

Communications Report

Rate Rise – January 2023



Phase 3

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Introduction

At its meeting on 8 November 2022 Council unanimously resolved to submit an application to IPART for a special rate variation. This included adopting the revised Integrated Planning and Reporting documents and further committing to finding more solutions to reduce operating costs.

A comprehensive communications and engagement plan was developed at the commencement of the financial sustainability discussion. It included a multi 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 the three phases and the amendments to the proposed SRV percentage, Council sought to continue the conversation with the community until an application to IPART is submitted.

- Phase 3 – Intent, Application, Determination

This report provides a summary of the community conversation including key awareness-generating communication of the engagement for the Phase 3 period up until submission of Council's application to IPART.

Council will publish its special rate variation application and provide details of IPART process on its website.

Communication and Engagement Methodology

Post Council decision (December to February)

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



Phase three objectives


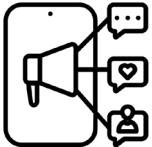

- Create community awareness of next steps for community engagement with IPART
- Inform the community about the rate rise increase option Council intends to include in an application to IPART
- Inform the community of IPART's determination




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 1: Phase 3 Communication and engagement methods

**figures from the 9th November 2022 till the 6 January 2023*

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	REACH*
 Project webpage	Rate rise options dedicated website page www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options Site included updated information including factsheets, IP&R documents, Council Reports and the rates calculator.	262 visits
	Fact Sheet	181 visits and 22 fact sheet downloads
	Rates calculator usage (download requests only)	20 downloads
	Integrated Planning & Reporting Documents (downloads)	22 downloads of Delivery Program 8 downloads of Resourcing Startegy
 Media	Media releases 10 November 2022, Council To Submit Application For Rate Rise	

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	REACH*
	https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/news/2022/council-to-submit-application-for-rate-rise	
	Media related via Media Monitors	
	10 November 2022, Port Stephens Council rate rise: councillors vote to seek 31% over three years from IPART. Port Stephens examiner, online edition https://www.portstephensexaminer.com.au/story/7975720/port-stephens-locks-in-three-year-31-rate-rise-bid/	44,000 distribution (digital and print)
 Radio	5 radio stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 November 2022 ABC Upper Hunter 7:35AM, 8:37AM, 8:40AM, 9:00AM • 9 November 2022, 2HD 10:27AM 	
 Social media	Facebook posts (organic) - 1 10 November 2022 'Council unanimously endorses an application to IPART for a special rate variation.'	1,900 reach; (24 clicks)
 Direct emails	Special Interest Groups 17 November 2022 an email to key community groups was sent to inform them of the Council decision and provided updated information material. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tomaree Ratepayers & Residents Association • South Tomaree Community Association • Fern Bay Fullerton Cove Community Association • Karuah Progress Association • Medowie Progress Association • Business Port Stephens • Voices of Wallalong/Woodville • Shoal Bay Community Association Inc. • Soldiers Point Community Group • Tilligerry Community Association • Karuah LALC • Wahrenonga Aboriginal Corporation • Worimi LALC 	13 groups

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	REACH*
 Bulk e-newsletters	E-newsletters distribution <i>Article included in e-newsletters</i> 15 December 2022 Your Port – December Edition newsletter	3713 recipients
 Phone messaging	On hold messaging Council will continue the “Rate Rise Options” announcement within its hold messaging up until the time of IPART determination. All customers who called Council during December to May will hear the announcement	5973 customer service calls
 Interactions	Interactions include counter enquiries, phone calls, or emails where a ratepayer has requested more information.	2 interactions

Key Findings

Phase 3 focused on awareness-generating communication for the period up until the submission of Council's application to IPART. During this period communication focused on informing the community of Council's intent to submit an application to IPART. The program had a community awareness reach of 55,599 and participation of 288.

Council found minimal engagement post-decision announcement which could be confirmation of the community's acknowledgment of the need for a special rate variation and recognition of the Council's changes to the special rate variation proposal.

Appendix A

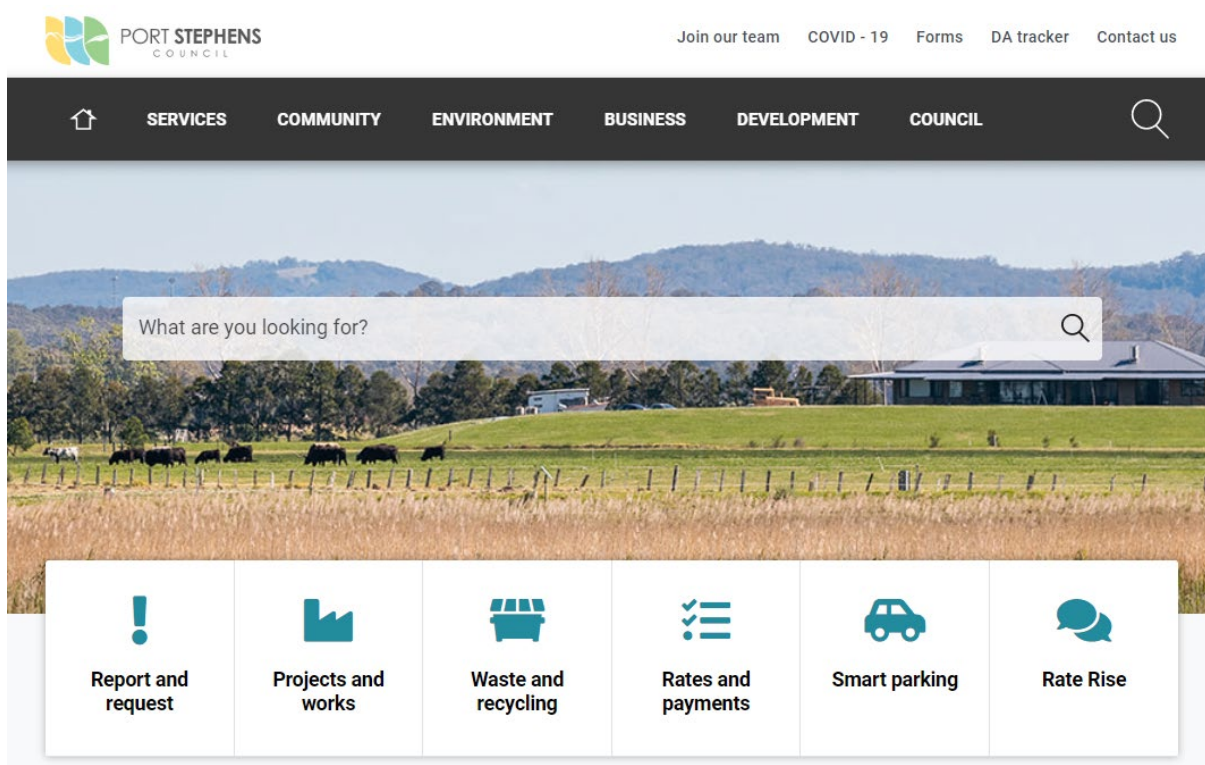
Communication Methods – Phase 3

Project webpage

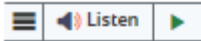
Rate rise dedicated website page

www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options

Rate rise options page promoted to home page via quick access bar and updated information held within the page.



Rate Rise



We've been talking with our community about Council's financial position and ways we can balance our budget since August 2022.

The Council met on 8 November 2022, and after carefully considering the community feedback received, unanimously agreed to submit an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a Special Rate Variation of 9.5% each year for three years.

Council is now working towards preparing the application which will be submitted prior to 3 February 2023.

The community will be able to make further community consultation via IPART which is expected to occur during February to March 2023.



Have your say

Find out how you can have your say on the proposed rate rise application.



Rate rise information

Find out more information here.



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: This calculator only works with current Land Values, please use the Land Value amount as shown on your 2022-2023 Rate Notice

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

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

LEVY DETAILS	VALUE/NO	RATE/CHARGE	LEVY
Residential Rate <small>Land Category</small>	278,000.00 <small>Land Value</small>	0.00296800	\$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
Totals			\$1,977.46

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 

Fact Sheet

<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/trim/other?RecordNumber=22%2F30219> 1

The fact sheet was updated to reflect the proposed SRV impact that Council would submit an application for. It was available on the Rate Rise webpage, as well as internally on the MyPort SharePoint page for staff to print and post to ratepayers.



Rate rise options

Striking a balance between the needs of our community and Council's funded future



Base scenario
4.4% year 1
2.5% onwards



Reduced Independent scenario
rate increase
9.5% for 3 years

At the Council Meeting on the 8 November 2022, Council unanimously agreed to submit an application to IPART the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for a special rate variation (SRV), known as a rate rise. This decision comes after months of conversations with our community investigating a range of non rate income and rate income options aimed at reducing a predicted \$80 million budget shortfall. We've been working closely with our community, considering their feedback while striking a balance and is a lower rate increase than originally proposed with the prioritisation of roads.

What amount is Council applying for?

We'll now submit an extensive application addressing IPART's criteria with the key purpose being financial sustainability. If approved, the Special Rate Variation will commence in the 2023-2024 financial year and will be a permanent increase that will be retained within the rate base.

The application will put forward an increase of

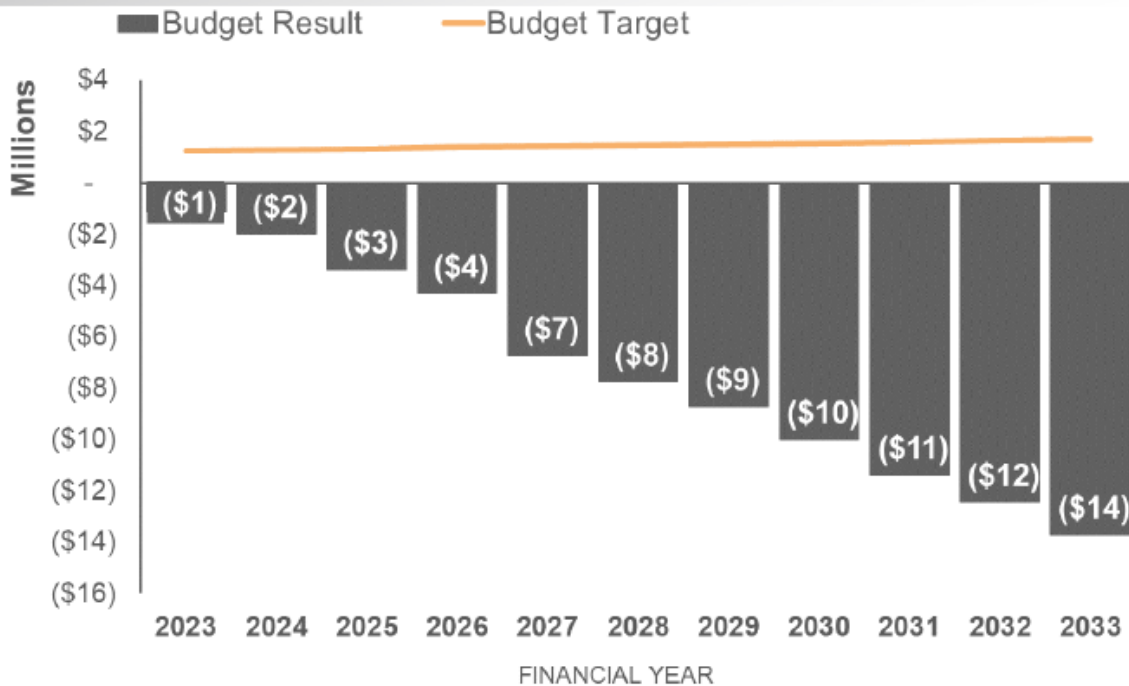
9.5% for three years, with a cumulative impact of 31.29%.

Base Scenario

Rate Capping
4.4% 202-2024
2.5% onwards

4.4% OR \$51
SINGLE YEAR CUMULATIVE COMPARISON

9.69% OR \$112
THREE YEAR CUMULATIVE COMPARISON



Impact Statement

Under the base scenario, we would not generate sufficient funds to continue providing existing service levels or renew its assets when required. We will not be financially sustainable and we will need to further look at reducing or ceasing services. If no corrective action occurred we would see annual operating shortfalls.

If this is the path forward, we and the community would have future lengthy community conversations to understand exactly what services the community is prepared to see reduced or stopped. The community would see an overall reduction in services in particular maintenance levels, for example more potholes as our road network deteriorates further, shorter hours at facilities, longer processing times for customer requests/applications, and fewer community events.

Base - Rate Cap 2.5%

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Council assumes and applies the rate cap of 4.4% in the 2023-2024 year and then 2.5% increase onwards 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 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$1,148	\$1,199	\$1,229	\$1,260	\$112
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Average Farmland Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$1,934	\$2,019	\$2,069	\$2,121	\$187
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Average Business Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average business rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$4,889	\$5,104	\$5,232	\$5,363	\$474
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Average Residential Williamstown Primary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential WP rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$690	\$720	\$738	\$756	\$66
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Average Residential Williamstown Secondary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential WS rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$740	\$773	\$792	\$812	\$72
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Base - Rate Cap 2.5%

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Council assumes and applies the rate cap of 4.4% in the 2023-2024 year and then 2.5% increase onwards to rates under the current rate capping regime.

Average Residential Williamstown Broader Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential WB rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$906	\$946	\$970	\$994	\$88
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Average Farmland Williamstown Primary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland WP rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$897	\$936	\$959	\$983	\$86
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Average Farmland Williamstown Secondary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland WS rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$1,204	\$1,257	\$1,288	\$1,321	\$117
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Average Farmland Williamstown Broader Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland WB rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$1,375	\$1,436	\$1,444	\$1,480	\$105
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.69%

Reduced Independent Scenario

31.29%
CUMULATIVE

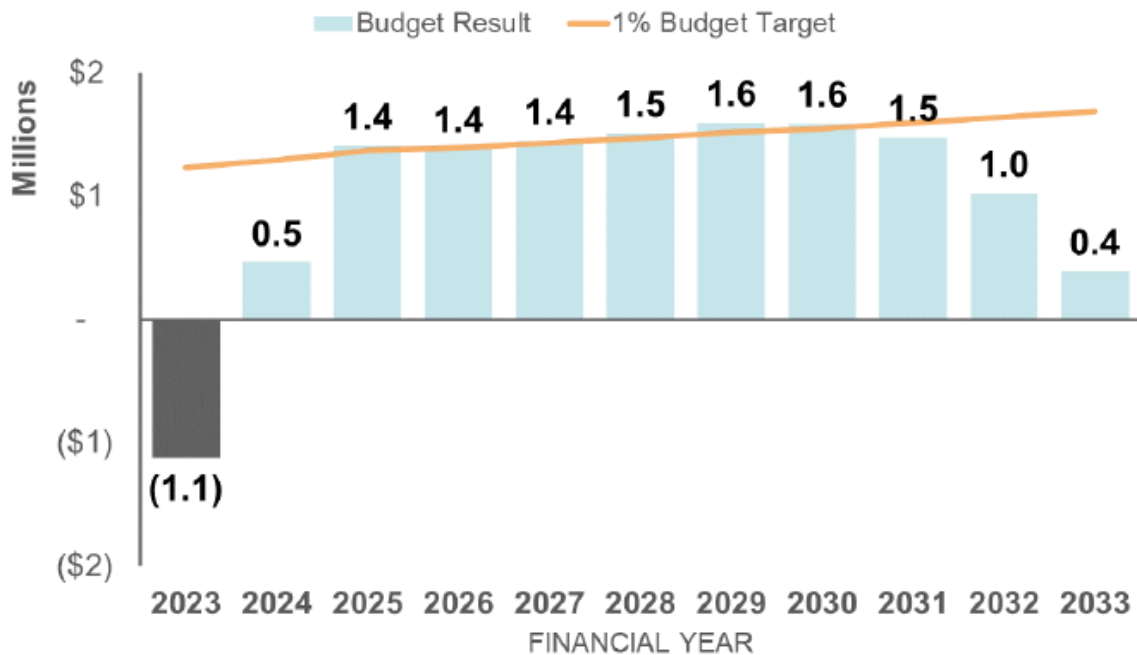
YEAR 1 **9.5%**

YEAR 2 **9.5%**

YEAR 3 **9.5%**

\$359 OR **\$6.9** PER WEEK
AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL

All figures are inclusive of the 4.4% 2023-2024 rate cap and future 2.5% rate caps and are permanent in nature



Impact Statement

Under the reduced independent recommendation scenario, the income generated would primarily be used to cover the increased costs and fund existing services at current levels over the next ten years. We would reach our 1% surplus resilience target for the majority of the next ten years and be financially sustainable.

Income generated above this is proposed to be spread across fixing our roads, looking after our public space and protecting our natural environment, waterways and foreshores, with roads maintenance prioritised.

Reduced Independent scenario



Fixing the budget, delivering planned services

\$99 million over ten 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

\$7.1 million prioritised first - three year program

Targeting roads with a high number of reoccurring potholes



Protecting our natural environment

\$2.3 million over a four year program

Dedicated recurrent works focused on protecting and enhancing our natural environment



Looking after our waterways and foreshores

\$2 million over four year program

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



Looking after our public space

\$1.4 million over three year program

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

Reduced Independent Recommendation

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%

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 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$1,148	\$1,199	\$1,229	\$1,260	\$112
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.8%
Average residential rate with an SV of 9.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$1,148	\$1,257	\$1,376	\$1,507	\$359
Annual increase with SV (%)		9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$109	\$228	\$359	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios		\$58	\$147	\$247	

Average Farmland Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$1,934	\$2,019	\$2,069	\$2,121	\$187
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.7%
Average farmland rate with an SV of 9.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$1,934	\$2,118	\$2,319	\$2,539	\$605
Annual increase with SV (%)		9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$184	\$385	\$605	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios		\$99	\$250	\$418	

Average Business Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average business rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$4,889	\$5,104	\$5,232	\$5,363	\$474
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.7%
Average business rate with an SV of 9.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$4,889	\$5,353	\$5,862	\$6,419	\$1,530
Annual increase with SV (%)		9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$464	\$973	\$1,530	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios		\$249	\$630	\$1,056	

Reduced Independent Recommendation

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%

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 Williamstown Primary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential WP rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$690	\$720	\$738	\$756	\$66
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.6%
Average residential WP rate with an SV of 9.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$690	\$756	\$828	\$907	\$217
Annual increase with SV (%)		9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$66	\$138	\$217	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios		\$36	\$90	\$151	

Average Residential Williamstown Secondary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential WS rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$740	\$773	\$792	\$812	\$72
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.7%
Average residential WS rate with an SV of 9.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$740	\$810	\$887	\$971	\$231
Annual increase with SV (%)		9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$70	\$147	\$231	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios		\$37	\$95	\$159	

Average Residential Williamstown Broader Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average residential WB rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$906	\$946	\$970	\$994	\$88
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.7%
Average residential WB rate with an SV of 9.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$906	\$992	\$1,086	\$1,189	\$283
Annual increase with SV (%)		9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$86	\$180	\$283	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios		\$46	\$116	\$195	

Reduced Independent Recommendation

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%

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 Farmland Williamstown Primary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland WP rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$897	\$936	\$959	\$983	\$86
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.6%
Average farmland WP rate with an SV of 9.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$897	\$982	\$1,075	\$1,177	\$280
Annual increase with SV (%)		9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$85	\$178	\$280	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios		\$46	\$116	\$194	

Average Farmland Williamstown Secondary Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland WS rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$1,204	\$1,257	\$1,288	\$1,320	\$116
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	9.6%
Average farmland WS rate with an SV of 9.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$1,204	\$1,318	\$1,443	\$1,580	\$376
Annual increase with SV (%)		9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$114	\$239	\$376	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios		\$61	\$155	\$260	

Average Farmland Williamstown Broader Rate	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Cumulative Increase
Average farmland WB rate under assumed rate peg of 4.4% year 1 and 2.5% onwards	\$1,375	\$1,436	\$1,472	\$1,509	\$134
Annual increase rate peg (%)		4.4%	2.5%	2.5%	7.7%
Average farmland WB rate with an SV of 9.5% p.a. for 3 years	\$1,375	\$1,506	\$1,649	\$1,806	\$431
Annual increase with SV (%)		9.5%	9.5%	9.5%	31.29%
Cumulative impact of SV above base year levels		\$131	\$274	\$431	
Cumulative difference between SV and rate-peg-only scenarios		\$70	\$177	\$297	



Rates assistance

We understand paying your rates can sometimes be difficult. If you are experiencing financial hardship at any time, we may be able to:

- offer smaller regular payments
- extend the time for payment
- write off accrued interest
- defer payment of large rate assessments for aged pensioners against the property estate.
- provide assistance through our rates assistance program

Call us for a confidential discussion about your situation and how we can help.

Key dates

Milestone	Timeframe
Submit intent to apply	Before 25 November 2022
Submit application	Before 3 February 2023
IPART community consultation	February – March 2023
IPART determination	May 2023
Rate Increase (if approved)	1 July 2023



- portstephens.nsw.gov.au/rate-rise-options
- Visit your local library or Council administration building
- 02 4988 0255
- raterriseoptions@portstephens.nsw.gov.au



Integrated Planning & Reporting Documents

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

<https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/plans-and-reporting/integrated-plans>

The adopted Integrated Planning and Reporting documents revised for a Special Rate Variation were placed on Council's Rate Rise webpage and a re-direction box was placed on the Integrated Plans webpage.

Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents

As part of Council's engagement and application to IPART for a Special Rate Variation Council adopted the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) revised for a Special Rate Variation documents after being on public exhibition for 28 days. These plans outline the need and purpose for a special rate variation and how the funds would be spent if an rate rise was approved.

- [Delivery Program 2022-2026 Operational Plan 2023-2024 – Revised for a Special Rate Variation \(PDF 13.3 MB\)](#)
- [Resourcing Strategy 2023-2033 – Revised for a Special Rate Variation \(PDF 15.2 MB\)](#)

Integrated plans

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Integrated plans



We use the [Integrated Planning and Reporting \(IP&R\) Framework](#) → to plan for the future and report on our progress to our community.



View Integrated Plans

Click here to view the adopted revised suite of Integrated Plans for a special rate variation application being submitted February 2023 and learn more about the rate rise.

[View](#)

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 online Wednesday 12 October

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



The screenshot shows the top portion of a news article on the Port Stephens Examiner website. At the top left, there is a search icon and the text 'LATEST NEWS'. The website logo 'PORT STEPHENS Examiner' is centered at the top, with 'PORT STEPHENS' in small red letters above 'Examiner' in large red letters. To the right of the logo is a 'Share' button with a left-pointing arrow. Below the navigation bar, there is a breadcrumb trail 'Our Future'. The main headline reads 'Port Stephens Council rate rise: councillors vote to seek 31% over three years from IPART'. Below the headline, it says 'By Matt Carr' and 'November 17 2022 - 8:30am'. There are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Email, and Print.



Port Stephens mayor Ryan Palmer. File picture

Port Stephens ratepayers are officially facing a proposed three years of rate hikes beyond the statewide cap after councillors unanimously backed an application for the rise.

Councillors voted on Tuesday night to support a 9.5 per cent rise each year for three years, the result of a lengthy period of consultation on options to cover growing costs for the area.

Port Stephens ratepayers are officially facing a proposed three years of rate hikes beyond the statewide cap after councillors unanimously backed an application for the rise.

Councillors voted on Tuesday night to support a 9.5 per cent rise each year for three years, the result of a lengthy period of consultation on options to cover growing costs for the area. The final figure proposed is a drop from a plan put forward in council documents a month ago that had suggested either a 10.5 per cent rise over three years or a one-off 26 per cent jump.

If the revised plan wins regulatory approval, the suite of rate rises will kick in next financial year.

The rises will also be permanently added to the rate base, meaning they will be incorporated into calculations for any future rises.

The council's general manager, Tim Crosdale, said the decision to proceed with a rate hike was a difficult one.

"Over the year we've been working closely with our council to investigate a range of options aimed at reducing a predicted ten-year \$80 million budget shortfall," Mr Crosdale said.

"This has included everything from reducing services, the sale of property assets, and of course, a rate increase.

"Since July, we've been out talking to our community on the options around a rate rise.

While we know a rate rise discussion is very difficult, we've had some really objective and valuable feedback from our community.

"We know that half of those who engaged with council on the rate rise were supportive of a rate increase over reduced services. We also know that all our residents want to see council keep within its means. It's also abundantly clear that roads are an important issue for our community right now."

The three-year 31.27 per cent rise includes the Independent Regulatory and Pricing Tribunal (IPART) limit of 4.4 per cent. IPART will decide whether the council's proposal proceeds to residents' rate notices.

"Our community will have another chance to share their thoughts on our application to IPART once council submits its application in early 2023," Mr Crosdale said.

Mayor Ryan Palmer said he understood that not everyone would welcome the news.

"With increasing living costs, we know that many within our community will find it tough to take on more expenses. As part of our decision to apply for a rate increase, we're also committing to include additional affordability measures to help those most vulnerable" he said.

Facebook posts (organic)

10 November 2022



Port Stephens Council
November 10 at 11:49 AM · 🌐

At this week's Council meeting, Council unanimously resolved to submit an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a special rate variation.

After listening to the community's feedback, Council is applying for a lower rate increase than originally proposed, and is committed to finding more solutions to reduce operating costs.

We will apply for a Special Rate Variation of 9.5% each year, for three consecutive years. The cumulative increase ... See more

Council meeting decision

Council unanimously endorses an application to IPART for a special rate variation

Post insights

At this week's Council meeting, Council unanimously resolved to submit an application to the Independent...
Published by Meltwater Engage · 10 November 2022 · 🌐

Some insights are only available when the total is at least 100.

Post impressions	Post reach	Post engagement
2,013	1,900	417

Interactions

Interaction	Count
Reactions	5
Comments	33
Link clicks	24
Shares	1
Other clicks	344

Other

- Hide post
- Hide all posts

See Page insights Boost post

Special Interest Groups

Direct notification of Council's decision was made to the key community groups who engaged throughout the process.

From: rateriseoptions
Sent: Thursday, 17 November 2022 10:51 AM
Subject: Council to submit an application for a Special Rate Variation - Rate Rise Options

Hi

As you may be aware, at last week's Council meeting Council unanimously resolved to submit an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a special rate variation.

After listening to the community's feedback, Council is applying for a lower rate increase than originally proposed, and is committed to finding more solutions to reduce operating costs.

Council will now apply for a Special Rate Variation of 9.5% each year, for three consecutive years. The cumulative increase of 31.29% includes the recently announced rate cap of 4.4% for 2023-2024 as well as future rate caps set by IPART in years 2 and 3.

Please note Council's application for a rate rise doesn't automatically impose a rate increase – our application is subject to IPART's assessment and determination. The community will be able to view our application and engage with IPART in their community consultation period in early 2023, with a determination announced May 2023 and if successful the rate increase will commence 1 July 2023.

Use our updated online rates calculator using your current land value to find out how your rates will be impacted if our application is approved by IPART. Information on our rate rise webpage has been updated to reflect the lower rate increase amount, have a look by visiting <https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options>

Council considered all feedback gained through the extensive engagement process. We value the time and effort taken by community members in participating in the process and providing their feedback and submissions. Council's critical issue for the future is to safeguard Council's long-term financial sustainability and to ensure generations to come are well placed to both benefit and enjoy living a great lifestyle in a treasured environment.

Kindest Regards

Direct email/E-newsletters

Notification of Council's decision was included in E-Newsletter sent to subscribers of 'Your Port'.



15 December 2022

In this edition:

- [Christmas shutdown](#)
- [Communications and Engagement Strategy](#)
- [Twilight Christmas storytime and craft](#)
- [It's On! This Season](#)
- [It's On! McGrath Port Stephens New Year's Eve](#)
- [Produce Market](#)
- [Rate Rise Options](#)
- [Report and request](#)



Rate Rise Options

At the Council Meeting on 8 November 2022 it was resolved that Council would submit an application to Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to apply for a special rate variation.

[Learn more](#)

On-hold Messaging

Council continued the “Rate Rise Options” announcement within its hold messaging until the determination announcement of IPART.



TELEMALL SCRIPT & PRODUCTION NOTES

CLIENT DETAILS		PRODUCTION NOTES		<input type="text"/>
Name	Port Stephens Council – Customer Contact Centre	Prod #	Various	
<input type="text"/>				
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).



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL