

Minimum Rate Increase
Application Form Part B

Application Form

2026-27

 Local Government >>



Acknowledgment of Country

IPART acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders both past and present.

We recognise the unique cultural and spiritual relationship and celebrate the contributions of First Nations peoples.

Contact details

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The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

IPART's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Further information on IPART can be obtained from IPART's website.

Contents

Council information	1
1 About this Application Form	2
2 Preparing your application	3
3 Description and context	5
4 Criterion 1 – Rationale for increasing minimum rates above the statutory limit	18
4.1 What is the council's rationale for increasing minimum rates above the statutory limit?	18
5 Criterion 2 – Impact on ratepayers	25
5.1 What are the current and proposed levels of minimum rates, and the number of ratepayers on the minimum rate over the application period?	26
5.2 What will be the impact on ratepayers of the proposed increase in minimum rates?	27
5.3 How does the proposed increase affect the distribution of the rating burden among ratepayers?	29
5.4 How has the council considered affordability and the affected ratepayers' capacity to pay higher rates, including measures to address hardship?	29
6 Criterion 3 – Consultation on the proposal	32
6.1 How did the council consult the community about the proposed increases to minimum rates?	33
7 Other relevant matters	38
8 Council certification and contact information	39
8.1 Certification of application	39
8.2 Council contact information	39
9 List of attachments	41

Council information

Council name	Glen Innes Severn Council
Date submitted to IPART	30 January 2026

About this Application Form

This Application Form is to be completed by councils applying for an increase to a minimum rate (MR) for 2026-27 above the statutory limit under s 548(3) of the *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act). The Application Form for a minimum rate increase (MR increase) is in two parts:

- Application Form Part A (separate Excel spreadsheet)
- Minimum Rate Increase Application Form Part B (this MS Word document).

Councils can apply for an MR increase either in conjunction with a special variation (SV) under s 508(2) or s 508A of the LG Act, or as a stand-alone adjustment (i.e. without also seeking an increase to general income in place of the rate peg).

Councils applying for an MR increase in conjunction with an SV should complete this form and the SV Application Form Part B. In addition, they should complete the Application Form Part A that covers both MR and SV increases.

This MR Increase Application Form Part B consists of:

- Description and Context Questions
- Criterion 1: Rationale for increasing minimum rates above the statutory limit
- Criterion 2: Impact on ratepayers
- Criterion 3: Consultation on the proposal
- Other relevant matters
- Council certification and contact information
- List of attachments

Under each section, we provide some guidance to complete the section. However, when preparing their application, including this form, councils should refer to:

- OLG's MR Guidelines issued in November 2020
- section 4 of IPART's Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply, in particular for information about community awareness and engagement for special variations and minimum rates.

Preparing your application

Ordinary rates – minimum amounts

Councils must apply to increase the minimum amount of an ordinary rate above the statutory limit where:

- The council is currently charging a minimum ordinary rate at or below the statutory limit and is seeking to increase its minimum rate(s) above the statutory limit for the first time.
- The council is currently charging a minimum ordinary rate(s) above the statutory limit and is seeking to increase its minimum rate(s) in 2026-27 by more than the rate peg percentage or the percentage allowed by an approved SV.
- The council is currently charging a minimum ordinary rate(s) at or below the statutory limit and, as part of implementing a proposed SV for 2026-27 (whether applying a lower, higher or the same percentage increase as the requested SV percentage) the increase would result in a minimum rate(s) that is above the statutory limit for the first time.

Councils **do not need** to apply for an increase to minimum ordinary rates in the following circumstances, whether or not they are applying for an SV:

- The proposed increase (even if it is above the rate peg percentage) would result in a minimum rate(s) which are still below the statutory limit.
- The minimum rate(s) is already above the statutory limit (having previously been granted approval for the rate(s) to be above the statutory limit) and the council proposes to increase the minimum rate(s) by the rate peg percentage or the percentage allowed by an approved SV.

If a MR increase application is approved, IPART will issue the instrument in **dollar terms** rather than percentage increase(s). The statutory limit of the minimum amount of an ordinary rate is set out in clause 126 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*, which is typically updated annually.

Special rates – minimum amounts

Councils must apply to increase (even if the proposed increase is by the rate peg percentage or the same as a proposed special variation) the minimum amount of a special rate above the statutory limit of \$2 or a previously approved limit.

Attaching supporting material

Responses in the text boxes should clearly cross-reference where the information is located in the supporting documents attached to the council's application.

It is not necessary to submit a document with the MR Increase Part B Application Form if the same document is submitted as part of an SV application.

Confidential content in supporting material

We will publish all applications (excluding any confidential content) on our website. The submission process allows councils to highlight confidential content. Examples of confidential content include personal information relating to a member of the public or a document which includes commercial-in-confidence content.

Councils should ensure supporting documents are redacted to remove confidential content where possible, or clearly marked as **CONFIDENTIAL**. To protect confidential details in submissions from ratepayers, either redact or submit as a confidential attachment.

Submitting the application online

Applications must be submitted through IPART's LG Portal by 05:00pm on Monday, 2 February 2026.

A council will need to register before first using the LG Portal. You can find user information, including guidance for uploading SV and MR applications [here](#).

Maximum file size allowed per document is 150 megabytes.

Contact Arsh Suri on (02) 9113 7730 or localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au for assistance with using the LG Portal.

Description and context

These questions seek general information about the council's application to increase minimum rates.

Question 1: What is the increase to minimum rate(s) the council is applying for?

The response will provide a high-level summary of the proposal to increase minimum rates. Detailed information about the increase is collected in Application Form Part A. However, if only applying for an MR increase (not an SV), please note that not all sections of Application Form Part A need to be filled out. Further details about what needs to be completed is provided in Worksheet 1 (WS 1) of the Part A application form after selecting the nature of the application as a 'Minimum Rates Increase' application.

If the increase applies to an ordinary rate, complete this section

Does the council propose to increase the minimum amount of its ordinary rate(s) above the statutory limit for the first time?	Yes
Which rating category(s) will the increase(s) apply to? If the increase will apply to some subcategory(s), please specify them in the text box also.	Residential, Business, Farmland, Mining
Please specify the proposed dollar amount(s) per rating category (and if applicable per subcategory) that the council considers would need to apply in 2026-27.	Residential - \$774.00 Business - \$774.00 Farmland – Base charge Mining - \$453.00
Does the council propose to increase the minimum amount of its ordinary rate(s) for 2026-27 by the rate peg percentage, the proposed SV percentage, a previously approved SV percentage, or a different percentage?	Proposed SV percentage 21.5%
For multi-year increases, please specify the proposed dollar amount(s) per rating category (and if applicable per subcategory) that council considers would need to apply in each proposed year after 2026-27.	Residential 2026-27 - \$774.00 2027-28 – \$867.00 2028-29 - \$945.00 Business 2026-27 - \$774.00

	2027-28 – \$867.00 2028-29 - \$945.00 Farmland – Base charge Mining 2026-27 - \$453.00 2027-28 – \$508.00 2028-29 – \$553.00
For multi-year increases, does the council propose to increase the minimum amount of its ordinary rate(s) by the rate peg percentage, the proposed SV percentage, a previously approved SV percentage or a different percentage? Please specify for each proposed year after 2026-27.	Proposed SV percentage 2026-27 – 21.5% 2027-28 – 12.0% 2028-29 – 9.0%

If the increase applies to a special rate, complete this section

Does the council propose to increase the minimum amount of a special rate above the statutory limit?	No
Does the council propose to increase the minimum amount of its special rate(s) by the rate peg percentage, SV percentage or a different percentage?	Not applicable
Please specify the proposed dollar amount(s) for the special rate that the council considers would need to apply in 2026-27 (and for multi-year increases, for each financial year after 2026-27).	Not applicable
For multi-year increases, does the council propose to increase the minimum amount of its special rate(s) by the rate peg percentage, the proposed SV percentage, a previously approved SV percentage or a different percentage? Please specify for each proposed year after 2026-27.	Not applicable

Question 2: What is the key purpose(s) for requesting to increase minimum rate(s) above the statutory limit?

In the **text box**, indicate at the highest level the key purpose(s) of the proposed increase to minimum rates. The purposes could include one or a combination of:

- increasing minimum rates by the rate peg percentage
- maintaining an equitable allocation of the rating burden across the council's rating categories

- improving the equitable allocation of the rating burden across the council's rating categories
- matching the level of minimum rates in comparable councils
- improving financial sustainability (assuming there is a related SV application), and/or
- increasing a special rate by the rate peg percentage.

GISC is reluctant to impose any rate increase above the annual rate peg on the community, however Council also has a responsibility to maintain and renew its assets and be financially sustainable over the longer term - for this generation and future generations to come.

The purpose of Glen Innes Severn Council's (GISC's) proposed Minimum Rates Increase (MRI) is to:

1. restore long-term financial sustainability (by 2029/2030) by addressing a significant and ongoing operating deficit in the general fund as identified in the independent Financial Sustainability Review prepared by Morrison Low in early 2024;
2. maintain the delivery of current services at existing levels as expected by the community;
3. fund critical infrastructure renewal and maintenance programs at above current levels and ensure that Council has the capacity to deliver GISC's Asset Management Plans for the general fund related assets, particularly roads, bridges, buildings and open space assets, that have historically been difficult to maintain under the current rate peg, and to be less dependent on government grant funding in the future (ie increases Council's own source funding);
4. address and continue to maintain a positive unrestricted cash position into the future without the need for additional loans to support Council's working capital requirements, and reinstall internal restrictions in the General Fund; and
5. support the implementation of opportunities for future growth and prosperity in line with *Towards 2034 Community Engagement* outcomes.

The MRI is a necessary component of Council's broader financial strategy, which also includes operational efficiencies and ongoing functional service reviews.

Why the MRI Is Necessary

In early 2024 Glen Innes Severn Council commissioned Morrison Low (specialists in Local Government Financial Management) to undertake an independent Financial Sustainability Review (FSR) of GISC and develop a comprehensive Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP 2024-2034).

The findings of the FSR and LTFP were clear - GISC is not financially sustainable and, without significant intervention, would not achieve financial sustainability over the ten-year term of the LTFP. The following recommendations were provided by Morrison Low as part of the FSR and have or are currently being acted on by Council:

1. Undertake a full review of domestic and non-domestic waste income and costs, including compliance obligations, future remediation and new cell expenditure needs, FOGO 2030, along with funding options (councils are required to maintain separate accounting and reporting for domestic waste).
2. Review Water and Sewer funds income and expenditure, including the level of capital expenditure.
3. Review Domestic Waste, Water and Sewer Fund overhead allocations methodology and ensure it is considered in determining pricing.
4. Develop a pricing approach and options analysis that fully cover the expenditures for Domestic and Non-domestic Waste, Water and Sewer funds.
5. Develop a recommended pricing strategy.
6. Develop a service review program and/or a council-wide improvement plan, with a focus on areas for potential service cost reductions.
7. Determine the need to increase rates revenue through a Minimum Rates Increase.

Since the commencement of the implementation of these strategic actions from the above recommendations, Council has improved the General Fund's ongoing operating deficits from an average of \$6.1M to \$4.7 million per annum.

Council's general fund average forecast operating result is a \$4.7 million deficit for the period 2025/26 to 2034/35. Council's unrestricted cash position for the General Fund, (Council reported a negative \$1.195 million for 2023/24, and a negative \$1,505 million for 2024/25), has required urgent attention which Council has addressed over the past months through \$10M in external and internal loans (over two years) for additional working capital. Once these loans expire, without an increase in income Council is likely to fall back into a negative unrestricted cash position.

Furthermore, population growth in Glen Innes is constrained and new housing growth forecast is expected to be minimal. Due to the remoteness of the LGA, land values are also suppressed relative to other regions. GISC does not have the opportunity to introduce new revenue streams from areas such as parking and compliance to the extent of other larger centres. Consequently, Council has very few opportunities available to materially increase its own-source revenue.

These factors combine to limit any real or material increase in income, other than through the annual rate peg increases, which currently do not provide the necessary headroom for GISC to keep up with inflation and the significant increases in operating costs experienced in recent years.

From the Morrison Low independent review and the development of the LTFP, it has become clear that Council has a significant and ongoing structural operating deficit in the general fund. Without additional revenue, Council's financial position will continue to deteriorate.

Council has also examined all available options, including cost reductions, efficiency gains, and service level reviews. While these measures do form part of Council's ongoing financial strategy, they are insufficient to close the financial gap created by continuing average forecasted operating deficits over the next ten years. Ultimately, the essential component of Council's financial recovery strategy is to increase income through a responsible and transparent rate increase.

A special rate variation is therefore required to stabilise Council's financial position, prevent further deterioration of cash reserves, reinstall internal reserves which have been completely depleted in recent years, and ensure Council can continue to meet its statutory and service obligations.

Initially, four financial scenarios were developed as part of a Revision of the Long-Term Financial Plan 2025-2035, and these scenarios were also included in the new Delivery Program 2025-2029 and Operational Plan 2025-2026. Please refer to the table below:

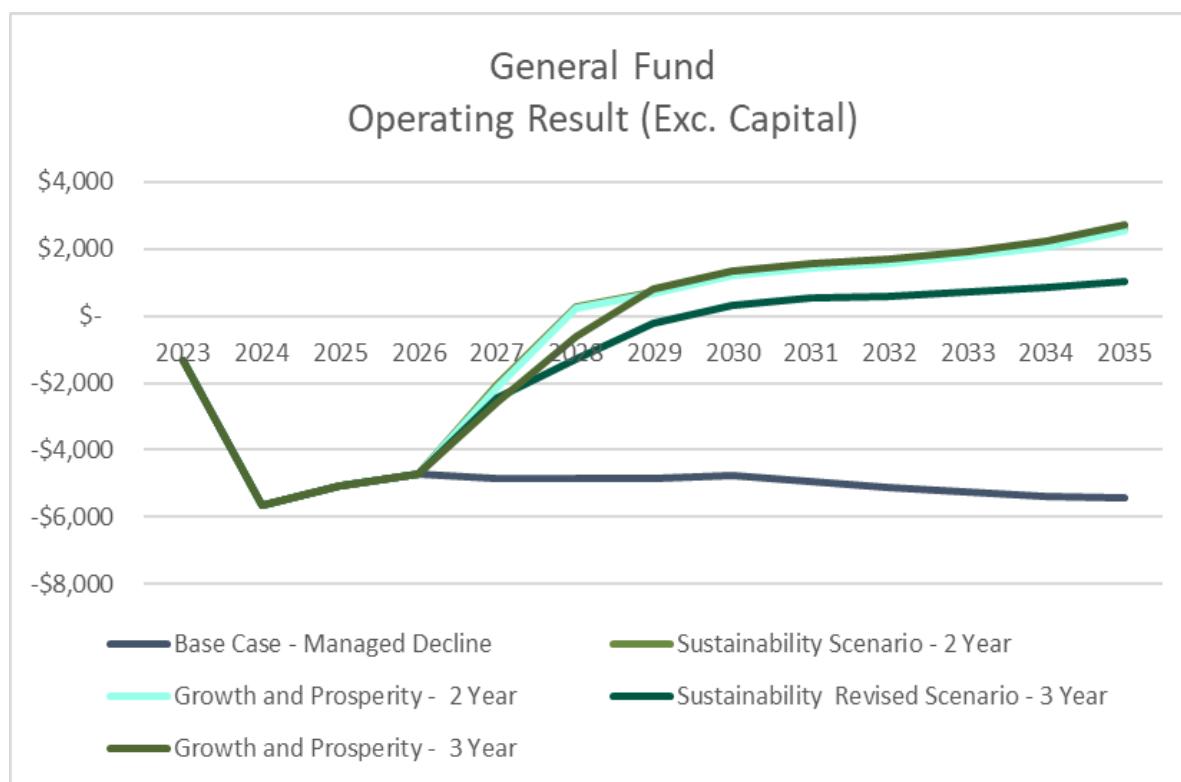
Table 1 Proposed SRV increases – Initial Options Considered

Scenario	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Cumulative increase over SRV period	Comparison increase at 2028/29
1: Base Case (Managed Decline) - Rate Peg	3.5%	3.0%	3.0%	9.5%	9.5%
2:Sustainability Scenario 2 Year SRV	28.5%	21.0%	-	55.49%	60.15%
3: Growth & Prosperity Scenario 2 Year SRV	31.50%	23.0%	-	61.75%	66.60%
4: Growth & Prosperity Scenario 3 Year SRV	26.5%	20.0%	11.0%	68.50%	68.50%

The abovementioned scenarios were presented to the community through the *Shaping Tomorrow Community Engagement Program* (discussed in more detail below), and, in response to the community's feedback and concerns, Council developed a fifth scenario – Sustainability Revised, which extended the objective year for financial sustainability by one year and identified and incorporated additional savings (outlined below) – reducing the proposed cumulative SRV (including rate peg at three years) from 60.15% to 48.3%.

Table 2: Proposed Revised Sustainability 3 year SRV Scenario

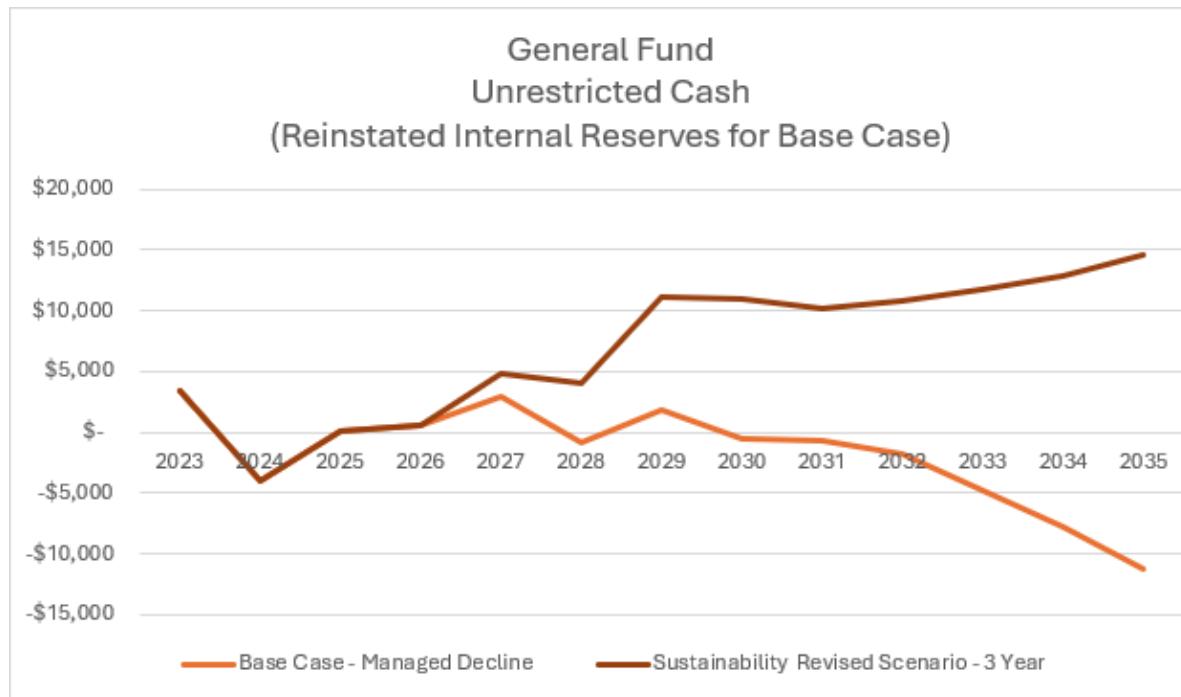
Scenario	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Cumulative increase over SRV period	Comparison increase at 2028/29
5: Revised Sustainability Scenario 3 Year SRV	21.5%	12.0%	9.0%	48.3%	48.3%

Figure 1: General Fund operating results by scenario

The Sustainability Revised SRV option of 48.3% would allow Council a modest General Fund surplus by 2029/30 to continue to provide the current level of services and a modest increase in infrastructure renewals and maintenance; and to have the ability to provide some level of response to emergencies and unforeseen events should they occur, in order to support the community.

The features of the Sustainability Revised scenario are discussed in detail below in the *Response to Community Engagement* section. This Scenario was adopted by Council at its June 2025 Ordinary Council Meeting as the preferred SRV option.

As previously mentioned, Council's unrestricted cash position has been in a negative position for most of the past eighteen months. Council established an external loan for two years of \$5M through Nab Bank, and an internal loan of \$5M for two years against the externally restricted water and sewer funds which has recently been approved by the Minister. Council's unrestricted cash position as at the end of December was positive \$2.35M. However once the loans expire, without the SRV, Council is likely to once again fall into a negative unrestricted cash position as shown in the graph below. The Sustainability revised SRV will help Council to maintain a positive unrestricted cash position.



Based on the analysis and information provided above, GISC has included in its Revised Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035, Delivery Program 2025-2029, and Operation Plan 2025-2026, an action to apply to IPART for a Special Rate Variation to take effect from 1 July 2026, with detailed SRV scenarios having been presented and discussed with the Community through the recent engagement program.

Financial Sustainability

In considering making an application for an MRI, Council has reviewed its recent operating results along with the forecasted operating losses into the future as outlined in Council's adopted Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP).

As identified in the LTFP, a financially sustainable council is one that can fund ongoing service delivery and renew and replace assets without imposing excessive debt or rate increases on future generations. This definition has been translated into the following key financial sustainability principles:

- Council must achieve a fully funded operating position reflecting that it collects enough revenue to fund operational expenditure, repayment of debt and depreciation.

- Council must maintain sufficient cash reserves to ensure it can meet its short-term working capital requirements.
- Council must have a fully funded capital program, where the source of funding is identified and secured for both capital renewal and new capital works.
- Council must maintain its asset base, by renewing identified ageing infrastructure, and ensuring cash reserves are set aside for those works yet to be identified.
- Council should have regard to achieving intergenerational equity.

These principles are the foundation for sound financial management and a financially sustainable council that has the financial capacity to deliver the required services to its community over the long term. GISC does not currently, nor will it in the future without significant intervention and a material uplift in revenue, meet the above objectives.

The Sustainability Revised Scenario, (a permanent cumulative SRV of 48.3% implemented over three years), is supported by additional strategic actions as outlined below to enable General Fund operations to achieve modest surpluses and financial sustainability over the longer term.

The proposed SRV should also provide adequate funding to support the implementation of the modest Economic Development program and "Our Towns" initiatives identified in the *Towards 2034 Community Engagement Program*.

Service Continuity

During the *Shaping Tomorrow Community Engagement* process, most of the Community's participants indicated a desire for no significant rate rise, yet they also indicated they still wanted improved road conditions and for existing service levels to be maintained. In addition, the community engagement Council had previously undertaken in 2024 in preparation for the development of Council's Community Strategic Plan, also made it clear that residents do not want to see reductions in services and, in many cases, expect improvements, particularly in the condition of local roads.

Council has considered the community's feedback in developing the SRV proposal, and the combination of no or low rate increases and maintained or enhanced services is clearly not financially viable or sustainable over the longer term for GISC.

To ensure the ongoing review of services and operations Council has created *Elevate 360 Improvement Plan* that aims to deliver further efficiencies, customer service improvements and potential savings, including annual service reviews.

These changes have already led to an improvement in sustainability, and along with potential future improvements, GISC has committed to further financial savings. However, these efficiency gains and cost savings alone will not be sufficient for Council to be financially sustainable. In simple terms, Council is not generating enough income each year to adequately cover the increasing costs of delivering its current services at existing levels and maintaining and renewing community infrastructure.

Without the SRV, Council would be required to significantly reduce service levels over time across core and non-core service areas including but not limited to: road maintenance, parks and open spaces, community facilities & services, including the ongoing delivery of aged-care, NDIS, youth and child-care services, regulatory services, and waste management services.

Council's ability to co-fund or support government grant opportunities would also be significantly constrained and limit our ability to apply for government grant funding for both capital and operating purposes.

The SRV will help Council to maintain current service levels and avoid the substantial service cuts that would otherwise be required to address ongoing operating deficits.

Infrastructure Renewal and Asset Management

As part of Morrison Low's Financial Sustainability Review, Council also undertook a review of its asset management strategy and plans including the renewal and maintenance requirements. The adopted LTFP anticipates that an increase in investment is required to address the asset backlog ratio from 7.0% in 2024/25 to 5.0% in 2034/35.

The SRV will provide additional funding to help GISC to maintain and renew general fund assets moderately above present levels (without the current dependence on grant funding) including roads, bridges, buildings, open space assets, and urban drainage systems.

The SRV will also reduce Council's heavy reliance on grant funding for asset renewals, many of which require Council to contribute up front funding from its General Fund before we receive the grant funds from the funding bodies, and ultimately places additional pressure on operating cash; and ensure that asset renewal programs can move forward at the appropriate levels.

Strategic Alignment

The SRV supports the ten-year Community Strategic Plan 2025 -2035, and the Delivery Program 2025-2029, by ensuring that long-term planning is financially sustainable. It enables Council to deliver the infrastructure and services identified as priorities by the community and ensures that future generations are not burdened by deferred maintenance or deteriorating assets. The top priorities identified by the community and presented in the Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 include:

- Roads and Infrastructure
- Healthcare
- Economic Development
- Facilities and Services for the Youth
- Fiscal Management

The Delivery Program 2025-2029 does not provide for any new services or increases to service levels, however, the following additional programs which have been identified by the community through the planning process are:

- Economic Strategy Program
- Health Services Facilitation Program
- Housing Facilitation Program
- Our Towns Improvement Program
- Town Hall Master Planning and Activation.

Glen Innes Severn Council's (GISC) suite of Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents, which incorporated information on the SRV scenarios and the reasons why the SRV was needed, were finalised and adopted by Council (to be placed on public exhibition) at its April Ordinary Council Meeting and subsequently placed on public exhibition from 28 April 2025 until 6 June 2025. Upon the completion of the public exhibition period and consideration of the community's feedback, at its Ordinary Council Meeting of 19 June 2025, Council adopted the following IP&R plans and reports:

- The Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035;
- The Delivery Program 2025-2029;
- The Operating Plan and Budget 2025/2026; and
- The Revised Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035.

The Revised Long Term Financial Plan also included a proposed resolution to apply to IPART for a Special Rate Variation in 2026 which was adopted by Council on 19th June 2025 – resolution as follows:

2: Adopts the Sustainability Revised scenario as Council's scenario and makes a Special Rate Variation application to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) in 2026 for a permanent 48.3% (cumulative, including the rate peg) SRV over three years as follows; 21.5% in 2026/27, 12.0% in 27/28 and 9.0% in 28/29.

Responding to Community Feedback

Council undertook a comprehensive community engagement program for the proposed SRV scenarios as part of the *Shaping Tomorrow Community Engagement Program*. The program also included engagement on Council's vision and strategic objectives, and its goal to achieve financial sustainability.

The *Shaping Tomorrow Community Engagement Program* was launched to the community on 28 April 2025 for six weeks of engagement (until 6 June) using the following communication channels:

- Media Releases,
- Regular information to the local Community News Paper,
- Radio advertisements,
- Shaping Tomorrow Community Information Pack, made available at the Library, Council Administration Centre, online (Council's website Have Your Say Page) and available at each Town Hall Meeting.

- Resident newsletter (to all residents),
- Ratepayer letter (to all ratepayers),
- Have Your Say site on Council's website – all documents are available, information videos and survey submission,
- Three Information Videos made by Greg Smith of Morrison Low at Council's request titled:
 - What is an SRV,
 - Why does GISC need one,
 - How will it impact me.
- SRV Micromex Phone and Online Survey – issued online, hard copy (available at the Library, Council's Administration Office and at Town Hall Meetings) and by phone (19-22 May),
- Three Town Hall meetings (Emmaville 5 May, Glen Innes 14 May and Deepwater 27 May),
- Virtual Town Hall meetings (6 May, 15 May and 28 May).

The purpose of the *Shaping Tomorrow Community Engagement* Program was to ensure that the community was adequately informed and consulted with about the new Draft Community Strategic Plan 2025 to 2035 (CSP), Draft Delivery Program 2025 to 2029 (DP) and the 2026-2027 Draft Operational Plan (OP) and Revised Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2036 (LTFP), including a proposal for a future application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a special rate variation (SRV). The key message in the Shaping Tomorrow program was to answer the question "why is Council seeking an SRV" and the following response was provided to the community:

- Become financially sustainable,
- Maintain current service levels to the community,
- Be able to proceed with planned asset management plans and maintenance, and
- Action opportunities to support future growth and prosperity in line with Towards 2034 Community Engagement outcomes.

As discussed previously, four financial scenarios were initially developed as part of a Revision of the Long-Term Financial Plan 2025-2035, and these scenarios were included in the new Delivery Program 2025-2029 and Operational Plan 2025-2026:

1. Managed Decline (rate peg only, no SRV).
2. Financial Sustainability (rate peg + 2 year SRV – cumulative increase of 55.5%).
3. Growth and Prosperity (rate peg + 2 year SRV - cumulative increase of 61.8%).
4. Growth and Prosperity (rate peg + 3 year SRV - cumulative increase of 68.5%).

Council's initial preferred option was Scenario 4 which was communicated at the Town Hall and virtual community engagement sessions in addition to related IP&R and SRV documentation and communications.

During the engagement process, the community expressed strong concerns about both large rate increases and reductions in services. However, they also clearly indicated a desire for improved road conditions and the continuation of existing service levels. Many residents preferred a lower increase implemented over a longer period, rather than a sharp rise over two years. The key community engagement themes were:

- Affordability
- Level of income
- Council to deliver basic services
- Further cost savings

In response to the community's feedback collected over the engagement period and when considering the outcomes of the *Capacity to Pay* report commissioned by Council early in 2025, an alternative and more modest Special Rate Variation (SRV) scenario was developed - the *Sustainability Revised Scenario* - a permanent cumulative SRV of 48.3% implemented over three years. The key features of this scenario are detailed below:

- Remodelled the current Sustainability Option (Scenario 2) based on a delayed financial sustainability objective of 2029/30 (moved out by one year),
- Spread the SRV increases over 3 years to ease the annual impact on rate payers with 21.5% increase in 26/27, a further 12% increase in 27/28 and a third and final SRV increase of 9% in 28/29. While this option does delay Council's ability to report a modest surplus and be financially sustainable by one year (29/30), it reduces the impact of the rate increase on the Community and responds appropriately to the Community's feedback received over the engagement period,
- Applied additional business improvement savings of \$65K per year, bringing the total to \$165K per annum for 5 years,
- Through the recent technical review of depreciation undertaken by Morrison Low, GISC improved the bottom line by a further \$350K per annum,
- To address the Community's concerns about affordability and the Capacity to Pay report, for pensioners, GISC proposes to increase the pensioner concession from \$250 to \$300.
- After hearing directly from the communities of Deepwater and Emmaville, Council acknowledges that we need to do more for the villages and towns in our LGA, and therefore we will proceed with the "Our Towns" improvement programs of up to \$150K per year - this to ultimately apply to smaller villages as well.
- GISC will defer planned improvements to the Glen Innes Town Hall until suitable grant funding becomes available,
- GISC proposes to reduce the investment in Economic Development, Health, and Housing programs from \$500k per annum to \$300k per annum – this still enables Council to address many of the key barriers to population retention and growth.

In addition to the abovementioned revisions, Council also reviewed its Hardship Policy, Debt Collection Policy and Pensioner Concessions Policy to soften our approach to consumer hardship, overdue rates collections, and pensioner concessions in consideration the proposed SRV. These policies will again be reviewed once the outcome of the SRV application is known, particularly the pensioner concession policy which is proposed to incorporate the \$50 per annum additional Council contribution to the \$250 current concession.

The *Sustainability Revised* scenario and further actions by Council reflects that:

- Council has listened to the community through the community engagement process and appropriately responded to the outcomes of the Capacity to Pay report;
- Council has made every effort to ensure that the impact on rate payers is minimised, whilst still achieving its financial sustainability objectives within an acceptable timeframe;
- Council can continue to deliver its services at the level that the community wants and expects;
- Council can confidently proceed with the implementation of its Asset Management Plans; and
- Council can deliver on its commitments outlined in the Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 and Delivery Program 2025-2029.

This SRV scenario was supported by Council at its June 2025 Ordinary Council Meeting as the preferred SRV Option to be presented in its application to IPART.

Criterion 1 – Rationale for increasing minimum rates above the statutory limit

Criterion 1 in the MR Guidelines is:

The rationale for increasing minimum rates above the statutory amount.

The MR Guidelines discuss minimum rates in the context of rating principles in Attachment 1. The MR Guidelines state that:

Where applicable, councils should make reference to the relevant parts of their Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documentation to demonstrate how the criteria have been met.^a

We expect councils to be able to provide evidence of how the proposal to increase minimum rates was developed in the context of the council's IP&R framework, and councils should refer to the relevant parts of their IP&R documents.

How to respond for Criterion 1

The council's response should be tailored to the specific circumstances of the minimum rate increase, including whether it is part of a proposal for an SV.

If the increase to minimum rates is **in conjunction** with a proposed SV, the response for criterion 1 should focus on the aspects directly relevant to the proposed MR increase. It is not necessary to duplicate all the information explaining how the council established financial need which is included in the response for criterion 1 in the SV Application Form Part B.

Where applicable, councils should provide references to their IP&R documents dealing with the proposal to increase minimum rates to demonstrate how the criterion has been met.

What is the council's rationale for increasing minimum rates above the statutory limit?

In the text boxes the response should:

- Explain how the council developed the proposal in the context of its IP&R framework, including the SV proposal, if relevant.
- Explain why the council considers the increase to minimum rates is necessary.
- Discuss both the benefits and drawbacks of the proposed changes to the rating structure.

^a OLG, MR Guidelines, section 2.2.

a. Why the council is seeking to introduce or increase minimum rates above the statutory limit.

Council is seeking to increase minimum rates above the statutory limit to improve equity in the rating system and strengthen financial sustainability. Under the current structure, a significant proportion of ratepayers contribute only the statutory minimum, which is well below the average contribution of other categories. This creates an imbalance in the distribution of the rating burden. Increasing the minimum rate ensures that all ratepayers contribute a fairer share towards the cost of maintaining essential services and renewing critical infrastructure.

The proposal has been developed in the context of Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework, including the Long-Term Financial Plan and Delivery Program, and complements the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) by broadening the revenue base needed to address Council's structural deficit.

b. How the proposed minimum rates are to be applied.

The proposed minimum rates will apply across all rating categories — Residential, Farmland, Business, and Mining — and, where relevant, their subcategories. The new minimums will be phased in from 2026–27, aligned with the timing of the SRV, and adjusted annually by the approved SRV percentage. This approach ensures consistency across categories and provides a clear, predictable pathway for ratepayers. The minimums will be set at levels that bring Glen Innes Severn closer to comparable councils, while maintaining transparency and fairness in application.

The following tables, from the Long Term Financial Plan, show the minimum rates for 2026/27 – 2028–29.

Table 7 Estimated residential average rates to 2028/29

Residential					
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Base Case (managed decline)		\$ 1,025.18	\$ 1,061.06	\$ 1,092.89	\$ 1,125.68
	Increase:		\$ 35.88	\$ 31.83	\$ 32.79
	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$659	\$679	\$699
Sustainability - 2 year SRV		\$ 1,025.18	\$ 1,317.36	\$ 1,594.00	\$ 1,641.82
	Increase:		\$ 292.18	\$ 276.64	\$ 47.82

	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$819	\$990	\$1020
Growth & Prosperity - 2 year SRV		\$ 1,025.18	\$ 1,348.11	\$ 1,658.18	\$ 1,707.92
	Increase:		\$ 322.93	\$ 310.07	\$ 49.75
	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$838	\$1030	\$1061
Growth & Prosperity - 3 year SRV		\$ 1,025.18	\$ 1,296.85	\$ 1,556.22	\$ 1,727.41
	Increase:		\$ 271.67	\$ 259.37	\$ 171.18
	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$806	\$967	\$1073
Sustainability Revised - 3 year SRV		\$ 1,025.18	\$1245.59	\$1,395.06	\$1,520.62
	Increase:		\$220.41	\$149.47	\$125.56
	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$774	\$867	\$945

Table 8 Estimated farmland average rates to 2028/29

Farmland					
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Base Case (managed decline)		\$ 3,668.62	\$ 3,797.02	\$ 3,910.93	\$ 4,028.26
	Increase:		\$ 128.40	\$ 113.91	\$ 117.33
	Base Amount	\$485	\$502	\$518	\$533
Sustainability - 2 year SRV		\$ 3,668.62	\$ 4,714.18	\$ 5,704.15	\$ 5,875.28
	Increase:		\$1,045.56	\$989.98	\$171.12
	Base Amount	\$485	\$624	\$755	\$777
Growth & Prosperity - 2 year SRV		\$ 3,668.62	\$ 4,824.24	\$ 5,933.81	\$ 6,111.82
	Base Amount	\$485	\$638	\$785	\$809
	Increase:		\$ 1,155.62	\$ 1,109.57	\$ 178.01
Growth & Prosperity - 3 year SRV		\$ 3,668.62	\$ 4,640.80	\$ 5,568.97	\$ 6,181.55
	Increase:		\$ 972.18	\$ 928.16	\$ 612.59
	Base Amount	\$485	\$614	\$737	\$818
Sustainability Revised - 3 year SRV		\$3668.62	\$4,457.37	\$4,992.26	\$5,441.56
	Increase:		\$788.75	\$534.88	\$449.30
	Minimum Rate	\$485	\$590	\$661	\$720

Table 9 Estimated business average rates to 2028/29

Business					
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Base Case (managed decline)		\$ 2,134.78	\$ 2,209.50	\$ 2,275.78	\$ 2,344.06
	Increase:		\$ 74.72	\$ 66.28	\$ 68.27
	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$659	\$679	\$699
Sustainability - 2 year SRV		\$ 2,134.78	\$ 2,743.19	\$ 3,319.26	\$ 3,418.84
	Increase:		\$ 608.41	\$ 576.07	\$ 99.58
	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$819	\$990	\$1020
Growth & Prosperity - 2 year SRV		\$ 2,134.78	\$ 2,807.24	\$ 3,452.90	\$ 3,556.49
	Increase:		\$ 672.46	\$ 645.66	\$ 103.59
	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$838	\$1030	\$1061
Growth & Prosperity - 3 year SRV		\$ 2,134.78	\$ 2,700.50	\$ 3,240.60	\$ 3,597.06
	Increase:		\$ 565.72	\$ 540.10	\$ 356.47
	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$806	\$967	\$1073
Sustainability Revised - 3 year SRV		\$2,134.78	\$2,593.76	\$2,905.01	\$3,166.46
	Increase:		\$458.98	\$311.25	\$261.45
	Minimum Rate	\$637	\$744	\$867	\$945

Table 10 Estimated mining average rates to 2028/29

Mining					
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Base Case (managed decline)		\$373	\$386	\$398	\$410
	Increase:		\$13	\$12	\$12
	Minimum Rate	\$373	\$386	\$398	\$410
Sustainability - 2 year SRV		\$373	\$479	\$580	\$597
	Increase:		\$106	\$101	\$17
	Minimum Rate	\$373	\$479	\$580	\$597
Growth & Prosperity - 2 year SRV		\$373	\$490	\$603	\$621
	Increase:		\$117	\$113	\$18
	Minimum Rate	\$373	\$490	\$603	\$621
Growth & Prosperity - 3 year SRV		\$373	\$472	\$566	\$628
	Increase:		\$99	\$94	\$62
	Minimum Rate	\$373	\$472	\$566	\$628
Sustainability Revised - 3 year SRV		\$373	\$453	\$508	\$553
	Increase:		\$80	\$54	\$46
	Minimum Rate	\$373	\$453	\$508	\$553

c. What benefits and drawbacks of the proposed changes to the rating structure have been identified?

Benefits:

- Creates a more equitable distribution of the rating burden, ensuring all ratepayers contribute fairly.
- Strengthens Council's financial sustainability by stabilising the revenue base and reducing reliance on high-value properties.

- Aligns Glen Innes Severn's minimum rates with those of comparable councils, addressing regional disparities.
- Supports continuity of essential services (roads, waste, community facilities) and priority infrastructure renewal projects identified in the Asset Management Plans.
- Provides consistency with the IP&R framework and complements the SRV application, ensuring long-term planning is financially achievable.

Drawbacks:

- Increases the financial burden on ratepayers currently paying only the statutory minimum, which may be challenging for households with limited capacity to pay.
- May generate community concern about affordability, particularly among pensioners and low-income ratepayers.
- Requires careful communication and hardship support measures (rebates, payment plans, hardship policy review) to mitigate impacts.

Table 1 Criterion 1 attachments

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references
03	Long Term Financial Plan	Pp31 - 34

Criterion 2 – Impact on ratepayers

Criterion 2 in the MR Guidelines is:

The impact on ratepayers, including the level of the proposed minimum rates and the number and proportion of ratepayers that will be on the minimum rates, by rating category or subcategory.

The criterion requires consideration of two elements:

- the level of minimum rates for ratepayers whose rates will be increased, and
- the distribution of the rate burden in the particular category or subcategory between those paying minimum rates and those paying an amount based on the value of their property.

Although it is a matter for each council to determine its rating structure, including the level of minimum rates, for this criterion, IPART will assess the proposal on its merits, but will consider how the proposed minimum rates accord with the principles of rating, by looking at:

- the absolute and percentage increase in minimum rates proposed for ratepayers paying the minimum amount
- how the council will manage any adverse impact on ratepayers
- how the increase in minimum rates affects the equitable distribution of the rate burden among all ratepayers in the category or subcategory.

As the minimum rate is the lowest amount that is paid by ratepayers in any rating category, the impact of the proposed increase to minimum rates may not, of itself, be as significant as the same percentage increase to rate levels above the minimum. Nevertheless, IPART expects that councils will be able to demonstrate how they have considered its affordability and the affected ratepayers' capacity to pay.

IPART will make its own assessment of the affected ratepayers' capacity to pay by reference to evidence provided by the council and our own analysis using socioeconomic indicators, including as they relate to those for comparable councils in the council's OLG grouping.

How to respond for Criterion 2

By completing the Application Form Part A, councils will provide full details of current and proposed levels of minimum rates and the number of ratepayers affected. The response to the first question for criterion 2 requires only a summary of this information.

If the increase to minimum rates is in conjunction with a proposed SV, the response for the other questions for criterion 2 should focus on the aspects of the impact on ratepayers and its affordability which are directly relevant to the proposed MR increase. It is not necessary to duplicate all the information providing details included in the response for criterion 3 in the SV Application Form Part B.

The council's response to the other questions for criterion 2 should explain the specific circumstances of the minimum rate increase, including whether it applies to an ordinary or special rate and whether it is part of a proposal for an SV, and the characteristics of the ratepayers who will be affected.

Where applicable, councils should provide references to their IP&R documents dealing with the proposal to increase minimum rates to demonstrate how the criterion has been met.

The response to this criterion should refer to matters such as:

- the extent to which the new minimum rates exceed the equivalent ad valorem rates that would apply in the absence of the minimum rates
- the overall impact on ratepayers resulting from the proposed increase
- steps that have been taken to distribute the rate burden equitably
- affected ratepayers' capacity to pay the higher level of rates, overall and by each rating subcategory
- how the council plans to address hardship ratepayers may experience in meeting their obligations to pay rates in the future.

In considering capacity to pay, you may also want to consider how the council's socioeconomic profile and other relevant measures of capacity to pay relate to those for comparable councils. IPART will also review various socio-economic indicators, particularly as they relate to those for comparable councils in your OLG grouping.

What are the current and proposed levels of minimum rates, and the number of ratepayers on the minimum rate over the application period?

In the text box, summarise the information. This can be presented in table form, if appropriate, that clearly shows the different items over the application period (up to 7 years). Alternatively, the information can be presented in an attachment.

The number of ratepayers per category of rate is listed below:

Residential – 922

Business – 81

Mining – 1

Farmland has a base amount, rather than a minimum rate.

Council has not modelled any changes to the number of ratepayers on each category.

What will be the impact on ratepayers of the proposed increase in minimum rates?

In the text box, set out the increase in dollar and percentage terms for each category and subcategory of ratepayers affected by the proposed MR increase. This can be presented in table form, if appropriate, that shows category breakdowns of ratepayers (e.g. minimum ratepayers and ad valorem ratepayers) over the application period (up to 7 years). Alternatively, the information can be presented in an attachment.

The table below shows the increase in dollar and percentage terms for each category and subcategory of ratepayers affected by the proposed MR increase.

Minimum Rates Increases - Sustainability Revised Scenario – 3 Years

Rate Category		2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029
Residential	Average Rate	\$ 1,025.18	\$1245.59	\$1,395.06	\$1,520.62
	Increase		\$220.41	\$149.47	\$125.56
	Minimum Rate	\$637.00	\$774.00	\$867.00	\$945.00
	Min Rate Increase \$'		\$137.00	\$93.00	\$78.00
	Min Rate Increase %		21.5%	12.0%	9.0%
Rate Category		2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029
Business	Average Rate	\$2,134.78	\$2,593.76	\$2,905.01	\$3,166.46
	Increase		\$458.98	\$311.25	\$261.45
	Minimum Rate	\$637.00	\$774.00	\$867.00	\$945.00
	Min Rate Increase \$'		\$137.00	\$93.00	\$78.00

	Min Rate Increase %		21.5%	12.5%	9.0%
Rate Category		2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029
Farmland	Average Rate	\$3668.62	\$4,457.37	\$4,992.26	\$5,441.56
	Increase		\$788.75	\$534.88	\$449.30
	Base Rate	\$485.00	\$590.00	\$661.00	\$720.00
	Base Rate Increase \$'		\$105.00	\$71.00	\$59.00
	Base Rate Increase %		21.6%	12.0%	9.0%
Rate Category		2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029
Mining	Average Rate	\$373.00	\$453.00	\$508.00	\$553.00
	Increase		\$80.00	\$54.00	\$46.00
	Minimum Rate	\$373.00	\$453.00	\$508.00	\$553.00
	Min Rate Increase \$'		\$80.00	\$55.00	\$45.00
	Min Rate Increase %		21.4%	12.0%	9.0%

How does the proposed increase affect the distribution of the rating burden among ratepayers?

In the text box, explain the action, if any, the council took in response to feedback from the community.

The proposed MRI applies a uniform percentage increase to Council's general income. Because all rating categories—residential, mining, and business—receive the same percentage increase, the overall distribution of the rating burden remains consistent with the current structure. Ratepayers continue to contribute in proportion to their property category and land value under the existing ad valorem system. No category will experience a disproportionate shift in rating responsibility as a result of the proposal.

During community engagement, some ratepayers expressed concern about affordability, particularly for low-income households and pensioners. In response, Council strengthened its communication materials to highlight the availability of existing pensioner rebates and hardship assistance, and committed to reviewing its Hardship Policy to ensure it remains contemporary and responsive during the MRI period. Several submissions also asked whether certain sectors could be exempted or have lower increases; Council considered this feedback but determined that applying a consistent percentage increase across all assessments was the fairest approach and avoided shifting the rating burden onto any single group of ratepayers.

Overall, the proposed MRI maintains an equitable distribution of rates while ensuring all ratepayers contribute proportionately to the long-term financial sustainability of Council's services and infrastructure.

How has the council considered affordability and the affected ratepayers' capacity to pay higher rates, including measures to address hardship?

In the text box, explain how the council considered whether the rate increases would be affordable for the affected ratepayers, including any socioeconomic data referred to in making its assessment, and any measures the council proposes to use to reduce the impact, if necessary.

Council has considered affordability and the community's capacity and willingness to pay through the *Capacity to Pay Report*, which analysed household income levels, socio-economic indicators, and ratepayer demographics.

This evidence base was integrated into the Delivery Program, ensuring that service priorities are balanced against financial realities and that projects are only pursued where they can be funded without imposing unreasonable burdens on ratepayers.

The Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) further tested affordability by modelling different revenue scenarios, including rate variations, to assess their impact on household budgets and long-term sustainability.

Council also undertook community consultation, including surveys and public exhibition periods, to gauge willingness to pay and to understand concerns about affordability, particularly among fixed-income households. Feedback from these processes was documented and informed adjustments to proposals.

Together, these instruments demonstrate that Council has acted transparently, tested affordability against objective measures, and incorporated community willingness to pay into its financial planning and decision-making.

Specifically, Council demonstrated its consideration of affordability and community willingness to pay by:

- Modelling rate scenarios in the Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP)
- Aligning service delivery in the Delivery Program
- Adjusting its SRV proposal based on community feedback
- Enhancing hardship support mechanisms here to enter text.

Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) 2025–2035

- Council revised its LTFP to reflect updated financial forecasts and community priorities.
- The plan includes modelling of multiple SRV scenarios, ranging from 48.3% to 68% cumulative increases over three years.
- Council used these scenarios to assess the community's capacity to absorb rate increases while maintaining essential services and infrastructure.
- The LTFP also incorporates assumptions about pensioner rebates and hardship provisions to mitigate affordability impacts.

Delivery Program 2025–2026

- The Delivery Program outlines service levels and capital works aligned with the revised LTFP.
- Council prioritised projects that deliver high community value while remaining financially viable.
- The program reflects Council's intent to balance service delivery with affordability, including staged implementation of infrastructure upgrades.

Community Consultation – “Shaping Tomorrow” Campaign

- Council conducted a region-wide engagement program in early 2025, including:
 - Online surveys
 - Community information sessions (Glen Innes, Deepwater, Emmaville)
 - Public submissions on the draft CSP, Delivery Program, Operational Plan, and LTFP

- Feedback revealed strong concern about affordability, especially among pensioners and low-income households.
- In response, Council:
 - Reduced its proposed SRV from 68% to 48.3% over three years
 - Committed to reviewing its hardship policy
 - Introduced a \$50 pensioner rebate.

Table 2 Criterion 2 attachments

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references
10	Council Minutes - Capacity to Pay Report	125 (as numbered)
03	Long Term Financial Plan	Key affordability modelling
04	Community Engagement Materials	

Criterion 3 – Consultation on the proposal

Criterion 3 in the MR Guidelines requires IPART to assess applications in light of the consultation the council has undertaken to obtain the community's views on the proposal.

The criterion requires IPART to make an assessment on the council's consultation with its community about the proposal to increase minimum rates.

Although this criterion does not specify the various aspects of how the council should conduct consultation on the minimum rate increases, IPART expects that councils should be able to offer evidence to demonstrate that its consultation has been effective. Councils need to use appropriate methods to make the community aware of the proposal and afford ratepayers opportunities to provide feedback and show that the proposed increase is reflected in its IP&R documents.

The breadth and depth of the consultation should be commensurate with the size of the proposed increase in rates and tailored to the specific circumstances of the minimum rate increase, including whether or not it is part of a proposed SV.

IPART expects that the consultation would:

- include the broader community as well as the ratepayers directly affected
- explain the rationale for the proposal, and
- transparently outline:
 - how the proposed minimum rate increase incorporates the rate peg and/or SV percentage increase
 - the annual increase (rather than just a weekly amount)
 - the full cumulative increase in percentage terms, and the total increase in dollar terms for ratepayers in each affected rating category
 - the impact on other ratepayers in the category who do not pay the minimum rate
 - any change in the proportion of ratepayers on the minimum rate.

For councils also applying for an SV, it is not sufficient to only communicate the proposed average rates (i.e. ad-valorem or base rate + ad-valorem) in the council's community consultation materials. IPART would also expect to see evidence that the council has communicated the proposed minimum rates to ratepayers in dollar terms.

Councils are strongly encouraged to review section 4 of IPART's Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply, in particular for information about community awareness and engagement for special variations and minimum rates.

How to respond for Criterion 3

The response for this criterion should demonstrate that the council used an appropriate range of methods to inform the community about the proposed increase to minimum rates and offered opportunities for the community to provide their comments on the proposal.

Where applicable, councils should provide references to their IP&R documents dealing with the proposal to increase minimum rates to demonstrate how the criterion has been met.

In the **text box**, the council should explain the consultation process, including:

- how the council has consulted with the community
- the forms of consultation used
- when consultation occurred
- which groups were consulted
- opportunities for the community to give feedback
- a summary of the outcomes and feedback received
- any action taken, or which will be taken, to address issues of common concern within the community about the proposal to increase minimum rates.

If the increase to minimum rates is in conjunction with a proposed SV, the response for criterion 3 should focus on the aspects directly relevant to the proposed MR increase.

How did the council consult the community about the proposed increases to minimum rates?

Extensive community engagement was undertaken through the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) 2025–2035, including the “*Shaping Tomorrow*” community consultation activities and exhibition process, demonstrates a clear community desire to maintain and improve essential services—particularly local roads, waste services, town amenities, and core community infrastructure. Across the CSP engagement sessions, residents consistently identified the condition of roads, the reliability of waste services, and the upkeep of public spaces as top priorities, while also expressing concern about affordability and the financial pressures facing households.

The CSP summarises these expectations, noting that the community wants “well-maintained roads, reliable essential services, and attractive, functional town centres” (CSP 2025–2035, pp. 14–15). At the same time, the CSP acknowledges the challenge of balancing service expectations with financial constraints, stating that the community seeks “responsible financial management that ensures services and infrastructure are maintained for future generations.”

Translation of Community Priorities into the Delivery Program

The Delivery Program 2025–2029 translates these community priorities into specific service commitments and funded actions. It highlights that maintaining service levels—particularly in roads, buildings, open spaces, waste, and community facilities—requires stable and adequate revenue. The DP explicitly recognises that Council’s ability to deliver these services is constrained by limited revenue growth and rising costs, noting that “Council’s budget faces significant pressures... with costs increasing at a greater rate than revenue.”

The DP also outlines the financial sustainability challenges identified through the independent 2024 Financial Sustainability Review and the development of the LTFP. It states that while Council is pursuing efficiency measures, service reviews, and improved asset management, “these initiatives... are not likely to fully address Council’s operating deficits or its declining cash entirely.” As a result, the DP makes clear that maintaining the service levels expected by the community will require additional revenue through an SRV.

Limited Resourcing Alternatives Identified in the LTFP

The Long-Term Financial Plan 2025–2035 reinforces that Council has very limited alternatives to generate the revenue needed to sustain community-desired service levels. The LTFP notes that Council has “very limited opportunity to materially increase own-source revenue,” due to statutory limits on fees, a small rating base, and limited commercial activity. It also highlights that relying on grants is not a viable long-term strategy, as grant funding is uncertain and cannot be used to support core operating costs.

The LTFP demonstrates that even with efficiency gains, service reviews, and cost-recovery improvements in waste, water, and sewer services, the General Fund remains in structural deficit under the baseline scenario. Without additional revenue, the LTFP shows that Council would be forced to reduce service levels—an outcome that is inconsistent with the priorities expressed by the community through the CSP and engagement processes.

Alignment Between Community Expectations and the SRV

The combined evidence from the CSP, DP, and LTFP shows:

- The community expects Council to maintain or improve essential services, particularly roads, waste, and town amenities.
- The community does not support significant service reductions, even while expressing concern about affordability.
- Council has already implemented and planned efficiency measures, but these are insufficient to close the structural deficit.
- There are no realistic alternatives to a rate rise that would allow Council to maintain the service levels the community has identified as priorities.
- The SRV is therefore necessary to align community expectations with Council's financial capacity.

The Delivery Program summarises this alignment clearly, stating that "to fully fund the delivery of services and meet unexpected emergencies... Council considered permanent Special Rate Variation (SRV) options in addition to the rate peg."

The Community Engagement Program achieved a high degree of community awareness about:

- The new Draft CSP, Draft DP, Draft OP and Revised LTFP,
- Council's challenge to achieve Financial Sustainability,
- Council's proposal to apply to IPART for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) in 2026, and the four financial options and SRV scenarios being considered, and
- The impact on rate payers in relation to each SRV Scenario across each of the average rating categories.

Active participation in Town Hall and virtual meetings, completion of paper-based and online surveys and submissions to Council, as well as the outcomes from the Micromex phone survey, indicate a very high level of awareness among the 8,945 people of the in the Glen Innes Severn community about the proposed SRV. Further details of the *Shaping Tomorrow Community Engagement Program* are provided in Section 4 below.

The majority of the population (64%) indicated that they would prefer not to have a Special Rate Variation due to their already strained financial situation. However more than one in three residents (36%) were supportive at least some level of rate variation (36%). The majority of residents (88%) believe it is important or very important for Council to implement plans and programs that will maintain/renew local infrastructure in the local area.

Following the conclusion of the engagement program adjustments were made with a revised more modest SRV recommended to Council.

b. What was the consultation period?

28 April - 6 June 2025

c. Which groups in the community were consulted?

Council consulted a broad cross-section of the community to ensure awareness and input into the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV). Engagement activities targeted:

- **General residents and ratepayers**
 - Through letters sent to all ratepayers, resident newsletters, and the "Shaping Tomorrow" information pack distributed online and in physical locations (Library, Council Administration Centre).
 - Rate impact tables and explanatory materials were made available to demonstrate the cumulative effect of the SRV.
- **Pensioners and vulnerable households**
 - Targeted outreach was conducted to pensioners, including information on rebates and hardship policies.
 - Council introduced a \$50 pensioner rebate in direct response to feedback.
- **Rural and farming communities**
 - Specific consultation materials outlined impacts for farmland categories.
 - Town Hall meetings were held in rural centres (Emmaville, Deepwater) to ensure rural voices were heard.
- **Business community**
 - Rate impact tables included business categories.
 - Local businesses were invited to participate via surveys, Have Your Say portal, and Town Hall sessions.
- **Community organisations and stakeholders**
 - Information was shared through local newspapers, radio, and community networks.
 - Council encouraged submissions from community groups concerned with service delivery and infrastructure renewal.
- **Digital participants**
 - Online engagement via the Have Your Say portal, information videos, and surveys (Micromex online and phone survey).
 - Virtual Town Hall meetings ensured accessibility for those unable to attend in person.

d. How were the proposed changes to minimum rates presented to the community?

The proposed changes to minimum rates were presented transparently through Council's "Shaping Tomorrow" community engagement campaign and associated consultation materials. Council ensured that the community was aware of both the percentage increase and the dollar impact for the average ratepayer across rating categories.

- Rate Impact Tables: Published in consultation documents and the Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP), showing the cumulative increase (48.3% over three years) and the dollar impacts for residential, farmland, and business categories.
- Delivery Program & LTFP: Detailed modelling of the proposed minimum rate changes, clearly linking the increases to service delivery outcomes and infrastructure renewal priorities.
- Community Information Pack & Have Your Say Portal: Included explanatory materials, FAQs, and videos outlining how minimum rates would change and what this meant for different groups of ratepayers.
- Direct Communication: Letters to ratepayers and newsletters highlighted the proposed minimum rate changes, with examples of impacts on typical households and businesses.
- Public Meetings & Surveys: Town Hall sessions and the Micromex survey provided opportunities for residents to ask questions and give feedback on the proposed minimum rate increases.
- Council emphasised both the need for the changes (to address the structural deficit and maintain services) and the extent of the impact (in clear percentage and dollar terms), ensuring the community could make informed submissions.

e. What feedback from the community was received?

Community feedback gathered through surveys, town hall meetings, written submissions, and online engagement highlighted several recurring themes:

- Affordability concerns: Many residents, particularly pensioners and low-income households, felt the proposed 68% SRV was unaffordable and would cause financial hardship.
- Scale of increase: Ratepayers questioned why such a large cumulative increase was necessary, with some suggesting a smaller, staged rise.
- Impact on rural and farming communities: Farmers and rural residents raised concerns about disproportionate impacts on farmland categories.
- Business impacts: Local businesses expressed worry about higher operating costs and competitiveness.
- Demand for efficiency: Residents asked Council to demonstrate cost savings and internal efficiencies before seeking higher rates.

- Transparency and trust: Some submissions requested clearer communication about how the funds would be used and whether service improvements would be delivered.

f. How the council responded to any issues of concern raised in feedback from the community.

Council made several adjustments in direct response to community concerns:

- Reduced SRV proposal: The originally proposed 68% increase was scaled back to 48.3% over three years, easing the financial burden.
- Pensioner support: Council introduced a \$50 pensioner rebate to assist vulnerable households.
- Hardship policy review: Council committed to updating its hardship and concession policies to provide more flexible support for struggling ratepayers.
- Efficiency savings: Council identified over \$600,000 in internal savings and committed to ongoing service reviews, demonstrating responsiveness to calls for efficiency.
- Community engagement adjustments: Council extended consultation timelines and provided additional explanatory materials (rate impact tables, videos, FAQs) to improve transparency.

Table 3 Criterion 3 Attachments

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references
03	Glen Innes Severn Community Engagement Materials	

Other relevant matters

The MR Guidelines provide that we will assess each application based on its merits against the 3 assessment criteria and any other matters we consider relevant. The MR Guidelines do not specify examples of such matters.

Consistent with the approach for assessing SV applications, IPART's approach will be to assess each of the 3 criteria, then make an overall assessment taking into account any other relevant factors.

In the text box, the council may provide information in addition to that provided elsewhere in the application which it would like to be considered when assessing the proposed increase to minimum rate(s).

Not applicable

Table 4 Attachments for other relevant matters

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references

Council certification and contact information

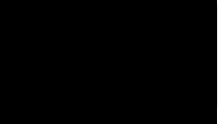
Certification of application

Councils must submit a declaration in the specified form. It should be completed by the General Manager and the Responsible Accounting Officer. Prepare a document in the form indicated below, sign, scan and attach as a public supporting document.

To be completed by General Manager and Responsible Accounting Officer

Name of the council:	Glen Innes Severn Council
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We certify that to the best of our knowledge the information provided in this application is correct and complete.

General Manager (name):	Mr Bernard Smith
Signature and Date:	 30/01/2026
Responsible Accounting Officer (name):	Mr Gary Mills
Signature and Date:	 30/01/2026

Note: These signatures will be redacted before publication of the application.

Council contact information

IPART's formal contact with the council will be with the General Manager.

During the assessment period, IPART officers are likely to contact the council with detailed queries about the application and supporting documents. Councils should provide direct contact details of the primary contact for such inquiries where this person is a council officer who is not the General Manager. Council officer contact details will be redacted before publication of this application.

General Manager

General Manager contact phone	
General Manager contact email	

Note: These contact details will be redacted before publication of the application.

Primary council contact

Council contact phone	[REDACTED]
Council contact email	[REDACTED]
Council email for inquiries about the MR application	[REDACTED]

Note: These contact details will be redacted before publication of the application.

Secondary council contact

Council contact phone	[REDACTED]
Council contact email	[REDACTED]
Council email for inquiries about the MR application	[REDACTED]

Note: These contact details will be redacted before publication of the application.

List of attachments

Table 5 is a checklist to ensure that all relevant documents are submitted to IPART.

Some documents are mandatory for all councils to submit, while others are only applicable if required by the council's specific circumstances and application. Each council can determine which other supporting materials to attach. To assist councils, Table 5 includes the names of some supporting documents commonly provided.

If the increase to minimum rates is in conjunction with a proposed SV, councils should include in the List of attachments all documents relied on in the application and referred to in Tables 1-4.

Complete the List of attachments, adding rows as necessary:

- name each document.
- check the box to indicate that it is being submitted with the application.

IPART will publish on our website the Application Forms and all material submitted as attachments to the application (unless it is marked confidential).

Table 5 List of attachments to the council's application

Name of Attachment	The document is included	The document is not applicable	The document was attached with the SV Part B Application Form
Mandatory forms/attachments (i.e. to be published on IPART's website):			
Application Form Part A (Excel spreadsheet)	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Application Form Part B (this Word document)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Council resolution to apply for the for the minimum rate increase	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Completed certification	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delivery Program	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Long Term Financial Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community feedback (including surveys and results if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Willingness to pay study (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hardship Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other public supporting materials:			
Community Engagement Materials			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community Feedback 19 June 2025			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Name of Attachment	The document is included	The document is not applicable	The document was attached with the SV Part B Application Form
Confidential supporting material (i.e. not to be published on IPART's website):			
(List the documents)			

Important information

Submitting online

Applications must be submitted through IPART's LG Portal by 05:00pm on Monday, 2 February 2026. Councils should note a file size limit of 150MB applies to any individual document uploaded in the portal.

It is not necessary to submit a duplicate copy of a document with the MR Increase Application Form if the council has submitted the same document as an attachment to its SV Application Form.

Confidential content

IPART will publish all applications (excluding confidential content) on our website. Examples of confidential content are those parts of a document which disclose the personal identity or other personal information pertaining to a member of the public, a document such as a council working document that does not have formal status, or a document which includes commercial-in-confidence content.

Councils should ensure supporting documents are redacted to remove confidential content where possible, or clearly marked as **CONFIDENTIAL**.

Publishing the council's application

Councils should also publish their application on their own website for the community to access.