

# Communications and Engagement Report

Rate Rise Options  
September 2022



Phase 2



**PORT STEPHENS**  
COUNCIL



# Rate Rise Options


## Engagement snapshot - Phase 2

At its meeting on 13 September 2022 Council agreed to move forward with the community discussion around financial sustainability. This included placing the draft Integrated Planning and Reporting documents on public exhibition to further discuss the community's views on the three narrowed down scenarios: the base rate cap scenario and two rate increase options.


### What we've been up to



**Community sessions**  
13 locations



**Surveys**  
671 completed



**Webpage**  
1090 visitors




**Direct emails**  
3913 sent



**Social media**  
51914 reached

### Survey Results



**61%**  
Preferred a Single Year increase over a Multi-year Increase



**54%**  
Were in favour of the proposed distribution of extra funds



**53%**  
Were in favour of a rate rise over reduced services



The typical survey respondent was a:

male (48%)  
resident and ratepayer (92%)  
aged 56 that heard about the survey from social media (53%)





## Both sides of the conversation

“A single year adjustment makes the most sense to me as improvements to services should be seen quickly and will be easily observable. Also paying less overall to achieve a faster result is more efficient.”

“I dont believe a rate rise to either level is reasonable as cost of living increases have already put pressure on families.”

## What’s in a name?

### Our Funded Future Rate Rise Options



Following the Council meeting on 23rd August 2022 Council resolved to change the name of the Special Rate Variation application strategy from ‘Our Funded Future’. ‘Rate Rise Options’ was chosen, with the aim to be as direct about the intentions as possible. As planned, Phase 2 would focus clearly on rate rise options.

## Rate Cap Change

# 4.4%

During public exhibition IPART announced a change to the rate cap raising from 2.5% to 4.4%. This does not change the overall rate for the Special Rate Variation application but only that the rate cap will make up a larger proportion of the overall special rate..

## Phase 2 - Project timeline



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# Introduction

At its meeting on 13 September 2022 Council agreed to move forward with the community discussion around financial sustainability. This included placing the draft Integrated Planning and Reporting documents on public exhibition to further discuss the community's views on the three narrowed down scenarios: the base rate cap scenario and two rate increase options.

A comprehensive communications and engagement plan was developed at the commencement of the financial sustainability discussion. It included a three phase approach:

- Phase 0 – Community education  
To inform the community on Council's financial situation and the current and short-term mitigation strategies that have been implemented to date.
- Phase 1 – Financial sustainability options  
To provide non-rate increase and rate increase options to the community that creates a financially sustainable Council.
- Phase 2 – Public exhibition  
To publically exhibit preferred options within the Integrated Planning & Reporting documents (This phase is dependent on the outcome of Phase 1).

Following the completion of first two phases Phase 0 and Phase 1, Phase 2 was renamed 'Rate Rise Options', making sure the purpose of the engagement was clear to the community. The objectives of Phase 2 were to:

- Continue to increase community awareness of Council's financial situation and its journey to date
- Inform the community about the preferred rate increase options for Council's financial sustainability
- Seek community feedback on the preferred rate increase options for Council's financial sustainability
- Identify the community's view on the preferred rate increase scenarios

This report provides a summary of the community conversation including key findings and an analysis of the engagement for the Phase 2 period.


# Communication and Engagement Methodology




The communication and engagement program was designed based on the demographic analysis or audience profile for the Port Stephens community.

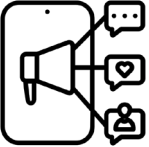

## Phase 2 – Rate rise options (14 September to 12 October)

A diverse range of communication methods were used throughout Phase 2 to further raise community awareness of Council’s financial position and the narrowed down options for the community feedback. Table 1 outlines a description and the reach for each communication method used. Further details and examples of all methods are included in Appendix A. Table 2 is an outline of engagement methods, as well as the community participation for each method. Further details on engagement are included in Appendices B to E.



Table 1: Phase 2 Communication methods

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	REACH
 <b>Project webpage</b>	<b>Rate rise options dedicated website page</b> <a href="http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options">www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options</a>	1090 visits
	Site included the link to short survey; various information including increased FAQs; videos; webinar from independent experts and a rates calculator.	
	<b>Rates calculator usage</b> (download requests only)	52 downloads
	<b>Independent Expert Webinar</b>	58 visits 44 video views
	<b>Rate Cap Announcement Video</b>	932 visits* 28 video views
	<b>Revaluation Explanation Video</b>	171 visits 72 video views
	<b>Fact Sheet</b>	932 visits*
	<b>Rate Rise Options Webinar</b>	932 visits* 354 video views
	<b>Integrated Planning &amp; Reporting Documents</b> (downloads)	57 downloads
	* these resources are hosted on the same page	



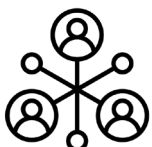

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	REACH
 <p data-bbox="252 416 344 450">Media</p>	<p data-bbox="416 264 644 297"><b>Media releases</b></p> <p data-bbox="416 315 1102 387">14 September 2022, Rate rise options proposed for Port Stephens</p> <p data-bbox="416 405 1126 510"><a href="https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/news/2022/rate-rise-options-proposed-for-port-stephens">https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/news/2022/rate-rise-options-proposed-for-port-stephens</a></p> <p data-bbox="416 573 919 607"><b>Media related via Media Monitors</b></p> <p data-bbox="416 624 1121 842">30 September 2022, IPART hands Port Stephens a 4.4 per cent rate rise as Councils battle inflation. Port Stephens examiner, online edition <a href="https://www.portstephensexaminer.com.au/story/7924791/srv-aside-port-stephens-rates-set-to-almost-double/">https://www.portstephensexaminer.com.au/story/7924791/srv-aside-port-stephens-rates-set-to-almost-double/</a></p> <p data-bbox="416 909 1126 1167">12 October 2022, Port Stephens Council 2023 rate rise proposals: two options on public exhibition until October 12. Port Stephens Examiner, online edition <a href="https://www.portstephensexaminer.com.au/story/7939049/port-stephens-rate-rise-last-day-to-have-your-say/">https://www.portstephensexaminer.com.au/story/7939049/port-stephens-rate-rise-last-day-to-have-your-say/</a></p> <p data-bbox="416 1234 1102 1424">14 September 2022, Rate rise options proposed for Port Stephens. What's on in Our Backyard, online edition <a href="https://www.whatsoninourbackyard.com.au/rate-rise-options-proposed-for-port-stephens/">https://www.whatsoninourbackyard.com.au/rate-rise-options-proposed-for-port-stephens/</a></p>	<p data-bbox="1155 618 1310 685">25,000 distribution</p>
 <p data-bbox="209 1626 384 1697">Paid print advertising</p>	<p data-bbox="416 1440 743 1473"><b>1 print advertisement</b></p> <p data-bbox="416 1514 1074 1585">22 September 2022, Port Stephens Examiner, p. 9</p>	<p data-bbox="1155 1440 1310 1507">25,000 distribution</p>
 <p data-bbox="252 1872 344 1906">Radio</p>	<p data-bbox="416 1713 635 1747"><b>4 radio stories</b></p> <ul data-bbox="464 1771 1094 2027" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="464 1771 1094 1877">• 14 September 2022, ABC Newcastle , 7:37AM and 7:55AM, 8:00AM, 8:32AM, 9:00AM</li> <li data-bbox="464 1883 1094 1944">• 14 September 2022, ABC Upper Hunter, 8:35AM, 4:30PM, 5:00PM</li> <li data-bbox="464 1951 1094 1984">• 14 September 2022, NEWFM, 5:56PM</li> <li data-bbox="464 1991 1094 2027">• 15 September 2022, 2NURFM, 11:41PM</li> </ul>	

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	REACH
 <b>Social Media</b>	<b>Facebook posts (organic) - 8</b>	
	14 September 2022 'Striking a balance between the needs of our community and Council's funded future.'	12071 reach; 2342 clicks
	27 September 2022 'Community engagement sessions'	5102 reach; 319 clicks
	28 September 2022 'Community engagement session – Boyd Oval, Medowie'	4324 reach; 168 clicks
	29 Septmeber 2022 'Outdoor Sunset Cinema Medowie'	1416 reach; 43 clicks
	4 October 2022 'Rate rise options – Have your say'	2605 reach; 350 clicks
	5 October 2022 'Rate rise options – Have your say'	3758 reach; 442 clicks
	7 October 2022 'IPART rate cap announcement' (Video included)	3423 reach; 651 clicks
	10 October 2022 'Rate rise options – last chance to have your say' (Video included)	2619 reach; 586 clicks
		<b>Facebook posts (paid ads) - 1</b>
Posts focusing on 'Rate rise options' asking the community for help to identify which of the narrowed down options they would prefer.		16596 reach; 991 clicks
 <b>Direct emails</b>	<b>Special Interest Groups</b>	13 groups
	19 September 2022 a group email to key community groups was sent to offer placeholder time at their next meeting pending 13 September 2022 Council Meeting.	
	All Rate Rise Options material has been emailed directly to the community groups below throughout the public exhibition period.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tomaree Ratepayers &amp; Residents Association</li> <li>• South Tomaree Community Association</li> <li>• Fern Bay Fullerton Cove Community Association</li> <li>• Karuah Progress Association</li> <li>• Medowie Progress Association</li> <li>• Business Port Stephens</li> <li>• Voices of Wallalong/Woodville</li> <li>• Shoal Bay Community Association Inc.</li> <li>• Soldiers Point Community Group</li> <li>• Tilligerry Community Association</li> <li>• Karuah LALC</li> <li>• Wahroonga Aboriginal Corporation</li> <li>• Worimi LALC</li> </ul>	



ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	REACH
 <b>Bulk e-newsletters</b>	<b>E-newsletters distribution</b> <i>Article included in e-newsletters</i> 19 September 2022 'Have Your Say' subscribers 5 October 2022 'Your Port' subscribers	3913 total  1521 recipients 2392 recipients
 <b>Phone messaging</b>	<b>On hold messaging</b> Throughout the public exhibition period Council has a "Rate Rise Options" announcement within its hold messaging. All customers who called Council heard the announcement	3159 customer service calls

**Table 2: Phase 2 Engagement methods**

DATE	METHOD	PARTICIPATION
 <b>Online Survey</b>	<b>Survey Monkey</b> <a href="https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/rateriseoptions">https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/rateriseoptions</a> Open 14 September – 12 October 2022	671 surveys completed 883 comments
	<b>Sunset Cinema</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raymond Terrace 27 September 2022</li> <li>• Medowie 29 September 2022</li> <li>• Nelson Bay 1 October 2022</li> </ul>	17 total attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 attended</li> <li>• 7 attended</li> <li>• 5 attended</li> </ul>
 <b>Community drop in sessions</b>	<b>Port Stephens Visitor Information Centre</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 October 2022</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 attended</li> </ul>
	<b>Shopping Centres</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salamander Bay 4 October 2022</li> <li>• Raymond Terrace 6 October 2022</li> <li>• Medowie 6 October 2022</li> </ul>	26 total attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 attended</li> <li>• 4 attended</li> <li>• 12 attended</li> </ul>
 <b>Key stakeholder meetings</b>	<b>Special Interest Groups</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wahroonga Aboriginal Corporation 12 September 2022</li> <li>• Tilligerry Community Association 28 September 2022</li> <li>• Karuah LALC 4 October 2022* <i>*emergency cancellation, reschedule attempted</i></li> <li>• Soldiers Point Community Association 4 October 2022</li> <li>• Voices Of Wallalong/Woodville 5 October 2022</li> <li>• Shoal Bay Community Association 10 October 2022</li> <li>• Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association 10 October 2022</li> </ul>	95 total attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 attended</li> <li>• 12 attended</li> <li>• Cancelled</li> <li>• 19 attended</li> <li>• 14 attended</li> <li>• 21 attended</li> <li>• 26 attended</li> </ul>
	 <b>Interactions</b>	Interactions include counter enquiries, phone calls, or emails where a ratepayer has requested more information.

## Key findings – Phase 2

The Rate rise options communication and engagement program had a community awareness reach of 83999 and participation of 7819\*. Participation is any time people have actively done something to be part of the engagement. This can be completing the online survey, visiting the website for more information, clicking or liking a social media post, attending a community information session or contacting Council to ask questions or find out more.

### Key Themes

A number of key themes came out of community input across all engagement opportunities including the online survey comments, community drop in sessions, special interest group presentations and Council interactions. As the engagement for Phase 2 is tied to the fiscal relationship between the community and Council, being that landowners in the LGA pay rates and then Council uses those rates to provide services, the key themes were also a reflection of this. The themes encompassed the community's understanding of the Special Rate Variation application process and ratepaying in general, as well as the affordability of a proposed rate rise during a time where the cost of living is also rising. They also explored Council's financial accountability and the service levels that were currently provided and how this should change should a SRV be approved. The key themes include:

#### 1. **Level of understanding**

Initially this theme was tied solely to the understanding of complex local government financial matters, but during the exhibition period, it grew to also include the community's understanding of the engagement process, specifically looking at the short survey and how it was structured. From a financial point of view, this included the understanding of rates in general, rating inequities, rate valuations and the 'rate pie', developer contributions and grant funding and how that differs from rating income, and state legislation. With regards to the survey, this theme encompassed understanding around the questions being asked, how they were being asked and the order they were being asked in.

Some participants expressed concern with the directness of the rate option questions. Some voiced their displeasure that there weren't more options to choose from or that there wasn't an option to choose 'No rate rise' in Question 1. A 'No rate rise' option was part of a later question (Question 3) and the survey was designed this way to give participants understanding of the rate rise options up front.

#### 2. **Efficiency and cost containment**

Efficiency and cost containment relates to directly to Council spending. This included cutting costs and looking at internal savings and efficiency measures. It covered the lack of trust in Council financial management and modelling and the community asking for accountability for perceived economic mismanagement. Often participants were asking Council to 'live within their means', cut staff or salaries or to sell the Mayor's car.

\*Total reach and participation have been reclassified in accordance with updated definitions such as updated newspaper readership figures when collating all phases.

### 3. **Affordability**

This theme focused on the community themselves and whether or not they could afford a rate rise on top of the growing cost of living. It included financial hardship and economic factors, especially for fixed income rate payers. It also demonstrated that there was a lack of awareness around the options for ratepayers who were experiencing financial difficulties.

### 4. **Service levels**

Service levels has been a key theme across all recent engagements with our community, not just during Phase 2, 'Rate Rise Options'. Within Phase 2 participants were opposing service level priorities, wanting more services but being unwilling to pay for them, sections of the community feeling that their locality is ignored or that services are always provided elsewhere; and explaining their preference for the allocation of surplus funds should a rate increase be applied. During the exhibition period, 'Roads' was identified as a subset of this theme. Many members of the community across the short survey, social media and community sessions identified this as a priority.

### 5. **SRV option preference explanation**

This theme was tied to positive responses from the community and where they could identify the benefit of a rate rise and the impact it would have on the service levels provided by the council. This included explanations for their choice of SRV (single year vs multi-year), as well as justification for the division of surplus and their decision to support a rate increase.

All comments from questions 1- 3 in the short survey were coded using the themes above. When coding the comments there were a number deemed as 'Miscellaneous'. This was because the comments were inappropriate or of a personal nature, were singular and non-repetitive, they didn't make sense or didn't offer an explanation for their decision that aligned with the key themes (e.g. 'No rate rise' or 'I agree').

## **Short survey**

After using the more extensive survey during Phase 1, a short survey was created in SurveyMonkey to clarify participants' views on the narrowed down scenarios by streamlining the process to just three questions (excluding demographic questions). Each question provide the opportunity for the respondent to also leave a comment. Paper copies of the survey were made available at Council libraries and the Council administration building for those without online access.

The survey had a total of 671 responses with 883 comments provided. Of those that completed the survey, 48% were male and 47% were female. The majority of participants were ratepayers living in Port Stephens (92%), while ratepayers living outside the LGA were the second-highest polling group at 4%. 53% of respondents found out about the survey from social media, with direct email (27%) and media such as papers and radio (17%) other popular methods of communication.

The full survey report and survey comments can be viewed in Appendices C and D.  
Question 1 – Rate rise option preference

The first question in the survey sought to understand the community’s preference between two different rate rise scenarios that had been streamlined from five original options during the Phase 1 survey process. Respondents were asked to chose between a Single Year Scenario of 26% or a Multi-Year Scenario of 10.5% per year (34.92% cumulatively), with results showing a preference for the Single Year Scenario, with 61% in favour. (Figure 1.)

Drawing on the comments, there seemed to be a misunderstanding about the purpose of the question and how it fit into the survey as a whole. There was an underlying sentiment that the question was leading and did not provide the option to say no to a rate rise, or that by answering the question the respondent was in favour of raising rates. This was not the intention, but instead the two options were laid out in the initial stages to provide greater understanding to aid in answering Question 3, where respondents could chose between a rate rise or reduced services. The language stated “**IF**” Council was to apply for a Special Rate Variation and not when, seeking preference rather than level of support. The number of comments per theme can be viewed in Table 3 below.

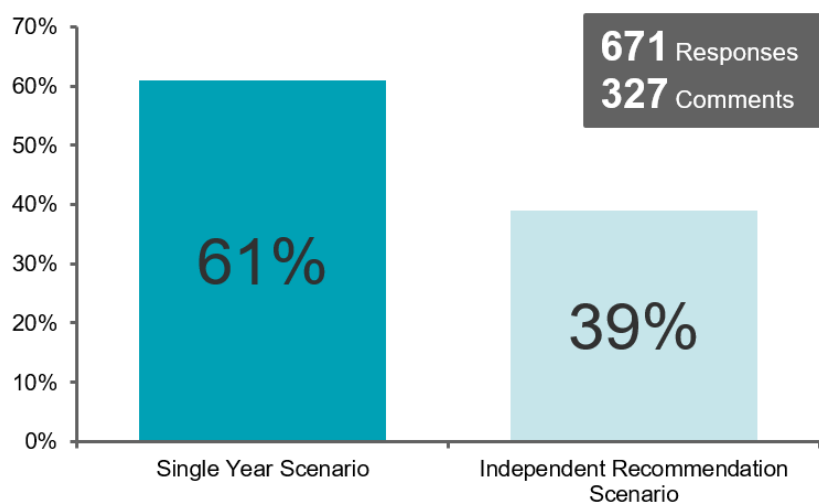
**Table 3: Question 1 comments**

Key Themes from 327 comments*					
Level of Understanding	Efficiency and Cost Containment	Affordability	Service Levels	Roads	SRV preference explanation
77	100	61	63	46	43

\*comments can include more than 1 theme

**Figure 1: Short Survey – Question 1 results**

**If Council was to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) which of the above options is your preference?**



Question 2 –

Distribution of funds

Question 2 was a Likert scale that asked respondents about how supportive they were of the proposed distribution of extra funds, should a rate rise occur. The community was generally in favour of the financial dispersement (54%) with 22% 'very supportive' and 32% 'supportive' of the split. (Figure 2) Conversely, 26% were against the proposal, 9% being 'opposed' and 17% 'very opposed'. 19% of respondents were unsure of how they felt about it.

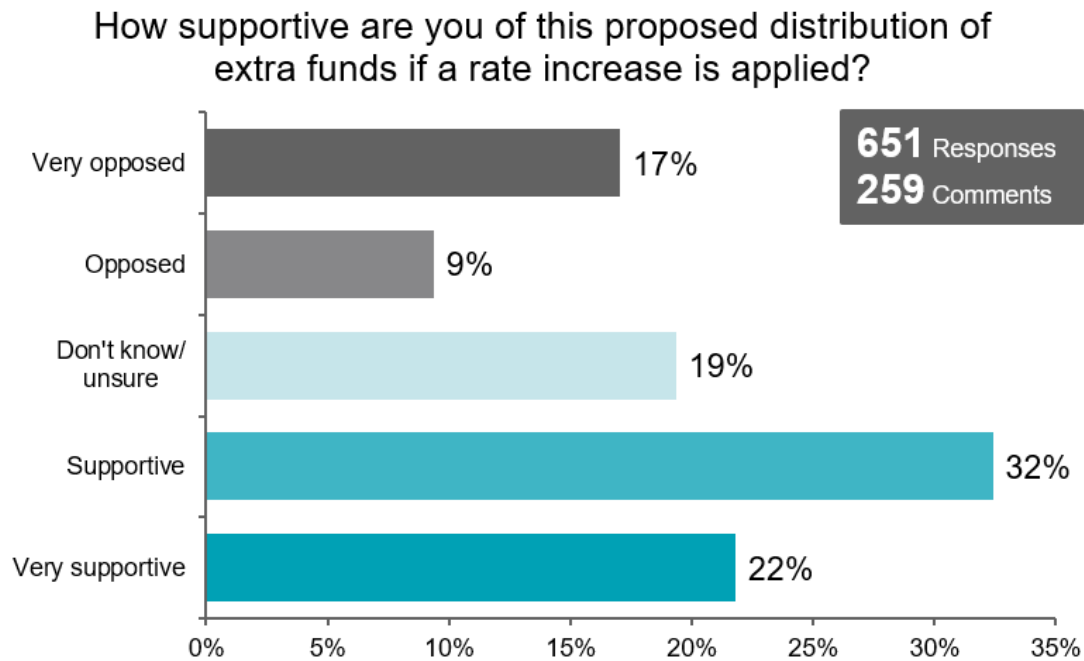
Because of the nature of this question, the comments were heavily weighted towards service levels and what the Council was providing for the rates that were paid. The comments regarding service levels were generally around two main themes. Either the community were critical of the services in their local area (or comparing their locality to other parts of the LGA) or they were critical of the roads and road maintenance. Those that didn't identify roads as our main priority listed the natural environment as their biggest concern. The number of comments per theme can be viewed in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Question 2 comments**

Key Themes from 259 comments*					
Level of Understanding	Efficiency and Cost Containment	Affordability	Service Levels	Roads	SRV preference explanation
35	50	10	139	111	10

\*comments can include more than 1 theme

**Figure 2: Short Survey – Question 2 results**



Question 3 – Rate rise or reduced services

Question 3 was the most direct about the financial future of Council. It asked whether the community wanted to pursue a rate rise option or a reduced services option. Over half of all respondents (53%) were in favour of a rate rise and the benefits that increased income would bring. (Figure 3) Analysis of the comments revealed that respondents who were against the rate rise (47% of responses) were almost twice as likely (1.75x) to comment, resulting in the written sentiment trending towards the negative.

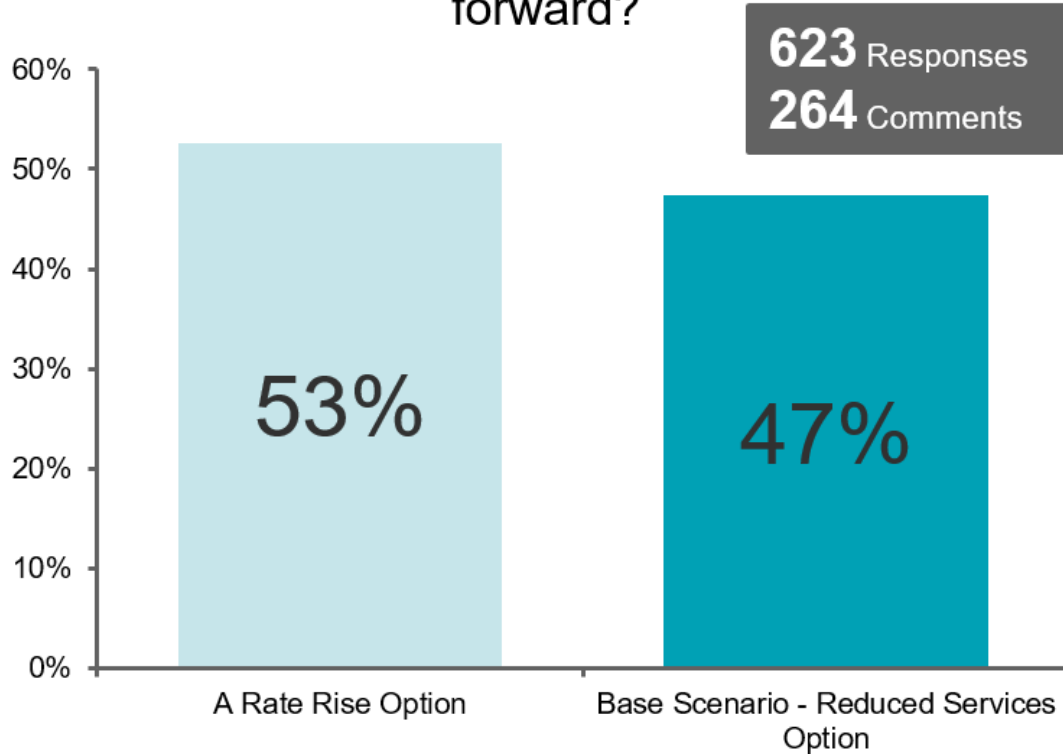
**Table 5: Question 3 comments**

Key Themes from 264 comments*					
Level of Understanding	Efficiency and Cost Containment	Affordability	Service Levels	Roads	SRV preference explanation
71	106	19	59	42	24

\*comments can include more than 1 theme

**Figure 3: Short Survey – Question 3 results**

## What is your preference on the path forward?



### Community drop in sessions and special interest group meetings

Table 6 and 7 below show participant numbers at both drop in sessions and group meetings.

**Table 6: Community drop in sessions**

Location	Date	Attendance
Sunset Cinema – Raymond Terrace	27 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	5
Sunset Cinema – Medowie	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	7
Sunset Cinema – Nelson Bay	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2022	5
Shopping Centre – Salamander Bay	4 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	10
Shopping Centre – Medowie	6 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	12
Shopping Centre – Raymond Terrace	6 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	4
Visitor Information Centre – Nelson Bay	4 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	12

**Table 7: Special interest group meetings**

Location	Date	Attendance
Wahroonga Aboriginal Corporation	12 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	3
Tilligerry Community Association	28 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	12
Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council	Cancelled due to emergency	
Soldiers Point Community Association	4 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	19



Voice of Wallalong/Woodville	5 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	14
Shoal Bay Community Association	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	21
Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	26

Across both the community drop-in sessions and the meetings with special interest groups, found a lot of feedback focused more on how services provided by Council would be affected by the proposed rate rise rather than the actual rate rise itself. Issues that arose were locally focused, specific to the location and residents where the face-to-face session was being held. Some of the specific issues to be raised included Air BnBs, Place Plans, Brandy Hill Quarry, Little Beach amenities, tourism, boatramps and Smart Parking. There were also broader questions across the community that were raised at a number of meetings. These ranged from climate change and the natural environment, over-development, over 55s living and land revaluations.

## Interactions

Council received 16 interactions representing every instance a community member contacted Council, regarding Rate rise options. This includes interactions such as phone calls acknowledging the receipt of the Rate rise options direct email, request to view the hard copy IP&R documents, and information requests regarding the engagement methods. Interactions are classified separately from formal submissions.

With survey respondents being able to comment on each financial sustainability question, we did find some overlap between the issues to be raised by the community in face-to-face meetings and the issues raised by the community who took part in the survey. The strongest correlation between these two engagement methods occurred around the natural environment in Port Stephens, as well as development (or over-development) and how rates are assessed for Over 55s living.

Across all forms of engagement the most discussed topic was roads and potholes. Whether it was a drop-in session, a community meeting or the survey, it was clear that the community's biggest concern was the state of the road network in the Port Stephens LGA. Professional discourse with colleagues from Communications and Engagement teams within nearby councils reveals a similar story, with unprecedented weather events causing widespread damage and making repairs for Council teams difficult.

It is important to note that the Rate Rise Options communications and engagement program remained agile and responsive to community needs throughout phase 2, as it had during phases 0 and 1. Comments and questions raised in the community information sessions, social media posts and online survey comments were monitored and responded to publically through a number of channels. These included updating factsheets, creating videos and answering questions and comments on Rate Rise Option posts on Facebook.

On top of this, IPART announced a change to the rate cap from 2.5% to 4.4% during public exhibition, which wouldn't change the overall rate for the Special Rate Variation application but would mean the rate cap will make up a larger proportion of the overall special rate. We moved quickly to create a video featuring the General Manager to explain this change and that it would not impact the total amount that Council was applying for.

## **Submissions**

Council received in total 138 submission from the period of the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 to the 12<sup>th</sup> 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.



# Appendix A

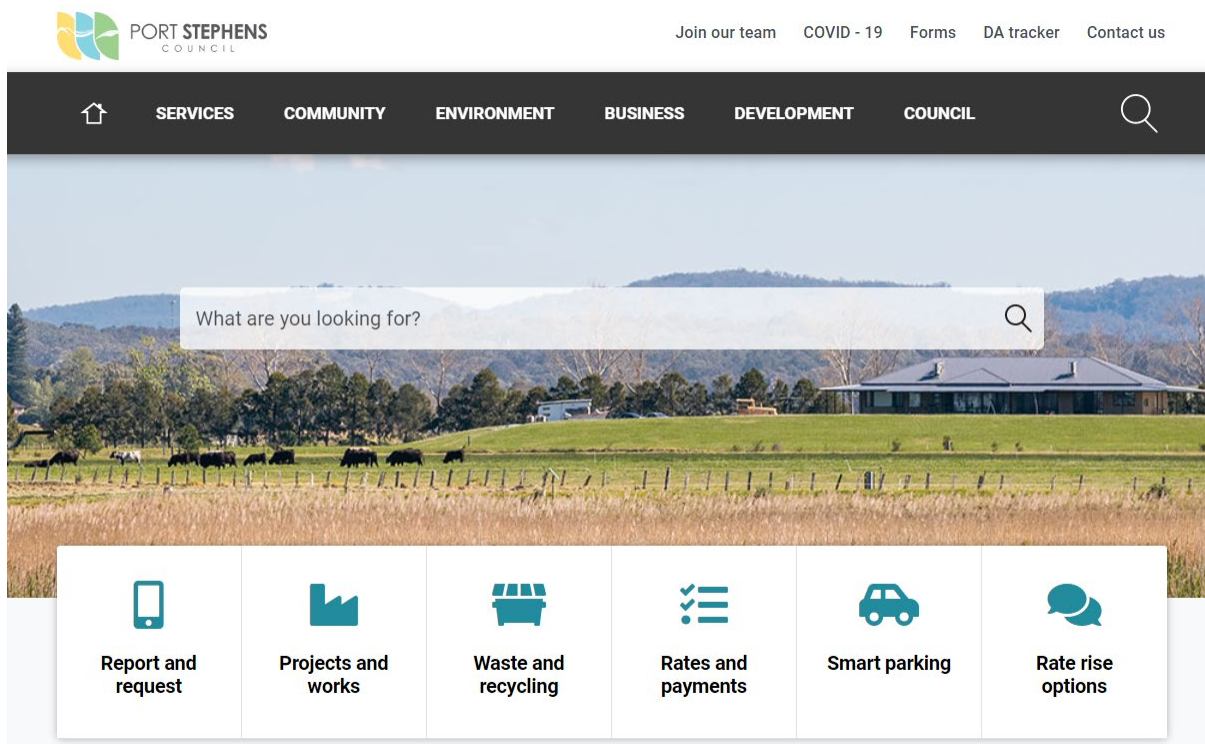
## Communication Methods – Phase 2

Project webpage

Rate rise options dedicated website page

[www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options](http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options)

Rate rise options page promoted to home page via quick access bar



Website page included:

Introduction, general information, media release, webinar from Chief Financial Officer, webinar from independent experts, FAQs, details of community drop in sessions.



### Have your say

Find out how you can have your say on the rate rise options and where you can talk to Council staff.



### Rate rise options

Find out more about the two rate rise options.



### Rates calculator

Use the rates calculator to find out an estimate of your land rates under each option.



### Independent expert advice

Independent experts have advised us to take urgent steps now to ensure long term financial sustainability.



### How did we get here?

Find out how we're in this position and what we've been doing about it.



### FAQs

Frequently asked questions about financial sustainability and a special rate variation.



# Rates calculator

<https://forms.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/RunForm.aspx?formId=2654>



## Rate Rise Options - Rates Calculator

**IMPORTANT:** The Rates Calculator works best with a Desktop/Laptop Computer OR Tablet.  
 For Mobiles, enter the required information, scroll to the bottom and follow the instructions to download a PDF copy of the results.

This tool has been designed to show you the impact of each of the proposed Special Rate Variation Options based on your individual land value. All you need to do is select your rating category and enter your land value, both of which are located on your rates notice (example provided below) or please call Council for assistance.

Land Category: \*

Land Value: \*

### RATE NOTICE EXAMPLE

<b>Assessment No:</b>		<b>1ST INSTALMENT</b>	
<b>Rating Year:</b>	01/07/2022 to 30/06/2023	<b>Amount Payable:</b>	
<b>Issue Date:</b>	13/07/2022	<b>Due Date:</b>	31/08/2022
<b>Land Category:</b>	RESIDENTIAL	No further notice will be sent for 1st instalment	
<b>Land Value:</b>	278000		
<b>Value Base Date:</b>	1/07/2019		
<b>Description and Location of Property Rated</b>			
[Redacted]			

LEVY DETAILS	VALUE/NO	RATE/CHARGE	LEVY
Residential Rate <small>Land Category</small>	278,000.00 <small>Land Value</small>	0.00286800	\$797.30
Residential Base Amount	1.00	403.00	\$403.00
Waste Management Charge	1.00	110.00	\$110.00
Domestic Waste Management Service Charge	1.00	500.00	\$500.00
Hunter Catchment Contribution	278,000.00	0.00009770	\$27.16
On-Site Sewage Management Renewal Fee	1.00	140.00	\$140.00
<b>Totals</b>			<b>\$1,977.46</b>

**DISCLAIMER**

The above estimate is for ordinary rates and does not include domestic waste/waste management or waste service charges, on-site sewage management renewal fees or Hunter Local Land Services catchment contributions. The land value shown on your 2022-2023 rate notice has a base date of 01/07/2019. Rates will be calculated for Year 1 (2023-2024), Year 2 (2024-2025) and Year 3 (2025-2026) using 01/07/2022 base date land values. The NSW Valuer General has not yet provided 01/07/2022 land values to Council. Rates will be calculated for Year 4 (2026-2027) using 01/07/2025 base date land values that are also unavailable at this time. For this reason the rates calculations are an estimate only using the best information currently available to Council and rates levied may vary from this estimate depending upon changes in your land value compared to your Rate Category average. General revaluations performed by the NSW Valuer General do not result in any increase to Council rate income. Total rate income increases are pegged by IPART. Council is required to reduce the rate in the dollar if general revaluation total land value increases would result in a total rate income increase exceeding the rate peg.

**PERMANENT IN NATURE**

The proposed SRV options are to be retained permanently in the rate base.

In the year following the end of the SRV and in future years, the rate peg percentage increase will apply to the increased rate level from the SRV, and not return to the rate level with the rate peg only.

This means rates will stay at the increased level and then only increase by the rate peg percentage after the SRV period finishes.

**WOULD YOU LIKE A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION?**

1. Click the 'I am not a robot' box
2. Press 'Submit'
3. Download a PDF copy of this information on the next page.

I'm not a robot

## Independent Expert Advice

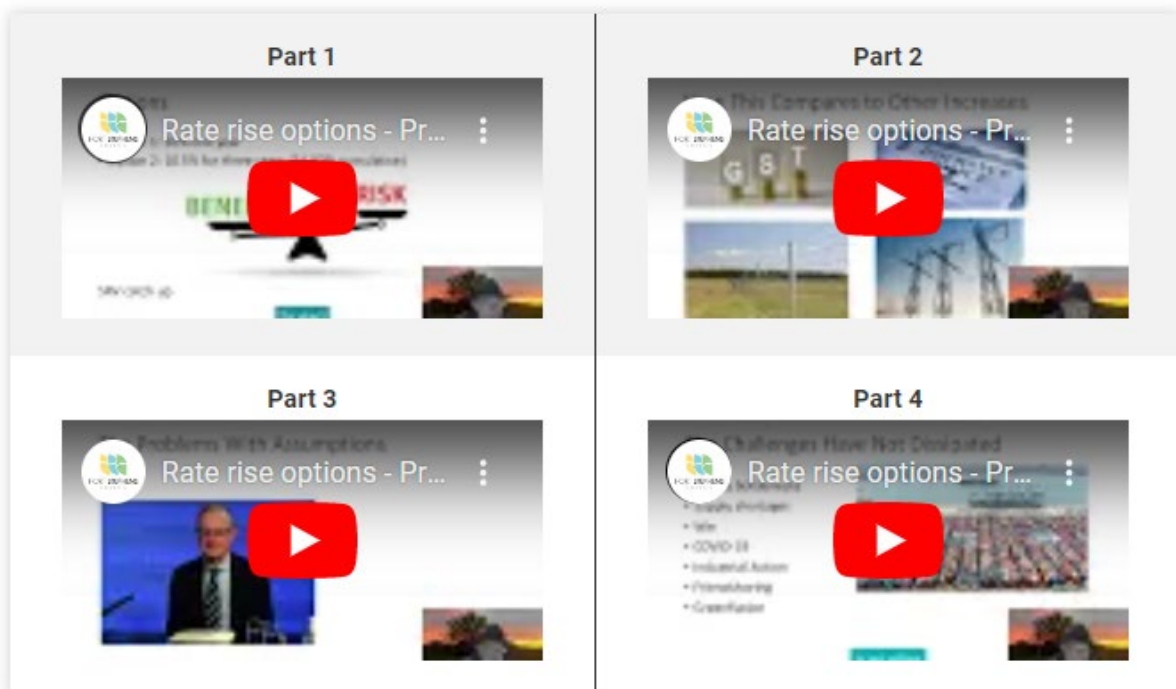
<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options/independent-advice>

To help us best understand our financial situation, Council appointed independent experts to analyse our long term financial position. Through a number of reports Professor Brian Dollery and Professor Joseph Drew identified that Council is not financially sustainable. Council needs to urgently take steps now to ensure it's financially sustainable in the long term.

The independent reports were presented to Councillors in March 2022, leading them to a number of workshops, taking an in depth look at Council's finances.

[View the independent experts' summary webinar and recommendations.](#) →

## Independent expert information videos



<b>Summary Report</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Report 1: Financial Sustainability</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Report 2: Capacity to Pay</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Report 3: Efficiency Report</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Report 4: Debt Capacity</b>	<b>+</b>

You can view a number of other webinars by Professor Joseph Drew on financial sustainability and local government [here](#).

This is a really important decision for our community. Let us know your thoughts through the [online survey](#).



## Land Revaluations Explanation Video

<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options/faqs>

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page was updated to reflect the changes in Phase 2

# FAQs



## Land revaluations and the rate cap



## Fact Sheet

<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/trim/other?RecordNumber=22%2F255853>

The fact sheet was updated after the Phase 0 and 1 engagement and to reflect the name change following the council resolution. It was available on the Rate Rise Options webpage, as well as internally on the MyPort SharePoint page.



For the past month, we have been talking to residents across Port Stephens about Council's financial position and how we can turn this around. We have presented five rate rise options and asked for feedback on how best to move forward. This has helped us drill down to two options which we have incorporated into our statutory planning documents. At its meeting on 13 September 2022, Council agreed to place the draft Integrated Planning and Reporting documents on public exhibition which includes modelling of two potential rate rise options. This gives our community further opportunity to give feedback on how to strike the balance between increasing costs and decreasing revenue.

### What are the scenarios?

In recent months we have been talking with our community about Council's financial position and how we can turn this around. The feedback received showed support for both a rate increase with enhanced services and reduced services. Council is seeking feedback on three scenarios

- **Base scenario** – a rate rise only in line with the rate cap (2.5%) and reduced service levels across a range of council services.
- **Single Year Scenario** – a 26% increase for a single year, being 2023 to 2024 only.
- **Independent Recommendation Scenario** – a cumulative increase of 34.92%, being a 10.5% increase for 3 consecutive years 2023 to 2024 and 2025 to 2026.

# Base scenario

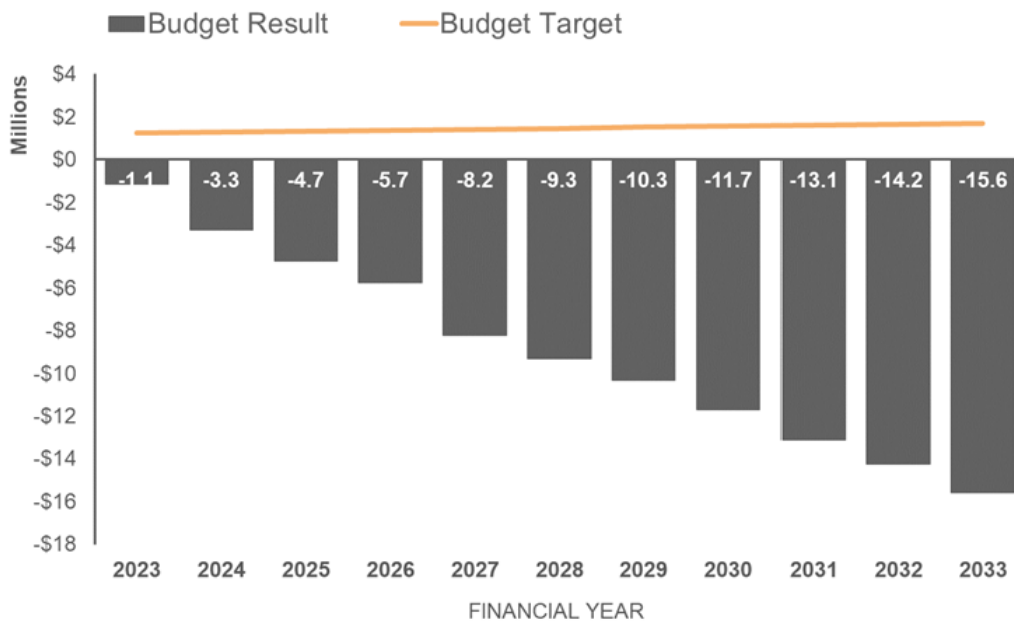
Standard 2.5% rate cap  
Reduce services

**2.5% OR \$29**

SINGLE YEAR CUMULATIVE COMPARISON

**7.69% OR \$88**

3 YEAR CUMULATIVE COMPARISON



## Impact Statement

Under the base scenario, Council will not be financially sustainable. The income we get will not cover what we need to spend to deliver services as they currently are. Our assets will deteriorate and we will look at reducing or ceasing services such as more potholes as our road network deteriorates further, shorter hours at our facilities,

longer processing times for customer requests/ applications, and fewer community events.

If this is the path forward, Council and the community would have future conversations to understand what services the community is prepared to see reduced or stopped.

**Budget shortfalls**  
NOT FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE

**Less services**  
SERVICES REDUCED OR CEASED

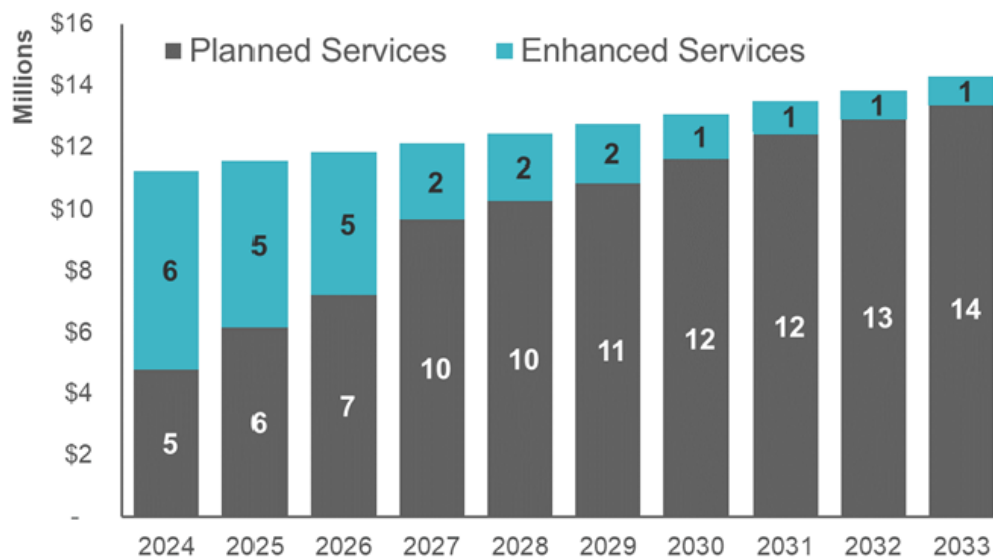
# Single year scenario

Rate increase 26% one year

# 26%

YEAR 1 **26%**

**\$298** OR **\$6** PER WEEK  
AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL



## Impact Statement

Under the Single Year scenario, ratepayers would pay more up front but less over time. Council would achieve a balanced budget in one year. The majority of the income generated from the rate rise will be used to fund existing services at current levels, ensuring Council remains financially sustainable.

We would be able to immediately deliver improvements to our services. Income generated above a balanced budget would be proposed to be spread across fixing our roads, looking after our public space and protecting our nature environment, waterways and foreshores.

 **Year 1**  
REACH BUDGET TARGET

 **Instant**  
ENHANCED SERVICES

# Independent scenario

Rate increase 10.5% for 3 years

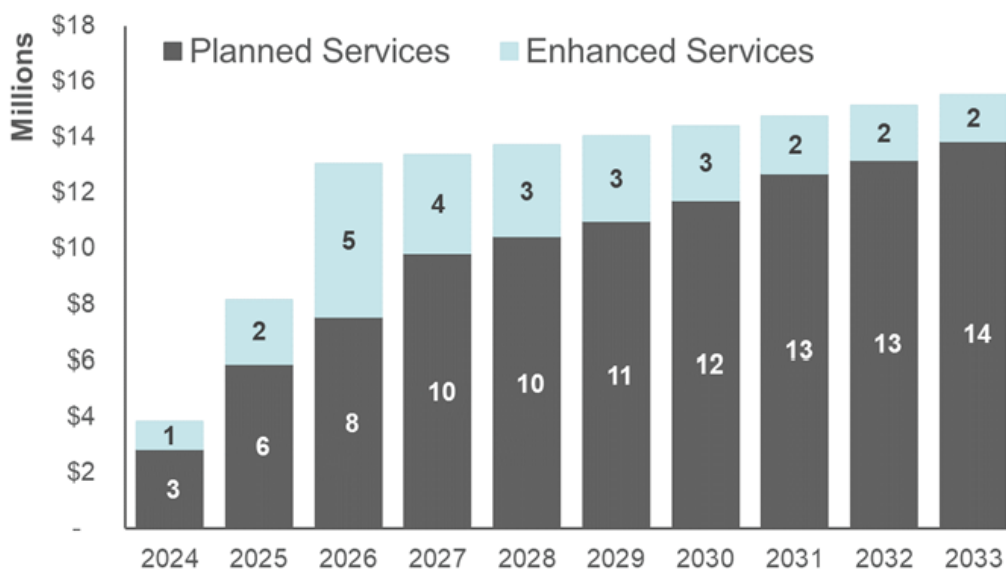
**34.92%**  
CUMULATIVE

**\$401 OR \$8** PER WEEK  
AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL

YEAR 1 **10.5%**

YEAR 2 **10.5%**

YEAR 3 **10.5%**



## Impact Statement

Under the Independent Recommendation scenario, ratepayers pay less each year but more over time. Council would reach its target budget in 3 years. The majority of the income generated from the rate rise will be used to fund existing services at current levels, ensuring Council remains financially sustainable.

The community would see a gradual enhancement of services. Income generated above a balanced budget would be proposed to be spread across fixing our roads, looking after our public space and protecting our nature environment, waterways and foreshores.



# Single year scenario

Funds



## Fixing the budget, delivering planned services

\$99 million over 10 years

Current levels of services to stay  
Delivering planned services as outlined in the CSP



Below enhancements immediately funded



## Fixing our roads

\$14 million over 10 years

Targeting roads with a high number of reoccurring potholes



## Protecting our natural environment

\$6 million over 10 years + continued funding

Dedicated recurrent works focused on protecting and enhancing our natural environment



## Looking after our waterways and foreshores

\$4.5 million one-off 3-year target program

Funding for 3 years of targeted works focused on looking after our waterways and foreshores across Port Stephens



## Looking after our public space

\$3 million over 10 years

Fixing defects throughout our community buildings, and replacing lighting with more energy-efficient LED globes

# Independent scenario

Funds



## Fixing the budget, delivering planned services

\$99 million over 10 years

Current levels of services to stay  
Delivering planned services as outlined in the CSP



Below enhancements gradual as SRV funds builds up



## Fixing our roads

\$14 million over 10 years

Targeting roads with a high number of reoccurring potholes



## Protecting our natural environment

\$5 million over 10 years + continued funding

Dedicated recurrent works focused on protecting and enhancing our natural environment



## Looking after our waterways and foreshores

\$5 million over 10 years + continued funding

Dedicated recurrent maintenance works focused on proactively looking after our waterways and foreshores across Port Stephens



## Looking after our public space

\$3 million over 10 years

Fixing defects throughout our community buildings, and replacing lighting with more energy-efficient LED globes



## How do I have a say?

You can have your say from 14 September to 12 October 2022.

- Complete the short survey on our website or in person at your local library or Council administration building
- Provide a written submission (including email) to the General Manager

Attend one of our community drop in sessions:

Date	Time	Where
Tue 27 Sep 2022	From 5pm	Sunset Cinema Series – Riverside Park, Raymond Terrace
Thur 29 Sep 2022	From 5pm	Sunset Cinema Series – Boyd Oval, Medowie
Sat 1 Oct 2022	From 5pm	Sunset Cinema Series – Apex Pak, Nelson Bay
Tue 4 Oct 2022	3pm to 4pm	Port Stephens Visitor Information Centre
Tue 4 Oct 2022	4:30pm to 5:30pm	Salamander Bay Shopping Centre
Thur 6 Oct 2022	9am to 10am	Raymond Terrace MarketPlace
Thur 6 Oct 2022	11am to 12pm	Medowie - Shopping Village



[portstephens.nsw.gov.au/rate-rise-options](https://portstephens.nsw.gov.au/rate-rise-options)

Visit your local library or Council administration building

02 4988 0255

[rateriseoptions@portstephens.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rateriseoptions@portstephens.nsw.gov.au)





## Base - Rate Cap 2.5%

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%

Council assumes and applies a regular 2.5% increase to rates under the current rate capping regime.

Average Residential Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$1,148	\$1,177	\$1,206	\$1,236	\$88
Annual increase rate peg (%)		2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%

Average Farmland Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$1,934	\$1,982	\$2,032	\$2,083	\$149
Annual increase rate peg (%)		2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%

Average Business Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average business rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$4,889	\$5,011	\$5,136	\$5,264	\$375
Annual increase rate peg (%)		2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%

Average Residential Williamstown Primary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential WP rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$690	\$707	\$725	\$743	\$53
Annual increase rate peg (%)		2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%

Average Residential Williamstown Secondary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential WS rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$740	\$759	\$778	\$797	\$57
Annual increase rate peg (%)		2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%

Average Residential Williamstown Broader Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential WB rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$906	\$929	\$952	\$976	\$70
Annual increase rate peg (%)		2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%

## Single Year

Year  
1

26%

The proposed SRV is to be retained permanently in the rate base.

In the year following the end of the SRV and future years, the rate peg percentage increase will apply to rate levels with the SRV, and not to the rate level with the rate peg only. This means rates will stay at the increased level and only increase by the rate peg percentage after the end of the SRV period.

Average Residential Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Cumulative Increase
Average residential rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$1,148	\$1,177	\$29
Average residential rate with an SV of 26% in first year	\$1,148	\$1,446	\$298
Difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios			\$269

Average Farmland Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$1,934	\$1,982	\$48
Average farmland rate with an SV of 26% in first year	\$1,934	\$2,437	\$503
Difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios			\$455

Average Business Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Cumulative Increase
Average business rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$4,889	\$5,011	\$122
Average business rate with an SV of 26% in first year	\$4,889	\$6,160	\$1,271
Difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios			\$1,149

## Independent Recommendation

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
10.5%	10.5%	10.5%	34.9%

The proposed SRV is to be retained permanently in the rate base.

In the year following the end of the SRV and future years, the rate peg percentage increase will apply to rate levels with the SRV, and not to the rate level with the rate peg only. This means rates will stay at the increased level and only increase by the rate peg percentage after the end of the SRV period.

Average Residential Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$1,148	\$1,177	\$1,206	\$1,236	\$88
Annual increase rate peg (%)		2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%
Average residential rate with an SV of 10.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$1,148	\$1,269	\$1,402	\$1,549	\$401
Annual increase with SV (%)		10.5%	10.5%	10.5%	34.9%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$121	\$254	\$401	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate peg-only scenarios		\$92	\$196	\$313	

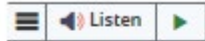
Average Farmland Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$1,934	\$1,982	\$2,032	\$2,083	\$149
Annual increase rate peg (%)		2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%
Average farmland rate with an SV of 10.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$1,934	\$2,137	\$2,361	\$2,609	\$675
Annual increase with SV (%)		10.5%	10.5%	10.5%	34.9%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$203	\$427	\$675	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate peg-only scenarios		\$155	\$329	\$526	

Average Business Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average business rate under assumed rate peg of 2.5% pa	\$4,889	\$5,011	\$5,136	\$5,264	\$375
Annual increase rate peg (%)		2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%
Average business rate with an SV of 10.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$4,889	\$5,402	\$5,969	\$6,596	\$1,707
Annual increase with SV (%)		10.5%	10.5%	10.5%	34.9%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$513	\$1,080	\$1,707	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate peg-only scenarios		\$391	\$833	\$1,332	

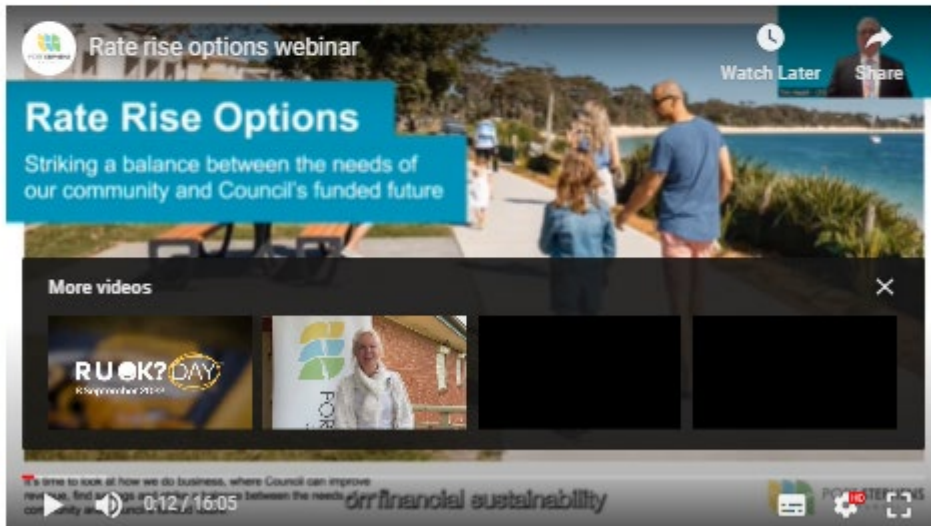
## Rate Rise Options Webinar

<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options/rate-rise-options>

# Rate rise options



## What are the rate rise options?

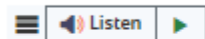


## Integrated Planning & Reporting Documents

<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/public-exhibitions/current-public-exhibitions>

### Current public exhibitions

There are many ways to have your say on issues that affect you. Provide feedback on formal public exhibitions and have your say on community consultation projects below.



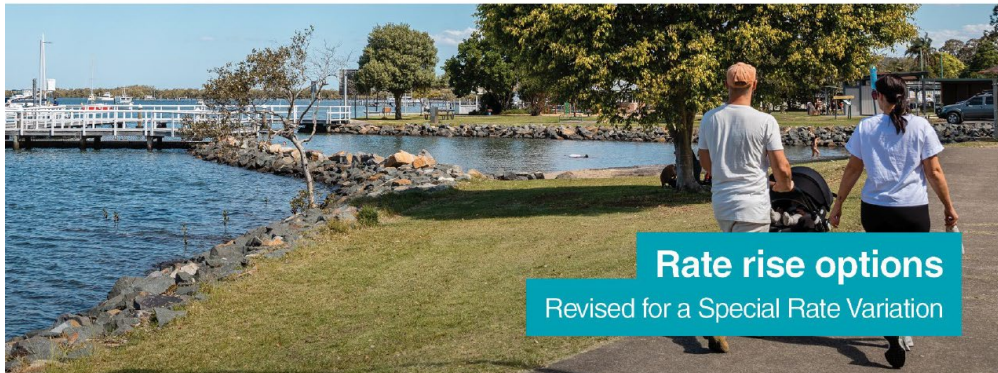
These are policies, strategies and plans that are available for comment by the public:

<b>Code of Conduct</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Draft Revised Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents – Revised for a Special Rate Variation</b>	<b>-</b>
<p>At its meeting on 13 September 2022, Council endorse to place the draft revised Integrated Planning and Reporting documents on public exhibition for a period of 28 days. The draft documents have been revised for 2 options for a Special Rate Variation.</p> <p>The documents will be on exhibition from <b>14 September 2022 to 12 October 2022</b>.</p> <p>Submissions are invited and can be lodged, in writing (including email) with the General Manager up until 5.00pm on 12 October 2022 quoting file number PSC2021-02359-002</p> <p>Please note, submissions may be made in any format, which is able to be sent via email and is less than 10mb in size.</p> <p>This may include a video file or audio voice recording in addition to more traditional written format.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Draft Port Stephens Delivery Program 2022 to 2026 and Operational Plans 2022 to 2023 (PDF 34 MB)</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Draft Port Stephens Resourcing Strategy 2023 to 2033 (PDF 26 MB)</a></li></ul>	

# Delivery Program 2022 to 2026 and Operational Plan 2023 to 2024



**DRAFT**



**Rate rise options**

Revised for a Special Rate Variation



# Resourcing Strategy

2023 to 2033

**DRAFT**



**Rate rise options**

Revised for a Special Rate Variation

## Media releases and associated media

### Media releases from Port Stephens Council

14 September 2022

### Rate rise options proposed for Port Stephens

<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/news/2022/rate-rise-options-proposed-for-port-stephens>

### Article – Port Stephens Examiner Thursday 22 September page 3

stephensexaminer.com.au

Thursday September 22, 2022 PORT STEPHENS EXAMINER 3

NEWS

# Two rate rise options tabled



BY MATT CARR

A QUARTER now or a third later? It's the question facing Port Stephens ratepayers after the council narrowed down the options for its looming rate rise.

Ratepayers face either a one-off 26 per cent jump from July 1 next year, or three consecutive 10.5 per cent rises for a higher overall jump under the proposals detailed in documents now on public exhibition.

Port Stephens Council's new general manager, Tim Crossdale, said putting the documents on public display would allow ratepayers to provide feedback on how they want the council to balance decreasing revenue and rising costs.

"We know from our engagement to date that our community supports a financially sustainable council," he said. "We also know that there's a good understanding that our low residential rates



Port Stephens mayor Ryan Palmer said the documents on public exhibition also include affordability measures for ratepayers to cope with the extra cost.

can't continue to support the level of services we offer."

"For the past month, we've been talking to residents across Port Stephens. We've presented five rate options and asked for feedback on

how best to move forward. This has helped us drill down to two options that we've incorporated into our statutory planning documents."

Councillors endorsed placing the draft Integrated

Planning and Reporting documents, which include modelling of a potential rate rise, on public exhibition at the September 13 meeting of council.

The two options are a sin-

gle-year scenario that would include a 26 per cent jump in rates, or an independent recommendation scenario that would deliver a 34.92 per cent rise spread out as 10.5 per cent annually over three years. Both options would kick in from July 1 next year, and include the standard annual rate cap which sits at 2.5 per cent.

The council's chief financial officer, Tim Hazell, said both options had merits.

"Under the Single Year Scenario, ratepayers would pay more up front but less over time. Council would achieve a balanced budget in one year," he said. "We'd be able to immediately deliver improvements to our services."

"Under the independent recommendation scenario, ratepayers pay less each year but more over time. Council would reach its target in three years and the community would see a gradual enhancement of services."

"Both options see the predicted budget shortfall eliminated and provide additional funds for enhanced services."

Mr Hazell said the extra

cash reaped in the rate rise would allow spending on the community priorities the council had been hearing about such as "road maintenance, condition of our public spaces, and protecting our waterways and natural environment".

Mayor Ryan Palmer said the council was under no illusion that it would be easy for ratepayers to foot the bill.

"As part of the planning documents we've also proposed a range of additional affordability measures to support those most vulnerable," he said.

"The community can have their say from September 14 via a short survey, written submission or by attending one of the many face to face drop in sessions held across Port Stephens."

The draft Integrated Planning and Reporting documents went on exhibition on September 14 and will remain available to view until 5pm on October 22.

Residents can view the documents and complete a survey about the options at [portstephens.nsw.gov.au/rate-rise-options](http://portstephens.nsw.gov.au/rate-rise-options).

## Article – Port Stephens Examiner online Wednesday 12 October

<https://www.portstephensexaminer.com.au/story/7939049/port-stephens-rate-rise-last-day-to-have-your-say/>

Our Future

### Port Stephens Council 2023 rate rise proposals: two options on public exhibition until October 12

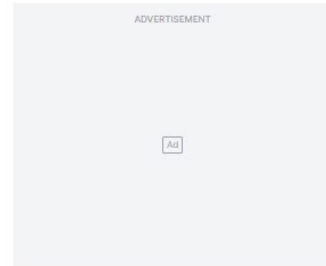


By Ellie-Marie Watts, and Matt Carr

Updated October 12 2022 - 10:40am, first published 10:29am



Port Stephens mayor Ryan Palmer said the documents on public exhibition also include affordability measures for ratepayers to cope with the extra cost.



A quarter now or a third later? It's the question facing Port Stephens ratepayers after the council narrowed options for its looming rate rise.

Ratepayers face either a one-off 26 per cent jump from July 1 next year, or three consecutive 10.5 per cent rises for a higher overall jump under the proposals detailed in documents now on public exhibition.

A quarter now or a third later? It's the question facing Port Stephens ratepayers after the council narrowed options for its looming rate rise.

Ratepayers face either a one-off 26 per cent jump from July 1 next year, or three consecutive 10.5 per cent rises for a higher overall jump under the proposals detailed in documents now on public exhibition.

The council's new general manager, Tim Crosdale, said putting documents including the options on public display would let ratepayers weigh in on how the council should balance decreasing revenue and rising costs.

"We know from our engagement to date that our community supports a financially sustainable council," he said.

"We also know that there's a good understanding that our low residential rates can't continue to support the level of services we offer.

"For the past month, we've been talking to residents across Port Stephens. We've presented five rate options and asked for feedback on how best to move forward.

"This has helped us drill down to two options that we've incorporated into our statutory planning documents."



The 10.5 per cent option was recommended by an external advisor. Both plans include the annual rate cap, which sits at 2.5 per cent and is under review.

The council's chief financial officer, Tim Hazell, said both options had merits. "Under the single year scenario, ratepayers would pay more up front but less over time. Council would achieve a balanced budget in one year," he said.

"We'd be able to immediately deliver improvements to our services.

"Under the independent recommendation scenario, ratepayers pay less each year but more over time. Council would reach its target in three years and the community would see a gradual enhancement of services.

"Both options see the predicted budget shortfall eliminated and provide additional funds for enhanced services.

Mr Hazell said the extra cash reaped in the rate rises would allow spending on "the community priorities we've been hearing like road maintenance, condition of our public spaces, and protecting our waterways and natural environment".

Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association spokesman Geoff Washington said the group, which opposed the council's last bid for a rise, felt there was more justification behind this push but would consult with its members about the two specific options.

Mayor Ryan Palmer said the council was under no illusion that it would be easy for ratepayers to foot the bill.

"As part of the planning documents we've also proposed a range of additional affordability measures to support those most vulnerable," Mayor Palmer said.

"The community can have their say from 14 September via a short survey, written submission or by attending one of the many face to face drop in session held across Port Stephens."

The [Integrated Planning and Reporting documents are on exhibition](#) until 5pm on Wednesday, October 12.

Submissions can be lodged in writing (including email) with the General Manager quoting file number PSC2021-02359-002: [council@portstephens.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@portstephens.nsw.gov.au)

## Paid advertisement

22 September 2022, Port Stephens Examiner, p. 9



Subscribe to our community e-newsletters  
Visit [portstephens.nsw.gov.au/newsletters](http://portstephens.nsw.gov.au/newsletters)

### RATE RISE OPTIONS

#### HAVE YOUR SAY NOW

In recent months we've presented 5 rate rise options to our community and asked for feedback on how to turn our financial position around. This helped us drill down to 2 options which are modeled into our revised draft Integrated Planning and Reporting documents. These documents are on public exhibition until 5pm 12 October 2022. Have your say via:

- Short survey at [pscouncil.info/rro-survey](http://pscouncil.info/rro-survey) or in person at your local library or Council administration building
- Written submission (including email) to the General Manager
- Attending a community drop in session

DATE	TIME	WHERE
Tue 27 Sep 2022	From 5pm	Raymond Terrace
Thu 29 Sep 2022	From 5pm	Medowie
Sat 1 Oct 2022	From 5pm	Nelson Bay
Tue 4 Oct 2022	3pm to 4pm	Visitor Info Centre
Tue 4 Oct 2022	4:30pm to 5:30pm	Salamander Bay
Thu 6 Oct 2022	9am to 10am	Raymond Terrace
Thu 6 Oct 2022	11am to midday	Medowie

Learn more at: [pscouncil.info/rateriseoptions](http://pscouncil.info/rateriseoptions)

### JOIN OUR TEAM

#### APPRENTICE CIVIL CONSTRUCTION AND APPRENTICE PARKS & GARDEN

Exciting opportunities starting in 2023 or ASAP.  
Contact: Julie-Anne McDougall on 0439 582 536 or for recruitment process information Brooke Tisdell on 0428 574 614.

Applications close: Sunday 9 October 2022

Apply online: [portstephens.nsw.gov.au](http://portstephens.nsw.gov.au)

### NOTICE OF TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURES

#### RAYMOND TERRACE / NELSON BAY

Tue 27 Sep 2022, 8:30am to 10:15am – Port Stephens St and William St, Raymond Terrace, between Glenelg St and Adelaide St, will be closed to traffic for a NAIDOC march.

Fri 30 Sep 2022, 3pm to 8pm – Yacaaba St, Nelson Bay, between Magnus St and Victoria Pde will be closed to traffic for the Friday Flavours event.

Fri 7 Oct 2022, 3pm to 8pm – Sturgeon St and Library Lane, Raymond Terrace will be closed to traffic for the Friday Flavours event.

For further enquiries: NAIDOC 0432 611 302, Friday Flavours 0429 009 395 or Council's Civil Assets Section 4988 0255.

**COUNCIL NOTICES** | 02 4988 0255 | [council@portstephens.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@portstephens.nsw.gov.au) | [portstephens.nsw.gov.au](http://portstephens.nsw.gov.au)

**Please Note:** Any submission or other correspondence received by Council may be released to any person making application to Council under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009. For further enquiries, please contact Council.

# Facebook posts (organic)

14 September 2022



**Port Stephens Council**  
14 September at 13:05 · 🌐

Last night, Council endorsed the exhibition of its draft Integrated Planning and Reporting documents which include modelling of a potential rate rise.

In recent months we've been talking with you about our financial position, five rate rise options and how we can strike a balance between increasing costs and decreasing income.

Your feedback has helped us drill down to two rate rise options and we would like your feedback.

Find out more about the options and how you can have a say 🗨️

<https://pscouncil.info/rateriseoptions>



## Performance for your post

12071 People reached

278 Likes, comments and shares

2342 Post clicks

54	448	1840
Photo views	Link clicks	Other Clicks

### Distribution summary

+2.7x higher than your other posts within 21+ days of being published.

↑ 2.7x more	↑ 9.7x more	↑ 1.0x more
Post impressions	Post clicks	Reactions

[View More Details](#)

### NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

2 Hide all posts	0 Hide post
0 Report as spam	0 Unlike Page

278 Likes, comments and shares

### BRANDED CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

[View Breakdown](#)

12071	12071	0
Total reach	Organic reach	Paid reach
14211	14211	0
Total impressions	Organic impressions	Paid impressions

27 September 2022

**Port Stephens Council**  
27 September at 11:54 · 🌐

Our Community Engagement team will be at tonight's [Outdoor Sunset Cinema | Raymond Terrace](#) from 5pm to answer any questions about our rate rise options.

We'll also have tablets on site for you to complete our survey if you haven't yet had a chance to!

We hope to see you at [Riverside Park, Raymond Terrace](#) but if you can't make it, find other upcoming sessions and learn more at [pscouncil.info/RROHaveYourSay](https://pscouncil.info/RROHaveYourSay)



**Performance for your post**

5102 People reached

37 Likes, comments and shares

319 Post clicks

7	45	267
Photo views	Link clicks	Other Clicks

**Distribution summary**

average performance as your other posts within 17 days of being published.

↓ 1.0x less	↑ 1.0x more	↓ 5.8x less
Post impressions	Post clicks	Reactions

[View More Details](#)

**NEGATIVE FEEDBACK**

0 Hide all posts	0 Hide post
0 Report as spam	0 Unlike Page

37 Likes, comments and shares

**BRANDED CONTENT DISTRIBUTION**

[View Breakdown](#)

5102	5102	0
Total reach	Organic reach	Paid reach
5102	5102	0
Total impressions	Organic impressions	Paid impressions

28 September 2022



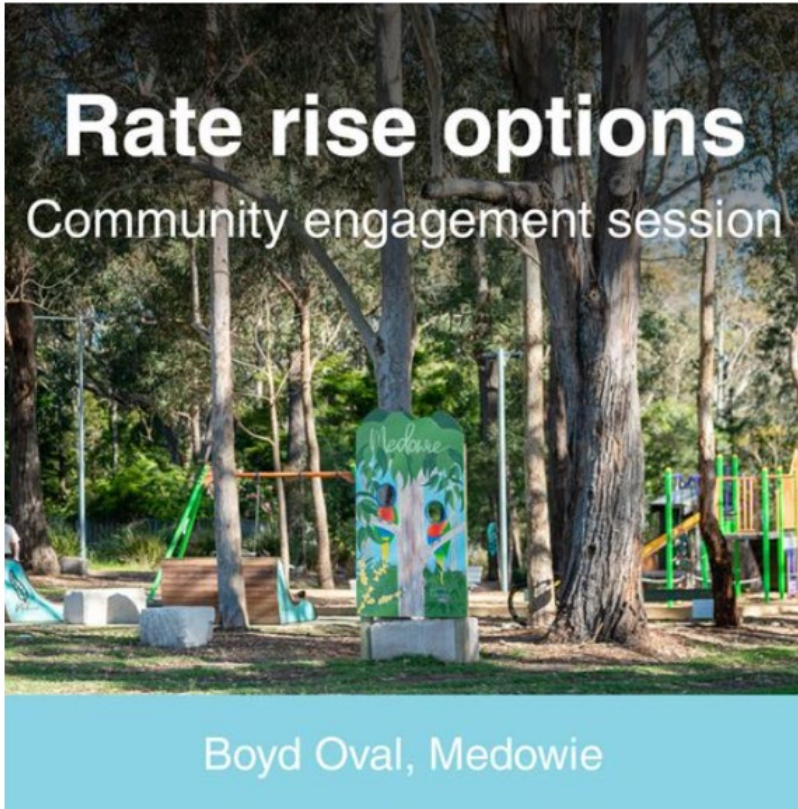
**Port Stephens Council**  
28 September at 19:35 · 🌐

...

If you didn't catch us yesterday evening, our Community Engagement team will be out again tomorrow, at our Outdoor Sunset Cinema at Medowie.

From 5pm they'll be around to answer any questions about our rate rise options. We'll also have tablets on site for you to complete our survey if you haven't yet had a chance to!

We hope to see you at Boyd Oval, but if you can't make it, find other upcoming sessions and learn more at [pscouncil.info/RROHaveYourSay](https://pscouncil.info/RROHaveYourSay)



**Performance for your post**

**4324** People reached

**27** Likes, comments and shares

**168** Post clicks

<b>8</b> Photo views	<b>17</b> Link clicks	<b>143</b> Other Clicks
-------------------------	--------------------------	----------------------------

**Distribution summary**

average performance as your other posts within 15 days of being published.

↓ <b>1.2x less</b> Post impressions	↓ <b>2.1x less</b> Post clicks	↓ <b>4.6x less</b> Reactions
--	-----------------------------------	---------------------------------

[View More Details](#)

**NEGATIVE FEEDBACK**

<b>0</b> Hide all posts	<b>0</b> Hide post
<b>0</b> Report as spam	<b>0</b> Unlike Page

**27** Likes, comments and shares

**BRANDED CONTENT DISTRIBUTION**

[View Breakdown](#)

<b>4324</b> Total reach	<b>4324</b> Organic reach	<b>0</b> Paid reach
<b>4481</b> Total impressions	<b>4481</b> Organic impressions	<b>0</b> Paid impressions

29 September 2022

 **Port Stephens Council**  
29 September at 16:02 · 🌐

🟡🟢🔴 It's On! 🟡🟢🔴

The rain looks like it'll hold off for tonight's Sunset Cinema at Medowie, but bring a raincoat just in case the we have a little sprinkle! 🌧️🌂🌈

Remember to BYO fold out chairs or a picnic rug in case you miss out on one of our comfy bean bags.

📌 Our Community Engagement team will also be on site to answer any questions you might have about Council's rate rise options.



**THURS, 29 SEP**  
**Outdoor Sunset Cinema | Medowie**  
Medowie, NSW  
Film · 386 people

☆ Interested

Performance for your post

<b>1416</b> People reached		
<b>3</b> Likes, comments and shares		
<b>43</b> Post clicks		
<b>0</b> Photo views	<b>23</b> Link clicks	<b>20</b> Other Clicks

**Distribution summary**  
-3.5x lower than your other posts within 14 days of being published.

↓ <b>3.5x less</b> Post impressions	↓ <b>2.2x less</b> Post clicks	↓ <b>15.4x less</b> Reactions
--	-----------------------------------	----------------------------------

[View More Details](#)

**NEGATIVE FEEDBACK**

<b>0</b> Hide all posts	<b>1</b> Hide post
<b>0</b> Report as spam	<b>0</b> Unlike Page

**3** Likes, comments and shares

**BRANDED CONTENT DISTRIBUTION** [View Breakdown](#)

<b>1416</b> Total reach	<b>1416</b> Organic reach	<b>0</b> Paid reach
----------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------

<b>1491</b> Total impressions	<b>1491</b> Organic impressions	<b>0</b> Paid impressions
----------------------------------	------------------------------------	------------------------------

4 October 2022



Port Stephens Council  
4 October at 11:10 · 🌐

...

In recent months we've been talking with you about our financial position, rate rise options and how we can strike a balance between our increasing costs and capped income.

Your feedback has helped us drill down to two rate rise options and we'd like your feedback.

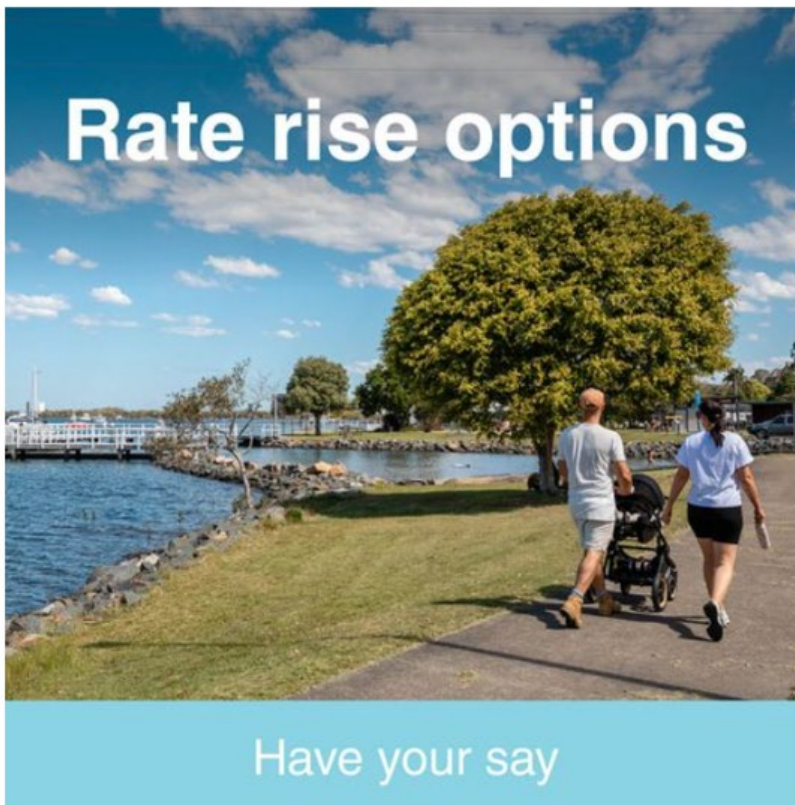
We have two engagement sessions this afternoon where you can come along, learn more, ask any questions, and have your say:

🕒 3 to 4pm at our Visitor Information Centre in Nelson Bay

🕒 4.30 to 5.30pm at Salamander Bay Shopping Centre

If you can't make it in person, take our online survey! 📄 [pscouncil.info/RRO-Survey](https://pscouncil.info/RRO-Survey)

To find out more about ALL the options on the table (including a base rate scenario with a reduction in services) visit [pscouncil.info/rateriseoptions](https://pscouncil.info/rateriseoptions)



### Performance for your post

2605 People reached

93 Likes, comments and shares

350 Post clicks

5	54	291
Photo views	Link clicks	Other Clicks

### Distribution summary

-2.0x lower than your other posts within 10 days of being published.

↓ 2.0x less	↑ 1.1x more	↓ 5.1x less
Post impressions	Post clicks	Reactions

[View More Details](#)

### NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide all posts    2 Hide post

0 Report as spam    0 Unlike Page

93 Likes, comments and shares

### BRANDED CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

[View Breakdown](#)

2605	2605	0
Total reach	Organic reach	Paid reach

2632	2632	0
Total impressions	Organic impressions	Paid impressions

5 October 2022

 Port Stephens Council  
5 October at 15:27 · 🌐

This is the last week to have your say on our proposed rate rise options.

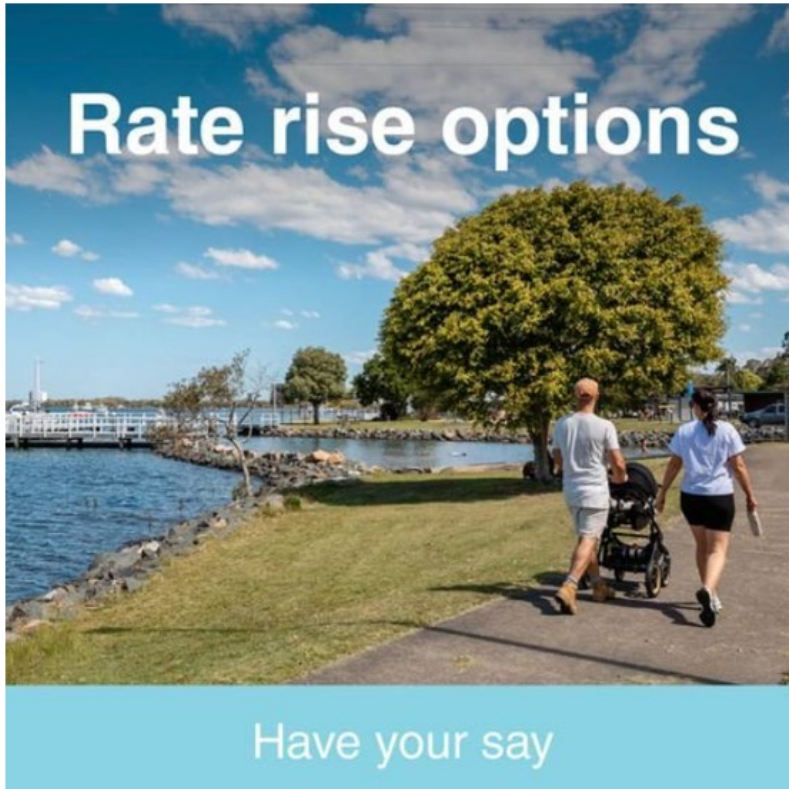
Tomorrow, Thursday 6 October, we've got two in-person engagement sessions where you can come along to learn more, ask any questions, and have your say:

🕒 9am to 10am at [MarketPlace Raymond Terrace](#)

🕒 11am to 12pm at [Medowie Shopping Village](#)

If you can't make it in person, take our online survey! ➡️ [pscouncil.info/RRO-Survey](https://pscouncil.info/RRO-Survey)

To find out more about ALL the options on the table (including a base rate scenario with a reduction in services) visit [pscouncil.info/rateriseoptions](https://pscouncil.info/rateriseoptions)



...

### Performance for your post

3758 People reached

62 Likes, comments and shares

442 Post clicks

10	62	370
Photo views	Link clicks	Other Clicks

### Distribution summary

-1.4x lower than your other posts within 9 days of being published.

↓ 1.4x less	↑ 1.4x more	↓ 5.1x less
Post impressions	Post clicks	Reactions

[View More Details](#)

### NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide all posts    1 Hide post

0 Report as spam    0 Unlike Page

62 Likes, comments and shares

### BRANDED CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

[View Breakdown](#)

3758	3758	0
Total reach	Organic reach	Paid reach
3758	3758	0
Total impressions	Organic impressions	Paid impressions



7 October 2022



Port Stephens Council  
6 d · 🌐

...

Late last week, IPART (Independent Productivity and Regulatory Tribunal) announced the rate cap figure for the 2023-2024 financial year. For Port Stephens Council, this total rate cap is 4.4%.

We're currently asking for your feedback on 2 special rate variation options. In this video, General Manager Tim Crosdale explains that even with the 4.4% rate cap (which was previously 2.5%), the overall special rate variation amounts won't change.

Read more about the rate rise options at [www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/rate-rise-options](http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/rate-rise-options) and have your say before Wednesday 12 October.



<b>1.7K</b> 3-second video views	<b>218</b> 1-minute video views	<b>0:13</b> Average minutes viewed	<b>101</b> Engagement	<b>696</b> Minutes viewed
-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------------

### Performance for your post

3423 People reached

101 Likes, comments and shares

651 Post clicks

<b>73</b> Clicks to Play	<b>11</b> Link clicks	<b>567</b> Other Clicks
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### VIDEO PERFORMANCE

<b>1.7K</b> 3-second video views	<b>218</b> 1-minute video views	<b>0:13</b> Average minutes viewed
-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

### Audience retention

Most of your audience dropped off at the 0:17 mark.



10 October 2022



There are 3 days left to have your say on our proposed rate rise options.  
Take our online survey before 11.59pm on 12 October! [pscouncil.info/RRO-Survey](https://pscouncil.info/RRO-Survey)  
To find out more about ALL the options on the table (including a base rate scenario with a reduction in services) visit [pscouncil.info/rateriseoptions](https://pscouncil.info/rateriseoptions)

## Rate Rise Options



### Viewer activity

How the post has performed since being published.

<b>1.2K</b> 3-second video views	<b>0</b> 1-minute video views	<b>0:07</b> Average minutes viewed	<b>118</b> Engagement	<b>291</b> Minutes viewed
-------------------------------------	----------------------------------	---------------------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------------

### Performance for your post

2619 People reached

118 Likes, comments and shares

586 Post clicks

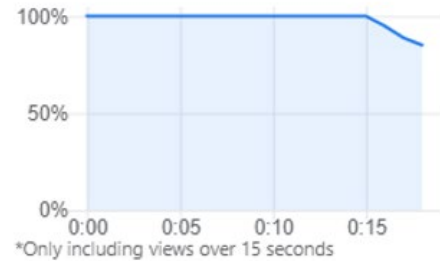
<b>75</b> Clicks to Play	<b>82</b> Link clicks	<b>429</b> Other Clicks
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### VIDEO PERFORMANCE

<b>1.2K</b> 3-second video views	<b>0</b> 1-minute video views	<b>0:07</b> Average minutes viewed
-------------------------------------	----------------------------------	---------------------------------------

### Audience retention

Most of your audience dropped off at the 0:17 mark.



# Facebook posts (paid ads)

21 September to 12 October



Ad	Results	Reach	Impressions	Cost per result	Quality ranking	Engagement rate ranking
New Traffic ad	991 Link Clicks	16,596	81,973	\$0.50 Per link click	Above average	Above average
<b>Results from 1 ad</b>	<b>991</b> Link Clicks	<b>16,596</b> People	<b>81,973</b> Total	<b>\$0.50</b> Per link click		

Port Stephens Council Sponsored

We've been talking with our community about Council's financial position and how we can balance our budget.

We want your help to identify which of two rate rise options or a reduced services option, would be preferred by the community.

## Ad carousel linking through to website

The carousel consists of six cards, each with a different background image related to the council's services and a call-to-action button. The cards are:

- Card 1:** "Rate rise options" with image of a park. Call-to-action: "Have your say" (button: "Learn more").
- Card 2:** "Rate rise options" with image of a road. Call-to-action: "Find out more about the two rate rise options" (button: "Learn more").
- Card 3:** "Rate rise options" with image of a car. Call-to-action: "Estimate your land rate with our Rates Calculator" (button: "Learn more").
- Card 4:** "Rate rise options" with image of a tree. Call-to-action: "Independent Expert Advice" (button: "Learn more").
- Card 5:** "Rate rise options" with image of a house. Call-to-action: "How did we get here?" (button: "Learn more").
- Card 6:** "Rate rise options" with image of a street. Call-to-action: "Frequently asked questions" (button: "Learn more").

## Special Interest Groups

Throughout the public exhibition phase special interest groups were continually informed regarding the Special Rate Variation application process and how they could contribute to the conversation around rate rise options.

### Email sent 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Hi

As discussed in August, Council is scheduled to decide on the next step forward in the Our Funded Future engagement at this upcoming Council Meeting Tuesday the 13<sup>th</sup> of September. If the next step proposed is agreed to, the draft integrated planning and reporting documents revised for a proposed special rate variation scenarios will be put on public exhibition for 28 days.

Whilst we still await Tuesday's meeting, I would like to offer to placeholder some time at your next scheduled meeting if you were interested. If so, could you please advise any suitable dates between the 15 September and the 12 October?

Alternatively, we will have some drop-in sessions and a recorded webinar, with a full list of engagement activities to still be finalised and promoted.

Please feel free to call me if that is easier for you.

Kind Regards

### Email sent 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022



rateriseoptions

Rate Rise Options - information material and how to have your say details

To



Hi

Following on from previous emails, at the Council meeting on 13 September 2022, Council agreed to move forward with the community discussion around financial sustainability. I now have attached material and links below for you to distribute to your members to ensure they are informed about the next phase of this project.

1. You can access the short survey by following this [direct link](#)
2. You can view the Webinar presented by our CFO Tim Hazell and the proposed additional affordability measures on our website located [here](#)
3. You can view the Webinar presented by Professor Drew on our website located [here](#)
4. You can access the Revised Integrated Planning & Reporting for an SRV documents located [here](#)

We currently have on public exhibition our revised draft Integrated Planning and Reporting documents. These draft documents show 3 scenarios.

- **Base Scenario** – 2.5% state imposed rate cap assumption;
- **Single Year Scenario** – A 26% increase for a single year, being 2023-2024 only;
- **Independent Recommendation Scenario** - A cumulative increase of 34.92%, being a 10.5% increase for three consecutive years 2023-2024 to 2025-2026.

Both of the rate rise options see the predicted budget shortfall eliminated and provide additional funds for enhanced services to fix our roads and public spaces as well as protect our waterways and natural environment.

The webpage has been updated, including the rates calculator <https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options>

There is also a number of drop-in sessions where you can talk with Council staff about the rate rise options.

Date	Time	Where
Tue 27 Sep 2022	From 5pm	Sunset Cinema Series – Riverside Park, Raymond Terrace
Thur 29 Sep 2022	From 5pm	Sunset Cinema Series – Boyd Oval, Medowie
Sat 1 Oct 2022	From 5pm	Sunset Cinema Series – Apex Pak, Nelson Bay
Tue 4 Oct 2022	3pm to 4pm	Port Stephens Visitor Information Centre
Tue 4 Oct 2022	4:30pm to 5:30pm	Salamander Bay Shopping Centre
Thur 6 Oct 2022	9am to 10am	Raymond Terrace MarketPlace
Thur 6 Oct 2022	11am to 12pm	Medowie - Shopping Village

Please quote file number PSC2021-02359-002 on any submission lodged

Kind Regards

Email sent Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022



Fri 7/10/2022 4:46 PM

rateriseoptions

Rate Rise Options - New Videos Uploaded - Rate Cap Announcement & Land revaluations

To --

Hi

Following on from IPART's announcement of the 2023-2024 rate cap and questions raised at our Special Interest Group meetings this week Council has uploaded the two following videos to assist the Community in understanding these two important matters.

If you could share these links with your members that would be much appreciated.

2023-2024 Rate Cap Announcement (bottom of the page)

<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options/rate-rise-options>

Land Revaluations Webinar (top of the page)

<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options/faqs>

Any questions please feel free to contact me.

Kind Regards



p 02 4988 0312 | m 0431755072  
w [portstephens.nsw.gov.au](http://portstephens.nsw.gov.au)



We acknowledge the Worimi people as the original Custodians and inhabitants of Port Stephens. We acknowledge and pay respects to Worimi elders past and present. May we walk the road to tomorrow with mutual respect and admiration as we care for the beautiful land and waterways together.

## Direct email/E-newsletters

Newsletter sent to subscribers of 'Have Your Say' and 'Your Port' e-newsletters



## Have your say on the Port Stephens Rate Rise Options

At the Council meeting on 13 September 2022, Council agreed to move forward with the community discussion around financial sustainability. This is a really important decision for our community and we wanted to reach out to you and make sure that you know about the next phase of this project.

We currently have on public exhibition our revised draft Integrated Planning and Reporting documents. These draft documents show 2 rate rise options. The feedback collected during the public exhibition period, which is open until 12 October 2022, will help to identify which of these two rate rise options or a reduced services option would be preferred by the community.

The rate rise options are:

- Independent Recommendation Scenario – cumulative 34.92% rate (increase 10.5% increase each year, for 3 years)
- Single Year Scenario – 26% rate increase (26% increase for 1 year)

*These rate increase amounts include the 2.5% rate cap and are permanent. This means rates will stay at the increased level and only increase by the rate cap percentage after the end of the SRV period.*

Both of the rate rise options see the predicted budget shortfall eliminated and provide additional funds for enhanced services to fix our roads and public spaces as well as protect our waterways and natural environment.

You can have your say by completing:

- a short survey by following this [direct link](#)
- lodging a submission and please quote file number PSC2021-02359-002

You can also learn more at a number of drop in sessions where you can talk with Council staff about the rate rise options. See the factsheet on our website for more information here or visit our website for further details [www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options](http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options)

Date	Time	Where
Tue 27 Sep 2022	From 5pm	Sunset Cinema Series – Riverside Park, Raymond Terrace
Thur 29 Sep 2022	From 5pm	Sunset Cinema Series – Boyd Oval, Medowie
Sat 1 Oct 2022	From 5pm	Sunset Cinema Series – Apex Pak, Nelson Bay
Tue 4 Oct 2022	3pm to 4pm	Port Stephens Visitor Information Centre
Tue 4 Oct 2022	4:30pm to 5:30pm	Salamander Bay Shopping Centre
Thur 6 Oct 2022	9am to 10am	Raymond Terrace MarketPlace
Thur 6 Oct 2022	11am to 12pm	Medowie - Shopping Village

### Who's listening?

**Emily Livens**, Coordinator Communications & Engagement, Port Stephens Council

**Elizabeth Akerman**, Team Leader Community Engagement, Port Stephens Council



### **Bulk newsletter print copy 'Your Port'**

The printed copy of 'Your Port' was not used for Phase 2 as it would not have reached the community before the end of public exhibition

## On-hold Messaging

Throughout the public exhibition period Council has a “Rate Rise Options” announcement within its hold messaging. All customers who call Council will hear the announcement.



### TELEMALL SCRIPT & PRODUCTION NOTES

CLIENT DETAILS		PRODUCTION NOTES	
Name	Port Stephens Council – Customer Contact Centre	Prod #	Various
Notes this update:			

#### CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE – Rate Rise

##### **Rate Rise Announcement before Press 1 IVR: (audio recording separately)**

V1: Did you know that Council has a dedicated webpage for the Rate Rise Options engagement in which you can access all information? Please visit (port) (stephens) dot (nsw) dot (gov) dot (au) forward-slash (rate) (rise) (options).

V2: Our rate rise option webpage will regularly be updated with new information and next steps as the conversation continues. Please visit (port) (stephens) dot (nsw) dot (gov) dot (au) forward-slash (rate) (rise) (options).



# Appendix B

## Engagement Methods – Phase 2

### Rate Rise Options – Short Survey



#### Rate rise options short survey

In recent months we've been talking with our community about Council's financial position and ways we can balance our budget. Council has implemented a range of financial sustainability measures, such as increasing fees and charges, seeking grant funding, identifying underperforming land for sale, pushing back non-essential projects and deferring debt. Despite these efforts, our financial forecast has shown that if we keep going this way, we'll spend more on our services than we can afford unless we make real change.

Learn more about our financial position, how we got here, and the conversations we've had with our community so far by visiting the Rate rise options page on our [website](#). You can also see the results from the previous survey [here](#).

The feedback the community provided shows support for both a rate increase option with enhanced services and an option for reduced services. Now, we want your help to identify which of these two options would be preferred by the community. To do this, the following short survey includes these questions:

1. If there was a rate rise - which option would you prefer?
2. How do you feel about the distribution of the extra funds if there was a rate rise?
3. Would you prefer Council to raise rates and enhance some services or keep the baseline and reduce service levels?
4. Demographic questions

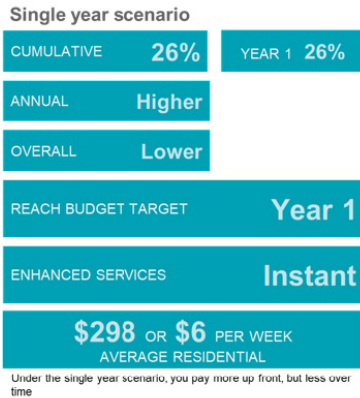
We appreciate your time in completing this survey, which takes approximately 5 minutes.

**Please return your paper version to a Council site by the  
12th of October 2021**

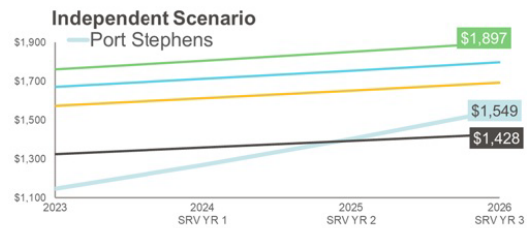
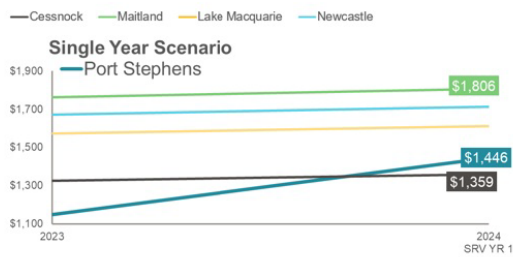


## Rate rise options short survey

We have presented 5 rate rise options and asked for feedback on how best to move forward. Your feedback helped us drill down to 2 options, we're now seeking feedback on. These options take into account our aim to achieve a financially sustainable future and the concerns we've heard from our community around affordability.



### Projected average residential rates



\* 1. If Council was to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) which of the above options is your preference?

*Please note: The rate increase amounts include the 2.5% rate cap and are permanent in nature. This means rates will stay at the increased level and only increase by the rate cap percentage after the end of the SRV period*

- Single Year Scenario - A 26% increase for a single year, being 2023-2024 only
- Independent Recommendation Scenario - A cumulative increase of 34.92%, being a 10.5% increase for three consecutive years 2023-2024 to 2025-2026

Comments



## Rate rise options short survey

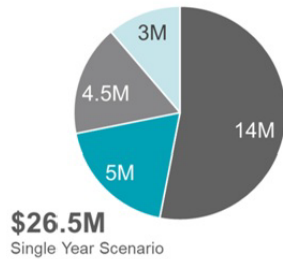
Page 1 of 1

The key purpose of a proposed rate rise is to cover the costs of current and planned services. In recent conversations with the community, we asked where you'd like extra funds allocated to enhance Council's current services, should a rate increase be applied.

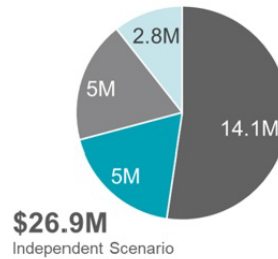
From this feedback we propose to spread these extra funds across 4 key areas.

### Enhanced Services

- Fixing our roads
- Looking after our waterways & foreshores
- Protecting our natural environment
- Looking after our public space



ENHANCED SERVICES **Instant**



ENHANCED SERVICES **Gradual**

\* 2. How supportive are you of this proposed distribution of extra funds if a rate increase is applied?

Very supportive      Supportive      Don't know/ unsure      Opposed      Very opposed

Comments



## Rate rise options short survey

Over the past 2 years, Council has been reducing its costs to balance our budget. We've saved \$7.4 million by reducing the level of service we deliver, and we've heard our community has felt it. To maintain a balanced budget this financial year, we'd need to follow the same approach, reducing our service delivery –but we can only do this for so long.

To be financially sustainable, we'll need to make a savings of \$8 million per year for the next 10 years. This level of saving would be a tough challenge and the community would see a significant and noticeable impact on the current services Council delivers.

If this is chosen as the path forward however, Council and the community will have future conversations to discuss what services you're prepared to see reduced or stopped.

You would see an overall reduction in services, in particular maintenance levels. For example, more potholes as our road network deteriorates further, shorter hours at our facilities, longer processing times for customer requests/applications and fewer community events.

The service areas that Council wouldn't reduce to contribute to savings are those that:

**make money for council**, for example our holiday parks and child care centres

**we are required to provide by legislation**, for example Development Application (DA) approvals

**provide community safety**, for example animal control or broken play equipment

\*3. What is your preference on the path forward?

- Rate Rise Option - a rate increase **above** the rate cap (2.5%) known as a Special Rate Variation (SRV): a sustainable council, maintaining current services and enhancing some services
- Reduced Services Option (current path) - a rate rise only **in line** with the rate cap (2.5%): an unsustainable council, reducing service levels across a range of council services

Comments



## Rate rise options short survey

\*

4. Age:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 19 years and under | <input type="radio"/> 60-69             |
| <input type="radio"/> 20-29              | <input type="radio"/> 70-79             |
| <input type="radio"/> 30-39              | <input type="radio"/> 80-89             |
| <input type="radio"/> 40-49              | <input type="radio"/> 90 years and over |
| <input type="radio"/> 50-59              | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |

\*

5. Gender:

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Male       | <input type="radio"/> Other             |
| <input type="radio"/> Female     | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Non-binary |   |

\*

6. I am a:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Ratepayer (living in Port Stephens)         | <input type="radio"/> Work in Port Stephens (living outside Port Stephens) |
| <input type="radio"/> Ratepayer (living outside Port Stephens)    | <input type="radio"/> Visitor to Port Stephens                             |
| <input type="radio"/> Resident (non ratepayer)                    | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say                                    |
| <input type="radio"/> Business owner living outside Port Stephens |  |

\*

7. How did you learn about this project? (tick all that apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) | <input type="checkbox"/> Face to face at community information session/drop in |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct email                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Media including local papers and radio                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Councillor                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Council's phone message                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                       |  |



## Rate rise options short survey

### Thank you

We thank you for your time in completing this survey. Once the Public Exhibition period closes we'll collate all feedback received and prepare a report to Council to inform a way forward. We are committed to ensuring the community continues to be aware of how the conversation progresses and any outcomes as we move through the next steps.

Follow us on Facebook

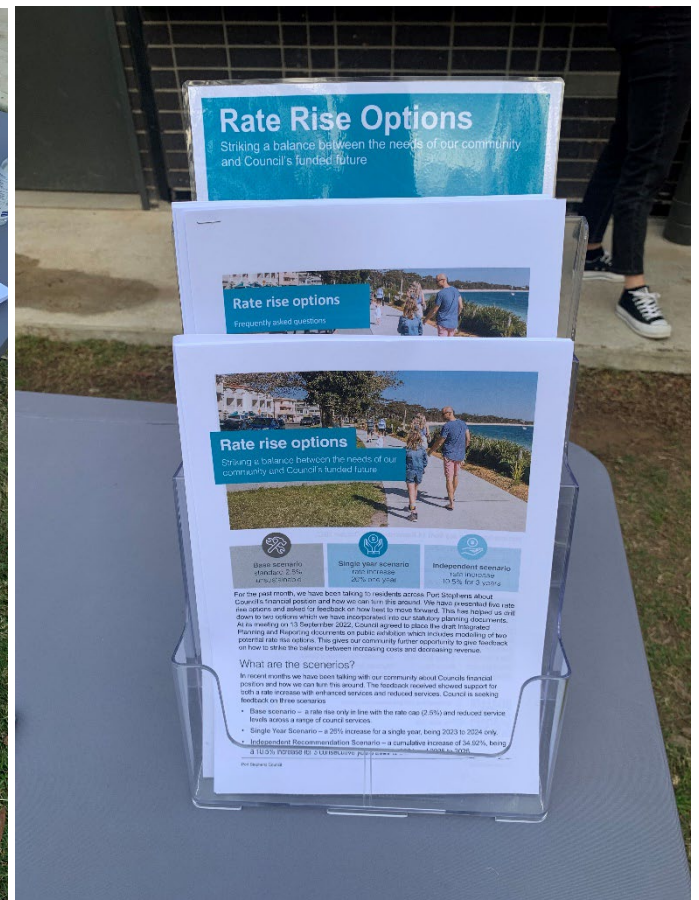
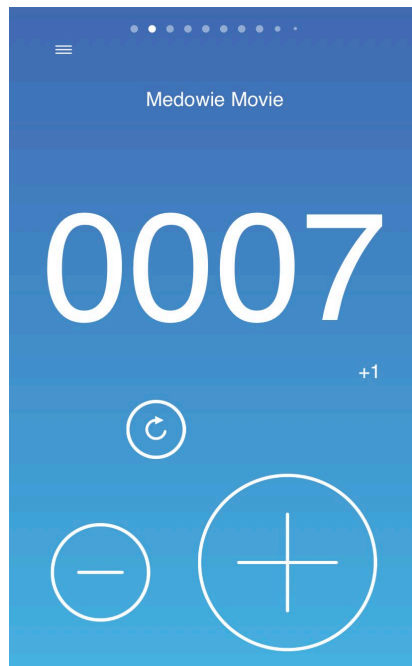
[@PortStephensCouncil](#) and visit the [Rate Rise Options webpage](#) for future updates.



## Community Drop-in Sessions

A selection of images from Sunset Cinema and shopping centre community drop-in sessions.











## Key Stakeholder Meetings – Special Interest Groups

A selection of images from special interest group meetings





# Appendix C

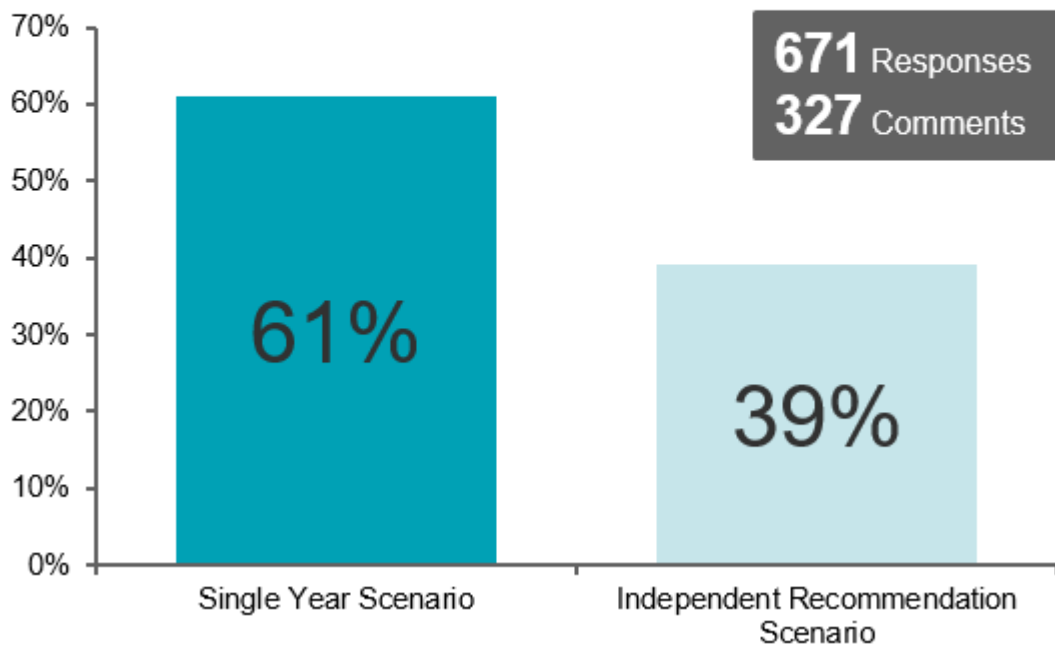
## Survey Report – Phase 2

### Question 1

If Council was to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) which of the above options is your preference?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Single Year Scenario	61%	409
Independent Recommendation Scenario	39%	262
Comments		327
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>671</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

If Council was to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) which of the above options is your **preference**?



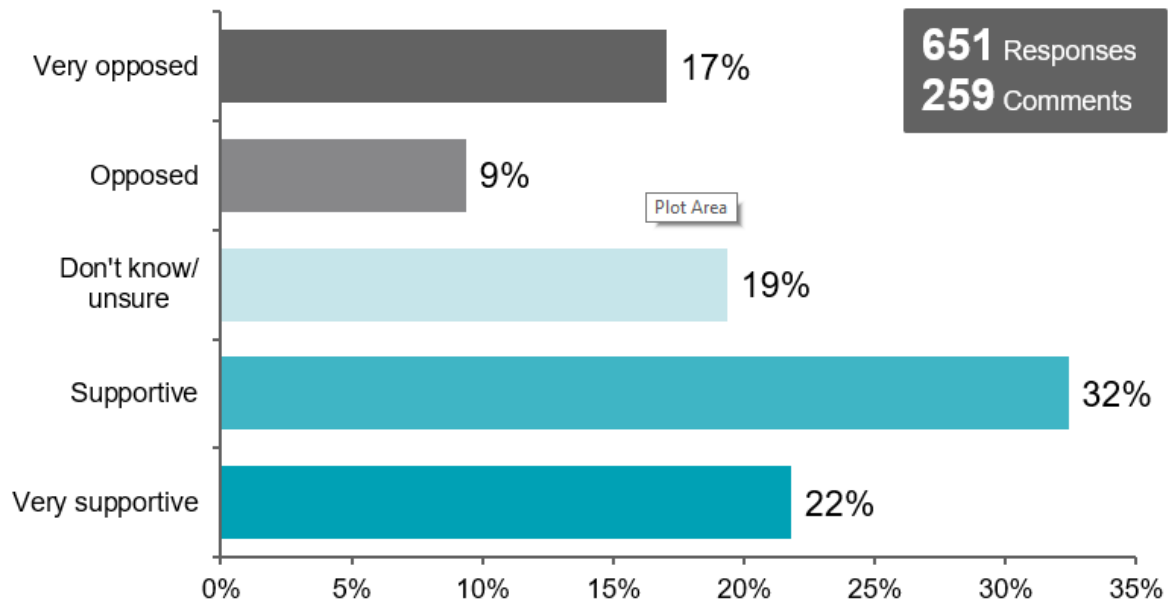
## Question 2

Rate rise options short survey

How supportive are you of this proposed distribution of extra funds if a rate increase is applied?

	Very supportive	Supportive	Don't know/ unsure	Opposed	Very opposed	Total	Weighted Average
1	21.81%	32.41%	19.35%	9.37%	17.05%	651	2.67
Comments						259	
						<b>Answered</b>	<b>651</b>
						<b>Skipped</b>	<b>20</b>

How supportive are you of this proposed distribution of extra funds if a rate increase is applied?

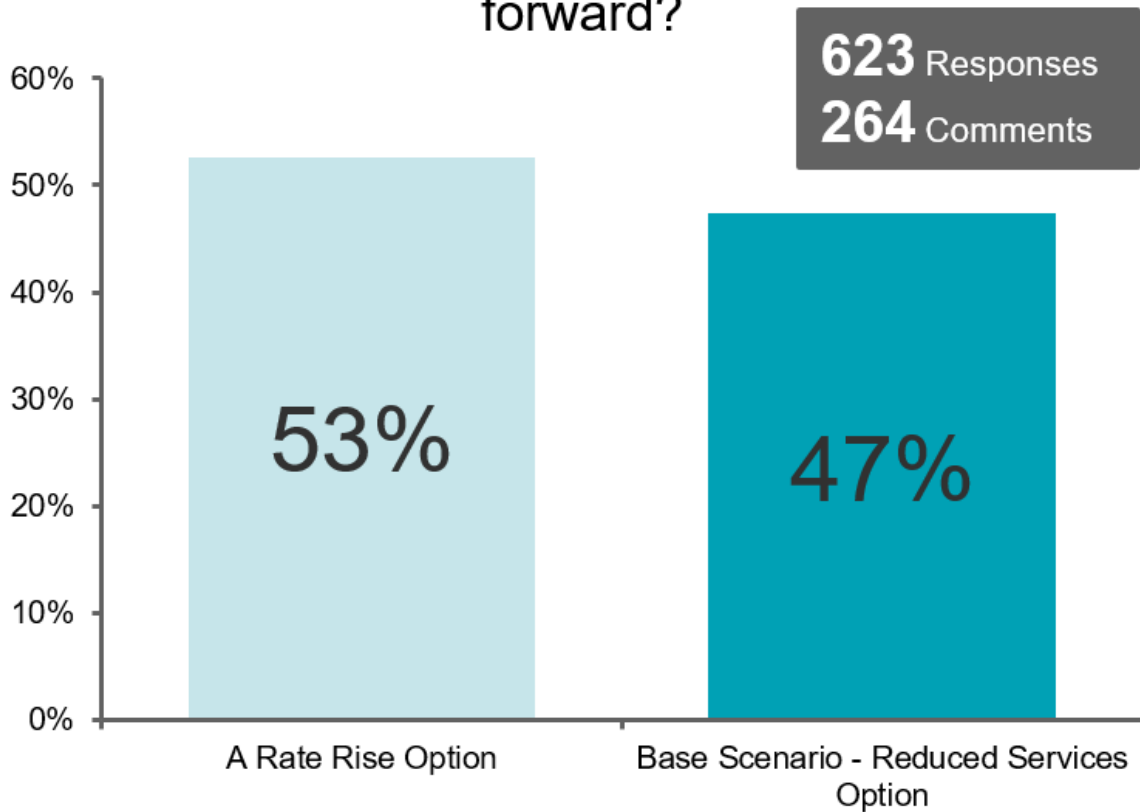


### Question 3

What is your preference on the path forward?

Answer Choices	Responses	
A Rate Rise Option	52.65%	328
Base Scenario - Reduced Services Option	47.35%	295
Comments		264
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>623</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>48</b>

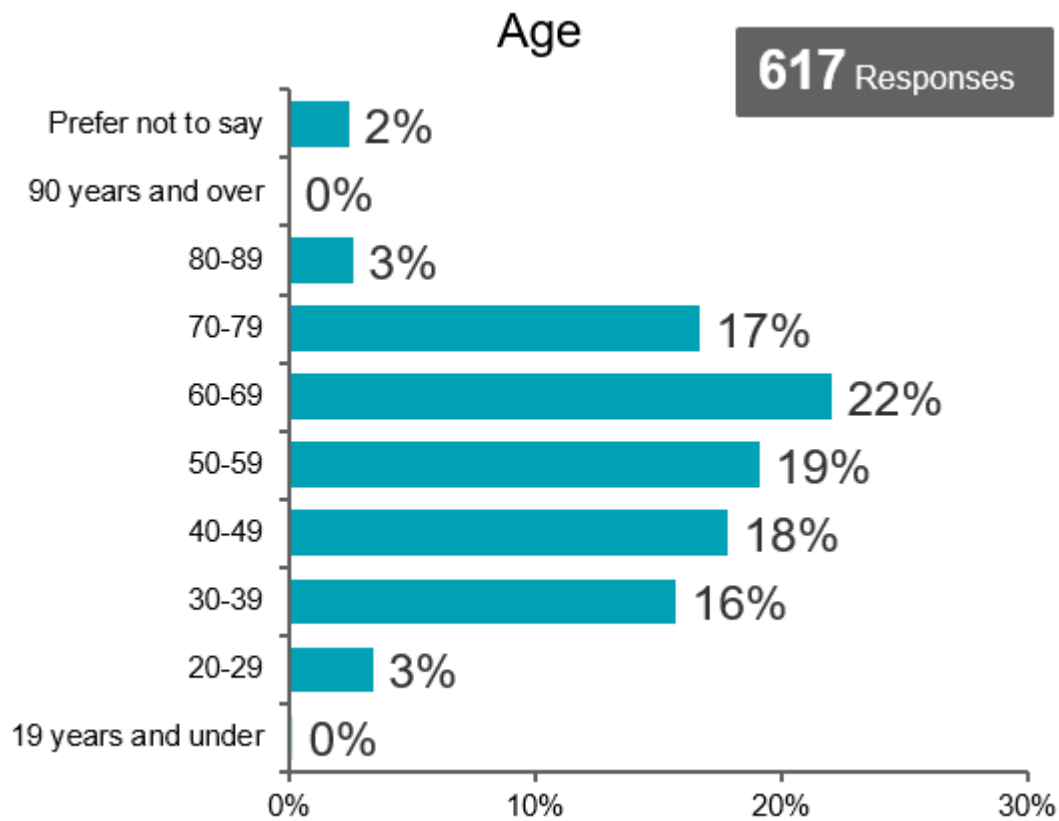
What is your preference on the path forward?



## Question 4

### Age:

Answer Choices	Responses	
19 years and under	0.16%	1
20-29	3.40%	21
30-39	15.72%	97
40-49	17.83%	110
50-59	19.12%	118
60-69	22.04%	136
70-79	16.69%	103
80-89	2.59%	16
90 years and over	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	2.43%	15
<b>Answered</b>		<b>617</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>54</b>

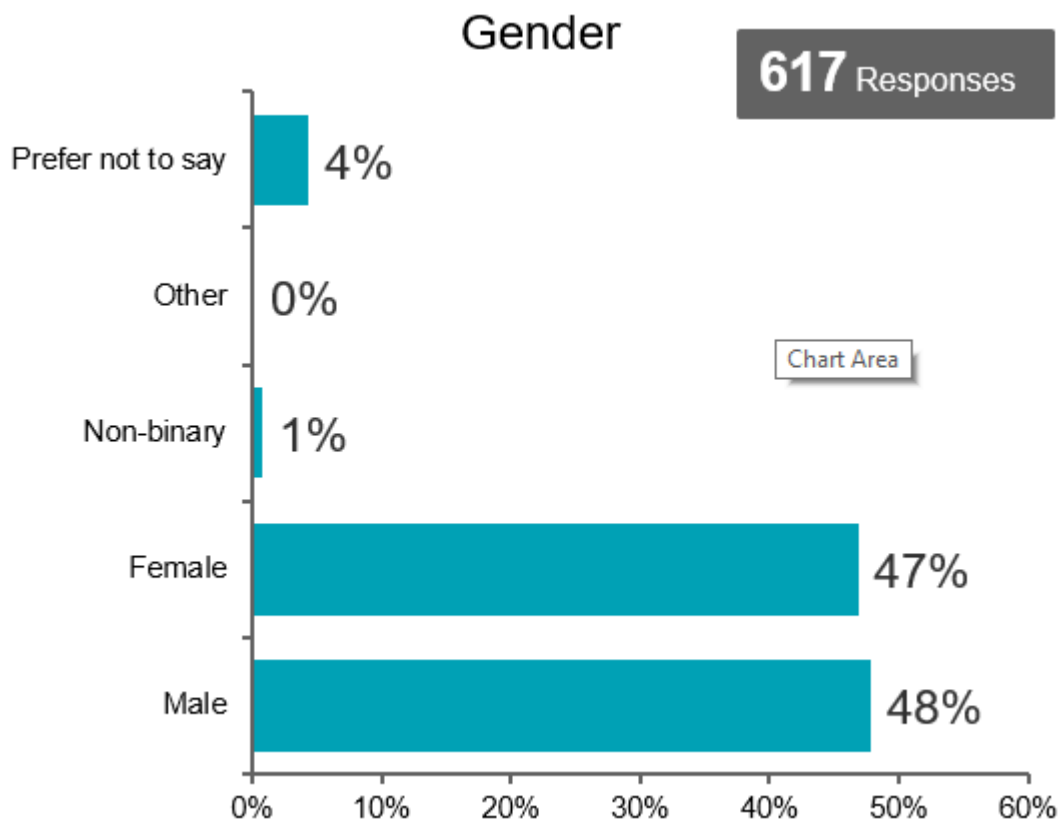




### Question 5

#### Gender:

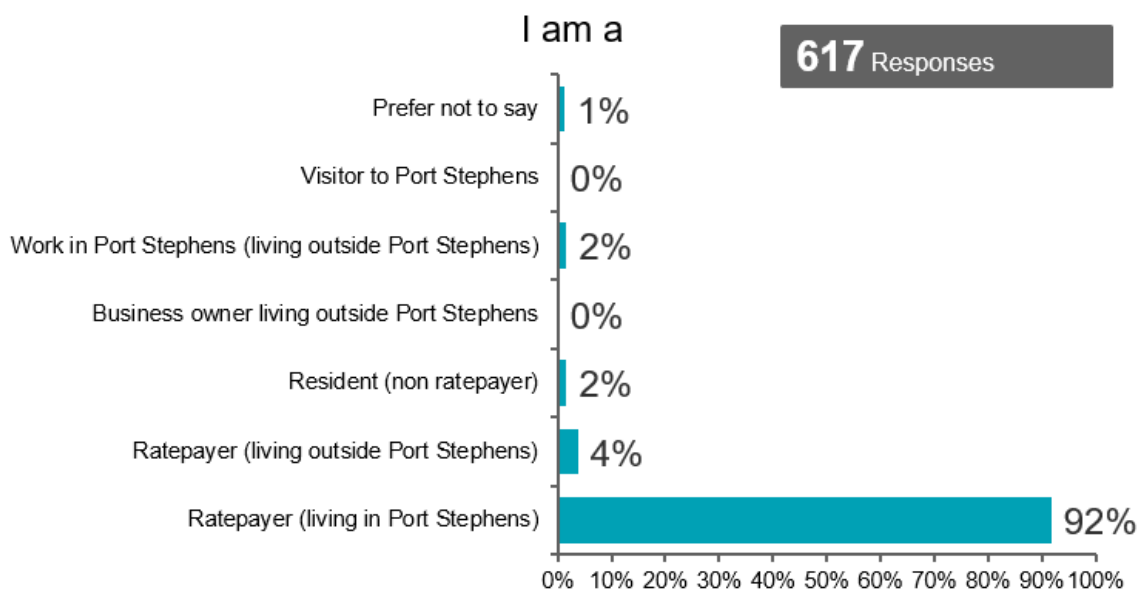
Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	47.81%	295
Female	46.84%	289
Non-binary	0.81%	5
Other	0.16%	1
Prefer not to say	4.38%	27
<b>Answered</b>	<b>617</b>	
<b>Skipped</b>	<b>54</b>	



## Question 6

I am a:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Ratepayer (living in Port Stephens)	91.73%	566
Ratepayer (living outside Port Stephens)	3.73%	23
Resident (non ratepayer)	1.62%	10
Business owner living outside Port Stephens	0.00%	0
Work in Port Stephens (living outside Port Stephens)	1.62%	10
Visitor to Port Stephens	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	1.30%	8
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>617</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>54</b>

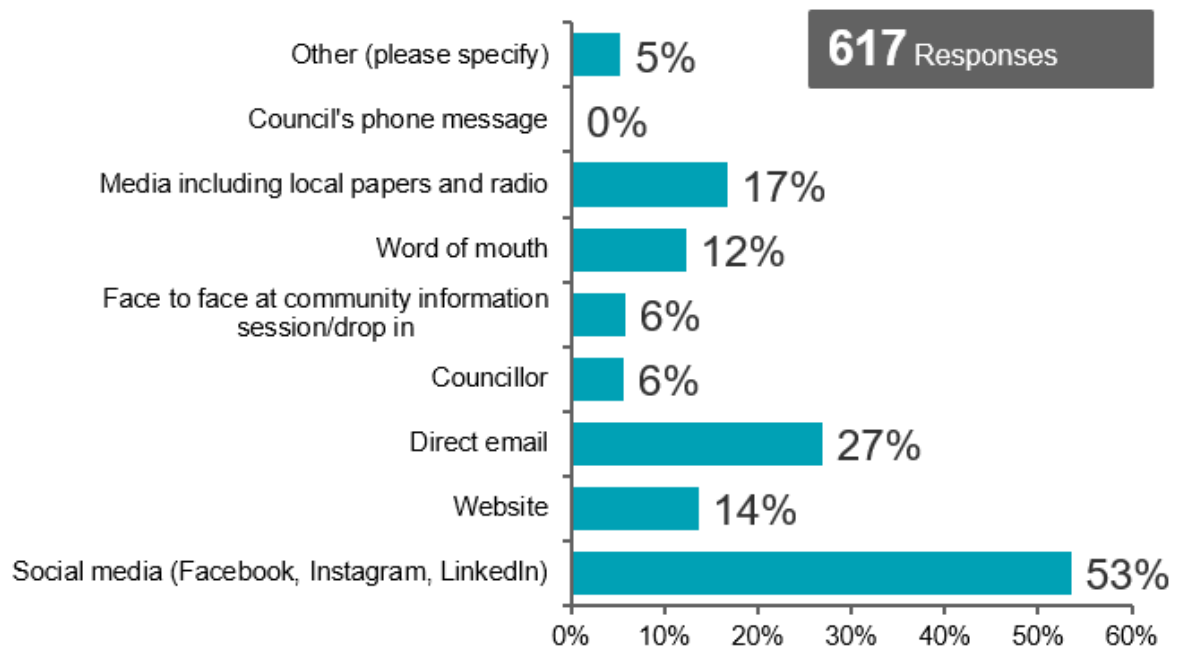


## Question 7

### How did you learn about this project? (tick all that apply)

Answer Choices	Responses	
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)	53.48%	330
Website	13.61%	84
Direct email	26.90%	166
Councillor	5.67%	35
Face to face at community information session/drop in	5.83%	36
Word of mouth	12.32%	76
Media including local papers and radio	16.69%	103
Council's phone message	0.16%	1
Other (please specify)	5.35%	33
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>617</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>54</b>

### How did you learn about this project?



# **Appendix D**

## **Survey Comments – Phase 2**

# Appendix E

## Submissions

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.

# Appendix F

## Rate Cap Announcement

### IPART Media Release



Local Government >>

## Media Release

29 September 2022

### NSW council rates to rise

IPART has set the 2023-24 base rate peg for NSW councils at 3.7%. There is also an allowance for the level of population growth, meaning some councils will have rate pegs of up to 6.8%.

The rate peg varies from the base level of 3.7% for most councils, to 6.8% for Camden Council. Please see the [Information Paper](#) on IPART's website for the rate peg for every council across NSW.

The rate peg protects ratepayers from excessive increases in council rates by limiting the total amount by which councils can increase income from rates each year.

"Higher inflation means that councils are facing increased costs in delivering services to the communities they serve.

"We have taken these increased costs into consideration while also trying to limit the level of rate increases that ratepayers are facing," said IPART Chair Carmel Donnelly.

IPART does not set the actual rates that households and businesses pay, which is a decision for councils and their communities. However, councils must set those rates to ensure that the change in total rates income stays below the rate peg limit.

IPART is currently reviewing the methodology it will use to set the rate peg from 2024-25. We are now calling for public submissions to the [Issues Paper](#) which is available on IPART's website. Submissions will be open until 4 November 2022.

"We will be looking at new approaches to setting the rate peg that reflect, as far as possible, changes in inflation and local government costs, while continuing to protect ratepayers from excessive rate increases," said Ms Donnelly.

IPART will also be consulting with stakeholders during workshops to be held in November. A Draft Report will be released in February 2023 setting out our draft findings and recommendations. We will take further submissions on the Draft Report and hold a public hearing early next year, most likely in March 2023.

The Terms of Reference for this review are available [here](#).


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 [media@ipart.nsw.gov.au](mailto:media@ipart.nsw.gov.au)

## Video Update

As IPART announced the rate cap during public exhibition, Port Stephens Council published a message from the General Manager via Facebook to explain how this change would affect our application for a Special Rate Variation and what it meant for ratepayers. Video published Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October



**Port Stephens Council**  
3 d · 🌐

Late last week, IPART (Independent Productivity and Regulatory Tribunal) announced the rate cap figure for the 2023-2024 financial year. For Port Stephens Council, this total rate cap is 4.4%.

We're currently asking for your feedback on 2 special rate variation options. In this video, General Manager Tim Crosdale explains that even with the 4.4% rate cap (which was previously 2.5%), the overall special rate variation amounts won't change.

Read more about the rate rise options at [www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/rate-rise-options](http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/rate-rise-options) and have your say before Wednesday 12 October.

**4.4% rate cap**

Play  
0:16 / 1:27



**PORT STEPHENS**  
COUNCIL