

15 LOCAL COUNCILS NOTIFY SPECIAL VARIATION INTENTIONS

Fifteen councils across NSW have notified the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of their intention to apply for a special variation to increase their general income above the rate peg in 2018-19.

Councils were asked to notify IPART by 15 December 2017. They have until 12 February 2018 to consult with their communities and submit their applications for a special variation increase.

The councils that lodged notifications by 15 December 2017 were:

Ballina	Kiama
Balranald	Lismore
Bellingen	Liverpool Plains
Clarence Valley	Muswellbrook
Cootamundra-Gundagai*	Randwick
Hawkesbury	Shoalhaven
Hay Shire	Willoughby
Kempsey	

* New council created in 2016.

Under guidelines issued by the Office of Local Government in November 2017, new councils created in 2016 (other than Mid-Coast council) are not permitted to apply for a special variation in 2018-19. This policy applies to one of the councils that notified IPART (Cootamundra-Gundagai).

Special variations are the mechanism for councils to use if they want to increase their general income by more than the rate peg to fund items such as infrastructure or additional services, or to improve their financial sustainability.

The rate peg for 2018-19 is 2.3%. We determined it by measuring changes in the Local Government Cost Index, which includes changes in average costs faced by councils, and considering a factor to reflect improvements in productivity.

IPART will begin assessing the applications against criteria set out in the Office of Local Government's guidelines from February 2017. These criteria include demonstrating the need for the additional income, evidence of adequate community awareness and an assessment of the reasonableness of the increase and impact on ratepayers.

Details about each council's proposal should be available from the council.

Full details about the assessment criteria for special variations and the amounts sought may be found on IPART's website www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

Media Contact: Julie Sheather 0409 514 643