



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)
PO Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop
NSW 1240

Dear Sheridan Rapmund, Director,

Re: NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO APPLY SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

This letter provides formal notification that Port Stephens Council intends to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to Council's general income of a **cumulative 31.29%**, being a **9.5% increase for three consecutive years** 2023-2024 to 2025-2026, commencing 2023-2024, under section 508(A) of the Local Government Act 1993 as resolved by Council at its Ordinary Meeting held 8 November 2022 (Min. No. 304)

At this meeting, it was resolved to:

- 1) Receive and note the Independent Financial Analysis 2022 – Consolidated Reports from UNE Emeritus Professor Brian Dollery and Professor Joseph Drew.
- 2) Receive and note the community submissions and responses in relation to the Draft 2023 to 2033 Integrated Planning and Reporting documents revised for a Special Rate Variation.
- 3) Receive and note outcomes of the community engagement provided in the Rate Rise Options Engagement Report.
- 4) Note the recommendations relating to amendments to the 2023 to 2033 Integrated Planning and Reporting documents revised for a Special Rate Variation.
- 5) Adopt the Integrated Planning and Reporting documents, being the Delivery Program 2022 to 2026 incorporating the Operational Plan 2023 to 2024, Resourcing Strategy 2022 to 2032 (incorporating the Workforce Management Strategy 2022 to 2026, Long Term Financial Plan 2023 to 2033 and Strategic Asset Management Plan 2023 to 2033) revised for a Special Rate Variation with amendments provided in (AMENDED ATTACHMENT 5) relating to the base scenario as well as amendments that reflect the special rate variation application type and percentage as stated in recommendation 6.



- 6) Apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal under Section 508(A) of the Local Government Act for a 2023-2024 Special Rate Variation of a cumulative increase of 31.29%, being a 9.5% increase for three consecutive years 2023-2024 to 2025-2026, to be a permanent increase that will be retained within the rate base with financial sustainability being the key purpose of the application.
- 7) Subject to the approval of a Special Rate Variation endorse the inclusion of the proposed additional affordability measures into the Debt Recovery & Hardship Policy to further support ratepayers should a Special Rate Variation be approved.
- 8) Requests the General Manager to provide information regarding its hardship policy & the process on the Rates Notices
- 9) Requests the General Manager to provide a comprehensive monthly report at each month's council meeting detailing income and expenditure for each month and year to date actual v budget
- 10) Requests the General Manager to provide a comprehensive quarterly two-way discussion with the Mayor and Councillors regarding Council's overall financial position, income, and expenditure, and that quarterly budget review reports are promptly made available to the Mayor and Councillors and the general public as close as possible after the end of each quarter
- 11) Requests the General Manager to develop a program to address the additional recommendations of the independent financial review, specifically providing a two-way conversation on the following topics:
 - 1) Combat fiscal illusion ongoing by providing carefully constructed financial sustainability information with rates and charges notices.
 - 2) Review of its Corporate Structure
 - 3) Service Level Review program
 - 4) Internal efficiencies review, including potential deferral of discretionary projects, improved procurement practices, review of community grant schemes, and improved capture of tourist revenues including more appropriate use of tailored fees and charges.

The **key purpose** of the Special Rate Variation Application is **financial sustainability**. SRV income would be used to eliminate the consecutive operational budget shortfalls as forecasted within our Long Term Financial Plan and fund the delivery of the activities and actions outlined in our Integrated Planning and Reporting suite of documents. In addition, some of the SRV income would be used to enhance four key areas of existing services as identified as priorities by our community, being road maintenance, condition of public space, and protecting our natural environment and waterways.



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL

For further information, please contact Tim Hazell, Council's Chief Financial Officer on [REDACTED] or by email: [REDACTED]

Port Stephens Council looks forward to working with IPART in relation to this special rate variation application.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Crosdale
GENERAL MANAGER

9 November 2022

Telephone enquiries



Please quote file no: PSC2021-02359

ITEM NO. 1

**FILE NO: 22/287452
EDRMS NO: PSC2017-00180**

SPECIAL RATE VARIATION - REVISED INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING DOCUMENTS - RATE RISE OPTIONS ENGAGEMENT

REPORT OF: TIM HAZELL - FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTION MANAGER
GROUP: CORPORATE SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION IS THAT COUNCIL:

- 1) Receive and note the Independent Financial Analysis 2022 – Consolidated Reports from UNE Emeritus Professor Brian Dollery and Professor Joseph Drew (**ATTACHMENT 1**).
 - 2) Receive and note the community submissions and responses in relation to the Draft 2023 to 2033 Integrated Planning and Reporting documents revised for a Special Rate Variation (**ATTACHMENT 3**).
 - 3) Receive and note outcomes of the community engagement provided in the Rate Rise Options Engagement Report (**ATTACHMENT 4**).
 - 4) Note the recommendations relating to amendments to the 2023 to 2033 Integrated Planning and Reporting documents revised for a Special Rate Variation (**ATTACHMENT 5**).
 - 5) Adopt the Integrated Planning and Reporting documents, being the Delivery Program 2022 to 2026 incorporating the Operational Plan 2023 to 2024, Resourcing Strategy 2022 to 2032 (incorporating the Workforce Management Strategy 2022 to 2026, Long Term Financial Plan 2023 to 2033 and Strategic Asset Management Plan 2023 to 2033) revised for a Special Rate Variation with amendments provided in (**ATTACHMENT 5**).
 - 6) Apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal under Section 508(2) of the Local Government Act for a 2023-2024 Special Rate Variation of 26%, to be a permanent increase that will be retained within the rate base with financial sustainability being the key purpose of the application.
 - 7) Subject to the approval of a Special Rate Variation endorse the inclusion of the proposed additional affordability measures into the Debt Recovery & Hardship Policy to further support ratepayers should a Special Rate Variation be approved.
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ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING - 8 NOVEMBER 2022

MOTION

304	<p>Councillor Leah Anderson Councillor Jason Wells</p> <p>It was resolved that Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Receive and note the Independent Financial Analysis 2022 – Consolidated Reports from UNE Emeritus Professor Brian Dollery and Professor Joseph Drew (ATTACHMENT 1).2) Receive and note the community submissions and responses in relation to the Draft 2023 to 2033 Integrated Planning and Reporting documents revised for a Special Rate Variation (ATTACHMENT 3).3) Receive and note outcomes of the community engagement provided in the Rate Rise Options Engagement Report (ATTACHMENT 4).4) Note the recommendations relating to amendments to the 2023 to 2033 Integrated Planning and Reporting documents revised for a Special Rate Variation (AMENDED ATTACHMENT 5).5) Adopt the Integrated Planning and Reporting documents, being the Delivery Program 2022 to 2026 incorporating the Operational Plan 2023 to 2024, Resourcing Strategy 2022 to 2032 (incorporating the Workforce Management Strategy 2022 to 2026, Long Term Financial Plan 2023 to 2033 and Strategic Asset Management Plan 2023 to 2033) revised for a Special Rate Variation with amendments provided in (AMENDED ATTACHMENT 5) relating to the base scenario as well as amendments that reflect the special rate variation application type and percentage as stated in recommendation 6.6) Apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal under Section 508(A) of the Local Government Act for a 2023-2024 Special Rate Variation of a cumulative increase of 31.29%, being a 9.5% increase for three consecutive years 2023-2024 to 2025-2026, to be a permanent increase that will be retained within the rate base with financial sustainability being the key purpose of the application.7) Subject to the approval of a Special Rate Variation endorse the inclusion of the proposed additional affordability measures into the Debt Recovery & Hardship Policy to further support ratepayers should a Special Rate Variation be approved.8) Requests the General Manager to provide information regarding its hardship policy & the process on the Rates Notices9) Requests the General Manager to provide a comprehensive monthly report at each month's council meeting detailing income and expenditure for each month and year to date actual v budget10) Requests the General Manager to provide a comprehensive quarterly two-way discussion with the Mayor and Councillors regarding Council's overall financial position, income, and expenditure, and that quarterly budget review reports are promptly made available to the Mayor and Councillors and the general public as close as possible after the end of each quarter
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MINUTES ORDINARY COUNCIL - 8 NOVEMBER 2022

	<p>11) Requests the General Manager to develop a program to address the additional recommendations of the independent financial review, specifically providing a two-way conversation on the following topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Combat fiscal illusion ongoing by providing carefully constructed financial sustainability information with rates and charges notices.2) Review of its Corporate Structure3) Service Level Review program4) Internal efficiencies review, including potential deferral of discretionary projects, improved procurement practices, review of community grant schemes, and improved capture of tourist revenues including more appropriate use of tailored fees and charges.
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Those for the Motion: Mayor Ryan Palmer, Crs Leah Anderson, Matthew Bailey, Chris Doohan, Peter Francis, Peter Kafer and Jason Wells.

Those against the Motion: Nil.

The motion was carried.

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING - 8 NOVEMBER 2022 MOTION

305	<p>Councillor Chris Doohan Councillor Peter Francis</p> <p>It was resolved that Cr Leah Anderson be granted an extension of time to address Council.</p>
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Those for the Motion: Mayor Ryan Palmer, Crs Leah Anderson, Matthew Bailey, Chris Doohan, Peter Francis, Peter Kafer and Jason Wells.

Those against the Motion: Nil.

The motion was carried.