

# SPECIAL RATE VARIATION 2018-19 – RANDWICK CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION by JAYASOORIAH

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

I make this submission with the genuine belief that the information I provide in this submission is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, and that it will be of assistance to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (the Tribunal) in assessing of the application by the Randwick City Council (the Council) for a Special Rate Variation 2018-19 (the SRV) of 19.85 percent increase over the 2018-21 period.

This submission relates to how the Council involved the community in the proposed rate increase discussions, engaged with the community, sought feedback and presented community consultation outcomes<sup>1</sup> in its application to the Tribunal in support of the SRV.

I make this submission as a resident of Randwick City and as a member (and the Chairperson) of the La Perouse Precinct (the Precinct), one of eleven precincts comprising the Council's Local Government Area, that the Randwick community is strongly opposed to the proposed 19.85 percent rate increase over three years.

## 2. CHRONOLOGY

The Council undertook to engage the community during the months of December 2017 and January 2018 over the Christmas and New Year break at which time ratepayers are on holidays often overseas or otherwise engaged in activities that do not enable them to attend or reasonably respond to the call for community feedback on the SRV.

On Monday 5th February 2018, the Precinct was one of the first precincts to conduct its first meeting of the year at which time it took a vote to formulate its position in relation to the Council's Ratepayer Mailout Survey (the Council Survey). The meeting unanimously rejected the 19.85 percent rate increase over three years proposed by the Council as its preferred option. The vote was scrutinised by the Council's General Manager and Chairperson of its Administrative and Finance Committee (the Committee) who were in attendance.

On Thursday 8th February 2018, the Council released results of the Council Survey and its proposal to seek a 19.85 percent rate increase over three years by way of business paper F3/18

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<sup>1</sup> See attachment 6 to the SRV application – Community Feedback

– The 20 Year Randwick City Plan to be considered by its Administrative and Finance Committee at its next meeting to be held on the following Tuesday 13th February 2018.

On Friday 9th February 2018, the Chairperson of the Precinct registered to address the Committee and was requested to provide presentation slides to Council by 3pm on Tuesday  
5 13th February 2018, three hours before the scheduled start of the meeting of the Committee.

On Sunday 11th February 2018, the Precinct Executive sought feedback from the broader precinct community to formulate the Precinct's response to business paper F3/18 by way of a survey (Precinct Survey) conducted on its website.

On Tuesday 13th February 2018, at about 2:30pm, the Chairperson of the Precinct provided  
10 the Council a document comprising fifteen slides<sup>2</sup> that will be used during his address to the Committee later that day. The submission included interim results of the Precinct Survey and was accepted and declared a "public document" by a Council.

At the meeting of the Committee, the Chairperson of the La Perouse Precinct was called to address the meeting as a member of the public. A minute into the three minutes allocated to  
15 address the Committee in accordance with the Council's Code of Meeting Practice, on the fourth slide that introduced the Precinct Survey, he was stopped by the Chairperson of the Committee.

On Monday 19th February 2018, the Chairperson of the Committee was formally requested in writing to provide his reasons for preventing the Chairperson of the Precinct from presenting  
20 the interim results of the Precinct Survey to the Committee.

On Monday 5th March 2018, the Precinct met to consider its response to the SRV application before the Tribunal. The Council's General Manager and the Chairperson of the Committee were in attendance. An attempt by the Chairperson of the Committee to address the meeting encouraged by the General Manager and contrary to Council's Precinct Rules and Procedures  
25 resulted in disruptive behaviour and the Precinct's failure to resolve on its submission to the Tribunal in support of its position against the 19.85 percent rate increase.

The chronology shows that the Council a) conducted its community consultation at a time when the ratepayers are on holidays often overseas; b) engaged in activity that interfered with the community consultation process at the precinct level; and c) prevented the outcome of the  
30 independent Precinct Survey from being considered by the Committee.

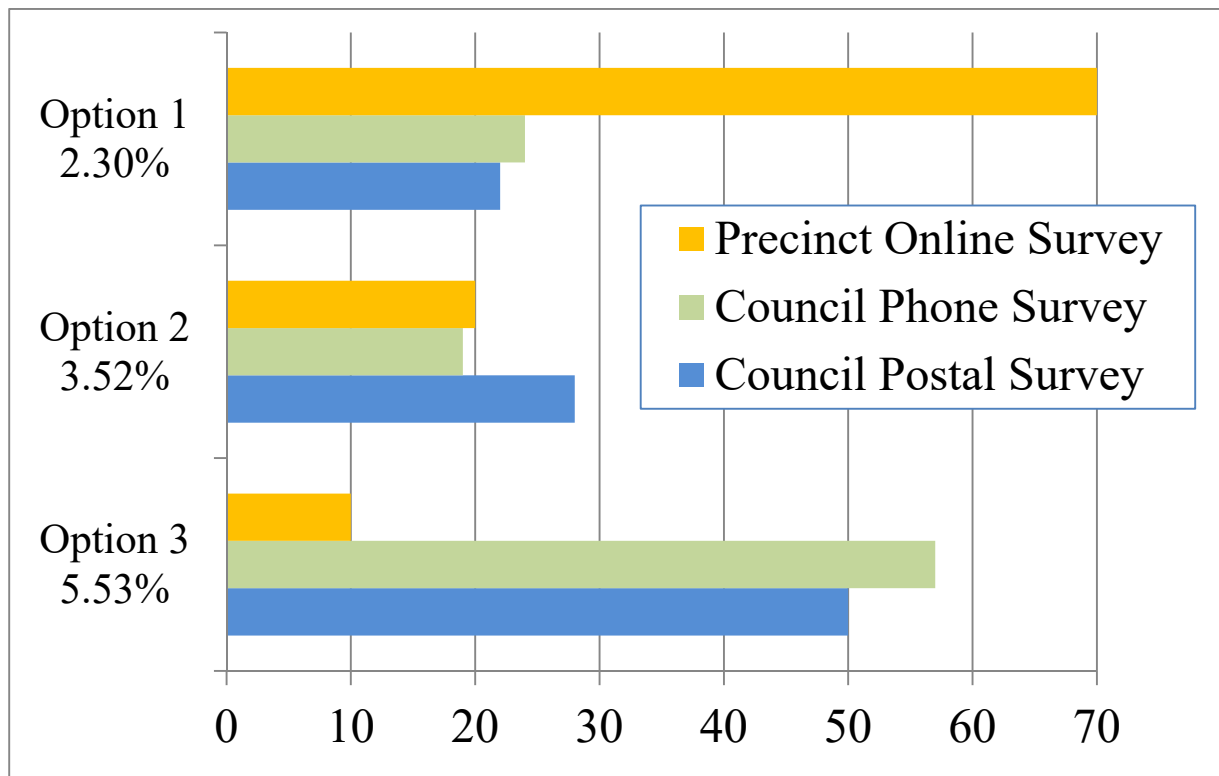
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<sup>2</sup> See Annex B – 2018-21 Special Variation Rate Increase

### 3. SURVEY OUTCOMES

Council conducted two surveys during the December 2017 and January 2018 holiday break. The first was a phone survey of 603 ratepayers and the second was a postal/online survey of 4,642/1,074 respondents.

- 5 The Precinct conducted its own survey between 11th February 2018 and 11th March 2018 and received 39 responses.



The results of all three surveys show a significant disparity between the outcomes of the surveys conducted by the Council from that conducted by the Precinct.

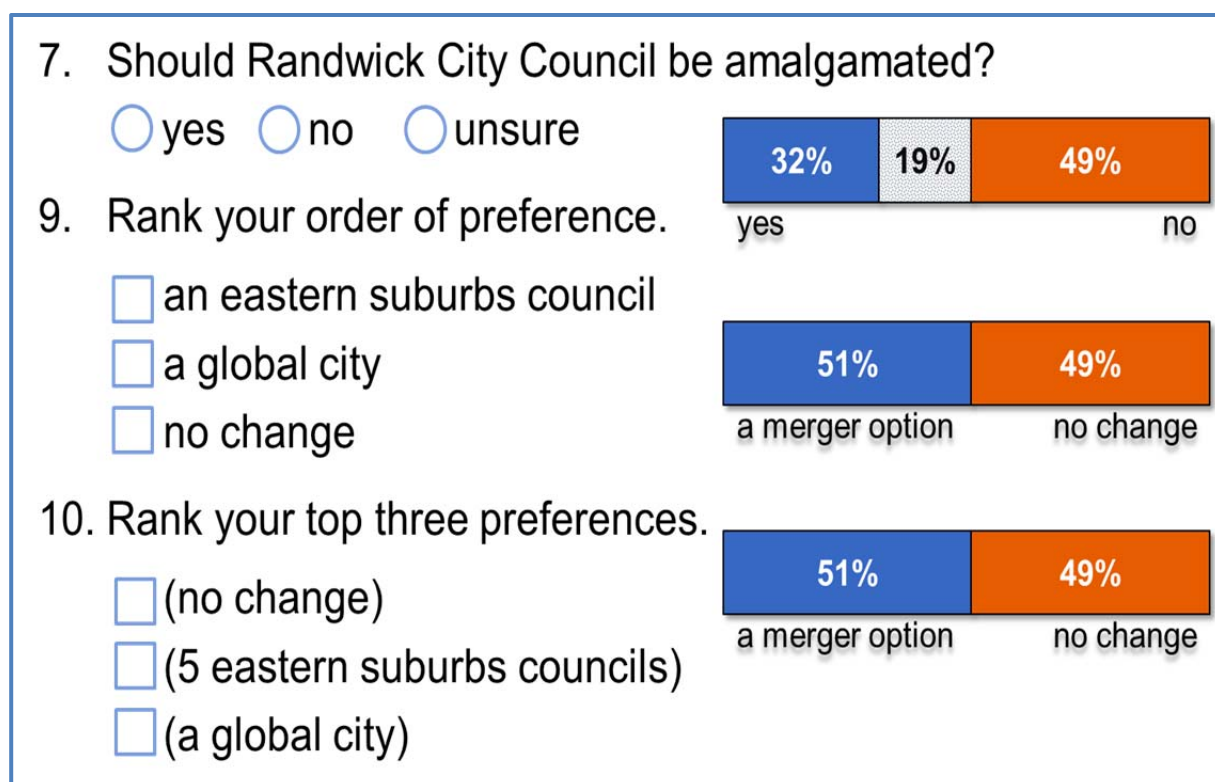
- 10 The Council's surveys show that residents consistently preferred Option 3 for the largest of three rate increases on offer, 19.85 percent rate increase over three years, plus borrowings of \$27M, the option that Council touted as its preferred option.

- 15 The Precinct's survey shows that residents overwhelmingly preferred Option 1 that is the smallest of the three rate increases on offer and this is consistent with what would be reasonably expected of ratepayers in the current economic climate.

This begs the question as to which of the surveys more correctly reflects the true and informed choice of ratepayers. Whilst it could be argued that the sample size of the Precinct Survey is less significant compared to the Council Surveys, it must be borne in mind that the

Council has a record of having conducted one of its largest surveys in relation to the government's Fit for the Future agenda and getting it wrong to the extent the government saw fit not to proceed with the merger proposed by the Council after the community that supposedly supported the merger rallied against the merger in unprecedented scale.

- 5 Of special mention is slide 15 of 2018-21 Special Variation Rate Increase presentation – Legacy of the FFTF Survey.



- 10 It starts with **49 percent** of respondents **opposed to** amalgamation (vs 32 percent in favour) in Question 7 and somehow ends up with **51 percent in favour** (vs 49 percent opposed to) by the time the respondents got to Questions 9 and 10.

#### 4. RATEPAYER COMMENTS

The relatively large number respondents to the Precinct Survey<sup>3</sup> provided comments. This suggests that respondents were well aware of the issues and had given the options some thought.

<sup>3</sup> See Annex A – Comments By Ratepayers

## 5. CONCLUSION

The Council has not demonstrated that its proposed SRV has support of ratepayers and that the proposal should not be considered by the Tribunal before an independent community consultation is carried out by the relevant authority.

- 5 I agree to appear before the Tribunal if required, to provide further evidence on matters inter-alia that may require investigation or examination.

Jayasooriah

Randwick City

13th March 2018

## SPECIAL RATE VARIATION 2018-19 – RANDWICK CITY COUNCIL

### ANNEX A - COMMENTS BY RATEPAYERS

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1. There should be an effort to work more productively and produce efficiency dividends, taking on board feedback from ratepayers.
2. There is a lot more that can be achieved in collaboration with community, e.g. community initiated events; water sensitive design & biodiversity improvements that reduce outdoor maintenance; better management of beaches to improve biodiversity values that also reduce costs.
3. Randwick Council has demonstrated good management of Ratepayers funds over recent decades.
4. There is no reason why rates should not be increased for the Port, but this was only listed in Options 2 and 3.
5. I object to the way the options were presented including the list of items, the fact that efficiency measures were not discussed and the 'sampling' methodology.
6. Provide community centres so that everyone has access to such a facility within a nominated radius and make them genuine community centres.
7. In waste management there are measures that could be undertaken in compliance and building community capacity that could achieve lower costs.
8. Unhappy with the waste of ratepayers money.
9. The vote for this address on Council Survey was for Option 1
10. After the Precinct meeting and talk from the General Manager our vote would be for Option 2.
11. I STRONGLY DISAPPROVE of borrowing \$27 Million which will grow exponentially as interest rates rise and also probably will be increased over the years by extra borrowings.
12. Do the basic services right that are the responsibility of local government, like providing active transport corridors and people can save by walking and cycling and benefits to their health.
13. I cannot imagine that any person would want to pay an extra 5.52% for rates when so much money has been recklessly spent by our Council.
14. Some of the Councils staff Salaries are absolutely over the top and perhaps could be pulled back to pay for the new works proposed !!
15. I accept that a small rate increase is necessary to achieve some of the new improvements that are advised will be commencing in the next year.
16. There already have been special rate rises that were designed to be temporary but have never been removed...
17. We can't just keep on introducing special taxes, perhaps council should live within its means and not squander OUR finances on self-approved wage increases and facilitating state and federal government agendas.

18. I think this survey is somewhat inaccurate.
19. I think I voted for an option which says No increase?
20. The choices here do not include NO increase.
21. RCC rates are already 25% above where they should be due to 'temporary' levies making the base bigger and then being made permanent.
22. I have already provided this feedback to the Council via mail.
23. I believe we are already paying enough in rates and Council will need to be more selective as to where it goes.
24. Not sure what "pegged" means, but assuming it means "not at all".
25. Full review of current spends and audit of newly built properties and how many extra dollars they bring into the councils coffers.
26. I am furious with Randwick Council wasting money on [REDACTED] things example Pandas on Anzac Parade Kingsford I saw at least 10 Council men installing them.
27. My rates on Tunstall Avenue are \$[REDACTED] and Anzac Parade Kingsford \$[REDACTED] and on The Crescent Vaucluse one of the most expensive streets in Australia \$[REDACTED] work that out its outrageous and it is very hard to rent the shop on anzac parade because of the light rail What are they doing with all this money just liquid waste.
28. Technically I can't see need for any rate increase based on how they have been expending money.
29. They need to be more disciplined in their expenditure.
30. They obviously have too much if they can do things such as \$300, 000 prizes for competitions, "frivolous" prosecution of KWKP Sec. and seemingly excessive overtime for council employees.
31. Kingsford has become a dirty little suburb with outrageous waste. THERE TALKING ABOUT INCREASES IT LUDARCRIS.
32. Stop this over development and tourism promotion of our local area it's being destroyed by thousands of people coming into the area over the weekend and causing problems of parking, rubbish, property damage and violence.
33. I do not believe any rate increase should be percentage based, since that just means if your council charges more than another council then your increase is automatically greater.
34. I do not believe it costs anymore to empty our rubbish compared to another council and so on for other expenses.
35. Most people I speak to believe Randwick council does less for its residents in relation to street maintenance than other councils. Council spends most of its money on staff but if you try to speak to anyone it is next to impossible - you are told to email and wait for a response.
36. So maybe should consider whether administration is overstaffed (even though I don't like placing individuals jobs in peril, life is hard enough).
37. Just believe council should be more diligent in their expenditure.

38. We should budget for what we can afford and not have unnecessary high increases in rates.
39. Perhaps reduce any discretionary and nice to have capital expenditure to pay for the proposed expenditure on anti-terrorism or doing up the museum.
40. All works undertaken by council must be contained within their annual working budget.
41. There is no justification to increase rates especially for the projects that council is now seeking fund.
42. Any additional funds raised by council will just go into general revenue and be wasted in other areas.
43. Council has demonstrated that it cannot be trusted with ratepayers' funds through - amongst other things - its involvement in actively promoting one side of the same-sex marriage campaign in 2017.
44. As I understand Randwick Council approved spending 68 million dollars for the
45. Light rail car park at Kingsford ... why do we have to pay for it? That must be the state's responsibility.
46. It was to be built in stages I think we should campaign to scrap anything that hasn't gone ahead or seek compensation from the State Government.
47. Why do the ratepayers of Randwick have to pay more rates for Berejiklian's light rail?
48. Council should use its surplus to carry out infrastructure projects without having to levy special rate increase on ratepayers.
49. I do not support borrowing \$27 million.
50. In the evenings it's attracting car hooners, large groups of Middle Eastern teens and a bad drug element to the area.
51. All this started with upgrade of the parks and car parks and beach facilities and the promotion of tourism in the area prior to that this was a very quiet peaceful area for residents.
52. Thanks council and NSW government for wrecking the area now you want to do more NO WAY.
53. I can't wait for the next council elections.
54. The Council should live within its means like I have to do.
55. Rates have always increased above inflation--need to stop -- administrative salaries far too high.
56. Would like to see justification for Terrorism Budget and why it's not a State or Federal Government's responsibility and on who's authority ... Why is it a responsibility of Ratepayers.

The comments from respondents to the Precinct Survey are in random order.



# ANNEX "B"

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*2018-21 Special Variation Rate Increase  
(20 Year Randwick City Plan)*

AGAINST THE MOTION

Administration and Finance Committee F3/18

# 2018-21 Special Variation Rate Increase (20 Year Randwick City Plan)

AGAINST the 19.85% Rate Increase

*Jayasooriah  
La Perouse Precinct  
13th February 2018*

# RCC Community Consultation

- Eight Week Consultation
  - from 1st December 2017 to 31st January 2018
- Option 3 – THE PREFERRED APPROACH
  - 57% stated this as their preferred choice.
- Option 1 – DO NOTHING APPROACH
  - 76% rejected this option or outcome.

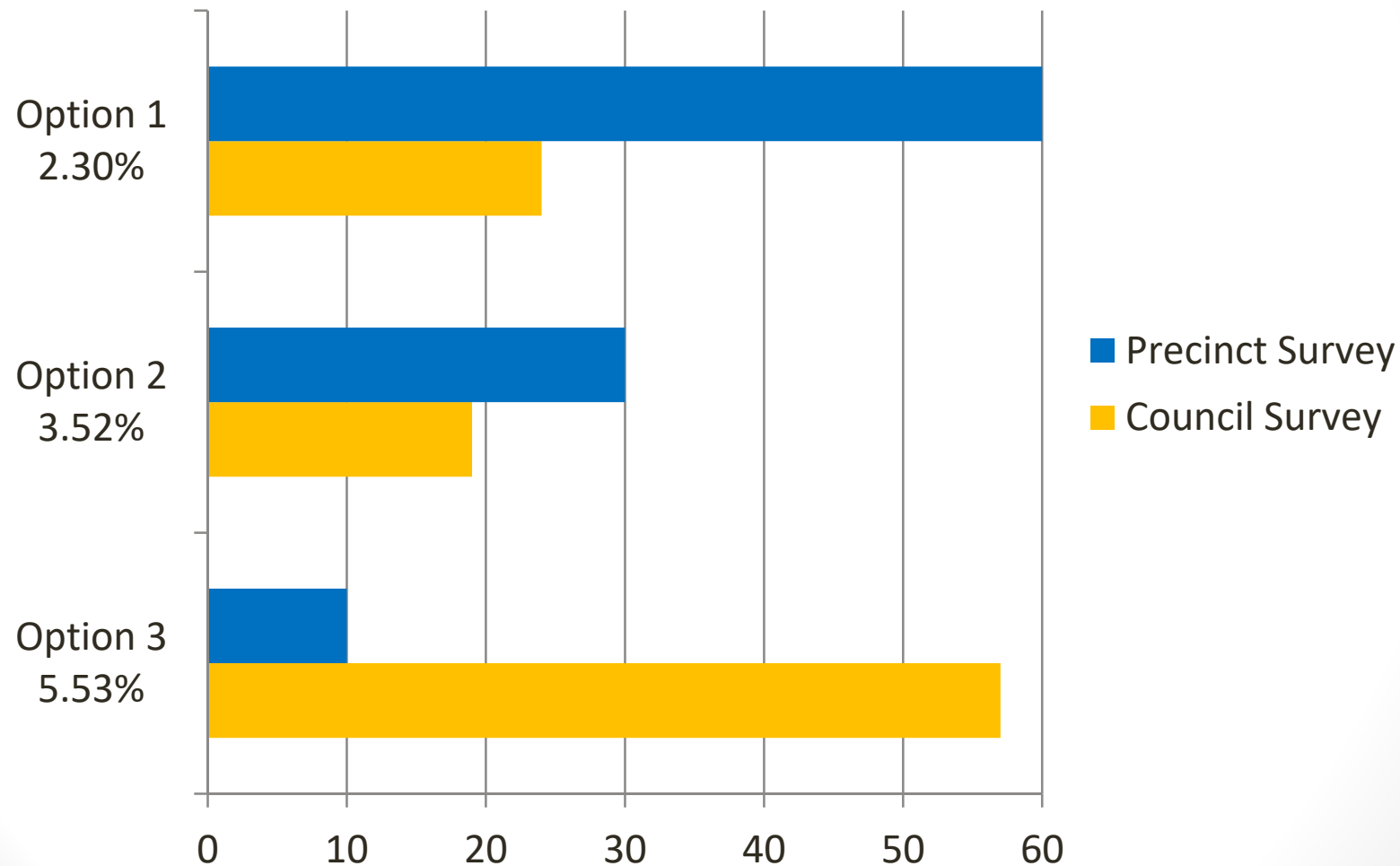
# La Perouse Precinct Meeting

- Meeting held Mon 5th February 2018
  - 17 attendees including the General Manager and two Ward Councillors.
- Option 3 – THE PREFERRED APPROACH
  - NIL stated this as their preference.
- Option 1 – DO NOTHING APPROACH
  - 60% voted for Option 1 in first count.
  - 45% voted for Option 1 in the recount.

# La Perouse Precinct Survey

- <http://laperouse.net.au/> [Survey]
  - Started Sun 13th February 2017 at 12:49pm.
- Indicative results from the Precinct Survey
  - 60% for Option 1 DO NOTHING APPROACH
  - 30% for Option 2 DELAYED APPROACH
  - 10% for Option 3 PREFERRED APPROACH
- Comparative results from Council Survey
  - 24% for 1, 19% for 2, and 57% for 3

# Compare the Outcomes



# Feedback from Ratepayers ... 1

- There should be an effort to work more productively and produce efficiency dividends, taking on board feedback from ratepayers.
- Randwick Council has demonstrated good management of Ratepayers funds over recent decades.
- Unhappy with the waste of ratepayers money.
- The vote on Council Survey was for Option 1. After the Precinct meeting and talk from the General Manager vote would be for Option 2.

# Feedback from Ratepayers ... 2

- I accept that a small rate increase is necessary to achieve some of the new improvements.
- I cannot imagine that any person would want to pay an extra 5.52% for rates when so much money has been recklessly spent by our Council.
- Some Councils staff Salaries are absolutely over the top and perhaps could be pulled back to pay for the new works proposed!!
- I STRONGLY DISAPPROVE of borrowing \$27 million.



# Feedback from Ratepayers ... 3

- There already have been special rate rises that where designed to be temporary but have never been removed.
- We can't just keep on introducing special taxes, perhaps council should live within its means and not squander OUR finances on self approved wage increases and facilitating stage and federal government agendas.
- RCC rates are already 25% above where they should be due to 'temporary' levies making the base bigger and then being made permanent.

# Feedback from Ratepayers ... 4

- I think this survey is somewhat inaccurate. I think I voted for an option which says No increase? The choices here do not include NO increase.
- I have already provided this feedback to the Council via mail. I believe we are already paying enough in rates and Council will need to be more selective as to where it goes.
- Full review current spend and audit of newly built properties and how many extra dollars they bring into the councils coffers.

# Feedback from Ratepayers ... 5

- I am furious with Randwick Council wasting money on stupid things example Pandas on anzac Parade Kingsford I saw at least 10 Council men installing them.
- My rates on Tunstall Avenue are \$3300 and Anzac Parade Kingsford \$3365 and on The Crescent Vaucluse one of the most expensive streets in Australia is \$2780.
- Kingsford has become a dirty little suburb with outrageous waste. THERE TALKING ABOUT INCREASES IT LUDARCRIS.

# Feedback from Ratepayers ... 6

- Technically I can't see need for any rate increase based on how they have been expending money. They need to be more disciplined in their expenditure.
- Most people I speak to believe Randwick council does less for its residents in relation to street maintenance than other councils. Council spends most of its money on staff but if you try to speak to anyone it is next to impossible - you are told to email and wait for a response.

# Feedback from Ratepayers ... 7

- We should budget for what we can afford and not have unnecessary high increases in rates.
- Perhaps reduce any discretionary and nice to have capital expenditure to pay for the proposed expenditure on anti terrorism or doing up the museum.
- Council has demonstrated that it cannot be trusted with ratepayers' funds through - amongst other things - its involvement in actively promoting one side of the same-sex marriage campaign in 2017.

# Feedback from Ratepayers ... 8

- All works undertaken by council must be contained within their annual working budget.
- There is no justification to increase rates especially for the projects that council is now seeking fund. Any additional funds raised by council will just go into general revenue and be wasted in other areas.
- I would prefer no increase.
- No loan.

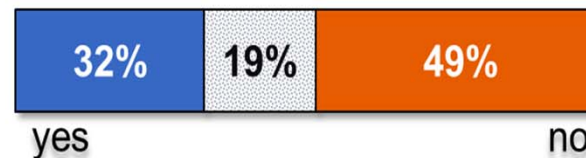
# Feedback from Ratepayers ... 9

- Randwick Council has demonstrated good management of Ratepayers funds over recent decades.
- Our rates are much higher than the average now, I don't want to contribute more money if it is not going to be spent wisely.
- I've provided feedback but I thought I was providing it to you confidentially not on the website. Can you please take it down.

# Legacy of the FFTF Survey

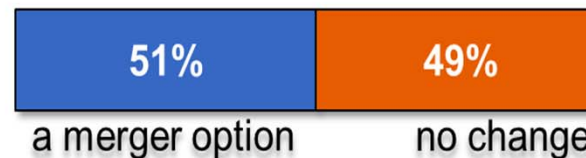
7. Should Randwick City Council be amalgamated?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ unsure



9. Rank your order of preference.

- ☐ an eastern suburbs council
- ☐ a global city
- ☐ no change



10. Rank your top three preferences.

- ☐ (no change)
- ☐ (5 eastern suburbs councils)
- ☐ (a global city)

