

Media Release

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IPART Decisions on Council Special Variation Applications

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has released its decisions on 6 NSW council applications for special variations to increase the council's general income by more than the rate peg, and 2 applications to increase the minimum rates.

IPART Chair Carmel Donnelly said the Tribunal approved the special variation applications from Federation Council, Gunnedah Shire Council, Shoalhaven City Council and Upper Hunter Shire Council, partially approved the special variation application from Northern Beaches Council, and did not approve the special variation application from North Sydney Council.

The Tribunal also approved a minimum rate increase application from Gunnedah Shire Council and did not approve a minimum rate increase application from North Sydney Council.

"These decisions are based on our assessment against the Office of Local Government criteria, taking into account the issues raised by stakeholders during our submission period," Ms Donnelly said.

"The councils with approved increases are encouraged to consult with the community to decide how best to implement the allowed increase.

"It's important to note that elected councillors can choose when they implement the approved increase in rates income, including deferring any increases for up to 10 years and also how they set rates across the rating categories."

IPART sets a rate peg annually for each of the 128 councils in NSW which caps each council's increase in the income they collect from ordinary rates. For 2025-26, the core rate pegs range from 3.6% to 5.1% across NSW, and 72 of the 128 councils also received an additional allowance to reflect an adjusted population factor of up to 3.8%.

Reports on each of the 6 council special variation decisions, 2 minimum rate decisions, and related documents are now available on the IPART website.

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Table 1 Summary of IPART's decisions on councils' special variation applications

Council	Application	Decision	Approved Annual Increases		
			2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Approved in Full					
Federation Council	69.94% over 2 years	Approved	52.01%	11.8%	
Gunnedah Shire Council	37.67% over 2 years	Approved	18%	16.67%	
Shoalhaven City Council	12% over 1 year	Approved	12%		
Upper Hunter Shire Council	33.10% over 3 years	Approved	10%	10%	10%
Partially approved					
Northern Beaches Council	39.6% over 3 years	Approved first two years of the SV (25.2%)	12.1%	11.7%	
Not Approved					
North Sydney Council	87.05% over 2 years	Not Approved	Rate Peg Only		

Table 2 Summary of IPART's Decision on Minimum Rates Applications

Council	Application	Decision	Approved Minimum Rates
Gunnedah Shire Council	\$178 increase over 2 years for farmland and some residential ratepayers	Approved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For residential ordinary, rural, Gunnedah and farmland rates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – \$638 in 2025-26 – \$733 in 2026-27 For business Gunnedah rates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – \$625 in 2025-26 – \$718 in 2026-27
	\$174 increase over 2 years for business - Gunnedah ratepayers		
North Sydney Council	\$833 increase over 2 years for residential ratepayers	Not Approved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rate Peg Only
	\$1,091 increase over 2 years for business ratepayers		