

Executive Summary




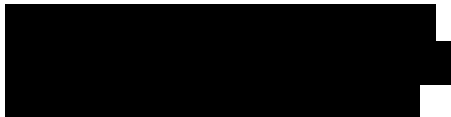








Council received in total 138 submissions from the period of the 13th of September 2022 to the 12th of October 2022 relating to the Rate Rise Options engagement and the draft Integrated Planning and Reporting documents revised for a Special Rate Variation. Of the submissions, 58 were from individuals, 1 from a community association group and 78 were petition style submission in which an individual put their name and address to. Most of the submissions were emailed directly to the generic council information address however some were in response to direct emails sent as per the engagement plan to raise awareness.

The common themes from the submissions included concerns around the affordability of a rate increase, Council's efficiency and cost containment measures, Council's expenditure on capital projects and not focussing on core maintenance services, as well as suggestions for raising revenue through other measures, such as separately rating over 55's lifestyle villages and increasing fees for developers. Noting that there were some submissions that acknowledged Council's need for raising rates, its efforts in raising awareness and engaging with the community as well a few submission suggested a smaller increase would be more tolerable.

A summary of each submission and a Council response has been provided with the Council Report – Special Rate Variation – revised Integrated Planning and reporting Documents – Rate Rise Options Engagement – 25 October 2022.

Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents 2023 to 2033 Revised for a Special Rate Variation
Public exhibition submissions

No.	Author of submission	Comment	Council Response
Council values the community's detailed responses to the draft 2023-2033 Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) documents. Whilst Council has attempted to capture the key issues raised, not every comment has been addressed directly in the summary.			
1	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	<p>Location of previous engagement results given.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
2	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
3	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p> <p>Whilst changes within the individual rates income may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations.</p>

			Council had not yet received the new land values from the Valuer General at the time of the public exhibition phase and as such put a disclaimer on the rates calculator to inform ratepayers of this timing matter.
4			Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
5			<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
6			<p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p> <p>Council's Customer Service Charter clearly defines the standards that community members can expect when dealing with Council to ensure a positive customer experience.</p>
7			Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
8			<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. This includes pensioners.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
9			In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. Additional measures include aged pensioners.








			Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
10	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div>	<p>Whilst the previous SRV application's key purpose was to enhance current services and provide new infrastructure to the community, given the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and other global matters the environment in which we operate and our financial forecasting has significantly changed since IPART's determination. Should an application to put to IPART Council would need to satisfy the criteria issued by the OLG and IPART.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
11	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div>	Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
12	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
13	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
14	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div> <div></div>	<p>Whilst changes within individual rate notices may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations. Council had not yet received the new land values from the Valuer General at the time of the public exhibition phase and as</p>

			<p>such put a disclaimer on the rates calculator to inform ratepayers of this timing matter.</p> <p>Council currently has a rollout plan for paid parking in a number of locations. These locations are currently being investigated and undergoing community consultation. This has been focused on main town centres. It may be possible to further extend to other locations once this town centre rollout is underway.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals as the current rating regulation and legislation does not provide an avenue for this type of structure. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p>
15			<p>IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4 for 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
16			<p>Council has sections of our organisation that work on a commercial basis such as Holiday Parks and Childcare however, this is not available to all parts of our organisation as we provide either statutorily required service or community desired service.</p> <p>Council has included details of our service review program which focuses on cost saving, efficiencies, and productivity within our Integrated Planning and Reporting documents and our Annual Report. Details of our financial investments, are included in the annual financial statements and details of the</p>

			<p>capital works program included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
17	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div>	<p>Council has 700kms of roads that it proactively maintains and manages to increase the safety and quality of the road network. Council uses Statewide Mutual Best Practice and The Austroads Standards/Guides to assess and manage its assets, including roads. It is noted that the increase in rain has deteriorated our road pavements faster than usual and the funds available to undertake road maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Council regularly completes routine maintenance on all outlets on foreshore areas in effort to avoid upstream flooding, especially if rain is predicted.</p>
18	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div>	<p>Council suffered a financial impact from the Covid-19 pandemic however Council had forecasted this period of time to be financially difficult through its Long Term Financial Plan Modelling.</p> <p>Council has considered and implemented a range of approaches to improve its financial sustainability long term, such as the sale of underperforming assets, increasing fees and charges, further rollout of paid parking and continuing its service review program.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to</p>

			<p>mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
19			<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
20			<p>Since 2012 Council has consistently delivered a strong, stable or 'fit' financial position achieving an annual budget surplus of 1%. The Fit for the Future reports were designed solely to investigate the potential of merging local government areas. Whilst the previous SRV application's key purpose was to enhance current services and provide new infrastructure to the community.</p> <p>Our Long Term Financial Plan for some time highlighted that 2022/2023 would be difficult years for our budgets. Given the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and other global matters the environment which we operate in and our financial forecasting has significantly changed since the reports and IPART's determination.</p> <p>Council's capital projects of this nature are predominately funded through grant funds.</p>

			<p>of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation.</p> <p>Whilst changes within individual rate notices may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations. Council had not yet received the new land values from the Valuer General at the time of the public exhibition phase and as such put a disclaimer on the rates calculator to inform ratepayers of this timing matter.</p> <p>Council benchmarks yields and vacancy rates each quarter to industry data to ensure targets continue to be met. It also undertakes an annual independent review of the portfolio to ensure each property is fit for purpose and continuing to perform in line with expectations, and any that are no longer deemed fit for purpose may be recommended for divestment as a result.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
22	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div> <div></div>	<p>Council's capital projects of this nature are predominately funded through grant funds.</p> <p>The majority of additional funds raised through a special rate variation will be targeted toward road maintenance.</p> <p>Individual received the link to Council's draft Delivery Program and Operational Plan which outlines council's commitment to delivering on key directions/goals into activities and actions.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>

23			<p>Council proposes to use the majority of additional funds raised to target road maintenance. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
24		 	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Direction to current draft IP&R documents as well as Annual Report and Annual Financial Statements for past performance.</p> <p>Council fought against the previously proposed merger with the surrounding Council's in line with community feedback.</p> <p>Council is investigating the sale of underperforming assets as part of the approach to addressing financial sustainability.</p> <p>The majority of additional funds raised by a Special Variation would be targeted to road maintenance.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
25			<p>Council operates within a treasury model and a strict procurement contracts process. Council was commended on its budgetary control within the Independent Financial Sustainability Report.</p> <p>Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale, with the process involving community consultation.</p> <p>Council has a range of strategies and plans that guide where additional housing can be provided. We are also working on a project to demonstrate how and where housing can occur over the next 20 years</p>

			<p>Street beautification projects are generally funded by State or Federal grants.</p> <p>Any income raised by a special rate variation would be spent in accordance with Council's application to IPART and would be required to report back evidence of such to IPART and the community.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
28			<p>The information provided for both reports was accurate and financial data was audited independently as per legislative requirements for Council's annual financial statements.</p> <p>Whilst income from some of the Council's income-generating sections of the organisation has returned, others such as the airport dividend have not. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Independent report highlighted Council's reliance on and risk of these commercial revenues.</p> <p>Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams.</p> <p>Council fought against the previously proposed merger with the surrounding Councils in line with community feedback.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
29.			<p>As part of the Long Term Financial Plan Council is required to make assumptions for the next ten years. The key assumptions are reported in the Long Term Financial Plan publicly exhibited and are based on current and forecasted economic factors. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of</p>

			<p>additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
30.	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
31.	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>The rate-pegging regime is calculated by using prior years' costs indexes and as a result, it lags and ultimately does not keep pace with Council's expenses. Inflation has been in recent years and is forecasted into the short-to-medium term future as being above the rate peg.</p> <p>Where available Council during the Covid-19 period has delayed capital expenditure.</p> <p>Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale, with the process involving community consultation. Investment assets where Council expects to receive a reoccurring income stream have not been considered for sale.</p> <p>Council currently has a rollout plan for paid parking in a number of locations. These locations are currently being investigated and undergoing community consultation. This alternative source of income has been modelled into the Long Term Financial Plan.</p>
32.	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>Whilst changes within individual rate notices may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations.</p>

			<p>Council also reviews the annual budget quarterly and reports any significant adjustments to Council.</p> <p>Council has over the years engaged in commercial-based operations as a strategy to raise income through non-rate revenue sources. Whilst balancing our responsibilities of the maintenance of our community assets.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
36.			<p>Whilst most of our income streams have returned after the Covid-19 pandemic some are yet to return. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Independent report highlighted Council's reliance and risk of these commercial revenues.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation.</p> <p>Council has 700kms of roads that it proactively maintains and manages to increase the safety and quality of the road</p>

			<p>network. Council uses Statewide Mutual Best Practice and The Austroads Standards/Guides to assess and manage its assets, including roads. It is noted that the increase in rain has deteriorated our road pavements faster than usual and the funds available to undertake road maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Registered vehicles for example trucks used to carry building materials to construct residential dwellings are legally able to use our roads. Council does gain funds from local quarries for trucking movements and funds from the State Government that originates from fuel and vehicle tax which contributes towards the increasing cost of maintaining our road network.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council applies Section 7.12 contributions for commercial developments which are calculated as a percentage of the cost of works of development. Council applies the maximum allowable levy that is set out by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. Council applies Section 7.11 contributions for individual developments within catchments, these individual developments under current legislation are capped at \$20,000 for each dwelling or lot, except for greenfield areas, where the cap is \$30,000.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is</p>
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			<p>currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is considered inappropriate, with recent approval relying on existing use rights.</p> <p>Council would not look to reduce services in areas where it makes money for Council, there is a legislative requirement, or in a matter of safety. Any specific reduction in services would involve community consultation.</p> <p>Council has committed to the further rollout of paid parking to increase income from user pay options which has been modelled into the Long Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>Council benchmarks yields and vacancy rates each quarter to industry data to ensure targets continue to be met. It also undertakes an annual independent review of the portfolio to ensure each property is fit for purpose and continuing to perform in line with expectations, and any that are no longer deemed fit for purpose may be recommended for divestment as a result.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
37.	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<p>Whilst most of our income streams have returned after the Covid-19 pandemic some are yet to return. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Independent report highlighted Council's reliance and risk of these commercial revenues.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate</p>

		<div data-bbox="446 94 885 357" data-label="Image"> </div>	<p>peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation. Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council applies Section 7.12 contributions for commercial developments which are calculated as a percentage of the cost of works of development. Council applies the maximum allowable levy that is set out by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. Council applies Section 7.11 contributions for individual developments within catchments, these individual developments under current legislation are capped at \$20,000 for each dwelling or lot, except for greenfield areas, where the cap is \$30,000.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is</p>
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		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>Through the independent assessment recently conducted, it was confirmed that Council spends less on staff per assessment than its typical peer does.</p> <p>Council is committed to maintaining our infrastructure across the LGA, this can be seen through our declining infrastructure backlog trend since 2009.</p> <p>The NSW Valuer General issues land valuation every three years, whilst Council is not responsible for this determination it using the land value when calculating rates. Whilst change within the rates income may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase, which include self-funded retiree.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
41.	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>The ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and other global matters of the environment which we operate in and our financial forecasting, in particular inflation, have significantly changed since the IPART's determination. IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4% for the 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation.</p> <p>Whilst the previous SRV application's key purpose was to enhance current services and provide new infrastructure to the community, this proposed SRV is to ensure financial sustainability.</p> <p>Council has a corporate Project Management Framework based on the best practice 'Project Management body</p>

			<p>of knowledge' principles. Our processes and projects are regularly reviewed and audited to ensure compliance and facilitate continuous improvement. Infrastructure projects are impacted by a range of external factors. Council's annual capital works program as a whole is delivered within budget, with all variations (changes) to individual project time, cost or scope acknowledged reported and justified.</p> <p>Council has undertaken an extensive community engagement program over several weeks using a range of communication and engagement methods, one of which was a double-sided A4 letter included within the Rate Notice issued in July during the first phase on engagement.</p>
42.	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div> <div></div>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase, which include self-funded retiree.</p> <p>Potholes occur through a number of ways – sometimes due to general wear and tear, sometimes due to faults in the pavement surface but more often than not, it's a weather event. Council, as with most Council's in NSW have experienced increased rainfall which has deteriorated our road pavement faster than usual. Council's takes a risk mitigation approach when addressing potholes. For Council to be able to get on top of the increased potholes we would require funds to conduct rehabilitation road maintenance works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target this type of road maintenance.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
43.	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div> <div></div>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to</p>

			<p>mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase, which include self-funded retiree.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
44.			<p>Whilst most of our income streams have returned after the Covid-19 pandemic some are yet to return. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Independent report highlighted Council's reliance and risk of these commercial revenues.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation.</p> <p>Council has 700kms of roads that it proactively maintains and manages to increase the safety and quality of the road network. Council uses Statewide Mutual Best Practice and The Austroads Standards/Guides to assess and manage its assets, including roads. It is noted that the increase in rain has deteriorated our</p>

			<p>road pavements faster than usual and the funds available to undertake road maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Registered vehicles for example trucks used to carry building materials to construct residential dwellings are legally able to use our roads. Council does gain funds from local quarries for trucking movements and funds from the State Government that originates from fuel and vehicle tax which contributes towards the increasing cost of maintaining our road network.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council applies Section 7.12 contributions for commercial developments which are calculated as a percentage of the cost of works of development. Council applies the maximum allowable levy that is set out by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. Council applies Section 7.11 contributions for individual developments within catchments, these individual developments under current legislation are capped at \$20,000 for each dwelling or lot, except for greenfield areas, where the cap is \$30,000.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in</p>
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		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is considered inappropriate, with recent approval relying on existing use rights.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
47.	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council has a dedicated grants officer to pursue and manage all grant funding available. The majority of grants that Council receives are for capital expenditure. Council's key purpose of the proposed rate increase is to address its operating budget. Council will continue to seek grant funding across all areas including road funding.</p> <p>Council has undertaken an extensive community engagement program over several weeks using a range of communication and engagement methods both print and digital.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>

			<p>economic change. Council runs a whole suite of strategies to help save money and run efficiently. These include our Service Review Program, Business Improvement Ideas, and our Problem/Opportunity 'Plan Do Study Act' program.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
50.			<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation.</p> <p>Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale, with the process involving community consultation.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
51.			<p>There are various factors that have contributed to Council's forecasted financial position. Since 2012 Council has</p>

		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>consistently delivered a strong, stable or 'fit' financial position achieving an annual budget surplus of 1%. Our Long Term Financial Plan for some time highlighted that 2022/2023 would be difficult years for our budgets. Given the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and other global matters the environment which we operate in and our financial forecasting has significantly changed. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams.</p> <p>Whilst the previous SRV application's key purpose was to enhance current services and provide new infrastructure to the community.</p> <p>Council has 700kms of roads that it proactively maintains and manages to increase the safety and quality of the road network. Council uses Statewide Mutual Best Practice and The Austroads Standards/Guides to assess and manage its assets, including roads. It is noted that the increase in rain has deteriorated our road pavements faster than usual and the funds available to undertake road maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as</p>
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			<p>Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is considered inappropriate, with recent approval relying on existing use rights.</p> <p>Council currently has a rollout plan for paid parking in a number of locations. These locations are currently being investigated and undergoing community consultation. This alternative source of income has been modelled into the Long Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>Council applies Section 7.12 contributions for commercial developments which are calculated as a percentage of the cost of works of development. Council applies the maximum allowable levy that is set out by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. Council applies Section 7.11 contributions for individual developments within catchments, these individual developments under current legislation are capped at \$20,000 for each dwelling or lot, except for greenfield areas, where the cap is \$30,000.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
52.	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div> <div></div>	<p>Council is unable to impose a special charge separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
53.	<div></div> <div></div>	<div></div> <div></div>	<p>In addition to our current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale,</p>

			<p>with the process involving community consultation.</p> <p>Council has a corporate Project Management Framework based on the best practice 'Project Management body of knowledge' principles. Our processes and projects are regularly reviewed and audited to ensure compliance and facilitate continuous improvement. Infrastructure projects are impacted by a range of external factors. Council's annual capital works program as a whole is delivered within budget, with all variations (changes) to individual project time, cost or scope acknowledged reported and justified.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
54.			<p>Council operates within a treasury model with strict budgetary control. Council was commended on its budgetary control within the Independent Financial Sustainability Report.</p> <p>Council publishes each year the Integrated Planning and Reporting documents along with the Annual Report and Annual Financial Statements that outlines all financial information relating to rating income that is received by Council.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
55.			<p>IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4% for the 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation.</p> <p>Financial Statements forwarded.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
56.			<p>In addition to our current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p>

			<p>Council operates within a treasury model with strict budgetary control and runs a whole suite of strategies to help save money and run efficiently, known as our Service Review Program and working within the Business Excellence Framework.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
57.			<p>IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4% for the 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
58.			<p>Whilst changes within individual rate notices may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is</p>

			<p>maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Registered vehicles for example trucks used to carry building materials to construct residential dwellings are legally able to use our roads. Council does gain funds from local quarries for trucking movements and funds from the State Government that originates from fuel and vehicle tax which contributes towards the increasing cost of maintaining our road network.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council applies Section 7.12 contributions for commercial developments which are calculated as a percentage of the cost of works of development. Council applies the maximum allowable levy that is set out by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. Council applies Section 7.11 contributions for Individual developments within catchments, these Individual developments under current legislation are capped at \$20,000 for each dwelling or lot, except for greenfield areas, where the cap is \$30,000.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is</p>
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Total Submissions Count: 138				

