

Executive Summary

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

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

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

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

No.	Author of submission	Comment	Council Response
<p>Council values the community's detailed responses to the draft 2023-2033 Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) documents. Whilst Council has attempted to capture the key issues raised, not every comment has been addressed directly in the summary.</p>			
1	<p>Individual EDRMS 22/253560</p>	<p>Requested location of results from the previous engagement. Objection to any rate rise. Concerns raise regarding the affordability during extremely tough financial times with inflation growing, interest rates, strata levies, and cost of living. Preference to reduce services or put in place user pays.</p>	<p>Location of previous engagement results given. In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
2	<p>Individual 22/256050</p>	<p>Objection to rate increase over the standard capped figure. Concerns raised regarding the cost of living, home loan interest rates. Preference to re-adjust council expenditure and Council only providing traditional core services and functions rather than being involved in responsibilities of other levels of government or private enterprise.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
3	<p>Individual 22/256615</p>	<p>Objection to the proposed rate rises in particular survey design. Concerns raised regarding the extent of the proposed rate rises with the rising cost of living, increased mortgage rates, electricity, groceries, petrol, and the current number of homeless people. Concerns around the increase in rates due to new land valuations soon to be issued.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation. Whilst changes within the individual rates income may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations.</p>

			Council had not yet received the new land values from the Valuer General at the time of the public exhibition phase and as such put a disclaimer on the rates calculator to inform ratepayers of this timing matter.
4	Individual 22/257984	Support for Council to learn to live within its means with no SRV rate increase as the election promised no return to SRV consideration.	Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
5	Individual 22/257985	Objection to the proposed rate rise. Concerns with tough times and budget mismanagement.	In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
6	Individual 22/257994	Views raised that all local governments should return to the core business (roads, drains, and garbage). Raised issues on the decline in customer service over the years and seeks more concentration on needs and not wants of the community.	Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation. Council's Customer Service Charter clearly defines the standards that community members can expect when dealing with Council to ensure a positive customer experience.
7	Individual 22/258183	Support for not allowing any increase in rates and concern for financial mismanagement.	Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
8	Individual 22/258447	Proposed increases are not reasonable and will add financial hardship to ratepayers, particularly aged pensioners.	In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. This includes pensioners. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
9	Individual 22/258456	Unwanted additional financial burden for ratepayers, particularly aged pensioners	In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. Additional measures include aged pensioners.

			Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
10	Individual 22/259891	Strongly opposed to any rate rise. Concerns were raised over the survey format, past SRV application, and its non-approved determination. Proposed to spend less on social programs and fleet vehicles.	Whilst the previous SRV application's key purpose was to enhance current services and provide new infrastructure to the community, given the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and other global matters the environment in which we operate and our financial forecasting has significantly changed since IPART's determination. Should an application to put to IPART Council would need to satisfy the criteria issued by the OLG and IPART. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
11	Individual 22/261725	No intention of paying one cent more to an incompetent council.	Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
12	Individual 22/261741	Pointless survey with the only options being massive rate hikes that people cannot afford	In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
13	Individual 22/261460	Objection to any rate increase over the rate cap. Concerns raised about the survey format, and the increase in the cost of living. Preference for Council is re-adjust their expenditure and only provide core services.	In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
14	Individual 22/262285	View held that the increase in land values in 2022/2023 should provide a significant increase to Council's ongoing revenue, without the need to impose additional Special Rate variation. Suggestion made to extend smart parking to all boat ramps and surrounding streets, with keeping Individuals exemptions and	Whilst changes within individual rate notices may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations. Council had not yet received the new land values from the Valuer General at the time of the public exhibition phase and as

		<p>impose a special charge on all holiday rentals.</p>	<p>such put a disclaimer on the rates calculator to inform ratepayers of this timing matter.</p> <p>Council currently has a rollout plan for paid parking in a number of locations. These locations are currently being investigated and undergoing community consultation. This has been focused on main town centres. It may be possible to further extend to other locations once this town centre rollout is underway.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals as the current rating regulation and legislation does not provide an avenue for this type of structure. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p>
15	Individual 22/265558	<p>Objection to the proposed SRV in any shape or form. Considers that the 4.4% rate cap announcement is far more than is deserved.</p> <p>Concerns raised about the survey format and limited options, poor fiscal management and excess extravagance on projects, and affordability for pensioners and low-income earners.</p>	<p>IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4 for 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
16	Individual 22/266196	<p>Comparison made to competitive/private sector business models to find a range of different means to increase profitability. Suggest Council run more like a proper business.</p> <p>Request details in relation to cost savings, efficiencies, productivity, investments and cosmetic projects.</p> <p>Raises concerns around the economic outlook and affordability on a size of the proposed rate increases.</p>	<p>Council has sections of our organisation that work on a commercial basis such as Holiday Parks and Childcare however, this is not available to all parts of our organisation as we provide either statutorily required service or community desired service.</p> <p>Council has included details of our service review program which focuses on cost saving, efficiencies, and productivity within our Integrated Planning and Reporting documents and our Annual Report. Details of our financial investments, are included in the annual financial statements and details of the</p>

			<p>capital works program included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
17	Individual 22/266214	<p>Raised that the repairing of roads should be conducted in a more cost-effective manner and that sand movement work is a waste of money and resources.</p>	<p>Council has 700kms of roads that it proactively maintains and manages to increase the safety and quality of the road network. Council uses Statewide Mutual Best Practice and The Austroads Standards/Guides to assess and manage its assets, including roads. It is noted that the increase in rain has deteriorated our road pavements faster than usual and the funds available to undertake road maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Council regularly completes routine maintenance on all outlets on foreshore areas in effort to avoid upstream flooding, especially if rain is predicted.</p>
18	Individual 22/266226	<p>Raised that the issue of financial sustainability appeared before Covid-19 and that Council needs a much more comprehensive and long-term approach to ensure financial sustainability. Approach to include, changes to the rated revenue base, increase to development fees, selective reduction in some services, more 'user pay' services that reflect the true cost of the services, liquidation of underperforming assets and exiting partnership with Newcastle Airport and investment properties.</p>	<p>Council suffered a financial impact from the Covid-19 pandemic however Council had forecasted this period of time to be financially difficult through its Long Term Financial Plan Modelling.</p> <p>Council has considered and implemented a range of approaches to improve its financial sustainability long term, such as the sale of underperforming assets, increasing fees and charges, further rollout of paid parking and continuing its service review program.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to</p>

		<p>Protest against Council's intention to raise individual rates due to cost of living increases, increase costs to renters and business owners resulting in a reduction in their staff or having to close their doors, wage increases generally around 3 percent,</p>	<p>mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
19	Individual 22/266231	<p>Objection to the rate rise due to rising inflation and cost of living while wages are generally remaining static putting considerable pressure on families after an already difficult few years with Covid. Impact on local businesses after still trying to recover their losses of Covid pandemic and rate increase will also lead to staff reductions as businesses struggle to keep afloat. Landlords will pass the rate rise on to tenants further contributing to the inflationary cycle.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
20	Individual 22/268669	<p>Strong objection to the proposed increase in domestic rates. Statements made around 'Fit for the Future' and Council's previous SRV application determinations towards current financial outlook. Council has little ability to work within its rates revenue and should live within its means.</p> <p>Raised issues on Council expenditure on unnecessary structures and consequential removal parking spaces in William Street, refusal on significant development in Nelson Bay reducing the income available from completed development, no communication of financial situation before the election, and lack of services received for rates paid.</p>	<p>Since 2012 Council has consistently delivered a strong, stable or 'fit' financial position achieving an annual budget surplus of 1%. The Fit for the Future reports were designed solely to investigate the potential of merging local government areas. Whilst the previous SRV application's key purpose was to enhance current services and provide new infrastructure to the community.</p> <p>Our Long Term Financial Plan for some time highlighted that 2022/2023 would be difficult years for our budgets. Given the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and other global matters the environment which we operate in and our financial forecasting has significantly changed since the reports and IPART's determination.</p> <p>Council's capital projects of this nature are predominately funded through grant funds.</p>

			<p>In accordance with Council's 'Planning Matters to be Reported to Council Policy', Councillors are provided with the opportunity for input into the determination of development applications. When acting as the delegated consent authority, the elected Council has discretion to either support or refuse development applications, notwithstanding Council staff recommendations. Council is susceptible to Land and Environment Court proceedings as part of any development application, not only those reported to Council for determination.</p> <p>Council's published Long Term Financial Plan has highlighted that this period would be difficult years for our budgets. In addition, Council adopted the Financial Sustainability and Prosperity Fund (later renamed resilience fund) in October 2021 to set the key strategic direction for a financially sustainable organisation.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
21	Individual 22/268720	Issues raised with the survey only providing 2 options, the timing of the land revaluation, the previously approved drainage levy - special rate variation and cash and investment portfolio	<p>The rate rise options survey was narrowed down to two options built on from the previous survey in July/August in which five options were presented to the community.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount</p>

			<p>of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation.</p> <p>Whilst changes within individual rate notices may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations. Council had not yet received the new land values from the Valuer General at the time of the public exhibition phase and as such put a disclaimer on the rates calculator to inform ratepayers of this timing matter.</p> <p>Council benchmarks yields and vacancy rates each quarter to industry data to ensure targets continue to be met. It also undertakes an annual independent review of the portfolio to ensure each property is fit for purpose and continuing to perform in line with expectations, and any that are no longer deemed fit for purpose may be recommended for divestment as a result.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
22	Individual 22/271974	<p>Cannot consider a rate rise when there is wasted money on the construction in the main street and roads are in such a bad condition with repairs not lasting.</p> <p>Requested to see what Council has done for ratepayers excluding waste management</p>	<p>Council's capital projects of this nature are predominately funded through grant funds.</p> <p>The majority of additional funds raised through a special rate variation will be targeted toward road maintenance.</p> <p>Individual received the link to Council's draft Delivery Program and Operational Plan which outlines council's commitment to delivering on key directions/goals into activities and actions.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>

23	Individual 22/269316	Raised concerns on survey format. Council's proposal for a rate rise shows lack of regard for its Individuals, preference to no extra rate rise and reduce services and fix potholes properly and drainage issues.	Council proposes to use the majority of additional funds raised to target road maintenance. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
24	Individual 22/269784	<p>Raised concerns over the cost of living pressures and that the proposed large increase has come from left-field and is a complete surprise.</p> <p>Questions raised in relation to Council's past financial performance. Suggestions put forward of Council merger, selling Council-owned properties to pay down debt, and redirecting funds away from strategic planning towards maintenance work.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Direction to current draft IP&R documents as well as Annual Report and Annual Financial Statements for past performance.</p> <p>Council fought against the previously proposed merger with the surrounding Council's in line with community feedback.</p> <p>Council is investigating the sale of underperforming assets as part of the approach to addressing financial sustainability.</p> <p>The majority of additional funds raised by a Special Variation would be targeted to road maintenance.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
25	Individual 22/273330	Strongly opposed to the special rate rise due to inadequate budgeting, out-of-control contract employment, lack of asset utilisation, development in LTFP in particular, and planning opportunity for more high rise. Suggested housing provisions for a cheaper option for staff retention and if Council in unable to trade its way out then a forced amalgamation.	<p>Council operates within a treasury model and a strict procurement contracts process. Council was commended on its budgetary control within the Independent Financial Sustainability Report.</p> <p>Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale, with the process involving community consultation.</p> <p>Council has a range of strategies and plans that guide where additional housing can be provided. We are also working on a project to demonstrate how and where housing can occur over the next 20 years</p>

			<p>to ensure that we are meeting the forecasted demand for housing. In respect to Lemon Tree Passage, we will start preparing a Place Plan in early 2023. This has the potential to look at housing opportunities if this is something the local community is supportive of.</p> <p>High-rise development is permissible in a number of our zones and existing town centres. We are seeing an increase in the uptake of these opportunities in areas such as Nelson Bay in particular. These will become an increasingly important form of housing to help meet the demand for housing and as such, it is something that we will continue to look to support and facilitate in the future.</p> <p>Council provides a staff retention allowance which is currently more cost-effective than housing provisions.</p> <p>Council fought against the previously proposed merger with the surrounding Councils in line with community feedback.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
26	Individual 22/271143	<p>Opposed to both options being put forward. Understanding that Council has identified that its will not be able to deliver the services it is currently providing and encourages Council to implement all of the recommendations held in the Independent Reports. If after all recommendations have been undertaken if there is a shortfall then that amount will be able to determine the application of a special rate variation.</p>	<p>Council has thoroughly examined all recommendations held in the Independent reports, many of which have already been implemented and modelled into the Long Term Financial Plan, such as increasing fees and charges, continuous service level reviews, and increased tourist revenue.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
27	Individual 22/271812	<p>No support for any rate rise at all. Council needs to learn to live within its means like every ratepayer has to. Issues raised around affordability, current economic times, wasteful money on street beautification projects,</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p>

		no guarantee that income raised by a rate increase would be spent where promised, and survey format and two options only.	<p>Street beautification projects are generally funded by State or Federal grants.</p> <p>Any income raised by a special rate variation would be spent in accordance with Council's application to IPART and would be required to report back evidence of such to IPART and the community.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
28	Individual 22/271851	No support for either of the two special rate variations being proposed as Council is not equitable when investing in my ward. Question raised if the information supplied for Fit for the Future and Professor Drew Report was accurate. Unsure of how an increase of either option is necessary given health orders for the Covid pandemic have been removed and if so then Council to consider amalgamation.	<p>The information provided for both reports was accurate and financial data was audited independently as per legislative requirements for Council's annual financial statements.</p> <p>Whilst income from some of the Council's income-generating sections of the organisation has returned, others such as the airport dividend have not. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Independent report highlighted Council's reliance on and risk of these commercial revenues.</p> <p>Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams.</p> <p>Council fought against the previously proposed merger with the surrounding Councils in line with community feedback.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
29.	Individual 22/271957	Raised scepticism over Long Term Financial Plan modelling and expenditure assumptions. Raised issues of affordability with a high increase.	<p>As part of the Long Term Financial Plan Council is required to make assumptions for the next ten years. The key assumptions are reported in the Long Term Financial Plan publicly exhibited and are based on current and forecasted economic factors. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of</p>

			<p>additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
30.	Individual 22/271899	<p>Opposed to either option for the proposed increase in Council rates. Raised issues of increased costs of living and many households on fixed incomes.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
31.	Individual 22/272072	<p>Raise strong objection to the proposal to seek a special rate variation at all as considers the rate peg sufficient to meet incremental costs of operations. Preference that the maintenance of current expenditure levels is concentrated on select services, specifically on road maintenance and reduction in other non-core services, delay any capital expenditure, disposal of real estate holdings of non-operational land, and examination of income-generating assets with alternative income sources pursued vigorously.</p>	<p>The rate-pegging regime is calculated by using prior years' costs indexes and as a result, it lags and ultimately does not keep pace with Council's expenses. Inflation has been in recent years and is forecasted into the short-to-medium term future as being above the rate peg.</p> <p>Where available Council during the Covid-19 period has delayed capital expenditure.</p> <p>Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale, with the process involving community consultation. Investment assets where Council expects to receive a reoccurring income stream have not been considered for sale.</p> <p>Council currently has a rollout plan for paid parking in a number of locations. These locations are currently being investigated and undergoing community consultation. This alternative source of income has been modelled into the Long Term Financial Plan.</p>
32.	Individual 22/272073	<p>Does not want or can afford either amount shown in the survey. Cost of living increases and that rates will go up with the land revaluation.</p>	<p>Whilst changes within individual rate notices may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations.</p>

			<p>Council had not yet received the new land values from the Valuer General at the time of the public exhibition phase and as such put a disclaimer on the rates calculator to inform ratepayers of this timing matter.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
33.	Individual 22/272272	<p>Does not prefer either rate increase option and would rather see rates increase at the 2.5% rate cap. There is no reason for such a proposed increase amount, especially with the rising cost of living, inflationary pressure, the current level of service provided, and ongoing wage stagnation. Also, note that Council's past SRV application was rejected by IPART.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>The key purpose of this proposed SRV is financial sustainability, whilst the previous SRV application's key purpose was to enhance current services and provide new infrastructure to the community.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
34.	Individual 22/272747	<p>I do not support any Special Rate Variation that Council may wish to seek. Concerns raised around the inflation rate of 6.1% with further increases predicted, cost of living, and self-funded retiree on a limited income. It is the time for Council to reduce unnecessary spending while continuing to provide basic services such as roads, waste collection and public space maintenance.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
35.	Individual 22/273059	<p>Rejection of the rate rise options as the rate cap of 4.4% is a significant increase. An organisation cannot predict its budget needs over 10 years as most companies have annual budgets they review and adjust</p>	<p>IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4% for the 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation.</p> <p>Council is required by the Office of Local Government to model a 10 year budget known as the Long Term Financial Plan.</p>

		<p>accordingly. Council should not operate in areas that should be left to private enterprises such as holiday parks and rather focus on rubbish collection, footpaths, and roads. Council needs to reign in its spending on unnecessary costs and live within its means.</p>	<p>Council also reviews the annual budget quarterly and reports any significant adjustments to Council.</p> <p>Council has over the years engaged in commercial-based operations as a strategy to raise income through non-rate revenue sources. Whilst balancing our responsibilities of the maintenance of our community assets.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
36.	Individual 22/273132	<p>No support for the proposed options but would consider a lower rate rise and some increases in service cost to meet the Council's budget deficit.</p> <p>Reasons and alternative options include,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The financial situation is not just Covid-19 impacts - Previous drainage levy not included in the total amount - Condition of roads - Increased transport/road levies payable by developers of extra-large houses/multi-Individual & commercial/industrial developments - Charge commercial rates for rental & Air BnB properties. - Lack of rates paid by relocatable accommodation - Increase charge for development services & Section 94 payments - Service reductions restrictions - Increase user pay options - Asset reduction of the investment portfolio 	<p>Whilst most of our income streams have returned after the Covid-19 pandemic some are yet to return. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Independent report highlighted Council's reliance and risk of these commercial revenues.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation.</p> <p>Council has 700kms of roads that it proactively maintains and manages to increase the safety and quality of the road</p>

			<p>network. Council uses Statewide Mutual Best Practice and The Austroads Standards/Guides to assess and manage its assets, including roads. It is noted that the increase in rain has deteriorated our road pavements faster than usual and the funds available to undertake road maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Registered vehicles for example trucks used to carry building materials to construct residential dwellings are legally able to use our roads. Council does gain funds from local quarries for trucking movements and funds from the State Government that originates from fuel and vehicle tax which contributes towards the increasing cost of maintaining our road network.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council applies Section 7.12 contributions for commercial developments which are calculated as a percentage of the cost of works of development. Council applies the maximum allowable levy that is set out by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. Council applies Section 7.11 contributions for individual developments within catchments, these individual developments under current legislation are capped at \$20,000 for each dwelling or lot, except for greenfield areas, where the cap is \$30,000.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is</p>
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			<p>currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is considered inappropriate, with recent approval relying on existing use rights.</p> <p>Council would not look to reduce services in areas where it makes money for Council, there is a legislative requirement, or in a matter of safety. Any specific reduction in services would involve community consultation.</p> <p>Council has committed to the further rollout of paid parking to increase income from user pay options which has been modelled into the Long Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>Council benchmarks yields and vacancy rates each quarter to industry data to ensure targets continue to be met. It also undertakes an annual independent review of the portfolio to ensure each property is fit for purpose and continuing to perform in line with expectations, and any that are no longer deemed fit for purpose may be recommended for divestment as a result.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
37.	Individual 22/273208	<p>No support for the proposed options but would consider a lower rate rise and some increases in service cost to meet the Council's budget deficit.</p> <p>Reasons and alternative options include,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The financial situation is not just Covid-19 impacts - Previous drainage levy not included in the total amount - Condition of roads - Charge commercial rates for rental & Air BnB properties. 	<p>Whilst most of our income streams have returned after the Covid-19 pandemic some are yet to return. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Independent report highlighted Council's reliance and risk of these commercial revenues.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of rates paid by relocatable accommodation - Increase charge for development services & Section 94 payments - Asset reduction of the investment portfolio 	<p>peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation. Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council applies Section 7.12 contributions for commercial developments which are calculated as a percentage of the cost of works of development. Council applies the maximum allowable levy that is set out by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. Council applies Section 7.11 contributions for individual developments within catchments, these individual developments under current legislation are capped at \$20,000 for each dwelling or lot, except for greenfield areas, where the cap is \$30,000.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is</p>
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			<p>considered inappropriate, with recent approval relying on existing use rights.</p> <p>Council benchmarks yields and vacancy rates each quarter to industry data to ensure targets continue to be met. It also undertakes an annual independent review of the portfolio to ensure each property is fit for purpose and continuing to perform in line with expectations, and any that are no longer deemed fit for purpose may be recommended for divestment as a result.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
38.	Individual 22/273254	<p>Raised issue with survey format and does not want to select either of the options as there is no guarantee that the rate rise won't continue in subsequent years as CPI indexation. Requested information around productivity and waste measures as well as how the rate revenue is applied across the LGA.</p>	<p>As per the NSW rating legislation Council can only increase its rates income by either the annual rate cap or an approved special rate variation.</p> <p>Council provided link to the draft Integrated Planning and Reporting revised for a Special Rate Variation which contains information requested.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
39.	Individual 22/273764	<p>Objection to the two rate rise options, however, felt strong support for a 10-15% one-off increase. Understanding that Council has not had an increase for many years but the amount asking for is too much. A smaller increase even if it does not cover expenses for the ten-year period, will give Individuals the opportunity to see what extra rates will fund and get the roads repaired.</p> <p>Council is not looking at other avenues to raise funds, only hitting the ratepayers.</p>	<p>One option of the five rate rise options considered was a short-term solution but was not supported by the community. Council would only have additional funds for roads maintenance after the budget is repaired and as such the options proposed provide that level of additional funds.</p> <p>Council has investigated all areas of revenue prior to considering a special rate variation. These include increasing non-statutory fees and charges, the further rollout of paid parking, and investigating the sale of underperforming land.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
40.	Individual 22/274701	<p>Council should tighten its belts in the economic climate just like ratepayers. Preference to reduce</p>	<p>Council has been tightening its belts for the past few years with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>

		<p>employees from the top. Raised concerns over the deterioration of infrastructures such as potholes in the roads and footpaths but yet Council has funds for sporting fields and tourism. Self-funded retirees may have to sell and move away from this area as new land valuations are becoming unaffordable to pay the rate increase.</p> <p>A lower rate rise may be more acceptable if ratepayers could see some value for a rates dollar.</p>	<p>Through the independent assessment recently conducted, it was confirmed that Council spends less on staff per assessment than its typical peer does.</p> <p>Council is committed to maintaining our infrastructure across the LGA, this can be seen through our declining infrastructure backlog trend since 2009. The NSW Valuer General issues land valuation every three years, whilst Council is not responsible for this determination it using the land value when calculating rates. Whilst change within the rates income may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase, which include self-funded retiree.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
41.	Individual 22/274578	<p>Opposed rate hike. Council should stay with the 4.4% rate cap suggested by IPART and manage its funding better with projects not being mismanaged. The previous attempt was overwhelmingly rejected by an independent umpire. Many Individuals who do not have the internet or receive the local newspaper would not be aware of the council intention to increase rates.</p>	<p>The ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and other global matters of the environment which we operate in and our financial forecasting, in particular inflation, have significantly changed since the IPART's determination. IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4% for the 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation.</p> <p>Whilst the previous SRV application's key purpose was to enhance current services and provide new infrastructure to the community, this proposed SRV is to ensure financial sustainability.</p> <p>Council has a corporate Project Management Framework based on the best practice 'Project Management body</p>

			<p>of knowledge' principles. Our processes and projects are regularly reviewed and audited to ensure compliance and facilitate continuous improvement. Infrastructure projects are impacted by a range of external factors. Council's annual capital works program as a whole is delivered within budget, with all variations (changes) to individual project time, cost or scope acknowledged reported and justified.</p> <p>Council has undertaken an extensive community engagement program over several weeks using a range of communication and engagement methods, one of which was a double-sided A4 letter included within the Rate Notice issued in July during the first phase on engagement.</p>
42.	Individual 22/274815	<p>It is the wrong time to propose a rate increase after covid-19, rising interest rates/cost of living and council mismanagement of funds.</p> <p>Potholes and lack of road maintenance have been a constant issue that Council does not seem to be able to get on top of.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase, which include self-funded retiree.</p> <p>Potholes occur through a number of ways – sometimes due to general wear and tear, sometimes due to faults in the pavement surface but more often than not, it's a weather event. Council, as with most Council's in NSW have experienced increased rainfall which has deteriorated our road pavement faster than usual. Council's takes a risk mitigation approach when addressing potholes. For Council to be able to get on top of the increased potholes we would require funds to conduct rehabilitation road maintenance works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target this type of road maintenance.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
43.	Individual 22/274818	<p>Objection to the proposed rate increases. The 4.4% rate increase for 2023-2024 is a terrible</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to</p>

		hardship in itself for the average ratepayer. Council financial situation is not the fault of the ratepayers it is the mismanagement of ratepayers' money by Council over the years.	mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase, which include self-funded retiree. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
44.	Soldiers Point Community Group Inc. 22/275192	<p>No support for either of the rate rise options and no support for no increase. It was explicitly and implicitly suggested by some members that a lower rate rise would be supported.</p> <p>Issues raised include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The financial situation is not just Covid-19 impacts - Previous drainage levy not included in the total amount - Condition of roads - Increased transport/road levies payable by developers of extra-large houses/multi-individual & commercial/industrial developments, - Charge commercial rates for rental & Air BnB properties. - Lack of rates paid by relocatable accommodation - Increase charge for development services & Section 94 payments - Service reductions restrictions - Increase user pay options - Asset reduction of the investment portfolio 	<p>Whilst most of our income streams have returned after the Covid-19 pandemic some are yet to return. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Independent report highlighted Council's reliance and risk of these commercial revenues.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation.</p> <p>Council has 700kms of roads that it proactively maintains and manages to increase the safety and quality of the road network. Council uses Statewide Mutual Best Practice and The Austroads Standards/Guides to assess and manage its assets, including roads. It is noted that the increase in rain has deteriorated our</p>

			<p>road pavements faster than usual and the funds available to undertake road maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Registered vehicles for example trucks used to carry building materials to construct residential dwellings are legally able to use our roads. Council does gain funds from local quarries for trucking movements and funds from the State Government that originates from fuel and vehicle tax which contributes towards the increasing cost of maintaining our road network.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council applies Section 7.12 contributions for commercial developments which are calculated as a percentage of the cost of works of development. Council applies the maximum allowable levy that is set out by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. Council applies Section 7.11 contributions for individual developments within catchments, these individual developments under current legislation are capped at \$20,000 for each dwelling or lot, except for greenfield areas, where the cap is \$30,000.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in</p>
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			<p>zones where this type of development is considered inappropriate, with recent approval relying on existing use rights.</p> <p>Council would not look to reduce services in areas where it makes money for Council, there is a legislative requirement, or in a matter of safety. Any specific reduction in services would involve community consultation.</p> <p>Council has committed to the further rollout of paid parking to increase income from user pay options which has been modelled into the Long Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>Council benchmarks yields and vacancy rates each quarter to industry data to ensure targets continue to be met. It also undertakes an annual independent review of the portfolio to ensure each property is fit for purpose and continuing to perform in line with expectations, and any that are no longer deemed fit for purpose may be recommended for divestment as a result.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
45.	Individual 22/275367	<p>Council should live within their budget and cut back on unnecessary waste such as street beautification projects. Council should “up their game” and stick with the normal rate rises set out by State Government. Every household is facing financial pressure at the moment and it is unaffordable.</p>	<p>IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4% for the 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation.</p> <p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
46.	Individual 22/275386	<p>No support for either option. Taking into consideration that while some wages have increased 3% some have not and everyone is experiencing increased living expenses. The rate cap of 4.4% and will get increased rates based on increase in land valuations.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the</p>

		<p>I acknowledge Council has increased costs due to increased road repairs caused by wet weather damage and increased costs for maintenance of council properties, materials, transportation costs, and fuel.</p> <p>Concerns raised on 'lifestyle/over 55's villages' and requested Council lobby with other Council's to change the legislation.</p> <p>A rate increase more closely aligned to the cap already approved by IPART would be more acceptable to ratepayers.</p>	<p>current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is considered inappropriate, with recent approval relying on existing use rights.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
47.	Individual 22/275402	<p>Opposition for all three scenarios. The two rate rise options are a huge increase for the average household, it is over the top extravagant and way too steep a rise.</p> <p>Raises issues of affordability with the pandemic, fires, floods, and current rising cost of living.</p> <p>There is plenty of funding available from State and Federal governments for a diverse range to contribute to and service community needs, in particular roads.</p> <p>Unsatisfied with the community consultation about this rate rise, it is an animated, emotional, dramatic and unsubstantiated forecast of future costs. Can not recall an ounce of information from Council.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council has a dedicated grants officer to pursue and manage all grant funding available. The majority of grants that Council receives are for capital expenditure. Council's key purpose of the proposed rate increase is to address its operating budget. Council will continue to seek grant funding across all areas including road funding.</p> <p>Council has undertaken an extensive community engagement program over several weeks using a range of communication and engagement methods both print and digital.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>

48.	Individual 22/275430	<p>Welcomes the level and modes of consultation over the two stages to date, which have been significantly better than in the past. Acknowledgment and commended given for the extreme difficulty of communicating clearly and engaging effectively with the community on the complex subject of Council finances.</p> <p>Disappointment raised that a hybrid approach (cut some services and a lesser rate rise) was not presented. Also, other revenue-raising options (incl. fees and charges and asset sales) were not included in the survey.</p> <p>Suggestion that the survey include indicates their broad income/wealth levels (in bands) to be able to correlate preferences against income/wealth levels.</p> <p>The rating system is not fit for purpose, being fundamentally inequitable. Acknowledge the responsibility is with State and Federal government, but urge Council to become active in lobbying for fundamental reforms.</p> <p>It is essential that Council continues to be both more transparent and more accountable for expenditure, making an objective to more clearly explain the way Council finances 'work', in particular the differences between capital and operating budget.</p>	<p>Council has undertaken an extensive community engagement program over several weeks using a range of communication and engagement methods with Local Government finances and NSW Rating legislation a complex topic.</p> <p>The two options proposed were modelled upon feedback gained in earlier phases of the engagement however, Council takes under consideration of a hybrid approach. Council has included in the revised Long Term Financial Plan the inclusion of other revenue income streams such as increases to fees and charges and the further rollout of paid parking. Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale, with the process involving community consultation.</p> <p>Through the independent reports a Capacity to Pay assessment of the Port Stephens Council area was undertaken this included a range of ABS financial factors such as income levels.</p> <p>Council is in agreement that the rate capping legislation is not fit for purpose during long periods of high inflation and is intending to submit a submission to IPART's upcoming review.</p> <p>During community information sessions, short videos and FAQs Council sought to explain the technical detail of Council's finances and budgets and the key purpose and need for the proposed special rate variation.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
49.	Individual 22/275527	<p>Objection to future rate increases above the rate cap. The proposed rate increases are above CPI and is unsustainable for the average and fixed income household.</p> <p>It is Council's responsibility to ensure its accounts are kept within budget, rein in its spending</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council has a history of maintaining a small budget surplus each year prior to the covid-19 pandemic and global</p>

		and re-examine the way they conduct future endeavours to reduce its costs and waste.	<p>economic change. Council runs a whole suite of strategies to help save money and run efficiently. These include our Service Review Program, Business Improvement Ideas, and our Problem/Opportunity 'Plan Do Study Act' program.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
50.	Individual 22/275588	<p>Objection to the two proposed rate increase options, but would consider a much lower amount. The total amount does not include drainage levy. It is unsustainable for myself as a fixed pensioner and don't have additional money.</p> <p>Council should instead of looking to ratepayers for income, sell investments and land which is not being used for recreational or environmental purposes.</p>	<p>In addition to its current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation.</p> <p>Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale, with the process involving community consultation.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
51.	Individual 22/275628	No support for the proposed options but would consider a mix of a lower rate rise and some	There are various factors that have contributed to Council's forecasted financial position. Since 2012 Council has

		<p>increases in service cost to meet the Council's budget deficit.</p> <p>Understanding there is a difference of opinion as to the cause of the Council's financial position, being Covid-19 related or failed past SRV related.</p> <p>Other issues raised during community meetings includes road condition, over 55's housing, user pay options, and developer contributions.</p> <p>Thank you given to the Council representatives and ward elects for their efforts in engaging with the community. A vast improvement from the previous application.</p>	<p>consistently delivered a strong, stable or 'fit' financial position achieving an annual budget surplus of 1%. Our Long Term Financial Plan for some time highlighted that 2022/2023 would be difficult years for our budgets. Given the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and other global matters the environment which we operate in and our financial forecasting has significantly changed. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams.</p> <p>Whilst the previous SRV application's key purpose was to enhance current services and provide new infrastructure to the community.</p> <p>Council has 700kms of roads that it proactively maintains and manages to increase the safety and quality of the road network. Council uses Statewide Mutual Best Practice and The Austroads Standards/Guides to assess and manage its assets, including roads. It is noted that the increase in rain has deteriorated our road pavements faster than usual and the funds available to undertake road maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as</p>
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52.	Individual 22/275677	Peruse all the Individuals of all the retirement village houses for more rates.	<p>Council is unable to impose a special charge separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
53.	Individual 22/275699	<p>Opposition to a rate rise. Expressed concerns for hardship and financial stress on Individuals and business owners due to rising cost of living.</p> <p>Council needs to wait for the economy to stabilise, prioritise</p>	<p>In addition to our current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale,</p>

		and cut unnecessary spending, better manage projects, ensure only projects that benefit the whole community be completed in a cost-effective and timely manner, and liquidate underperforming assets.	with the process involving community consultation. Council has a corporate Project Management Framework based on the best practice 'Project Management body of knowledge' principles. Our processes and projects are regularly reviewed and audited to ensure compliance and facilitate continuous improvement. Infrastructure projects are impacted by a range of external factors. Council's annual capital works program as a whole is delivered within budget, with all variations (changes) to individual project time, cost or scope acknowledged reported and justified. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
54.	Individual 22/275700	Strongly objecting to both proposed scenarios. There has been poor fiscal management and no budget constraints. There is no transparent accountability for ratepayers' dollars. Either proposal is unjustifiable.	Council operates within a treasury model with strict budgetary control. Council was commended on its budgetary control within the Independent Financial Sustainability Report. Council publishes each year the Integrated Planning and Reporting documents along with the Annual Report and Annual Financial Statements that outlines all financial information relating to rating income that is received by Council. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
55.	Individual 22/275701	Management should work within the 4.4% rate cap more diligently and not be so wasteful. Do not want to vote for either option, agrees with the need of a rate rise but not to this extent. Requested a current set of financial statements.	IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4% for the 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation. Financial Statements forwarded. Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.
56.	Individual 22/278699	Not accepting of either rate rise option. Council should tighten its own belt and live within its means. All householders have a budget and if it means cutting back that's	In addition to our current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.

		<p>what you do. Individuals are overwhelmed with their own bills. Council is known for the wastage of ratepayers' money.</p>	<p>Council operates within a treasury model with strict budgetary control and runs a whole suite of strategies to help save money and run efficiently, known as our Service Review Program and working within the Business Excellence Framework.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
57.	Individual 22/278669	<p>Strongly object and reject all the proposed rate rise options. The rate cap of 4.4% has been granted and no further increase should be approved. Ratepayers should not be responsible for Council's inefficiencies and neither of these proposals is a solution for Council not directing funds where needed.</p>	<p>IPART announced the rate cap for Port Stephens at 4.4% for the 2023-2024 financial in which they indicated is lower than current inflation.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
58.	Individual 22/278670	<p>No support for either option of a rate rise. Council will not need a rate rise given the increase in land values.</p> <p>Council should raise revenue by charging business rates to AirBnBs and rein in over 55 villages or lobby to state government. Stop delivering the extras and get down to the core of their business.</p>	<p>Whilst changes within individual rate notices may occur depending on the variation in land value changes across the LGA, Council's total income does not increase with a general revaluation. Council has published a video to help assist in understanding the rating legislation and the land revaluations.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is</p>

			<p>considered inappropriate, with recent approval relying on existing use rights.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
59.	Individual 22/278681	<p>No support for either option but would consider a mix of a lower rate rise and some increases in service cost to meet the Council's budget deficit.</p> <p>Issues raised include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The financial situation is not just Covid-19 impacts - Previous drainage levy not included in the total amount - Condition of roads - Increased transport/road levies payable by developers of extra-large houses/multi-Individualial & commercial/industrial developments, - Charge commercial rates for rental & Air BnB properties. - Lack of rates paid by relocatable accommodation - Increase charge for development services & Section 94 payments - Service reductions restrictions - Increase user pay options <p>Asset reduction of the investment portfolio</p>	<p>Whilst most of our income streams have returned after the Covid-19 pandemic some are yet to return. Council is currently facing and will continue to face in the short-to-medium term high inflation and cost pressures which are greater than our income streams. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Independent report highlighted Council's reliance and risk of these commercial revenues.</p> <p>Council's drainage levy was introduced as a \$500,000 permanent special rate variation in 1997-1998. It is retained in the ordinary rate income base. Since introduction 26 years ago the drainage levy has increased annually by the rate peg percentage applicable to Council and it currently raises in the order of \$1.15 million per annum (or an average of \$32.80 per rate assessment). These funds are set aside to be used for various drainage works that are included in the Strategic Asset Management Plan each year.</p> <p>As per IPART's guidelines Council is required to communicate the total amount of the proposed special rate variation and not past approved special rate variations. Unlike most other NSW Councils, Port Stephens does not charge a stormwater management charge due to this drainage special rate variation.</p> <p>Council has 700kms of roads that it proactively maintains and manages to increase the safety and quality of the road network. Council uses Statewide Mutual Best Practice and The Austroads Standards/Guides to assess and manage its assets, including roads. It is noted that the increase in rain has deteriorated our road pavements faster than usual and the funds available to undertake road</p>

			<p>maintenance is less than the increase in the cost of works. The majority of 'additional funds' raised from an approved special rate will target road maintenance.</p> <p>Registered vehicles for example trucks used to carry building materials to construct residential dwellings are legally able to use our roads. Council does gain funds from local quarries for trucking movements and funds from the State Government that originates from fuel and vehicle tax which contributes towards the increasing cost of maintaining our road network.</p> <p>Council is unable to impose a special charge on all holiday rentals or separately rate relocatable accommodation as the current rating and planning regulation and legislation does not allow for this to occur. Council has made and will continue to make representations to State Governments for rating reform on this matter.</p> <p>Council applies Section 7.12 contributions for commercial developments which are calculated as a percentage of the cost of works of development. Council applies the maximum allowable levy that is set out by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. Council applies Section 7.11 contributions for Individual developments within catchments, these Individual developments under current legislation are capped at \$20,000 for each dwelling or lot, except for greenfield areas, where the cap is \$30,000.</p> <p>Council has an active program of advocating to the State for reform concerning lifestyle villages, and is currently working with the NSW Department of Planning on this in combination with other councils such as Mid-Coast Council. Council has removed 'caravan parks' as a permissible use in zones where this type of development is</p>
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			<p>considered inappropriate, with recent approval relying on existing use rights.</p> <p>Council would not look to reduce services in areas where it makes money for Council, there is a legislative requirement, or in a matter of safety. Any specific reduction in services would involve community consultation.</p> <p>Council has committed to the further rollout of paid parking to increase income from user pay options which has been modelled into the Long Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>Council benchmarks yields and vacancy rates each quarter to industry data to ensure targets continue to be met. It also undertakes an annual independent review of the portfolio to ensure each property is fit for purpose and continuing to perform in line with expectations, and any that are no longer deemed fit for purpose may be recommended for divestment as a result.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
60-138	Individuals X 78	<p>Objection to the rate rise under</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Severe cost of living increases - Impact on homeowners, businesses, and renters - Wage strikes are generally only increasing wages at three percent - Inflation has impacted business turnover resulting in a reduction in staff and many small businesses having to close <p>Alternative solutions raised</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selling non-environmental or culturally significant properties to cover debt - Ensure all projects undertaken are in the interest of all the 	<p>In addition to our current Hardship Policy, Council is proposing a number of additional affordability measures to mitigate any financial hardship caused by a rate increase.</p> <p>Council is currently investigating a range of underperforming land sites for sale, with the process involving community consultation.</p> <p>Council has a corporate Project Management Framework based on the best practice 'Project Management body of knowledge' principles. Our processes and projects are regularly reviewed and audited to ensure compliance and facilitate continuous improvement. Infrastructure projects are impacted by a range of external factors. Council's annual capital works program as a whole is delivered within budget, with all variations (changes) to individual project time, cost</p>

		<p>community and not specific individuals/organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further contract negotiations to obtain better pricing and reduce unexpected costs - Improve project management to ensure projects are completed on time and within budget 	<p>or scope acknowledged reported and justified.</p> <p>Council to consider feedback in relation to the proposed special rate variation.</p>
<p>Total Submissions Count: 138</p>			