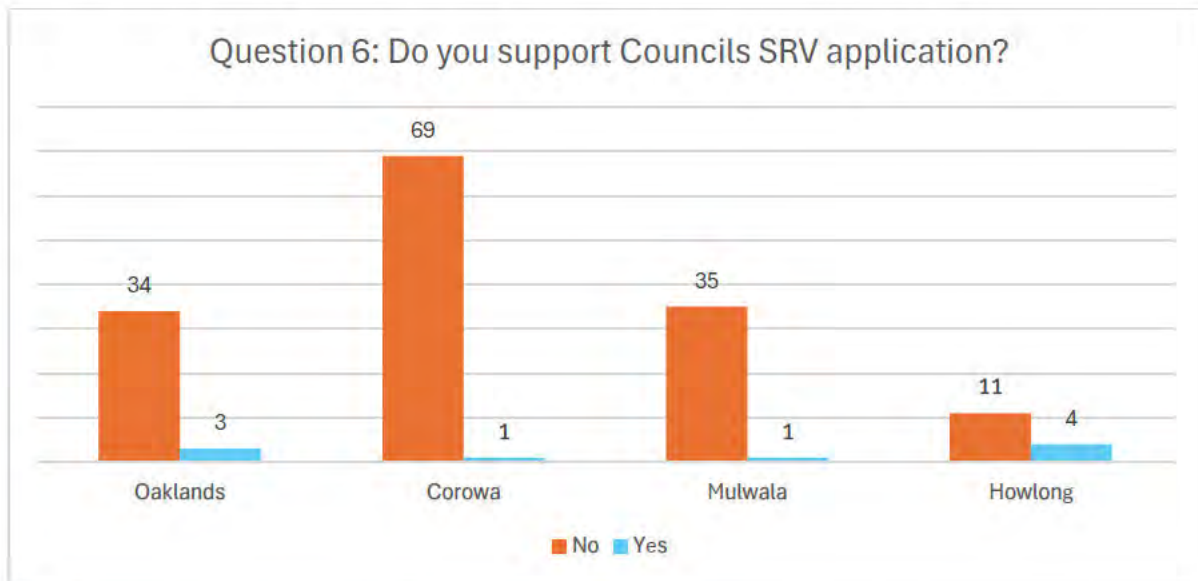


Figure 1: FRI March 2025 Survey across 4 township's; 158 respondents.

We consider Council's communication of the temporary two year cumulative 39.2% SRV expiring in June 2025 to be poor and misleading. Council has assumed that the temporary increases will become permanent, and the new SRV rate rise has been advertised as just a further 19% in 2025/226 and 11.8% in 2026/27. This is just not true.

There has been no mention of the 52.01% increase council is actually applying for in the first year after the temporary SRV instrument expires. Nowhere does Council explain that rate peg increases of 4.3% and 4.5% remain in the general rate revenue base for 2023/24 and 2024/25 after the temporary increases are removed. The fact sheet mailed out to ratepayers only states in the very last paragraph that it is 69.94% permanent SRV (Figure 2.) The main body of the fact sheet communicated 19% and 11.8% increases over the next 2 years, a cumulative increase of 33.04% (Figure 3).

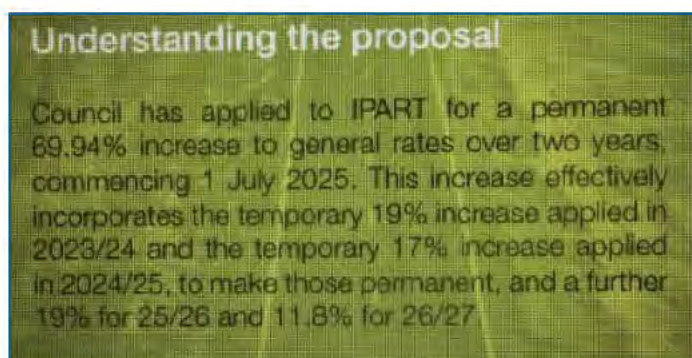


Figure 2: Last paragraph on page of Federation Council Fact Sheet

Table 2. Impact on Total Rate Revenue of an s508A Permanent Special Rate Variation converting the existing Temporary SRV to Permanent plus an additional 19% in Year 1 followed by 11.80% in Year 2

Proposed Rates	Base Year (with temporary SRV)	Year 1 of Permanent SRV	Year 2 of Permanent SRV	Cumulative Increase
Financial Year	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Baseline Scenario				
Total Notional Rates Income under assumed rate peg (no proposed SRV)	\$12,933,242	\$10,580,653	\$11,056,783	-\$1,878,458
Annual Increase under rate peg		-18.19%	4.60%	-14.51%
Proposed SRV				
Total Notional Rate Income after proposed SRV	\$12,933,242	\$15,390,557	\$17,206,643	\$4,273,402
Annual Increase with SRV		19.00%	11.80%	33.04%
Cumulative impact of SRV above Base Year levels		\$2,457,316	\$4,273,402	
Difference between SRV and rate peg only scenarios		\$4,809,904	\$6,149,860	

Figure 2. Estimate of Impact on Average Rates for Each Category of an s508A Permanent Special Rate Variation converting the existing Temporary SRV to Permanent plus an additional 19% in Year 1 followed by 11.80% in Year 2 (Is subject to future decisions of both IPART and a future Council).

Figure 3: Screenshot of main table in Federation Council Factsheet

assessment. A council-wide mail-out will be distributed next week to update the community on the proposed permanent increase to general rates, followed by pop up information sessions in Corowa, Howlong, Mulwala and Urana as per below -

- Monday, March 3: Corowa Memorial Arcade (10am-11:30am)
- Monday, March 3: Mulwala Bakery (1pm-2:30pm).
- Tuesday, March 4: Howlong Bakery (10am-11:30am)
- Tuesday, March 4: Urana Takeaway (1pm-2:30pm).

The SRV proposes an increase to general rates of 19% in 2025/26 and 11.8% in 2026/27. The cumulative increase across the four years from 2023/24 to 2026/26 is 69.94%, to include the temporary increases of 19% and 17% applied in 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively to make those increases permanent/remaining in the rate base.

IPART will publicly exhibit the application and call for submissions, and this is expected to be through March/April, before they make a decision expected in May. Once Council knows the exact exhibition dates, this will be communicated to residents.

Information about IPART, their assessment process, and direct engagement opportunities can be found on the [IPART website](#).

Federation Council Mayor, Cr Cheryl Cook said Council understands that rate increases can cause concern within the community and can be confident to understand the actual amounts rates will rise by, if

Figure 4: Federation Council Facebook post, February 2025

Federation Ratepayer's disagree with Federation Council's statement posted on their Facebook information page and their website, *"The SRV proposes an increase to general rates of 19% in 2025/26 and 11.8% in 2026/27. The cumulative increase across the four years from 2023/24 to 2026/26 (sic) is 69.94%"* (Figure 4.)

After applying the rate peg in 2023/24, 2024/25 and the proposed SRV of 52.01% in 2025/26 and 11.80% in 2026/27, the cumulative rate increase is 85.23% over four years. Considering that this is the true hip-pocket cost for ratepayers, it's completely unacceptable that it has not been disclosed or acknowledged by Council. Community members advised Council that the 69.94% figure was wrong but were completely ignored. In fact, one ratepayer was told the four year figure was calculated as per IPART guidelines. We encourage IPART to do this calculation because it is clear to us that Council has been deliberately misleading and communicating a grossly understated cumulative four year figure to ratepayers.

made the following comment in his community engagement report;

“Nevertheless, we wish to make plain to Council and IPART that it would be unwise to give disproportionate attention to a few people who object when the vast majority of the 12,939 residents have declined the offer to express a strong voice on the matter. Doing so would fall afoul of self-selection bias and likely misrepresent the sentiment of the majority – after all, everyone was given the opportunity to contribute in various ways and a failure to take up the offer can only mean that ninety-nine percent of residents felt that they could contribute little that would improve the proposal.”

This sentiment by [REDACTED] on community engagement exemplifies his position that anyone who disagrees with his narrative is not worthy of being heard. This was highlighted by his reluctance to engage with anyone at the July 2024 public meetings who had a contrary view to his own.

[REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Community Awareness and Engagement

Federation Ratepayers Inc know a significant portion of ratepayers did not know of the opportunities to give feedback to council before their SRV application was submitted. This was evident by just four public responses to the December 2024 public exhibition of the Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) and its hidden 69.94% SRV proposal (Figure 5.) It was disappointing to see the release of the SRV FAQ and a rate estimator calculator published in mid- February 2025 after Federation Council submitted their application. This gave no opportunity for ratepayers to understand the implications of the proposed SRV (Figure 6.) It is disturbing that none of this information was available before Council made its SRV application and insulting that Council is now trying to communicate with residents now there is no opportunity for people to have their say.

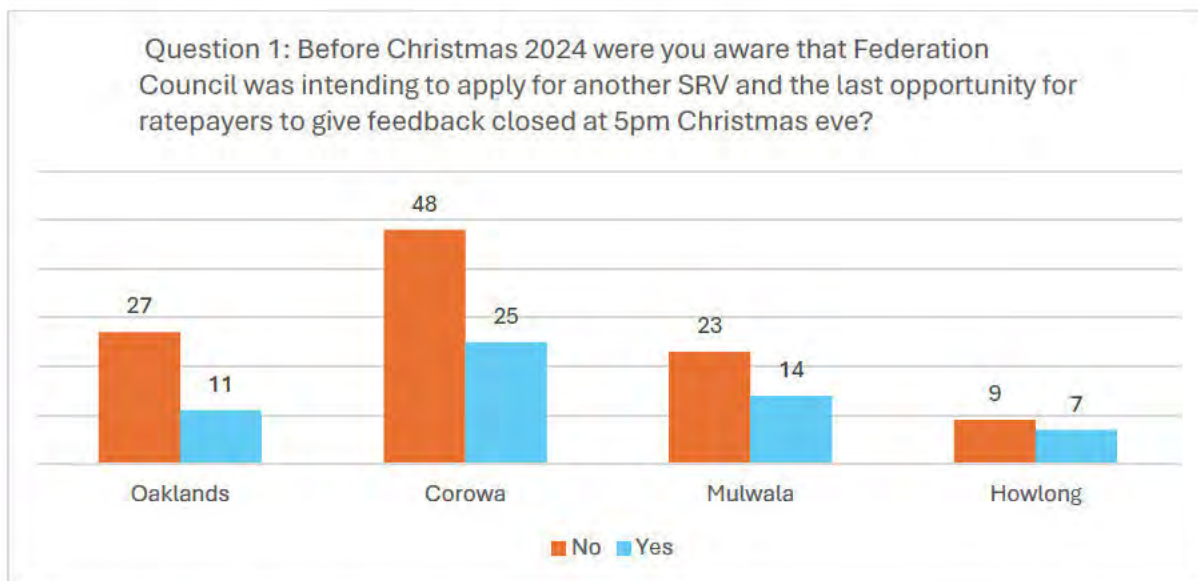


Figure 5: FRI March 2025 Survey, Question 1

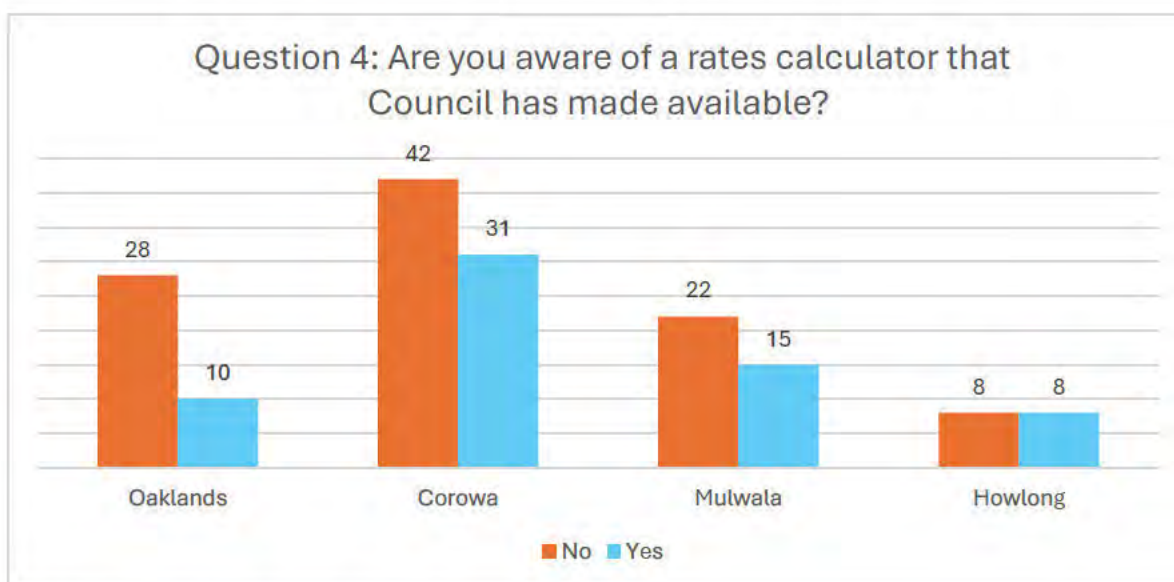


Figure 6: FRI March 2025 Survey, Question 4

In July 2024, 6,200 unaddressed fact sheets and surveys were supposedly mailed via post. [REDACTED] boasts that he is aware of only 2 households that missed the mail out. However, how can anyone be aware of missing a postal survey they didn't know was happening. Of the 6,200 surveys, only 171 were returned. These 171 have been used to make assumptions about the rest of community. The Federation Council area contains 8,134 rateable properties. It would be reasonable to expect that Federation Council could have mailed a factsheet and survey to each rateable property address.

Just 43% of the 158 respondents to FRI's March 2025 Survey were aware of the [REDACTED] face-face public meetings (Figure 7.)

Attendance at [REDACTED] face-to-face public meetings in July 2024 was low. The survey conducted at the conclusion of the meetings was completed by 74 people in total. [REDACTED] states that it is “*unwise to give disproportionate attention to a few people*” and that “*Doing so would fall afoul of self-selection bias and likely misrepresent the sentiment of the majority.*” Yet this is exactly what his conclusions of the post-meeting survey results represent, a minority of the community.

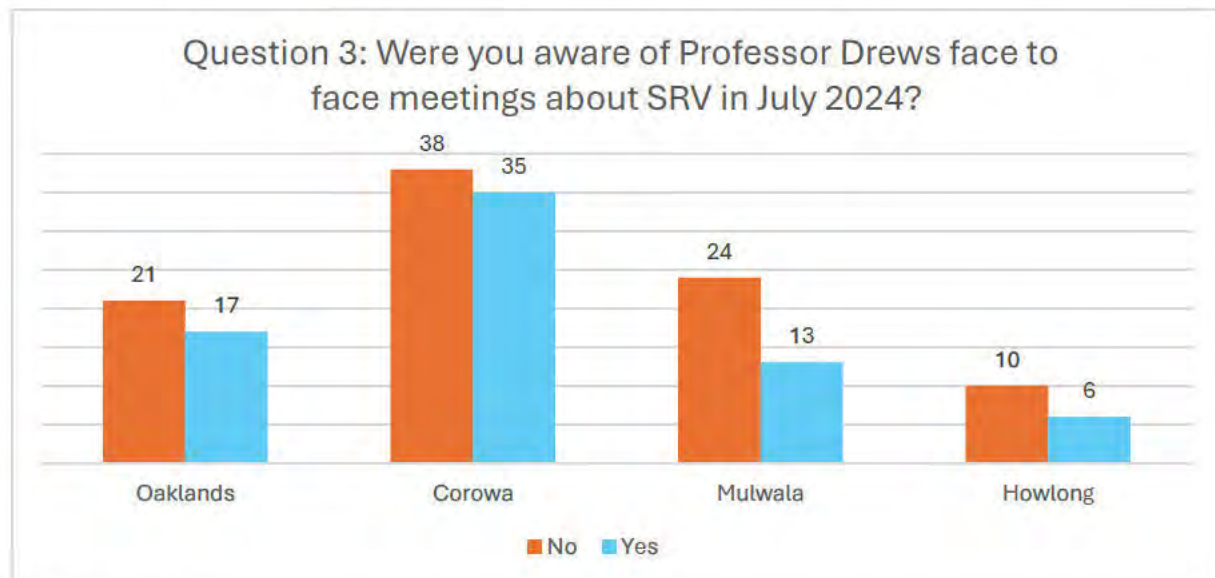


Figure 7: FRI March 2025 Survey, Question 3

Further evidence of Council’s lack of engagement is Council’s refusing an application from a representative of Federation Ratepayers Inc. to speak at Councils public forum on Agenda Item 8.7 Special Rate Variation Application for 2025/26 and 2026/27 – Final Engagement Summary, 25 March 2025 Ordinary Meeting. This report, authored by the General Manager, accused Federation Ratepayers Inc of presenting misinformation to the community. The General Manager attended three of our four information sessions. He had ample opportunity during these sessions to publicly discuss his concerns with the information being presented but said nothing.

It is disappointing to be refused an opportunity to participate in the 25 March 2025 public forum addressing the governing body of Councillors on the information contained in this Agenda Item 8.7 Report. There was 8 pages of Council staff feedback to comments made by FRI presenters during the 4 x March 2025 Information Sessions for IPART public submissions. Public Forum should be an opportunity for all ratepayers to engage with all Councillors about important information being presented by Council.

Impact on Ratepayers

Capacity to Pay Report relies on the August 2021 census data that does not truly reflect ratepayer's current capacity to pay. Since that 'snap in time' there has been a significant shift in the factors driving the economy with rising interest rates combined with high inflation. This without doubt has had a multi-faceted impact on households that cannot be justifiably measured in exact terms until the completion of the next census in 2026. Whilst the new census data is still 18 months away, the impact of the first 19% general rate temporary increase is evident. The author of Federation Council's June 2024 Financial Performance Report notes, *"outstanding debtors at 30 June is \$458,613 greater than the same time last year. It would be reasonable to expect debtors to have increase by the quantum of the increase to general rates in 2023/24 (19%). This amount is a higher increase"* (Figure 8.)

The impact of the 2nd year temporary 17% increase will not be publicly known until late July 2025 when Council release its June 2025 Financial Performance Report. It is difficult to imagine those households under financial pressure with unpaid rates at 30 June 2024 will be able to afford the second 17% temporary rise amidst ongoing inflationary pressure.

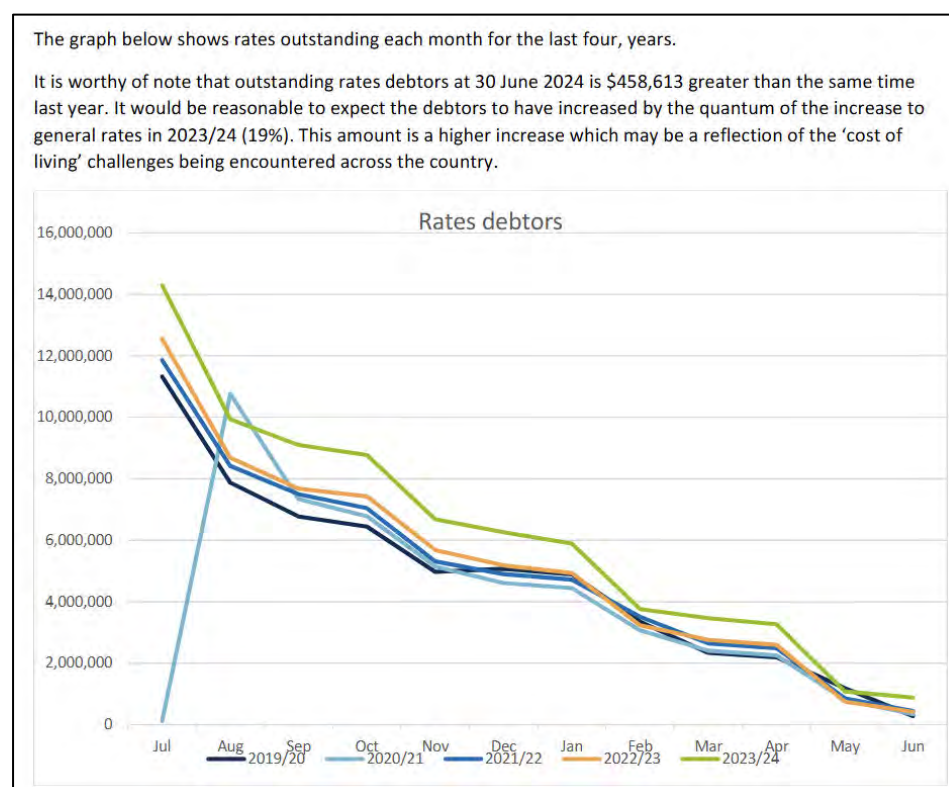


Figure 8: June Financial Performance Report, page 9, July 2024 Federation Council Ordinary Meeting.

The unaffordability of the proposed SRV increase is further demonstrated via rolling 12-month average household expenditure. (Figure 9.) This is tracking the changes in discretionary and non-discretionary spending of households from December 2019 to December 2023.

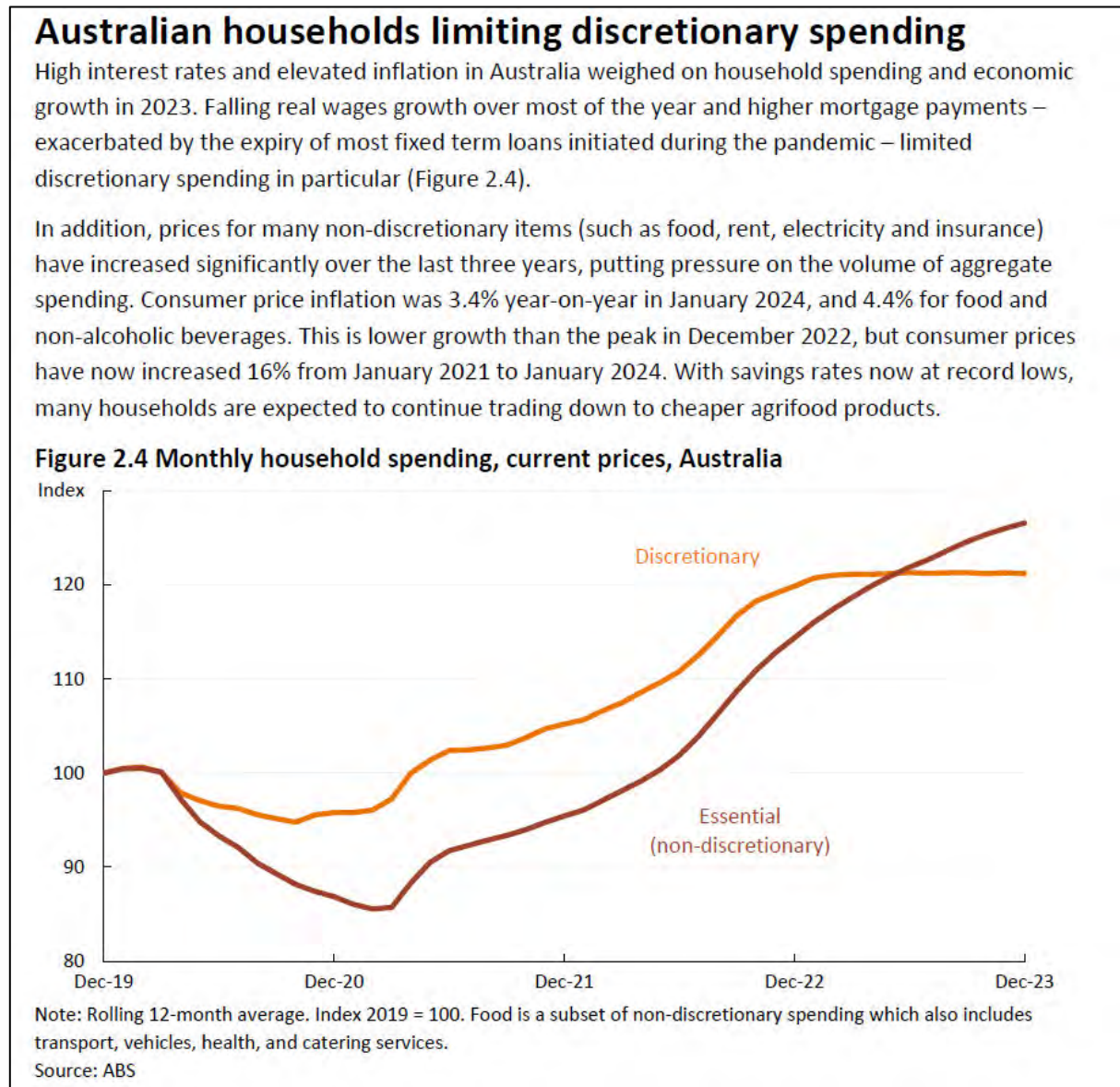


Figure 9: Monthly Household spending, rolling 12-month average. Index 2019=100

Report states the distribution of general rates between categories needs to be reviewed. If this was to occur, some rating categories may in future years incur a significantly higher than advertised average rate rise. For example, in 2024/25 the distribution of the temporary 17% increase was not distributed evenly, in contradiction to Councils 2023 SRV application where they stated the rate increase would be applied evenly. I.e. In 2024/25, business rates increased 15%, residential rates increased by 11% but farmland rates increased by 21% - all from what Council had promised would be an even increase across all categories (Page 8, Federation Council – Revenue Policy 2024/25)

Capacity to Pay report summary of residents was, *“In sum, the majority of indicators suggest typical or above typical capacity to pay, aided by relatively low levels of inequality. Low rates of mortgage stress are also a positive, although this is marred a little by rent stress. All of this is supportive for the proposition that Federation residents ought to be able to pay at least typical revenue efforts”*

In a polar opposite contradiction, the August 2016 to 2021 Census data for Federation Council showed a substantial growth in the number of households vulnerable to financial stress. These are households that are paying more than 30% of their income into rent or a mortgage in the Federation Shire. This data, as stated previously, was collected in a historically low interest rate economy. The lowest quartile, comprising of 1,742 households were on an equivalised weekly income of \$603 or less. This is 36.6% of all Federation Council households. This quartile has grown faster than the others and has increase by 322 households.

Equivalised household income quartiles

Federation Council area - Households (Enumerated) Quartile group	2021			2016			Change
	Number	%	Regional NSW %	Number	%	Regional NSW %	2016 to 2021
Lowest group	1,742	36.6	30.5	1,420	33.5	30.6	+322
Medium lowest	1,483	31.1	28.8	1,347	31.7	29.2	+136
Medium highest	1,070	22.5	24.2	1,003	23.6	24.1	+68
Highest group	466	9.8	16.5	473	11.2	16.1	-8
Total Households	4,763	100.0	100.0	4,245	100.0	100.0	+518

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Census of Population and Housing](#) 2016 and 2021. Compiled and presented by [.id](#) (informed decisions).

The Council’s Hardship Policy is only a temporary extension of instalment payment option, ie. debt management policy. The obvious balloon of unpaid rates demonstrates that households under financial pressure are not taking up the hardship policy. It is widely known that financial stress can cause mental health issues where individuals can spiral and make poor decisions. This needs to be avoided at all costs.

conclusion on farmland ratepayer's income prospects were, *"In sum, current and future conditions are conducive to high profits for the agricultural sector for the foreseeable future."* His flawed rational for this forecast was presented as the 31 January 2024 drought indicator and Soft commodity prices over time sourced from ABARE, ABS. (Figure 10, Figure 11)

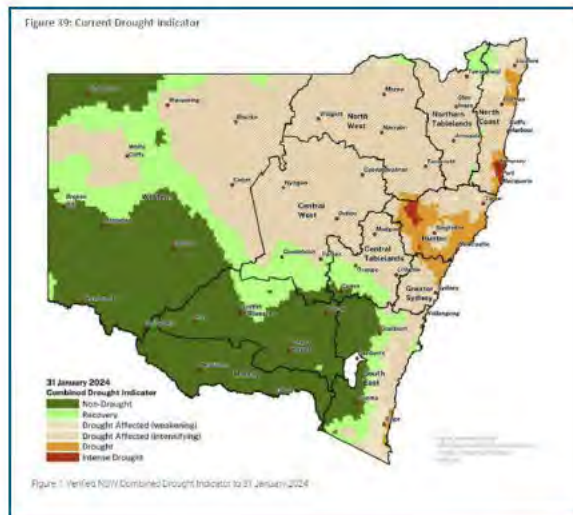


Figure 10: 31 January 2024 Current Drought Indicator, ABARE

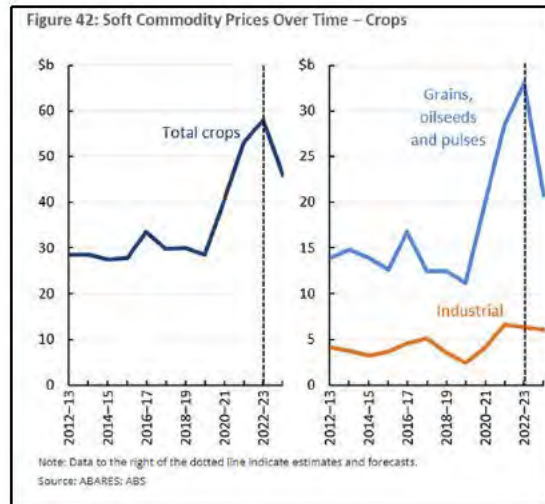


Figure 11: Soft Commodity prices over time, ABARE, ABS

Forecasting in the Australian agriculture industry is widely acknowledged to have a high degree of uncertainty based on the large variability of seasonal conditions and large reliance on export into the global market. The phrase *"foreseeable future"* means "soon" or "not long from now."

Just 6 months later in July 2024, the same ABARE drought indicator map (Figure 12) shows Federation Council in intensifying drought conditions and both wheat and sheep prices have crashed from historical highs back down to same prices received 10 years ago (Figure 13, Figure 14.)

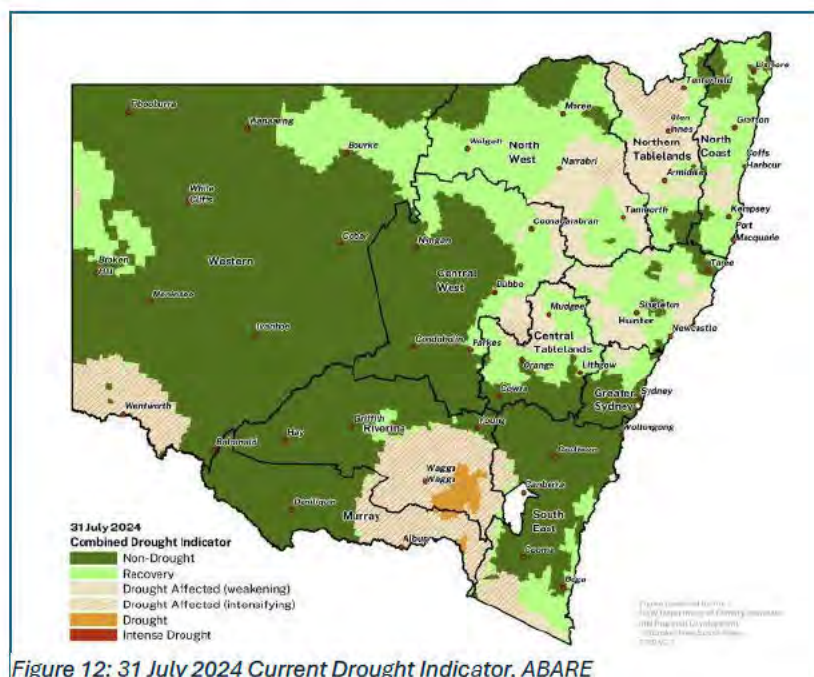


Figure 12: 31 July 2024 Current Drought Indicator, ABARE

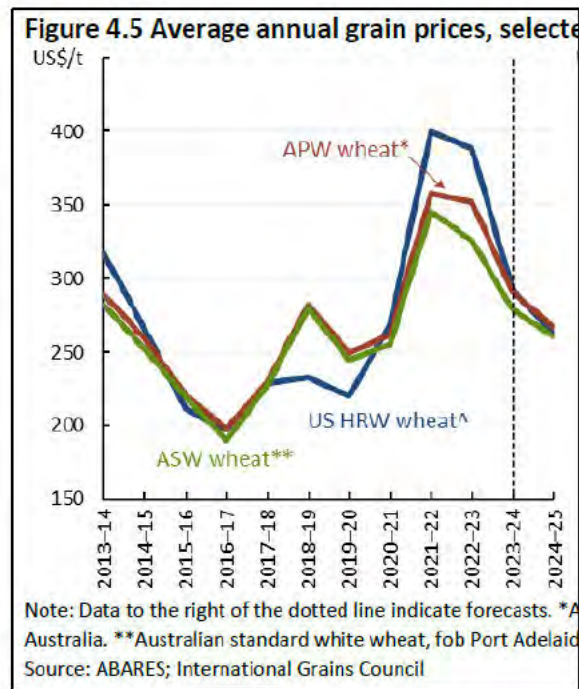


Figure 13: Average annual wheat grain price, ABARE

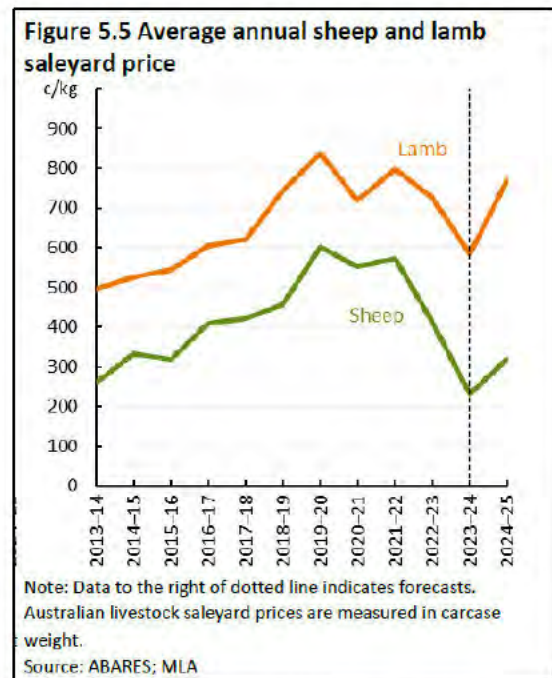


Figure 14: Average annual sheep and Lamb saleyard price, ABARE

In FRI's March 2025 survey, the majority of the 162 survey participants responded Yes to Question 5, "The cost of living pressures are too high to afford this proposed rate increase" (Figure 15.) This response shows the cost-of-living pressures is being felt deeply through all townships of the Federation LGA.

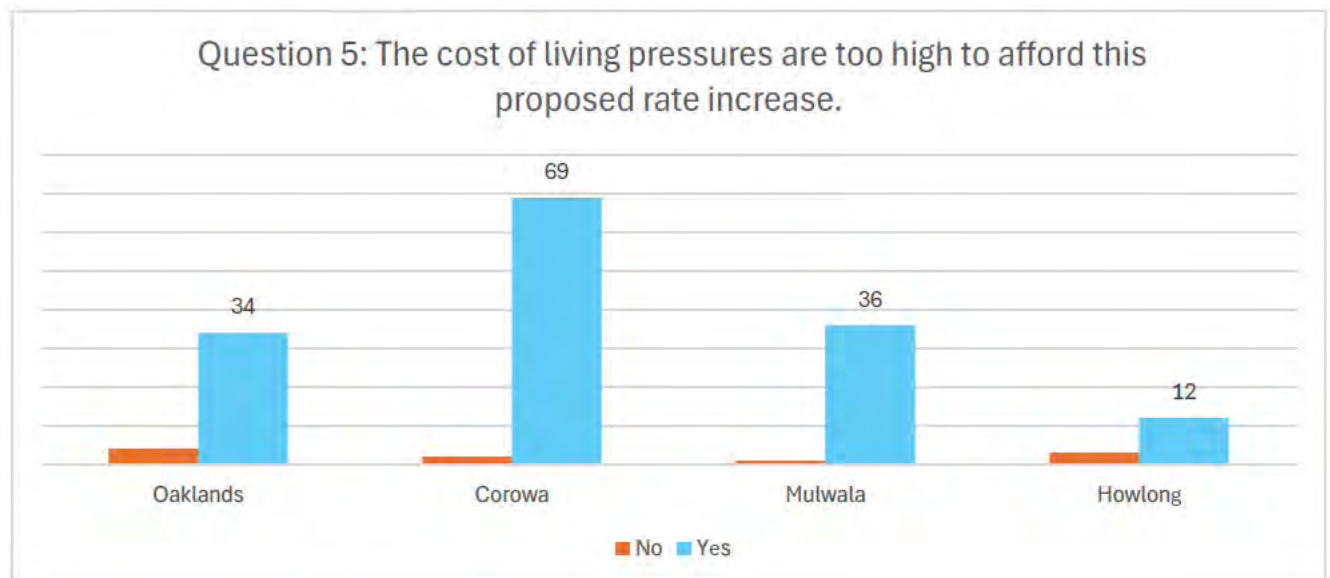


Figure 15: FRI March 2025 Survey, Question 5

Need for Extra Revenue

Throughout this process, the need for extra revenue for roads has been the main selling point promoted by both [REDACTED] and Council. IPART recently asked Council why there was no budget for roads maintenance for the next two years? The response from Federation Council to IPART was *'The road maintenance projects will be funded by the Regional and Local Roads Repair Program (RLRRP) grant from Transport for NSW in 2025/26 and 2026/27'*. If there was an extreme need to address the road infrastructure backlog, SRV money would be prioritised to roads regardless of 'extra grant' money being available.

Productivity improvement and Cost containment strategies

Council has not discussed any productivity and cost containment strategies with the community, so it is not possible for us to comment on that except to say there hasn't been any.

[REDACTED] Report and views on the efficiency of Federation Council can be summed up in his statement to IPART *'There is no good reason to think that efficiency is either a legitimate goal of government. Or indeed that high levels of efficiency are even possible.'*

This view is so far out of touch with community expectation it is laughable. FRI wants to be part of a Federation Council that ratepayers can be proud of. The notion that efficiency is not a legitimate goal of government does not pass the pub test and should be completely rejected.

Council claims it can only do 3-5 service reviews per year and claim a significant budget (\$250K) would be required to gain this information. This view would not be tolerated in private enterprise. What are managers doing if they are not keeping tabs on the financial performance of the operations under their control? This information should be available on a monthly basis. With 40 odd services are we really only getting a review done every ten years?

[REDACTED] makes the following statement regarding the 77 recommendations he made to address Council's financial sustainability challenges – "Councillors & Staff were prompted to vigorously engage on the long list of tasks that need to be dealt with prior to being in a position to actively submit another compelling SRV application!" This is clearly not happening - If you don't measure, you can't manage!

Alarming, Council have not provided any evidence of future cost containment strategy or any information that is front and centre, to mitigate further pressures on the ratepayer. The CFO has already flagged future SRV applications within the next 5 years.

Federation Ratepayers Inc. Public Engagement throughout the SRV process

Federation Ratepayers Committee has been communicating with Councillors . The Chairman and Vice-Chairman after the successful September election of the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor met with them formally to discuss their concerns.

Our Facebook page has been used to publicise information on how to make a submission

Federation Ratepayers Inc. Committee planned four community information sessions during the IPART submission period to educate and encourage ratepayers to “Have your Say”. These were located in the townships of Oaklands, Corowa, Mulwala and Howlong. The presenters discussed some of the issues the committee had identified from the 5 criteria that IPART assess Special Rate Variations, however, the focus of the information sessions was to explain who IPART was and how to navigate the IPART website to the survey or submission button. Screenshots of the survey questions were briefly shown in an effort to demonstrate ‘how easy’ and ‘how quick’ it is to fill out a survey or submission on an iPad or smart phone if a person did not have access to a laptop/desktop computer.

The presenters explained there are 4 pages of questions to reply to but did not read the specific questions out to the audience or indicate what response to give. The key message to the audience was to “take your time to read each question or statement and give your own opinion on each one.” As part of the information night, we had a 1 page survey of questions for the audience to fill out. We have provided as attachments, a copy of the Rate Rise meeting flyer, Rate Rise meeting slideshow presented, the survey and 1 page flyer left at business premises for persons not in attendance at meetings.

After the formal presentation of around 35 minutes, the meeting was opened up for questions and feedback.

We attempted to supply the community with the information that should have been supplied by Council but was sadly lacking.

Conclusion

Federation Ratepayers Inc requests IPART reject Federation Councils SRV application as council has not made a solid case for it to be granted. Community engagement has been clearly lacking. They have been advising the wrong cumulative four year increase they were applying for and said they were applying for a 19% increase next year instead of the correct 52.01% increase. There has been no effort to contain costs, improve productivity and make management accountable for outcomes. We as Ratepayers have had enough!

To approve this SRV would only be endorsing inefficiency and poor management. Cost of living pressures along with the reasons stated above make this SRV unaffordable for our community. Please refuse this SRV application and maintain your last determination which covers the next two years.

Attachments:

1. FRI March 2025 Meeting Flyer, FRI March 2025 Meeting Slideshow, FRI March 2025 March Survey, 2025 March Survey Results Table
2. 2 sided one page handout flyer made available for distribution by local retail businesses.
3. Federation Ratepayers Inc Facebook page, example screenshots.

**Do you know about the permanent
69.94% General Rate Rise?**

FEDERATION RATEPAYERS INC.

Rate Rise Meeting

**Free & Open to
the Public**

What to expect:

Clear and easy to understand information on the 69.94% rate increase Federation Council has applied to IPART for.
Information on how to have your say on the Rate Rise to IPART during the now open public submission period.

Further Info:



**1 hour info
session starts
at 6pm**

Locations + Dates:

OAKLANDS

Tue 4th March
@ Oaklands Bowling Club

COROWA

Wed 5th March
@ Corowa Golf Club

MULWALA

Tue 11th March
@ CLUB Mulwala

HOWLONG

Wed 12th March
@ Howlong Golf Club

F

FEDERATION RATEPAYERS INCORPORATED

Survey Questions

✓ the option(s) to answer

1 - Before Christmas 2024, were you aware that Federation Council was intending to apply for another SRV and the last opportunity for ratepayers to give feedback closed at 5pm Christmas Eve.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2 – If Yes, where did you find out about it?

- ☐ Council advertising
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Federation Ratepayers Inc
- ☐ Other

3 – Were you aware of [REDACTED] face-to-face public meetings about SRV held in July 2024?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Are you aware of a “Rates Estimator Calculator” that Council has made available.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. “The cost-of-living pressures are too high to afford this proposed rate increase”

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Do you support Council’s SRV application?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

AGENDA

RATE RISE MEETING

Howlong

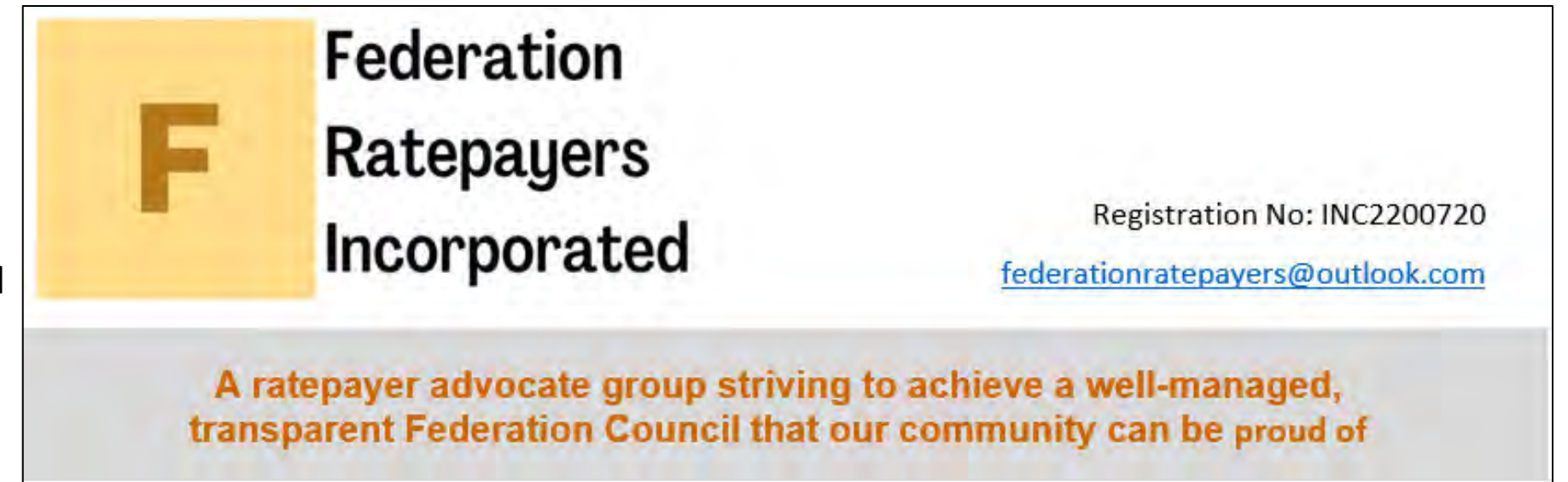


TIME	CONTENT	SPEAKER
6.00 pm	Welcome and Housekeeping	<div></div> Chairman
6.10 pm	Audience participation survey	<div></div> Vice Chairman
6.15 pm	What is the Rate Rise	<div></div>
6.30 pm	IPART survey + submission Criteria 1-5	<div></div>
7.00 pm	Up to 10 min Break	Feel free to head home
7.10 pm	Open Meeting Discussion: Q & A from the audience	Audience Discussion

About Us

The General Committee has held 8 meetings in the 2022-23 period. The Committee's initial primary focus was the Council's proposed SRV application in February 2023 and concerns around the Council's financial documents presented to the community in the May/June 2022 period. The Committee's actions in its first 11 months of existence were as follows,

- One or more committee members in attendance at all Council Meetings.
- Committee members addressing Council in public forum on 3 occasions.
- Committee members and members meeting with Council Mannex staff to present concerns around Council financials.
- Committee executive and members meeting with willing Councillor's on a number of occasions and presenting information
- Committee executive and members meeting with State Government representatives; Mr Justin Clancy MP Local Member Albury Electorate, Local Labor Albury Candidate Marcus Rowland, Tara Moriarity MP Minister Agriculture, Regional NSW and Western NSW and Jenny Aitchison Minister Regional Roads and Transport.
- Social media presence on Facebook via Federation Ratepayers Incorporated page with 403 followers.
- Local print and TV media presence and a network contacts formed for future use.
- Hosted 2 public hall style meetings (Corowa and Mulwala) in February with combined 320 people in attendance. Distributed 500 physical information packs via pick up locations in local shops regarding "how to make a submission" for Council's proposed SRV. Emailed 100 PDF information packs.
- Correspondence with Office of Local Government (OLG) on numerous queries and governance concerns.
- Research and analysis of Council policies and strategies in comparison to similar OLG 11 Rural large Councils.



The General Committee has held 7 meetings in the 2023-24 Financial Year.

The Committee's actions in the 2023-24 financial year:

- One or more committee members in attendance at all Council Meetings.
- Committee members addressing Council in public forum
- Committee members and members meeting with Council Mannex staff to present concerns around Council financials and operations
- Correspondence with Office of Local Government (OLG) with general queries and governance concerns.
- Promoted the public information meetings for Council's Sustainability Report conducted by [REDACTED] in July 2023. Followed up with communications and feedback to [REDACTED].
- Attended stakeholder meetings into further SRV with [REDACTED] and provided feedback.
- Provided voting statistics information and encouraged new people to be candidates for the 2024 Federation LGA Election. This year's candidates numbered 40 in total.



Welcome + Meeting Conduct

Survey Questions

**Have your Say
IPART**

**Membership
Form**

3 x handouts

Who is IPART?

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
Regulates NSW Local Government pricing



"help NSW residents get safe and reliable service at a fair price"

The Special Rate Variation (SRV) Process:

1. IPART accepts Special Rate Variation applications from NSW Councils for a rise in General Rate above the "rate peg" (February 2025)
2. IPART calls for public submissions **"Have your say"**. (March 2025)
3. IPART considers the information and evidence presented (March/April 2025)
4. IPART hands down a final decision for a full, partial or nil rate rise in May 2025



Federation
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Special Rate Variation

The "5 Criteria" is used by IPART to assess NSW Council applications for increasing rates above annual "rate peg" increase.

Proposed Permanent SRV

		Rate Peg only	Temporary SRV incl. rate peg	New proposed SRV incl. rate peg	Effective increase/year	In dollar terms/\$1000
year 1	2023/24	4.30%	19.00%		19%	\$ 1,190.00
year 2	2024/25	4.50%	17.00%		17%	\$ 1,392.30
year 3	2025/26	4.80%		52.01%	19%	\$ 1,656.48
year 4	2026/27	4.50%		11.80%	11.80%	\$ 1,851.94
			2 year cumulative is 39.20%	2 year cumulative is 69.94%	4 year cumulative is 85.24%	

Community aware of need and extent of rate rise

- Council communication about the proposed SRV has been more comprehensive than last time. Still have concerns significant portion of ratepayers did not know of the opportunities to give feedback to council before application submitted. I.e. FAQ and a rate estimator calculator was published mid- February after the Council submitted application
- Long Term Financial Plan around the SRV – was anyone aware of opportunity to have your say before councillors voted in January Meeting to go to IPART application. **Only 4 submissions**
- 6200 fact sheet and surveys mailed out in July 2024 but **only 171 returned**. These 171 have been used to make assumptions about the rest of community. Mail out of 6,200 did not reach all residences – particularly some rural areas.
- Attendance at [REDACTED] face-to-face meetings in July 2024 was low - post-meeting survey returned by 74 people only.

Community aware of need and extent of rate rise

- From a phone survey of 201 residents Federation Council – Community Research Project – October 2024 – recorded that 73% of residents surveyed were aware that Council was considering applying for a large increase to rates.

█ comments from report on community engagement:

“Nevertheless, we wish to make plain to Council and IPART that it would be unwise to give disproportionate attention to a few people who object when the vast majority of the 12,939 residents have declined the offer to express a strong voice on the matter. Doing so would fall afoul of self-selection bias and likely misrepresent the sentiment of the majority – after all, everyone was given the opportunity to contribute in various ways and a failure to take up the offer can only mean that ninety-nine percent of residents felt that they could contribute little that would improve the proposal.”

Has Council established that the effect on ratepayers is reasonable? (ie. affordability of proposed rate rise?)

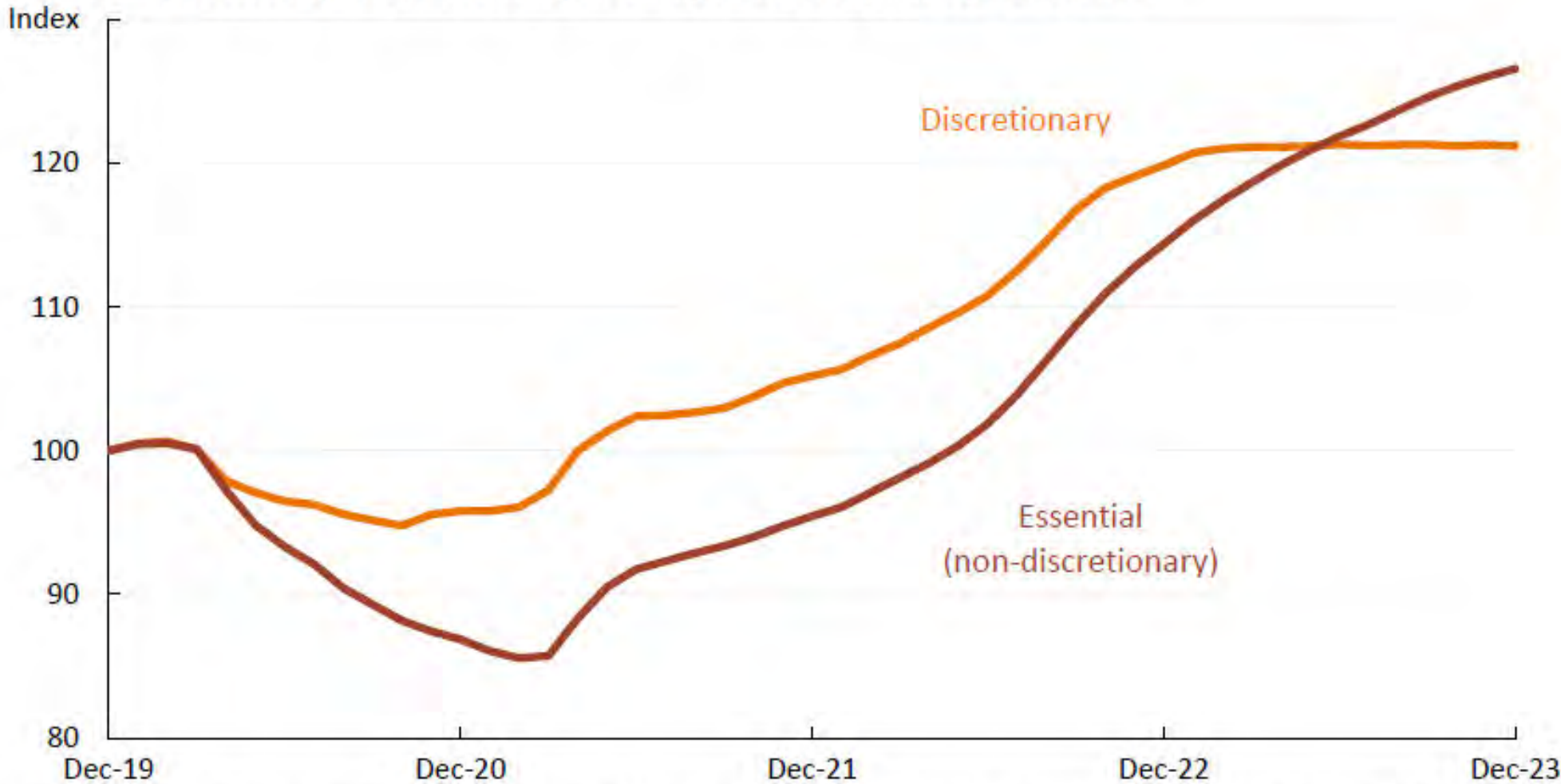
- The capacity to pay report analyses historical 2021 census data set. This does not truly reflect today's cost-of-living pressure or the future 2 years rate rises in 2025 and 2026.
- Federation Council's median equivalised household income has fallen between the years, from \$46,884 in 2016 to \$41,236 in 2021
- August 2021 Census data showed a substantial growth in the number of households vulnerable to financial stress – households that are paying more than 30% of their income into rent or a mortgage in the Federation Shire. **When interest rates were low**
- August 2021 Census also stated that 1,742 households are in lowest quartile on a equivalised weekly income of \$603 or less. This is 36.6% of all Federation Council households. From the 2016 Census, this quartile has grown faster than the others and has increase by 322 households.
- Vulnerable households with low savings/high portion of income housing rental/mortgage repayments.

Australian households limiting discretionary spending

High interest rates and elevated inflation in Australia weighed on household spending and economic growth in 2023. Falling real wages growth over most of the year and higher mortgage payments – exacerbated by the expiry of most fixed term loans initiated during the pandemic – limited discretionary spending in particular (Figure 2.4).

In addition, prices for many non-discretionary items (such as food, rent, electricity and insurance) have increased significantly over the last three years, putting pressure on the volume of aggregate spending. Consumer price inflation was 3.4% year-on-year in January 2024, and 4.4% for food and non-alcoholic beverages. This is lower growth than the peak in December 2022, but consumer prices have now increased 16% from January 2021 to January 2024. With savings rates now at record lows, many households are expected to continue trading down to cheaper agrifood products.

Figure 2.4 Monthly household spending, current prices, Australia



Note: Rolling 12-month average. Index 2019 = 100. Food is a subset of non-discretionary spending which also includes transport, vehicles, health, and catering services.

Source: ABS

The graph below shows rates outstanding each month for the last four years. This graph is at 31st October 2024 .



Has Council established that the effect on ratepayers is reasonable?

- The hardship policy has been updated, and a form is now available for download from council's website. However, this policy can only provide an extension of up to 12 months payment rates in full.
Interest charged on outstanding balance
- New option for Pensioners (fixed income) to apply for rate deferment if rates more than 7% pension payment.

I'm already stressed about the cost of living increases last over the last 12 months



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Has Council established that the effect on ratepayers is reasonable? (ie affordability of proposed rate rise?)

 *report on capacity to pay*

“In sum, the majority of indicators suggest typical or above typical capacity to pay, aided by relatively low levels of inequality. Low rates of mortgage stress are also a positive, although this is marred a little by rent stress. All of this is supportive for the proposition that Federation residents ought to be able to pay at least typical revenue efforts”

“In sum, non-farm businesses generally have typical or above typical indicators of capacity to pay.”

- *Note* – potential re-distribution ad valorem flagged for future year’s

Criteria 2 cont.: Has Council established that the effect on ratepayers is reasonable? (ie affordability of proposed rate rise?)

From Capacity to pay report by [REDACTED]
: “In sum, current and future conditions are conducive to high profits for the agricultural sector for the foreseeable future.”

Figure 39: Current Drought Indicator

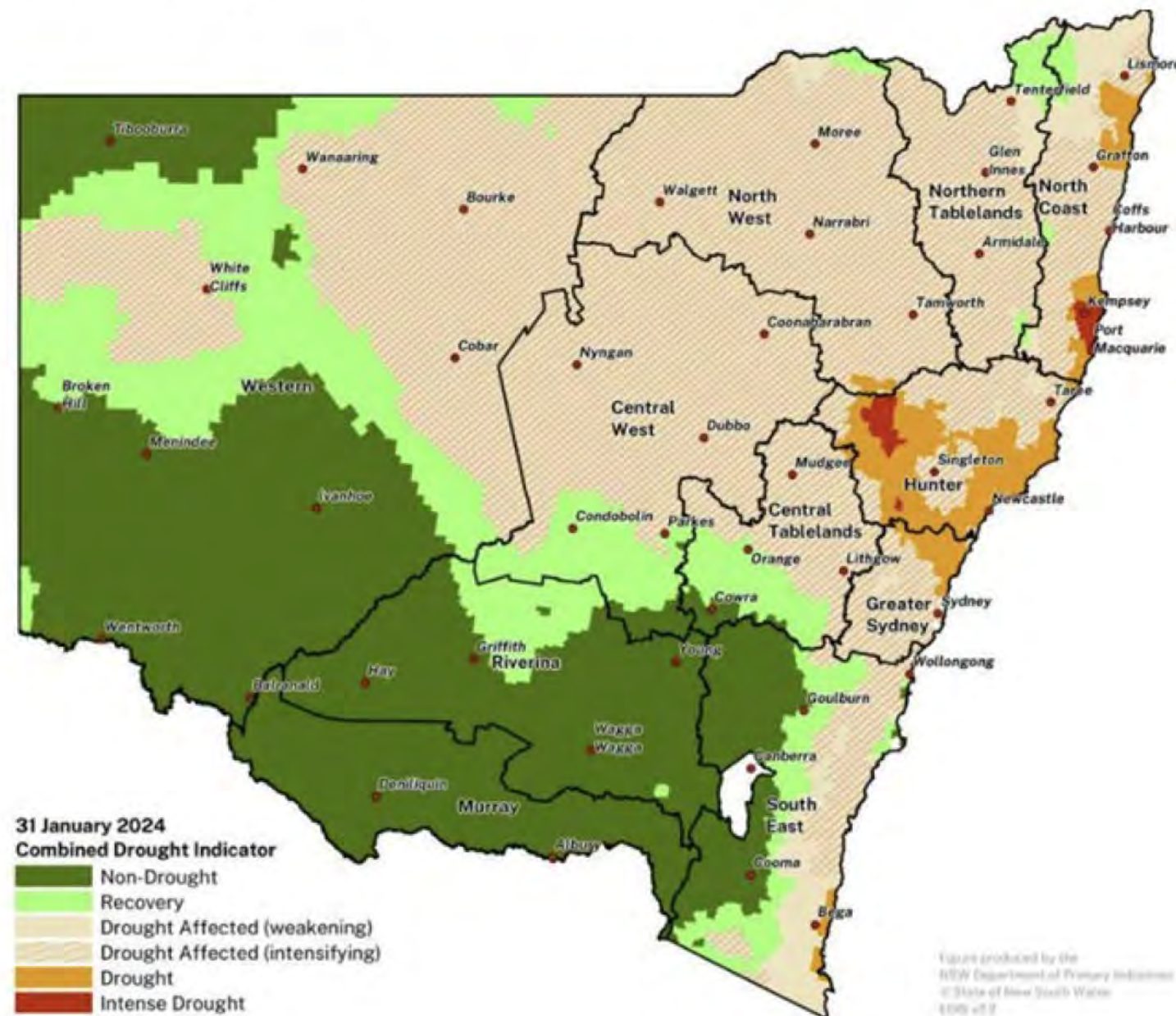
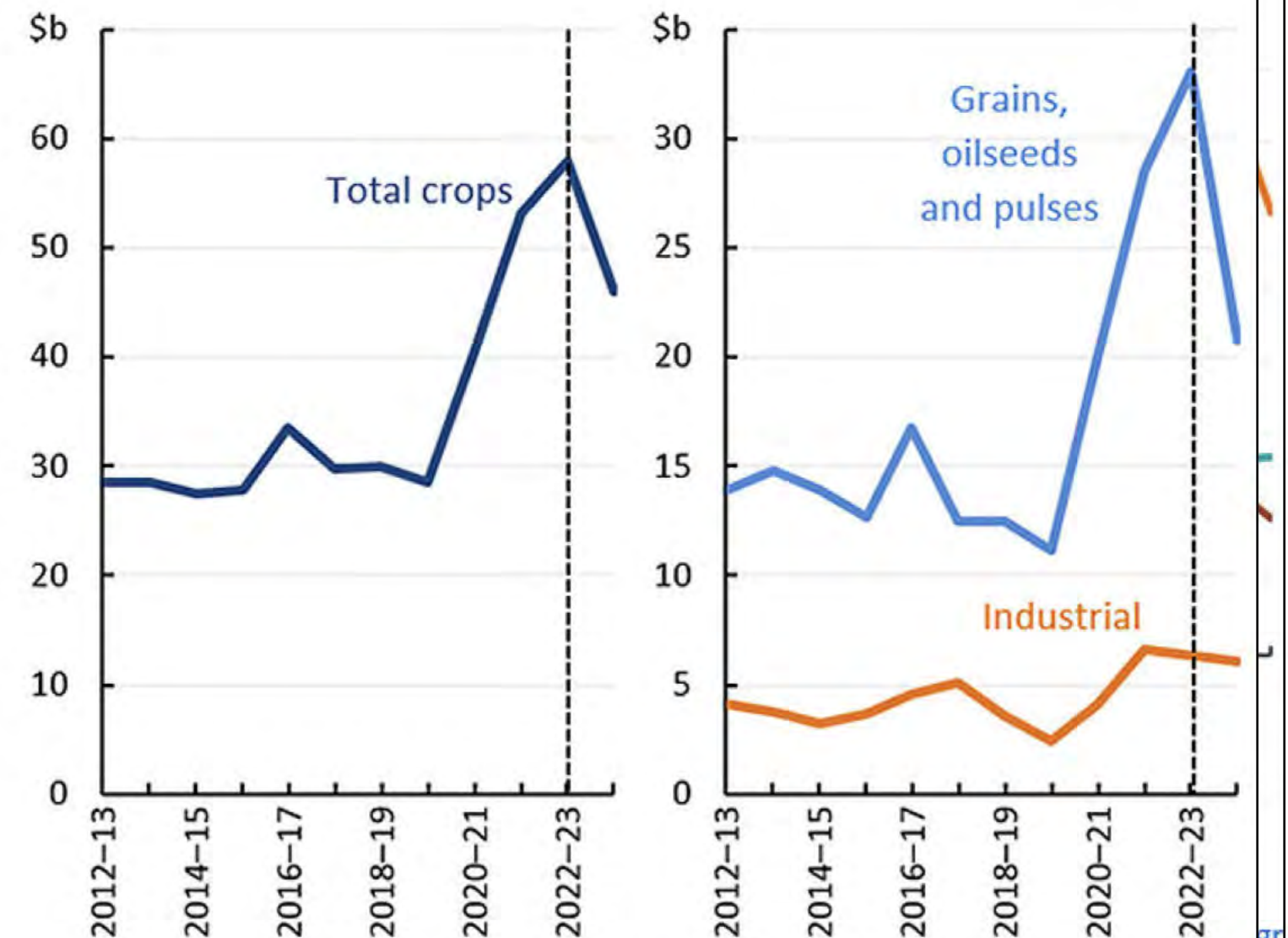


Figure 1. Verified NSW Combined Drought Indicator to 31 January 2024

Figure 42: Soft Commodity Prices Over Time – Crops



Note: Data to the right of the dotted line indicate estimates and forecasts.

Source: ABARES; ABS

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Criteria 2 cont.: Has Council established that the effect on ratepayers is reasonable? (ie affordability of proposed rate rise?)

Volatility of farming business with weather and price received for farm produce – more sensible to look at longer time horizon. ie. 5 year rolling average.

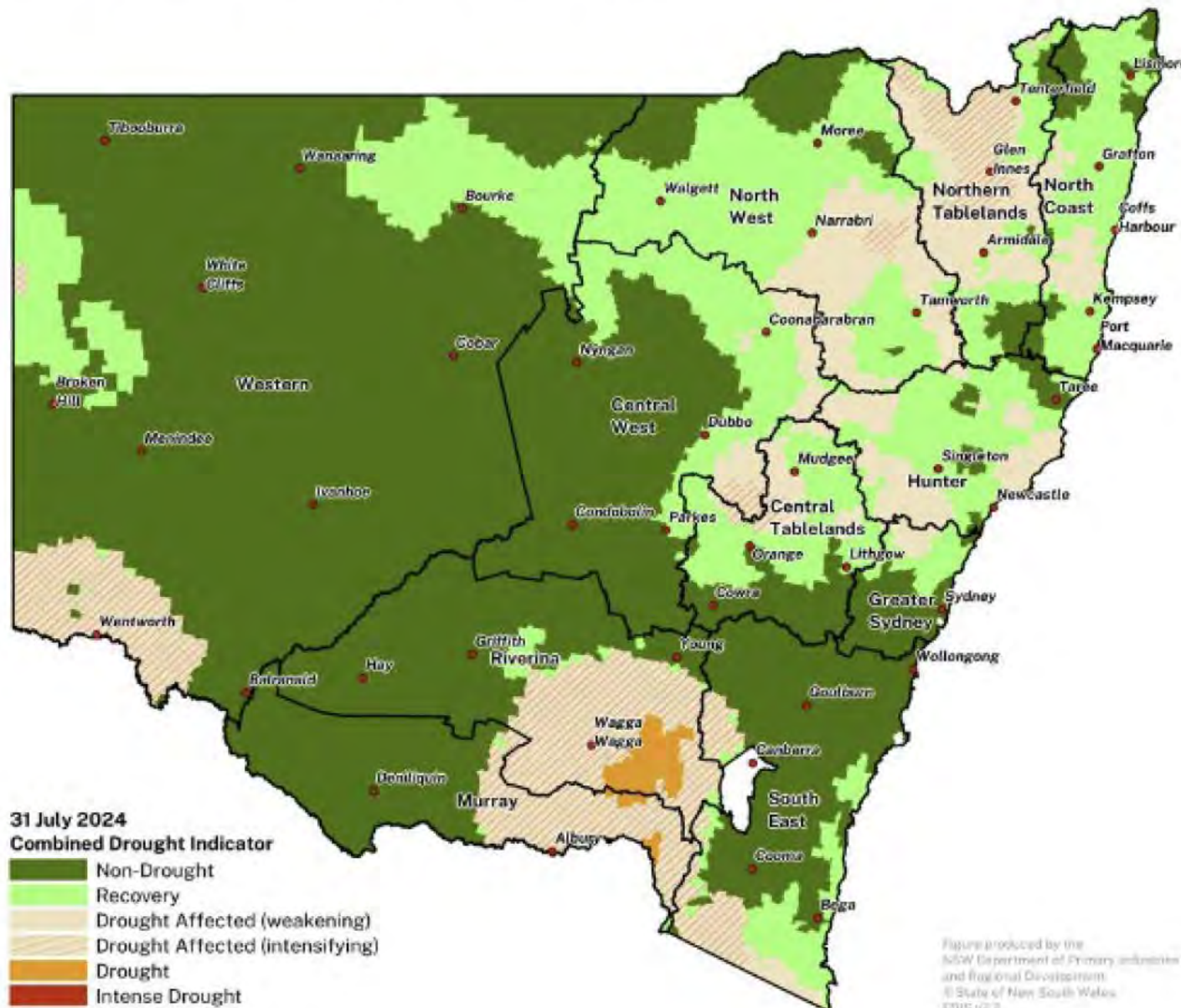
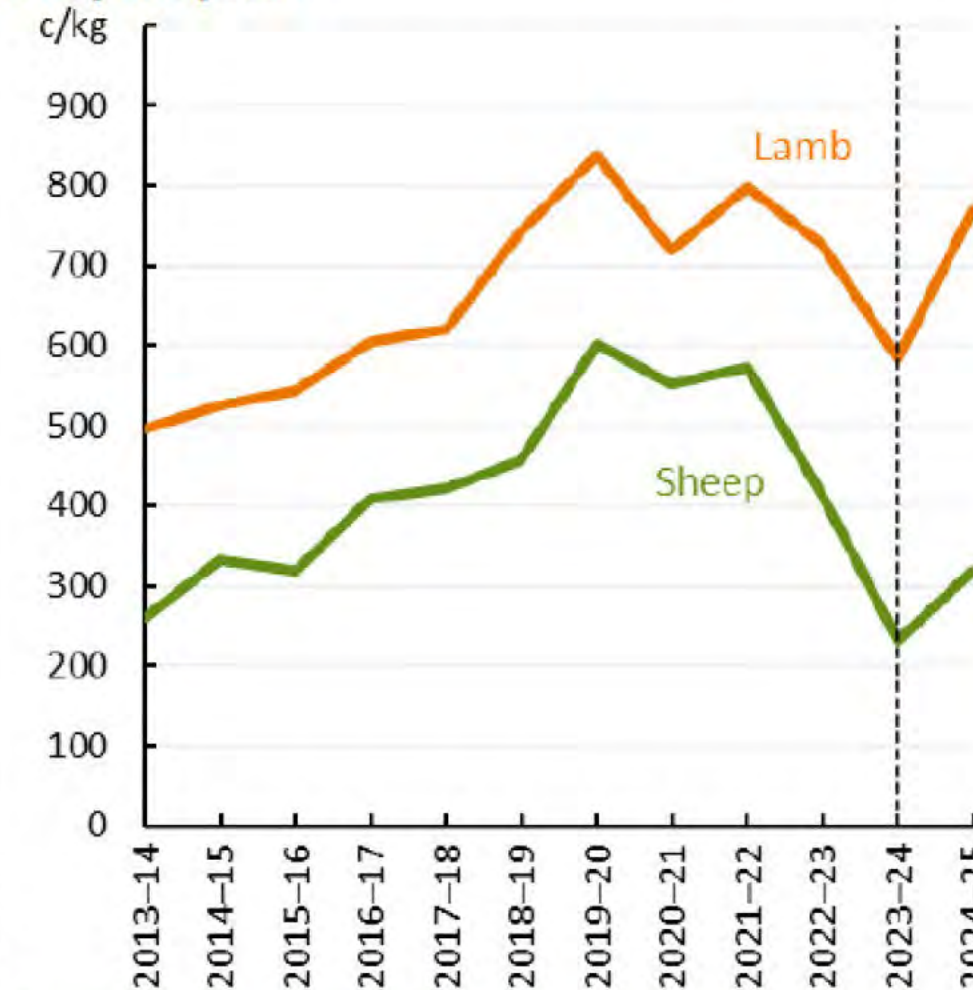


Figure produced by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
© State of New South Wales
2015 v2.2

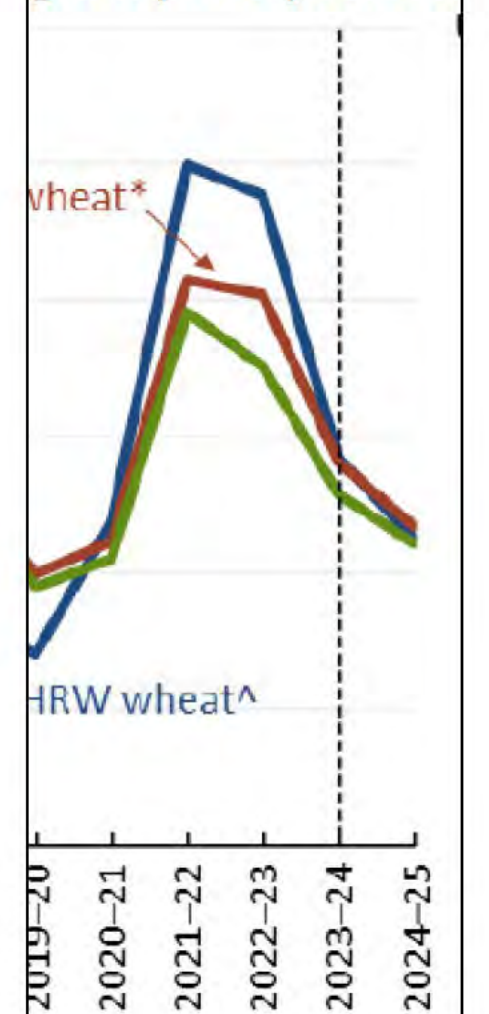
Figure 5.5 Average annual sheep and lamb saleyard price



Note: Data to the right of dotted line indicates forecasts.
Australian livestock saleyard prices are measured in carcase weight.

Source: ABARES; MLA

grain prices, selected



Data to the right of dotted line indicate forecasts. *Ate wheat, fob Port Adelaide
s Council

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Criteria 5: Cost containment and Efficiency Savings

- Council can only do 3-5 service reviews per year and claim a significant budget (\$250K) would be required to gain this information quicker.
- At the council public engagement – Council used the example of new mower being purchased but couldn't quantify the savings realised in labour or time.



How do I participate in the IPART public consultation period?

You will need to go to the IPART website and respond via:

- fill out the [survey](#) and/or
- lodge a [submission](#) on the IPART website, or if you need assistance, by phone to one of our staff.

If you need assistance to make a submission by phone, please contact **IPART** (02) 9290 8400. **IPART** arrange for a staff member working on the relevant matter to call you to receive your submission. You will need to agree to the staff member making a record of your submission, which will be treated in accordance with our [Submissions Policy](#).

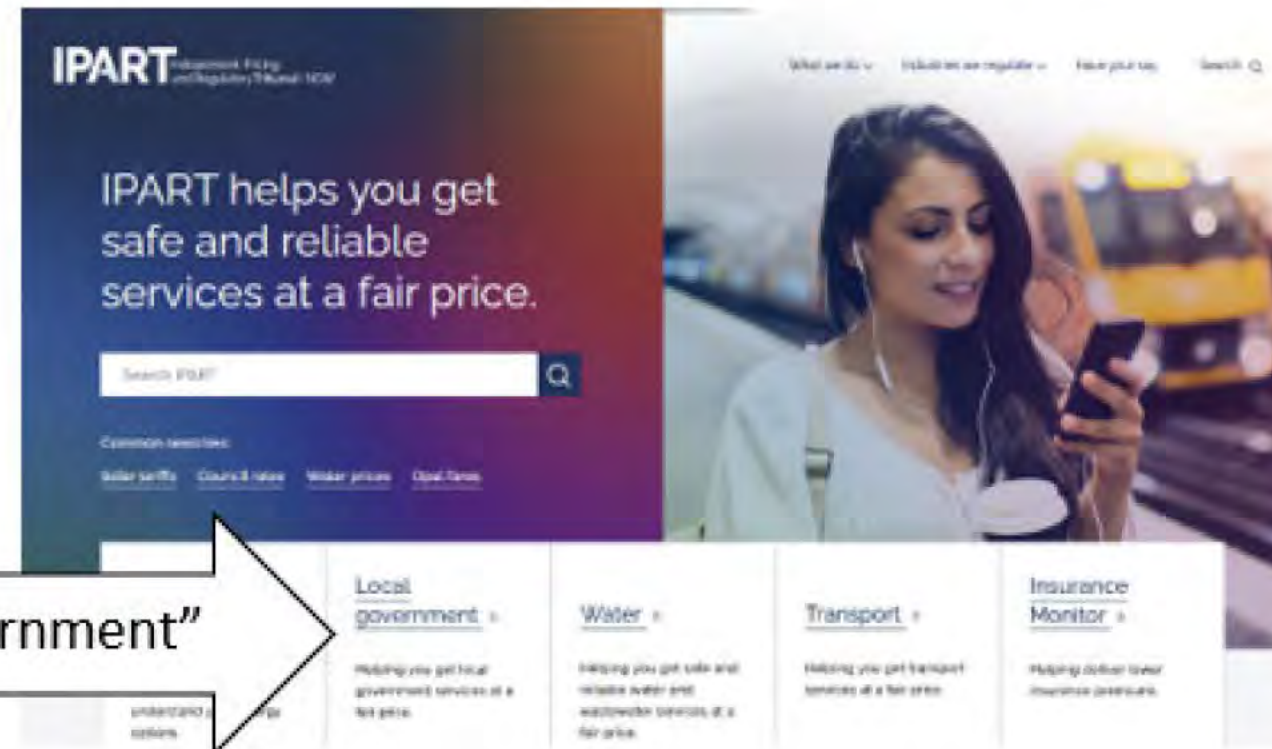
It's important to express your own opinion, thoughts or experience.



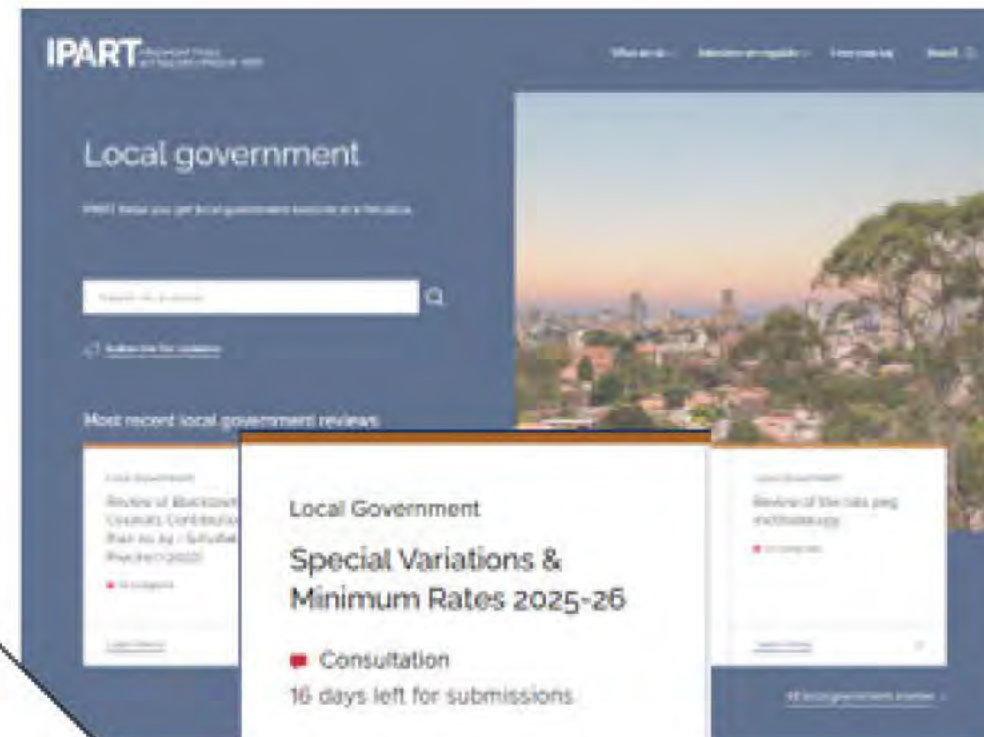
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How to find the Online Survey or make a submission

www.ipart.nsw.gov.au



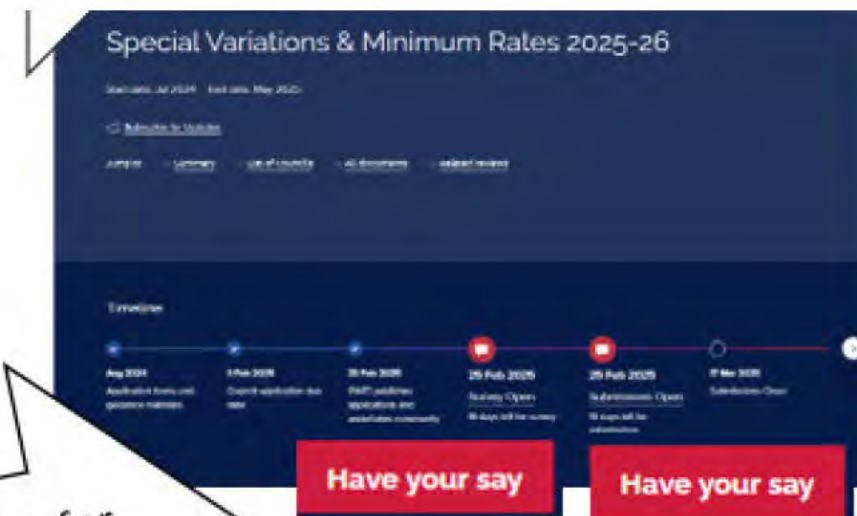
1. Click Link "Local Government"



2. Click "Learn More"
Special Variations and Minimum Rates 2025-26



3. Click the red "Have your say" link for either survey or written submission



March 2025

See back page of the yellow info booklet



Your feedback on councils' proposed special variations to rates

Some councils have applied to increase their rates income (via a special variation). We assess these applications against [criteria](#) set by the Office of Local Government. We are seeking feedback from stakeholders to inform our assessments of these applications.

To help our assessment of each council's application, we are asking for your views about the affordability of the proposed rate increases, community awareness of the proposed changes, and councils' cost management.

This survey has been designed to help respondents provide feedback on their council's special variation application.

These questions will take about [5 minutes](#) to complete.

Next



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Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal | NSW

General questions

Which council is your feedback related to?

☒ Federation Council

☐ Gunnedah Shire Council

☐ Northern Beaches Council

☐ North Sydney Council

☐ Shoalhaven City Council

☐ Upper Hunter Shire Council

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Which of the following best describes you? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Residential ratepayer
- ☐ Business ratepayer
- ☐ Farmland ratepayer
- ☐ Mining ratepayer
- ☐ Not a ratepayer in this council (e.g. tenant)

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Affordability of the proposed rate increases

The [criteria](#) set by the Office of Local Government requires a council to provide evidence that the impact on affected ratepayers is reasonable, having regard to both the current rate levels, existing ratepayer base and the proposed purpose of the variation.

The next set of questions are about the impact on ratepayers.

[Prev](#)[Next](#)

Affordability of the proposed rate increases

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The proposed rate increase is affordable.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

The council's application considers the financial constraints of ratepayers.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

The council's application considers different options to reduce the financial impact on ratepayers.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

The proposed rate increase balances the community's need for services and its impact on ratepayers.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

[Prev](#)[Next](#)

Community awareness of proposed rate increases

The [criteria](#) set by the Office of Local Government requires a council to provide evidence that the community is aware of the need for, and extent of, the proposed rate increase.

These next set of questions are about community awareness and understanding of the rate increase proposed by the council.

[Prev](#)[Next](#)

Community awareness of proposed rate increases

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The council has explained to the community its reasons for increasing rates.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The council has communicated with the community through various methods (such as community meetings, flyers, letters and social media).

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The council has provided adequate opportunity for the community to provide feedback.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The council has considered community feedback in its decision-making process on the proposed rate increase.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Council's cost management

The [criteria](#) set by the Office of Local Government requires a council to explain the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies that have been realised in past years and are expected to be realised over the proposed special variation period.

The next set of questions are about how your council manages costs and its plans going forward.

[Prev](#)[Next](#)

Council's cost management

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The council is effective in providing infrastructure and services for the community.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The council has explained to the community its past cost-saving strategies.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The council has explained to the community its future cost-saving strategies.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Prev](#)[Next](#)

Do you support the council's proposed rate increase?

- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Partly support

Which of the following are reasons that you might oppose the proposed rate increase? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Cost of living pressures are too high to afford a rate increase
- ☐ The Council has not been effectively managing its budget
- ☐ The Council is not effectively managing its infrastructure
- ☐ I disagree with the purpose of the proposed rate increase
- ☐ I disagree with the size of the proposed rate increase
- ☐ I disagree with the proposed rates structure
- ☐ I have other concerns that are not listed here
- ☐ I have no concerns with the proposed rate increase

Which of the following do you consider benefits of this proposed rate increase (regardless of whether you support the proposal overall)? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Current infrastructure needs to be fixed or upgraded with increased funding
- ☐ Current services are inadequate and need more funding
- ☐ I recognize that the council has financial sustainability issues which the funding will help address
- ☐ I agree with the purpose of the special variation
- ☐ I agree with the proposed rates structure
- ☐ I have other reasons for supporting the proposal not listed here
- ☐ I have no reasons to support the proposed rate increase

Is there anything else that you would like to say about the proposed rate increase apart from the above items?

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Submission and Attachments

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Maximum 5000 characters (5000 remaining)

If you have attachments you would like to include with your feedback, please attach them below.

Select file

Max file size: 10 MB

Max number of files: 5 files

Accepted file types: .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx, .jpg, .png, .mov, .avi, .mp3, .mp4, .wav, .wma



Your Details

Are you an individual or organisation? **Required**

- ☒ I am making a submission on my own behalf
- ☐ I am making a submission on behalf of an organisation

How would you like us to identify your individual submission? **Required**

- ☐ Publish my name
- ☒ Do not publish my name

Would you like your submission to remain confidential? **Required**

- ☐ Not confidential - The submission can be published on IPART's website
- ☒ Confidential - All or part of my submission should be treated as confidential and not published by IPART.
- I have indicated which parts of my submission are confidential.

Email **Required**

IPART publishes the submissions we receive on our website as part of our commitment to transparency.

Please read IPART's [Submission Policy](#).

I understand that:

- IPART may post or quote parts of my submission on the IPART website, social media accounts, in media releases or in its reports.
- If I have claimed confidentiality, IPART will generally not publish my submission or share it with third parties unless required to by law.
- IPART may use information from my submission, where relevant, in its other reviews.
- IPART treats all personal information in submissions in accordance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and [IPART's Privacy Statement](#).


IPART's Submission Policy **Required**

☒ I have read & accept IPART's Submission Policy and agreed to the terms above.

Please complete the following:

Verification expired. Check the checkbox again.

☐ I'm not a robot

 reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms

Submit



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Your Details

Are you an individual or organisation? **Required**

☒ I am making

☐ I am making

How would you like

☐ Publish my submission

☒ Do not publish my submission

Would you like to

☐ Not confident

☒ Confident

I have indicated

Email **Required**

IPART publishes the submissions we receive on our website as part of our commitment to transparency.

Please read IPART's [Submission Policy](#).

**Submissions Close
24th March 2025
(13 Days)**

Please complete the following:

Verification expired. Check the checkbox again.

☐ I'm not a robot



Submit

on the IPART website, social media, or any other platform. I agree that IPART may not publish my submission or any information I have provided, where relevant, in its other reports, publications, or otherwise. I agree that IPART may use my submission in accordance with the Information Privacy Act 1988 and [IPART's Privacy Policy](#).

I agree to the terms above.



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THANK-YOU

RATE RISE MEETING
Howlong



TIME	CONTENT	SPEAKER
6.00 pm	Welcome and Housekeeping	Chairman
6.10 pm	Audience participation survey	Vice Chairman
6.15 pm	What is the Rate Rise	
6.30 pm	IPART Cover Letter + Criteria 1-5	
7.00 pm	Up to 10 min Break	Feel free to head home
7.10 pm	Open Meeting Discussion: Q & A from the audience	Audience Discussion

Federation Ratepayers Survey March 2025. 164 returns

	Oaklands			Corowa			Mulwala			Howlong			Total	
	Yes	No		Yes	No		Yes	No		Yes	No		Yes	No
Before Christmas 2024 were you aware that Federation Council was intending to apply for another SRV and the last opportunity for ratepayers to give feedback closed at 5pm Christmas eve?	11	27		25	48		14	23		7	9		57	107
													35%	65%
If yes, where did you find out about it?														
Council advertising	1			6			4			4			15	
Word of Mouth	10			11			3						24	
Federation Ratepayers Inc.				7			2			2			11	
Other				1			5			1			7	
Were you aware of [REDACTED] face to face meetings about SRV in July 2024?	17	21		35	38		13	24		6	10		71	93
													43%	57%
Are you aware of a rates calculator that Council has made available?	10	28		31	42		15	22		8	8		64	100
													39%	61%
The cost of living pressures are too high to afford this proposed rate increase.	34	4		69	3		36	1		12	3		151	11
													93%	7%
Do you support Councils SRV application?	3	34		1	69		1	35		4	11		9	149
													6%	94%

Please take a copy home to read

"HAVE YOUR SAY"

69.94% SRV

General Rates

Federation Council



How do I participate in the IPART public consultation period?

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- fill out the [survey](#) and/or
- lodge a [submission](#) on the IPART website, or if you need assistance, by phone to one of our staff.

If you need assistance to make a submission by phone, please contact **IPART** (02) 9290 8400. **IPART** arrange for a staff member working on the relevant matter to call you to receive your submission. You will need to agree to the staff member making a record of your submission, which will be treated in accordance with

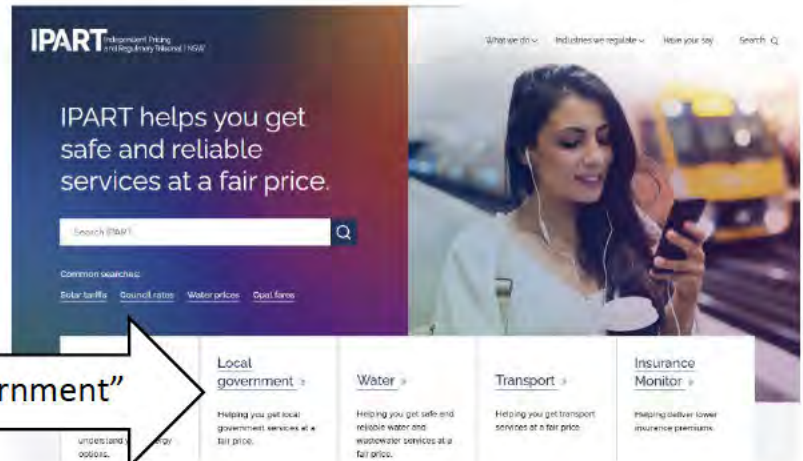
IPART [Submissions Policy](#).

It's important to express your own opinion, thoughts or experience.

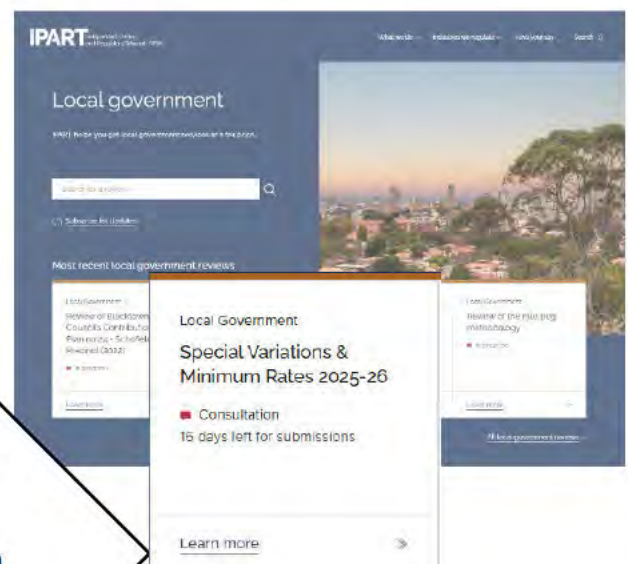
Submission Close Date: Monday 24th March 2025

How to find the Online Survey or make a submission

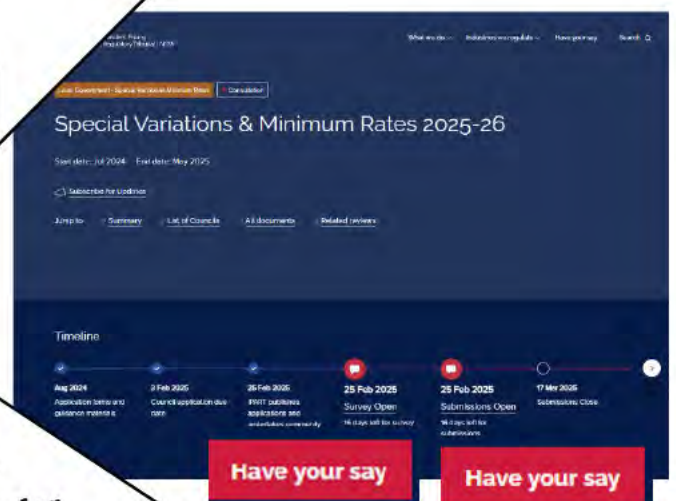
www.ipart.nsw.gov.au



1. Click Link "Local Government"



2. Click "Learn More"
Special Variations and Minimum
Rates 2025-26



3. Click the red "Have your say" link for
either survey or written submission

March 2025


Attachment 3:

Federation Ratepayers Inc Facebook page, screenshots examples of some advertising the FRI March 2025 Information sessions, photo of Corowa meeting attendance by 90 people and 3rd example of a post encouraging individuals to participate SRV feedback via IPART submission and/or survey .

Federation Ratepayers Incorporated
Published by [REDACTED]
March 14 at 4:16 AM · 🌐

Ok - meetings finished. Over to YOU - time to complete the survey & make a submission!
IPART need your responses to be able to make an informed decision regarding Federation Councils 69.94% SRV rate increase application.
HAVE YOUR SAY, 10 days to go - see how below

How to find the Online Survey or make a submission
www.ipart.nsw.gov.au



1. Click Link "Local Government"
2. Click "Learn More" Special Variations and Minimum Rates 2025-26
3. Click the red "Have your say" link for either survey or written submission

March 2025

F Federation Ratepayers



Federation Ratepayers Incorporated

Published by [REDACTED]



· March 13 at 9:08 AM ·

Thankyou Howlong & District Communities & Howlong Golf Club for hosting us last night!
This concludes our round of meetings - fantastic response from the entire Federation community- well done!

A BIG thankyou must also go to all the Business Houses who helped us promote these meetings by displaying flyers etc - Businesses in Oakland's, Urana, Morundah, Boree Creek, Balldale, Corowa, Mulwala & Howlong - too many to mention individually but big thanks!

Now it's down to business. IPART want to hear from you by way of completing the online survey & submission regarding the proposed rate increase applied for by Federation Council. Your input will enable the Independent Regulator the ability to make an informed decision.

11 days until submissions close - 24th March.

Have your say, complete the survey, make a submission!



Federation Ratepayers Incorporated

Published by [REDACTED]



· March 4 at 9:57 PM ·

Thank you Oakland's & district community!

What a fantastic response you gave us tonight! You've inspired us to continue the journey.....

Corowa & district community, please join us tomorrow night, Wednesday 5th March at 6.00pm, Corowa Golf Club.

Taking a leaf out of the Oaklands meeting response, community matters & people can make a difference!



Author name: A. Dye

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

The council is not supporting its local community The rate rises are not acceptable as the council is not doing enough cost control measures to help their financial situation. For example shut down Urana office and centralise services. The council needs to support and provide for its community with is mostly made up of agriculture businesses and retires not tourists who visit.

Author name: A. Stienstra

Date of submission: Monday, 10 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

We object to the rates increases, as nothing gets attention in Oaklands 2646. We have lived here for 4 years. We live on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Our road is not sealed, whereas other roads have been upgraded. We have a trucking company next door, so lots of trucks coming in and out and past our place, creating a lot of dust. Thanks A [REDACTED] Stienstra.

Author name: C. Smith

Date of submission: Tuesday, 11 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

The Federation Council in my opinion requires a complete Audit from an independent third party. Our rates are a joke. We pay \$165 less at our Howlong property that we do at our larger more valuable property in Lavington NSW. We pay exorbitant prices to use the local landfill which is only available to residents 2 days a week totalling 6 hours a week with no waste vouchers. Albury City allocates 4 waste vouchers per year plus a waste facility that is available 7 days a week yet we pay Federation Council \$65 per year for waste Facility Levy. With \$473 per year for Kerbside Waste Service. Howlongs Residential Base Rate of \$425 compared to Lavington being \$304. Make it make sense. Water Usage Howlong - \$2.05 per kL / Albury \$1.51 per kL Water availability Howlong - \$80.85 / Albury \$49.66 Sewer Availability Howlong - \$299.17 / Albury \$244.66. Speaking of water. We have so little pressure some days you cant even shower because its a trickle or its brown and filthy yet we have had so many water main upgrades that arent even connected because the water tower wont supply the upgraded system and is so full of sludge if it gets too low it will leak and wreak havoc on the towns water supply. How about the rented toilets down at Memorial Park? They are costing thousands to rent. Why are there no plans to build new toilets down there as a once off building cost? We love our beautiful little town of Howlong but we are forgotten by Federation Council on so many occasions, our roads are terrible, infrastructure not maintained etc. Corowa is forever getting upgrades within the town limits and we at Howlong are paying for that. The residents of the entire Federation Council are not at fault for the poor practices that Council have been running and yet we are being punished for it by constant ridiculous rate increases. To try and put some perspective it took a couple of young men to go around Howlong patching pot holes in our roads a couple of years ago to make the roads safe for travelling on before Council finally felt enough push back to do anything about it. For such a beautiful area it is so heartbreaking that Council believes these rate rises are fair and just. They are not. The cost of living crisis is rampant and not backing off anytime soon and these rate rises could possibly be the final straw for many land owners. Federation Council needs to reconsider their choices, the budget they have created and need to clean house. I hope this SVR is refused. Kind Regards.

Author name: D. Johnson

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I wish to object to the rate increase of being unfair on the basis of that the rate increase amount is well and truly above what is reasonable

Author name: G. Hopkinson

Date of submission: Monday, 3 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

G 

Author name: J. Hall

Date of submission: Wednesday, 5 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I say NO to the rate rise! Is isnt going to Benefit our town and community just make time even harder! NO NO NO

Submission to IPART Regarding Special Rate Variation Federation Council

To: Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)

From: Janette Outram

██████████ & J Outram T/As Wandong Pastoral Company

Date: 20.03.2025

Subject: Submission Opposing Special Rate Variation Proposed by Federation Council

Introduction

As a primary producer and rural ratepayer in the Federation LGA, I cannot support the permanent rate rise of 69.94% proposed by Federation Council.

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed special rate variation submitted by Federation Council. I believe that this permanent variation is unnecessary and will place an unfair financial burden on the residents of our community and that Federation Council has no transparent strategies for communicating with the community, for making efficiency gains and for cost cutting.

As you would be aware the Federation Council applied to IPART for a permanent rate rise of for the years 2023/24 and 2024/25. IPART refused to grant the permanent increase. It granted a temporary two-year increase of 19% and 17% which expires 30 June this year. The Council needed to develop and communicate strategies to show greater responsible for cost cutting measures, communicate more honestly and effectively with ratepayers and showed proof that they have evidence over the past 2 years of satisfying IPART on cost containments and efficiency savings, in particular.

I believe Council is asking for my hard-earned money to prop up their inefficiencies and bad decision making.

Key Arguments Against the Special Rate Variation

1. Need for extra revenue

I believe that Council has not provided adequate evidence to the community to justify the need for additional revenue.

Council's own metrics on service quality and performance indicators show that the current funding is sufficient for maintaining existing services, especially given the Council's own figures quantifying improvements and cost containment strategies (if accurate) places their Expected Operating Revenue (EOR) at -17.87% (2023) to positive and +16.45% after a temporary increase of 19% in one year.

Why are they needing a giant (69.94 %) permanent rate rise?

2. Community awareness & engagement

Council's engagement process with the community has been woefully inadequate. The numbers at Council's community engagement sessions were low. Many residents are

unaware of the proposed changes and have not actively been consulted or given opportunity to discuss the potential rate rise with Council.

Ratepayers at meetings that I have attended have been frustrated and distressed at the potential large hike in their rates to begin in July 2025, costs they have not budgeted for and will go on into the future.

Federation Ratepayers Incorporated have been instrumental in informing ratepayers in March 2025 about this SRV application. Their meetings in towns and rural villages throughout the council area have clearly set out the amount of the rate rise.

Ratepayers were not informed about the Long-Term Financial Plan's (LTFP) availability on Council's web site and definitely not made aware of the SRV imbedded in the plan. The closing date for comments was 5pm on Christmas Eve and Council offices closed at lunchtime.

I believe Council has displayed disregard for the community. The fact that 4 people out of 12,939 ratepayers put in submissions does not mean the SRV is supported by the ones who didn't put in a submission. It indicates to me that no one knew about the display and no one had time to get a submission in.

Council has since put a rate increase calculator on their website which is confusing and hard to work. FAQ were put up on website after council sent in their application for the SRV. It has actually been difficult to understand what the actual rate rise is. I note that it was unclear even to IPART, who had to question Council for greater clarity in their application. I believe Council has been deliberately vague and misleading.

3. Impact on ratepayers

Financial Impact on my business

The proposed increase in rates would lead to an annual cost of over \$10,000 for our business. (Calculated at a minimum as \$100,000 over 10 years).

As a primary producer for over 40 years I have seen the ebb and flow of cash flow associated with drought, commodity prices, input prices and unexpected events.

In the [REDACTED] Report, [REDACTED] points to good seasons and high commodity prices ahead. In my experience of running an agricultural business you can only ever budget for average prices over 5-10 years. It is certainly a long bow to draw to say anything about consistently high prices and good years in the face of climate change predictions, global insecurities and trade wars.

Thorough and current analysis indicates that many residents throughout the council area are already facing cost of living pressures, and this increase will exacerbate their hardship. Rural ratepayers pay a high price for very poor services. Whilst it is the same percentage the actual cash component in my business will result over \$100,000 extra going to the council out of my cash flow over the next 10 years. This cash flow is needed to support my business which uses the services of other small businesses who employ people throughout the council area.

██████████ makes a bold statement about farmers having the capacity to pay because they have had a good season or two with good prices. Anyone with direct or indirect connections with primary producers knows that prices and seasons are volatile. How would ██████████ know when the season will be good or bad? His data is skewed.

4. Exhibit IP&R documents

The relevant documents were not exhibited and explained in a coherent, transparent and timely manner.

As already note above, the submission documents were released for comment some time before Christmas 2024. From November to January primary producers in the Federation LGA are harvesting their crop. It is the busiest time of the year and very few primary producers would be reading through council documents, let alone getting a submission to the council before the Christmas Eve deadline.

Also, the proposed SRV did not have unanimous support of the councillors. Three Councillors objected to motion put forward to apply for the SRV.

5. Productivity improvements and cost containment strategies

Despite recognising the poor state of the roads in Federation LGA, the Council apparently failed to spend on budgeted road works 2024.

Our business and home are located over 30kms from the main service towns in the Federation LGA. Two of our staff travel over 70 kms round trip daily, and my husband and I regularly do the same trip for business. The road is a disgrace, there are over 20 culverts that are in desperate need of fixing, the road is broken up with potholes and is deteriorating weekly. It is dangerous and the wear and tear on our vehicles is enormous. The cost cutting seems slap dash and unpredictable at best.

Where in the Long-Term Plan can I see clearly the strategic planning, budgeting actions and timelines for spending our rates for the next 5, 10, 20 years. This is what the younger generation in our business are looking for. It is confusing to see where the long-term efficiency gains and cost containments are in councils planning.

I cannot see, nor has it been demonstrated to me or other ratepayers, that Council has demonstrated that it has exhausted all avenues for cost savings and efficiency improvements before proposing this rate increase. As I have noted, cost cutting appears to have no strategic purpose and is slap dash at best.

It has been suggested that council conduct an internal review of its operations to identify potential savings rather than relying on permanently large rate increases. Council have noted that they can only review 2-3 services per year at a cost of \$250,00 per review.

Conclusion

In light of the reasons stated above, I urge IPART to reject the permanent special rate variation proposed by Federation Council. It is crucial that any financial decisions consider the well-being of residents, prioritise sustainable and equitable funding solutions and that planners are transparent and strategic about the future.

Thank you for considering my submission. When you review Council's application to increase rates permanently by this very large amount, I ask you to consider my objections as a ratepayer who is unwilling to support Council's application.

Sincerely

Janette Outram

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Janette Outram.

Author name: L. Seeliger

Date of submission: Sunday, 23 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

As a ratepayer, I am disappointed that our Council wants a huge increase in rates, but they can't say what the extra is needed for. I have not seen any dates/times for Public consultations other a bakery chit chat that was after the Meeting that Council had already decided to put their decision into Ipart.. The Community engagement was missing. A large % of our Council area consists of pensioners/retirees. With the escalation of the cost of living expenses, how are they expected to come up with the extra rates money. Struggling now before any more increases. the pension hasn't gone up. As for the Hardship Policy, it's just frightening the people who will not be able to pay the extra. No-one wants to be in a partnership with a Council or Government regarding ownership of their property. No trust there and you cannot blame people. I believe [REDACTED] is out of touch with reality by his remarks that there isn't any hardship and that people will have the Capacity to Pay. As for blaming the Corowa Aquatic Centre for the cost blowout, saying it is costing \$1 million to keep. They need to look at Federal grants as the value in human terms from the benefits that are achieved in the pool, would be saving the Federal Government millions a year in medical and hospital and mental health costs. Please let common sense prevail. I have lived in the Federation Council area, (Corowa Council) for over 50 years. Corowa Council was run efficiently before any amalgamations.

Disappointingly, here we are again. Only two years ago Federation Council applied for an SRV when IPART granted a temporary SRV.

Since that time, as a ratepayer, I am yet to see Federation Council demonstrate efficiencies. For example, staffing levels have increased, there is a high level of engagement of consultants and external contractors, no rationalisation of two Council offices, and Corowa's pool asset is still running at a loss.

Federation Council received an SRV for the Corowa pool. It would be valuable to determine if they met the reporting criteria required by IPART and whether the loss of \$986,000 was accurately forecast for the year ending 2024.

Council's explanation of efficiencies is vague, at best, and difficult to quantify.

Federation Council attempt at community engagement was only marginally better than the last SRV application. Council held "pop up" sessions during business hours, which is difficult for most people to attend. Printed media was a little better this time with at least a colour brochure distributed with rate notices. The rate calculator on their website wasn't available until February. The notification of the intended application for another SRV was very quiet just before Christmas, feedback closing Christmas eve. FAQ responses on social media were scripted, despite promises to address specific questions.

The Federation Ratepayers Inc realised much better community engagement with over 98,000 Facebook views 16 February to 15 March. The information sessions Federation Ratepayers Inc hosted also attracted a bigger audience than anything hosted by Federation Council. This is indicative of the general disillusionment with our Council.

Federation Council have relied heavily on [REDACTED]'s report which states, "the majority of indicators suggest typical or above typical capacity to pay". I am unsure what indicators [REDACTED] relied on but according to the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for Federation Council in 2021 was 969 = disadvantaged.

Whereas North Sydney Council was the fifth most advantaged Councils in NSW and are outraged with their rate increase of 45% and 29%, as seen in the media. Obviously with their advantaged status their capacity to pay would be far greater than disadvantaged Federation Council ratepayers. Federation Council also has an average older population on fixed incomes which will struggle with this rate rise in the current cost of living crisis. The increase in rates will have a financial impact on all ratepayers and residents, especially during a cost-of-living crisis.

I appreciated the opportunity to meet with Federation Council's CFO, Jo Shannon, to address some of my queries. The following are my notes from the meeting.

The SRV will fund roads, footpaths and drainage. No extra services for the 69.94% increase. I queried why Federation Council would not be getting any further road funding to use for road maintenance and improvement. Jo explained funding has been budgeted from the Federal Government, but NSW hasn't provided any funding for the past two years and they are not expected to in the future???

I asked if Council were concerned with the doubling of unpaid rates since the introduction of the temporary SRV. Jo recommended additional financial modelling to ascertain if it is because of the temporary SRV.

I asked about the operating performance ratio of +16% after the temporary rate rise. Jo stated that the data was skewed due to the allocation of flood-related funding. Federation Council forecast an operating performance ratio of -23% for the same period in the last SRV application. It is difficult to have confidence in Council's forecasting, which is relied upon to justify the 69.94% increase.

Jo lamented the cost of preparing SRV applications and the impost on staff resources which I understand would be exhausting. Therefore, should this Council or any other Council ask for an SRV above 20% I suggest they must have an independent forensic audit of financials and operations prior to submitting an SRV application.

In summary, I have little confidence in Federation Council's financial acuity. I understand the need for an increase in rates and I believe making permanent the temporary increase is sufficient for the next four years (at least). I would like Council to prove financial proficiency, definitive and quantifiable cost cutting measures, and authentic community engagement.

I sincerely hope that we are not back at IPART again in two years, if the Council employees are exhausted with this process the some of the ratepayers and residents of Federation Council are bone-tired!

Author name: M. Johnson

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Being pensioners we are on below the basic wage. We find it hard to pay both the land rates and our water rates. This large increase will be very taxing on our basic lifestyle. We live very carefully and don't spend a lot on luxuries. We are not the only people in this Council region with concerns with this increase. [REDACTED] Johnson

Author name: M. Macqueen

Date of submission: Thursday, 20 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I am extremely dissatisfied with the performance of Federation Council and the lack of transparency in regard to the proposed special rate rise, we have already experienced a current rise and although I am not entirely against a rise the proposed amount of 69.94% in addition to the current one amounts to 85.24%, is this really necessary. This will impact on many of our rate payers as we are an ageing community. Affordability is becoming very difficult for many in our community and having read councils financial report it would seem they are not quite as broke as they would have the community believe. If council could guarantee that the money would be well spent and not squandered I would be more supportive. Federation council needs to be more transparent, honest and more efficient in its operations across the board. I would like to see significant Performance Management undertaken as I do not believe that council staff are working efficiently, my opinion is based on personal experience of which I have not able to get any resolve after 12 months.

Author name: M. Robson

Date of submission: Saturday, 15 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Question 1 (Criterion 1) Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund? After the merger the administrator appointed a general manager to oversee the merger. He was appointed until 2020 to ensure a smooth transition . However he was sacked in 2017 by the incoming elected council at an unknown settlement cost to ratepayers. The former general manager of Urana Shire was appointed instead. Since this time expenditure appears to have grown and grown, until we have reached the current situation. No review of project cost blowouts have taken place it just seems to go on and on. Question 1 (Criterion 2) Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category? No, it would have been nice to receive a notice with our last rates notice showing specifically what our rates would be during and after this SRV rather than some vague average hidden in council documents. Question 1 (Criterion 5) In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here. All I see see is an over reliance on consultants such as [REDACTED] at vast cost to council. Most recently I see Infrastructure Management Group (IMG) are to conduct a comprehensive assessment of our roads and foot paths.I would rather see I would rather have seen an organisational review that reduced costs and services overlapping. With a merged council one would imagine that you would need less employees not more.

Author name: P. Rosser

Date of submission: Wednesday, 26 February 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Federation shire has no right to ask for such a massive increase in rates for the following reasons. 1 They tell us it's due to councils of the past because they didn't charge enough, well if I go into our local bakery and they tell me prices are increasing because they didn't charge enough 20 years ago, I would just leave. 2. They have asked for and received opinions from professionals on the Amalgamation, and have been told it is nothing short of a disaster. 3 Under the current financial hardship the community is suffering, remember most of the shire are working class or retired, we can't afford it. 4. My family have been rate payers in this town for 5 generations, it's the first time in my life I wished I lived somewhere else. Thank you for the chance to express our disgust. P. Rosser, ratepayer.

Author name: P. Seeliger

Date of submission: Thursday, 13 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

First of all let me say that I believe rates are important to Council to fund services around the federation Council area. What I don't believe, is that Council has engaged with the whole community enough, or that the methods used to contact all residents was appropriate. The timing was inappropriate, what good is telling residents that Council need a rate increase when they have already put a submission into IPART. The "Capacity to Pay" report by [REDACTED], I have trouble working out where [REDACTED] gets his figures from, because it does not reflect the situation of any of my friends or people I have met with and by having a conversation about the rate increase. These conversations have only taken place in the last few weeks. [REDACTED] also goes on to say in item 9 (Recommendation) of his capacity to pay Report "It is clear beyond reasonable doubt that federation Council residents does indeed have capacity to pay considerably greater local Government taxes than are currently levied" (After reading many of [REDACTED] crystal ball evaluations on multiple subjects, I no longer believe anything [REDACTED] has to say) Federation Council residents have endured many rate increases before, during and after amalgamation, our water and sewerage costs that were a part of our rates were taken off our rates notice and now, instead of once a year, water and sewerage was at \$500 a year it is now \$400 three times a year on a separate notice that can be increased at Councils will. Council have often stated that they have increased efficiency across the Council area, I have not seen this reflected in any areas of Council, I can elaborate if need be. And finally one big red light for me was Council asking residents where they would like to see the SRV money spent. If Council do not have a priority on what to spend the SRV, it is obvious that they do not need this increase. If IPART's investigation into Federation Councils needs two years ago found that two temporary increases over two years was what was needed, and by the financial improvement shown by Federation Council now in the black, show that IPART were correct in their findings, WHY is Federation Council asking for such a substantial increase AGAIN. What has happened in the last two years.

Author name: P. Wright OAM

Date of submission: Thursday, 20 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I am writing this submission to voice my strong disapproval to the proposed rate variation by Federation Council. This rate variation, if approved, would be a reward to this Council, for poor performance in both financial, procedural and operational management. I am sure others have documented issues like wasted funds on roadworks, that often duplicated existing roads to a specific destination. Unacceptable delays in approving building applications. The Department of Planning statistics show Federation Council as one of the slowest Councils to approve Building applications. I believe it to be 67 days in Federation Council against a target of 15 working days. This Council needs to lift its game in so many areas. A rate increase of the proposed magnitude, must not be approved. As a former elected Corowa Shire Councillor, I have seen effective fiscal management by Council. I have seen planning and building approvals approved within an acceptable time frame. I have seen Council's senior officers working with both community and elected Councillors for the betterment of the Shire. To approve this rate rise will do nothing for the community other than increase the cost of living pressures that we all face, especially for farmers and pensioners (like myself) within the Shire. It will absolutely be a reward for poor performance by this Council. I implore you to see rate request increase this for what it is, a cash grab to help put a Band Aid on an inept organisation that has made no genuine, demonstrable effort to engage with community, or show any semblance of professional financial management. Poor performance must not be rewarded and paid for by a community that can ill afford it. Thank you

Author name: R. Hunter

Date of submission: Friday, 7 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

As Federation Council has just finished a 3 year "temporary" huge rate rise, I feel that instead of considering another "temporary" rate increase, it would be better to audit the Council

Author name: R. May

Date of submission: Saturday, 15 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Im against any type of rate increase as the cost of living is out of control. We cant afford a rate rise again as well as we have very minimal upkeep in our shire as it is we have better ways of saving money i.e. reducing the number of employees the number of company vehicles. How about try reducing costs before we start increasing rate rises? Im a small business in town and I cannot afford any more extra costs.

Author name: R. Witz

Date of submission: Sunday, 2 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

C council needs to look inwards to cut waste not endanger the well being of us elderly long time resident

Author name: S. Seeliger

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the Federation Councils proposal to increase rates by a staggering 70%. This significant increase comes on the heels of temporary rate hikes of 17% and 19% over the past two years, which have already placed a substantial strain on our community. In Australia, we are currently facing numerous economic challenges, including rising land taxes, escalating cost of living, and increasing interest rates. Families and individuals are grappling with the impact of these financial pressures. Just to highlight a few: Cost of Living Increases: Everyday expenses have surged, making it difficult for residents to afford basic necessities. Compliance Checks and Government Fees: These additional burdens including land taxes on households mean less disposable income to cover essential services. Water Rates: The rise in water rates has seen costs increase fourfold, which puts even greater strain on households budgets. Energy Costs: With Petrol, Power and Gas prices climbing, many families are already struggling to meet their energy needs without facing financial distress. Such cumulative increases in living expenses are making it increasingly challenging for residents to thrive within our community. To propose a 70% increase without a clear understanding or plan regarding the intended use of these funds raises serious concerns. I find it deeply concerning that the Council is considering this substantial increase without clearly defined objectives for the expenditure of the additional revenue. Transparency in financial planning is crucial, and I urge the Council to communicate its priorities and necessary projects before implementing any further increases. In conclusion, I respectfully request that the Federation Council considers the broader economic impact of such a steep rate increase on our community and reassesses its approach. A more gradual increase, accompanied by clear communication of how funds will be utilized, would be a more compassionate and responsible strategy. How poorly must this council be run if they have to increase the rates by such a massive amount. Why aren't you protecting us ? What do the ratepayers of Federation Council need to do to be heard ? We ask for our bins to be picked up, clean water, provide sewerage and safe roads. Apart from our bins I feel the rest is a massive fail in Mulwala and from what I am hearing our other sister towns also feel this way. Thank you for your attention to this vital matter.

Author name: S. Talbot

Date of submission: Saturday, 15 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

As a farmer I already pay high rates. I can only imagine how much this rate increase will add on to my over heads. Where I farm out at Coreen (about 25-30mins out of Corowa) we already get nothing for what we pay. We had dumpster for our rubbish only to have it taken away as it was costing too much to have it & now we are left with no rubbish removal service. We are lucky to get our roads grated once a year as the council can not afford to do it. We can not get gravel on our roads as the council can not afford it. We have bitumen roads that badly need to be repaired that council can not afford to do. It feels like once you leave Corowa the smaller farming communities are nonexistent. What will increasing rates gain as obviously the council can not get control of there spending. The only thing this rate rise will do is add more pressure to families that are already struggling. It is for this reason that i do not support a rate rise.

18th March 2025

Dear Sir Madam:

Re: Federation Council – Proposal for raising the special Variation.

Background work:

What are Special Variations and Minimum Rates?

Every year IPART sets a rate peg for each council in NSW which is the maximum amount by which councils can increase the general income that they collect from ratepayers (rates income).

For 2025-26, the core rate pegs range from 3.6% to 5.1% across NSW and 72 of the 128 councils also received an additional allowance to reflect an adjusted population factor of up to 3.8%.

Interpretation: Given the proposed increase within Federation Council – we immediately have an outlier v's the IPART rate peg so it's important to understand the rationale behind the proposed increase. Openly without a full scale 3rd party audit of what historically has taken place – this is completely unjustifiable.

Please note my submission 6th June 2022 – where we proactively responded to the rate increase consultation draft. Unfortunately, none of these suggested actions have been conducted.

If we apply - basic economic principles to what is being presented you are asking for the ability to have 'pricing power' and raise rates by an unprecedented amount.

Where listed companies have pricing power is where there are more buyers than sellers and the "goods or services" in question are in such high demand that a price increase is justified to find the equilibrium of supply v's demand. Let's be super clear – that is NOT the case with the Council's proposal.

We would hold councils to as high or higher bar of fiduciary and fiscal responsibilities of listed companies.

Given the current state of financials being analysed – you have two levers – increasing revenue(outside of rates) or cutting expenses. We previously proposed a full audit of all P&L line items. As you are aware the USA has implemented DOGE in order to critical examine government spending and the

reason for that is to be accountable to taxpayers. The bar globally is getting higher for best practise – DOGE is a great example of this.

Action list:

- 1) 3rd party forensic accounting firm be appointed to do a 3 month audit of all P&L items
- 2) Findings circulated to the public
- 3) Last 5 years Capex analysis of actual spend v's 3rd party audit on realistic comparable costings.
- 4) Review of next 5 yrs capex spend linked to revenue and profit projected off the back of this spend. Critical question – does this capex make sense and is there a force multiplier of revenue/ profit on the back of it
- 5) Complete community outreach on submission of top 2 ideas per local contributor- with the goal of increasing the town's revenue generating ability. I previously suggested a flexible workforce call centre model – leveraging the bank building / office space in town – which openly would have been a very powerful source of revenue and employee utilisation for the town. But nothing has happened. Lets engage with the great minds in the community and solve this collectively – you will have 50 great ideas surface from the smart minds in the area.
- 6) Short list of revenue ideas voted on – again always linked to (a) cost and a timeline to implement (b) profitability and ROIC benchmark.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our thoughts.

Best Tim Campbell

 resident / Corowa NSW

6/6/2022

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: Consultation Draft 1.0, Record # 22/ 1831 Our Community 22/23 to 31/32

Thank you for the opportunity to review the background proposal as per your website (Connect / On exhibition) URL Ref:

<https://www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au/Connect/On-Exhibition>

We have absorbed the material in detail in conjunction with your previous reported financial statements and enclose the following observations for your perusal. We come from a strong financial background so have looked at the numbers clinically and also in the very best interests of this great community you are helping foster. We commend long term planning and thinking, that is backed up by viable maths.

- 1) Even after the Covid migration from cities the population growth as per your data in the previous trailing 12 months is +1.1% (Ref: page 11 strategic plan). This on any metric needs further investigation. Our view is that we have the opportunity to structurally accelerate this % but right now its anaemic growth and if you were presenting it to a board of a listed company with that as one of the biggest drivers of long term growth they would be on the back foot to accelerate capex without a very clear and tangible link with at least a like for like pick up in revenue growth.
- 2) The maths you provide on the SRV (Recommended) shows a +79% increase in the residential rate notice from 21/22 to 26/27 and whilst this is an unprecedented number in terms of the sheer magnitude the maths is incomplete. For residential rate payers its important to look at this on an after tax basis or tax effect the calculations even at the marginal tax rate payer who can claim the rates as an expense. Having invested in utility assets around the world for the bulk of my career – I am yet to see an example such as this. Especially without a full audit on the current expense base.

- 3) It would be helpful to obtain the detail on employee cost break-down A\$15.8mn for fiscal 21. How do you evaluate the performance metrics on this number and the raw materials and consumables A\$33.3mn.
- 4) Linking the observation in (1) to solve the current backdrop there has to be a direct link with creating 'sustainable' employment opportunities for regional communities if you want to permanently accelerate the population growth opportunity.

Thanks to Covid we now live in a world where flexible workforces are increasingly important – that said Stayz.com / vrbo.com / Airbnb.com are some of the largest employees of flexible workforces right now. A clear opportunity I see would be to re-utilise some of the existing infrastructure in Corowa (council space/ Old bank buildings), provide council backed high end WIFI and approach some of these big companies for permanent call centre support. If you look @ it on a aggregate level with a local staffing availability app behind it – we could offer these companies big blocks of support for anyone wanting to work flexible hours around family / school pick up / drop offs etc. These hourly rates are very competitive and could be a fantastic way to build a whole new revenue stream for council and the force multiplier benefits with come alongside permanent population growth.

- 5) Respectfully, the bike path has been an initiative if we were using a mark to market lens that is yet to see the long term take up that would be required to justify the large capex. What open worries me on seeing rate increases without revenue linked capex projects is the risk that we do more of the same. Basic infrastructure on roads / sewerage has to be solved first if you want to (a) keep the existing population happy and (b) allow for hopefully a base case scenario to accelerate population growth as per (1) above.
- 6) The swimming center whilst built is a material investment and the 'ongoing sustainability' maths I am not across the detail other than my basic business observation skills. It would be also important to understand how this asset can scale to operational profitability and how engagement across regional and national clubs can occur in order to

expand the revenue streams and contribute a path to break-even or profitability.

- 7) Lastly, even a CPI linked increase in rates would need more detailed accountability on (a) audit on existing services and output metrics (b) any scope to add new services beyond this would need significant detail – both of which I cannot find in the materials provided.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute our thoughts – as mentioned we are doing this with one clear objective which is aligned with yours is the chance to further extend the magic opportunity for Corowa, Federation council and the collective communities that make up the umbrella.

Sincerely,

Tim Campbell



Corowa NSW 2646.

Author name: V. Spilva OAM

Date of submission: Wednesday, 12 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I recently attended the forum which provided information by the Federation Ratepayers Inc to the local residents of Mulwala. Having listened carefully to the impact of the SRV I am of the opinion that the increase would cause significant hardship to the ratepayers and at the same time provide little financial relief to the Federation Council. The SRV was buried in the financial plan prepared by Council in the June 2023 report. The ratepayers have already endured two significant rises in 23-24 and 24-25 financial rates. To request a further 2 year cumulative increase of 69.4% is unconscionable. Cost of living pressures on all sectors of the community cannot support such an increase. Deferring rates under the hardship provision is only a bandaid solution for the ratepayers as ultimately they still need to pay the huge increase being sought. More fiscal measures to cut unnecessary spending in Federation Council needs to be addressed, not revenue raising by increased rates. I am opposed to the SRV.

Author name: W. Bott

Date of submission: Saturday, 22 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

IPART handed down a decision on the 2022-2023 SRV, the previous application, from Federation Council June 2023. IPART determination awarded a temporary rate increase of 17% year 2023-2024, followed by a further temporary increase of 19% for the current year 2024-2025. Immediately Federation Council commenced preparation of the application for the current SRV. submission. Federation Council was not prepared to wait and see what financial improvement occurred as a result of the temporary rate increases that had been granted. They saw the solution to not having been granted by IPART what had been requested was to reapply and go back again to the SRV rates increase solution rather than seeking cost saving improvements in financial management and improvements in operating efficiency. From January 2011 until December 2015 I was privileged to be one of three AR BLUETT trustees who would receive submissions from NSW councils and assess and award the annual AR BLUETT memorial prize to a rural and a city council. Councils who in the judgement of the trustees are leading councils within their category of rural and city. In assessing a council submission one of the early indicators of financial performance is the operating performance ratio. Federation are applying for a 69.94% SRV over the next two years. The audited Federation Council financials 2023-2024 show the Operating Performance Ratio to be 16.45% positive. An OPR figure below zero is an indicator of the need to improve financial performance. An SRV request for an increase of 69.94% while the audited OPR is 16.45% is an unreasonable amount for Federation Council to be seeking. The reported 16.45% OPR has been achieved after only the one temporary SRV increase of 17% awarded by IPART for 2023-2024. The 19% temporary rate increase awarded to council for 2024-2025 will be reflected in next year financial reporting. Federation Council SRV submission 2023-2024 predicted the OPR to be -17.87%. The substantial improvement in OPR indicates the wisdom of IPART having made the previous increases temporary. It also indicates the unnecessary nature of the current application at a time of financial hardship being experienced by many Federation residents. Road Expenditure is again listed as a primary need for additional revenue in the Federation Council SRV submission. While I acknowledge there is need for improvement in our roads, I also draw attention to the fact that in all but one application to IPART for SRVs, road maintenance and improvement expenditure has been listed as a primary reason for the application. The SRV application exception occurs in the swimming pool SRV application where a cost reduction saving of \$730K is listed as having been taken from road expenditure and would be available for pool expenditure. There has been a consistent history of taking approved budget road expenditure and redirecting it to other expenditure priorities. It should also be noted that in reply to IPART question 4, where it is asked if in the council submission it is intended to leave road operating expenditure blank for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027? Federation Council reply is yes, because road maintenance will be funded by RLRRP grant from Transport for NSW in those two years. All this begs the question as to why this year will be any different from the previous SRV application years? If additional revenue is granted will it result in the application stated road improvement or will it follow the path of previous years. Council can alter the percentage rating between categories but it was the intent of IPART when handing down the June 2023 Federation decision that the temporary increases granted, should be applied evenly across all rating categories. Federation rating for 2023-2024 maintained this principal of fairness and equity. By contrast the GM and Director Corporate Services recommendation for 2024-2025 was that council set the farm rate at 29% rather than the IPART approved 19% temporary increase. The rationale being that farm property values had increased substantially resulting in unearned wealth for farmers. The council finally resolved to set the farmland rate at a percentage increase of 22% allowing other rate categories to be lowered below the 19%. The capital appreciation of a farm will be determined by VG valuation on which the ad valorem rate is levied. Capital appreciation can only be realized through sale and the payment of capital gains taxation. Council cannot determine a farmer's wealth, knowledge of what debt/borrowings may be held against the security of the farm is not known by council. Why should capital appreciation of farmland be treated differently to business, industrial or residential capital appreciation? When was Local Government given the power to levy wealth taxation? I believe that this 2024-2025 application to be excessive and I oppose it being granted.

W. Bott AM.



1st March 2025

IPART Members
Sydney. NSW. 2646

Dear IPART Members

I am writing to express my objection to the Federation Council's request for a rate increase of 69.5%.

Federation Council has not been transparent with their ratepayers regarding this rate increase request. When I received my rate notice by post there has been no information regarding this proposed rate increase-(I have had 2 rate notices - July/August 2024 and February 2025). They claimed to have had meetings in rural towns, but I saw no advertisements. A Federation Council satisfaction survey sent as unaddressed mail did not reach everyone. I did not receive one and nor did any of my neighbours in this area and we only found out about it after the fact. The Federation Council's survey revealed that people prefer receiving information by mail. Federation Council have ignored this request from their own survey results! This rate increase request is very significant and will impact many people. What have they got to hide? Why are they not communicating to their ratepayers in a transparent manner?

The Federation Council created a rate calculator for residents, releasing it after voting to increase rates. The debate in Federation council chamber was also cut short by the Major as she only allowed 2 councillors to speak for and 2 against the motion for a rate increase. This is the most important vote for our community. Why cut short a very important debate?

Federation Council employed a consultant [REDACTED] to look at the pros and cons of amalgamation. One of his recommendations was that senior management get a mentor. Why make this a recommendation? This shows a lack of confidence in senior management at Federation Council. I don't believe that this has occurred.

[REDACTED] report was also skewed towards rural rate payers being able to pay special rate increase, of which I am a ratepayer. Rural ratepayers make up 43% of the rates collected across the council area. Our land valuations have gone up in recent times and so have our costs of production (fertilizer etc) but the price of our commodities fluctuates enormously. Our climate is rapidly becoming drier. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] selected a top production year and used gross profit figures without including

production costs in his report, using this to argue rural ratepayers' ability to pay a rate increase. It's like seeing high revenue at a coffee shop on a busy Saturday and assuming they can handle a rate increase, ignoring the slower weekdays. This does not reflect people's ability to afford this proposed rate increase. He has also flagged that there should be a re-distribution in rates across the community with rural ratepayers bearing more of the rate burden. Federation did this with the last rate increase IPART granted even though they said they would not. Therefore, our rates under this proposed rate variation will increase significantly. It will significantly affect our businesses during a time of living cost challenges and international uncertainty. In turn, this will have a ripple effect on our small towns and communities. We support local community businesses by shopping locally. [REDACTED] proposal affects not only rural ratepayers but also local businesses and town ratepayers facing cost of living increases. Many of our community members are pensioners. The flow on effect means that the cost of renting will increase.

I am concerned about the governance of the Federation Council. They say that they have had \$800,000 in savings this year but are not able to prove it. I don't feel confident that the current senior management are managing our rates well. The Federation Planning Department is under review as it has one of the worst track records across NSW. Over the last 12 years between Corowa Shire Council and Federation Council there has been 8 special rate variations and 1 additional variation. What are they doing with this additional money? Another impost on our rural community is not warranted. Federation Council should be able to prove that they are using PUBLIC monies efficiently and effectively across the community and not keep putting their hand out for more funds until they can prove that they can do this.

I request that IPART members refrain from increasing our rates and consider the impact on rural communities when evaluating Federation Council's request for an SV rate increase. Please do NO harm to our rural community.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 1 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Hello federation council My submission is about your management and what happens when you cant manage the extra income you get from your rate rise do you just put it up again as handouts just dont work its all about management and the council wants ratepayers to cover the cost of all of the dumb decision makers involved with council

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 1 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Where do I start , with what the council is proposing it is going to stretch my funds even more , I'm a single women and life , work , living is costly enough. I'm at the stage of this king I might have the sell my home and move as this council has no desire to listen to it's people. We have a lot of aged living in Federation and they are suffering alot.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 1 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

This will have a devastating impact on residents if it goes ahead. Many are already struggling to keep up with rate payments as they are. please do not allow this huge rise. Council is not totally transparent on their spending and many residents will go under water with the proposed increase.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 2 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Household incomes are not increasing let alone by any more than 3%. How can such a significant rate rise be appropriately justified. The cost of living is crushing households. Council needs to do better by its people and find alternative savings and cost management techniques. If not, it will drive hard working families away from the community and with an aging population this will only further strain local resources and facilities. Please seriously consider what impact this will have on our vulnerable people and young families.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 3 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

With the increase of living plus increase in rates left over money will be very limited . From my research the people of the outer lying towns will not benefit from the increase.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 3 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

In regards to the special rate variation currently being applied for by Federation Council is NOT in the best interest of the rate payers and I strongly disagree. Poor management has led to shortfalls and need to be corrected. NO to the variation.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 4 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I am very concerned that the Federation Council will not be improved by a rate increase. The poor condition of the roads in our area is evident, and the patch-up repairs being made provide little improvement or solution. There is no plan in place to suggest that these issues will be resolved in a timely or cost-effective manner. The workload being managed within the Federation Council is at a low standard; often, a temporary fix is suggested but is delayed, turning into a larger problem later on.

Employees' workdays need to be more structured and accounted for, ensuring that tasks are completed in a timely manner. A rate rise does not address the underlying issues affecting the shire's financial and visual conditions; it is merely a temporary solution with no lasting results.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 4 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the rate variation application from Federation Council. In these current times where the cost of living has risen yet wages have not risen to meet these costs, this proposed rate increase from Federation Council highlights the councils utter detachment from the community they serve. Federation locality is largely working class and as such to impose an increase to the rates on the residents while the cost of living continues to rise is quite concerning. Perhaps Federation Council should be held to account on why they must raise rates yet again, is there a serious mismanagement of ratepayer funds to blame? As a resident of Federation Council in Howlong, I see poorly maintained riverside reserves, appalling road conditions, footpaths in need of repair and overrun with weeds like catheads which puncture pram & bike wheels and injure dogs by the dog parks. With the previous rate increase there was no improvement seen in Howlong on these matters, its hard to believe this increase would benefit ratepayers but only line the pockets of the council and the councillors. Please consider that it should not be up to residents to empty their pockets in compensation of the councils shortfalls.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 5 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I believe we do need a small increase in rates however we need to see some positive results for our money. We seem to have a lot of people making various decisions in Council, I question their ability to do so. Corowa is the main hub for the Federation Council this is where meetings and all main activities should be carried out ,I am talking about council meeting and all office procedures. I have sat in a couple of meetings with the CEO and so called specialists trying to get buildings passed. What a disgrace all these people were worried about their own little situation rather than the good of Federation Council throwing up as many negatives as they could instead of trying to resolve the issues, and the sad thing was they were not brought into line by the CEO. Talking to actual elected Councilors I think they are fed information in a way that is not quiet right. I believe that it all starts from the top and while I personally like and get on well with the CEO Adrienne we need some one who is stronger and in control running Council.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 6 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

We strongly object to Federation Councils proposed rate rise. The Community has not been fully informed about this proposed rate rise and what benefits we will receive from it. We don't understand why they are needing this significant rise. They have not demonstrated any cost saving plans in their budget prior to this, they seem to just want ratepayers to keep covering all their costs without strategies within the Council to reduce ongoing costs. We believe Council is inefficient with its funds - it seems to take 2-3 staff to do jobs that in private business would be done by 1 person. Council seems to purchase new plant and equipment which should be cost saving in reducing the need for more staff etc but this is not happening. There seems to be a lot of Council owned vehicles driving around town! We are farming land holders who already pay significant rates with little benefit to us. With the ongoing rising costs associated with farming, this proposed huge rise could mean we will have to sell as farming is not becoming viable. We would love to be able to get someone to cover our ongoing increasing costs for us too, but we have to look at strategies to cover these costs ourselves. Thank you for your consideration.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 7 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

The figure, used by Council on their brochure just received, for the Average Residential Rate is very inaccurate. The 69.94% permanent increase over 2 years is incorrect as Council have included the temporary rate increases from 2023/24 and 2024/25 into their proposed new SRV for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Theirs will be 85.24% over the 4 year cumulative. We are pensioners in a residential house. Our pension does not go up that much in a year. Cost of living, insurance, running a motor vehicle and medical, are all expensive. The rates should be pegged at the 4.3% figure. How much will our rates be costing in 10 years time if Council get their SRV approved? Before amalgamation with the other Councils, Corowa Council had a \$4 million credit on their books. Since amalgamation we seem to have acquired huge debt and expenses. Why are we paying so much to Consultants? Why waste so much money on a footpath in Wanstead Street that is double the width and stops half way. There are increased numbers of people who are falling behind with their rates due to cost of living expenses.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 7 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

As pensioners we are unable to afford the proposed SRV council have proposed It seems as though council have factored in the temporary rate increases into their permanent rate increase, along with their new proposed srV What with the cost of living expenses the permanent increase will be unaffordable as our pensions don't increase by this level. Consultant expenses seem to be excessive, especially for airport which is at \$150,000 so far Big spends don't seem to be notified to the ratepayers. E.g. a fancy air-conditioned lawn mower. Double width footpath in wanstead St that only goes half way. Three swimming pools when we only voted for an indoor pool. Federation vehicles. Council need to have more community awareness and engagement and investigate all efficiency options before increasing rates

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 8 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Federation Council is proposing a 69.94% increase in General Rates. Where have the Council's expenses increased by 70% to justify a 70% increase in General Rates.? I do not have a problem with rates increasing in line with the CPI but a 70% increase is a bit rich!

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 10 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Federation Council have mismanaged finances for some time. Bad decisions like the expensive Corowa swimming pool, which runs at a loss. Ratepayers are at breaking point. We cant afford continuous rate increases. Apart from a SRV, theres the added expense of council increasing water & sewage availability charges, which amount to \$1200 for some households, on top of rate charges. Many struggle with insurance payments, high power & gas bill. Petrol prices are high and some town people need to travel to Albury or Melbourne for medical reasons. We are all juggling our finances, council need to do the same. Its clear Adrian Butler General Manager is unable to look after council finances in an efficient manner. He isnt even qualified for the job. Its time council got a new GM, someone with accounting qualifications. I stress to IPART, despite [REDACTED] conclusions, ratepayers can not afford this steep increase. Even a modest increase will inflict hardship on some, such as single pensioners, single income families, low income households. Ratepayers can not afford a rate increase.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 10 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I speak on behalf of Oaklands residents. Did you know that Oaklands is the biggest private storage facility for the Australian defence force, they are also one of the biggest storage facilities for grain operated by two of the biggest international companies Grainflow and GrainCorp, which is classified as NSW mining. It also has a private company who is tendered by the ADF to dismantle ammunition. These jobs, are filled by Oaklands residents. These jobs also do NOT match salary levels offered in other regions. In fact its considerably less. But people here can work full time and then be home before 5pm. Making the work life money balance on par. All places can NOT get staff. In fact they hire more backpackers than locals as there is not enough people. Is the defence force ready to allow federation council to force out middle income workers out of their houses and towns in turn letting an industry fail? Were talking about ammunitions for wars we dont know about, and everyone in this world (minus gluten intolerant people) need grain for their food. You have small town people working for peanuts to provide services for the world who dont even recognise the importance of what people do not just a job but for other peoples benefits. Currently grain flows employment is 90% backpackers, and all the Aussie blokes do not live in Oaklands. They travel every day.

Because it cheaper to live in the bigger towns of Yarrawonga and Mulwala with services for their families. The council is in a deficit and requires higher rates from typical blue collar people and pensioners. Cause half of the town are retired farmers. We have dirt roads, and just got a new Main Street (which didnt need to be done considering half the town is dirt) that cost 3 times the cost of a normal piece of road. Hows do I know cause I been in the industry. Federation council is going to cause alot of folks to be more financially disadvantaged especially in this economy. Are they seeking extra rates from the defence force since we are the biggest storage facility for their ammunitions snd tankers? You google Oaklands, and hardly anything comes up, because it is technically a garrison town. We are close by to the base in Albury and the ammunition factory in Yarrawonga & Benalla. The only service we get from the council is the brilliant boys in the gardening crew. Who mow the park each week. Our landfill is also on Sundays till midday which we have to pay for by cash only. Thats it. Thats what we get. Oh and the new road we never asked for at 3 times the cost, If the rates raise we will be forced to sell up and move somewhere cheaper. And thats in the cards for many people who participate in society and work here. The pensioners? They will be in debt till they die, unable to move cause its all they known and they cant afford it. And young people? Why stay in a place with no services, no supports for kids, and too expensive?

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 11 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

A rise in property rates would be a bad idea, especially given the current economic strain. With the cost of living already soaring, including rising prices for food, essential items, and education, increasing property rates would only exacerbate the situation. Many people are already struggling with high mortgage payments, and a rise in property rates could push more people toward financial instability, increasing the risk of homelessness for some. The added pressure could force families to make impossible choices, like whether to pay for housing or essential needs like food and education. Instead of raising property rates, we need solutions that reduce financial strain and make housing more affordable, ensuring that people can meet their basic needs without the fear of losing their homes.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 13 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Costs have gone up for everything and so have the costs of running a council. Federation Council has kept rates too low for too long. Now more funding is needed to catch up and be able to meet the needs of maintaining and updating infrastructure and provide services etc. Forced amalgamations have caused more expenses for our council, rather than the promised savings stated by the State Government when they forced this on us. I'm a pensioner but understand the need for this increase.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 13 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Terrible lack of transparency and poor community consultation. Such as airport closure. Mulwala Museum closure, where crucial reports were NOT disclosed to the Historical Society 3 years ago. Nor by Corowa Council on 1994 prior to establishment of the Museum. Small rural villages are not receiving value for rates, such as withdrawal of rubbish and recycling facilities. Greater efficiencies within the budget should relieve the need for rates increases. Improve our roads with quality repairs, not just slapdash efforts which need repairs again within 6 months.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 13 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

To whom it may concern, I have owned this property for just over 8 years, when I first purchased it my rates were around \$500/year, we have zero services provided to us from council. Yet my rates are over \$2000/year now. Late last year our local bins were removed from the central waste point, not one of the locals were made aware of the situation and now we have no way of managing our waste. We now have an on-site cleanaway bin that we pay for on top of our rates which is disgustingly expensive. I don't believe the council needs to raise the rates, perhaps it's time that the entire staff were reviewed and made accountable for the spending on unsustainable things. We get absolutely nothing for our \$2000/year and I'll be disappointed if I have to pay anymore.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 15 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I live in the Federation council but was previously part of the Urana Shire Council. I opposed the amalgamation and would happily support a reversal. Since the merge in my small town of Oaklands we have seen our council services slowly eroded. Larger towns in the council are getting better services than us. The roads are appalling but Corowa has a new heated pool and Mulwala a flash park and a bike track between the two. Any requests we make to council are met with indecisive response, lack of response or inadequate response. My household is one of limited income yet our rates are being raised at above the normal increase and our services are decreasing. We are expected to pay rates at a level where you could reasonably expect much better facilities and services. Even an independent report showing lack of planning and serious waste seems to be getting ignored. I strongly oppose this submission as do many people in this area.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 15 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission about Federation Councils request for an exorbitant rate increase This request is not required for a number of reasons 1. The administration of the Shire is too heavy and salaries and conditions out of context .Substantial savings are possible in numbers 2. The rate increases are not affordable for many businesses and most pensioners of which there are many Additionally many families will find these proposed rate increases impossible to pay 3.Examples of inefficiencies that could be easily remedied include consolidating staff into one office therefore reducing travel and other costs considerably The number of indoor staff is excessive and yet performance is often sub par As an example my solicitor recently phoned me to advise they were still waiting on a planning certificate " Unfortunately you live in Federation Council and they are impossible to deal with They very often do not answer the phone There are 2.4 rates staff which is ample but still no responsiveness This council is an example of a council amalgamation that could have achieved savings but has not for a number of reasons 1. Excessive focus on new works or expansion without any recognition of long term depreciation and operational costs 2. Introduction of a nine day fortnight and additional staff to support same 3. Large increases in employment costs and an insistence to employ more staff as opposed to achieving productivity gains If IPART approves Federations request they will waste much of the money through ongoing lack of performance and new unnecessary capital expenditure Senior staff have already indicated they are looking to seek another special variation in 5 years When is enough enough. Please moderate this request because most in the community cannot afford to pay and the community is not making huge demands for the new capital projects of councillors Federation Council needs the return of Administrators although I do realise this is not within IPARTS scope Thank you for the chance to make a submission

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 15 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I am probably one of the hundreds that are saying they wont do this survey as it wont make any difference because Federation Council just do what they want to do and dont listen to the community which they have done for many many years 3/4 quarters of the councillors have only been on there to better they own circumstances and business or to basically line there own pockets and all of a sudden we the members of the community and rate payers have to pay for there incompetence Well live lived in town all my life and for my last two homes we have lived in in new estates we dont even have a footpath to walk on and dont get me started on their tip fees and operating hours Plus the ridiculous amount of money wasted on the swimming pool absolutely absurd the amount of staff they have ther doing nothing 70% of the time How we are expected to find the extra money on a pension I have no idea , we have always payed our rates in full and on time but cant see that happening now and I ask the question why the sewage use was always included in yearly the rate notice Now they include it on the water rates so now we get charged 4 times a year I realise the rates need to increase but please make it so people can afford it let common sense prevail

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 15 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

We have lived in the Federation Council area since 2018. In that time we have had multiple SRV rises outside of the standard rates increase. We own our home but now live on pensions. Money is increasingly harder to come by with the cost of living. We have not seen any improvements to our local area other than standard waste collection services, we have no footpaths or hardwaste collections so find it hard to justify increases such as the Council is proposing. Federation council is relying on an instant fix to solve their money shortages by imposing large percentage rate increases on residents. We have a caravan park that they emptied of permanent campers that runs at a loss, and a multi million dollar swimming pool that is in the same boat. We can't afford to use the pool, nor can many others. We cannot continue to keep Council afloat on the modest income we receive. This current SRV request is going to further cause financial hardship and we reject it on those grounds.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 16 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

We get no value for money now so any increase would be a waste. Should never had got rid of the permanent site holders at ball park 500k per year lost. I moved here in 2018 for a better life. We don't even have foot paths around my area prams wheelchairs and mobility scooters need to go on the road. I am on a disability pension now and money doesn't go as far as it use to. Amalgamation of councils only works in big cities not rural towns.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 17 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Federation council has been grossly mismanaged. There are employees on huge pay packets who are not needed or are not efficient at their jobs. Many have company cars that we pay for, each night they jump in them and drive off to other councils that they live in. They don't care about Fed council they only care about themselves. Money is wasted on ridiculous things while basic infrastructure is ignored. The main St is full of empty shops and falling down buildings while council does nothing to chase these issues up. We are a tourist town that borders VIC - the twin town across the river - Rutherglen is pumping. We should have the same or better as we are on the banks of the river and just a close to the wineries but no. DA s take forever to get through and when they do, they are often wrong. We are lucky we have JBS industry and agriculture businesses in town which the town basically lives off, but the council make it hard for them as well and treat them like a cash cow. Enough is enough - get rid of management get in administrators and clean the whole thing out this gross mismanagement of money is criminal.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 18 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Good Morning I have already provided details of my opinions, which obviously had little affect My current rates for 2024-2025 are \$7,237, plus water rates in excess of \$1500 plus land tax of \$18150 This property was purchased as a holiday home many years ago and is now a massive financial burden. No doubt people will say be the value has increased, which is correct but i do not want to sell I wish to enjoy property with my family it appears that previous Councils have failed to carry out their duties and there is now a massive backlog, plus the amalgamation with other Councils has added an additional backlog, which i think is very unfair With the increase in the cost of living over the last few years and this unjustifiable rate increase the burden on ratepayers is massive. Why are outside engineers being used to assess the structure of Museum when Council employs engineers? No doubt there are inefficiencies in the Council which hopefully are being addressed. The easiest thing is to increase rates rather than make hard decisions about culling the workforce. Working from home should be abolished as it is impossible to determine that a full days work is being completed I realise rates must increase due the rising costs bur this % rates rise cannot be justified over such a short period Please reconsider-this is placing ridiculous financial pressure on ratepayers, especially those in Melbou]rne Street

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 18 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I am 52 years of age and lived in Corowa almost all that time. Our town has very old infrastructure and after attending a few meetings with [REDACTED] and council information sessions, my opinion is decided. I like many dont want a rate rise but it appears we have been to cheap for to long and incremental rises didnt happen when they should have. I now reluctantly support the rise and can see its a case of have to if we want our roads and facilities upgraded and maintained.

“Have your say”

A 70% permanent rate increase is an issue for my family financially, with the continuing high cost of living personally and rapidly increasing business production costs that apply to farming in what is becoming quite a volatile economic forecast. Hard decisions and tough times loom for us in the Federation Shire, whether as wage earners, pensioners or small business owners. All will feel the pinch. It is not only the council who will be seeking support and we must all look carefully at managing our countries' future. As businesses fall by the way, life will become tougher for every-one.

Obviously, there has been quite a bit of concern as to how the Council is managing its Programs. Federation really seems to lack transparency in it's engagement with the Community. Efforts to air concerns fall on deaf ears and the evidence of a failure to run maintenance programs efficiently is quite common as we move around the local area. We continue to be frustrated at the waste and poorly managed road repairs & other infrastructure work carried out by Council. The sub-standard results are clearly evident by the re-works that are being carried out. While we should be shocked at this, our family saw it coming as the rushed works were obviously not well prepared or sustainable. Im sure, with improved planning, the Council would waste less of their budget and their limited resources. A genuine effort at efficient management is something that the council needs to address.

My fear is that the SRV will make our lives significantly harder as rates rise, while no gains will roll out from programs to tick boxes rather than create productive outcomes. Good decisions are vital to boost our community needs.

More funds for a wasteful set of programs cannot be tolerated, in my view. Be accountable, productive and transparent with local government processes and have accurate and regular reviews that are realistic and fit for purpose. Good people work at the Federation Council, but I do not feel that good, co-ordinated outcomes are forthcoming. Change is needed.

This is the reason I am expressing my opinion about the proposed SRV when I realised I have this option. I am frustrated by the lack of due diligence coming from our local Council. I was, initially unaware that a second SRV was being submitted by the Council and was shocked to learn that a notice was issued so close to Christmas (For most farmers, there is an extreme focus on harvest at this time but is a time of distraction for all ratepayers). This negative approach to informing ratepayers of important strategies is understandably not appreciated.

There will be significant hurdles for ratepayers in our community to manage the burden of the proposed rate increases and council will have issues with further unpaid rates during this time, I am sure. It would create an unjust, unwise and unsustainable outcome for the district.

Cost containment and raising efficiencies need to be addressed BEFORE not AFTER another RATE RISE by Federation.

I am not interested in backing this SRV when 2 years after the first one, poor decision-making is still rife.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 21 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I have attended a Federation Ratepayers Inc information session and found the sessions informative with helpful instructions on how to make a submission to IPART (positive or negative). Attached is a report from the Federation Council GM for the March meeting about the FRI information sessions, this document demonstrates very clearly the tone from Council if you disagree or question. The attached document also demonstrates how crucial information is always omitted, for instance how do we know that 70% of the temporary SRV has been expended correctly. What was the total amount raised from the temporary SRV (less rate pegging) to be spent? There is a table of expenditure on roads but states budget figures, not actual figures? Council repeats often that they do not get natural disaster funding every year and can't rely on that funding. Ratepayers know that, thankfully we don't have natural disasters every year. However, ratepayers do know that we get road funding from government but this 69.94% SRV is nearly fully funding our total roads and footpaths budget. Why?

Work Order	Description	Original Budget \$	C/I \$
3261	SRV - Reseal - Gitchell Street Corowa (280m) - From Redlands Rd Ch0.00km to Ch0.28km	18,000	
3262	SRV - Reseal Victoria Street Howlong (2380m) - From Sturt Street Ch0.09 to Ch0.207	65,000	
3263	SRV - Reseal Oakland Streets	200,000	
3264	SRV - Reseal - Bow Street Corowa (380m) - From Honour Ave Ch0.04 to Ch0.36 - 380m	40,000	
3265	SRV - Reseal - Whitehead Street Corowa (300m) - From Redlands Rd to Steel Street	27,000	
3266	SRV - Reseal - Redlands Road Street Corowa (420m) - From Jasmin Court to Cemetery Road	30,000	
3267	SRV - Reseal - Jude Street Howlong (215m) - From Sturt Street Ch0.00 to Ch0.215	10,000	
3268	SRV - Reseal - Oil Tree Lagoon Road (4150m) - From Railway Street Ch1.2km to 5.35km	180,000	
3269	SRV - Reseal - Boree Creek Road (1010m) - From Sturt Hwy Ch28.94 to Ch29.96	100,000	
3270	SRV - Reseal - Back Morundah Road (1670m) - From Yamma Rd Ch0.0 to Ch3.52	127,000	
3271	SRV - Corowa Public School Carpark Rehabilitation - 100lm Kerb and gutter replacement, pavement low spots, reseal and linemarking	100,000	
3272	SRV - St Marys Primary School Service Lane Stage 1 - Design and construct drainage (brick gutter replacement)	220,000	
3273	SRV - Reseal Federation Way near Coonong Road - 62.65 km to 71.16 km	80,000	
3274	SRV - Gravel Resheet - Boundary Road	84,000	
3275	SRV - Gravel Resheet - Piggins Road - CH From Balldale road - Ch 0.12 to 1.50 - 1380 x 6 = 8200m2 - Ch 2.11 to 2.28 - 1020m2 Total 1.550km - 9220m2	56,000	
3276	SRV - Gravel Resheet - Milns Road - CH From Emu Park road - Ch 0 to 0.7 - 700 x 6 = 4200m2 - Ch 4.73 to 5.38 - 650 x 6 = 3900m2 - Ch 3.44 to 3.77 - 3	60,000	
3277	SRV - Gravel Resheet - Old Corowa Road - CH From Riverina Hwy - Ch 3.37 to 3.76 = 380 x 6 = 1080m2 - Ch 4.92 to 5.4 - 480 x 6 = 2880m2 Total 1.060	42,000	
3278	SRV - Gravel Resheet - Coad Tank Road - CH From Emu Park road - Ch 1.69 to 2.69 - 1000 x 6 = 6000m2	42,000	
3279	SRV - Gravel Resheet - Trenton Valley Road - CH From Balldale/Correen road - Ch 0.29 to 1.55 - 1280 x 6 = 6800m2 - Total 1.260km - 3960m2 (some	45,000	
3280	SRV - Gravel Resheet - O'Connell's Road	42,000	
3281	SRV - Slattery Street Mulwala Stage 1 upgrade	100,000	
3282	SRV - Bailey Street Drainage outfall improvements	31,000	
3283	SRV - Skehans Lane Drain improvements stage 1	31,000	
Roads Footpaths Bridges Kerb & Guttering Drainage Total		4 751 000	4 37

At 31 December 2024, \$689,408 of the \$1.73 million program was expended or committed.

Council will ensure it communicates where the SRV funds are spent and will continue to report quarterly. As it was correctly stated by the Federation Ratepayers Inc speaker at the Mulwala session, a strong commitment was made by Council that the bulk of the SRV would be spent on roads. The speaker claimed it has not been. This claim is refuted. Council's reports demonstrate that over \$3.0 million of the SRV funds has been allocated to roads and drainage infrastructure (some 70% of the additional funds). Other funds have been used to undertake preventative maintenance of Council buildings, drive greater value in procurement and progress other more minor projects as include in Council's initial SRV application.

Operating Performance Ratio 2023/24: Claims by Federation Ratepayers Inc Executive at their Information Sessions, that Councils operating performance ratio for 23/24 year end, of 16.45% is significant enough to suggest that the temporary SRV for 23/24 has achieved what we need and with the temporary approvals for 23/24 and 24/25 retained, Council does not need the remaining two year increases sought. The claim was that they are grants Council gets every year, they apply for them, and know they will get them.

Council's operating performance ratio in 2023/24 was extraordinary at 16.45%. This was a 20.43% increase on the previous year and results from significant one-off, flood-damage grant funding awarded to council to repair roads across the Council area. Council received \$15.1 million from State and Federal Governments for various road works in 2023/24, an increase of \$11.8 million on the previous year. Whilst the majority of this was not expended at 30 June 2024, Council was required to recognise this as operating revenue in 2023/24, thus increasing operating revenue and inflating the operating performance ratio. Without this funding the ratio would have been below zero.

Dear IPART panel

I wish to object to the large SRV that Federation Council is seeking on the following grounds; Council has only referred to the residential rate increases on a flyer mail out, which appears to have only been delivered to residential mailboxes. I guess this is not uncommon for this Council as rural rate payers are not considered, except to be the Council's cash cow, we only make up approximately 11%, however pay majority of the rate take income and are considered the highest economic driver of federation, however if prevailing weather patterns continue the economic conditions will surely diminish, see what happens then. The fact that we are less than 11% of federation's electoral base, means we have no real say in the Council chamber. I know that IPART have no control over the distribution across the different rating categories, however Council told IPART in their last SRV that the increase would be distributed evenly across all categories. However, since then the council have decided to place the largest burden on farmland rates making their rate category well above the state average. This to me says two things about our Council. Firstly, you can't believe a word they say and secondly, they have discriminated against a small minority of rate payers. Under NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977, It is unlawful to discriminate against someone or a group of people (treat them less favourably than others)

Councils are required to comply with the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 regardless of the content of their EEO Management Plan and must not act in a way that results in adverse treatment in relation to a provision of service to the community. So without some concrete assurance that this imbalance of the rate take of different categories isn't to occur, to both the community and IPART, it would be somewhat reckless on IPART'S determination to grant Federation Council their very large unaffordable SRV, which I might add had already been determined two years ago for a four year period, or so the community, and I likewise, thought.

Not sure why we have an Operational Plan and Delivery Program which I believe has to be formally passed in the Council's general meetings, when it hasn't been acted upon, and the reason given by the GM as to why this is the case, is because those people responsible for the un-acted upon subjects were required to produce the IP&R documents in order to apply for the SRV. I do not recall them voting for staff to cease day to day functions in order to apply for seemingly easy money derived from highly frustrated ratepayers. One of the subjects was a review of development fees and charges, these are not progressing and left on hold indefinitely. Council intends to spend SRV money on fixing drainage problems and lack of drainage in recent developments, in the urban parts of Federation Council, out of either the roads budget or the general fund. Would not it have been a more equitable assumption that development fees and charges were brought in line with the true development cost as to not need to be subsidised by the general ratepayers and larger proportion of funds coming from the farmland rate base. Sewage and water funds were also not reviewed, and fees and charges were also left on hold. I know both sewage and water upgrades cannot be supported by the SRV, however as the Chief Financial Officer answered a question put to her by a councillor, "could he have a list of investments of where they had come from, and what they intended them to be spent on", she replied it would be all too hard as they only had one big BUCKET of MONEY and they drew from that as needed. How can we as farmland ratepayers who are not on town water or sewer be sure we are not subsidising the town water and sewer shortfalls? How can they budget properly if they don't increase these fees and charges at least to keep up with inflation, because if they do not, they will be losing money as the value of funds decreases with inflation and hence is not covered by the rate peg, which this Council has always taken in full. We have a sneaking

suspicion they intend to somehow syphon off money out of the BIG BUCKET to spend on much needed core infrastructure that has been neglected for popular urban votes, who is going to hold them to account?

If Council was run on a prudent business case, wouldn't it be as simple as copying and pasting to produce the IP&R documents? So why then did council need so many staff producing IP&R documents right up to the February 25 council meeting, and if this was the case then these were not exhibited, and the community did not have an opportunity to comment on these. Council at no time advertised openly to the community that they had put in an application for a permanent SRV of 69.94%. I also draw IPART's attention to the fact that this equates to 85.23% over the same four year period for which IPART refused their previous application for 74.59%. Council spent hard earned money on [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] to try to convince a highly frustrated community that we need such an unaffordable rate rise. Their audited operating performance ratio of 16.45% says to me they do not need this SRV. The community had no say in the appointment or the terms of reference for his employment. [REDACTED] has no understanding of our climate both weather and economic as he comes from northern NSW and had to go overseas to recruit peers that would toe the line, why when we have many local intelligent businesspeople better qualified to scan Council's operational and financial performance. Could it be that Council wanted a salesman to sell the impossible?

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

Council have control over the local newspaper due to the advertising they take out, local community newsletters that they provide funding for, and some social media platforms. This allows them to control the so called "facts" that they put out to the community.

Council is saying they need this SRV for roads, drainage, and footpaths. Then why haven't they spent most of the RLRRF grants from TfNSW. TfNSW said in the recent review into roads grants to Councils that there is no accountability or responsibility on Councils as to where these grants are currently spent, and they are reviewing the way these grants are granted as they were intended to improve road safety. Our own council is spending these grants on footpaths/bike tracks on floodplain land close to the waters edge which is against the SEPP (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021. They have also upgraded carparks and built new roads to seemingly nowhere, also on the floodplain. It is doubtful they can get insurance for these because of the risk. More expense and no real financial gain! Drainage has not been provided to support business and urban development due to the failure to collect the appropriate development fees at the approval phase. I don't believe these are justified expenses of an SRV as they will not be funded by the user.

Why is business rate take and residential rate take much lower than the farmland rate take when farmland ratepayers get less service than a tourist, who incidentally pays no rates?

Federation Council actually has no intention of fixing local roads as when asked what cost containment measures they would take when awarded a SRV to fund servicing the pool their response was reducing the road funding by \$750,000, in fact road funding has been Council's go to fund when community projects exceed their budgets to the detriment of local road users.

Unless IPART can enforce local councils to be more accountable and legally responsible or change legislation to a more democratic system then I think under the present circumstances Councils should have to tighten their belts and not receive this unaffordable rate increase, there is huge room for improvement, productivity and cost containment savings to be had from the top of the organisation down. Ratepayers cannot be seen as employment charity for incompetent and unqualified staff, or if this is not the case then dare I say, the other explanation is corruption, and government departments need to pick up the ball.

The only way Federation Council will improve their performance is if IPART refuses this unaffordable SRV application.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I feel as a rural rate payer we receive little to no benefit from paying our council rates. The costs of running a farming business have escalated significantly over the past couple of years to the point where it is financially very difficult to break even. The proposed rate hikes will add to this burden and for negligible benefit. It occurs to me that rural rate payers pay huge rates by the very nature of the value of the assets they own and that that if you compared the services received for every dollar of rates paid that rural rate payers are getting dealt a very rough hand. Put simply we pay the highest rates and receive the lowest level of service. I am also concerned that the council will take the extra windfall for granted and not look seriously at other ways to balance their books. All businesses need to look at ways to improve their efficiency and live within their means and I think the same thing needs to be said for Federation Council. I think that it is reasonable that rates increase gradually but the magnitude of this increase is unjustified and dangerous to the viability of some of Federation Council's most important businesses

To IPART Assessment Panel

I am writing in objection to the Federation council's SRV application.

I find it extremely frustrating the way in which the Federation council has conducted itself through this process it's left myself and so many others confused to what they are applying for a 69.94% SRV or an 11% or 19%. My understanding is that their previous application was only temporary so advertising that they are just adding to the 19% and 17% in my mind is just dishonest.

Once again, the Federation council has spent ZERO effort in allowing the community to have input into our future. The SRV was on public exhibition in the back of the long-term financial plan with no advertising so the community had no idea we could provide feedback. With only four submissions in total highlighting that the community was just unaware. After reading their application to IPART it just makes me wonder if this was intentional.

In [REDACTED] community engagement report he suggests that no consideration should be given to anybody providing feedback as they are just a noisy few within the community. If this is seen as morally acceptable, God help our communities' incompetent leaders think they are unanswerable to anybody. I find comments like this just outrageous and just highlights there has never been a true interest in listening to anyone that doesn't agree with their narrative.

The Federation council have been boasting pop-up sessions in the larger towns. With poor attendance in total to these meetings just highlights how poor Federation Council advertised these events even though they have surveyed the community before to understand how the community accesses information. The problem being Staff were only at these places for one and half hours in the middle of the day, a very inconvenient time for the working part of the population. Furthermore, this engagement was carried out after they had already applied for the SRV. What's the point? Nobody could have any input.

I have noticed that the Federation council has released a frequently asked questions document as well as rates calculator both tools were released after submitting their application. Both tools would have been very useful before they had put an application to IPART, to inform ourselves if we could even afford this rate rise and then provide feedback to the council. This just proves this was just a token gesture to try and get the SRV over the line. [REDACTED] report talks about a survey of 6200 residents with only being aware of two people not receiving one. Is this some sort of joke, how can anyone let you know you didn't receive a survey when we were unaware something was even sent to you? There are over 12000 residents, so they barely surveyed half.

After reading [REDACTED] capacity to pay report I find this document lacks important basic information which highlights the financial stress already in the community. And after using old census data keeps stating that the community has typically higher ability to pay higher rates. He has put no effort into looking at local shelters to see how the local hardship programs are tracking. For example, Amaranth a local charity is struggled to support people due to a lack donations of foods etc. A sure sign the cost-of-living people are experiencing is putting a lot of pressure on and disposable incomes are no longer. We have also just seen another pub close in Corowa due to a lack of patrons. All signs in my mind that our local economy is not faring very well.

We then need to ask why [REDACTED] has put in this document that he thinks rates should be paid out of un-earned wealth. To me this now highlights that he is once again trying to justify the morality of this rate rise not the affordability of it. Capital gains taxation is for unearned wealth. How

can anybody pay for unearned wealth out of their earnings, this is why this tax is applied once an asset is sold.

The Federation council's own document showing rates unpaid, has gone from \$500000 to \$1200000 unpaid just from a 19% increase in the current climate. Why has [REDACTED] not even investigated this? Another sign highlighting that we have an affordability crisis.

But most concerning in my mind, he says that the distribution of rates needs to be investigated. So, what will my rate bill be? The Federation council stated in their application for the last rate rise, that the ad valorem would not change. Twelve months in and management loaded the rural rate payer with a larger amount of the 17% increase. With an election immanent, this can only be seen as pork barreling.

There is no point even discussing the Federation council's savings or efficiencies, because there is none. On any given day they will tell you various things, none of which are quantified, generic numbers and comments which tell me there is no intent for any worthwhile change. The Federation council has 30% plus more staff today than when it was two councils and service levels in this time have only dropped. We have not rationalized any assets so [REDACTED] comments around people traveling further creating inefficiencies holds no weight. The Federation council have become employment agencies that are just bleeding the community dry.

I find [REDACTED] attitude to efficiency and productivity just bizarre. How can every other organization or business successfully conduct itself in an efficient and productive manner, yet [REDACTED] thinks it pointless and unachievable. If this is to be the case unfortunately there is no future for rural community's councils like Federation will kill us with rates.

I believe IPART's previous determination was very fair and gave us some breathing space for Federation council to sort its mess out. But instead of using this wisely, Federation council has spent the whole time starting a blame game with the community. Rather than looking internally at its problems and waste it decided to go straight back for another SRV repeating the same failings as last time, Talk about slow learners! I urge IPART to give federation council no SRV and use them as an example to other councils that enough is enough. You must live within your means communities are not a bottomless pit of money. Services must be efficient and affordable for every part of our community. I understand the stress this will put on the Federation council initially, but it will force change before it's too late. If we don't get this right, there is a grim future for all residents of Federation and as we have seen with all their previous SRV'S more money for this council achieves worse outcomes for all.

Thank you for reading my submission and hopefully you can understand my frustration over this matter.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

The rate increase would not be such an issue if the council did the same sort of works as they do in Corowa, to the other towns in this shire, the council seems to lack in having public works done to improve or upgrade, maybe the council should have a freeze on the wages and stop getting new equipment ie: cars and such which if well maintained would last for years.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

Thank you for allowing submissions in this matter. Given the small space given for responses I will shorten my answers into an executive summary and include the full response in the attachments. Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund? In the Year 2021-22 an SRV of 8.0% was granted To fund the ongoing operating expenditure of the new Corowa Aquatic Centre, with estimated additional income valued at \$5.5 million over 10 years this appears to have gone into general revenue. Council was advised by [REDACTED] to: o Outsourcing Corowa Aquatic Centre o Reducing Tourism expenditures o Sell the Saleyards The council failed to listen to its own expert in these matters. Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise? Long-Term Financial Plan Section 5.3 fails to model the recommendations of its own expert. The council has stated it will need at least a 112% rate increase to be financially stable, despite inflation between 2016 and 2023 being only 23.3% Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category? Due to the September election and the small amount of media coverage, up until the week before Christmas it is unlikely most people would have realised it was continuing. Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness? The community voted against the SRV, in the September Local Council elections and little was done until the week prior to Christmas, through January. Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation. The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) used are based on the data from the 2021 Census, before the massive inflation spike, peaking at 7.8% for the year to December. Subsequently the Census data is not usable to determine socio-economic conditions. Federation Council has stated that outstanding rates increased 26.86% between 2022-23 and 2023-24 now up to \$1,620,000 for only 7944 properties. Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The community has made it abundantly clear that they do not want this SRV. The polls in the September 2024 election resulted in: Question 1, Do you believe that the forced amalgamation by the State Government in 2016 was a mistake? Yes 76.6% Question 2, Should the State Government compensate ratepayers for the ongoing costs of the amalgamation? Yes 84.13% Question 3, Do you support that Council should approach the State Government to guarantee representation for the former Urana Shire? Yes: 68.62% To summarize the peoples willingness and ability to pay: They have already voted out the majority of councillors who were behind this SRV Most think that the 2016 amalgamation was a bad idea and that the rate payers should be compensated by the NSW State government That with the current temporary SRV 13% of properties have been unable to pay their rates There is no willingness or capacity to pay these increased rates. Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan. While the Council has stated its plan, there is nothing stopping any future meeting of the Council demanding payment of all outstanding debts, subjecting people to the loss of their homes. Other Comments and Attachments There are problems using Group 11 as a reference Rates are based on land values as should SRV analysis The Councils rates are currently inline with other councils with the same land values, no SRV is needed. Rate inequality is a huge problem in Federation council with Business and Residential properties paying most of the rates, while holding just over 35% of the land value. Summary Due to the unsustainability and loss of democratic representation, this SRV should not be granted, and the council should be de-amalgamated. Thank you for your time in this matter

SPECIAL VARIATIONS REQUEST RESPONSE

All responses given in this response are my opinions.

24 March 2025

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CRITERION 1

QUESTION 1 (CRITERION 1) - HAS THE COUNCIL CLEARLY ESTABLISHED THE NEED FOR, AND PURPOSE OF A DIFFERENT REVENUE PATH FOR THE COUNCIL'S GENERAL FUND?

PREVIOUS SRVS

To answer this, we must first look at past SRV's of the Federation Council.

The Federation Council was founded in 2016 due to the forced amalgamation by the state government of the day. The government then stated that residents would pay no more in their rates for 4 years.

The General Manager of the Federation Council wrote to the Director of IPART on 9 December 2016, stating that the council would apply for a Special Rate Variation if it could (see appendix A)

In the Year 2021-22 an SRV of 8.0% was granted "To fund the ongoing operating expenditure of the new Corowa Aquatic Centre", with estimated additional income valued at \$5.5 million over 10 years.

Financial need was classed as demonstrated with the additional comment stating *"Even with the special variation, the council's financial position will be significantly challenged. The council's operating result is in deficit and will continue to deteriorate."*, I was unable to find any reference to this special variation being kept aside for the upkeep of the Corowa Aquatic Centre. I presume that despite the SRV being for the Corowa Aquatic Centre, the extra revenue has gone into the General revenue account.

Federation Council was granted a permanent Additional Special Variation (ASV) for a percentage increase of 0.9% increasing its general revenue for the year by 2.5%.

IPART approved a 2-year temporary SV of 39.2%, which is made up of an increase of 19% in 2023-24 then a 17% increase in 2024-25.

In the report titled *“The Advantages and Disadvantages of Amalgamation and Federation Council’s Financial Sustainability Journey”*¹ dated 3 November 2023, by [REDACTED], recommendations were given to the Federation Council based on Tiers. Being Tiers 1-3, In Tier 1 are the following recommendations:

Recommendation 11. (included due to Recommendation 12) *“The Ball Park Caravan Park business needs to be divested to relieve the pressure on overstretched staff, eliminate distractions from core service provision, reduce local economic distortion, and better manage risk. With the note “The Urana caravan park is a slightly different matter because of the market failure that we wrote of in the main report. If a suitable operator could be found in Urana – whereby there was little risk of losing the business for the community – then it might be possible to also divest council of this northern facility.”*

Response Progress Report Recommendation 11²

Staff Comment: *“Council does not own the land that the Caravan Park operates on, it is Crown Land. Council cannot sell this land. Council supported a report at the April 2024 Council meeting with a resolution to engage resources to allow the park to be put to the market under a long term lease to improve the financial results, and offer an economic driver for the area. Other options will also be discussed.”*

Council Decision: *“Adopted by Council April 2024”*

Status (Sep 2024): *“Underway”*

Status update - September 2024 *“Expression of interest for work to progress private investment into the site developed. Advertising to commence shortly”*

¹ [REDACTED] *‘The Advantages and Disadvantages of Amalgamation and Federation Council’s Financial Sustainability Journey’.*

² The Council in its December meeting stated the following in regard to these measures in a Report *“Recommendations - The Advantages and Disadvantages of Amalgamation and Federation Council’s Financial Sustainability Journey - Progress reporting”*

Recommendation 12. *“Consideration needs to be given to outsourcing the Corowa Aquatic Centre for similar reasons.”*

Response Progress Report Recommendation 12. Staff Comment: *“Council considered this option and have decided to staff the Centre on a tiered supervision model. Further consider during the three year lower staffing model.”*

Council Decision: *“Adopted by Council April 2024”*

Status (Sep 2024): *“Complete”*

Recommendation 26. *“Survey evidence suggests that there is strong support in the community for reductions to tourism expenditures. In FY2021, expenditure in this category was \$356,000, in 2022 it was \$170,000. Many debate whether tourism is indeed a legitimate role for local government in the first instance. In addition, it is clear that tourists place a significant burden on council but provide very few opportunities for direct additional revenue in a land-based taxation system (in FY 2021 \$18,000 of revenues were collected, and in FY2022 just \$12,000). In view of the significant challenges facing Council, it may be prudent to pare back tourism spending even further, within the constraints of current obligations. Preference might be given, in the future, to matching grants provided to tourist-orientated businesses in the local area (limited to a certain quantum). There may also be opportunities for sharing the cost of the tourist information services with businesses in the local area. We understand that Council has already commenced a review into various options related to tourism expenditure.”*

Response Progress Report Recommendation 26. Staff Comment: *“The Tourism service budget has been significantly reduced over the past two years, with the service level reduced significantly in November 2023, resulting in a \$132,000 reduction to the budget. The 2024/25 draft budget shows a further reduction down to \$302,352 from \$336,613 in 2023/24 (10%). For further review across 2024.”*

Council Decision: *“Adopted by Council April 2024”*

Status (Sep 2024): *“Underway”*

Status update - September 2024 *“The tourism service level was reduced significantly in November 2023 (after drafting of this recommendation), resulting in a \$132,000 reduction to the budget”*

Note: The Tourism expenses (excluding employee costs) in the 2023-24 financial statements³ was \$383,000, revenue received was just \$7,000 in 2023-24.

Recommendation 30. *"We need to consider whether it might be advisable to remove the long-term risk and distraction posed by the saleyard business. One option would be to sell the saleyard business in its entirety (subject to the terms of recent grants or other constraints). In all likelihood, physical saleyards may continue to lose volume to online and direct options in the future and Council could ultimately be left with an unsaleable asset. A second option is to outsource the business on a long-term basis to delay the realisation of risk. Notably, the saleyard situation is slightly different to the caravan park and aquatic centre and needs to be treated with care."*

Response Progress Report Recommendation 30. Staff Comment

"Recommended to continue on current staffing arrangement, service review in future can look at all options."

Council Decision: "Not adopted (April 2024)"

Status (Sep 2024): "Complete"

In March 2024 the \$11.6 million upgrade of Corowa Saleyards was completed, the upgrade was jointly funded by the NSW Government (\$10.1 million) and the Federation Council (\$1.5 million).⁴

In the article *"Bid for big rate increases again in the spotlight as debate rages"*⁵, Cr Schoen during the Council meeting of November 26th said, *"We don't show restraint, we've just had a massive fleet upgrade of vehicles,"*

"We've got utes that are brand new utes that are out there replacing vehicles that are probably just past their run-in time."

³ 'Federation Council Financial Statements 2023-24.Pdf'.

⁴ '\$11.6 Million Upgrade of Corowa Saleyards' <<https://www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au/News-Media/11.6-million-upgrade-of-Corowa-Saleyards-strengthens-Riverina's-farming-future>>.

⁵ Bunn, "Bid for big rate increases again in the spotlight as debate rages", Border mail, accessed 02/01/2024, source: <https://www.bordermail.com.au/story/8830417/federation-council-to-continue-to-pursue-6994-per-cent-rate-rise/>

The council is failing to follow the recommendations of the experts they hired, locking up tens of millions in assets that the council should not be running, while trying to massively increase the burden on ratepayers.

Looking at the Long-Term Financial Plan 2024 – 2034 (Long Term Financial Plan), it states:

“Some of the other service areas undertaken by Federation Council to support a stronger community include:

- *Libraries*
- *Corowa Aquatic Centre and other swimming pools,*
- *Industrial Subdivision developments,*
- *Parks, gardens and sporting grounds,*
- *Corowa Saleyards,*
- *Corowa Aerodrome,*
- *Caravan Parks (Ball Park Caravan Park Corowa and Urana Caravan Park), and*
- *Services relating to Youth, Aged, Medical Services (GP) support, Mobile Preschools, Health, Early and*
- *Seniors Education, Social, Arts and Culture, Tourism and Economic Development*

Council values and acknowledges that these services are a priority, given that they make a place more liveable and a place that visitors want to visit, as has been communicated by the community in various forums over the

past years. In addition, Council acknowledges its role in supporting economic activity in the Council area, as evidenced by its commitment to developing industrial land and operating caravan parks and the Corowa

Saleyards. These activities are able to generate economic activity for local businesses and result in more employment opportunities. In addition, over time these activities will be able to generate a financial return to Council which will assist in alleviating the rates burden.”

Subsequently knowingly increasing the burden on ratepayers to the benefit of businesses in the area, in complete opposition to the recommendations of the expert they commissioned at great cost.

The council's refusal to follow even the Tier 1 recommendations to reduce costs and gain profits from the sales of assets clearly shows that there is no need for a Special Rate Variation as they continue to waste money on unnecessary expenditures and employee wages while retaining assets that would be in the best interest of the rate payers to sell.

QUESTION 2 (CRITERION 1) - HAS THE COUNCIL CANVASSED ALTERNATIVES TO THE RATE RISE?

In the Long-Term Financial Plan Section 5.2 it describes the baseline scenario as “rate increases at 4.50% for 2024/25 as announced by IPART, followed by anticipated rate increases of 3.50% for future years.

Stating “To address this in the short term, without increasing revenue, would require an additional reduction in capital renewal program or an additional annual reduction in operating expenditure (or a combination). This is contained in the Baseline with an intervention scenario and would translate to substantial reduction in the services that Council provides the community.”

In the Long-Term Financial Plan Section 5.3 it describes the baseline scenario with Intervention.

Both of these scenarios fail to model the recommendations by [REDACTED]. Knowing that the council has a problem with its revenue and expenses and has chosen not to model the recommendations the experts recommended, as part of its alternatives shows a failure to act in good faith towards IPART and the proposed rate variation process.

The following is item 8.4. Special Rate Variation (SRV): 2025 – 2026 from the 22/10/2024 October Ordinary Council Meeting, Federation Council.

The following provides a summary of the evolution of the comprehensive Long Term Financial Plan for Federation Council:

May 2016	Merger of Corowa Shire Council and Urana Shire Council
April 2019	Appointment of consultant to develop comprehensive Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) using a service based approach (merger funded project)
June 2020	Comprehensive LTFP 2020-2030 adopted with need for significant service/cost reductions required to be fit within existing financial resources
June 2021	LTFP 2021-2031 adopted, foreshadowing need for significant increase to general rates to be financial sustainable with 8%-12% increase for five years proposed (cumulative 61%)
June 2022	LTFP 2022-2032 adopted, recommending 74.59% general rate increase over four years to enable ratepayers to adjust to the increases and for further progress to be made on asset management practices
June 2023	LTFP 2023-20233 adopted, recommending 74.59% general rate increase over four years to enable ratepayers to adjust to the increases and for further progress to be made on financial and asset management practices
June 2024	LTFP adopted, detailing need for 112% general rate increase to be financial sustainable, whilst recommending 80% general rate increase to enable ratepayers to adjust to the increases and for further progress to be made on financial and asset management practices

According to the Reserve Bank of Australia, the total inflation between 2016 and 2023 has been 23.3% with 2024 increasing it a further 2.8% based on September quarter figures. So, the total from 2016 to 2024 is 26.1%, yet Federation Council is claiming the need for a 112% increase in rates “to be financial sustainable”.

It is clear that Federation Shire is not economically feasible and instead of burdening the rate payers it needs immediate de-amalgamation.

Debt

At 30 June 2024, Council had:

- \$12.9 million in secured loans (\$9.9 million in 2022-23). An additional loan of \$3.8 million were taken by the Council during the year.
- \$0.4 million in approved overdraft facility
- \$0.06 million in credit card facility with \$0.02 million used.

Expenses from continuing operations				
17,578	Employee benefits and on-costs	B3-1	16,429	14,120
18,024	Materials and services	B3-2	18,897	16,453
520	Borrowing costs	B3-3	494	363
14,491	Depreciation, amortisation and impairment of non-financial assets	B3-4	15,088	14,580
696	Other expenses	B3-5	682	622
—	Net loss from the disposal of assets	B4-1	263	1,477
51,309	Total expenses from continuing operations		51,853	47,615

In my opinion, the council is spending well beyond its means while failing to cut back on its spending in any meaningful way.

Given that expenses increased in 2024 by \$4.2 million, while taking out a loan of \$3.8 million.

CRITERION 2

QUESTION 1 (CRITERION 2) - DID THE COUNCIL COMMUNICATE THE FULL CUMULATIVE INCREASE OF THE PROPOSED SPECIAL VARIATION IN PERCENTAGE TERMS? AND THE TOTAL INCREASE IN DOLLAR TERMS FOR THE AVERAGE RATEPAYER BY RATING CATEGORY?

Yes, but due to the September election and the small number of media on the SRV up until the week before Christmas, it is unlikely most people until then believed it was going forward.

QUESTION 2 (CRITERION 2) - HAS THE COUNCIL'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY DEMONSTRATED AN APPROPRIATE VARIETY OF ENGAGEMENT METHODS TO ENSURE COMMUNITY AWARENESS?

SEPTEMBER 2024 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

On 14 September 2024 the Local Government elections were held. The successful candidates were declared on Tuesday, 1 October at 11.45am at the returning office at Oddfellows Hall, in Sanger Street Corowa.

Councillors in order of election are as follows:

- Derek Schoen
- Andrew Kennedy
- Cheryl Cook
- David Bott
- Rowena Black
- Patrick Bourke
- David Harrison
- Richard Nixon
- Susan Wearne

The outcomes of the previous Local Government elections held on the 4th December 2021 in order of election were:

- Patrick Bourke
- Andrew Kennedy
- Aaron Nicholls
- David Longley
- Shaun Whitechurch
- Sally Hughes
- Rowena Black
- David Fahey
- Gail Law

As can be seen the only people who remained in office were Rowena Black, Andrew Kennedy and the now ex-Mayor Patrick Bourke (elected in count 36, the last count with 3 other councillors)

As shown by the story in Appendix A the people of the Federation Council voted heavily against the Special Rate Variation, yet since the election the council has made almost no statements in the public sphere regarding the Special Rate Variation.

Given that the election that was held was a resounding vote against the Special Rate Variation and that the council has failed to mention it on its website or on Facebook or in its newsletter since it is logical for the rate payers of the Federation Council to presume that the matter has been dropped.

On top of this in the report *“Community Engagement Report”*, dated 30/08/2024 it states *“We have evidence to show that 6,200 surveys were posted”* and *“[REDACTED] – supported by Council staff and Councilors – worked lengthy days and nights to travel over 460km”* but fails to state the number of surveys received back, also Federation council has 7,888 properties as at July 1st 2023 according to the Valuer General. However, no methodology was given in this report, nor was the survey shown within this report to validate the questions asked in the survey.

The report noted that a response stated, *‘This is the worst questionnaire -it is designed to rig the results - this will result totally biased information -it is criminal’*.

With the response given by Federation Council as *“We are not aware of any laws broken in our response to the OLG criteria. Many opportunities were provided for negative responses, including the opportunity taken in this comment.”*

In my opinion this survey was done in such a manner as to make the results invalid, it cannot be determined if it contained leading questions, what the sample size was or what the randomness of the sample was.

QUESTION 3 (CRITERION 2) - PLEASE COMMENT ON THE ACTION TAKEN BY COUNCIL IN RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY ON THE PROPOSED SPECIAL VARIATION.

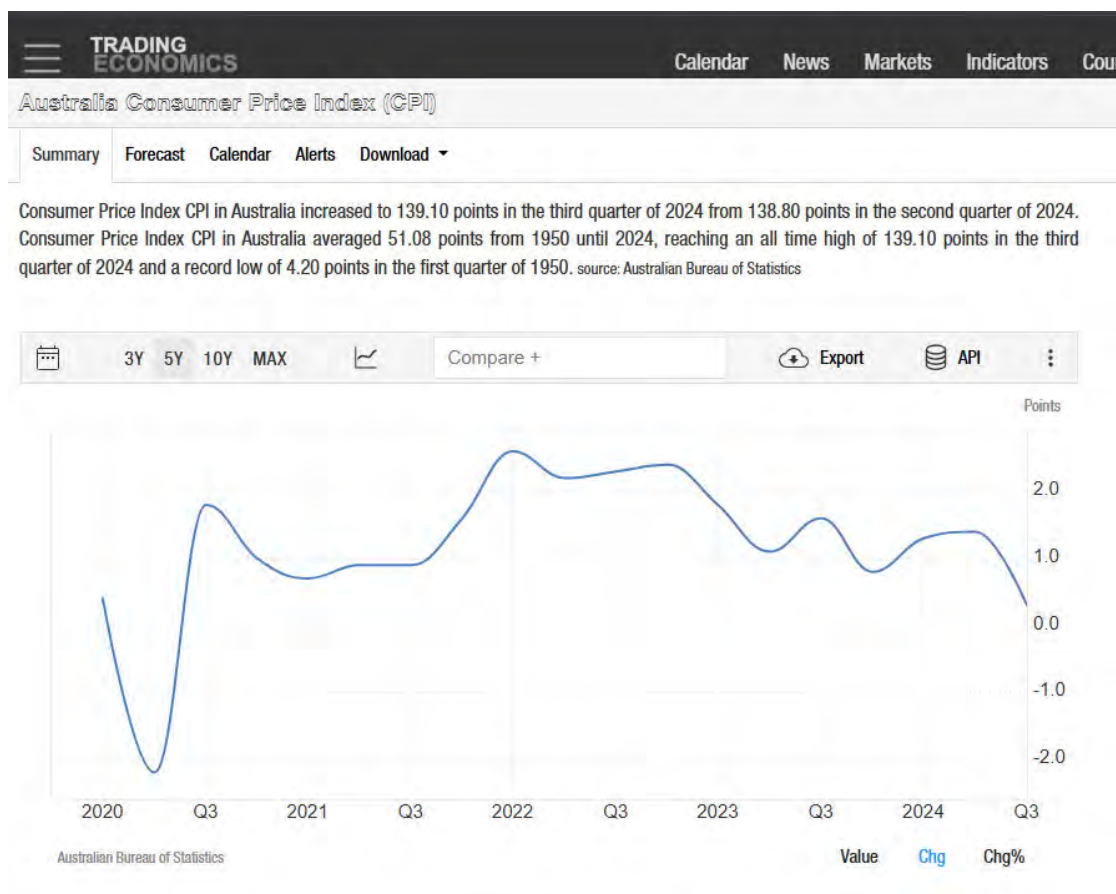
The council's response seems to be to completely ignore the feedback on the proposed rate variation, after the election decimated the majority of those who supported the SRV, the fact they are still proposing it shows how little they have listened.

CRITERION 3

QUESTION 1 (CRITERION 3) - PLEASE COMMENT ON THE REASONABLENESS OF THE IMPACT ON AFFECTED RATEPAYERS OF THE PROPOSED SPECIAL VARIATION.

The impact of the proposed special variation is unknown. In the Federation Council, Capacity to Pay Report dated 30 August 2025, prepared by [REDACTED], This report relies heavily on the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) which are based on data collected in the Census and so the data having been collected by prior to a massive historical event, make the index unreliable and should not be relied on to determine advantage or disadvantage. The 2021 census was done by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on the 10th of august 2021, before most of the inflation had hit.

The cumulative inflation from 2016 to 2021 was only 9.51%, in December 2022 the CPI peaked at 7.8% for the year, with it falling to 4.1% by December 2023. Inflation for September 2024 has now fallen to 2.8%.



Graph from: <https://tradingeconomics.com/australia/consumer-price-index-cpi>

Federation Councils own financial statements show outstanding rates and charges in 2022-23 as \$1,277,000 and 2023-24s as \$1,620,000 an increase of \$343,000 (26.86% increase).

In my opinion this makes the Capacity to Pay Report unusable and the reasonableness of the impact completely unknown.

QUESTION 2 (CRITERION 3) - PLEASE COMMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S CONSIDERATION OF THE COMMUNITY'S CAPACITY AND WILLINGNESS TO PAY.

The community has made it abundantly clear that they do not want this SRV.

Appendix G is a press release by the Office of Local Government stating that local councils have the power to de-amalgamate and as shown in Appendix F some councilors have already brought forth the idea of de-amalgamation stating “*..to push the government to fund a split, claiming it would cost \$5 to \$6 million while an extra \$70 million would be needed over the next decade if Federation continued in its present form.*”

The polls in the September election resulted in:

Question 1

Do you believe that the forced amalgamation by the State Government in 2016 was a mistake?

Yes 76.6%

Question 2

Should the State Government compensate ratepayers for the ongoing costs of the amalgamation?

Yes 84.13%

Question 3

Do you support that Council should approach the State Government to guarantee representation for the former Urana Shire?

Yes: 68.62%

It is clear that the amalgamation was a horrible idea. In the report “The Advantages and Disadvantages of Amalgamation and Federation Council’s Financial Sustainability Journey”⁶ [REDACTED] states:

“The 2016 Corowa Shire proposal to amalgamate with Urana lacked rigor and detail and it is hard to understand how it might have merited serious consideration. Savings of \$41 million over twenty years were never achievable (especially if the Act (1993, NSW) was to be observed). In similar vein, the proposed savings of \$2.6 million detailed by KPMG and the Minister were also beyond the realms of possibility.

Indeed, no rigorous evidence was ever put forward to substantiate the projected savings, and it should have been very obvious to those conducting boundary deliberations that most assumptions were implausible given the experience of Queensland less than a decade earlier (as documented in the extant scholarly literature).

The upshot of this negligence was that the already imposing financial challenges of the Corowa and (to a lesser extent) Urana local government areas were exacerbated by increased costs attendant upon the ill thought-out amalgamation. The community is now faced with the injustice of having to pay for the mistakes of people who ought to have done better – through higher taxes and likely lower services.

Moreover, entire communities have been effectively disenfranchised by the destructive amalgamation and it is difficult to reconcile this fact with the nation’s robust and energetic defence of the institution of democracy abroad.

Federation Council is now left in a rather distressed fiscal state made worse by a significant structural inefficiency. In simple terms, the Council is too large to be run with an acceptable level of technical efficiency. One has only to consider the fact that there are over thirty countries smaller than the local government area to fully comprehend the scale of the appalling error of judgement made in 2016. Indeed, our robust empirical evidence demonstrates that operational expenditure need increased by over twenty percent purely as a result of the ill-advised amalgamation. Sadly, this substantial financial burden was further compounded by imprudent spending at the behest of the former state government – a good proportion of which was approved and executed by the government appointed Administrator.

The matter of financial sustainability at Federation Council could hardly be more serious. Unfortunately, there is no quick fix to the problem and the

⁶ Ibid 2

community is faced with at least a decade of pocketbook pain and fiscal austerity.”

The community has clearly shown that it is against this rate rise by voting out the majority of the council involved, and current council members are calling for de-amalgamation. The council is just refusing to listen to the people.

As the chart below shows amalgamation has been one of the worst things to happen to local governments, it has increased the burden on rate payers with a loss in services to show for it.

Table 5. Summary of the Extant Ex-Post Studies on NSW Amalgamation

	McQuestin, Miyazaki, and Drew (2020)	Drew, McQuestin, and Dollery (2021)	Drew, McQuestin, and Dollery (2023)
Time elapsed since amalgamation	Three full financial years.	Four full financial years.	Five full financial years.
Control Used	All NSW local governments that were not amalgamated.	All NSW local governments that were not amalgamated.	Only the 26 local governments that were originally scheduled for amalgamation but escaped their designated fate.
Key Finding	Amalgamation increased unit costs by an average of 11.2% (significant at the 1% level). Staff spending up 15.2% (1% level).	Amalgamation increased unit costs by an average of 11% (significant at the 1% level)	Amalgamation increased unit costs by an average of 11.1% (significant at the 1% level)

Thus, it is clear that the recklessness of amalgamation architects cost communities dearly. To be precise, unit costs increased on average, across the state, by over 11% *ceteris paribus*. When combined with an ill-conceived four-year rate freeze, this has led to some recent hefty increases to local government taxation as detailed below:

Table 6. SRVs for Amalgamated Councils Since Rate Freeze Lifted

Local Government	Tax Increase Approved	Year Applied
Armidale	58.8% over 3 years	2023-24
Federation	39.2% over 2 years	2023-24
Snowy Monaro	52.48% over 4 years	2023-24
Central Coast	15% temporary for 7 years	2022-23
Snowy Valleys	35.95% over 2 years	2022-23
Armidale	10.5% over 1 year	2021-22
Canterbury-Bankstown	36.34% over 5 years	2021-22
Central Coast	15% temporary for 3 years	2021-22
Cootamundra-Gundagai	53.5% over 4 years	2021-22
Federation	8% over 1 year	2021-22
Georges River	32.6% over 5 years	2021-22

Source IPART (2023)

The amalgamations have been a complete disaster, which are financially untenable.

On top of this if we look at Government Public Information Access by Federation Council, reference 25/700 (Appendix I), we can see that the number of properties with outstanding rates in the Federation council is 1016. Federation Council according to the Valuer General in 2024 only has 7944

properties, meaning at present before the increased rate hikes the council is requesting, 13% of properties can already not afford to pay their rates, this number can only increase with increased rates.

To summarize the people's willingness and ability to pay:

- They have already voted out the majority of councilors who were behind this SRV
- Most think that the 2016 amalgamation was a bad idea and that the rate payers should be compensated by the NSW State government
- That with the current temporary SRV 13% of properties have been unable to pay their rates

There is no willingness or capacity to pay these increased rates.

QUESTION 3 (CRITERION 3) - IN ITS APPLICATION THE COUNCIL OUTLINED HOW IT INTENDED TO ADDRESS HARDSHIP CAUSED BY THE PROPOSED SPECIAL VARIATION. PLEASE COMMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S PLAN.

While the Council has stated its plan, there is nothing stopping any future meeting of the Council demanding payment of all outstanding debts, subjecting people to the loss of their homes.

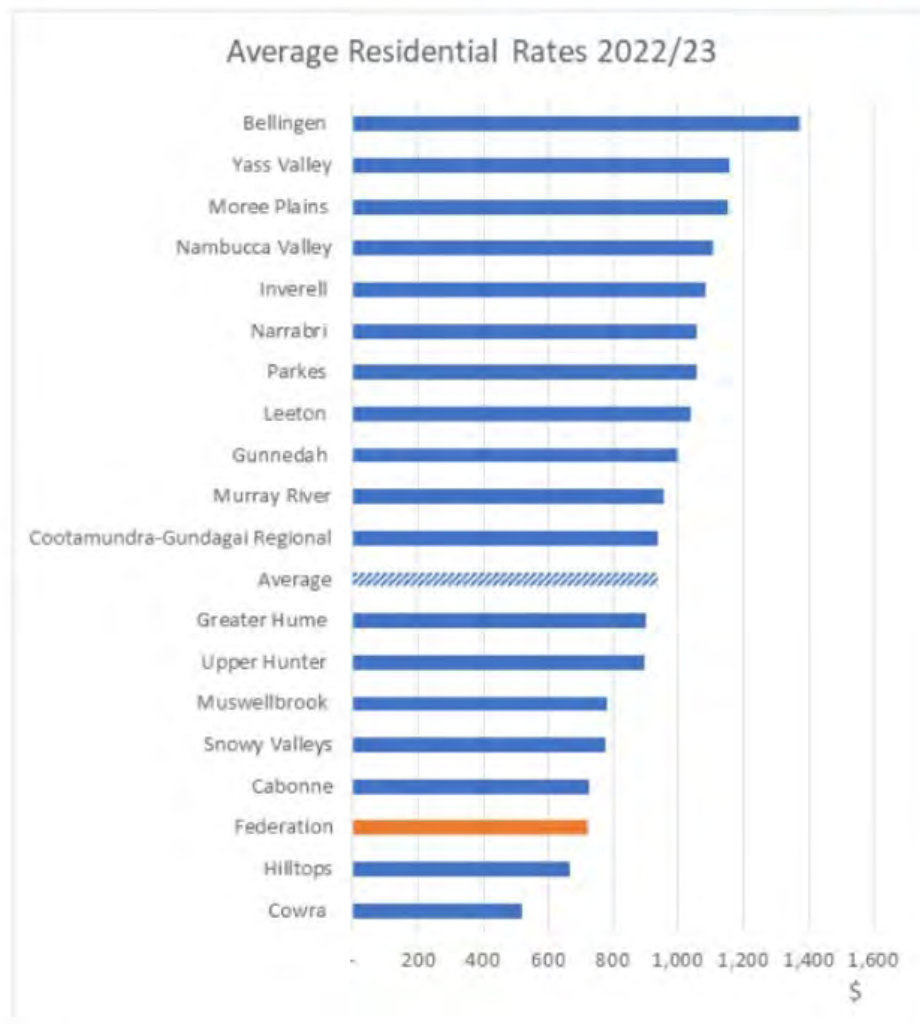
OTHER COMMENTS AND ATTACHMENTS

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THE COUNCIL'S APPLICATION THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE HERE.

GROUP 11 PROBLEMS

There is an oddity in the Councils comparison of Office of Local Government Group 11 data.

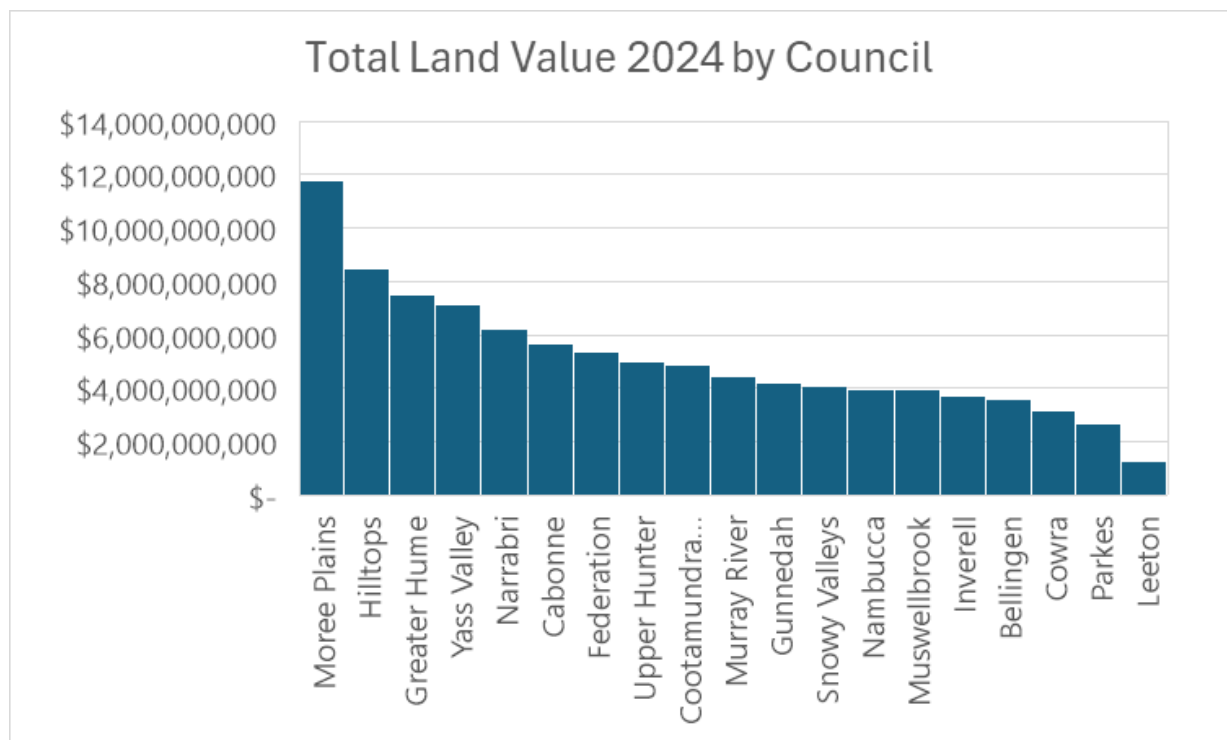
Federation Council Ordinary Council Meeting 26 November 2024



This uses the average rates which vary on land values and not the amount charged by councils.

clearly states in his report⁷ “Average rates are an extremely poor way to measure the relative revenue effort of a rural local government, because of obviously skewed data, and we are surprised that a person purporting to have the requisite skills to assess a boundary process was not aware of this statistical fact (see the YouTube video at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] ‘Why You Shouldn’t Compare Average Rates’).”

The following is the average land value by LGA on 01 July 2024 according to the NSW Valuer General.

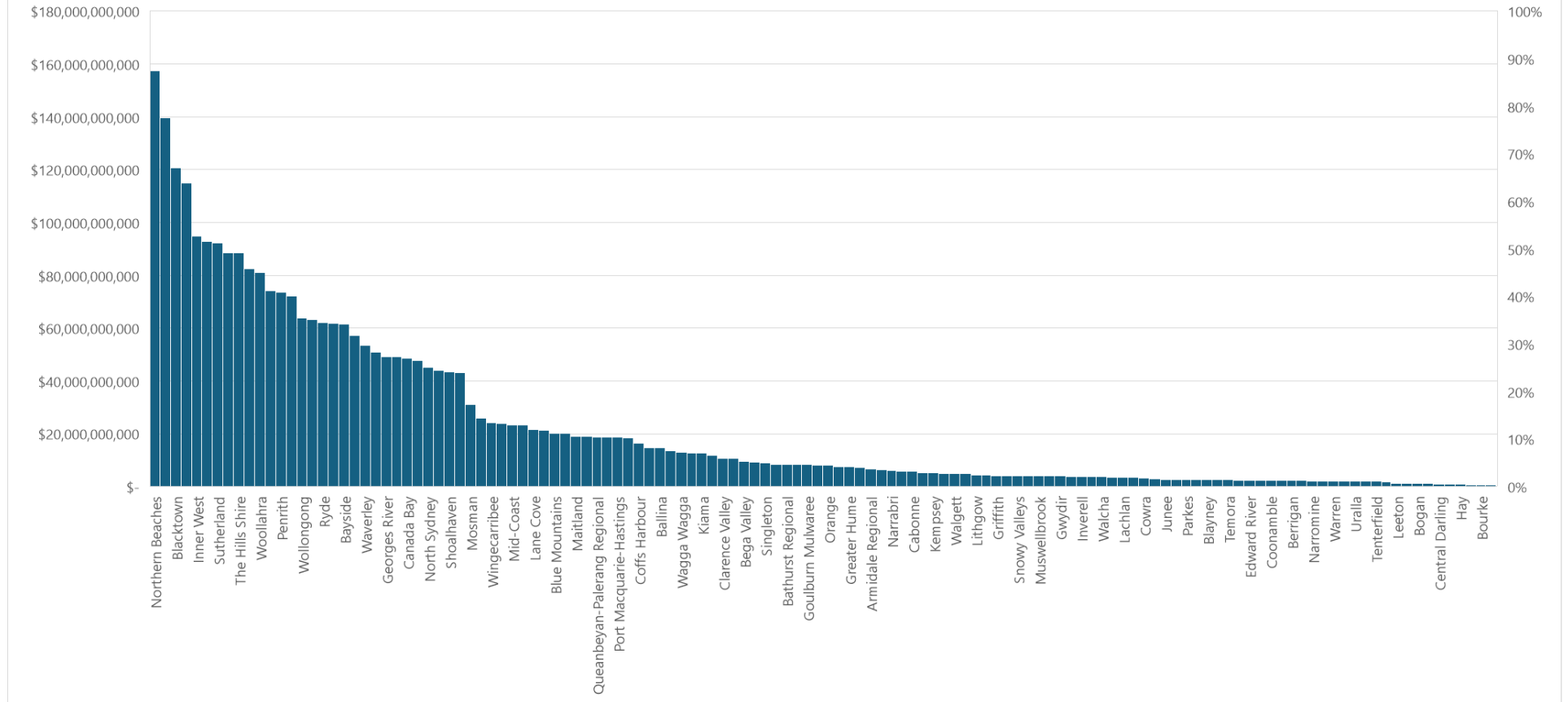


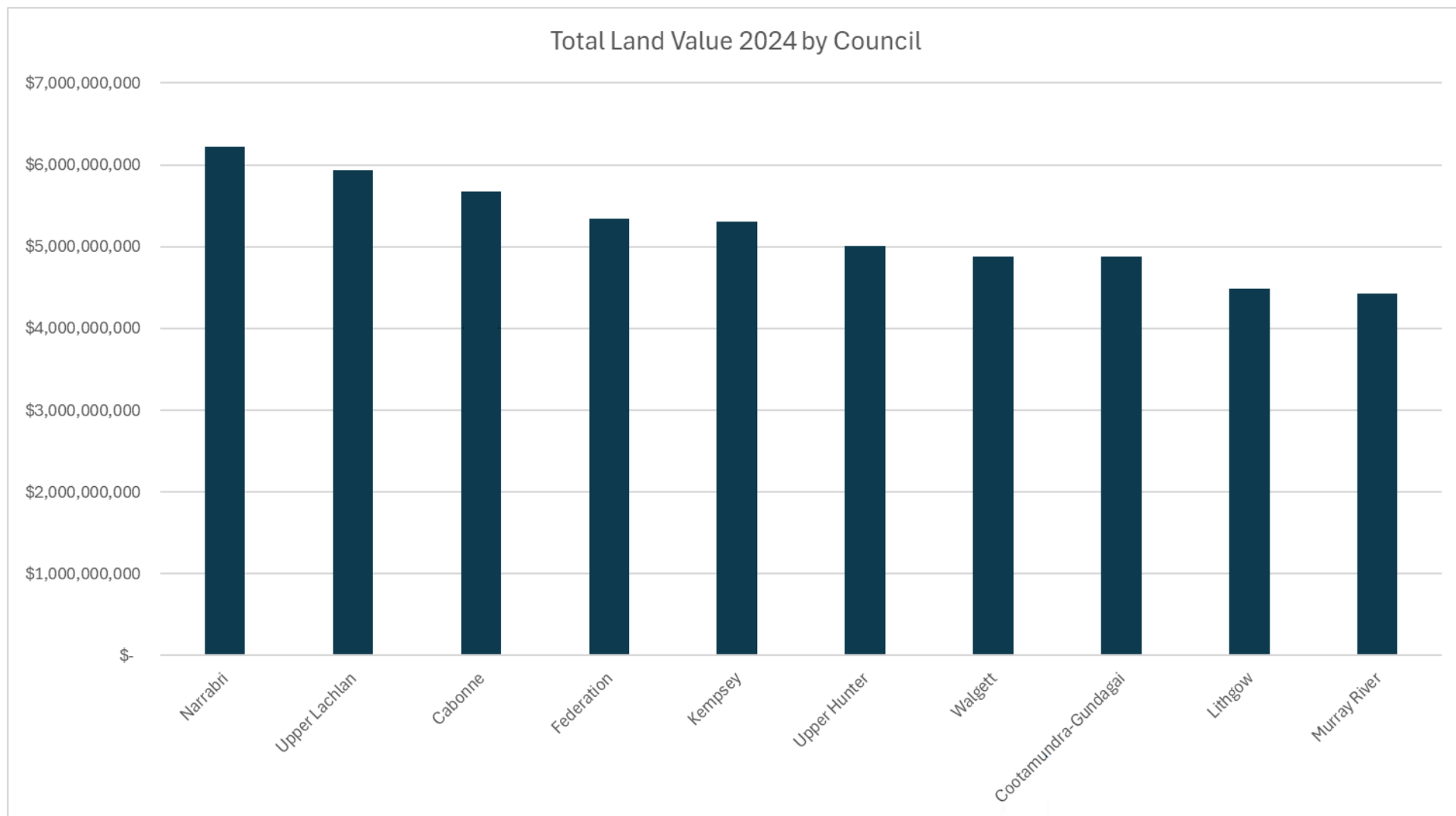
Federation Council has as can be seen the seventh highest total land value out of 19 and the fourth highest residential value with the 8th highest rural land values.

The use of Office of Local Government Group 11 data, is not a valid concept as can be seen. The Total land value ranges from \$11,783,540,880 down to \$1,264,942,150 Office of Local Government Group 11 consists of Rural Agricultural Local Governments of a population ranging from 10001 to 20,000, with no usage of land values, so it is comparing apples and oranges.

⁷ [REDACTED], “The Advantages and Disadvantages of Amalgamation and Federation Council’s Financial Sustainability Journey”, Report

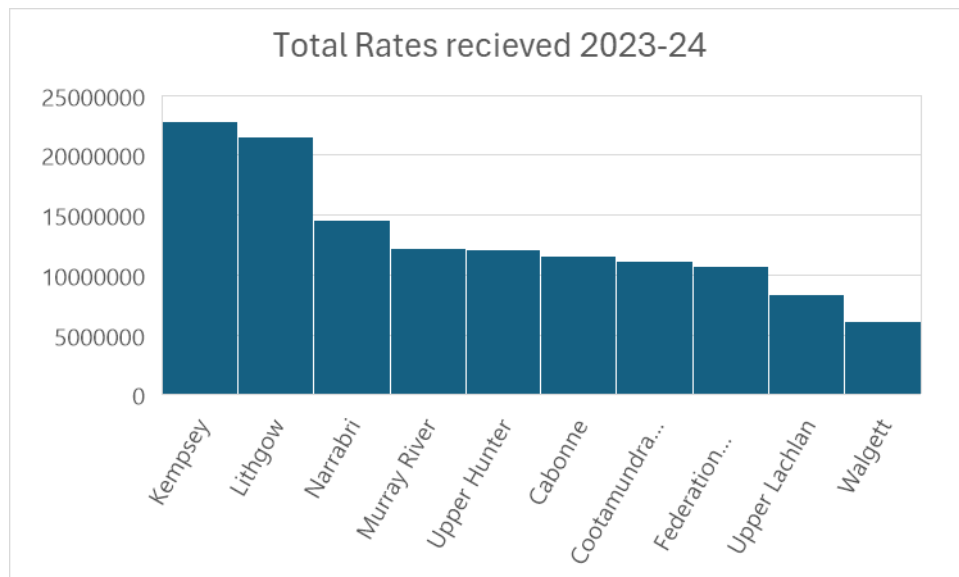
Total Land Value 2024 by Council





As can be seen on the previous page, the councils that are within \$1 billion in land value of Federation council

- Narrabri
- Upper Lachlan
- Cabonne
- Kempsey
- Upper Hunter
- Walgett
- Cootamundra-Gundagai
- Lithgow
- Murray River



The chart above shows the total rates received by these councils, as can be seen the current rates received are greater than those of Upper Lachlan by \$2.3 million with a property value almost identical to Federation Council's and Walgett by \$4.56 million with a total property value slightly lower. Murray River, Upper Hunter, Cabonne and Cootamundra are within \$1.5 million in total revenue of the Federation Council, with Narrabri, Lithgow and Kempsey being between \$3.8 million and \$12.1 million.

This shows that Federation Council rates received are in line with most of the councils in the same approximate land valuations and any additional increase would just be adding burden to rate payers for waste.

RATE EQUITY

As can be seen from the chart below⁸, residential landowners are paying over 50% of the rates while holding just over 30% of the land value and business rates are four times that of farmland rates.

1.5 Rates for each rating category for 2023/24

Rates levied for 2023/24 totalled \$11.1 million as detailed in the following table:

Rate Types	Category	Number of Assessments	Ad Valorem Amount in Cents	Base Rate \$	Land Value (Current)	2023-24 Notional Income Yield
Ordinary	Farmland	1,039	0.1171	\$425.00	\$3,478,455,970	\$4,514,847
Ordinary	Residential	6,379	0.2276	\$425.00	\$1,206,522,390	\$5,457,120
Ordinary	Business	717	0.4926	\$425.00	\$157,840,320	\$1,082,246
Total Rateable Assessments:		8,135	Total Ordinary Rate Yield:			\$11,054,213

Table 2: Ordinary Rate Structure 2024/25

Council	Residential Rate	Farm Business Rate	Non-Farm Business Rate
Federation	0.2839 ad valorem, plus base rate of \$425	0.1461 ad valorem, plus base rate of \$425	0.6145 ad valorem, plus base rate of \$425

In the report⁹ the Professors state that *“It is clear from Table 2 that there is a lack of distributive equity in Federation’s rate system (as readers will see later, this is a feature of most rural councils). Usually, distributive inequality will have arisen over time due to misapprehensions about the distinction between capacity to pay and distributive equity, as well as deeply embedded erroneous conceptions of rates as fee for service. Residential ratepayers are paying almost two-thirds more cents in the dollar for their land as do farm business owners. Non-farm business owners are paying almost three times the rate in the dollar as farm business landowners. Furthermore, it is a fact that most farm and non-farm business owners will get to*

⁸ Federation Council - REVENUE POLICY 2024 – 2025 (incl. Fees and Charges) Reference: 24/13331

⁹ [REDACTED] “Federation Council Capacity to Pay Report”, 2024, pp 8.

export some of their rates to the federal government as a tax deduction, whereas most residential landowners cannot do so (an exception are rental landlords). Thus, the effective local government rate for farm and business ratepayers is considerably less than the numbers presented in the aforementioned table might at first imply.

It is important to resist reading more into these observations than might be warranted. We are not suggesting that the rates of taxation ought to be precisely the same. Nor are we stating that extant practice at Federation is somehow 'wrong'. Nonetheless the data certainly indicates that there may be room for improvement with respect to distributive equity. Accordingly, we recommend that the matter should be investigated but note that doing so might take a year or more because of the need to properly canvass and evaluate the arguments of stakeholders."

Recommendation 1: *"That the General Manager be tasked with further exploring the distributive equity at Federation Council."*

I have been unable to determine if the council has made any progress or debate on this subject despite this being the first recommendation given in this report.

This report also stated **Recommendation 2:** *"Council should review the base rate with a view to either eliminating it entirely or linking it to a specified set of council overhead costs to be calculated annually. Ideally, a decision on this matter should be taken as soon as practicable."*

Again, I am unable to find any record of this being made, given the time frames involved since this publication I may have missed them. Yet as shown in the tables above the Ordinary Rate Structure 2024/25 the council is planning on making this situation worse, adding 0.1219 to non-farm businesses, 0.0563 to residential and only 0.029 to Farm Businesses, as well as failing to remove the \$425 base rate, again going completely against the recommendations of their own experts [REDACTED]

Thank you for your time in this matter.

Mayor at risk of losing his seat after rates tension bubbles up



By Anthony Bunn

September 16 2024 - 4:30pm

1 Comment



Anger at high rate rises in Federation Council has left mayor Pat Bourke and three other incumbent councillors struggling to be re-elected.

Only two sitting councillors, Mulwala builder Andrew Kennedy and Corowa-Rutherglen Football Netball Club secretary Rowena Black, appear guaranteed to be returned after attracting 14.42 per cent and 10.24 per cent respectively.

By contrast, Cr Bourke and his running mate councillor David Fahey are on 5.68 per cent, deputy mayor Shaun Whitechurch has 5.74 per cent and councillor Sally Hughes 5.11 per cent.

Coreen farmer David Bott and former Corowa Shire councillor Derek Schoen, who raised concerns with the council's finances and special rate variations, attracted 12.78 per cent and 10.33 per cent respectively, following all booths being counted.

The Howlong First group is on track for two councillors, having secured nearly 20 per cent of the overall vote.

Cr Bourke was shocked at the turnaround from the previous poll, where his popularity enabled him to carry Cr Fahey onto the council.

"Two years and nine months ago I had about 22 per cent of the vote and I've dropped down to five per cent, something dramatic has happened," Cr Bourke said.

Asked if he saw himself as a scapegoat for frustration with the rates situation, Cr Bourke said yes before adding he stood by the moves.

"For me to stand up as mayor and not support the special rate variation, particularly when we proved the affordability was there and we had a good hardship policy, I wouldn't have been doing my job," he said.

"I made the decision and it's cost me and I'm happy to take that on the chin."

Cr Bourke will be relying on postal votes to win a final seat on council, with Cr Whitechurch and candidates David Harrison (6.20 per cent) and Richard Nixon (6.85 per cent) split by around 60 votes.

Cr Kennedy said it was a "bit disappointing" to see such a low vote for Cr Bourke "because he's done a lot of work".

He ruled out a tilt at mayor.

"I don't think so, I think my work commitments stop me from being the mayor," Cr Kennedy said.

"We run a building company with 100 staff on wages."

Mr Bott said it would be a "bit arrogant" for him to seek the top job, but nominated Mr Schoen as a contender, based on his leadership with Beyond Blue and the NSW Rural Assistance Authority.

Mr Schoen said: "If the support is there I would look at being mayor".

"I think we need someone strong enough to carry through the reforms the council needs."

On the economic front, Mr Schoen said "we're almost committed to the rates variation because of the dire situation the council is in but I think we're going to have to restructure the organisation so this doesn't happen every three or four years".

Source: <https://www.bordermail.com.au/story/8765043/anger-at-rate-hikes-shakes-up-federation-council-election/>

Appendix B

FEDERATION COUNCIL

REFERENCE: CG:RH - 16/30687
CONTACT: Kristy Kay

9 December 2016

The Director
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)
PO Box Q290,
SYDNEY NSW 2000
localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: SPECIAL RATE VARIATION NOTIFICATION - FEDERATION COUNCIL

I would like to provide formal notification that Federation Council wishes to consider applying for a multi-year special rate variation (SRV) under section 508A.

As a newly created Council, we are aware that the guidelines do not currently permit us to apply for a special rate variation.

Federation Council does not support this current Policy of the NSW Government which prohibits special rate variations for newly amalgamated Councils and we are hopeful the Government's stance on this will change.

Federation Council was formed through the amalgamation of Corowa Shire Council, who had some of the lowest general rates in NSW and Urana Shire, who were previously the smallest Council in NSW (very small population but large area).

The purpose of our proposed SRV would be to fund the capital and ongoing running costs of a new Swimming Pool in Corowa. It is proposed that this SRV would only apply to residents located within the township of Corowa.

Council has recently completed extensive community consultation in respect to the future development options for the Corowa Swimming Pool. This included over 1,000 community surveys (phone and online) with strong feedback provided that the community wishes to support paying more in their rates in order for the desired facility to be built.

Subject to the release of new SRV guidelines which will allow our application, we will submit a formal application to proceed with this request.

If further information is required prior to this, please contact Council's Director Corporate and Community, Kristy Kay on [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]
CHRIS GILLARD
GENERAL MANAGER

The former Corowa and Urana Shires were amalgamated on 12 May 2016. Federation Council is now legally responsible for all activities, assets and liabilities of the former Councils.

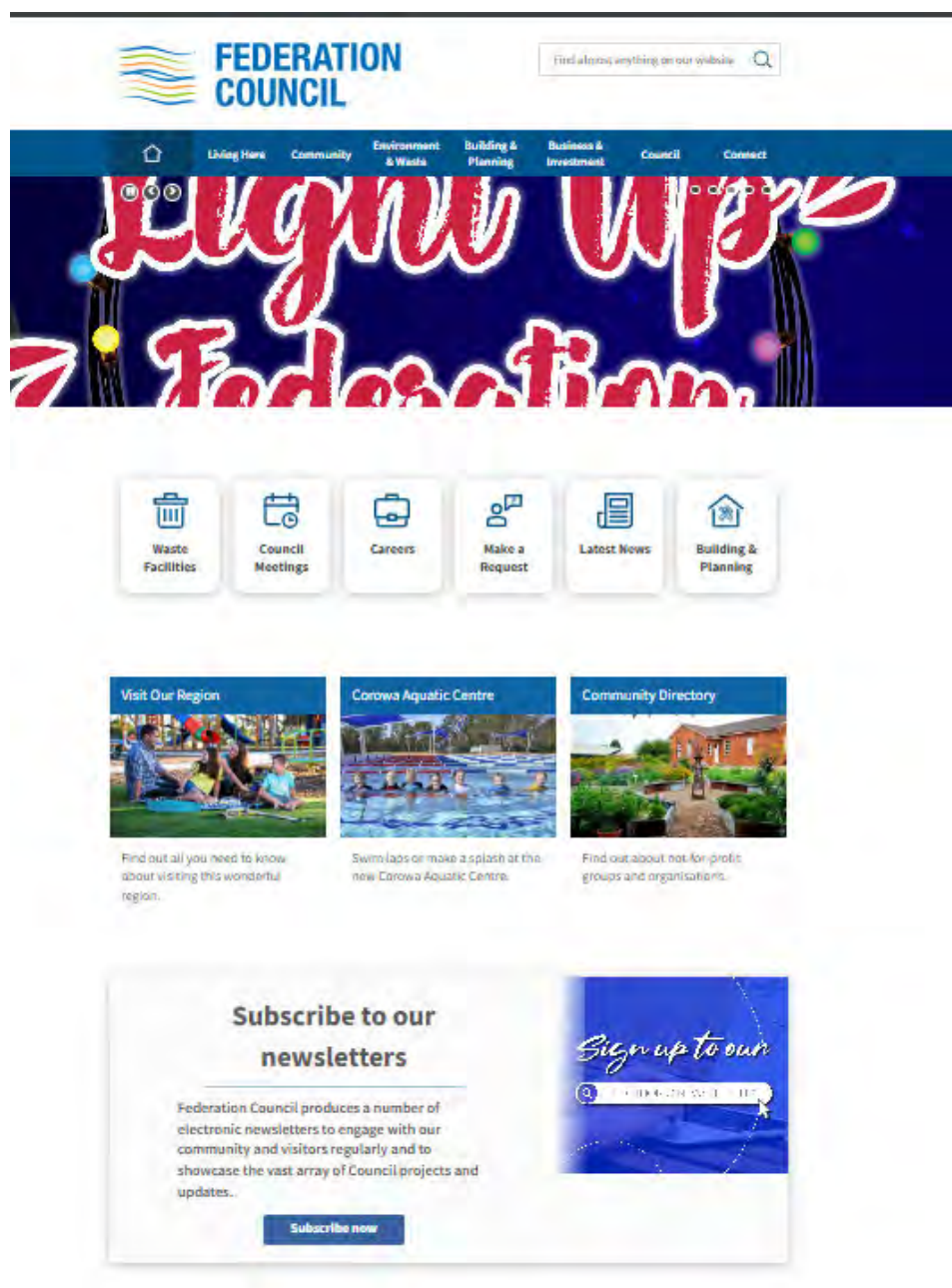
FEDERATION COUNCIL	ABN 30 762 048 084	All correspondence to be addressed to the General Manager
PO Box 77 Corowa NSW 2646		
Corowa (02) 6033 8999	Urana (02) 6930 9100	Email council@federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au
www.corowa.nsw.gov.au	www.urana.nsw.gov.au	

Appendix C

The following are copies of the Federation Council Website
(<https://www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au/Home>)

taken on the 16th of November 2024.

The Home Page.



Home Page banners as at 19 November 2024



A page about having your say about the future of the Federation Council

The screenshot shows the Federation Council website. At the top is the logo with the text 'FEDERATION COUNCIL' and a search bar with the placeholder text 'Find almost anything on our website'. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: Home, Living Here, Community, Environment & Waste, Building & Planning, Business & Investment, Council, and Connect. The main content area is titled 'Have your Say' and includes a paragraph about community engagement, a paragraph about the value of community information, and a paragraph encouraging participation. To the right of the text is a green graphic with the words 'HAVE YOUR SAY'. Below the text are two columns of content. The left column is titled 'Have your Say for Future Federation' and contains the text 'Welcome to the Future Federation 2040 Community Strategic Plan project!'. The right column is titled 'Proposed Drive Through Bottleshop Howlong' and contains the text 'Federation Council hosted a community meeting to discuss the proposed Drive Thru Bottle Shop (86-96 Sturt Street, Howlong) development application DA 10.2023.210.1 on Tuesday, November 12.'

FEDERATION COUNCIL

Find almost anything on our website

Home / Connect / Have your Say

Have your Say

Federation Council engages with the community to understand important issues and consider improvements we can make to ensure our residents' voices are heard.

Information obtained from the community provides Council with access to a wider source of information, as well as potential solutions to local issues. Engaging with Council also allows us to provide the community with information on why decisions were made and any related limitations or opportunities that may exist within these decisions.

We encourage you to work with us to help deliver the best possible outcomes for the community.

Have your Say for Future Federation

Welcome to the Future Federation 2040 Community Strategic Plan project!

Proposed Drive Through Bottleshop Howlong

Federation Council hosted a community meeting to discuss the proposed Drive Thru Bottle Shop (86-96 Sturt Street, Howlong) development application DA 10.2023.210.1 on Tuesday, November 12.

A page on the Future Federation 2040 consultation.


[Home](#) / [Council launches 'Future Federation 2040' consultation](#)

Council launches 'Future Federation 2040' consultation

Published on 28 October 2024

Federation Council is excited to launch the Future Federation 2040 consultation, which will shape the future of our community.

Through the Future Federation 2040 project, Council will guide the community through important discussions on the main aspirations and priorities for our local government area for the next 20 years and document these in a Community Strategic Plan.



Every local government area in New South Wales must work with their community to develop a Community Strategic Plan. This stems from the central assumption that all council planning should originate from a sound understanding of the community's expectations around priorities.

Federation Council Mayor, Cr Cheryl Cook said this is a great opportunity to share your ideas and influence our future.

"It's your chance to envisage what you, your friends, family and the wider community will need to grow and thrive towards 2040," Mayor Cook said.

Mayor Cook shared that she looked forward to collaborating with the community on this critical project.

The Future Federation 2040, community consultation will commence with a range of activities across the local government area, including a survey which can be completed [online here](#).

"I encourage everyone to get involved during October, November, and December and to have their say," she said.

"There will be several opportunities for people to conveniently share their thoughts, including a survey, pop ups, and community workshops. We all have aspirations for a better future. Future Federation 2040 allows us to consider what we love about where we live, what we'd like our future to look like, and how we will get there. Together, we can document a future vision that respects our unique local area and lifestyle."

Future Federation 2040 asks the local community some key questions so that we can review our Community Strategic Plan and makes sure it is an accurate representation of our future.

Council has a custodial role in initiating and preparing the Community Strategic Plan, but it is a community plan. Many partners, such as state agencies and community groups, will be responsible for its implementation. The Community Strategic Plan ensures the whole community is working towards a shared vision for a better future. For more information on how to get involved, visit the [Council's Future Federation 2040 page](#).

Tagged as:

[Media Releases](#)

A page related to the Community strategic plans and pop ups.

The screenshot shows the Federation Council website. At the top is the Federation Council logo with the text 'FEDERATION COUNCIL' and a search bar with the placeholder text 'Find almost anything on our website'. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: Home, Living Here, Community, Environment & Waste, Building & Planning, Business & Investment, Council, and Connect. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: Home / Connect / Have your Say / Have your Say for Future Federation. The title of the page is 'Have your Say for Future Federation'. The text welcomes visitors to the Future Federation 2040 Community Strategic Plan project and explains that every four years, each New South Wales Council must work with their community to develop a Community Strategic Plan. It states that the council is currently reviewing its plan and that having a plan ensures that council planning originates from a sound understanding of the community's expectations. A graphic on the right says 'Federation Council is reviewing our COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN' with a link 'Find out more about our plans'. The text continues to explain the council's custodial role and the importance of community input. It lists key questions being asked and provides ways to get involved: completing an online survey or attending a community pop up or workshop. A button labeled 'Complete the online survey' is present. The section 'Community Pop up or Workshop' lists several events: Pop Up at Howlong Bakery (Wednesday, November 6, 10am-12 noon), Workshop at Howlong Golf Resort (Wednesday, November 6, 1pm-2.30pm), Workshop at the Urana Council Office 'Council Chamber' (Wednesday, November 6, 6pm-7.30pm), Pop Up at Corowa Memorial Plaza (Wednesday, November 20, 10am-12 noon), Workshop at Club Corowa 'Miss Birdie Room' (Wednesday, November 20, 1pm-2.30pm), Workshop at Club Corowa 'Miss Birdie Room' (Wednesday, November 20, 6pm-7.30pm), Pop Up at Mulwala Bakery (Thursday, November 21, 10am-12 noon), Workshop at Mulwala Library and Resource Centre (Thursday, November 21, 1pm-2.30pm), and Workshop Online (Thursday, November 21, 6pm-7.30pm).

FEDERATION COUNCIL

Find almost anything on our website

Home / Connect / Have your Say / Have your Say for Future Federation

Have your Say for Future Federation

Welcome to the Future Federation 2040 Community Strategic Plan project!

Every four years, each New South Wales Council must work with their community to develop a Community Strategic Plan to document the community's aspirations and priorities. We are currently reviewing our Community Strategic Plan. Having a Community Strategic Plan ensures that our council planning originates from a sound understanding of the community's expectations around priorities.

Council has a custodial role in initiating and preparing the Community Strategic Plan, but it is a community plan. Many partners, such as state agencies and community groups, will be responsible for its implementation. The Community Strategic Plan ensures the whole community can contribute and work towards a shared vision for a better future.

Key questions we're asking you as part of the Future Federation 2040 consultation include where we are now, where we want to be in ten years, how we will get there, and how we will know if we've been successful.

There are plenty of ways that you can get involved:

- Complete the online survey.
- Attend a community pop up or workshop.

Future Federation 2040 allows us to consider what we love about where we live, what we'd like our future to look like, and how we will get there.

Let's work together to capture a future vision that respects our unique local area and lifestyle.

Complete the online survey

Community Pop up or Workshop

Attend a community pop up or workshop near you to provide your valuable feedback to shape our future:

- Pop Up at Howlong Bakery: Wednesday, November 6 from 10am - 12 noon.
- Workshop at Howlong Golf Resort: Wednesday, November 6 from 1pm - 2.30pm.
- Workshop at the Urana Council Office 'Council Chamber': Wednesday, November 6 from 6pm - 7.30pm.
- Pop Up at Corowa Memorial Plaza: Wednesday, November 20 from 10am - 12 noon.
- Workshop at Club Corowa 'Miss Birdie Room': Wednesday, November 20 from 1pm - 2.30pm.
- Workshop at Club Corowa 'Miss Birdie Room': Wednesday, November 20 from 6pm - 7.30pm.
- Pop Up at Mulwala Bakery: Thursday, November 21 from 10am - 12 noon.
- Workshop at Mulwala Library and Resource Centre: Thursday, November 21 from 1pm - 2.30pm.
- Workshop Online: Thursday, November 21 from 6pm - 7.30pm.

A Facebook post by the Federation Council

**Federation Council**
4 November at 12:00 · 🌐

👏 Have your say and influence our future!

Federation Council is reviewing our Community Strategic Plan. Please tell us what you think will improve our community as we look forward to 2040.

👉 Complete the Future Federation survey <https://ow.ly/cRyo50TXKFU>, or attend a community workshop or pop up near you.... **See more**



COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Pop-up Sessions:

- Pop Up at Howlong Bakery: Wednesday, November 6 from 10am - 12 noon.
- Pop Up at Corowa Memorial Plaza: Wednesday, November 20 from 10am - 12 noon.
- Pop Up at Mulwala Bakery: Thursday, November 21 from 10am - 12 noon.

Workshops Sessions:

- Workshop at Howlong Golf Resort: Wednesday, November 6 from 1pm - 2.30pm.
- Workshop at the Urana Council Office 'Council Chamber': Wednesday, November 6 from 6pm - 7.30pm.
- Workshop at Club Corowa 'Miss Birdie Room': Wednesday, November 20 from 1pm - 2.30pm.
- Workshop at Club Corowa 'Miss Birdie Room': Wednesday, November 20 from 6pm - 7.30pm.
- Workshop at Mulwala Library and Resource Centre: Thursday, November 21 from 1pm - 2.30pm.
- Workshop Online: Thursday, November 21 from 6pm - 7.30pm.

THIS IS FUTURE
FEDERATION
2040



 Like  Comment  Send  Share

A page out of the November 2024 Federation Council Newsletter, with no mention of the Special Rate Variation anywhere within it.

FEDERATION COUNCIL NEWS

HAVE YOUR SAY FOR FUTURE FEDERATION

Federation Council is reviewing our

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Influence our future! Find out more.

Welcome to the Future Federation 2040 Community Strategic Plan project!

Every four years, each New South Wales Council must work with their community to develop a Community Strategic Plan to document the community's aspirations and priorities. We are currently reviewing our Community Strategic Plan. Having a Community Strategic Plan ensures that our council planning originates from a sound understanding of the community's expectations around priorities.

Council has a custodial role in initiating and preparing the Community Strategic Plan, but it is a community plan. Many partners, such as state agencies and community groups, will be responsible for its implementation. The Community Strategic Plan ensures the whole community can contribute and work towards a shared vision for a better future.

Key questions we're asking you as part of the Future Federation 2040 consultation include where we are now, where we want to be in ten years, how we will get there, and how we will know if we've been successful.

There are plenty of ways that you can get involved:

- Complete the online survey.
- Attend a community pop up or workshop.

Future Federation 2040 allows us to consider what we love about where we live, what we'd like our future to look like, and how we will get there.

Let's work together to capture a future vision that respects our unique local area and lifestyle.

Community Pop up or Workshop:

- Pop Up at Corowa Memorial Plaza: Wednesday, November 20 from 10am - 12 noon.
- Workshop at Club Corowa 'Miss Birdie Room': Wednesday, November 20 from 1pm - 2.30pm.
- Workshop at Club Corowa 'Miss Birdie Room': Wednesday, November 20 from 6pm - 7.30pm.
- Pop Up at Mulwala Bakery: Thursday, November 21 from 10am - 12 noon.
- Workshop at Mulwala Library and Resource Centre: Thursday, November 21 from 1pm - 2.30pm.
- Workshop Online: Thursday, November 21 from 6pm - 7.30pm.

Complete the survey and find out more about pop-up and workshops on Council's website.



www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au

11



Leaflet titled "COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN". It features a large green stylized 'M' logo with a photo of a community event. A green circle with the text "HAVE YOUR SAY!" is overlaid on the logo. Below the logo, it says "Federation Council is reviewing our". The main title "COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN" is in large green and black letters. A green button says "Scan the QR Code for more information". Below this is a QR code. Text below the QR code says "This is a great opportunity to influence our future. Tell us what you, your friends, family and the wider community will need in the future." At the bottom is the Federation Council logo and the text "THIS IS FUTURE FEDERATION 2040".

Have your say!

Federation Council is reviewing our

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Scan the QR Code for more information



This is a great opportunity to influence our future. Tell us what you, your friends, family and the wider community will need in the future.

FEDERATION COUNCIL

THIS IS FUTURE FEDERATION 2040



Leaflet titled "Influence our Future". It has a white background with green text. The title is in green. The text explains the Community Strategic Plan and the survey period. A green button says "Scan here to complete the Future Federation 2040 online survey." Below this is a QR code. At the bottom is a large green stylized 'M' logo with a photo of a community event. Text at the bottom says "FEDERATION COUNCIL" and "THIS IS FUTURE FEDERATION 2040".

Influence our Future

The Community Strategic Plan is a shared vision of what the community aspires to see in our local government area in the future. It's reviewed every four years to align with your aspirations and priorities.

Between 28 October and 6 December 2024, we're listening to you.

Please tell us what you think will improve our community as we look forward to 2040.

Scan here to complete the Future Federation 2040 online survey.



FEDERATION COUNCIL

THIS IS FUTURE FEDERATION 2040

Community Strategic Plan

When we examine the Community Strategic Plan, the only thing mentioned after the election, it contains 4 mentions of council rates these are:

Page 13.

2. Council control, which relates to a Council's areas of core service provision and other statutory responsibilities. This includes roads, rates and waste management, as well as a range of governance and planning activities.

Page 20

Our Priorities—Well Governed Federation

Strong civic leadership and governance supporting equity across communities and effective communication with residents.

Our community places a high value on having the solid foundations for strong leadership, including in particular, extensive communication and consultation with residents, rates and fees that are in line with community needs, equitable servicing of all areas, good governance and administration, operational efficiency and effectiveness to enable us to be resilient and responsive to change.



Page 25

2. 5.1 Ensure rates and fees are in line with community needs N=43

Page 36

Objective	More / Less focus next 10 years	Areas of community importance	Council's Role
5.1 Ensure rates and fees are in line with community needs	More	Community awareness and consultation in setting rates & fees	Control

*Emphasis on the word “rates” added by search.

It contains no mention of Special Rate Variations.

In the week before Christmas the December January Newsletter was delivered containing:

FEDERATION COUNCIL NEWS

COUNCILLORS ENDORSE TO PROGRESS WORK ON SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROJECT

SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROJECT 2024-2025

Federation Council has resolved to endorse the progress of work required for an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a 69.94% permanent Special Rate Variation (SRV) over two years commencing 1 July 2025.

It is important to note that these increases effectively include the temporary 19% increase applied in 2023/24 and temporary 17% applied in 2024/25.

The motion put to Council's November Council meeting endorsed the updated 10 year Long Term Financial Plan to be placed on Council's website and public exhibition seeking community feedback for a period of 28 days. Council also adopted the recommended changes to the Delivery Program 2022-2026, and for the updated Delivery Program 2022-2026 to be placed on Council's website and public exhibition seeking community feedback for a period of 28 days.

www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au

Council resolved to continue to explore opportunities for financial initiatives through cost containment strategies, productivity improvements and revenue opportunities.

Federation Council has been on a financial improvement journey since it was formed in May 2016 from the merger of Corowa Shire Council and Urana Shire Council.

There has been community engagement on a future Special Rate Variation since mid 2021. Feedback from IPART in June 2023 detailed improvements that could be made to Council's community engagement around the proposed increase to general rates, with improvements since implemented. Comprehensive community engagement was undertaken in May 2024 and July 2024 on the need for the proposed SRV increase and the impact that it would have on ratepayers and the ability to renew assets that are important to the community.

Residents are encouraged to view the SRV project information available on Council's website or scan the QR code below.



Banners on the Federation Council Homepage
(<https://www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au/Home>) as at 1 January 2025



Hidden in the website (<https://www.federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au/Living-Here/Rates/Special-Rate-Variation-Project-24-25>) is the following:

Special Rate Variation Project 24-25

We're working on a project to increase rates – here is why:

To support our community's lifestyle, Federation Council provides a comprehensive range of community and library services, events, venues, public spaces and parks, as well as sport and recreation facilities. Our strong community spirit is forged from a comfortable and relaxed lifestyle and a willingness to nurture and support residents, local and regional businesses and visitors.

Council provides a range of services to local residents, business and industry, developers and investors as well as people visiting the region. We cater for a diverse range of community needs and encourage environmentally acceptable development in the region.

For many years now, Federation Council has been on a financial sustainability journey. Council, like many other NSW Councils is faced with the challenge of making sure we have enough money to continue to deliver the large range of services we provide and to look after our infrastructure into the future – things like roads, footpaths, bridges, stormwater drains, parks, libraries, community buildings and swimming pools – and other legislated and non-legislated services. We know that our community values the services we provide and places a high priority on maintenance and renewal of our Council's infrastructure when it is needed, so the current trend of our service delivery and asset costs exceeding our income needs to change.

In February 2023, Council lodged an application with IPART to increase general income above the rate cap. In May 2023, Council was granted a two-year temporary rate increase of 19% in year one (2023/24) and 17% in year two (2024/25). Council had requested a general rate increase of 19% for 2023/24, with 17%, 14% and 10% for the following three years and for the increases to remain in the rate base, (not be temporary), and reverting to the ordinary rate peg for 2027/28 onwards. Following Council's Independent Review into ***The Advantages and Disadvantages of Amalgamation and Federation Council's Financial Sustainability Journey Report***, as per recommendation 75: an appropriate expert has been engaged to work with Council from February 2024 onwards to progress through the substantial list of tasks that need to be done prior to applying for a permanent SV.



Professor Joseph Drew of the University of Newcastle is leading this project and is supported by Professor Ferreira and Professor Miyazaki. Professor Drew attended meetings with stakeholder groups in May 2024, and hosted a series of public meetings to seek feedback on a future SV in July 2024.

At the November 2024 meeting of Council, Councillors resolved to endorse the progress of work required for an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a 69.94% permanent Special Rate Variation (SRV) over two years commencing 1 July 2025.

It is important to note that these increases effectively include the temporary 19% increase applied in 2023/24 and temporary 17% applied in 2024/25.

The motion put to Council's November Council meeting endorsed the updated 10 year Long Term Financial Plan to be placed on Council's website and public exhibition seeking community feedback for a period of 28 days. Council also adopted the recommended changes to the Delivery Program 2022-2026, and for the updated Delivery Program 2022-2026 to be placed on Council's website and public exhibition seeking community feedback for a period of 28 days. Council resolved to continue to explore opportunities for financial initiatives through cost containment strategies, productivity improvements and revenue opportunities. The final application will be presented to Council at the January 2025 extraordinary meeting for consideration. Further updates will be provided to residents and interested stakeholders as this project continues to progress.

Residents are also encouraged to [sign up](#) to Council's electronic mail out list to stay up to date on this project.

Appendix D

Land Values July 2024 by the NSW Valuer General

Council	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Rural	Other	Total
Northern Beaches	\$ 138,600,773,569	\$ 5,629,395,260	\$ 3,047,256,123	\$ 4,468,998,160	\$ 5,607,739,154	\$ 157,354,162,266
City of Sydney	\$ 85,982,014,618	\$ 48,236,094,481	\$ 1,552,959,100		\$ 3,760,749,887	\$ 139,531,818,086
Blacktown	\$ 96,236,455,863	\$ 4,993,295,941	\$ 15,401,669,760	\$ 2,044,450,330	\$ 1,892,918,456	\$ 120,568,790,350
Canterbury-Bankstown	\$ 97,458,849,340	\$ 5,329,063,264	\$ 10,776,895,740	\$ 3,816,370	\$ 1,234,365,338	\$ 114,802,990,052
Inner West	\$ 81,723,346,171	\$ 7,658,377,904	\$ 3,957,537,580		\$ 1,332,391,220	\$ 94,671,652,875
Central Coast	\$ 77,322,873,501	\$ 2,807,270,345	\$ 2,747,047,670	\$ 2,570,739,970	\$ 7,337,633,072	\$ 92,785,564,558
Sutherland	\$ 74,086,380,570	\$ 4,717,170,820	\$ 2,452,465,031		\$ 10,904,105,062	\$ 92,160,121,483
Parramatta	\$ 75,474,789,954	\$ 4,524,789,922	\$ 7,056,049,059		\$ 1,566,154,065	\$ 88,621,783,000
The Hills Shire	\$ 71,603,613,773	\$ 4,108,459,096	\$ 1,238,545,000	\$ 2,271,543,064	\$ 9,331,987,940	\$ 88,554,148,873
Ku-ring-gai	\$ 79,074,429,158	\$ 1,455,889,100			\$ 1,971,928,230	\$ 82,502,246,488
Woollahra	\$ 77,911,683,712	\$ 2,267,035,390			\$ 988,526,030	\$ 81,167,245,132
Liverpool	\$ 51,747,618,123	\$ 7,797,568,913	\$ 8,095,326,740	\$ 5,165,900,501	\$ 1,314,074,744	\$ 74,120,489,021

Penrith	\$ 43,436,116,040	\$ 5,845,315,900	\$ 13,294,166,640	\$ 8,236,980,560	\$ 2,731,271,573	\$ 73,543,850,713
Randwick	\$ 64,629,960,320	\$ 3,501,982,030	\$ 950,334,900	\$ 5,160,000	\$ 3,113,313,560	\$ 72,200,750,810
Wollongong	\$ 54,264,509,928	\$ 3,462,798,098	\$ 3,138,038,080	\$ 260,694,040	\$ 2,645,738,272	\$ 63,771,778,418
Cumberland	\$ 47,639,041,244	\$ 5,666,860,621	\$ 9,317,261,050		\$ 683,622,774	\$ 63,306,785,689
Ryde	\$ 57,750,402,257	\$ 2,977,269,851	\$ 412,842,600		\$ 822,465,500	\$ 61,962,980,208
Hornsby	\$ 52,603,683,769	\$ 1,432,615,571	\$ 1,050,856,496	\$ 5,829,309,831	\$ 964,595,130	\$ 61,881,060,797
Bayside	\$ 50,915,340,553	\$ 4,875,765,840	\$ 4,510,609,400	\$ 9,040,000	\$ 1,282,686,760	\$ 61,593,442,553
Fairfield	\$ 43,815,079,900	\$ 984,758,197	\$ 8,699,409,290	\$ 3,040,741,180	\$ 792,316,026	\$ 57,332,304,593
Waverley	\$ 49,435,597,680	\$ 3,207,750,600			\$ 852,132,500	\$ 53,495,480,780
Lake Macquarie	\$ 45,075,106,084	\$ 1,405,763,160	\$ 1,558,139,711	\$ 1,300,216,700	\$ 1,431,241,002	\$ 50,770,466,657
Georges River	\$ 45,652,936,100	\$ 1,572,155,000	\$ 1,310,408,960		\$ 722,773,090	\$ 49,258,273,150
Willoughby	\$ 42,633,545,334	\$ 3,586,430,598	\$ 2,226,084,543		\$ 681,014,830	\$ 49,127,075,305
Canada Bay	\$ 47,294,023,336	\$ 920,948,500	\$ 86,089,000		\$ 393,727,321	\$ 48,694,788,157
Campbelltown	\$ 37,161,690,937	\$ 1,315,180,770	\$ 6,891,435,400	\$ 502,689,880	\$ 1,967,611,392	\$ 47,838,608,379
North Sydney	\$ 40,912,851,127	\$ 3,388,300,241	\$ 28,508,000		\$ 778,751,557	\$ 45,108,410,925
Camden	\$ 31,866,794,728	\$ 2,616,770,460	\$ 3,002,467,600	\$ 6,042,470,170	\$ 386,439,230	\$ 43,914,942,188

Shoalhaven	\$ 32,781,699,620	\$ 943,773,710	\$ 476,073,000	\$ 7,104,833,645	\$ 2,228,191,750	\$ 43,534,571,725
Newcastle	\$ 37,639,831,736	\$ 1,818,914,626	\$ 2,451,896,265		\$ 1,318,659,052	\$ 43,229,301,679
Mosman	\$ 29,200,607,212	\$ 1,437,349,439			\$ 460,086,290	\$ 31,098,042,941
Tweed	\$ 19,469,454,331	\$ 1,077,358,239	\$ 405,307,330	\$ 4,171,168,930	\$ 679,758,966	\$ 25,803,047,796
Wingecarribee	\$ 13,819,160,720	\$ 722,621,250	\$ 600,729,910	\$ 2,675,996,400	\$ 6,313,590,450	\$ 24,132,098,730
Strathfield	\$ 20,255,968,082	\$ 750,242,980	\$ 2,499,823,260		\$ 323,663,186	\$ 23,829,697,508
Mid-Coast	\$ 15,211,690,936	\$ 515,271,160	\$ 267,400,660	\$ 6,741,180,670	\$ 678,849,694	\$ 23,414,393,120
Hawkesbury	\$ 11,023,169,070	\$ 618,005,830	\$ 1,235,318,000	\$ 10,198,573,237	\$ 212,451,350	\$ 23,287,517,487
Lane Cove	\$ 20,027,466,408	\$ 624,640,318	\$ 590,927,111		\$ 405,525,120	\$ 21,648,558,957
Wollondilly	\$ 10,789,303,120	\$ 284,448,760	\$ 483,333,000	\$ 8,248,260,520	\$ 1,406,074,924	\$ 21,211,420,324
Blue Mountains	\$ 18,536,050,270	\$ 424,615,782	\$ 190,165,370	\$ 343,405,750	\$ 788,131,505	\$ 20,282,368,677
Byron	\$ 11,394,959,560	\$ 1,319,325,100	\$ 807,898,350	\$ 4,544,947,060	\$ 2,020,811,210	\$ 20,087,941,280
Maitland	\$ 15,431,877,869	\$ 1,246,042,900	\$ 138,657,201	\$ 1,893,442,156	\$ 290,460,204	\$ 19,000,480,330
Shellharbour	\$ 16,958,368,010	\$ 481,923,320	\$ 529,793,600	\$ 470,215,840	\$ 489,445,550	\$ 18,929,746,320
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional	\$ 13,428,822,448	\$ 568,457,800	\$ 825,366,600	\$ 3,589,729,920	\$ 376,645,540	\$ 18,789,022,308

Burwood	\$ 18,039,992,666	\$ 686,312,000			\$ 39,322,990	\$ 18,765,627,656
Port Macquarie-Hastings	\$ 14,603,912,800	\$ 710,059,500	\$ 460,394,770	\$ 2,601,817,018	\$ 234,618,660	\$ 18,610,802,748
Port Stephens	\$ 14,350,070,380	\$ 751,025,600	\$ 902,697,310	\$ 2,157,290,060	\$ 353,289,732	\$ 18,514,373,082
Coffs Harbour	\$ 13,103,601,060	\$ 666,146,020	\$ 548,366,940	\$ 1,821,603,550	\$ 320,928,416	\$ 16,460,645,986
Eurobodalla	\$ 12,025,906,220	\$ 246,839,310	\$ 207,700,000	\$ 1,942,062,250	\$ 306,080,300	\$ 14,728,588,080
Ballina	\$ 10,099,136,530	\$ 475,933,700	\$ 325,049,800	\$ 2,596,941,650	\$ 1,094,771,141	\$ 14,591,832,821
Cessnock	\$ 8,505,891,080	\$ 146,345,690	\$ 235,859,320	\$ 4,236,052,410	\$ 539,930,790	\$ 13,664,079,290
Wagga Wagga	\$ 6,484,920,580	\$ 642,827,050	\$ 445,978,900	\$ 5,307,076,240	\$ 236,943,980	\$ 13,117,746,750
Hunters Hill	\$ 12,119,018,906	\$ 57,765,000	\$ 5,945,000		\$ 412,500,700	\$ 12,595,229,606
Kiama	\$ 9,513,232,590	\$ 533,796,060	\$ 15,822,800	\$ 1,749,827,560	\$ 776,688,350	\$ 12,589,367,360
Moree Plains	\$ 322,290,720	\$ 67,176,260	\$ 44,717,970	\$ 11,337,119,080	\$ 12,236,850	\$ 11,783,540,880
Clarence Valley	\$ 6,397,533,425	\$ 370,624,040	\$ 239,419,190	\$ 3,117,683,860	\$ 452,743,850	\$ 10,578,004,365
Tamworth Regional	\$ 4,934,206,830	\$ 431,115,600	\$ 373,961,900	\$ 4,691,895,410	\$ 140,189,310	\$ 10,571,369,050
Bega Valley	\$ 6,146,063,470	\$ 305,751,600	\$ 131,346,680	\$ 2,079,298,190	\$ 975,628,350	\$ 9,638,088,290
Snowy Monaro Regional	\$ 3,399,996,930	\$ 122,715,090	\$ 122,601,800	\$ 4,659,798,010	\$ 842,057,074	\$ 9,147,168,904
Singleton	\$ 2,627,800,750	\$ 156,049,120	\$ 42,840,500	\$ 3,229,133,694	\$ 2,940,613,190	\$ 8,996,437,254

Hilltops	\$ 1,069,609,411	\$ 4,409,300	\$ 41,610,990	\$ 7,315,431,741	\$ 38,720,520	\$ 8,469,781,962
Bathurst Regional	\$ 4,864,534,390	\$ 399,411,540	\$ 180,795,160	\$ 2,813,017,380	\$ 96,121,740	\$ 8,353,880,210
Dubbo Regional	\$ 4,310,883,500	\$ 465,826,560	\$ 365,706,400	\$ 2,984,876,210	\$ 195,931,960	\$ 8,323,224,630
Goulburn Mulwaree	\$ 3,556,997,011	\$ 445,354,710	\$ 206,973,001	\$ 2,728,365,270	\$ 1,312,095,990	\$ 8,249,785,982
Albury	\$ 6,783,172,090	\$ 439,070,410	\$ 478,155,650	\$ 279,951,610	\$ 239,323,240	\$ 8,219,673,000
Orange	\$ 6,249,071,130	\$ 454,692,130	\$ 403,943,770	\$ 252,934,250	\$ 786,637,730	\$ 8,147,279,010
Mid Western Regional	\$ 3,017,758,650	\$ 201,374,800	\$ 97,508,570	\$ 2,863,835,900	\$ 1,451,250,460	\$ 7,631,728,380
Greater Hume	\$ 616,997,020		\$ 17,451,200	\$ 6,862,626,070	\$ 16,015,440	\$ 7,513,089,730
Yass Valley	\$ 2,741,306,090	\$ 108,445,350	\$ 30,069,800	\$ 4,086,816,320	\$ 165,352,360	\$ 7,131,989,920
Armidale Regional	\$ 2,171,547,000	\$ 82,279,140	\$ 110,385,500	\$ 4,185,969,000	\$ 122,602,270	\$ 6,672,782,910
Lismore	\$ 3,445,928,990	\$ 147,292,751	\$ 130,883,040	\$ 2,691,955,800	\$ 80,037,500	\$ 6,496,098,081
Narrabri	\$ 490,460,690	\$ 64,801,310	\$ 43,901,570	\$ 4,418,023,800	\$ 1,208,643,750	\$ 6,225,831,120
Upper Lachlan	\$ 589,961,610	\$ 8,245,600	\$ 877,000	\$ 5,116,116,104	\$ 217,547,950	\$ 5,932,748,264
Cabonne	\$ 772,108,440	\$ 12,525,620	\$ 8,576,900	\$ 4,799,427,470	\$ 75,885,560	\$ 5,668,523,990
Federation	\$ 1,361,807,310	\$ 48,225,910	\$ 55,565,900	\$ 3,726,089,100	\$ 153,983,480	\$ 5,345,671,700
Kempsey	\$ 3,297,841,590	\$ 139,387,000	\$ 67,954,920	\$ 1,658,228,110	\$ 137,032,020	\$ 5,300,443,640

Upper Hunter	\$	920,128,970	\$	50,616,960	\$	33,616,700	\$	3,853,753,945	\$	150,240,060	\$	5,008,356,635
Walgett	\$	61,457,860	\$	12,849,270	\$	4,905,060	\$	4,775,674,830	\$	25,725,920	\$	4,880,612,940
Cootamundra-Gundagai	\$	610,259,120	\$	46,493,000	\$	21,991,580	\$	4,144,255,891	\$	48,940,760	\$	4,871,940,351
Lithgow	\$	2,287,403,380	\$	64,526,590	\$	29,518,600	\$	1,726,023,770	\$	381,083,914	\$	4,488,556,254
Murray River	\$	1,329,408,380	\$	79,451,000	\$	76,771,000	\$	2,759,960,880	\$	175,064,870	\$	4,420,656,130
Griffith	\$	2,139,222,290	\$	239,545,120	\$	153,261,740	\$	1,566,335,000	\$	81,112,120	\$	4,179,476,270
Gunnedah	\$	596,543,590	\$	51,993,700	\$	65,627,800	\$	3,338,058,540	\$	120,210,830	\$	4,172,434,460
Snowy Valleys	\$	631,313,600	\$	45,331,030	\$	30,204,000	\$	3,342,360,851	\$	58,372,080	\$	4,107,581,561
Nambucca	\$	2,651,385,591	\$	77,305,540	\$	61,295,260	\$	1,123,526,180	\$	63,674,010	\$	3,977,186,581
Muswellbrook	\$	1,013,595,041	\$	83,000,590	\$	55,353,300	\$	903,882,110	\$	1,915,609,290	\$	3,971,440,331
Dungog	\$	1,349,971,260	\$	35,080,380	\$	11,859,770	\$	2,489,634,020	\$	59,598,570	\$	3,946,144,000
Gwydir	\$	102,568,530			\$	127,230	\$	3,829,687,990	\$	1,560,100	\$	3,933,943,850
Richmond Valley	\$	2,021,211,850	\$	93,511,430	\$	70,947,710	\$	1,613,874,810	\$	45,661,330	\$	3,845,207,130
Inverell	\$	721,263,790	\$	61,738,600	\$	39,816,120	\$	2,866,018,801	\$	24,670,300	\$	3,713,507,611
Liverpool Plains	\$	300,021,389	\$	10,720,800	\$	7,498,850	\$	3,347,517,830	\$	22,389,300	\$	3,688,148,169
Walcha	\$	107,243,100	\$	6,602,400	\$	4,613,600	\$	3,526,212,000	\$	2,322,780	\$	3,646,993,880

Bellingen	\$ 1,913,867,281	\$ 112,967,060	\$ 21,595,410	\$ 1,422,533,900	\$ 108,570,690	\$ 3,579,534,341
Lachlan	\$ 102,257,460			\$ 3,445,597,020	\$ 5,500,090	\$ 3,553,354,570
Bland	\$ 200,956,330	\$ 37,213,610	\$ 6,223,200	\$ 3,198,328,900	\$ 51,768,790	\$ 3,494,490,830
Cowra	\$ 808,454,380	\$ 48,205,260	\$ 41,636,100	\$ 2,252,423,000	\$ 16,120,250	\$ 3,166,838,990
Warrumbungle	\$ 203,143,240	\$ 17,729,550	\$ 6,645,710	\$ 2,738,827,820	\$ 5,905,630	\$ 2,972,251,950
Junee	\$ 379,907,760		\$ 2,270,300	\$ 2,371,356,260	\$ 6,253,900	\$ 2,759,788,220
Carrathool	\$ 32,106,350	\$ 2,190,520	\$ 3,826,300	\$ 2,705,589,090	\$ 2,006,080	\$ 2,745,718,340
Parkes	\$ 818,438,300	\$ 31,061,570	\$ 105,789,640	\$ 1,680,535,820	\$ 57,877,540	\$ 2,693,702,870
Lockhart	\$ 137,823,100		\$ 1,415,460	\$ 2,551,551,420	\$ 1,459,980	\$ 2,692,249,960
Blayney	\$ 720,561,190	\$ 18,893,900	\$ 12,753,010	\$ 1,769,580,840	\$ 145,898,970	\$ 2,667,687,910
Forbes	\$ 428,514,800	\$ 30,733,650	\$ 36,272,070	\$ 2,158,399,836	\$ 10,110,800	\$ 2,664,031,156
Temora	\$ 341,405,050	\$ 28,828,300	\$ 16,451,000	\$ 2,085,515,690	\$ 37,946,810	\$ 2,510,146,850
Oberon	\$ 470,445,410	\$ 12,243,000	\$ 15,632,801	\$ 1,973,751,980	\$ 15,668,400	\$ 2,487,741,591
Edward River	\$ 503,206,410	\$ 27,850,030	\$ 30,503,650	\$ 1,906,058,640	\$ 9,837,320	\$ 2,477,456,050
Glen Innes Severn	\$ 313,717,340	\$ 34,726,170	\$ 12,241,780	\$ 2,028,287,880	\$ 13,795,210	\$ 2,402,768,380
Coonamble	\$ 49,456,550	\$ 4,411,920	\$ 2,552,430	\$ 2,297,296,390	\$ 1,379,000	\$ 2,355,096,290

Kyogle	\$	392,415,290	\$	16,235,500	\$	11,293,100	\$	1,889,560,340	\$	13,187,110	\$	2,322,691,340
Berrigan	\$	669,200,720			\$	15,852,100	\$	1,592,768,690	\$	33,859,980	\$	2,311,681,490
Narrandera	\$	221,334,210			\$	8,873,230	\$	2,070,305,790	\$	2,585,660	\$	2,303,098,890
Narromine	\$	206,571,000	\$	5,262,060	\$	7,925,800	\$	1,939,905,430	\$	33,093,140	\$	2,192,757,430
Coolamon	\$	223,195,240			\$	5,573,000	\$	1,883,786,460	\$	3,868,460	\$	2,116,423,160
Warren	\$	54,445,920	\$	1,402,500	\$	6,429,470	\$	1,954,734,910	\$	2,103,350	\$	2,019,116,150
Weddin	\$	157,550,120	\$	1,786,050	\$	2,904,420	\$	1,852,319,290	\$	2,378,630	\$	2,016,938,510
Uralla	\$	399,370,080	\$	18,537,120	\$	6,192,000	\$	1,567,210,410	\$	12,118,700	\$	2,003,428,310
Murrumbidgee	\$	79,850,100			\$	10,154,760	\$	1,825,672,590	\$	18,568,100	\$	1,934,245,550
Tenterfield	\$	248,932,610					\$	1,675,942,520	\$	1,837,860	\$	1,926,712,990
Wentworth	\$	627,326,650	\$	6,946,000	\$	49,209,700	\$	1,021,593,809	\$	26,741,125	\$	1,731,817,284
Leeton	\$	487,655,610	\$	35,888,940	\$	45,904,790	\$	679,406,240	\$	16,086,570	\$	1,264,942,150
Gilgandra	\$	84,056,440	\$	2,940,830	\$	2,546,410	\$	1,157,810,280	\$	1,936,850	\$	1,249,290,810
Bogan	\$	56,487,040	\$	4,208,810	\$	2,698,000	\$	1,151,535,880	\$	11,745,840	\$	1,226,675,570
Cobar	\$	68,912,210	\$	8,051,840	\$	8,923,560	\$	950,350,040	\$	57,605,820	\$	1,093,843,470
Central Darling	\$	5,646,100					\$	1,024,742,560	\$	24,301,500	\$	1,054,690,160

Balranald	\$	91,941,500			\$	935,157,850	\$	16,932,500	\$	1,044,031,850		
Hay	\$	43,104,630		\$	1,305,800	\$	850,372,810	\$	18,411,170	\$	913,194,410	
Brewarrina	\$	5,506,600				\$	696,287,980	\$	7,726,250	\$	709,520,830	
Bourke	\$	28,226,590	\$	3,000,970	\$	2,464,420	\$	561,739,560	\$	10,900,680	\$	606,332,220
Broken Hill	\$	408,399,830	\$	29,107,520	\$	20,199,500	\$	2,523,030	\$	40,810,550	\$	501,040,430

Data Sourced from : <https://www.valuergeneral.nsw.gov.au/>

Appendix E

Federation Council

Federation Council has \$5,345,671,700 in total land value is made up of \$1,361,807,310 of Residential land and \$3,726,089,100 in Rural land and received \$10.7 million in rates from 2023/24

Federation Council | Notes to the Financial Statements 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

\$ '000	2024	2023
Ordinary rates		
Residential	5,458	4,549
Farmland	4,508	3,797
Business	869	739
Less: pensioner rebates (mandatory)	(251)	(239)
Rates levied to ratepayers	10,584	8,846
Pensioner rate subsidies received	138	133
Total ordinary rates	10,722	8,979

Narrabri

Narrabri Shire Council

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
Ordinary rates		
Residential	5,008	4,828
Farmland	7,047	6,814
Mining	1,081	1,039
Business	1,469	1,389
Less: pensioner rebates (mandatory)	(141)	(140)
Rates levied to ratepayers	14,464	13,930
Pensioner rate subsidies received	76	76
Total ordinary rates	14,540	14,006

Upper Lachlan

Upper Lachlan Shire Council | Notes to the Financial Statements 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

\$ '000	2024	2023
Ordinary rates		
Residential	2,135	2,036
Farmland	5,663	5,448
Mining	2	2
Business	667	605
Less: pensioner rebates (mandatory)	(115)	(118)
Rates levied to ratepayers	8,352	7,973
Pensioner rate subsidies received	51	53
Total ordinary rates	8,403	8,026

Cabonne

Cabonne Council | Notes to the Financial Statements 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

\$ '000	2024	2023
Ordinary rates		
Residential	3,387	3,388
Farmland	5,955	5,549
Mining	2,010	1,926
Business	284	300
Less: pensioner rebates (mandatory)	(162)	(142)
Rates levied to ratepayers	11,474	11,021
Pensioner rate subsidies received	89	88
Total ordinary rates	11,563	11,109

Kempsey

Kempsey Shire Council | Notes to the Financial Statements 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

	2024 <i>Actual</i> \$ '000	2023 <i>Actual</i> \$ '000
Ordinary rates		
Residential	17,781	16,824
Farmland	3,454	3,308
Business	2,334	2,271
Less: pensioner rebates	(715)	(728)
Rates levied to ratepayers	22,854	21,675
Pensioner rate subsidies received	376	378
Total ordinary rates	23,230	22,053

Upper Hunter

Upper Hunter Shire Council | Notes to the Financial Statements 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

\$ '000	2024	2023
Ordinary rates		
Residential	4,998	4,802
Farmland	6,399	6,180
Mining	137	132
Business	687	653
Less: pensioner rebates	(145)	(143)
Rates levied to ratepayers	12,076	11,624
Pensioner rate subsidies received	80	80
Total ordinary rates	12,156	11,704

Walgett

Walgett Shire Council | Notes to the Financial Statements 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

	2024	2023
\$ '000	\$ '000	\$ '000
Ordinary rates		
Residential	1,547	1,444
Farmland	4,276	4,069
Business	376	371
Less: pensioner rebates (mandatory)	(95)	(93)
Rates levied to ratepayers	6,104	5,791
Pensioner rate subsidies received	52	52
Total ordinary rates	6,156	5,843

Cootamundra-Gundagai

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council | Notes to the Financial Statements 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

\$ '000	2024	2023
Ordinary rates		
Residential	4,641	4,404
Farmland	5,418	5,166
Business	1,191	1,122
Less: pensioner rebates	(208)	(213)
Rates levied to ratepayers	11,042	10,479
Pensioner rate subsidies received	115	117
Total ordinary rates	11,157	10,596

Lithgow

Lithgow City Council | Notes to the Financial Statements 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

\$ '000	2024	2023
Ordinary rates		
Residential	11,174	8,401
Farmland	2,857	2,160
Mining	4,356	1,818
Business	3,021	2,086
Quarry	438	–
Less: rebates (Council policy)	(106)	–
Less: pensioner rebates (mandatory)	(337)	(349)
Rates levied to ratepayers	21,403	14,116
Pensioner rate subsidies received	185	192
Total ordinary rates	21,588	14,308

Murray River

Murray River Council | Notes to the Financial Statements 30 June 2024

B2 Sources of income

B2-1 Rates and annual charges

	2024 \$ '000	2023 \$ '000
Ordinary rates		
Residential	5,674	5,355
Farmland	5,713	5,496
Business	991	892
Less: pensioner rebates (mandatory)	(292)	(195)
Rates levied to ratepayers	12,086	11,548
Pensioner rate subsidies received	160	106
Total ordinary rates	12,246	11,654

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The Border Mail's complete view of property

'We don't have to be puppets': call for councillors to stand up to government



By Anthony Bunn

December 18 2024 - 6:00am

💬 1 Comment

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📷 Federation councillor Pat Bourke has stressed his desire for the shire to continue to push the NSW government for redress over the Corowa-Urana merger. File picture.

Former Federation mayor Pat Bourke has called on his fellow councillors not to be puppets and stand up to the NSW government after one suggested a poll on the Corowa-Urana amalgamation should never be discussed again.

The [results of the three-question poll](#), conducted as part of the September local government election, were formally tabled at the Federation Council meeting on Tuesday, December 17.

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The first question, "do you believe that the forced amalgamation by the state government in 2016 was a mistake?", saw 76.6 per cent reply yes and 23.4 per cent no.

To the second question "should the state government compensate ratepayers for the ongoing costs of the amalgamation?" there was an 84.13 per cent affirmative response and 15.87 per cent negative reaction.

The motion put to the meeting included the council conveying results to the government and seeking compensation for merger costs, further look at northern representation and note the results,

[Former councillor David Fahey](#) interpreted the outcome as supportive of a demerger and the break-up of Federation into Corowa and Urana shires.

He urged councillors at a forum on Monday, December 16, to push the government to fund a split, claiming it would cost \$5 to \$6 million while an extra \$70 million would be needed over the next decade if Federation continued in its present form.

"It's their stuff-up, they made the unholy marriage and it's time for a divorce," Mr Fahey said.

And to the last question "do you support that council should approach the state government to guarantee representation for the former Urana Shire?" there was 68.62 per cent in the yes column and 31.38 per cent in the no camp.

"If you can save \$70 million over the next 10 years if you spend \$5 [million] now and not burden your ratepayers why wouldn't you jump at the chance?"

Councillor David Harrison questioned the validity of the poll, given 20 per cent of voters did not answer the questions, and criticised calls for extra representation for the north of Federation, noting Corowa township had only a single councillor.

"That's the type of divisive thinking that is holding us back," Cr Harrison said.

"We should approve this motion, send the poll deep into the filing system of council and never speak of it again."

Cr Bourke said the council would be letting the government "off the hook" if it took such an attitude.

Source: <https://www.bordermail.com.au/story/8849238/federation-council-urged-to-fight-nsw-governments-merger-outcome/>

Appendix G

Labor's De-amalgamation Bill passes Parliament

Thursday, 9 May 2024

The NSW Labor Government has today given councils and their communities the power to make decisions about their future with the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024 passing both Houses of Parliament.

The new legislation provides certainty to councils that have been left in limbo due to legal flaws within the Local Government Act.

Under the Government's new laws, councils seeking to demerge must work in close consultation with their community to ensure local democracy is enshrined throughout the entire process.

The new pathway will require councils to develop a robust business case for de-amalgamation with community input so that residents are adequately informed of potential implications upfront.

The business case should consider the impacts of de-amalgamation including financial ramifications, long-term strategic plans, and the capacity of new councils to deliver services.

The Minister will then refer the business case to the Local Government Boundaries Commission for independent review and assessment.

If the Minister is satisfied by the Boundaries Commission's recommendation a proposal is sound, a compulsory referendum may then be held to give the community the final say on whether they wish to de-amalgamate.

The majority of the community must support this vote for the demerger to proceed.

The new legislation will also apply to any council that has been amalgamated, removing a provision that placed a 10-year period for councils to enact demerger proceedings.

It also provides for a mechanism for the Government to contribute to funding the costs of demergers incurred by councils.

Following its passage through both Houses of Parliament the Bill will soon be signed into law by the NSW Governor.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig:

“Today the NSW Labor Government has put an end to a disappointing chapter in local government history.

“Councils and communities across the state have suffered for too long without a clear mechanism to undo the amalgamations that were forced upon them.

“This Bill rightly puts those decisions that directly affect communities back into their hands.

“It provides a legal pathway to achieve de-amalgamation whilst mandating robust engagement with the community throughout the entire process.

“This is to ensure communities understand the consequences and can make an informed decision about their future.

“Whether that is to proceed down the path of de-amalgamation, or to get on with the job of providing for their community, this Bill delivers much-needed certainty.”

MEDIA: Clare Dowswell | Minister Hoenig | 0448 540 073

Appendix H

Bid for big rate increases again in the spotlight as debate rages



By [Anthony Bunn](#)

Updated November 27 2024 - 9:58am, first published 5:00am

1 Comment



📷 The Federation Council chamber where there was much debate about the pursuit of a special rate variation with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. File picture.

Federation Council will continue to work towards a 69.94 per cent special rate variation (SRV), with a motion to not progress any future extraordinary increases rejected.

Two notices of motions by separate groups of three councillors were put to the council meeting at Corowa on Tuesday, November 26.

The first from Derek Schoen, Richard Nixon and David Bott called for no future SRV to be advanced or sought until the quantum required is identified after workplace culture and productivity reforms are achieved.

That motion also recommended the council endorse and progress an application to the [Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal \(IPART\) to make a previously granted temporary SRV permanent.](#)

It would also have sought community feedback on the council's delivery program and for that to be presented at the council's January 2025 meeting.

However, that motion was lost 6-3, with councillors Rowena Black, Pat Bourke and Andrew Kennedy then moving their own recommendation on a SRV, which succeeded.

Hence the council endorsed the progress of work occurring to make a submission to IPART for a permanent 69.94 per cent SRV over two years from July 1, 2025.

It also acknowledged the council should continue to "explore opportunities for financial initiatives through cost containment strategies, productivity improvements and revenue opportunities".

Cr Black pleaded for the SRV, saying while it would not solve all financial problems it was needed to address 20 years of inefficiencies and unwillingness to raise rates.

Appendix I

The number of Pensioner Concession Applications made under the Local Government Act 1993 - Sect 575 between 2020 and 2024 broken down by year.

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
190	253	131	Unknown*	204

* 2023 Container includes historical records prior to 2014. Due to the number of applications in the container it is difficult to extrapolate 2023 applications without spending an onerous amount of time checking each file individually.

The number of Pensioner Concession Applications made under the Local Government Act 1993 - Sect 575 between 2020 and 2024 broken down by year which were refused.

Pensioner Concession Applications are assessed as either eligible or ineligible in accordance with the Local Government Act. To be eligible for a pensioner concessions, applicants must provide the required information as stipulated in the Act. Council does not retain records of ineligible applications.

The number of properties with outstanding rates within the Federation Council and the number of years those rates have been outstanding.
1016

The total amount of rates outstanding.
\$1,357,550

Ref: 25/700

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

The proposed special variation is entirely unreasonable. The council have already removed important ratepayer services such as the hard waste collection and do not offer replacement services like the vouchers offered by neighbouring Albury council. A lot of the infrastructure in Federation Council is basic and does not adequately give back to the community who funds it. It is not reasonable to remove popular services such as hard waste collection from households then expect an enormous rate rise. By their own admission this was a well utilised service Council recognises that the hard waste collection service was well patronised, but has had to make a difficult decision to cease this service in the interests of fairness to all within residents the municipality. I fail to see how maintaining this service would be unfair on the minority of residents who choose not to utilise this service. The variety of benefits and services offered to ratepayers by Federation Council pale in comparison to neighbouring Councils. It is not reasonable for a council who offers so much less, to expect so much more from its residents.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

The Federation Council has wasted rate payer money to pay for a consultant, with intent on shaming and scaring current residents into agreeing to a rate rise. Why does the council not have someone employed that is qualified to complete review instead? The council haven't provided any real evidence of cost saving, service reviews or a re-evaluation of structure and roles held by council. The application for temporary rate rises to be rolled into a permanent increase is deceitful and will go some way to understanding current concerns of rate payers. The 40% pay increase for councillors in 2023 certainly wouldn't have helped current budgeting concerns. The questionnaire was manipulative and poorly worded, using emotive and guilt inducing language. It was not easily accessible for all rate payer and not well distributed. Communication about the survey leading to this application was mostly advertised on social media. Given the older population in the Shire, this is not an effective mode of communication, nor considerate of people with accessibility needs. Information sessions were mostly organised for business hours, when working rate payer would be un able to attend. Council did offer one on one meetings, however it would be understandable if people would feel intimidated participating in a one on one session. As a new resident in Corowa I am concerned at the rate of closing businesses and businesses being put up for sale. I am concerned I have moved my family to a dying town. Council does little to encourage tourism and keep the town looking alive. For my rates, I get road side pick up and water connection. My road isn't even sealed, very rarely graded and local road works seem to be taking forever. Given the current state of late rate payments and cost of living pressures, the council request for near 70% increase is completely out of touch.

Submission to IPART re Federation Councils application for a 69.94% SRV from Richard Sargood, a Federation (and Corowa) ratepayer for 68 years.

Firstly, I would like to point out that I believe that most of this application from Federation Council has actually been written by [REDACTED] whom Federation Council employed at huge ratepayer expense to try and whitewash IPART into making a determination that overrides IPARTs last SRV determination. IPART previously ruled that Federation could have a temporary two-year increase of 19% and 17% which expires 30 June this year and no increase above rate peg for the next two years. The temporary increase was presumably to give Federation Council time to get its act together, show some fiscal responsibility, and communicate honestly with ratepayers including honestly advertising potential cumulative rate increases. Unfortunately, none of that has happened and Council has been deceptive, if not downright dishonest, in advising ratepayers what rate increase they were applying for.

[REDACTED] came to the table with a preconceived idea that amalgamated councils could not achieve savings through efficiency and a rationalisation of services and, narcissistically, quoted his own work as a reference so was never going to look for an efficient outcome. In fact, [REDACTED] states in documents provided in Federations application that *"There is no good reason to think that efficiency is either a legitimate goal of government. Or indeed that high levels of efficiency are even possible"* but then goes on to admit that *"regulators have continued to place strong focus on efficiency"*. Additionally, the Terms of Reference that Council provided to [REDACTED] as his remit specifically excluded him looking at Councils performance, procedures and management, much to the disdain of ratepayers who were hoping for a truly independent review of Councils operations and management, of which we got nothing.

[REDACTED]

Council published its long-term financial plan (LTFP) on its website, with no mention of the embedded SRV and no apparent intent to inform ratepayers the LTFP, and thus the SRV, was available for review. As ratepayers didn't know about the LTFP and its embedded SRV they didn't know the closing date for submissions and feedback was 5pm Christmas eve when all Council offices had closed at lunchtime that day. Consequently, out of 12,939 residents there were only 4 submissions, and three of those submissions pointed out to Council that they had only just found out the chance to have their say expired the next day, and told Council don't be surprised if there are not many submissions. Honestly, do you think that if Council had done its job properly and communicated how and when ratepayers could have their say and told them they were applying for a 69.94% rate increase that is actually 85.23% over four years there would only be four responses? I don't think so. Councils' communication with ratepayers has been woeful in the past and continues to be so. Much of [REDACTED] documentation draws the conclusion that a lack of community response can be considered as endorsing Councils SRV. This couldn't be further from the truth. If the community doesn't know they can respond or object, any response or objection is impossible.

Council is telling us right now *"The SRV proposes an increase to general rates of 19% in 2025/26 and 11.8% in 2026/27. The cumulative increase across the four years from 2023/24 to 2026/27 is 69.94%"* (I lifted this from Federation Councils website). This is blatantly untrue and designed to deceive. Federation, as you know, has applied for a 52.01% increase in 2025/26, and an 11.8%

increase in 2026/27. Their claimed 69.94% cumulative increase over the four years from 2023/24 to 2026/27 is also a fabrication. Once the temporary increases IPART approved for 2023/24 and 2024/25 are removed we will be left with the applicable rate peg increases of 4.3 and 4.5% respectively. These, when combined with the current application, if approved, will mean a cumulative increase of 85.23%, way above what council is advising. I informed Federation that they were advertising a wrong cumulative figure and the reply I received from the GM nearly two months later was, and I quote, *"I note that you have highlighted that the increase over the two years of the application plus the past two years is 85.23%. The reporting of 69.94% as the headline rate increase is required by the Office of Local Government (OLG) and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). Council does not get to elect how it reports the cumulative impact of a SRV increase, nor does it have authority to digress from the requirements"*. Funny how they didn't advertise the cumulative rate at all to ratepayers for their previous application to IPART and only equated their then proposed 75% cumulative increase to "the price of a couple of lettuces a week"!

I am in receipt of an example of how IPART calculates cumulative rate increases and can confirm the calculation for Federation Councils cumulative four year increase is 85.23%. It is clear the GM either has no idea what he is talking about or is being deliberately misleading. Whatever the case, the community is being grossly misled over the magnitude of the cumulative rate increase being proposed.

Councils SRV application is primarily based on its contention that it needs to fund road maintenance yet in response to IPART's recent queries as to why zero dollar values were budgeted for roads, footpaths and drainage maintenance in 2025/26 and 2026/27 Council replied to IPART saying *'the road maintenance projects will be funded by the RLRRP grant from Transport for NSW in 2025/26 and 2026/27'*. This is exactly the same period where Council wants to increase rates by 52.01 and 11.8% to fund road maintenance via this SRV yet this maintenance will be funded by the RLRRP grant not rates. Why is there any need for any SRV at all when the primary project that supposedly required this huge rate increase will be funded by an RLRRP grant?

And how is it that in the 8% SRV Federation got approved to run their white elephant pool complex they claimed they were saving money by ripping \$730,000 out of their roads budget. That's not a saving, that's a deferral. In the same application approval, they claimed they were saving a further \$850,000 by deferring capital works which no doubt was planned for roads. Neither of these are savings. That's \$1.58M that would have gone a long way to fixing our roads but was used to plug the swimming pool financial black hole. Please don't be fooled by the claimed savings in this current application as I fear any savings, like those I've detailed above, are all smoke and mirrors.

It should be noted that in Federation's last application to IPART Council said it would apply any rate increase evenly across business, residential and rural categories. That did not happen, rural ratepayers were inflicted with a much larger percentage increase than their business and residential counterparts. Not only is this Council not very interested in communicating with its constituents it's not very interested in equity either. Quite honestly, this Council cannot be trusted to do what it says it will do. If IPART grants any increase at all it will only endorse the inherent inefficiencies that are rife through this Council, and that would be a tragedy.

Affordability of the proposed rate increases

This proposed rate increase is not affordable to most residents. The current cost of living crisis is affecting everyone across the board and our capacity to pay has dropped significantly. Council has made no effort to control its spending and keeps employing people with no regard to the bottom line. As an example, after amalgamation Federation had about 125 full time employee equivalents

(FTE) that seemed to do a reasonable job. Here we are now less than eight years later, and we have nearly 180 FTE that doesn't get the job done any better. Until this elephant in the room is addressed Federation will remain a basket case.

Councils' application does not consider serious options to reduce the financial impact on ratepayers. They won't address the aforementioned employee blowout and all they do is threaten cuts to services without detailing what they would cut, which is fine if they cut their 'wants' and leave our 'needs' because at the moment they are incapable of distinguishing the difference.

Federation Council started FY 2023/24 with an operating ratio of -3.98. After applying the 19% temporary rate increase approved by IPART for that year Council finished the year with an operating ratio of +16.45. In Federations figures supplied to IPART to try and justify the obscene increases they were looking for last time around which IPART rightly knocked back, they predicted their operating ratio at the end of FY 2023/24 would be -17.87 yet in reality, it was +16.45. Clearly there is no need for any further rate increases and indeed an operating ratio of +16.45 would suggest there is actually room for a reduction.

ABS data shows that 50% of Federation workers gross weekly income is less than \$999/wk with over 75% having gross incomes of less than \$1499/wk. Convert those figures to nett household income, and it is obvious that Federation ratepayers have very little capacity to pay. The below graph shows that rate delinquency has recently increased dramatically from around \$600,000 to over \$1,000,000 now and still rising. Another 70% rate increase over the next two years is clearly unaffordable and will undoubtedly tip some ratepayers over the edge both financially and mentally.

The graph below shows rates outstanding each month for the last four years. This graph is at 31st October 2024 .



Community awareness of the proposed rate increase

Council has not explained to the community the reasons for proposed SRV. They can't even correctly advertise the % increase they are applying for nor what the correct cumulative increase is let alone the reasons for it. The only reason they are applying to IPART this time is they got knocked back last time. They have done nothing to mitigate the reasons for why they were knocked back and have gone and paid about \$150,000 to a professor for an application and report that is barely better than the last application and was more about de-amalgamation than rationalisation.

■■■■ report on pre-consultation engagement references responses from 13 people (which is a statistically irrelevant sample from 12,939 residents) does suggest, if you can believe any of his figures, that four times more people think Council is doing a poor job than think Council is doing a great job.

Council has not consistently and certainly not obviously communicated with ratepayers regarding this SRV application in fact I believe they have deliberately made it hard for anyone to find any details regarding this SRV. They never said or advertised anything like 'we are planning a 69.94% rate increase over the next two and would really like to know what you think before we lodge that application'. To get 4 responses from 12,939 residents who might have been able to give them feedback in the face of such a huge increase is a joke. If people don't know it's happening, you can't give feedback. It's as simple as that.

■■■■ Community Engagement Report to Council states we now have a community response whereby some eighty-four percent of informed persons agree with the proposal. Furthermore, the proportion of people who would like to see the SRV increased now exceeds those who would rather have it reduced.

This wildly inaccurate statement is based on minimal responses to his survey at his meetings. The questions asked in this survey were so loaded to elicit a favourable response for ■■■■ position with virtually no opportunity for dissent that everyone I know refused to fill it in. In my mind, to base a report on a statistically irrelevant population of responses out of a possible 12,939 is reckless and should be treated as such. The wild assertion that 84% of informed persons agree with the proposal is based on no significant data whatsoever.

Federation Ratepayers Inc. is conducting a survey in which participants can remain anonymous so can respond fearlessly. I believe this survey is currently showing that about 90% of people do not agree with the proposed SRV.

Councils Cost Management

Council has not been effective in providing infrastructure and services for the community. There are inefficiencies everywhere you look, Management seems to be lacking everywhere, and managers are not accountable for output, their own included. You have to live here to appreciate how badly things are managed and unfortunately bad management has now become the norm.

Council has not explained to the community its past cost saving strategies however they are now boasting they have made savings of \$800k/yr every year for the last five years yet a couple of years ago when the deputy GM was asked what savings and efficiency gains had been made as a requirement for the 8% swimming pool SRV that IPART granted, she stumbled around for a while and eventually came up with they installed a new telephone system in the office. That was the best she could do. If \$800k savings were true she would have been all over it like a rash.

The \$800k/yr figure is just [REDACTED]. If it were true they would have been spruiking it everywhere and they haven't been. I don't believe there is any concrete evidence of this supposed \$800k/yr saving. Where is it documented in their application to IPART? From what I can see some figures have just been a cut and paste job from a wish list spreadsheet somewhere and it is now trying to be passed off as savings, just like the swimming pool SRV did. Where are the facts that support this claim? Nothing has been provided to ratepayers verifying this claim, and this figure has just magically appeared just in time to try and tick a box for IPART. We are being treated like mushrooms.

As an example of their supposed cost savings, during last year's roadshow Council put on prior to formalising their LTFP (which was poorly attended as very few people knew it was happening) they put a slide up saying they had purchased a wider mower but wouldn't say if there were employment savings to be had despite saying this mower could do the work of 2 mowers and two men. So, they have purchased a new mower worth I'm told over \$100,000, haven't sold the other two mowers and haven't retired any employees, so where is the saving? All I can see here is more cost in interest and depreciation, zero savings. Surely if they believed they had made \$800k/yr savings over the previous few years they would have highlighted that in no uncertain terms but no, there was no mention of \$800k savings supporting their LTFP at all.

Future Cost Management and Efficiency Gains

I have seen nothing anywhere where Council is advising where future savings, efficiencies and productivity gains are going to come from, and given the statement from the GM below this will not even be a consideration for this Council.

In a letter back to me last week in response to my putting in a submission giving feedback on Councils LTFP, Federations GM said *"Whilst you do not support any rate increase above the rate peg until Council demonstrates that everything possible to contain spending, improve productivity and improve accountability of managers has been implemented, the significant quantum of savings required (\$8 million per annum) means this course of action is not feasible"*.

Really? Here is the General Manager saying that it is not feasible to do everything possible to contain spending, improve productivity and improve accountability of managers. If that's the GM's attitude, and clearly it is, then God help us because no matter how high rates rise nothing is going to satisfy the financial black hole that is created by management that refuses to look at controlling spending, improving productivity and making managers accountable for poor performance and outcomes, their own included.

Please do not grant Federation any more rate increases above rate peg. Until such time as they are forced to control spending Federation will remain a basket case. The financial position it finds itself in is self-inflicted. They haven't been able to distinguish between needs and wants and have prioritised wants above needs. They built two unaffordable pools in Corowa instead of one unaffordable pool and then through lack of foresight and budgeting couldn't afford to run them and got an 8% SRV just to cover the running costs that they clearly didn't allow for. The pools are still losing hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. They build \$4M bike tracks that no one uses that have to be maintained and depreciated instead of fixing roads, I could go on but I think you are getting the picture.

Again, please don't grant Federation this SRV. They haven't made a case for it and [REDACTED] report that they are relying on is severely flawed and should be ignored. People can just not afford to pay. IPART have already made a determination covering the next two years that this SRV is seeking to overturn. Federation Council has changed nothing from its last application and by not declaring the

correct cumulative percentage increases it is applying for, has deliberately and systematically tried to mislead ratepayers and the community. For this reason alone, notwithstanding all the other compelling evidence, this SRV should be refused.

LATE NEWS

Thursday 6th March 2025. I have just noticed that there is no reference, link or anything drawing ratepayers' attention to the SRV application that is before IPART on Councils website, or that Council has even applied for an SRV. There is no link to IPART and nothing encouraging ratepayers to have their say through a submission to IPART. All this information was there a couple of days ago including mind you, a grossly understated cumulative four year figure and that Council was applying to IPART for and a 19% and a 11.8% two year increase not the correct figures of 52.01% and 11.8%.

This is typical of how this Council operates. Tell lies to start with, then don't engage with the community and don't provide any information so ratepayers can make an informed decision. And when the community points out all the lies, inaccuracies and deception, take everything down to hide the evidence. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 24 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I am against the rate increase proposed by the Federation Shire Council for many reasons. To list a few: 1. Dishonest. The rate increase is actually about 85%, not the 70% as the council has said. 2. This rate increase is excessive. It is practically doubling our rates. 3. The rate rise is disproportionate, punitive and unsustainable. It will be impossible for most ratepayers in depressed areas with little income. 4. No return. Many small towns in the Federation shire are neglected in favour of the larger, tourist centric towns. Previous rate rises did not change this management plan. 5. The council's top level management spent \$100,000's of ratepayers money on reviews by professors, one who based his reports on outdated 2021 census data, not factoring in the current economic situation where cost of living has increased and income has dropped. Nor did he understand the nature of farming. 6. There was no community consultation and little transparency. The council let ratepayers know at the eleventh hour. Many of us found out inadvertently. 7. No cost cutting measures. The council management treats ratepayers as an unlimited resource. Unlike us, it has not limited its spending, made significant budget cuts or decreased top management bloated salaries to award wage rates. 8. The CEO, CFO and upper management fail up. The mismanagement of resources, assets and tasks would, in industry, have rightly led to the managers losing their positions. Instead, in Federation Shire local government it is the ratepayers that are to be punished for the top level management's ineptitude. 9. Lack of transparency. The public input in the decision making process is restricted and much information is undisclosed. These are a few reasons why I oppose this rate rise. I do not trust the top level management of Federation Shire Council. Increasing our rates by such a large factor and to such a punitive amount is unjust. Such mismanagement must not be supported. Please oppose this rate rise.

SUBMISSION

IPART Special Variations & Minimum Rates 2025-2026

Federation Council – Special Variation

TO

IPART

NSW Government

Submitted By Website Upload

NON-CONFIDENTIAL - DO NOT PUBLISH NAME

Please make this submission non confidential, but do not publish my name.

SUBMISSION CONTENT

Introduction

I am a resident ratepayer in Federation shire. I have owned property in Oaklands since mid 2023.

I am on a very low income, living well below the absolute poverty line (ie. the minimum income required to meet the basic necessities of life). I survive on a Centrelink payment, despite being university educated in a profession with a high earning potential, as I have a chronic illness that severely affects my ability to work. It's fashionable in some circles to think that people on Centrelink are lazy and get loads of free money. Neither could be further from the truth. I have no NDIS assistance or any other form of government assistance to help with my day to day needs. I am sometimes bedridden for months at a time. In 2023 I was bedridden for over 6 months.

I resided in Albury for 35 years, but the housing crisis forced me to look at other alternatives as I could no longer afford to rent in Albury or anywhere in the eastern states. I was expecting to become homeless for the three years prior to moving to Oaklands. I used the extra money from the Centrelink Covid Supplement to purchase camping equipment in anticipation of this, so I would at least have a tent. I then decided to repair a relationship with a relative, with whom I was estranged, in order to borrow money to purchase a cheap property to live in, so that my child would not be forced to live on the street. I looked everywhere in the eastern states and even in South Australia and the Northern Territory in places like Coober Pedy, Andamooka and Alice Springs for something that was affordable and where it was viable to get my basic needs met (and by basic needs, I mean VERY basic). Oaklands was the only viable place.

But there is no supermarket here, the store has almost no stock, there is no fuel and not even street delivery of mail (we have to pick it up from the store). Neither Coles nor Woolworths home deliver groceries to Oaklands. It is a three hour round trip to Albury to get groceries at the nearest affordable supermarket (where there is Aldi and other discount grocery outlets). I have to drive myself, without any assistance from another driver, which is exhausting. Nearby smaller towns only have expensive supermarkets and expensive fuel, so I am forced to drive to the city

to cut overall costs. Milk is around \$4.35 for 3 Litres in the city stores, whilst it is almost twice that price at the small town IGA nearest to Oaklands. Many other products have a much larger price gap. These problems are the reason why property prices are low here.

I live here because I can't afford to live elsewhere.

No need for the special variation

Oaklands is a very rural village with mostly unsealed, dirt roads, no footpaths except around the pub and few derelict shops in the main street, no concrete gutters in most of the town. It is characterised by grassed table drains for drainage, dirt driveways (most aren't sealed) and mostly aging houses among many vacant blocks, often containing livestock such as sheep and horses to eat the grass. Most houses were constructed pre 1950, with a large number dating to the 1930s or earlier. It has a distinct post-apocalyptic vibe to it. My son even joked about painting a Vault-Tec logo on the shed.

The water and sewerage services in the town are provided by Riverina Water, not Federation Council.

After talking with other residents, it appears Federation Council have a long history of not supporting improvements to the town when even minor, low cost requests are made. They are not proactive problem solvers, they find every reason and put up every obstacle to avoid their core function.

Oaklands is a low maintenance town with low community expectations regarding service delivery.

The council views the residents of Oaklands and other rural towns in the shire as a cash cow to fund executive salaries and capital projects in river tourist towns - that we will never benefit from - whilst expecting us to pay city rates without providing city services.

We don't need it and we don't want to pay for it.

Most of the community were unaware of the rate rise application until recently

When I first acquired property in Oaklands, I immediately joined the local Facebook group so I could keep abreast of what was going on. I also made a point of getting to know my neighbours and people around the town.

The first I heard about a big rate rise was a rumour I heard around town shortly before the meeting held in Oaklands by the Federation Shire Ratepayers group. I went along to the meeting and we were told that the council should have sent us out some sort of notification or paperwork about it when they sent out the rates – apparently some sort of fact sheet and survey. I don't recall getting any such notice. I only heard about it *after* the council had already approved the motion at a council meeting to seek a rate rise from the state government. Looking around the very packed room at the ratepayers meeting, at the number of shaking heads, it was obvious that most of the other people at the meeting also had not received any paperwork from the council about this. The community, in Oaklands at least, was not aware of the rate rise at all.

The community doesn't support the rate rise and the impact on affected ratepayers is grossly unreasonable

It was obvious at the Oaklands ratepayers' meeting that there was basically zero support for the rate rise, even after some details had been explained by the Ratepayers' group doing the presentation. People walked into the meeting very angry and walked out even angrier.

Most of the people who live in Oaklands are quite happy to get by with very basic council services. We like having low rates and we don't mind having unsealed roads. Even the sealed roads in and out of Oaklands aren't that great. (Although there have been some recent road works that upgraded the road into the eastern side of town from absolutely appalling to acceptable – but it was in a very poor state of maintenance for many years). We are used to the conditions here and we don't want to pay for fancy roads, guttering and other unnecessary things. Many of us live here because it's cheap and we are willing to put up with lower standards than what you would expect in the urban areas of larger towns or cities. Most people in Oaklands own a 4WD or ute. I'm one of the few people who owns a small car.

Federation shire's median equivalised household income has fallen from \$46,884 in 2019 to \$41,236 in 2021. August 2021 Census data showed a substantial growth in the number of households vulnerable to financial stress, paying more than 30% of their income in rent or mortgage payments (and this was when interest rates were still low). The August 2021 Census showed that 36.6% of households in Federation shire had an annual income of \$31,356 or less – that's over a third of the shire – and this quartile had grown faster than the others compared to the 2016 Census. That is over 1/3rd of Federation shire households (not residents) who are living on \$603 or less per week.

It is easy for somebody on a salary of hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to talk about affordability flippantly. They will never experience what it is like to not be able to afford what they *need* to sustain life.

These [REDACTED] are using this rate rise to fund another few bottles of Dom Perignon to tip into the trough for their consumption, without any thought or care as to how it will affect people like me. They live in their own world and can't see past the end of their own snouts. To be quite honest, I'm getting really tired of subsidising the lifestyles and egos of these sorts of people out of my meagre income and being forced to make sacrifices and decisions that I should never have to make.

It's really not that hard to work out. A quick trip to the Food Bowl emergency food outlet operated by the Amaranth Foundation in Corowa will tell you all you need to know about how the poor end of the community is doing in Federation Shire. The Food Bowl is run very professionally, with a clean premises and compassionate staff. It is the best run emergency food outlet I have ever been to. But the shelves are almost bare. There is hardly any stock across all categories of groceries. This is because demand for their services is high and donations are not keeping pace with the need in the community. Anyone who has to rely on this food outlet as their primary source of food, or even a regular supplemental source of food, will almost certainly be suffering from severe nutritional deficiencies. GPs across the country are already reporting that low income patients are suffering from conditions like scurvy. Well, it's happening

here in Federation Shire as well. Just because the Council turns a blind eye to it, doesn't mean it's not happening.

I draw your attention to Article 25 of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Australia is a signatory:

"1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

The rate rise proposed by Federation Shire will seriously endanger my ability to acquire even the most essential of these things and no doubt will affect many other people in the shire as well.

I have this question for Federation Shire Council – and you should ask it of them too: Which meals in my week should I forego so I can pay for their special rates rise and keep the roof over my head? Which meals should my child now go without? I already regularly shop at the Foodshare. Should I stop buying petrol and walk the 60km to the nearest Foodshare and then back home again carrying the food? This would be very difficult for a fully able-bodied person, let alone someone with my state of health. Please tell me. If they are such grand financial managers, surely they have the answer to this very simple question.

If this rate rise is not affordable for the people on the lowest incomes in the shire, then it is simply *not affordable*.

Final Comments & Recommendations

I recommend that the Special Variation rate rise that Federation Council have applied for be absolutely rejected.

SUBMITTED BY

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 25 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

The gates were open to this relentless pursuit of increasing charges when water and sewer charges were separated from the rates notice in 2016. This was a deliberate, underhanded strategy to give the illusion of lower rates while allowing the water and sewer costs to be increased at will and without any accountability. The annual sewer costs have increased by 48% over this period of time with water increasing by nearly 150%. When everything was inclusive within the rates notice, my instalment amount was the same as my now instalment amount for sewerage alone... While these charges have been separated, the sewer/water account are still due at the same time as rates and almost need an instalment for the instalment amount.... This has been an astonishing increasing burden on the ratepayers of the shire to date and appears to have no signs of abatement. To get it over the line, the financial manager stood in front of an audience of residents and vowed that the SRV applied for in 2020 would be the only one and we are now onto our third... The council appear to be primarily focused on new developments which are appearing at a mind blowing rate.. Not only have older areas been neglected, my block has become unliveable and unsaleable since essential energy were enabled to install double storey HV power lines down our once quiet little quaint street and a huge unbearable, unsightly, buzzing, overhead sub-station right on the entrance to my yard as a means of providing underground power to a privately funded sub-division further on from me... No-one cares.... I have been trying to get some clarity on what the 'Waste Facility Levy' that was introduced in 2014 was actually for and no-one seems to know. I question the validity of this charge and believe it was for metro sydney and south coast.. The only knowledge around this charge was that \$45 a year would net a million dollars and now that charge is \$65 with a huge increase in residencies and no-one knows exactly what it's for !!! Put simply, when sewer was inclusive in the rates my annual cost was around \$1500 and is now \$2600 when including sewer costs.. Not only did the separation of these access charges veil the actual rate charges, it lowered the pension rebate substantially... I implore you to reject the current SRV application and allow ratepayers to attempt to catch up to the already overwhelming charges....

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 26 February 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I think such a large increase is not affordable for me in the current economic climate also I believe the council should take a good look into their productivity and become more efficient

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 28 February 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I think that the SRV for Federation Council is extremely important and a must do. Services of the entire Council will not be able to be kept to a suitable standard without a sizeable increase in rate payments. I am a business person in Corowa and have been for over 50 years with experience in Retail and hospitality and I am disappointed to see the standards of services dropping. The pensioners in the LGA get a reduction in their rates and council is offering payment plans for those having difficulty paying. Councils interstate pay much higher rates and some locals have second homes elsewhere. Farmers are complaining bitterly about the increases in their rates while their farms are getting bigger as they increase the size and number of holdings. I feel if the residents want services they have to pay for them. I am a married older woman (75) and my husband is still working (aged 69). We have limited income but I am realistic about the need for Council to raise rates to provide services. Balldale township wants a better water supply (potable water); Howlong want to bypass the Main Street, better water and sewerage services to provide for future development; Corowa needs sewerage upgrades and water services to promote development; and the smaller villages in the LGA all have a wish list. Morundah, at the northern end of the council, has very few sealed roads, flood problems almost every time it rains, along with Boree Creek and Rand. Flood studies for these area are be done, but what then without money to supply the services need to fix these many problems. I, personally feel that without the SRV our council area will not go ahead at a rate that will encourage further development and entice businesses and new residents and instead will become a backwater where it could be a shining light.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 17 March 2025

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

We strongly oppose the Federation Councils proposed rate rise. As a local business we feel that the council is grossly mismanaged and is making another cash grab while not proving themselves to be working toward benefiting council residents. It is time for the council to go into administration and have someone take over and sort the whole mess out. Continuing to ask ratepayers to give you more money when you haven't proven that you are spending any of it wisely is a joke.