



Special Variation Application Form Part B

Hawkesbury City Council

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.

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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 Description and Context	3
Question 1: What type and size of SV is the council is applying for?	3
Question 2: Is the council applying for a Crown Land Adjustment (CLA) in 2026-27?	4
Question 3: What is the key purpose of the requested SV?	5
Question 4: Is the council proposing to increase minimum rates in conjunction with the special variation?	6
Question 5: Does the council have an expiring SV?	7
Question 6: Does the council have an existing (ongoing) section 508A special variation which applies in 2026-27?	8
Question 7: Has IPART ever approved a special variation (including additional special variations in 2022-23)?	9
Question 8: Does the council have deferred general income increases available to it?	10
3 OLG SV Criterion 1 – Financial need	12
3.1 Additional information required for councils with an existing SV applying for an additional percentage increase	17
3.2 Any other factors that demonstrate the council's financial need (optional)	17
4 OLG SV Criterion 2 – Community awareness and engagement	19
4.1 How did the council engage with the community about the proposed special variation?	19
4.2 Proposed average rates outlined in the council's community consultation materials	23
4.3 Additional information (optional)	23
5 OLG SV Criterion 3 – Impact on ratepayers	25
5.1 How did the council clearly show the impact of any rate rises on the community?	25
5.2 How has the council considered affordability and the community's capacity and willingness to pay?	26
5.3 How has the council addressed (or intend to address) concerns about affordability?	27
5.4 Are there any other factors that may influence the impact of the council's proposed rate rise on ratepayers (optional)?	29
6 OLG SV Criterion 4 – Exhibition and adoption of IP&R documents	30
7 OLG SV Criterion 5 – Productivity improvements and cost-containment	32
7.1 What is the council's strategic approach to improving productivity in its operations and asset management?	32
7.2 What outcomes has the council achieved from productivity improvements and cost containment strategies in past years?	33
7.3 What productivity improvements and cost containment strategies are planned for future years?	36
7.4 How has the council's levels of productivity and efficiency changed over time, and compared to similar councils?	37

8	Council certification and contact information	40
8.1	Certification of application and declaration	40
8.2	Council contact information	41
9	List of required attachments	42
10	Checklists	45

Council Information

Please fill out the table below.

Council name	Hawkesbury City Council
Date submitted to IPART	2 February 2025

1 About this application form

This application form is to be completed by councils applying for a special variation (SV) to general income for 2026-27 under section 508(2) or 508A of the *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act). The application form is in two parts:

1. Application Form [Part A](#) (separate Excel spreadsheet)
2. Special Variation Application Form Part B (this MS Word document)

The SV Application Form Part B collects:

- Description and Context information for the SV
- Evidence against:
 - Criterion 1: Need for the variation
 - Criterion 2: Community awareness and engagement
 - Criterion 3: Impact on ratepayers
 - Criterion 4: Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) documents
 - Criterion 5: Productivity improvements and cost containment strategies
 - Criterion 6: Other relevant matters
- Council certification and contact information

It also provides a List of attachments and checklist to assist councils.

When completing this Application Form, councils should refer to:

- The 'Apply for a SV or minimum rates (MR) increase' page of IPART's [website](#)
- The Office of Local Government (OLG) [Guidelines](#) issued in November 2020
- IPART's SV Guidance Booklet – *Special Variations: How to prepare and apply* available on our [website](#).

We encourage Councils to contact IPART early in their preparation to apply, or potentially apply, for an SV.

2 Description and Context

These questions seek information not tied to a specific criterion in the OLG guidelines.

Question 1: What type and size of SV is the council is applying for?

In Table 1, please use the checkboxes to indicate the type of SV the council is applying for. In Table 2, please provide, rounded to **1 decimal place**, unless otherwise specified in Table 3:

- the total percentage increase (including the rate peg) and,
- for a section 508A SV, the cumulative percentage increase over the SV period.

The percentage increases applied for should match any percentages specified in the council resolution to apply for an SV. That is, the council resolution should be specified to 1 decimal place unless the council specifically wants a different number of decimal places.

Should an SV be approved, the instrument will list the approved percentage(s) and the maximum permitted cumulative increase. If the cumulative increase is not specified in the council resolution, we will use 1 decimal place unless a different number of decimal places is specifically requested in Table 3.

If applying for a Crown Land Adjustment (CLA), please **do not** include the CLA percentage in Table 2. Information about CLAs is collected in Question 2 below.

In Table 3, please explain if the council would like its instrument issued to a different number of decimal places and if it has used an assumed rate peg that is not 2.5%.

Our [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) has an example of these questions completed.

Table 1 Type of special variation

What type of SV is this application for?	<input type="checkbox"/> Section 508(2)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Section 508A	
Are you applying for Permanent or Temporary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permanent	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary	<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent + Temporary

Table 2 The council's proposed special variation

	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33
Is this year in the SV period?	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no
Percentage increase	8.66%	8.66%	8.66%	8.66%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rate peg	3.1%	3.0%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%

	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33
Cumulative percentage increase over the SV period for s 508A	8.66%	18.07%	28.29%	39.41%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Indicate which years are permanent or temporary	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 3 Further questions

Question	The council's response
Does the council wish its potential SV instrument to be issued with a different number of decimal places?	Yes
If the council used an assumed rate peg that is not 2.5%, please briefly justify why it did so.	<p>Council utilised an assumed rate peg of 3.9% for its initial modelling and community consultation. This amount was used as it aligned to the rate peg determined for Hawkesbury City Council for the 2025/2026 financial year. This amount was also advised to be suitable in consultation with IPART.</p> <p>Council has subsequently utilised a revised rate peg modelled into the assumptions of the Long Term Financial Plan of:</p> <p>2026/2027 – 3.1% 2027/2028 – 3.0% 2029/2030 Onwards – 2.5%</p> <p>This provides the most up to date data possible, incorporating the confirmed rate peg for 2026/2027 and a balanced projection of future rate pegs in line with recent decisions and the expected inflationary environment</p>

Question 2: Is the council applying for a Crown Land Adjustment (CLA) in 2026-27?

Please fill out the table below if the council is also applying for a CLA, otherwise leave it blank.

Is the council also applying for a CLA?	No
If so, by what percentage?	N/A
What is the dollar (\$) value for the CLA?	N/A
Who was the prior owner of the Crown Land?	N/A
Briefly outline the reason for the land becoming rateable.	N/A

Question 3: What is the key purpose of the requested SV?

In the text box below please summarise the key purpose(s) of the proposed SV.

The purpose of the proposed Special Variation (SV) is to deliver vital asset renewals, particularly on the local road network.

The Asset Management Strategy 2025-2035 (AMS) details the asset challenges facing Council and the current \$99.1m unfunded asset renewal shortfall. Without additional funding, this shortfall is projected to grow to approximately \$170m by 2035.

Council faces a substantial infrastructure backlog due to years of constrained revenue growth under the rate peg, compounded by escalating service delivery expectations, natural disasters that have accelerated asset decline, and ageing community assets.

As detailed within the AMS and the Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 (LTFP), maintaining these infrastructure assets across a large, disaster-prone region, while balancing rising costs and limited revenue options, threatens long term financial sustainability unless additional funding is secured.

The need for increased investment in the road network is the most pressing both from an asset condition perspective, as well as responding to community priorities.

Improving roads and the investment in infrastructure is repeatedly highlighted as the number one priority for our community. Council cannot meet community expectations or maintain high quality, reliable roads and infrastructure without a significant increase in available funding for asset renewal.

Council has received significant amounts of grant funding in recent years to repair and remediate the major damages incurred throughout the flooding events of 2020-2022. Council is also receiving the Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants funding from 2025-2028.

The recovery funding received has been dedicated to immediate, critical and urgent repairs on damaged infrastructure. As these grants are finalised and the income ceases, the ongoing investment in asset renewals will be insufficient to remediate the current backlog of unfunded renewals and this will grow sharply if additional funding is not secured.

These grants have and will inflate Council's capital budget during this period, essentially masking Council's underlying and ongoing asset renewal expenditure shortfalls.

The proposed SV seeks to address this critical funding gap in the asset renewal program. The SV is designed to secure a stable and predictable revenue stream dedicated specifically to the renewal of existing infrastructure.

Alternatively, if Council does not pursue an SV, it will be subject to increased future financial challenges to address the asset renewals. This would lead to significant reductions to service levels and a greater need to increase revenue from other sources, noting there is limited capacity to achieve this currently.

Council is implementing a proactive Comprehensive Spending Review within the 2026/2027 budget cycle, to identify a minimum of \$1 million in recurrent savings. This complements a program of continued savings and efficiency initiatives in recent years to identify and implement measures which support budget sustainability.

This also includes the potential divestment of the Windsor Sewerage Scheme which will provide financial benefits to Council and customers of the Scheme should the divestment proceed.

Notably, even when incorporating these past and future savings into future modelling, these measures are insufficient to achieve a tangible increase in available asset renewal funding.

The proposed SV allows for significant funding that can be utilised quickly, which also helps to reduce the future compounding effects of the current shortfall.

Question 4: Is the council proposing to increase minimum rates in conjunction with the special variation?

Complete Table 4 if the council proposes to increase minimum ordinary rates and/or Table 5 if the council proposes to increase special rates in conjunction with the SV for 2026-27. Otherwise, leave it blank. IPART will also use data provided in Application Form [Part A](#) to understand the details of the proposed SV and minimum amounts of rates.

In some situations, a minimum rates increase will be subject to IPART approval. In these cases, councils will need to also complete *Minimum Rate Increase Application Form Part B 2026-27* (Word document) available on our [website](#). Please see Table 2.4 of the [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) for further information on when an additional MR increase application may be required. Councils do not need to submit another Application form Part A (Excel document).

Table 4 Minimum rates increase for ordinary rates

Does the council have an ordinary rate(s) subject to a minimum amount?	No
Does the council propose to increase the minimum rate(s) above the statutory limit for the first time? (If yes, you must complete a separate minimum rate increase application form.)	No
Does the council propose to increase the minimum rate(s) above the proposed SV percentage(s)? (If yes, you must complete a separate minimum rate increase application form, even if the council has been approved to increase its minimum rate above the statutory limit in the past.)	No
Has the council submitted an application for a minimum rate increase?	No

In the text box below, provide the council's proposed minimum rates increase (both in percentage and dollar terms) and to which rating category (or sub-category) the increase is to apply for each year (this can be in table form).

N/A

Worksheets 4, 5 and 7 (WS 4, 5 and 7) of the [Part A](#) application form collects more detailed information about the proposed minimum rates increase.

Table 5 Minimum rates increase for special rates

Does the council propose to increase the minimum amount of a special rate above the statutory limit?	No
What will the minimum amount of the special rate(s) be after the proposed increase?	N/A
Has the council submitted an application for a minimum rate increase?	No

The council must ensure that it has submitted [MR Increase Application Form Part B](#), if required. No separate Part A is required.

Question 5: Does the council have an expiring SV?

Complete the table below if the council has a temporary SV which is due to expire:

- on 30 June 2026, or
- at the end of any year in the period the requested SV would apply.

To calculate the amount to be removed from general income when the SV expires, councils must follow the terms of the relevant condition in the SV instrument. Councils may find the example in Attachment 1 to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) useful. The OLG's SV Guidelines also specify that councils must contact the OLG to confirm the calculation of this amount.

Does the council have an SV which is due to expire on 30 June 2026?	No
Does the council have one or more SV/s due to expire during the proposed SV period?	No
If Yes to either question: a. When does the SV expire?	N/A

b. What is the percentage to be removed from the council's general income?	N/A
c. What is the dollar amount to be removed from the council's general income?	N/A
Has OLG confirmed the calculation of the amount to be removed?	N/A

Attachments required:

- Instrument(s) approving any SV which expires at 30 June 2026 or during the period covered by the proposed SV.
- OLG advice confirming calculation of the dollar amount to be removed from general income as a result of the expiring SV.

Question 6: Does the council have an existing (ongoing) section 508A special variation which applies in 2026-27?

Complete this question if the council has an existing section 508A multi-year SV instrument which approves an increase to general income above the rate peg for 2026-27 and future years within the period covered by the council's SV application.

If the council has an ongoing section 508A SV and is seeking additional changes to general income during the term of that existing SV, IPART will need to vary the original instrument if the application is approved, rather than issuing a separate SV instrument to apply for 2026-27 (or later years).

Does the council have a section 508A multi-year SV instrument that applies in 2026-27?	No
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If yes to the above question, in the text box below:

- Specify the percentage increase(s) and duration of the SV
- Outline the council's actions in complying with conditions in the instrument approving the original SV
- Describe any significant changes relevant to the conditions in the instrument since it was issued.

Supporting documents could include extracts from annual reports or any other publications in which compliance with the terms of the SV has been reported to ratepayers.

N/A

Attachments required:

- A declaration by the General Manager as to the council's compliance with the conditions specified in the SV instrument on the council's official letterhead.
- Supporting documents providing evidence of the council's actions to comply with the conditions in the instrument. For example, extracts from annual reports or any other publications in which compliance with the terms of the SV has been reported to ratepayers.

Question 7: Has IPART *ever* approved a special variation (including additional special variations in 2022-23)?

Complete this question if IPART has ever approved an SV for the council.

You **do not need** to complete the text box for this question if the relevant information has been provided in the council's response to Question 6.

Does the council have a section 508(2) or 508A SV which IPART has approved?	Yes
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If yes, in the text box below, for each SV approved by IPART, briefly:

- Specify the type of SV and the increase to general income approved.
- Outline the council's actions in complying with conditions in the SV instrument(s) or where the council has failed to comply with the conditions, provide reasons and list the corrective actions undertaken.
- Describe any *significant* changes relevant to the conditions in the SV instrument(s) since it was issued.

Supporting documents could include extracts from annual reports (or webpage hyperlinks to them) or any other publications in which compliance with the terms of the SV has been reported to ratepayers.

Hawkesbury City Council applied for a multi-year permanent special variation of 9.50% each year from 2018/2019 to 2020/2021, comprising a total cumulative increase of 31.29%. The annual increase included the rate peg of 2.3% in 2018/2019 and an assumed rate peg of 2.5% in future years. The SV was approved in line with the application.

The SV was approved to fund operational and capital expenditure, reduce the infrastructure backlog and improve financial sustainability. The conditions included that the funding be used for these purposes, and that a report be provided in Council's Annual Report from 2018/2019 until 2027/2028 on the expenditure and outcomes achieved.

Council reported as conditioned via the Annual Report and will continue to report on the approved SV until year 2027/2028 as conditioned.

The reporting outlines the projects and dollar amounts the additional funding was directed towards on an annual basis.

The attachment provided contains each year's report extracted from the Annual Report as published by Council and provided to the Office of Local Government.

The declaration from the General Manager confirms Council's compliance to the reporting requirements of the instrument.

Hawkesbury City Council also received an Additional Special Variation (ASV) for 2022/2023 that allowed a further increase from the approved rate peg of 0.8% to up to a total increase of 2.5% for that year.

Attachments required:

- A declaration by the General Manager as to the council's compliance with the conditions specified in the SV instrument(s).
- Supporting documents providing evidence of the council's actions to comply with the conditions in the instrument(s). For example, extracts from annual reports or any other publications in which compliance with the conditions of the SV instrument has been reported to ratepayers.
- If applicable, supporting documents providing evidence of the corrective actions undertaken in the event of a failure to comply with the conditions in the SV instrument(s).

Question 8: Does the council have deferred general income increases available to it?

Complete the question box below if the council has decided not to apply the full percentage increases to general income available to it in one or more previous years under sections 506, 508(2) or 508A of the LG Act.

Does the council have deferred general income increases available to it from one or more previous years under section 511 of the LG Act?	No
If Yes, has the collection of this additional income been included in the Council's Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP)?	N/A

In the text boxes also explain:

a. The quantum, rationale and timing of any deferred increases in general income.

N/A

b. When council plans to catch up on the deferred general income through the catch-up provisions and whether this been included in the LTFP.

N/A

c. How does this deferred income impact on the council's need for the SV and its cumulative impact on ratepayers' capacity to pay? The council may also wish to further expand on this question in

Table 6 in the OLG Criterion 1 section below.

N/A

3 OLG SV Criterion 1 – Financial need

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 3 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and material for completing this section.

In

Table 6 below, please explain how the council met each component of Criterion 1. Please also provide a reference to evidence in the IP&R documents.

The [Part A](#) application form also collects information for this criterion in Worksheets 9 (WS 9 - Financial), 10 (WS 10 - LTFP) and 11 (WS 11 - Ratios).

Table 6 OLG Criterion 1 components

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
The need for, and purpose of, a different revenue path for the council's General Fund (as requested through the SV) is clearly articulated and identified in the council's IP&R documents	<p>Council completed a review of its full suite of Integrated Planning & Reporting documents in 2025, adhering to the post-election requirements under the Local Government Act. This included a review of the Community Strategic Plan and development of a new four-year Delivery Program. The community repeatedly highlighted roads and infrastructure as the number one priority for the future of the Hawkesbury.</p> <p>Key to the review was the completion of Council's updated Asset Management Plans which detailed the specific asset management requirements and details for each of Council's asset classes – roads, buildings, stormwater and open space.</p> <p>The Asset Management Plans combined with the Asset Management Strategy and Long Term Financial Plan, detailed Council's significant financial pressures and explored various options and scenarios into the future.</p> <p>The central theme of the financial and asset scenarios was the current value of the unfunded asset renewals and the projections of this compounding problem should additional funding not be secured.</p>	<p>Attachment 8 – Hawkesbury City Council Asset Management Strategy 2025-2035</p> <p>Attachments 9 to 12 – Hawkesbury City Council Asset Management Plans</p> <p>Attachment 7 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035</p> <p>Attachment 5 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Delivery Program 2025-2029</p>

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
	<p>Scenarios were used to model the investment required to eliminate the unfunded renewals over 10 and 20 year time horizons (Improve and Resolve) while the Decline scenario mirrored current funding levels.</p> <p>Council's infrastructure has been significantly damaged by repeated flooding events, and historic underfunding, despite the additional funding provided through the previous SV and recovery grants. Into the future, Council's assets, particularly the road network will be unable to meet service level expectations when Council's budget returns to more normalised conditions.</p> <p>This is due to a range of factors including the high infrastructure cost per resident, rising construction costs, natural disasters and operational budgets capping available funding for asset renewal.</p> <p>The Asset Management Strategy 2025-2035 (AMS) states - "Asset lifecycle models have been developed for various asset groups to estimate the funds required for asset renewal and clearing the unfunded renewals over a 10-year period. These models have predicted an approximate \$17 million annual renewal gap and \$100 million in total unfunded renewals over the 10 year strategy. Consequently, Council will need to seek additional funding for the renewal of its asset portfolio, or continue to see a decline in the condition of its assets, with a permanent lowering of service levels." (Page 6)</p> <p>The Strategy also details the current state of the assets portfolio including the renewal gap (Pages 18 – 23) and the above scenarios Decline, Improve , Resolve which provided the main input for the SRV proposal (Page 26-28)</p> <p>Council has amended its IPR documents (Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 and Delivery Program 2025-2029) following the SV proposal engagement and analysis phase to ensure the updated options, including the endorsed application amount of 8.66% for four years are reflected within the modelling and clearly explained.</p> <p>Council's Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 (LTFP) provides a thorough summary of the SV including purpose, impact on budget, community engagement, impact on ratepayers, the revision of the initial proposal and the alternatives should the SV not be applied (Page 9-13).</p> <p>It also provides the financial linkages to the asset scenarios and multiple financial models which demonstrate the impacts of the rate rise options (Pages 34-37). The scenarios demonstrate that even incorporating the SV, Council will still struggle with deficits in the later years, however be in a significantly improved position, particularly in relation to its unfunded renewals.</p>	

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
	<p>Council's Delivery Program 2025-2029 describes these challenges and Council's intent to investigate and implement all viable options to improve asset renewal outcomes. (Page 21) It also discussed the SRV and the implications of the application model on the four-year Delivery Program budget (Pages 43-47).</p>	
<p>In establishing need for the SV, the relevant IP&R documents should canvass alternatives to the rate rise.</p>	<p>Council's LTFP provides a Base Case financial model that mirrors closely the expected business as usual financial position (Pages 34-37). This model shows significant deficits as early as 2027/2028.</p> <p>"The unfunded asset renewals and backlog will continue to expand under this scenario and deliver a compounding effect of worsening condition. This follows the initial positive impacts delivered by the significant grant funding. Based on this scenario Council would not be considered as having strong financial sustainability and is therefore not the optimal long term model to pursue. (Page 36)"</p> <p>The LTFP explains that despite significant cost containment and efficiency initiatives in recent years and into the future, service level reductions are the only realistic alternative to achieve additional investment in assets. However, it is likely that a combination of these strategies will be the most optimum approach due to the significance of the current funding gap and the need to maintain services in line with community expectation and legislative requirements. (Page 13 and 17).</p> <p>This is reinforced in the AMS with a Fallback Strategy described for each asset class:</p> <p>"If Scenario 3 (Resolve) is not adopted, fallback strategies will be employed to maximise the effectiveness of the reduced works program under Scenario 1 (Decline).</p> <p>This would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Limiting maintenance and renewal to only critical repairs. •Prioritising safety-related works to mitigate risks associated with deteriorating roads and transport assets. • Accepting that ongoing degradation of roads and transport assets will result in reduced service levels. <p>Without sufficient funding, Council will be unable to minimise the degradation of its roads and transport assets, address compliance issues, or meet growing community expectations. Securing increased investment under Scenario 3 is essential to achieving sustainable outcomes and delivering the highest level of service to the Hawkesbury community." (Roads and Transport Asset Management Plan - Page 37)</p>	<p>Attachment 7 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035</p> <p>Attachment 8 – Hawkesbury City Council Asset Management Strategy 2025-2035</p> <p>Attachment 9 to 12– Hawkesbury City Council Asset Management Plans</p>

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
In demonstrating this need, councils must indicate the financial impact in their LTFP by applying the baseline and special variation scenarios.	Council's LTFP provides a thorough summary of the SV including purpose, impact on budget, community engagement, impact on ratepayers, the revision of the initial proposal and the alternatives should the SV not be applied (Page 9-13). It also provides the asset scenarios (Decline, Improve and Resolve) and multiple financial models (Base Case, SRV Exhibited, SRV Amended Sustain) which demonstrate the impacts of the exhibited and application proposals and baseline. (Page 34-37).	Attachment 7 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035
Evidence of community need/desire for service levels/projects and limited council resourcing alternatives.	<p>Council's Community Strategic Plan: Our Hawkesbury 2045 was developed through extensive community engagement. Improving roads and infrastructure was repeatedly highlighted through a range of engagement methods as the number one priority for the Hawkesbury. (Page 22 and 24)</p> <p>The current condition and desire to improve service levels of roads and infrastructure assets was key to informing the development of the AMS, LTFP and Delivery Program, including strategies to improve these outcomes.</p> <p>Council's formalised Community Satisfaction surveys have supported this, and these priorities have remained consistent for a significant period:</p> <p>2021 Community Satisfaction Results</p> <p>Drivers of Overall Satisfaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road maintenance number one. <p>2023 Community Satisfaction Survey Results</p> <p>Highest Priority Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 59% road maintenance and supporting infrastructure / access roads <p>Satisfaction Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road Maintenance scored lowest at 32% <p>Council's LTFP discussed various revenue opportunities and expected future costs, and the reasoning behind rating being a key strategy alongside potential reductions in services.</p>	<p>Attachment 3 – Hawkesbury City Council Community Strategic Plan: Our Hawkesbury 2045</p> <p>Attachment 22 – Results Report – Community Satisfaction Survey 2021</p> <p>Attachment 21 – Results Report – Community Satisfaction Survey 2023</p> <p>Attachment 20 – Results Report – Special Rate Variation Survey 2025</p> <p>Attachment 7 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035</p>

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
	<p>"Rates Revenue – This Strategy is aimed at undertaking a comprehensive review of Council's rating revenue approach and options to increase future funding from this source. This has included the development of proposals for Special Rate Variation options to proceed through engagement, analysis and application stages. These options are preferred as they provide the most rapid and sustained increases in funding." (Page 25)</p> <p>"Council aims to provide the highest level of service and match these service level requirements with community needs, priorities and legislative requirements. As can be seen within the LTFP models, even with increases in funding from the SRV, it is likely that future service levels will need to be reviewed and reduced to achieve ongoing financial sustainability.</p> <p>It is therefore seen that major service reductions are a complimentary strategy, rather than a real alternative for the magnitude of funding opportunities provided through the SRV proposals." (Page 28)</p>	
Evidence could also include the analysis of the council's financial sustainability conducted by Government agencies	There are no recent reports from Government agencies on Council's financial sustainability, however, recent articles and enquiries including the <i>NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services</i> provide important context.	N/A
If applicable, has the council not applied the full percentage increases available to it in one or more previous years under section 511 of the Local Government Act? If a council has a large amount of revenue yet to be caught up over the next several years, it should explain in its application how that impacts on its need for the SV.	N/A	N/A

3.1 Additional information required for councils with an existing SV applying for an additional percentage increase

If the council has **an existing SV**, then explain the need for **a variation to that SV** to increase the annual percentage increases.

N/A

3.2 Any other factors that demonstrate the council's financial need (optional)

In the text box please give a brief explanation of any other factors not already mentioned that may be relevant to demonstrate the council's need.

For instance, the council may wish to discuss the impact of **non-rateable** properties.

Natural Disaster and Flooding

The Hawkesbury region has a very high exposure to natural disasters as have been experienced in recent years. Dominated by the Hawkesbury-Nepean River System and the escarpment of the Blue Mountains to its west, it has one of the most significant flood risk exposures within Australia, while at the same time the substantial areas of bushland within the Hawkesbury creates a high vulnerability to bushfire events. Almost every part of the Hawkesbury is vulnerable to flooding or bushfire risks, a vulnerability which a changing climate is likely to intensify. The effects of these events create significant repair and recovery costs and accelerate the deterioration of Council's assets, particularly roads.

On top of the likely impacts of natural hazards (amplified and accelerated by climate change), acute shocks to Council's infrastructure assets, will be the chronic stressors, the impacts of which are only emerging and thus partially understood. As these are better understood, this will impact the way Council renews its assets, potentially placing an additional financial burden on the renewal task as "betterment" becomes necessary.

The improvement in the timeliness, quality and resilience of renewals facilitated through additional funding is key to the ongoing ability of the region to withstand these pressures.

Asset to Ratepayer Ratio

In comparison with many of its neighbouring councils with larger populations and more compact urban areas, the Hawkesbury has a large land area but a relatively smaller and decentralised rating base.

More than half of its residents live in semi-rural and rural areas and Council is required to provide core services and local facilities to outlying areas with small population catchments. As a result, the Hawkesbury has a very high ratio of infrastructure per resident (i.e. the total value of council assets divided by the estimated resident population - IPR).

Blacktown City Council IPR	The Hills Shire Council IPR	Penrith City Council IPR	Hawkesbury City Council IPR
\$10,513	\$11,042	\$12,901	\$20,630
of Assets Per Resident	of Assets Per Resident	of Assets Per Resident	of Assets Per Resident

Low Growth Factor

Whilst Council encourages growth within the community by revitalising town centres, open spaces and accompanying infrastructure, areas within the Hawkesbury continue to experience modest population growth, largely constrained by flooding risks. There remains a strong imperative to balance development with the protection of the distinct semi-rural, heritage rich character of townships and the broader community. The average growth from 2018 to 2023 equates to 0.35% with a total population of 68,704 whilst the LGA has a land area of 2,776km²; the population density remains at 24.55 persons per km².

Growth is expected to be modest into the future and thus growth factor increases are likely to be similarly modest.

Worksheet 12 (WS 12) in the [Part A](#) Excel application form can also be used to provide additional data.

4 OLG SV Criterion 2 – Community awareness and engagement

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 4 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and materials for completing this section. Please also note that section 4 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) is the IPART fact sheet referred to in the OLG SV Guidelines under Criterion 2 that provides guidance to councils on the community awareness and engagement criterion for special variations.

4.1 How did the council engage with the community about the proposed special variation?

In Table 7 please provide evidence as to how the councils community engagement met Criterion 2.

Table 7 Evidence of the council's community engagement demonstrating Criterion 2

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion	Reference to application supporting documents
Evidence that the community is aware of the need for and extent of a rate rise.	<p>Council completed an extensive program of community consultation of the SV proposal. This campaign was based on Council's Communications and Engagement Strategy, to ensure a wide range of engagement methods and approaches that align with stakeholders' preferences.</p> <p>This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A direct mailout to over 25,000 ratepayers, providing a letter from the General Manager and a fact sheet explaining the SV proposal. • Four community information sessions, held both in person and online. • Public exhibition of all key information via Council's website and physical display points. • A dedicated Your Hawkesbury Your Say page, which served as the central information hub. • A statistically valid community survey conducted by Micromex Research. • Active social and local media campaigns to raise awareness. • Customer service pop-up and responsive FAQ support, including email and telephone enquiries. <p>This campaign generated an extremely high level of engagement and feedback including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Your Hawkesbury Your Say (YHYS) page accumulated 7,570 visits and 5,500 active engagements in total. This is one of the highest levels of engagement Council has received on a single item through the Your Hawkesbury Your Say platform. 	<p>Attachment 14 - Community Feedback Submissions Part 1 and 2</p> <p>Attachment 19 - Your Hawkesbury Your Say Insights</p> <p>Attachment 20 - Results Report – Special Rate Variation Survey 2025</p> <p>Attachment 18 - Engagement Insights Report</p> <p>Attachment 13 - Consultation Material Letter and Factsheet to Ratepayers – page 9 to 10</p> <p>Capital Program Examples - page 5 to 8</p> <p>Social Media Campaign – page 12 to 18</p> <p>Media Release – page 22 to 23</p> <p>Recorded public session slide deck – page 28 to 66</p> <p>Attachment 13 - Consultation Material - Average Rates by Rating Category (page 27)</p> <p>Attachment 20 - Results Report – Special Rate Variation Survey 2025</p> <p>Attachment 19 - Your Hawkesbury Your Say Insights</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 2,300 individual submissions were received (approximately 1,800 informal and 500 formal). • The recorded public session was viewed over 250 times, and community sessions were attended by 200 people across all formats. <p>The attached Engagement Insights Report for the SV proposal provides a thorough overview of the engagement activities and results.</p> <p>The statistically valid survey showed that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 69% of participants were aware that council was exploring a Special Variation (SV). - 81% of participants were aware Council would have to reduce other service should the SV not proceed. <p>(Hawkesbury City Council SRV Survey 2025 Results)</p> <p>This shows a very high level of awareness and engagement, demonstrating that the engagement campaign, as well as Council's IP&R documents in recent years such as the LTFP and AMS, have clearly communicated the challenges facing Council, and the need to explore improved revenue options to fund roads and local infrastructure</p> <p>As part of the consultation period concluding the Engagement Insights Report was produced to highlight key results, themes and the outcomes of the extensive engagement measures.</p>	
<p>The council need to communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed SV in percentage terms, and the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer, by rating category.</p>	<p>All correspondence clearly outlined the proposed figures of 11.73% for three years with a permanent cumulative increase of 39.4% once endorsed for consultation.</p> <p>The community was advised of the proposal and the impact on average rates via a mailout to ratepayers including a Letter and Factsheet, the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document, displayed on Your Hawkesbury Your Say and via the presentations at all community information sessions, both online and in person. This can be seen in the provided facts sheet example and links to ongoing online engagement and web pages.</p> <p>As Council's initial proposal was revised down (maintaining the cumulative 39.4% over four years) all information and major communication points were updated with the revised figures and rating impacts.</p> <p>Council's Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 (LTFP) provides a thorough summary of the SV including purpose, impact on budget, community engagement and the impact on ratepayers under each rating category (Pages 9-13).</p>	<p>Attachment 13 - Consultation Material Letter and Factsheet to Ratepayers – page 9 to 10</p> <p>Attachment 13 - Consultation Material Frequently Asked Questions – page 3 to 4</p> <p>Attachment 6 - Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035</p> <p>Attachment 7 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035</p>

<p>The Delivery Program and LTFP should clearly set out the extent of the General Fund rate rise under the SV, for the average ratepayer, by rating category.</p>	<p>Council's amended Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 (LTFP) provides a thorough summary of the SV including purpose, impact on budget, community engagement and the impact on ratepayers under each rating category (Pages 9-13).</p> <p>Council's amended Delivery Program 2025-2029 discussed the SRV and the implications of the application model on the four-year Delivery Program budget (Pages 43-47).</p>	<p>Attachment 7 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035</p> <p>Attachment 5 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Delivery Program 2025-2029</p>
<p>Council should include an overview of its ongoing efficiency measures and briefly discuss its progress against these measures, in its explanation of the need for the proposed SV.</p>	<p>Council's communications material, including fact sheet mailed to all rate payers and online platforms, contained a section on Council's cost containment strategies.</p> <p>Council's LTFP provides a thorough summary of the SV including recent cost containment and efficiency measures and past and future trends impacting Council's financial position (Pages 9-13 and 23-31)</p> <p>The LTFP provides Council's efficiency measures and various ratios for the General Fund for each financial model, explaining how they will be impacted by the SV and the base case implications.</p>	<p>Attachment 13 - Consultation Material Letter and Factsheet to Ratepayers – page 9 to 10</p> <p>Attachment 7 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035</p>
<p>The council's community engagement strategy for the SV must demonstrate an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness and input occur.</p>	<p>As part of the Communications and Engagement Strategy, Council has developed a sound understanding of how the community and key stakeholders prefer to communicate with Council. This included specifics of the Hawkesbury, including a retained preference for mailout information over online.</p> <p>The engagement and analysis phase of the SV proposal was built around these insights, to ensure an effective level of reach and awareness building could be achieved.</p> <p>The community consultation period was designed with multiple options for well-rounded methods to be used in encouraging engagement from the community, and this is demonstrated by the extent of feedback received.</p> <p>In alignment with the IPART Guidelines, council has been exhibiting and highlighting the financial need across its suite of IP&R documents over recent years. This is in conjunction with the official consultation materials such as,</p> <p>Digital Media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media releases - Online newspaper - Quarterly community newsletter - Corporate website - Facebook - Information session video <p>Traditional Material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Printed material to properties (letter and factsheet with crucial information) - Customer Experience staff at pop-ups in towns - Signage at the Central Library - Council meetings - Customer experience team (call centre, counter service centre, internal knowledge base with additional information and processes) 	<p>Attachment 17 - Communication and Engagement Strategy</p> <p>Attachment 18 - Engagement Insights Report</p> <p>Attachment 23 - Commence Community Engagement Council Meeting 9 September 2025 - page 12 to 14</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requests for service with a call back to direct staff - Email responses to correspondence - Staff information session (due to the high amount of local staff) <p>These are summarised in the Engagement Insights Report – Special Rate Variation Proposal Attachment.</p>	
Explain the action, if any, the council took in response to feedback from the community	<p>Feedback showed concerns about the affordability of the SRV proposal as well as clear expectations around the demonstration of sound financial management and transparency. There is continued acknowledgment that infrastructure renewal, especially roads, is a top community priority and that service reductions may be required if additional funding is not secured.</p> <p>In response to the outcomes of the engagement and analysis phase, further options were prepared which responded to affordability and capacity to pay concerns. This included a reduced amount of 9.48% over three years from 2026/2027 and a longer term, reduced amount of 8.66% per year for four years from 2026/2027.</p> <p>These options were presented to Council at its meeting on the 18 November 2025, where it was resolved to apply to IPART for an SV of 8.66% per year for 4 years from 2026/2027. This approach balances the requirements of the asset renewal funding with a smoother increase in rates for ratepayers. This SV constitutes a total cumulative increase of 39.4%, which matches the exhibited proposal, however is less in real terms when factoring in the rate peg for year four.</p> <p>Council has also updated its key IP&R documents to ensure the revised model is reflected and compared against the exhibition model and base case.</p>	<p>Attachment 24 – Minutes and Agenda 18 November 2025 – Revised SV Scenario</p> <p>Attachment 7 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035</p> <p>Attachment 15 – Morrison Low Capacity to Pay Report</p>

In the text box below, provide any other details about the council's consultation strategy, timing or materials that were not captured in Table 7.

N/A

4.2 Proposed average rates outlined in the council's community consultation materials

Are the average rates provided in the council's community consultation materials the same as what has been inputted into Table 7.2, Worksheet 7 (WS 7) of the Part A application form?	No
If no, please explain why.	<p>Following Council's significant community engagement campaign and Capacity to Pay Analysis and multiple strategic workshops with Councillors, additional options were developed to balance the asset renewal needs with a smoother increase in rates across a longer period.</p> <p>This led to the endorsement of the revised option of 8.66% for four years to proceed through to the application stage.</p> <p>Council has subsequently updated its LTFP demonstrating the impact of the exhibited, application and base case options of the average rates of all categories.</p> <p>Rate peg assumptions for the base case were also updated to include the 2026/2027 determination and revised future years.</p>

4.3 Additional information (optional)

In the text box below, please provide any other details about the community's involvement in, engagement with or support of or opposition to the proposed SV not captured in Table 7.

N/A

Please list out any other attachments in Table 8 that the council has relied on to respond to Criterion 2 that was not otherwise outlined in Table 7.

Table 8 Other Criterion 2 attachments

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references
Nil		

5 OLG SV Criterion 3 – Impact on ratepayers

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 5 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and material for completing this section. The [Part A](#) application form also collects information for this criterion in Worksheet 7 (WS 7 - Impact on Rates).

5.1 How did the council clearly show the impact of any rate rises on the community?

Please articulate in the text box below how the council demonstrated this question.

In your response, please include references to the Delivery Program, LTFP and relevant community consultation materials to support the council's claims.

All engagement materials contained key section detailing the impact to ratepayers including the average rate increases under the proposal.

All materials also clearly outlined the proposed figures of 11.73% for three years with a permanent cumulative increase of 39.4% once endorsed for consultation.

This includes:

- Mailout Fact sheet to all ratepayers (Attachment 13 - Consultation Material Letter and Factsheet to Ratepayers – page 9 to 10)

- Your Hawkesbury Your Say Page Link - <https://www.yourhawkesbury-yoursay.com.au/special-rates-variation>

- Website Special Rate Variation Page Link - <https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/for-residents/rates/special-rate-variation-srv>

Council has continued to update the relevant online pages and IP&R documents with the revised proposal figures to ensure the impacts of the options are clearly documented and available.

Council's Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 (LTFP) provides a thorough summary of the SV including purpose, impact on budget, community engagement and the impact on ratepayers under each rating category (Pages 9-13). Attachment 7 – Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035.

The LTFP and Asset Management Strategy and Plans describes the impact of the options on service levels and the ability of Council to improve its asset management practices and strategies. (Attachment 8 - Asset Management Strategy 2025-2035 Pages 26 – 27)

5.2 How has the council considered affordability and the community's capacity and willingness to pay?

Please articulate in the text box below how the council demonstrated this question.

In your response, please provide references to the Delivery Program, LTTP and community consultation materials where the council has considered the affordability and the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Morrison Low were commissioned to prepare a Capacity to Pay Analysis (report attached) to support Council's data gathering phase for the proposed Special Variation (SV). The analysis assessed a wide range of socioeconomic indicators to evaluate the general financial capacity of ratepayers across the Hawkesbury Local Government Area, including intraLGA differences, vulnerability across community groups, geographic areas and the rates and charges outstanding.

The analysis found that, at an overall level, the Hawkesbury demonstrates a moderate capacity to pay, but with significant variation between localities. Areas such as Kurrajong–Rural North and Pitt Town–East exhibit stronger capacity indicators, including higher incomes, higher rates of home ownership and lower vulnerability, while the Richmond–Windsor area shows greater financial vulnerability, with lower incomes, higher proportions of renters and increased exposure to financial stress.

The analysis also identified that, if the SV were applied, average residential rates would sit toward the higher end compared with metropolitan and metropolitan fringe councils, while farmland rates would remain below the metropolitan fringe average and business rates would remain highly competitive relative to peers.

Although Council's outstanding rates ratio is currently above the NSW benchmark, this is influenced by reduced debt recovery activity following recent natural disasters and higher levels of non-payment in more affluent areas.

Council significantly relaxed its collection processes as a strategy to aid community recovery following the recent flooding and bushfires. During this period, the rates and charges outstanding increased significantly. In 2025, Council recommenced a more rigorous collection strategy and expects this to reduce the ratio in coming years.

The report details that the Kurrajong-Rural North has the comparatively highest proportion of residential rates outstanding, however this area is also seen as having the strongest capacity to pay. Comparatively, the Richmond-Windsor grouping, which was found to have a lower capacity to pay, also has a much lower number of rates outstanding. This points to a willingness to pay rather than capacity to pay root cause.

This is relevant only to residential, business and farmland rates outstanding was found to be low.

The report outlines a range of options to manage affordability risks while supporting long-term financial sustainability, including adjustments to the overall SV quantum or its distribution across rating categories, consideration of alternative residential rating structures, targeted debt management measures, and if required, reductions in service levels or asset renewal expenditure. These findings have informed Council's amended SV proposal.

Council will also review its Hardship Policy, ensure its accessibility, and investigate options to assist customers with their ability to pay.

In response to the outcomes of the engagement and analysis phase, further options were prepared which responded to affordability and capacity to pay concerns. This included a reduced amount of 9.48% over three years from 2026/2027 and a longer term, reduced amount of 8.66% per year for four years from 2026/2027.

These options were presented to Council at its meeting on the 18 November 2025, where it was resolved to apply to IPART for an SV of 8.66% per year for 4 years from 2026/2027. This approach balances the requirements of the asset renewal funding with a smoother increase in rates for ratepayers. This SVV constitutes a total cumulative increase of 39.4%, which matches the exhibited proposal, however is less in real terms when factoring in the rate peg for year four.

The amended LTFP now includes the AMS Scenarios on which the original proposal was based -Decline/Improve/Resolve as well as additional financial model which demonstrate the impact of the funding made available through the exhibited proposal and the endorsed application.

The report is provided as Attachment 15 – Morrison Low Capacity to Pay Report

5.3 How has the council addressed (or intend to address) concerns about affordability?

Does the council have a hardship policy?	Yes
If yes, is an interest charge applied to late rate payments?	Yes

To inform our assessment, Worksheet 12 (WS 12) in the [Part A](#) application form also collects data on overdue notices, rates and annual charges outstanding/collectable, pensioner concessions and ratepayers subject to hardship provisions.

Please provide the council's response in the text boxes below.

a. Explain the measures the council proposes to use to reduce the impact of the proposed SV on vulnerable ratepayers, or alternatively, explain why no measures are proposed.

Council both currently and historically has a very low number of ratepayers on formal Hardship provisions. Council has payment plan options that are offered to support customers struggling with financial difficulties.

In order to ensure equity and access to these provisions Council will:

- Review its Hardship Policy and complete any updates determined to provide access to these services where required.
- Provide reference to the Hardship Policy and provisions in the annual Operational Plan.
- Continue to provide details of the Hardship provisions on rates notice instalments.
- Investigate the implementation of payment smoothing options and software including Payble. Payble provides voluntary bill-smoothing by enabling ratepayers to pay their annual rates through smaller, more frequent instalments aligned with household cashflow, without reducing or deferring the total amount payable.

Attachment 16 – Hardship Policy

b. Indicate whether the hardship policy or other measures are referenced in the council's IP&R documents (with relevant page reference or extract provided).

Council's Annual Operational Plan references the available Pensioner Concessions and rebates on rates and annual charges. (Attachment 31 - Hawkesbury City Council Operational Plan 2025/2026 – Page 62)

c. Please explain how the council makes its hardship policy or other measures known to ratepayers.

Council includes a Financial Assistance section on all rates notices (see excerpt below) linking to the Hardship, Pensioner Concession and Debt Recovery Policy.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

If you are experiencing financial difficulty paying the rates and charges hardship provisions are available at <http://bit.ly/hcc-hardship-policy>

This information is also available readily on Council's website and includes key information on the About Your Rates page.

<https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/for-residents/rates/about-your-rates>

Council has also published a page with key SV related information including the impact of the amended proposal on all rating categories.

<https://www.yourhawkesbury-yoursay.com.au/special-rates-variation>

5.4 Are there any other factors that may influence the impact of the council's proposed rate rise on ratepayers (optional)?

Describe the impact of any other anticipated changes in the rating structure (e.g. receipt of new valuations), or any changes to other annual ratepayer charges such as for domestic waste management services.

You may also explain how the number of **non-rateable properties** may impact the council's average rates, if relevant to your council.

You can provide additional data using Worksheet 12 (WS 12) in the [Part A](#) Excel application form. For instance, providing the number of non-rateable versus rateable properties.

Wastewater Divestment

Council has been in active negotiations with Sydney Water to divest its wastewater business. The Windsor Sewerage Scheme includes the treatment facilities as well as the pumps and pipes infrastructure that service more than 8,000 customers in Windsor, South Windsor, Bligh Park, Windsor Downs, McGraths Hill, Mulgrave, Vineyard, Pitt Town and Clarendon.

Council is in the final stages of negotiations and contractual arrangements with Sydney Water. This includes the asset arrangements of both McGraths Hill and South Windsor Treatment Plants.

Council will still have the liability of the current Sewer Loan following the completion of the divestment, which is predicted to occur at the beginning of 2026/2027. Council has resolved to pay down the principal of this loan to \$20m using the available sewer reserve funding.

The remainder of this cost of repayment will then be levied to customers through a Sewer Infrastructure Charge which can be repaid by customers over a term of 10 years. The details of this charge will be contained within the 2026/2027 Operational Plan should the divestment be finalised.

The divestment of the wastewater business to Sydney Water would have a beneficial impact on ability to pay for the approximately ~25% of ratepayers that are covered by the Scheme. Council can reasonably expect Windsor Sewer Scheme customers to be \$200 to \$300 better off per annum should the wastewater divestment proceed. These saving will continue to increase as sewer charges will no longer be charged or undergo an annual indexing increase.

These customers are geographically located in the areas assessed to have the lowest capacity to pay.

6 OLG SV Criterion 4 – Exhibition and adoption of IP&R documents

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 6 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and material for completing this section.

Seeks information which demonstrates that the council has met the formal requirements (where applicable) for the preparation, exhibition, adoption and publication of the current IP&R documents.

Table 9 IP&R documents

IP&R Document	Exhibition dates	Link to council minutes that outlines the resolution to publicly exhibit	Adoption date	Link to council minutes that outlines the resolution to adopt	Link to the adopted IP&R document on the council's website
Community Strategic Plan	19 March 2025 – 7 May 2025 Total of 49 days for exhibition.	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/287209/Minutes-11-March-2025.pdf Attachment 25 - Community Strategic Plan - Public Exhibition Minutes	10 June 2025	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/295158/Minutes.pdf Attachment 26 - CSP, Delivery Program, LTFP, Asset Management Strategy - Adoption Minutes	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/your-council/about-council/integrated-planning-and-reporting
Delivery Program	09 April 2025 – 07 May 2025	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/289576/Minutes.pdf Attachment 27 - Delivery Program, LTFP - Public Exhibition Minutes	10 June 2025	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/295158/Minutes.pdf Attachment 26 - CSP, Delivery Program, LTFP, Asset Management Strategy - Adoption Minutes	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/your-council/about-council/integrated-planning-and-reporting
Amended Draft Delivery Program	2 February 2026 – 2 March 2026	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/309057/Minutes-.pdf Attachment 28 - Amended LTFP, Delivery Program - Public Exhibition Minutes	TBA	Currently on exhibition and to be adopted following the conclusion of public exhibition.	Attachment 5 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Delivery Program 2025-2029

Long Term Financial Plan	09 April 2025 – 07 May 2025	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/289576/Minutes.pdf Attachment 27 - Delivery Program, LTFP - Public Exhibition Minutes	10 June 2025	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/295158/Minutes.pdf Attachment 26 - CSP, Delivery Program, LTFP, Asset Management Strategy - Adoption Minutes	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/your-council/about-council/integrated-planning-and-reporting
Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan	2 February 2026 – 2 March 2026	The Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 was completed and adopted by Council at its 10 June 2025 meeting. This LTFP 2025-2035 has been updated to include the latest available data and updated modelling against the exhibited and revised SV proposals. https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/309057/Minutes-.pdf Attachment 28 - Amended Draft LTFP, Draft Delivery Program - Public Exhibition Minutes	TBA	Currently on exhibition and to be adopted following the conclusion of public exhibition.	Attachment 7 – Hawkesbury City Council Amended Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035
Asset Management Strategy and Plan (which contain long-term projections of asset maintenance, rehabilitation and replace, including forecast costs).	10 April 2024 – 07 May 2024	Voluntarily exhibited Asset Management Strategy 2024-2034 to provide the community oversight to asset management challenges. https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/257350/Minutes.pdf Attachment 29 - Asset Management Strategy 2024-2034 - Exhibition Minutes The Asset Management Strategy 2025-2035 was not exhibited as this is not a requirement under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework	Asset Management Plans - 10 June 2025	Asset Management Strategy 2025-2035 https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/295158/Minutes.pdf Attachment 26 - CSP, Delivery Program, LTFP, Asset Management Strategy - Adoption Minutes Asset Management Strategy 2024-2034 https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/261713/Agenda.pdf Attachment 30 - Asset Management Strategy 2024-2034 - Adoption Minutes	https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/your-council/about-council/integrated-planning-and-reporting

Note: The exhibition and adoption dates must match the dates recorded in the council resolution.

7 OLG SV Criterion 5 – Productivity improvements and cost-containment

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 7 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing for and completing this section.

7.1 What is the council's strategic approach to improving productivity in its operations and asset management?

Please provide the council's response in the text box below.

Containment of Costs and Efficiency Improvements

Council is continually seeking cost savings and efficiencies through on-going process improvements, increased use of technology, best value for money procurement processes, resource sharing and partnerships.

Council delivers an annual service review and internal audit program to ensure specific services and functions are providing value for money and to identify opportunities for improvement.

In recent years, Council has delivered a wide range of initiatives to ensure it is delivering effective services and identifying opportunities for savings within its budgeting.

This has included:

- Strong Budget Parameters and annual Planning Cycle
- Wastewater Divestment
- Lower Portland Ferry Transfer
- Food Organics and Garden Organics - ARC Ento Trial
- Animal Shelter Services Agreement
- Property Portfolio Review
- Cemeteries Review
- Events Review
- Child Care Property Review
- Development Application Process Improvements
- Customer Experience Charter
- Continuous Improvement Program

- Investment in renewables and hybrid fleet

Council will continue to identify opportunities to proactively improve its budget sustainability wherever possible.

Comprehensive Spending Review

To further support ongoing financial sustainability, Council has committed to undertaking a proactive comprehensive spending review as part of the 2026/2027 planning cycle.

This review will examine expenditure and income for each major service area to identify efficiency gains and cost savings. Documenting and embedding these improvements in Council's future planning will show that Council is actively managing its budget and ensuring that operational sustainability is addressed.

The 2025/2026 Operational Plan contains budgeted operating expenditure of \$121.4 million. An initial target for the Comprehensive Spending Review is \$1 million per annum. The goal of this review is to continue to support operational budget sustainability, whilst the proposed SV is focused solely on supporting capital budgets and reducing the unfunded asset renewals.

The savings target of \$1m has been built into each of the financial models of the LTFP.

Asset Management Practices

Council's recent improvements in strategic asset management and maturity, including the completion of the Asset Management Strategy has been central to the development of the SV proposal.

"The Asset Management Strategy (AMS) provides accurate data and a robust planning process to ensure that these assets are managed and accounted for in an efficient and sustainable way on behalf of the local community. The key objective of asset management planning is to provide the required level of service for the community in accordance with the CSP and in the most cost-effective manner. The required level of service ensures safe, amenable and sustainable assets across the Hawkesbury. The Asset Management Plans then apply and implement this strategy to each asset category." (Page 6)

The three scenarios aim to demonstrate the improvements in not only the number but also the quality of renewal works that can be achieved with additional funding. The Strategy also contains strategic actions and a commitment to regularly updating and amending the models to ensure assets are funded in the most efficient way possible.

7.2 What outcomes has the council achieved from productivity improvements and cost containment strategies in past years?

Please provide the council's responses to the questions in in the text boxes below.

a. Explain initiatives undertaken and/or processes put in place in the past few years to improve productivity and contain costs.

b. Outline the outcomes which have been achieved, including providing quantitative data where possible.

Council has implemented a range of initiatives to improve budget management and achieve significant recurrent savings in the annual operational budget. This includes:

Lower Portland Ferry

Council advocated heavily in partnership with The Hills Shire Council for several years for the transfer of operation and management of the Lower Portland Ferry to be transferred to Transport for NSW. The Lower Portland Ferry until the transfer was the only Ferry not funded and operated by Transport for NSW.

This agreement was reached and finalised in September 2024 and represents a recurring saving of approximately \$571,970 per year.

Animal Shelter Services Agreement

The Hawkesbury Companion Animal Shelter provides services for dogs and cats from the Hawkesbury, Penrith, The Hills, Hornsby and Cumberland Council areas. In 2025, Council sought to achieve a greater level of cost recovery by renegotiating the contractual arrangements with partner Council's.

These agreements are expected to produce approximately \$800,000 in additional income per annum on an ongoing basis.

Events Review

In 2025, Council identified that its major events program was unsustainable due to significant cost increases to host and improve each event. In response, Council developed a funding model and event program to move two major events, Light Up Windsor Street Fair and Savour the Flavour Richmond to a biennial schedule. This initiative saved approximately \$200,000 per year and provided a more sustainable future model for the continuation of these highly valued events.

Food Organics and Garden Organics – FOGO Trial

Council is partnering with ARC Ento Tech to trial one of Australia's first waste-to-resource facilities at the Hawkesbury Waste Management Facility with the aim of initially diverting 20 tonnes of food and organic waste per day as part of the small-scale trial, converting it into fertiliser, biofuel and livestock feed instead of burying it in landfill. Construction on the trial site at the Waste Management Facility is underway.

The twelve-month trial, which will commence in 2026, seeks to help extend the life of the waste management facility and reduce methane emissions from food and other organic matter decomposing in the landfill. This trial could also save ratepayers money by bypassing the need to introduce the FOGO system, while also generating a new income stream for Council through the sale of the fertiliser, biofuel and livestock feed.

Should the trial be successful and FOGO implementation no longer be required, the savings in running a FOGO service would be in the order of \$3.6million per annum, with an initial setup cost of \$8.3million.

Property Portfolio Review

Council is undertaking significant projects within its property portfolio including a review of Remnant Land and a review of its rental model with Child Care Centre providers. These are being informed by the Property Strategy which is driving improved outcomes from Council's property assets.

The sale of remnant land will provide Council with some additional income for future property initiatives and upon completion of the transfer to market rate of child care providers where possible, this will provide a significant source of recurrent income.

As part of the Review of Childcare Centre Leases, Council examined options to secure ongoing revenue from the nine childcare centres and ensure these facilities can be appropriately maintained and renewed over time. A key option involves transitioning lease terms so that Council progressively receives full market rental over a five-year period, while tenants assume responsibility for maintenance costs in line with standard commercial leasing models. This strategy could potentially increase rental income by over \$600,000 per annum.

A comprehensive review of Council's commercial leasing portfolio will also be undertaken to ensure maximum returns from these strategic locations.

Council has activated two industry road billboards to increase property revenue and these signs combined have delivered a \$70,000 return per annum.

Oasis Aquatic and Leisure Centre Contract

Council recently entered into a new contract with The Y to manage and operate the Hawkesbury Oasis Aquatic and Leisure Centre. As part of this agreement, The Y provides Council with regular financial reports, which are used to determine whether Council contributes to operating costs or receives a profit share when the Centre performs well. In completing a review of these reports, Council has recovered almost \$200,000 and expects a future benefit from this initiative.

Sustainability Initiatives

LED Lighting Upgrade – Council has been partnering with the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils to deliver significant LED lighting upgrades to the street lighting network.

Power Purchasing - In May 2020, Hawkesbury City Council announced signing a new electricity supply agreement, taking a huge step towards 100 per cent renewable power. The 10-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) is the result of Council's commitment to achieve both carbon emissions reductions and cost savings for council.

Solar on facilities and buildings – Windsor Function Centre, South Windsor Family Centre and Oasis Fitness and Leisure Centre now contain solar systems. Council retains the savings generated through the solar and bills the tenant the full amount.

Hybrid Fleet – Council is on track to complete its transition to 100% hybrid fleet vehicles, delivering environmental benefits and cost savings to Council.

OLG Fresh Start Program

Council is participating in the Office of Local Government Fresh Start Program, utilising cadets and apprentices in project delivery, strategic planning, graphic design and other key areas to help with major initiatives at relatively low or no cost to Council.

This initiative also develops junior staff and positions them with knowledge for future roles within Council.

Council has 6 apprentices and 6 cadets in total through the program. The cost of the 12 positions is \$455k for 2025/2026, with \$438k recovered through the grant funding, giving a cost of just \$1,415 to Council per position.

7.3 What productivity improvements and cost containment strategies are planned for future years?

The council should provide information that details initiatives planned for the next two years when requesting a one-year section 508(2) SV, or match the duration of the proposed SV.

The response should, wherever possible:

- estimate the financial impact of strategies intended to be implemented in the future
- present these as a percentage of operating expenditure
- indicate whether the proposed initiatives have been factored into the council's Long Term Financial Plan.

In the text boxes below:

Comprehensive Spending Review

To further support ongoing financial sustainability, Council has committed to undertaking a proactive comprehensive spending review as part of the 2026/2027 planning cycle.

This review will examine expenditure and income for each major service area to identify efficiency gains and cost savings. Documenting and embedding these improvements in Council's future planning will show that Council is actively managing its budget and ensuring that operational sustainability is addressed.

The 2025/2026 Operational Plan contains budgeted operating expenditure of \$121.4 million. An initial target for the Comprehensive Spending Review is \$1 million per annum or 0.8% of budgeted expenditure. The goal of this review is to continue to support operational budget sustainability, whilst the proposed SRV is focused solely on supporting capital budgets and reducing the unfunded asset renewals.

Service Reviews and Internal Audit

Council will continue to deliver a program of service reviews and internal audits, targeting cost recovery, efficiencies and alignment to service level expectations.

Discretionary services will be rigorously tested for need and the ability to achieve cost neutral operations.

Continuous Improvement

Council is developing frameworks and methodologies to drive continuous improvement in its processes and services, to drive savings, efficiencies and improved customer experiences.

Fees and Charges

Council will deliver improvements to the method and system for the development of the annual fees and charges, improving cost recovery and revenue opportunities where feasible.

b. Indicate whether these have been incorporated in the council's Long Term Financial Plan, if not, explain why.

Yes, the Comprehensive Spending Review savings target of \$1m has been modelled into each of the financial models of the LTFP. This includes an indexing of 2% to continue to add savings over time and drive Council to realise these improvements.

7.4 How has the council's levels of productivity and efficiency changed over time, and compared to similar councils?

In the text box, summarise data which demonstrates how the council has improved productivity and indicate its performance against that of comparable councils.

Project Management – Infrastructure Recovery and Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants

Council's capital budgets have been significantly expanded in recent years due to grant funding opportunities provided by State and Federal Governments. Budgets have increased from \$37m per annum in 2020/2021 to \$128m in 2024/2025.

This has led to an increase in project management resources to deliver these significant programs and a significant investment in improving project phasing, timings and procurement practices. These resources and internal knowledge will be partly retained to support the delivery of the expanded program under the SV should the application proceed.

Council is updating its Project Management Framework (PMF) to support a more flexible approach to project delivery, tailored to project scale, complexity and risk. This includes defining clear governance and approval processes for variations and ensuring project management and reporting practices place a strong emphasis on risk management and staff capability.

To support ongoing improvement, the PMF will be regularly reviewed and refined using feedback and lessons learned, ensuring it remains aligned with industry best practice and emerging needs.

Comparison of total capital budgets 2025/2026

- The Hills Shire Council - \$69.9m
- Wollondilly Council - \$77.3m
- Blue Mountains Council – \$53.6m
- Penrith City Council - \$107.6m
- Hawkesbury City Council - \$101.8

Council's budget have been comparable with much larger Council's in recent years, showing the ability of Council to undertake significantly larger programs

DA Processing Times

Council is continuously seeking opportunities and collaboration to improve internal efficiencies and external impacts to services presented to the community.

An extensive and thorough internal project to improve Development Services was established including API integration alongside the NSW Planning Portal to facilitate the flow of data between the external State Government systems and Council's IT systems.

Hawkesbury City Council could recognised the efficiency this integration would provide and launched 8 September 2023, well in advance of the Department of Planning deadline of 31 December 2023.

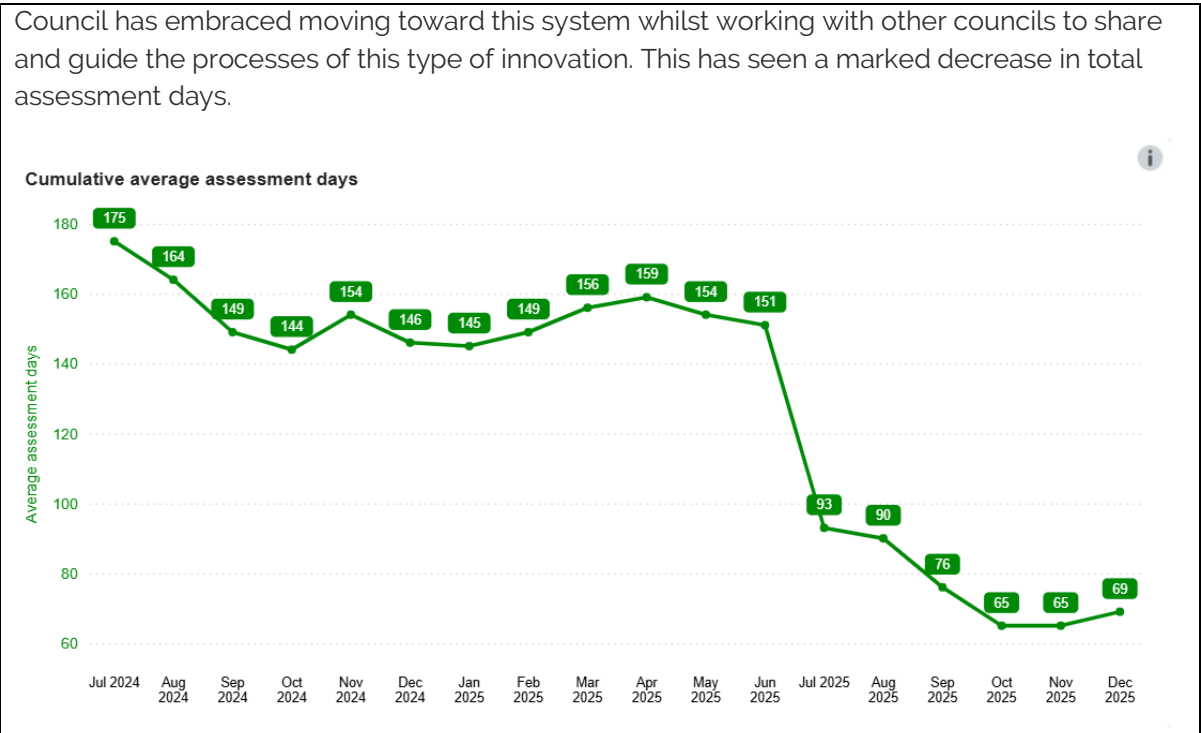


Table 10 Criterion 5 attachments

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references
Nil		

8 Council certification and contact information

Councils must submit a declaration in the specified form. It should be completed by the General Manager and the Responsible Accounting Officer.


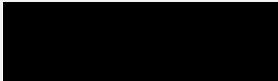
8.1 Certification of application and declaration

Prepare a document in the form indicated below. Please sign (electronic signature is also acceptable), scan and submit it with your application.

This is to be completed by General Manager and Responsible Accounting Officer.

Name of the council:	Hawkesbury City Council
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We certify that to the best of our knowledge the information provided in the Part A application form and this SV Part B application form is correct and complete. We have completed the checklist for the Part A and B application forms and also provided all relevant attachments as requested (see Table 11, Table 12 and Table 13).

General Manager (name):	Elizabeth Richardson
Signature and Date:	 2 February 2026
Responsible Accounting Officer (name):	Catherine Trivers
Signature and Date:	 2/02/2026

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

8.2 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 direct contact details will be redacted before publication of this application.

General Manager

General Manager contact phone	[REDACTED]
General Manager contact email	[REDACTED]

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 SV 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 SV application	[REDACTED]

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

9 List of required attachments

To complete (adding rows as necessary):

- Name each document.
- Check the box to indicate that the document is being submitted with the application.

Table 11 Required attachments checklist

Name of attachment	The document is included	The document is not applicable
Mandatory forms/attachments:		
Application Form Part A (Excel spreadsheet)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Application Form Part B (this Word document)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Council resolution to apply for the special variation - Attachment 24 - Minutes and Agenda 18 November 2025 - Revised SV Scenario	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Completed certification and declaration (see 8.1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
If applicable, to support the responses provided in Question 5 of Description and Context (see section 2) provide:		
Instrument for expiring special variation/s	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OLG advice confirming calculation of amount to be removed from the council's general income	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If applicable, to support the responses provided in Questions 6 AND/OR 7 of Description and Context (see section 2) provide:		
Attachment 1 - Declaration of compliance with conditions in past instruments (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attachment 2 - Evidence of compliance with conditions in past instruments (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mandatory public supporting material (i.e. to be published on IPART's website):		
Attachment 3 - Community Strategic Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 2 - Delivery Program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 3 - Amended Delivery Program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 6 - Long Term Financial Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 7 - Amended Long Term Financial Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 8 - Asset Management Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Name of attachment	The document is included	The document is not applicable
Attachment 9 to 12 - Asset Management Plan(s) (required if a key purpose of the SV is related to assets and capital expenditure)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attachment 13 - Consultation materials, e.g. copies of media releases, notices of public meetings, newspaper articles, fact sheets used to consult on rate increase and proposed special variation (combined into one document)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 14 - Community feedback (including surveys and results). Confidential information should be redacted, or the entire document marked as confidential.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 15 - Morrison Low Capacity to Pay Report (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attachment 16 - Hardship policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Other public supporting materials:		
Government agency's report on financial sustainability e.g. NSW Treasury Corporation (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(List the additional documents) Provided below		
Attachment 17 - Communications and Engagement Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 18 - Engagement Insight Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 19 - Your Hawkesbury Your Say Insight	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 20 - Results Report - Special Rate Variation Survey 2025	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 21 - Community Satisfaction Survey 2023	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 22 - Results Report - Community Satisfaction Survey 2021	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 23 - Commence Community Engagement Council Meeting 9 September 2025	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 24 - Minutes and Agenda 18 November 2025 - Revised SV Scenario	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 25 - Community Strategic Plan - Public Exhibition Minutes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 26 - CSP, Delivery Program, LTFP, Asset Management Strategy - Adoption Minutes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 27 - Delivery Program, LTFP - Public Exhibition Minutes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Attachment 28 - Amended LTFP, Delivery Program - Public Exhibition Minutes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Special Variation Application Form Part B Page | 44

10 Checklists

We provide these checklists to ensure that submitted applications meet a minimum standard.

Meeting the requirements of these checklists **does not** guarantee a council will be approved for the SV it has applied for.

Table 12 Part A Application Form Checklist

Checklist items	Please indicate whether the items have been actioned
Data provided in Part A application (i.e. proposed SV%, rates amount etc) are consistent with those contained in Part B application.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Table 1.2 of "WS1-Application" lists all the tables in worksheets 1 -12 that council must complete, based on the nature of council's application. Please confirm that all the data requirements, as listed in table 1.2, have been completed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
All completed tables (values and units – i.e. \$ or \$'000) have been completed correctly and verified to source. Please pay attention to the units specified for each table in each worksheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
WS 10 - LTFP agrees to the council's provided (adopted) LTFP.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dollar numbers provided in "WS10 – LTFP" are in dollars (\$) not thousands (\$'000) or millions (\$M)	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the council has an expiring or existing SV, it has incorporated this when filling out WS 2.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annual and cumulative percentages are rounded to 1 decimal place.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that figures provided in WS 9 – Financials, WS 10 – LTFP and WS 11 – Ratios are at the General Fund level and <i>not</i> consolidated.	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the council proposes an SV with both permanent and temporary components, the council has discussed the relevant data and modelling requirements with IPART prior to submission.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indication whether optional tables in WS 12 has been completed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Table 13 SV Part B Application Form Checklist

Checklist items	Please indicate whether the items have been actioned
All required text boxes and tables have been completed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
All applicable documents per the List of Attachments (Table 11) have been provided.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council has declared all SVs (including ASVs) approved since 2011-12 and provided annual reports that show compliance with the instrument reporting conditions, or explaining divergences.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council's LTFP includes both the baseline (no-SV) and the SV scenario it is applying for.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The proposed SV annual and cumulative percentages agree to those used in community consultation, or if they differ, the reason has been explained.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If applying for a multi-year SV, the council has correctly calculated the cumulative percentage and dollar impact of the proposed SV using compounding.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council has referenced community consultation materials that <i>at minimum</i> show the cumulative percentage of the SV and average total dollar increase (cumulative) per rating category.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Figures presented in Application Form Part B are consistent, as relevant, with those in Application Form Part A.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council has submitted a Minimum Rates Part B Application Form, if required.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
For OLG Criterion 5 (section 7), the council has provided concrete evidence and plans for past and future cost-containment and productivity strategies, as far as practicable.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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.

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 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.