

# Media Release

17 February 2026

## IPART seeks community feedback as 10 councils apply to increase rates above the rate peg

IPART is inviting community feedback on special variation applications from 10 NSW councils to increase their income from rates above the rate peg for 2026-27.

IPART Chair Carmel Donnelly said the Tribunal is now seeking community feedback on applications from Ballina Shire Council, Blacktown City Council, Central Coast Council, Cessnock City Council, Glen Innes Severn Council, Hawkesbury City Council, Ku-ring-gai Council, Muswellbrook Shire Council, North Sydney Council and Uralla Shire Council. The increases sought range from 12.8% over one year to 58% over two years. Glen Innes Severn Council and North Sydney Council have also applied for minimum rate increases.

"Community feedback is an important part of the Tribunal's assessment of special variation applications," Ms Donnelly said.

"We encourage ratepayers and community members to fill out the survey on the IPART website or lodge a submission in relation to any of the applications we've received."

IPART assesses special variation applications against criteria set by the Office of Local Government (OLG). As set out in the OLG assessment criteria, IPART will consider whether councils have:

- demonstrated the need for the additional income
- provided evidence that the community is aware of the need for and extent of the proposed rate rise
- established that the impact on affected ratepayers is reasonable
- exhibited, approved and adopted relevant planning documents
- explained and quantified the council's productivity improvements and cost containment strategies.


IPART may also consider other relevant matters.

All special variation applications for 2026-27 are available for review on the IPART website, along with a short survey, a fact sheet on special variations and information about how to lodge a submission. IPART is seeking feedback on Special Variation applications by 9 March 2026.

IPART will release the final decisions on special variation and minimum rate increase applications by June 2026.

Attachment 1 - list of special variation (Table 1) and minimum rate (Table 2) applications can be viewed on pages 3-5 of our media release.

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Table 1 Special variation applications

Council	Cumulative increase	Purpose of the special variation (as advised in Council application)	Proposed annual increases			
			2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Ballina Shire Council	26.25% over 4 years	Asset renewal of core infrastructure of roads, stormwater, footpaths, community buildings and open spaces. A smaller component of funding is to be allocated to the Healthy Waterways Program, implementing the adopted Biodiversity Strategy and to maintain Federal Government funded CCTV program.	6%	6%	6%	6%
Blacktown City Council	37.39% over 3 years	To fund the operational and maintenance costs of new facilities, asset renewal and maintenance, and a component of the overall funding strategy for new office accommodation.	16.64%	8.53%	8.53%	Rate peg
Central Coast Council	12.8% over 1 year	To maintain current funding for essential stormwater drainage services without adversely impacting service levels in other areas. The council proposes to apply a Drainage Charge to the rate notice under the Local Government Act 1993 for ratepayers who currently pay the charge.	12.8%	Rate peg	Rate peg	Rate peg
Cessnock City Council	39.9% over 1 year	To restore and maintain the council's long-term financial sustainability including: to stabilise the council's general fund position, address growing infrastructure backlog and improve asset condition outcomes, maintain existing service levels and support financially sustainable delivery program.	39.90%	Rate peg	Rate peg	Rate peg
Glen Innes Severn Council (GISC)	48.33% over 3 years	Restore long-term financial sustainability by addressing ongoing operating deficit in the general fund, maintain delivery of current services, fund critical infrastructure renewal and maintenance at above current levels, deliver Council's Asset Management Plans, maintain a positive unrestricted cash position and support <i>Towards 2034 Community Engagement</i> outcomes.	21.50%	12.00%	9.00%	Rate peg
Hawkesbury City Council	39.41% over 4 years	The purpose of the proposed Special Variation is to deliver vital asset renewals, particularly on the local road network.	8.66%	8.66%	8.66%	8.66%
Ku-ring-Gai Council	29% over 1 year	To fund essential renewals, upgrades, and new infrastructure including: stormwater and drainage, recreational facilities, footpaths, community, traffic and transport facilities. A portion of the funding would also partly repay the loan for the construction of the St Ives Indoor Sports Centre.	29%	Rate peg	Rate peg	Rate peg

Council	Cumulative increase	Purpose of the special variation (as advised in Council application)	Proposed annual increases			
Muswellbrook Shire Council	29% over 1 year	The key purpose of this SV is to ensure Council's ongoing financial sustainability and its ability to maintain existing services and service levels, generally as most of the mining operations in the Local Government Area (LGA) wind down and close. This proposed SV is targeted at mining assessments only. The increased revenues will be invested into further improving Council's own productivity and efficiency, economic development activities to attract alternative industry to the LGA, and further investment in Council's future fund, reducing Council's dependence on rates revenue to fund services.	29%	Rate peg	Rate peg	Rate peg
North Sydney Council	52.66% over 3 years	Restore Council's financial sustainability by addressing long-standing structural under-funding of infrastructure renewal, and preventing further growth in the infrastructure backlog, while maintaining service levels in line with community expectations.	23%	14.58%	8.32%	Rate peg
Uralla Shire Council	58.06% over 2 years	Improve a significant operating deficit; maintain roads, community and open space assets; provide community-based services at current service levels; reduce heavy reliance on grant funding for asset renewals; address a forecasted negative unrestricted cash position.	28.5%	23%	Rate peg	Rate peg

**Note:** All proposed special variations are for permanent increases. An approved special variation typically replaces the rate peg applicable to a council for the approved year/s.

Table 2 Minimum rates increase applications

Council	Application	Purpose of Minimum Rate application (as advised in Council application)	Proposed annual increases		
			2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
North Sydney Council	<p><b>Residential</b> 2025-26 (Current): \$743.85 2026-27: \$970.72 2027-28: \$1,116.32 2028-29: \$1,216.79</p> <p><b>Business</b> 2025-26 (Current): \$743.85 2026-27: \$970.72 2027-28: \$1,116.32 2028-29: \$1,216.79</p>	Support the Council's long-term financial sustainability and improve equity within the Council's rating system by reducing the imbalance between the minimum rate payers and ad valorem ratepayers.	Residential: \$226.87  Business: \$226.87	Residential: \$145.60  Business: \$145.60	Residential: \$100.47  Business: \$100.47

Council	Application	Purpose of Minimum Rate application (as advised in Council application)	Proposed annual increases		
Glen Innes Severn Council	<b>Residential</b> 2025-26 (Current): \$637 2026-27: \$774 2027-28: \$867 2028-29: \$945	Improve equity in the rating system and strengthen financial sustainability by broadening the revenue base needed to address Council's structural deficit and ensuring all ratepayers contribute a fairer share towards the cost of maintaining essential services and renewing critical infrastructure.	Residential: \$137	Residential: \$93	Residential: \$78
	<b>Business</b> 2025-26 (Current): \$637 2026-27: \$774 2027-28: \$867 2028-29: \$945		Business: \$137	Business: \$93	Business: \$78
	<b>Farmland</b> 2025-26 (Current): \$485 2026-27: \$590 2027-28: \$661 2028-29: \$720		Farmland: \$105	Farmland: \$71	Farmland: \$59
	<b>Mining</b> 2025-26 (Current): \$373 2026-27: \$453 2027-28: \$508 2028-29: \$553		Mining: \$80	Mining: \$55	Mining: \$45