



Proposed Application for Special Rate Variation 2021/22

**Community Engagement Strategy and
Outcomes Report**

January 2021

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1 Executive Summary

This Community Engagement Strategy and Outcomes Report details the *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy delivered by Liverpool Plains Shire Council (“Council”) between December 2020 and January 2021, including the engagement activities undertaken during this period and the outcomes of the engagement process.

2 Objective

At its Ordinary Meeting held 27 November 2021, Council confirmed its intent to apply under section 508A of the *Local Government Act 1993* (“the Act”) for a Special Rate Variation (“SRV”) of 8 per cent (including the rate peg) in 2021/22, 8 per cent in 2022/23 (including the rate peg) and 8 per cent in 2023/24 (including the rate peg), to be a permanent increase retained within the rate base.

Council resolved to notify the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (“IPART”) of its intention to make application for an SRV (“the SRV Application”) and requested the General Manager undertake community consultation to ensure community awareness of the need for, and extent of, a rate rise.

As such, the objective of the *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy was two-fold:

1. Inform the community of the **need for** the proposed rate rise; and
2. Inform the community of the **extent of** the proposed rate rise.

3 Background

Liverpool Plains Shire Council has been open with the community about the challenges we face in relation to our long-term financial sustainability and infrastructure maintenance and renewal backlog. These challenges have been highlighted in our Integrated Planning and Reporting (“IP&R”) framework and discussed with the community in a range of community consultation activities.

3.1 *Fit for the Future*

In 2013, the Independent Local Government Review Panel was established with the aim of ensuring an effective framework for the provision of services and infrastructure to local communities in NSW.

The Panel acknowledged that local government works the closest with communities and highlighted how this can be an important factor in achieving local, state and national goals and objectives. The Panel stated that a move to larger organisations, with greater ability to generate increased resources, work at scale and implement more effective ways of operating, would see communities benefit from better infrastructure and services and a stronger link between local and other tiers of government.

In response, the NSW Government instigated the *Fit for the Future* reforms. The purpose of these reforms was to strengthen and modernise the Local Government sector, by creating strategic and “fit for the future” councils - councils that are financially sustainable and efficient, with the capacity to effectively manage infrastructure and deliver services, as well as the scale, resources and capacity to govern effectively.

At this time, Liverpool Plains Shire Council explored a merger with the neighbouring Gunnedah Shire Council. We undertook a community engagement strategy to determine community preferences with respect to the two options available, being:

- **Option 1:** Remain an independent, standalone council as a member of the Namoi Joint Organisation; or
- **Option 2:** Merge with the neighbouring Gunnedah Shire Council.

As part of this process, we commissioned a survey, which had 1,102 responses and indicated:

- **87.3 per cent** of respondents preferred Option 1, being for Liverpool Plains Shire Council to remain a standalone council;
- **8.3 per cent** of respondents indicated they preferred Option 2, being for Liverpool Plains Shire Council to merge with Gunnedah Shire Council; and
- **4.4 per cent** of respondents did not indicate a preference for either Option 1 or Option 2.

The survey indicated that in the event Council exhausted all efficiency measures and there is a demonstrated need to increase revenue, 35.8 per cent of respondents prefer a rate rise, in comparison to 33.5 per cent who prefer a reduction in services. Just over 30 per cent of respondents did not indicate a preference for either option.

After consulting with our community, we opted to remain a stand-alone, independent council. Instead of merging with Gunnedah Shire Council, we committed to pursuing efficiency improvements and seeking an SRV from 2017-18 of 19.1 per cent cumulative over three years.

Over the past four years, we have worked hard to achieve efficiencies and productivity improvements, so that we can continue managing infrastructure and delivering services, in line with community expectations. However, we did not apply for an SRV of 19.1 per cent from 2017-18 as originally planned.

3.2 Our financial position

Since the *Fit for the Future* reforms, Council has continued to produce significant operating deficits, while maintaining - and in some cases, expanding and improving - the services we provide.

In the 2019/20 financial year, Council had an operating loss of \$3.89 million, a deterioration from the \$1.31 million loss in 2018. With capital grants removed, the underlying operating deficit for 2019/20 was \$7.13 million (\$8.30 million in 2019/20).

Over the past five years, Council has only been able to renew 56 per cent - or just over half – of assets as they fall due. A large proportion of additional funding is required to address the maintenance of our existing public infrastructure, such as roads, drainage and bridges, that we have not had sufficient cash to renew.

As a result of the projected funding shortfall, Council has explored a number of options to becoming financial sustainable in the long-term,

Specifically, Council has identified in its IP&R framework that an SRV would be an appropriate solution to improve the organisation's financial sustainability and maintain our existing infrastructure and community services.

In addition to developing our SRV Application, we are reviewing our organisation structure and service levels to identify and implement further efficiency improvements.

4 Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

All councils in NSW are required to undertake their strategic planning and reporting activities in accordance with the IP&R framework set out in the Act and *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*.

The IP&R framework requires councils to draw together their various strategies and plans to understand how they interact and achieve maximum leverage from their efforts by planning holistically for the future.

The IP&R framework is illustrated in *Image 1*, below:

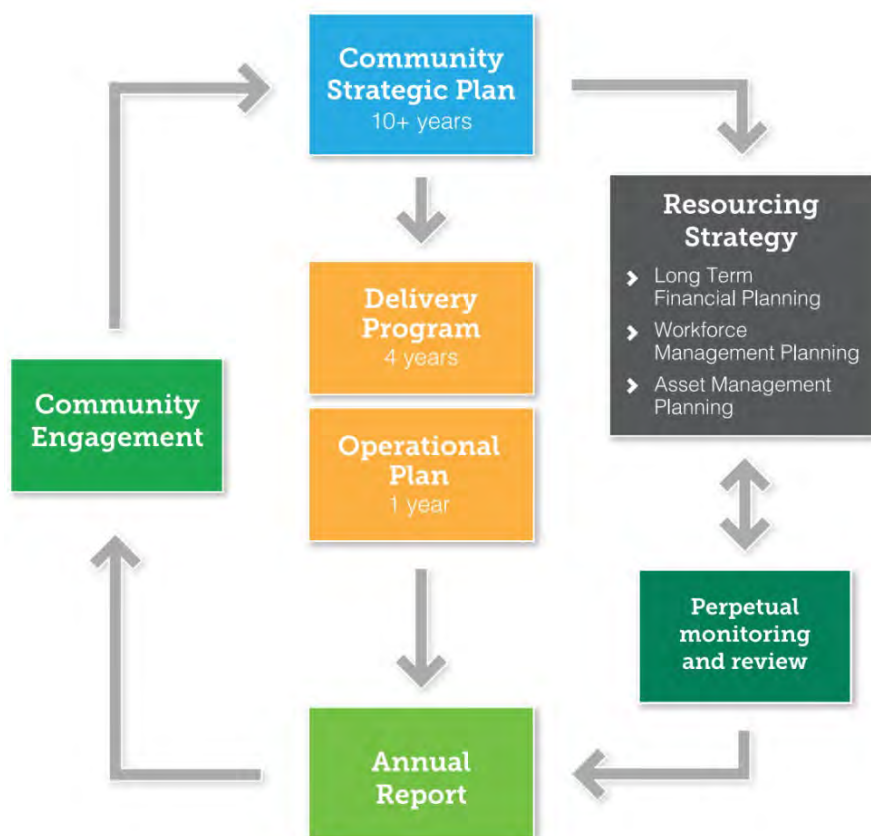


Image 1: IP&R Framework

Council adopted its current Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program in 2017. The Community Strategic Plan informs the Delivery Program, which identifies the principal activities that we will undertake over the 2017-2021 period to deliver on the aspirations of the Liverpool Plains community.

Our decision to develop the proposed SRV Application has been guided and informed by our IP&R framework; in particular, by our Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, LTFP and Asset Management Plans.

5 Community Profile

Located in the New England North West region of NSW, the Liverpool Plains local government area covers an area of 5,086 square kilometres, extending from the Great Diving Range in the east to the highly fertile and productive Liverpool Plains in the east.

The Liverpool Plains Shire includes the towns of Quirindi and Werris Creek as well as several villages and hamlets, such as Blackville, Caroon, Currabubula, Pine Ridge, Premer, Spring Ridge, Wallabadah and Willow Tree.

As at the 2016 Census, the Liverpool Plains Shire is home to a permanent population of 7,687 residents. Of the people living in the Liverpool Plains Shire, over 84 per cent are Australian-born and over 90 per cent of residents identify English as their first language.

The 2019 NSW Population Projections indicate that the Liverpool Plains Shire's population is declining, with the NSW Government forecasting the Shire's population will decrease to 6,700 residents by 2041. This presents significant challenges in terms of generating revenue to cover the maintenance costs of our existing infrastructure, let alone fund new infrastructure.

Most people living in the Liverpool Plains either fully own their own home (41.3 per cent) or are paying a mortgage (25.1 per cent), meaning the outcome of Council's SRV Application will affect a significant portion of our community.

Approximately 3,256 residents are in the workforce, with 57.5 per cent of those employed full-time, 2.89 per cent employed part-time, and 7.4 per cent unemployed. Sixty-five (65) per cent of all employed people in the Liverpool Plains travel to work by car, either as a driver or passenger; highlighting that a vast proportion of our community rely heavily on our roads and related infrastructure.

With its fertile alluvial soils and reliable access to ground water, as well as its proximity to the Gunnedah Basin coal field; the Liverpool Plains Shire's economy is underpinned by the agriculture and mining sectors, both of which also rely heavily on our road network and transport infrastructure. Opportunities to facilitate growth in both sectors are reliant on our roads and transport infrastructure remaining well-maintained into the future.

6 Community Engagement Strategy

6.1 Engagement Principles

Engaging with the community in an open and transparent manner in order to enable the community to inform the decision-making process

Council has formalised its dedication to ongoing community engagement and recognises the importance of community participation in decision making, through its adopted Community Engagement Policy and Framework. This policy and framework underpin all community engagement activities carried out by Council and has formed the basis of the *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy.

We are also committed to the social justice principles of access, equity, participation and rights and have used these as guiding principles for the development of the *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy. We purposefully provided a range of engagement opportunities to allow equitable access to information and participation in the decision-making process.

We were guided by the International Association of Public Participation (“IAP2”) spectrum of public participation in designing the *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy. The principles utilised in the community engagement strategy included:

- **Inform:** to provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding Council’s long-term financial sustainability and the need for the SRV Application.
- **Consult:** to obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions regarding Council’s long-term financial sustainability and the need for the SRV Application.

In addition to social justice principles and IAP2 participation principles, we also considered IPART’s *Community Awareness and Engagement Guidelines* when developing our community engagement strategy. These guidelines identify the need to ensure that the community is aware of the need for and extent of a rate rise; and that an appropriate variety of engagement methods are used to ensure ample opportunities for community awareness and input to occur.

6.2 Engagement Methodology

The *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy employed a range of communication and consultation methods to ensure that our target audiences were aware of the proposed SRV Application and the various engagement opportunities to provide feedback and input prior to Council determining to submit the SRV Application to IPART for assessment and determination.

The Liverpool Plains Shire is geographically large, and as a result, Council acknowledges that providing opportunities for all community members to participate in the *Proudly Independent* community engagement was difficult. Additionally, we appreciate that delivering – and participating in – engagement activities over the Christmas-New Year period is challenging. With this in mind, we purposefully utilised a range of communication and consultation methods to ensure the community had every possible opportunity to participate in the process.

The communication and consultation methods utilised included:

- Council reports;

- Direct correspondence;
- Flyers;
- Media releases;
- Newspaper advertisements;
- Community information sessions;
- Website content;
- Social media posts; and
- Telephone and online survey.

Each of these communication and consultation methods is detailed below.

6.3.1 Council Reports

Six reports were submitted to Council between March and December 2020 informing Councillors on Council’s long-term financial sustainability and the need to apply to IPART for an SRV, as well as provide detail on Council’s proposed SRV Application and community engagement strategy.

The reports are detailed in *Table 1*, below.

Reporting to Council not only informed Councillors further about the need for an SRV and the community engagement strategy, but also enabled another avenue for community members to learn more about the challenges facing Council’s long-term financial sustainability and its proposed SRV Application, and address Council regarding these matters at a Public Forum. No applications were received from community members wishing to address Council regarding any of the reports detailed in *Table 1*, below.

Table 1: Council reports		
Meeting Date	Report Details	Content
25 March 2020 Ordinary Meeting	Special Rate Variation 2021/22	This report informed Council of the process of applying for an SRV in 2021/22 and recommended that Council agree in principle to consider making an SRV Application in the 2021/22 year. Council subsequently resolved to agree in principle to consider making application for an SRV in the 2021/22 year [res. 2020/41].
08 May 2020 Extraordinary Meeting	Draft combined Delivery Program 2017-2021 and Operational Plan 2020-2021	This report recommended that Council place the draft combined Delivery Program 2017-2021 and Operational Plan 2020-2021 (“the draft combined Delivery Program and Operational Plan”) on public exhibition, in accordance with the IP&R requirements contained in the <i>Local Government Act</i> . The draft combined Delivery Program and Operational Plan included commentary on Council’s intention to develop a proposed

		<p>SRV Application in the 2020/21 year (pp. 10-11), as well as an Operational Plan action (p. 30) committing Council to developing an SRV Application proposal and undertaking community consultation on that proposal.</p> <p>Council subsequently resolved to place the draft Delivery Program and Operational Plan on public exhibition and receive a further report following the exhibition period [res. 2020/82].</p>
17 June 2020 Extraordinary Meeting	Adoption of the combined Delivery Program 2017-2021 and Operational Plan 2020-2021	<p>This report recommended that Council adopt the draft combined Delivery Program and Operational Plan, as exhibited.</p> <p>The report noted that four (4) public submissions were received during the exhibition period. None of the submissions commented on the proposed SRV Application.</p> <p>Council subsequently resolved to adopt the draft combined Delivery Program and Operational Plan as exhibited [res. 2020/136].</p>
22 July 2020 Ordinary Meeting	Adoption of the Long-Term Financial Plan 2020-2030	<p>This report recommended that Council adopt the draft LTFP.</p> <p>The report noted that the draft LTFP contained three scenarios (consistent with the IP&R Guidelines), including two alternative scenarios which modelled the implementation of an SRV.</p> <p>Council subsequently resolved to adopt the draft LTFP [res. 2020/136].</p>
27 November 2020 Ordinary Meeting	IPART Notification of Special Rate Variation	<p>This report recommended that Council formally resolve to notify IPART of its intention to apply for an SRV under section 508A of the Act and authorise the General Manager to commence a community consultation program to inform the community of the proposed SRV Application and seek feedback on that proposal.</p> <p>The report detailed the consultation requirements associated with the SRV Application process and provided an overview of the various activities that were proposed to be delivered via the consultation program. The report confirmed that the proposed SRV</p>

		<p>Application would be for 8% in 2021/22, 8% in 2022/23 and 8% in 2023/24, to be a permanent increase retained within the rate base.</p> <p>Council subsequently resolved to notify IPART of its intention to apply for an SRV and authorise the General Manager undertake community consultation to ensure community awareness of the need for, and extent of, the proposed rate rise [res. 2020/249].</p>
16 December 2020 Ordinary Meeting	Public Exhibition of draft Long-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plans	<p>This report recommended that Council place the revised draft LTFP and three Asset Management Plans (Transportation; Buildings and Recreation; Aerodrome) on public exhibition.</p> <p>The report noted that the LTFP, and the three scenarios contained within it, had been further revised since July 2020, to better reflect Council’s financial position and to align with the revised draft Asset Management Plans, which were appended to the report. The report confirmed that Alternative Scenario 1 (being the introduction of an SRV of 8% in 2021/22, 8% in 2022/23 and 8% in 2023/24) was the preferred scenario for the purposes of Council’s SRV Application.</p> <p>Council subsequently resolved to place the draft LTFP and Asset Management Plans on public exhibition and receive a further report following the exhibition period [res. 2020/264].</p>

6.3.2 Direct correspondence

Following the Ordinary Meeting held 16 December 2020, Council distributed a mail-out, in the form of a letter from the Mayor and General Manager, to all ratepayers in the Liverpool Plains Shire. A flyer was also enclosed (see [5.3.3 Flyers](#), below).

Printed correspondence was sent to those ratepayers who receive their rates and water charge notices via Australia Post, while electronic correspondence was sent to those ratepayers who receive their rates and water charge notices via email.

While the printed correspondence was distributed via Australia Post soon after the December Ordinary Meeting, we acknowledge that due to postal service delays over the busy Christmas period, many ratepayers did not receive their correspondence until the New Year.

A copy of the mail-out is appended at *Annexure A*.

6.3.3 Flyers

Council developed a suite of three (3) DL flyers to inform the community of the proposed SRV Application, including the need of the proposed SRV and the extent of the rate rise. Each of the three flyers was used to communicate a different key message:

1. **General Flyer (Green):** This flyer informed the community of Council's proposed SRV Application; outlined the need for the proposed SRV and what the funds would be used on; provided an overview of how the proposed SRV would impact rates; and included the dates, times and locations of the community information sessions. This flyer was issued to all ratepayers alongside a letter from the Mayor and General Manager (see [5.3.3 Direct correspondence](#), above).
2. **Rates Flyer (Blue):** This flyer informed the community as to how the proposed SRV would impact on rates. The flyer included tables illustrating the impact of implementing the SRV Application on the average rates by rate category.
3. **Services Flyer (Red):** This flyer informed the community as to the sources of Council's revenue; the challenges Council is facing in terms of providing its current services with limited revenue; and how the proposed SRV will be spent, if implemented.

All flyers were made available from Council's dedicated online consultation platform, *OurSay Liverpool Plains*, available at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains.

The collated flyers are appended at *Annexure B*.

6.3.4 Media releases

Four (4) media releases were distributed throughout the community engagement period, being:

- "Council to undertake consultation on proposed SRV" (09 December 2020); and
- "Feedback invited on strategic documents, SRV modelling" (16 December 2020).
- "SRV information sessions to kick off in New Year" (22 December 2020)
- "SRV phone survey to get underway from January 7" (03 January 2021)

All media releases were published to Council's website at www.lpsc.nsw.gov.au and distributed to our media distribution list, including the following media organisations:

- *Quirindi Advocate*;
- *Northern Daily Leader*;
- ABC Radio New England/North West;
- ABC Radio Upper Hunter;
- Radio 2TM Tamworth;
- Radio 9.29FM Tamworth;
- Community Radio 2YOUFM - 88.9FM Tamworth/ 96.3FM Liverpool Plains;
- Prime 7 TV;
- NBN TV;
- Channel 10 New England/North West.

The collated media releases are appended at *Annexure C*.

6.3.5 Newspaper advertisements

Two full-page advertisements were published in the *Quirindi Advocate* during the community engagement period.

The first advertisement, published 23 December 2020, included the dates, times and venues of the community information sessions (see [5.3.6 Community information sessions](#), below), whereas the second advertisement, published 13 January 2021, focused on the impact of the SRV Application, if implemented, on ratepayers.

The collated newspaper advertisements are appended at *Annexure D*.

6.3.6 Community information sessions

The Liverpool Plains Shire local government area is geographically large, encompassing around 5,086 square kilometres and taking in several villages and hamlets, such as Blackville, Caroon, Currabubula, Pine Ridge, Premer, Spring Ridge, Wallabadah and Willow Tree, in addition to the main townships of Quirindi and Werris Creek.

With this in mind, we facilitated seven (7) community information sessions across the local government area early in the New Year, between 04 January and 07 January 2021. We held a combination of both morning meetings and evening meetings to provide a variety of times for community members to attend.

The sessions provided community members to receive a presentation detailing the proposed SRV Application and ask questions regarding the proposal. A copy of the presentation is appended at *Annexure E*, with a summary of questions asked at each session appended at *Annexure F*.

These sessions were attended by approximately 308 residents. This is an estimated figure, based on the completed attendance sign-in registers completed at each session.

Table 2, below, details the dates, venues, times and estimated attendance at each of the seven (7) community information sessions.

Table 2 – Community information session attendance			
Date	Time	Venue	Attendance
04 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Wallabadah Village Hall Martyn Street, Wallabadah	34
04 January 2021	5.00pm – 6.30pm	Longfield Pavilion Henry Street, Quirindi	88
05 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Currabubula War Memorial Hall Davis Street, Currabubula	7
05 January 2021	5.00pm – 6.30pm	Werris Creek Bowling/Tennis Club Henry Street, Werris Creek	87
06 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Spring Ridge Hall Darby Road, Spring Ridge	21
06 January 2021	5.00pm – 6.30pm	Premer Hotel Eilerslie Street, Premer	21
07 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Willow Tree Hall New England Highway, Willow Tree	50
TOTAL (Estimated)			308

6.3.7 Website content

Utilising the *OurSay* platform, Council developed a dedicated online consultation website, *OurSay Liverpool Plains*, to support the delivery of the *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy.

The website includes background information on Council’s SRV Application, including key documents (such as the revised LTFP and Asset Management Plans) and details on engagement opportunities. The website also includes a list of Frequently Asked Questions relating to the SRV Application.

The website, which is available at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains, was referenced on all other communication and consultation materials and promoted as the “one-stop-shop” for information relating to the proposed SRV Application.





6.3.8 Social media posts




Council’s Facebook page was used extensively to promote the proposed SRV Application as well as the community engagement activities delivered between December 2020 and January 2021.




Thirteen (13) posts were published to our Facebook page during the community engagement strategy period, and are summarised in *Table 3*, below.

Table X: Social Media Engagement			
Date	Content	Reach	Engagements
17 December 2020	 <p>Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] on 17 December 2020 · 🌐</p> <p>To remain proudly independent and deliver sustainable services and infrastructure into the future, we're proposing to introduce an SRV in 2021/22 – and over the coming weeks, we're seeking your feedback!</p> <p>To learn more about the proposed SRV and how you can have your say, check out our dedicated consultation platform. #OurSayLiverpoolPlains: https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains</p>	557	54

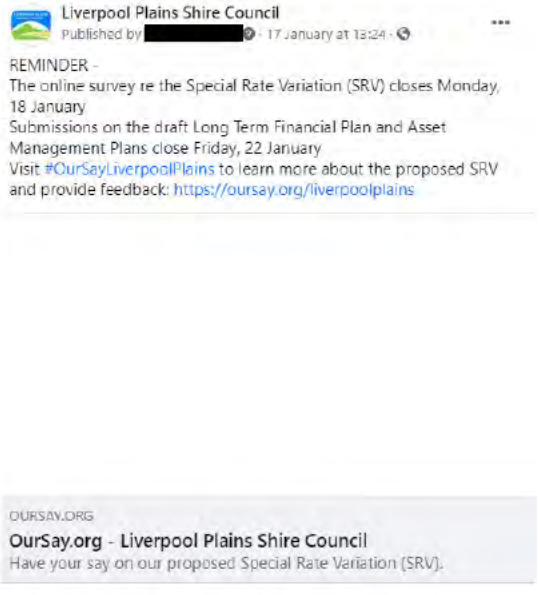
<p>19 December 2020</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] · 19 December 2020 · [share icon]</p> <p>Interested in learning more about the proposed SRV? In early January, we'll be holding community information sessions at Currabubula, Premer, Quirindi, Spring Ridge, Wallabadah, Willow Tree and Werris Creek!</p> <p>Until then, you can visit our online consultation platform, #OurSayLiverpoolPlains, to read about the proposed SRV and how it impacts you: https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains</p> 	<p>1,867</p>	<p>239</p>
<p>21 December 2020</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] · 21 December 2020 · [share icon]</p> <p>All members of our community now have the change to have their say on Council's proposed Special Rate Variation application! Don't miss out, head over to #OurSayLiverpoolPlains and share your thoughts today!</p> <p>https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains</p> 	<p>1,450</p>	<p>229</p>

<p>23 December 2020</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] · 23 December 2020 · [share icon] ...</p> <p>The proposed SRV will give us additional funds to continue providing services to our community and maintain our local infrastructure – including roads, footpaths, public buildings and swimming pools. To learn more about the proposed SRV and how you can have your say, check out our new consultation platform, #OurSayLiverpoolPlains: https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains</p> 	<p>658</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>27 December 2020</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] · 27 December 2020 · [share icon] ...</p> <p>The proposed SRV will generate the revenue we need to continue maintaining our public infrastructure and assets – such as our roads, drainage, bridges, public buildings and swimming pools – in the years ahead. To learn more about the SRV and have your say, visit #OurSayLiverpoolPlains at: https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains</p> 	<p>2,501</p>	<p>484</p>

<p>29 December 2020</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] on 29 December 2020</p> <p>Please note (04/01) The venue for the Werris Creek meeting has been changed to the Werris Creek Bowling and Tennis Club on Henry Street, still commencing at 5pm.</p> <p>Liverpool Plains Shire Council is currently consulting on a proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV). This is the timetable for the community information sessions to be held across the Shire for residential and business ratepayers. These sessions will be COVID Safe with social distancing measures in place, and you are required to register to attend these sessions. To confirm your attendance at one of the above community information sessions, please email your name, phone number and the meeting you wish to attend to lpssc@lpssc.nsw.gov.au. For further information and a list of frequently asked questions or if you wish to comment/make a submission on this proposal please go to https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains.</p> <p>Details of the seven community information sessions are as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="488 600 1024 857"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Time</th> <th>Venue</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Monday, 04 January 2021</td> <td>10.00am – 11.30am</td> <td>Wallabadah Village Hall Martyn Street Wallabadah</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.00pm – 6.30pm</td> <td>Longfield Pavilion Henry Street, Quirindi</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Tuesday, 05 January 2021</td> <td>10.00am – 11.30am</td> <td>Currabubula War Memorial Hall Davis Street, Currabubula</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.00pm – 6.30pm</td> <td>Railway Institute Hall Anzac Parade, Werris Creek</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Wednesday, 06 January 2021</td> <td>10.00am – 11.30am</td> <td>Spring Ridge Hall Darby Road, Spring Ridge</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.00pm – 6.30pm</td> <td>CWA Rooms Ellerslie Street, Premer</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Thursday, 07 January 2021</td> <td>10.00am – 11.30am</td> <td>Willow Tree Hall New England Highway, Willow Tree</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Date	Time	Venue	Monday, 04 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Wallabadah Village Hall Martyn Street Wallabadah	5.00pm – 6.30pm	Longfield Pavilion Henry Street, Quirindi	Tuesday, 05 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Currabubula War Memorial Hall Davis Street, Currabubula	5.00pm – 6.30pm	Railway Institute Hall Anzac Parade, Werris Creek	Wednesday, 06 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Spring Ridge Hall Darby Road, Spring Ridge	5.00pm – 6.30pm	CWA Rooms Ellerslie Street, Premer	Thursday, 07 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Willow Tree Hall New England Highway, Willow Tree	<p>6,185</p>	<p>868</p>
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	<p>30 December 2020</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] on 30 December 2020 at 18:30</p> <p>Want to know what the proposed SRV is all about? Come along to one of our community information sessions being held next week – we've got sessions planned for Currabubula, Premer, Quirindi, Spring Ridge, Wallabadah, Willow Tree and Werris Creek!</p> <p>https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains</p> 	<p>588</p>	<p>14</p>																				

<p>03 January 2021</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] · 3 January at 07:30 · 🌐</p> <p>Keen to learn more about the proposed SRV and how it will impact you? Seven community information sessions will be held across the Liverpool Plains Shire this week – full details available from #OurSayLiverpoolPlains at: https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains</p> 	<p>468</p>	<p>8</p>
<p>04 January 2021</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] · 4 January at 14:37 · 🌐</p> <p>Due to the high number of registrations received from members of the community wishing to attend the Werris Creek Special Rate Variation (SRV) community information session on Tuesday, 5 January, the venue has been changed.</p> <p>The community information session will now be held at the Werris Creek Bowling and Tennis Club on Henry Street. The time remains unchanged, and will commence at 5.00pm.</p> <p>Community information sessions will be COVID Safe, with social distancing measures in place. Due to attendance restrictions, we ask that all members of the community wishing to attend register their attendance by contacting our Customer Service Centre on (02) 6746 1755 or by email at lpssc@lpssc.nsw.gov.au.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Werris Creek Special Rate Variation (SRV) Community Consultation Meeting Tuesday 5 January 5 - 6.30pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The meeting venue has been changed to the WC Bowling and Tennis Club Henry Street</p>	<p>3,732</p>	<p>706</p>

<p>06 January 2021</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council is with [redacted] ... Published by [redacted] on 6 January at 19:15</p> <p>Around 300 homes across the Liverpool Plains Shire can expect a call over the coming week, with a telephone survey soon to be underway to seek community feedback on the proposed SRV!</p> <p>Respondents will be randomly selected, and these calls may be outside of business hours and on weekends. Council will only receive the overall results from the research agency, so rest assured that any personal details and individual responses will remain confidential.</p> <p>If you don't receive a call, but still want to have your say on the proposed SRV, head over to #OurSayLiverpoolPlains and complete the online survey: https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains</p> 	<p>3,117</p>	<p>395</p>
<p>10 January 2021</p>	<p> Liverpool Plains Shire Council Published by [redacted] on 10 January at 18:30</p> <p>Council delivers a wide range of services across the Liverpool Plains Shire, including roads, footpaths, waste collections, libraries, gym and swimming pools – to name a few!</p> <p>To maintain our current range of services, we're proposing to introduce an SRV in 2021/22.</p> <p>Visit #OurSayLiverpoolPlains to learn more about the proposed SRV and have your say: https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains</p> 	<p>2,291</p>	<p>793</p>

<p>15 January 2021</p>		<p>837</p>	<p>34</p>
<p>17 January 2021</p>		<p>762</p>	<p>90</p>

6.3.9 Telephone and online survey

Council engaged an independent market research firm, Micromex Market Research & Consulting (“Micromex”), to undertake a telephone survey to measure levels of support for the proposed SRV, as well as awareness levels and information received about the proposed SRV.

Micromex undertook the telephone survey from 06 to 12 January 2021.

A total of 307 community members were interviewed and this provided a maximum sampling error of plus (+) or minus (-) at 5.6 per cent. As a result, the research findings can be interpreted as being a largely representative measure of the community’s attitudes.

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with Interviewer Quality Control Australia (“IQCA”) standards and the Market Research Society’s Code of Professional Behaviour.

A sample profile of the respondents is illustrated in *Image 2*, below. The selected survey sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2016 ABS community profile of the Liverpool Plains Shire local government area.

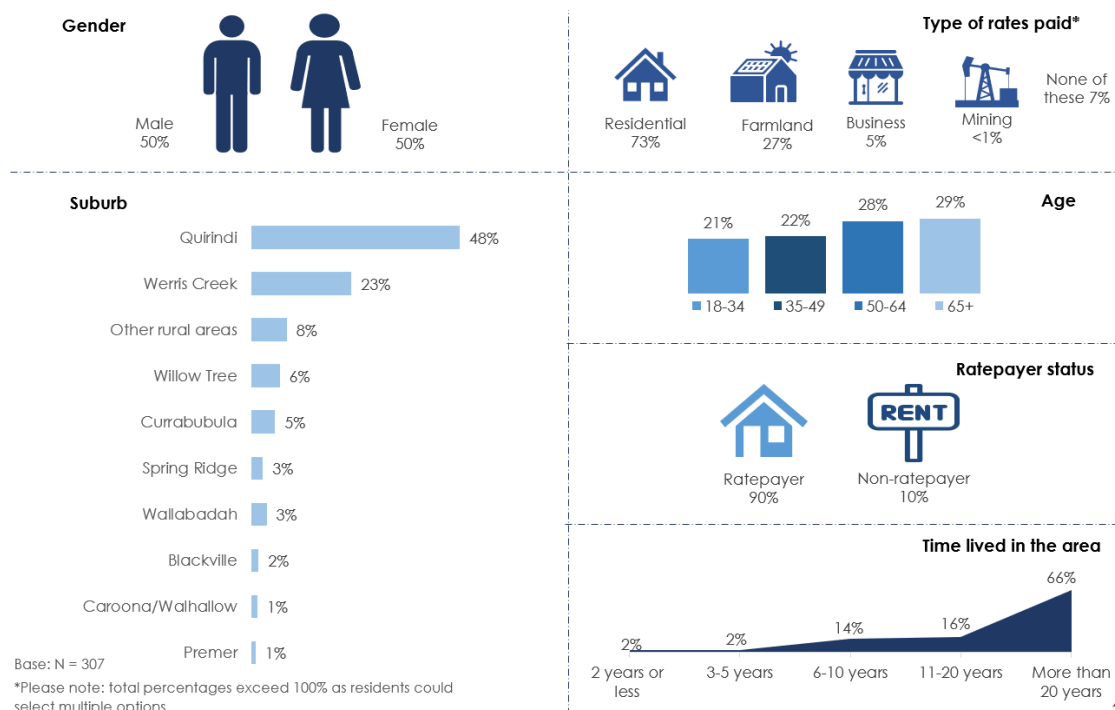


Image 2: Telephone Survey Sample Profile

Respondents were asked a range of questions relating to Council’s performance and satisfaction with Council services; and were also read a concept statement relating to two (2) options, being:

- Option 1 - Rate Peg:** Under this option, Council would not apply for an SRV. This option would continue the status quo with rates only increasing by the rate peg amount (assumed to be 2 per cent per year).
- Option 2 - Rate Increase:** Under this option, Council would apply for an SRV of 8 per cent per annum for three years to maintain infrastructure and services. At the end of the three years, the SRV increase would be built into the rate base.

When respondents were asked how satisfied they were with Council’s performance over the last 12 months; 49 per cent of respondents indicated they were at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Council. Additionally, when asked how satisfied they were with Council’s level of communication with the community; 43 per cent of respondents indicated they were at least somewhat satisfied with the level of communication Council has with the community. Both results are lower than Micromex’s Regional Benchmark norms.

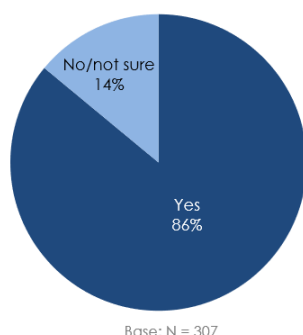
With respect to the SRV options Council is considering, respondents were read a concept statement relating to two (2) options (and the potential impacts of each option on ratepayers), being:

- **Option 1 - Rate Peg:** Under this option, Council would not apply for an SRV. This option would continue the status quo with rates only increasing by the rate peg amount (assumed to be 2 per cent per year).
- **Option 2 - Rate Increase:** Under this option, Council would apply for an SRV of 8 per cent per annum for three years to maintain infrastructure and services. At the end of the three years, the SRV increase would be built into the rate base.

The telephone survey indicated that 75 per cent of respondents preferred Option 1, being the Rate Peg only (no SRV), with the remaining 25 per cent of respondents preferring Option 2, being the proposed SRV. This result indicates that there is low levels of community support for Council’s proposed SRV Application.

IPART will consider community awareness of Council’s SRV Application in assessing and determining that application, should Council resolve to submit it. The telephone survey indicated that, prior to contact, 86 per cent of respondents were aware of the proposed SRV. This is significantly higher than Micromex’s Regional Benchmark norms. These results are illustrated in *Image 3*, below.

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Yes %	86%	87%	86%	90%	86%	90%	81%	88%▲	70%
Base	307	152	155	64	67	87	88	277	30



	Liverpool Plains Shire Council	Micromex LGA Benchmark - Regional
Yes %	86%↑	49%
Base	307	5,443

Image 3: Telephone Survey SRV Awareness

Council also engaged Micromex to facilitate an opt-in online survey to complement telephone survey. While the telephone survey is regarded as a reflective and representative sample of the community; the online survey results are only reflective of respondents that elected to take part in the survey.

The online survey was hosted on Council’s online consultation platform, at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains, from 23 December 2020 to 19 January 2021, with 215 respondents completing the survey.

As with the telephone survey, most respondents (81 per cent) selected Option 1, being the Rate Peg only (no SRV), as their preferred scenario, with 19 per cent selecting Option 2, being the proposed SRV, as their preferred scenario. In marked contrast to telephone survey respondents; only 50 per cent of online survey respondents indicated that they were aware of the proposed SRV prior to completing the survey.

The results of the telephone survey are appended at *Annexure G*, with the results of the online survey appended at *Annexure H*.

7 Engagement Outcomes

The *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy revealed that while community support for Council's proposed SRV Application is low; community awareness of our proposed SRV Application is high.

While delivered over the first week of 2021, the community information sessions were well-attended, with approximately 308 residents participating. As reflected in the summary of the information sessions contained at *Annexure F*; generally, participants were not supportive of the proposed SRV Application and did not feel that a rate rise was justified.

Similarly, the results of the telephone and online survey indicate that respondents were strongly against the SRV Application, with 75 per cent of telephone survey respondents and 81 per cent of online survey respondents indicating their preferred scenario was for rates to increase by the Rate Peg only. Only 25 per cent of telephone survey respondents and 19 per cent of online survey respondents indicated their preferred scenario was for rates to increase by the amount detailed in the SRV Application.


Notwithstanding the low levels of community support for the SRV Application, there was a very high level of community awareness of Council's proposed SRV Application. As noted above, the community information sessions were well attended, and most respondents to both the telephone and online surveys indicated they were aware of Council's SRV Application prior to completing their respective survey.

Irrespective of whether Council determines to make application to IPART for an SRV; the *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy indicates that Council has substantial work to do to improve community satisfaction with our performance, communication levels, and core services.

The results of the *Proudly Independent* community engagement strategy will guide the review of Council's Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program, which is scheduled to commence later in 2021.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Direct Correspondence (Mail-Out)



Dear Ratepayer,

We are seeking your feedback on a proposed Special Rate Variation

Liverpool Plains Shire Council is facing increased pressure to continue providing our current range and standard of services, while maintaining our public infrastructure and assets, such as roads, drainage, bridges, public buildings and swimming pools. In fact, over the past five years, we have only been able to renew 56 per cent – or just over half – of assets as they fall due.

Detailed analysis of Council's financial position indicates that additional funding is required for Council to deliver sustainable services and infrastructure. To this end, we are intending to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) in 2021.

We are proposing to apply for an SRV to increase the general rate recurrently by 8 per cent in 2021/22, 8 per cent in 2022/23 and 8 per cent in 2023/24 - in total, an accumulative increase of 26 per cent. The proposed SRV would generate an additional \$1.5 million (over three years) to Council's annual revenue base and be used to fund our existing services and maintain assets.

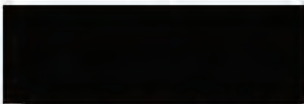
We are seeking your views on the proposed SRV. With this in mind, we have launched a dedicated consultation website, *OurSay Liverpool Plains*, which is available at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains and contains detailed information on the proposed SRV and how you can provide feedback, including an online survey.

In the New Year, we will be holding a series of community information sessions throughout the Liverpool Plains Shire to seek your views on the proposed SRV. Details of the community information sessions, including dates, times and venues, are available from *OurSay Liverpool Plains*. In early January, you may also be contacted by an independent market research firm to take part in a telephone survey and provide feedback.

Proposing a rate increase is not a decision we take lightly. However, it is one that is critical to the long-term sustainability of Council, as well as the sustainability of the services we provide and assets we maintain. Your feedback is imperative to the decision-making process.

Please find enclosed a factsheet on the proposed SRV. We encourage you to read this factsheet and visit www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains to access further information and provide feedback.

Yours faithfully,



**Cr Doug Hawkins OAM
MAYOR**



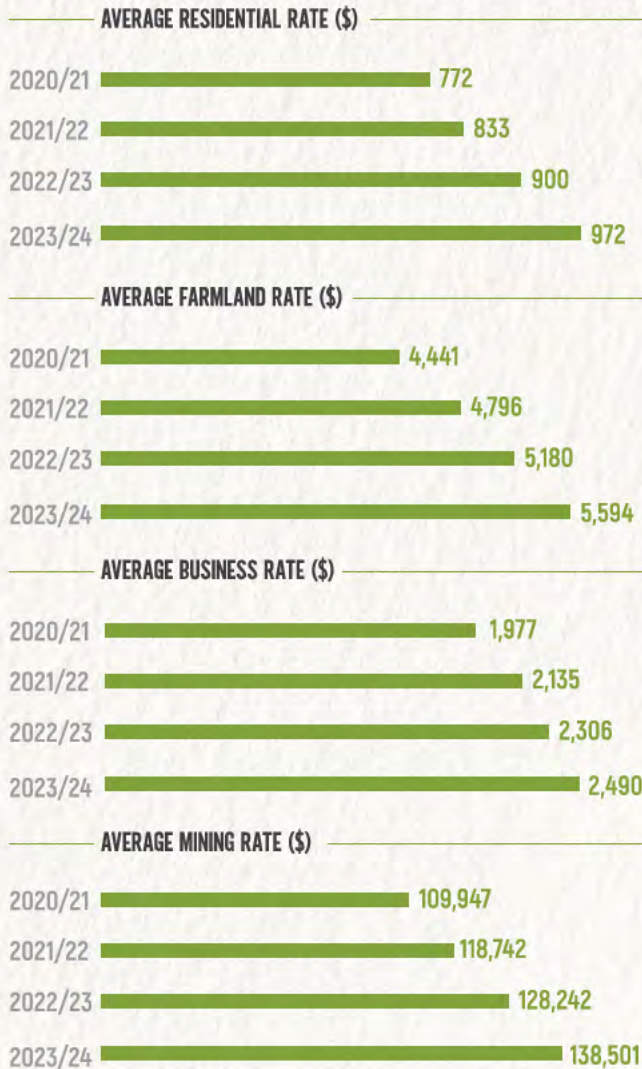
**Jo Sangster
GENERAL MANAGER**

8.2 Appendix B – Flyers

WHAT IS COUNCIL PROPOSING AND HOW WILL IT IMPACT ON MY RATES?

We are proposing to increase rates by 8 per cent each for the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years. This will have an accumulative effect of increasing the rates by 26 per cent.

The following table shows the impact of implementing the proposed SRV on the average rates by rate category.



WHERE AND WHEN CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROPOSED SRV?

Council has launched a dedicated online website, available at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains, for our community to learn more about the proposed SRV and provide feedback via an online survey. Further information on SRVs and the application process is available from the IPART's website at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

In early January 2021, we will be hosting a series of community information sessions across the Liverpool Plains Shire. These sessions will be COVID Safe with social distancing measures in place, and you will be required to register to attend these sessions.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

- WALLABADAH // MONDAY, 04 JANUARY 2021**
10.00am - 11.30am // Wallabadah Village Hall, Martyn Street
- QUIRINDI // MONDAY, 04 JANUARY 2021**
5.00pm - 6.30pm // Longfield Pavilion, Henry Street
- CURRABUBULA // TUESDAY, 05 JANUARY 2021**
10.00am - 11.30am // Currabubula War Memorial Hall, Davis Street
- WERRIS CREEK // TUESDAY, 05 JANUARY 2021**
5.00pm - 6.30pm // Railway Institute Hall, Anzac Parade
- SPRING RIDGE // WEDNESDAY, 06 JANUARY 2021**
10.00am - 11.30am // Spring Ridge Hall, Darby Road
- PREMER // WEDNESDAY, 06 JANUARY 2021**
5.00pm - 6.30pm // CWA Rooms, Eilerslie Street
- WILLOW TREE // THURSDAY, 07 JANUARY 2021**
10.00am - 11.30am // Willow Tree Hall, New England Highway

To register your attendance at one of the community information sessions, contact Council's Customer Service Centre on (02) 6746 1755 or by email at lpssc@lpssc.nsw.gov.au.





COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY STRENGTH

For the Liverpool Plains to remain **Proudly Independent** and enjoy access to **sustainable infrastructure and services**, Liverpool Plains Shire Council needs to increase revenue.

Council is proposing to apply for a **Special Rate Variation (SRV)**. If approved, the SRV will result in a rate increase over a three-year period.

This will enable us to continue maintaining our public infrastructure and provide our community with certainty for a positive and sustainable future.

WHAT IS AN SRV AND RATE PEGGING?

The annual increase of rates is calculated by the NSW Government and is referred to as the 'rate peg'. The amount is decided by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). The rate peg applied to the 2021/22 financial year will be 2.0 per cent.

If a council's rate revenue is not sufficient to maintain service levels, it can apply to IPART to increase overall rate revenue by more than the rate peg. This is known as a Special Rate Variation (SRV).

In order to apply for an SRV, councils must demonstrate to the community and IPART the need for the increase and how they have implemented improvements to be more efficient and productive.

WHY DO WE NEED AN SRV?

Through the NSW Government's Fit for the Future process, Council was assessed as being "not fit". Since this assessment, we have continued to produce significant operating deficits, while maintaining – and in some cases, expanding and improving – the services we provide.

In the 2019/20 financial year, Council had an operating loss of \$3.89 million, a deterioration from the \$1.31 million loss in 2018. With capital grants removed, the underlying operating deficit for 2019/20 was \$7.13 million (\$8.30 million in 2018/19).

Over the past five years, Council has only been able to renew 56% – or just over half – of assets as they fall due. A large proportion of additional funding is required to address the maintenance of our existing public infrastructure, such as roads, drainage and bridges, that we have not had sufficient cash to renew.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE SRV IS NOT IMPLEMENTED?

Council will need to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise the range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term.

WHAT WILL THE SRV FUNDS BE USED FOR?

The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund maintenance of local infrastructure, including:

- Grading unsealed local roads to meet existing service levels;*
- Additional maintenance of rural roads, such as bitumen maintenance, drainage, patching, roadside slashing, gravel maintenance, and vegetation management;*
- Roadwork and renewal of urban streets;*
- Increased funding to maintain existing services across Council operations;*
- Additional bitumen resealing and gravel re-sheeting to keep our roads at a good standard and prevent them from deteriorating;*
- Culverts, causeways, drainage and footpath renewal; and*
- Community assets renewal.*

If implemented, the SRV will apply to your general rates only and will not apply to the waste management, water and sewerage charges on your rates notices.

SRV funds would not be used on waste management, water and sewerage services, which are all funded through direct fees and charges.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

Council has revised its Long-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plans to align with the Council's decision for a special rate variation. These documents are currently on public exhibition and will form the basis for Council's engagement with the community.

We want to hear from as many members of the community as possible. A range of community engagement methods will be implemented from over the coming weeks through to Wednesday, 20 January 2021. Council will consider the community feedback prior to determining in early February 2021 whether to proceed in applying for an SRV.

WHAT IS COUNCIL PROPOSING AND HOW WILL IT IMPACT ON MY RATES?

We are proposing to increase rates by 8 per cent each for the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years. This will have an accumulative effect of increasing the rates by 26 per cent.

The following table shows the impact of implementing the proposed SRV on the average rates by rate category.



WHERE AND WHEN CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROPOSED SRV?

Council has launched a dedicated online website, available at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains, for our community to learn more about the proposed SRV and provide feedback via an online survey. Further information on SRVs and the application process is available from the IPART's website at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

In early January 2021, we will be hosting a series of community information sessions across the Liverpool Plains Shire. These sessions will be COVID Safe with social distancing measures in place, and you will be required to register to attend these sessions.

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To register your attendance at one of the community information sessions, contact Council's Customer Service Centre on (02) 6746 1755 or by email at lpssc@lpssc.nsw.gov.au.





COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY STRENGTH

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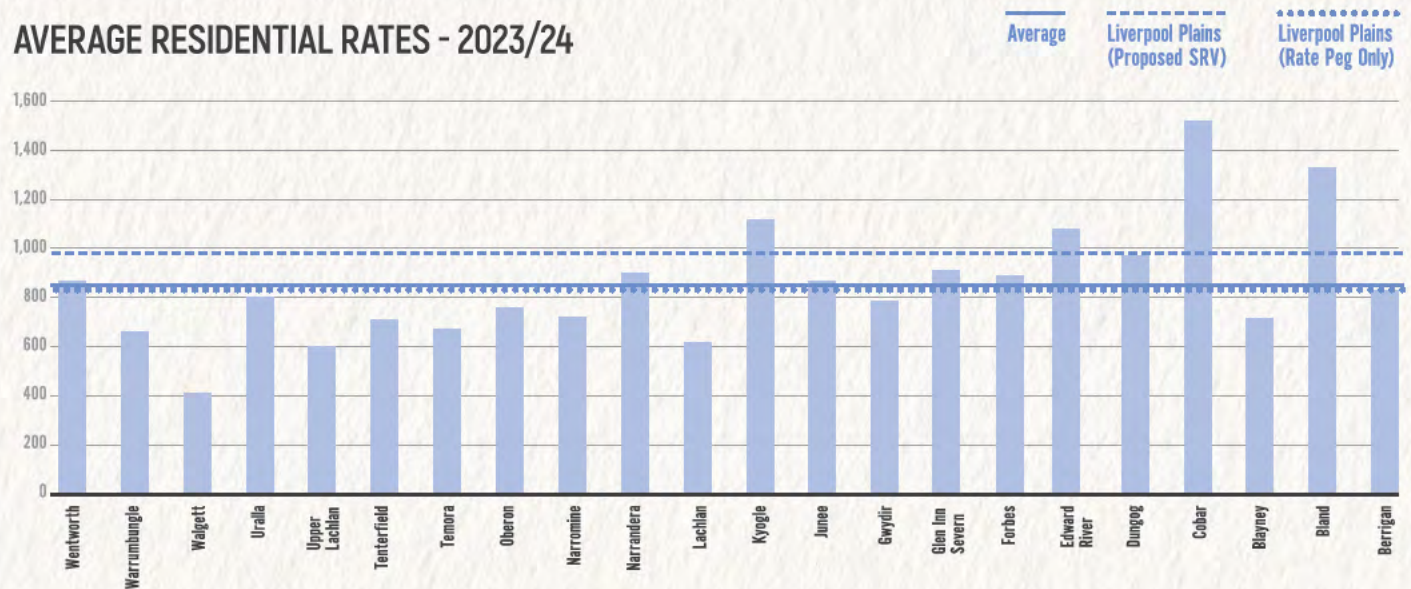
Council is proposing to apply for a **Special Rate Variation (SRV)**. If approved, the SRV will result in a rate increase over a three-year period.

This will enable us to continue maintaining our public infrastructure and provide our community with certainty for a positive and sustainable future.

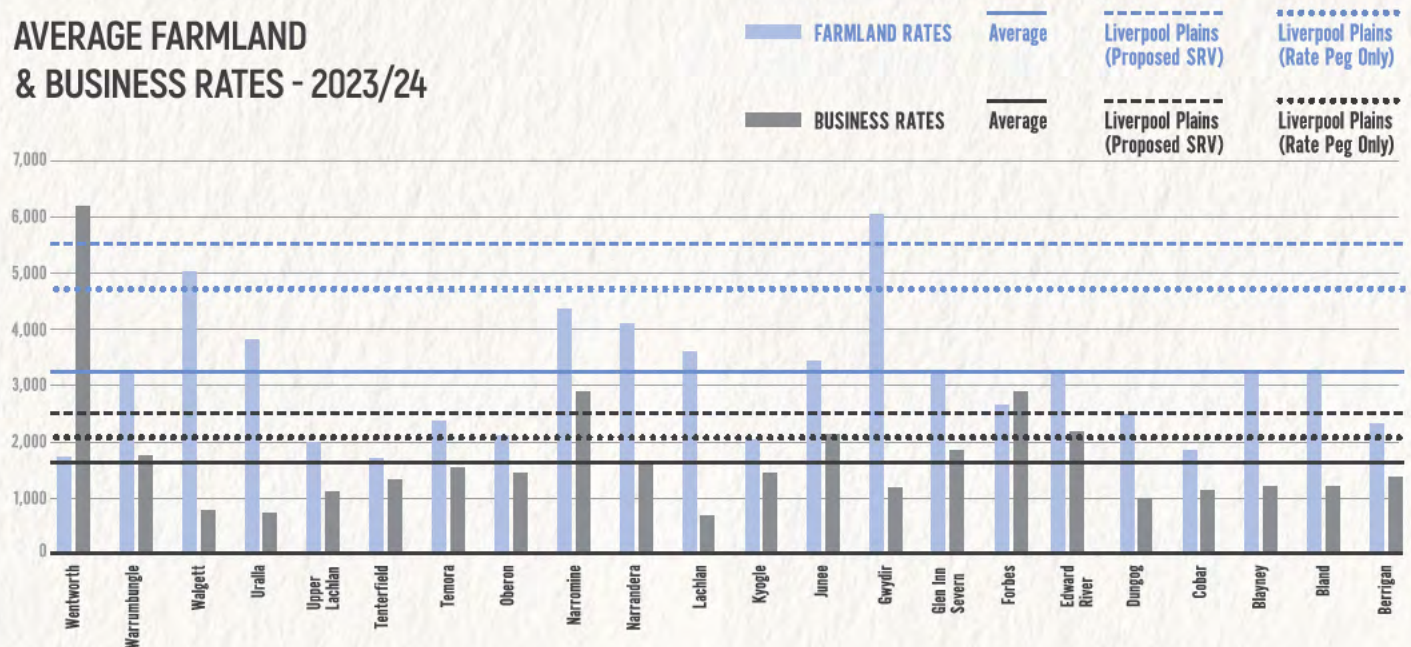
HOW DO OUR RATES COMPARE TO OTHER COUNCILS?

The following graphs show how we expect the average rates in LPSC compare to other Councils at the end of the SRV in 2023/24.

AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL RATES - 2023/24



AVERAGE FARMLAND & BUSINESS RATES - 2023/24





COUNCILS SOLUTION TO ENSURING A SECURE FUTURE FOR THE COMMUNITY

The additional funds received through the SRV will enable Council to maintain the level of services and infrastructure that our community is so proud of.

The Community Strategic Plan – your plan – is where the community expressed how they would like to see resources – time, energy and money – directed over the next ten years.

The Community wanted to protect and enhance that which we value and are proud of within Liverpool Plains Shire; the fantastic rural lifestyle, strong community spirit, economic growth and environmental sustainability.

The Delivery Plan outlines the services and projects that Council plans to deliver, while the Long Term Financial Plan is the resourcing plan to fund our community services. The recently revised Long Term Financial Plan is clear...

...We can not deliver the range of services we currently provide and maintain our assets.

WHERE AND WHEN CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROPOSED SRV?

Council has launched a dedicated online website, available at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains, for our community to learn more about the proposed SRV and provide feedback via an online survey. Further information on SRVs and the application process is available from the IPART's website at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

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**Liverpool
Plains**
Shire Council



COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY STRENGTH

For the Liverpool Plains to remain **Proudly Independent** and enjoy access to **sustainable infrastructure and services**, Liverpool Plains Shire Council needs to increase revenue.

Council is proposing to apply for a **Special Rate Variation (SRV)**. If approved, the SRV will result in a rate increase over a three-year period.

This will enable us to continue maintaining our public infrastructure and provide our community with certainty for a positive and sustainable future.

WHY DO WE NEED TO SPEND SO MUCH ON ASSETS?

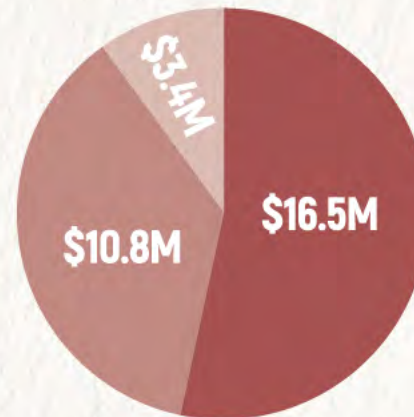
Despite Council's attempts to achieve long-term financial sustainability our community assets are ageing and deteriorating. Approximately \$8-10M a year needs to be spent on our existing assets to ensure they meet the needs of our community. A Capital Works Plan (part of a revised Asset Management Plan) has been developed addressing the needs of our sport and recreational facilities, roads, drainage, bridges, footpaths and necessary buildings to provide our library and community services.

Without the SRV there will not be sufficient cash to address all the needs of the community.

WHERE DOES COUNCIL GET IT'S FUNDING FROM?

Council has been very successful in attracting grant funding for new and upgraded assets. We are expecting to spend \$30.7M on assets:

- Specific non-recurrent grant funding
- Consolidated available cash
- Borrowings



We can not rely on grant funding like this to maintain our assets in the future. However, with a successful SRV, our Capital Works Plan will see \$167.5M spent on assets over the next 10 years.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE SERVICES IF THE SRV IS NOT APPROVED BY IPART?

Without additional revenue Council will need to constrain expenditure on services and maintaining assets, which will result in prioritising critical assets.

Services that are not the core statutory requirement of Council will need to be reviewed, including swimming pools, gymnasium, parks and gardens and sport and recreational facilities.

The Capital Works Plan ensures we can maintain the services and assets we currently have and are so proud of as a community (figures show in \$million).

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Buildings	\$2,076	\$85	\$250	\$650
Plant, machinery & equipment	\$950	\$1,341.5	\$1,051.9	\$450.9
Computers & telecommunications	\$800	\$85		
Roads	\$5,943.5	\$12,373.7	\$8,625.4	\$6,196.4
Bridges	\$442	\$1,063		
Footpaths & cycle ways		\$69	\$69	\$69
Drainage	\$70	\$40	\$40	\$115
Rec, leisure & community facilities	\$3,632	\$473	\$3,986.9	\$132
Parks, open spaces & streetscape	\$190	\$25	\$25	\$25
Aerodromes		\$150		
Other infrastructure	\$150			
Water	\$13,984	\$20,305	\$1,812	\$1,472
Sewer	\$920	\$7,363.9	\$5,676.2	\$541.4
Waste management	\$1,000	\$390	\$3,400	\$760

8.3 Appendix C – Media Releases



Media Release

Liverpool Plains Shire Council – 6746 1755

Council to undertake consultation on proposed SRV

(09-12-20)

Liverpool Plains Shire Council (LPSC) is set to kick off a comprehensive community consultation process on a proposed rate increase, after having formally notified the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of its intention to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV).

LPSC Mayor, Councillor Doug Hawkins OAM, said ratepayers would soon receive a flyer containing further information on the proposal, with Council to launch an online consultation site dedicated to the SRV and holding information sessions across the region in the New Year.

“As with many other councils across rural and regional NSW, LPSC is struggling to provide the broad range of services that we do and maintain our assets and infrastructure at the standard our community expects,” he said.

“Each year, IPART sets a rate peg that limits the amount by which local councils can increase their total rate revenue by, and unfortunately, the rate peg has not kept pace with the increasing costs of delivering services, maintaining and improving our assets, and running a contemporary local government organisation.

“While Council has contained rates to the rate peg for the past five years, the costs of providing services and maintaining infrastructure have increased and they will continue to increase over the years ahead,” he continued.

Councillor Hawkins said an SRV is required for Council to maintain existing services, improve its financial sustainability, and fund infrastructure maintenance and renewal.

“We’ve been incredibly fortunate in recent years to receive funding from the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to deliver some major infrastructure projects across the shire, with several more in the pipeline,” he said.

“However, with new and improved assets comes increased maintenance costs and increased depreciation fund; all on top of the costs we must meet in maintaining our roads, bridges, footpaths, water and sewer infrastructure, and public buildings.

“Over recent years, Council has also increased the number of services it provides to the community, and while some of our community and recreation services operate in a cost-neutral manner, others are operating at a significant loss,” he continued.

Councillor Hawkins encouraged all community members to have their say on the proposed SRV, by participating in Council's program of consultation exercises over the coming weeks or providing a submission to IPART.

"This is a conversation our community has to have, and we want to hear from as many residents and ratepayers as possible," he said.

"I urge all community members to keep an open mind, consider the information put before them, and to provide feedback over the coming weeks before Council determines in early February whether or not to formally apply for an SRV," he concluded.

Further information on the SRV process is available from IPART's website at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

Media contact – Doug Hawkins 0448 092 932.



Media Release

Liverpool Plains Shire Council – 6746 1755

Feedback invited on strategic documents, SRV modelling

(16-12-20)

Liverpool Plains Shire Council is seeking community feedback on several key strategic planning documents currently on public exhibition.

With Council having notified the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of its intention to apply for an SRV, it is a requirement that Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting documents be publicly exhibited and adopted prior to a formal application being submitted.

LPSC Mayor, Councillor Doug Hawkins OAM, said the strategic documents, which include Council's Long-Term Financial Plan, Workforce Management Plan and Asset Management Plans, highlight the challenges the organisation continues to face in becoming fit for the future.

"The Long-Term Financial Plan clearly identifies that Council cannot continue delivering the existing range and standard of services our community currently enjoys, while also funding the maintenance and renewal of local infrastructure," Councillor Hawkins said.

"In addition to modelling the "status quo" of Council's current income and expenditure and what that looks like over the coming decade, the Long-Term Financial plan models two alternative scenarios which include the introduction of an SRV and how each of those would affect our bottom line," he continued.

Councillor Hawkins said Council's preferred scenario, which will form the basis of its SRV application should it proceed, includes the introduction of a permanent SRV of an additional 8 per cent, which includes the rate peg, in 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.

"While we understand that rate rises of any kind are never welcome, it is clear that without the introduction of the proposed SRV, we will struggle to provide services and maintain infrastructure in line with community expectations," he said.

"The community owns and your Council maintains an extensive infrastructure network, including roads, bridges, drainage, footpaths and public buildings, but as our Asset Management Plans demonstrate, the cost of maintaining these assets increases as they age," he concluded.

Public submissions on the documents close Friday 22 January 2021.

The strategic documents can be accessed from Council's website at www.lpsc.nsw.gov.au, with hard copies available at Council's Customer Service Centre at 60 Station Street, Quirindi.

For further information about the proposed SRV, visit *OurSay Liverpool Plains* at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains.

Media contact – Doug Hawkins 0448 092 932.



Media Release

Liverpool Plains Shire Council – 6746 1755

SRV information sessions to kick off in New Year

(22-12-20)

Ratepayers and residents will be able to learn more about Liverpool Plains Shire Council's Special Rate Variation (SRV) proposal at a series of community information sessions being held across the region in the New Year.

LPSC Mayor, Councillor Doug Hawkins OAM, said the seven community information sessions will be complemented by other consultation opportunities, including telephone and online surveys.

"We're pulling no punches and are consulting far and wide on our proposed SRV, and we are encouraging all members of the community to familiarise themselves with the proposal and provide feedback before Council determines in early February whether to apply for an SRV," Councillor Hawkins said.

"It's always challenging undertaking consultation over the holiday period, but unfortunately, it's simply unavoidable given the timeframe set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

"A flyer providing more detail on the SRV proposal and modelling is being distributed to all ratepayers this week, so that they can learn more about Council's financial position and what we're proposing, prior to the information sessions being held in the New Year.

"We've also launched an online consultation platform to provide residents and ratepayers with further information on the SRV proposal," he continued.

Details of the seven community information sessions are as follows:

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 04 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Wallabadah Village Hall Martyn Street Wallabadah
	5.00pm – 6.30pm	Longfield Pavilion Henry Street, Quirindi
Tuesday, 05 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Currabubula War Memorial Hall Davis Street, Currabubula
	5.00pm – 6.30pm	Railway Institute Hall Anzac Parade, Werris Creek
Wednesday, 06 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Spring Ridge Hall Darby Road, Spring Ridge
	5.00pm – 6.30pm	CWA Rooms Ellerslie Street, Premer
Thursday, 07 January 2021	10.00am – 11.30am	Willow Tree Hall New England Highway, Willow Tree

Councillor Hawkins said the sessions will be COVID Safe, with social distancing measures in place.

“Community members interested in attending one of the sessions are encouraged to register their attendance by contacting Council’s Customer Service Centre on (02) 6746 1755 or by email at lpcc@lpcc.nsw.gov.au.

“Those residents and ratepayers unable to attend an information session can still provide feedback and have their say on the proposed SRV, by providing a formal submission or completing the online survey available at OurSay Liverpool Plains,” he said.

For further information about the proposed SRV, visit OurSay Liverpool Plains at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains,” Councillor Hawkins concluded.

Media contact – Doug Hawkins 0448 092 932.



Media Release

Liverpool Plains Shire Council – 6746 1755

SRV phone survey to get underway from January 7

(03-01-21)

Residents are being encouraged to have their say on Liverpool Plains Shire Council's Special Rate Variation (SRV) proposal, with a telephone survey to commence on Thursday 7 January.

The survey will involve approximately 300 interviews conducted among a representative sample of residents.

LPSC Mayor, Councillor Doug Hawkins OAM, said the survey has been designed to test community awareness and support for the proposed rate increase before Council decides in February whether to formally apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for an SRV.

"Council is undertaking a comprehensive community consultation exercise with respect to a proposed SRV, and the survey has been designed to test community support for an SRV and obtain feedback on the levels of service we provide and suggestions for improvement of our operations," Councillor Hawkins said.

"We have engaged an independent market research company, Micromex Research, to conduct the survey, which will be delivered over a one-week period," he said.

"Respondents will be randomly selected, so your home may receive a call from the agency during this period, and these calls may be outside of business hours and on weekends.

"Council will only receive the overall results from the research agency, so rest assured that any personal details and individual responses will remain confidential," he continued.

Councillor Hawkins said residents will also be able to have their say on the proposed SRV by completing an online survey or providing a formal submission and he was encouraging them to do so.

"While only 300 residents will be surveyed by phone, all members of the community will be able to complete the online survey available on Council's consultation platform, OurSay," he said.

"The survey results will be made publicly available and will be considered by Council, along with the formal submissions and feedback we receive during the consultation period, in early February before we decide whether to apply to IPART for an SRV," Councillor Hawkins concluded.

For further information about the proposed SRV, or to complete the online survey, visit OurSay Liverpool Plains at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains.

8.4 Appendix D – Newspaper Advertisements



PROUDLY INDEPENDENT

TOGETHER, LETS KEEP IT THIS WAY

COMMUNITY. SUSTAINABILITY. STRENGTH

For the Liverpool Plains to remain proudly independent and enjoy access to sustainable infrastructure and services, Liverpool Plains Shire Council needs to increase revenue. Council is proposing to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV). If approved, the SRV will result in a rate increase over a three-year period. This will enable us to continue maintaining our public infrastructure and provide our community with certainty for a positive and sustainable future.

The annual increase of rates is calculated by the NSW Government and is referred to as the 'rate peg'. The amount is decided by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). The rate peg applied to the 2021/22 financial year will be 2.0 per cent.

If a council's rate revenue is not sufficient to maintain service levels, it can apply to IPART to increase overall rate revenue by more than the rate peg. This is known as a Special Rate Variation (SRV).

Through the NSW Government's Fit for the Future process, Council was assessed as being "not fit". Since this assessment, we have continued to produce significant operating deficits, while maintaining – and in some cases, expanding and improving – the services we provide. Council will need

to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise the range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term.

The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate an additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund maintenance of local infrastructure, sport and recreational facilities, roads, drainage, bridges, footpaths and necessary buildings to provide our library and community services

SRV funds would not be used on waste management, water and sewerage services, which are all funded through direct fees and charges.

Council has revised its Long-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plans to align with Council's proposal for a special rate variation. These documents are currently on public exhibition and will form the basis for Council's engagement with the community.

Over the coming weeks, we want to hear from as many members of the community as possible. In early January 2021, we will be hosting a series of community information sessions across the Liverpool Plains Shire.

Council will consider all community feedback prior to determining in February 2021 whether to proceed in applying for an SRV.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

Council has launched a dedicated online website, available at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains, for our community to learn more about the proposed SRV and provide feedback via an online survey. Further information on SRVs and the application process is available from the IPART's website at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

WALLABADAH // MONDAY, 04 JANUARY 2021
10.00am - 11.30am // Wallabadah Village Hall, Martyn Street

QUIRINDI // MONDAY, 04 JANUARY 2021
5.00pm - 6.30pm // Longfield Pavilion, Henry Street

CURRABUBULA // TUESDAY, 05 JANUARY 2021
10.00am - 11.30am // Currabubula War Memorial Hall, Davis Street

WERRIS CREEK // TUESDAY, 05 JANUARY 2021
5.00pm - 6.30pm // Railway Institute Hall, Anzac Parade


SPRING RIDGE // WEDNESDAY, 06 JANUARY 2021
10.00am - 11.30am // Spring Ridge Hall, Darby Road

PREMER // WEDNESDAY, 06 JANUARY 2021
5.00pm - 6.30pm // CWA Rooms, Ellerslie Street

WILLOW TREE // THURSDAY, 07 JANUARY 2021
10.00am - 11.30am // Willow Tree Hall, New England Highway

These sessions will be COVID Safe with social distancing measures in place, and you will be required to register to attend these sessions.

To register your attendance at one of the community information sessions, contact Council's Customer Service Centre on (02) 6746 1755 or by email at lpssc@lpssc.nsw.gov.au.

Follow us on facebook or visit www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains to find more information 



**Liverpool
Plains**
Shire Council

LIVERPOOL PLAINS PROUDLY INDEPENDENT
TOGETHER, LETS KEEP IT THIS WAY

COMMUNITY. SUSTAINABILITY. STRENGTH

For the Liverpool Plains to remain proudly independent and enjoy access to sustainable infrastructure and services, Liverpool Plains Shire Council needs to increase revenue. Council is proposing to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV). If approved, the SRV will result in a rate increase over a three-year period. This will enable us to continue maintaining our public infrastructure and provide our community with certainty for a positive and sustainable future.

The annual increase of rates is calculated by the NSW Government and is referred to as the 'rate peg'. The amount is decided by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). The rate peg applied to the 2021/22 financial year will be 2.0 per cent.

If a council's rate revenue is not sufficient to maintain service levels, it can apply to IPART to increase overall rate revenue by more than the rate peg. This is known as a Special Rate Variation (SRV).

Through the NSW Government's Fit for the Future process, Council was assessed as being "not fit". Since this assessment, we have continued to produce significant operating deficits, while maintaining – and in some cases, expanding and improving – the services we provide. Council will need to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise the range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term.

The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate

an additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund maintenance of local infrastructure, sport and recreational facilities, roads, drainage, bridges, footpaths and necessary buildings to provide our library and community services.

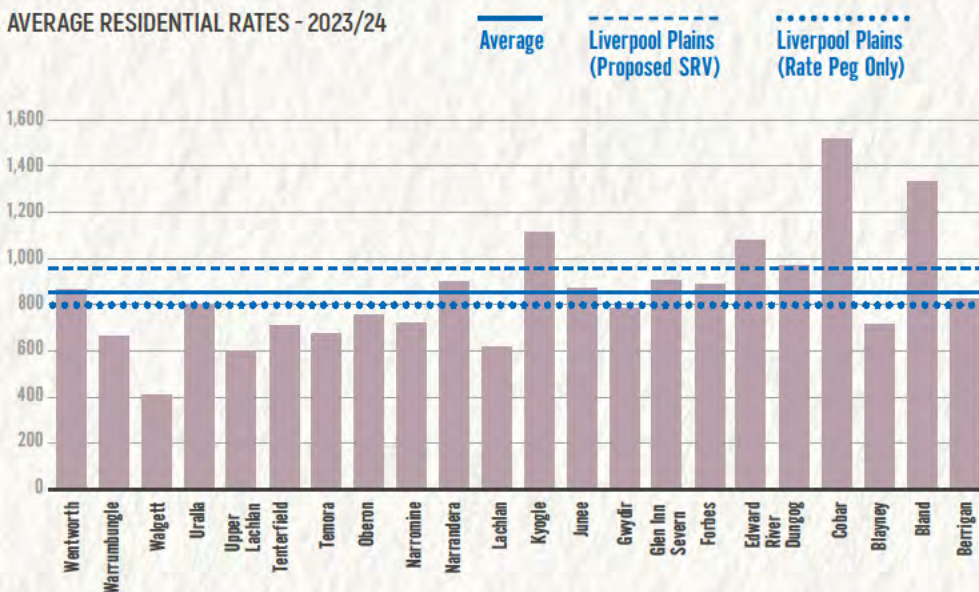
SRV funds would not be used on waste management, water and sewerage services, which are all funded through direct fees and charges.

Council has revised its Long-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plans to align with Council's proposal for a special rate variation. These documents are currently on public exhibition and will form the basis for Council's engagement with the community.

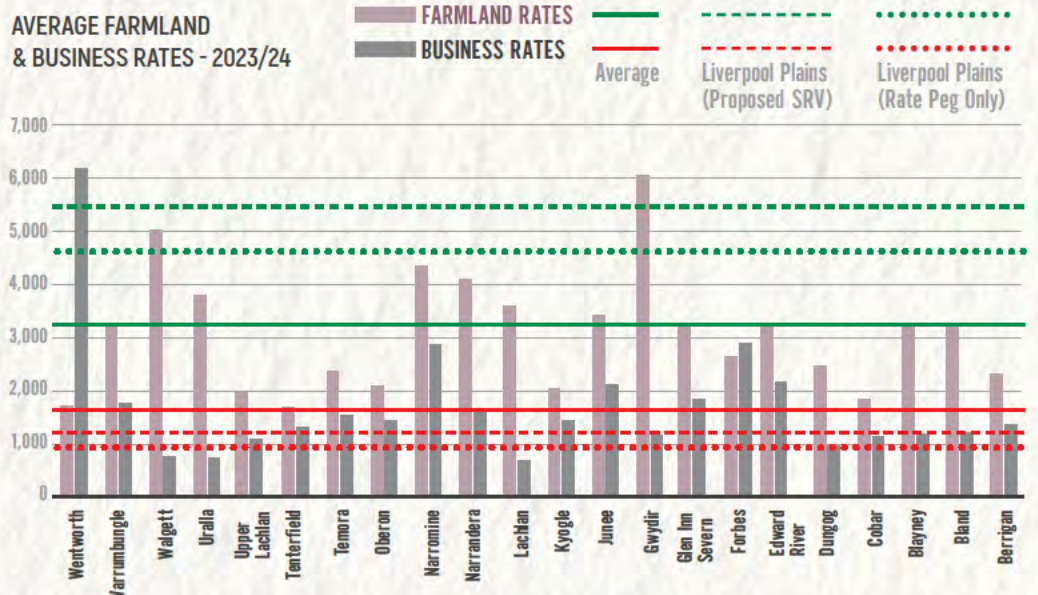
Council will consider all community feedback prior to determining in February 2021 whether to proceed in applying for an SRV.

Council has launched a dedicated online website, available at www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains, for our community to learn more about the proposed SRV and provide feedback via an online survey. Further information on SRVs and the application process is available from the IPART's website at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL RATES - 2023/24



AVERAGE FARMLAND & BUSINESS RATES - 2023/24




To register your attendance at one of the community information sessions, contact Council's Customer Service Centre on (02) 6746 1755 or by email at lpssc@lpssc.nsw.gov.au.

Follow us on facebook or visit www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains to find more information



Liverpool Plains
Shire Council

8.5 Appendix E – PowerPoint presentation (community information sessions)




OUR COMMUNITY NEWS // OUR COMMUNITY NEWS //

LIVERPOOL PLAINS **PROUDLY INDEPENDENT**
TOGETHER, LETS KEEP IT THIS WAY

Introduction to the Proposed Special Rate Variation


December 2020




Liverpool Plains Shire Council

1

What is the Proposal?



Following a detailed review of Council's financial position, the Council has voted unanimously to prepare an application to introduce a Special Rate Variation (SRV) that will increase the general rate by 8% in 2021/22, 8% in 2022/23 and 8% in 2023/24.



LIVERPOOL PLAINS SHIRE COUNCIL

2

What is a Special Rate Variation?



IPART establishes the “rate peg” each year which limits the amount councils can increase their rate revenue by from one year to the next. Councils can apply to IPART to increase overall rate revenue by more than the rate peg. This is known as a Special Rate Variation (SRV).



3

Why does Council need a special rate variation (SRV)?



Through the NSW Government’s Fit for the Future process, Council was assessed as being “not fit”. Since this assessment, we have continued to produce significant operating deficits, whilst maintaining – and in some cases, expanding and improving – the services we provide.



4

Why does Council need a special rate variation (SRV)?

Despite delivering efficiencies, Council has continued to produce significant operating losses. In 2019/20 financial year the Council had a net operating loss of \$6.392M, a deterioration from the \$2.138M operating loss in 2018/19 – *note an increase of \$3.2M in depreciation was recognised in 2019/20.*

A history of significant operating deficits was noted in the State Government’s Fit for the Future assessment. Repetitive operating deficits are unsustainable and lead to a cash deficit and/or depleted assets.



5

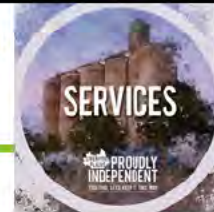
Projected Cash Position

Council currently holds significant grant funding for projects that must be spent in 2020/21. The cumulative impact of operating deficits is that Council will run out of cash by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.



6

Why Do We Need to Spend So Much On Assets?



Our community assets are ageing and deteriorating. Approximately \$8-10M a year needs to be spent on our existing assets to ensure they meet the needs of our community. A Capital Works Plan (part of a revised Asset Management Plan) has been developed addressing the asset needs. Without the SRV there will not be sufficient cash to address all the needs of the community.



7

Why Do We Need To Spend So Much On Assets?



	2021	2022	2023	2024
Buildings	\$2,076	\$85	\$250	\$650
Plant, machinery & equipment	\$950	\$1,341.5	\$1,051.9	\$450.9
Computers & telecommunications	\$800	\$85		
Roads	\$5,943.5	\$12,373.7	\$8,625.4	\$6,196.4
Bridges	\$442	\$1,063		
Footpaths & cycle ways		\$69	\$69	\$69
Drainage	\$70	\$40	\$40	\$115
Rec, leisure & community facilities	\$3,632	\$473	\$3,986.9	\$132
Parks, open spaces & streetscape	\$190	\$25	\$25	\$25
Aerodromes		\$150		
Other infrastructure	\$150			
Water	\$13,984	\$20,305	\$1,812	\$1,472
Sewer	\$820	\$7,363.9	\$5,676.2	\$541.4
Waste management	\$1,000	\$390	\$3,400	\$760



Council's plan for assets is outlined in the drafted Asset Management Plans and Long Term Financial Plan. Both draft plans are on our website:

<https://www.oursay.org/LiverpoolPlains>

8

What Will the SRV be Spent On?



The proposed SRV will generate \$1.5M over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to correct the operating deficit of current services and fund appropriate maintenance levels.

If implemented, the SRV will apply to your general rates only and will not apply to the waste management, water and sewerage charges on your rates notices.



9

Improved Maintenance

- Grading unsealed local roads to meet existing services;
- Additional maintenance of rural roads, such as bitumen maintenance, drainage, patching, roadside slashing, gravel maintenance, and vegetation management;
- Roadwork and renewal of urban streets (28% increase in rehabilitation works);
- Additional bitumen resealing (31% increase) and gravel re-sheeting (85% increase);
- Culverts, causeways, drainage and footpath renewal;
- Renewal of community facilities.



10

What Will Happen If the SRV Is Not Approved?



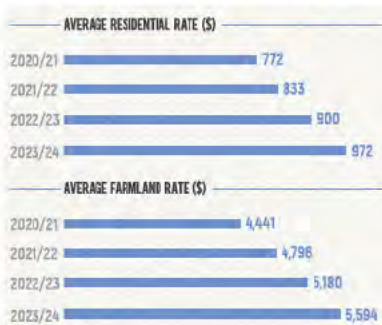
Council will need to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise the range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term.

Deteriorating assets may not be replaced, leading to a decrease in services provided.



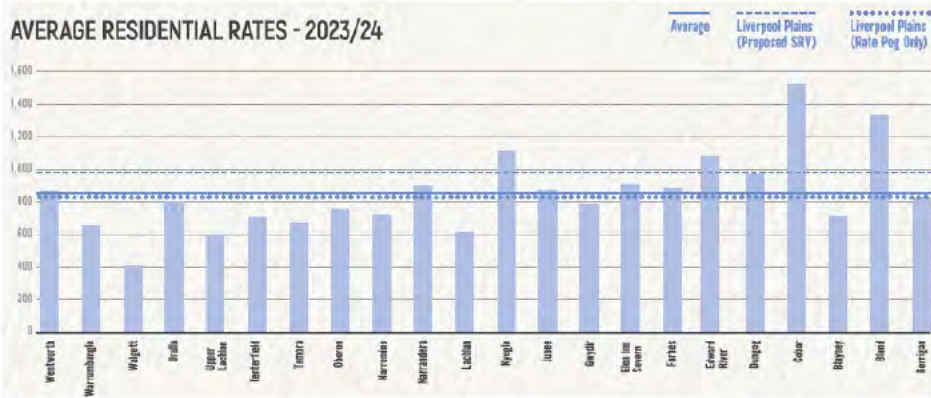
What is the Impact on Average Rates?

General rates will increase by 8% each year for three years - a cumulative increase of 26%.



How do we Compare to Other Councils?

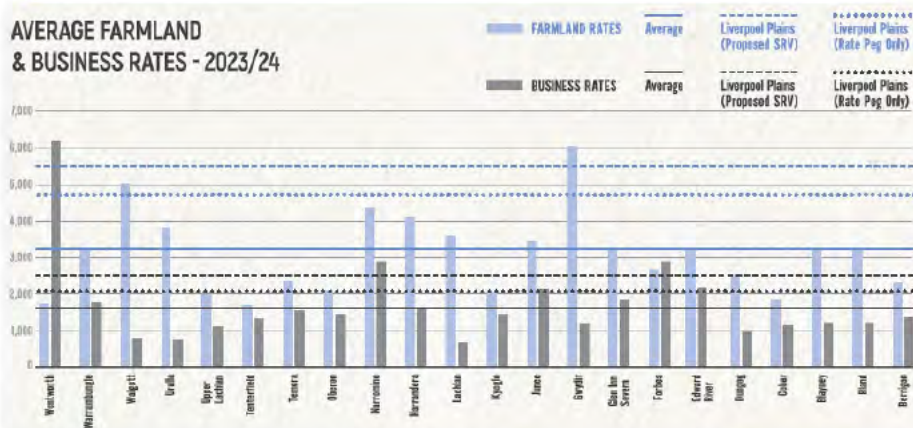
AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL RATES - 2023/24



13

How do we Compare to Other Councils?

AVERAGE FARMLAND & BUSINESS RATES - 2023/24



14

What are the Next Steps in the Application Process?

- The Long-Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan and other information is available on Council's dedicated website (<https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains>).
- Council wants to hear from as many members of the community as possible. Complete the survey available on the dedicated website (<https://oursay.org/liverpoolplains>)
- A telephone survey will also be conducted.
- Council will consider the community feedback prior to determining in early February 2021 whether to proceed in applying for an SRV.



15

Community Information Sessions

WALLABADAH // MONDAY, 04 JANUARY 2021

10.00am - 11.30am // Wallabadah Village Hall, Martyn Street,

QUIRINDI // MONDAY, 04 JANUARY 2021

5.00pm - 6.30pm // Longfield Pavilion, Henry Street

CURRABUBULA // TUESDAY, 05 JANUARY 2021

10.00am - 11.30am // Currabubula War Memorial Hall, Davis Street

WERRIS CREEK // TUESDAY, 05 JANUARY 2021

5.00pm - 6.30pm // Railway Institute Hall, Anzac Parade

SPRING RIDGE // WEDNESDAY, 06 JANUARY 2021

10.00am - 11.30am // Spring Ridge Hall, Darby Road

PREMER // WEDNESDAY, 06 JANUARY 2021

5.00pm - 6.30pm // CWA Rooms, Ellerslie Street

WILLOW TREE // THURSDAY, 07 JANUARY 2021

10.00am - 11.30am // Willow Tree Hall, New England Highway



16



17

8.6 Appendix F – Community information session questions/comments

Wallabadah – Monday, 04 January 2020

Community comments/questions:

- Disappointment regarding communication process for SRV and consultation process. The process feels rushed, Council should have commenced consultation much earlier in 2020 year. Some attendees only received the mail-out the morning of the session, others didn't receive the mail-out at all.
- Comments around Council needing to focus on core services rather than other functions such as tourism/marketing, economic development, Royal Theatre. These functions should not be resourced by Council, they should be organic and led by the business community.
- Concerns around size of organisation's workforce and staff benefits. Has Council's FTE been reviewed, and other benefits (namely vehicles) been reviewed?
- Questions around who is responsible for Council's financial position. If Council is in a poor financial position, and has been for many years, why has it not been addressed sooner than now?
- Unhappy with current assets and levels of service. Council has overwhelmingly focused on roads and assets in Quirindi and Werris Creek at expense of Wallabadah and other rural villages. Roads, footpaths, laneways and infrastructure in Wallabadah is not well-maintained.
- Support for reconsidering amalgamation with neighbouring councils. Could a voluntary merger provide efficiencies and cost-savings?
- Concerns around decision-making being made on historical data collected through the *Fit for the Future* process, when the public may not have had access to reliable information. Council has not undertaken more recent community satisfaction surveys or consultations around service levels and expectations.
- Concerns around communication regarding Council's performance and sustainability more generally. The *Quirindi Advocate* regularly features Council's media releases and information on Council projects, events and activities, but this is overwhelmingly positive (and potentially dishonest in terms of articulating Council's true financial position to the community).
- Request for decision on making application to IPART to be deferred pending further consultation. Public needs further information from Council prior to expressing support for a potential SRV.
- Questions around whether the results of the consultation process will be made publicly available prior to the SRV application being submitted.

Quirindi – Monday, 04 February 2020

Community comments/questions:

- Questions around what Council is doing to reduce expenditure, prior to making SRV application.
- Comments around the total in unpaid rates and questions around what Council is doing to raise missing revenue.
- Questions around the historical SRV and how that funding was used, whether it addressed the organisation's financial position.

- Concerns around timeline of the SRV project. Shouldn't Council have completed the Service Efficiency Plan and explored efficiencies prior to determining whether to apply for an SRV? Seems like the cart has been put before the horse – Council should have looked at how it could cut costs and achieve efficiencies before asking ratepayers to pay more.
- Concerns around delays in communicating public notice of the information sessions and the delay in communicating information on proposed SRV application following 27 November Extraordinary Meeting.
- Question regarding Waste Management fees and implementation of Waste Management Strategy. Concerns that Waste Management fees will increase alongside SRV.
- Concerns around accessing material and information from Council website.
- Questions around where the “average” rate figures came from. Figures published in the SRV materials seemed substantially lower than the actual rates paid by ratepayers.
- Question around Council's *Fit for the Future* Improvement Plan and implementation of that document. As Council has not completed the Implementation Plan, will Liverpool Plains Shire Council be required to merge/amalgamate with another council? Will the proposed SRV result in Council becoming sustainable? Is Council too small to ever achieve sustainability?
- Question around when the next *Fit for the Future* assessment be undertaken.
- Question around size of Council's workforce and whether reducing the size of the workforce has been considered.
- Concerns around Council's financial position dating back to 2015, and why steps hadn't been taken to remedy the organisation's position. Has CT Management formed an opinion on the advice provided to Council during this period?
- Multiple questions around why Council hasn't achieved financial sustainability, despite other councils of a similar size and service profile being in a more sustainable position. Why is Council now struggling in terms of its financial sustainability?
- Concerns around the socio-economic status of the Shire and capacity to pay. Has this been considered as part of the SRV process?
- Council has an annual operational budget of around \$23 million. Of that, Council's employee cost is around \$5 million (with a significant proportion going to senior staff). How many of your staff live in the Shire?
- Comments around the need for local councils to advocate to Government for more regular/consistent funding for existing/ongoing services, rather than grants for delivering new/upgraded assets.
- Question around Werris Creek Mine and what happens in terms of revenue once that mine ceases operations.
- Comments around grants, grant income and projects prioritised for grant applications. Questions around whether grants for new and upgraded infrastructure can be rejected.
- Question around the 8/8/8 model and whether it will continue once implemented.
- Has ICAC rejected SRV applications previously?
- Does Council have a plan to release more land for housing to enable development and support population growth?

Currabubula – Tuesday, 05 January 2021

Community comments/questions:

- Why is Council in so much debt?
- No services provided to outlying areas, particularly grading/upkeep of roads, will this improve if the SRV goes ahead?
- How many targeted telephone surveys will be completed?

Werris Creek – Tuesday, 05 January 2020

Community comments/questions:

- Questions around the cost to Council of engaging CT Management to assist with the SRV project. Further questions around why Council isn't speaking to the proposed SRV and instead using consultants.
- Questions from Mr McHugh.
- Comments around CPI indexation. Projected to be around 4 per cent, which is approximately half the value of the proposed SRV.
- Questions around whether more substantial information could be provided regarding expenditure. Does Council have performance indicators for its financial performance, and are these reported on?
- Comments around funding received for specific projects (Swimming Pool improvements, David Taylor Oval improvements), and the costs of new/upgraded assets moving forward.
- How much does Council spend annually on consultants? Can we see comparisons of the salaries of Council's Senior Staff against those of other similar sized councils?
- Query around the status of the Quipolly Water Project, the expected duration of the project's delivery, and the funding received for the project.
- Comments around the ongoing sustainability of Council. Rates could increase by up to 40 per cent, taking into account the SRV as well as the rate peg over a 10-year period. Council is not "fit for the future". What do you see as the most appropriate way to move forward – you can't keep milking the same cash cow.
- How do we know that waste, water and sewer services won't end up in the same state of disrepair as our other assets?
- Clarification sought on the value of the SRV – by the end of the 23/24 year, will the 2 per cent rate peg be on top of the 8/8/8? Does the 26 per cent stay?
- Comments around the impact the SRV will have on pensioners and the capacity of pensioners to pay the SRV. Further comments on the value of the pensioner rebate (hasn't changed since 2005).
- Comments regarding the Quirindi Silo proposed to be purchased by Quirindi Rotary Club, and whether public funds are being used for the project.
- Question regarding CT Management is providing advice to Council around the construction of new assets/buildings so as not to increase the costs associated with new assets/buildings.
- What other steps are being taken to reduce expenditure and achieve efficiencies? What specific savings have been achieved before Council has

progressed an SRV application? Why is this work being undertaken by consultants rather than Council staff?

- Why weren't Org Review and Efficiency Review undertaken before this meeting? Will they be completed before the SRV is implemented?
- Other councils work via Joint Organisations/Regional Organisation of Councils to achieve efficiencies and problem-solve. Why has Council engaged consultants to handle the SRV project rather than use the JO to do this project?
- Question around projected growth in the Liverpool Plains Shire and opportunities to increase population to increase affordability of SRV.
- Comments regarding the Crawford Freightlines development and impact on the community.
- Query regarding the letter sent to the IPART and the grounds for seeking an SRV, referencing the Capital Works Program contained in the Community Strategic Plan.
- Comments regarding consultation undertaken by Council and concerns that Councillors will not take on board and act on the feedback provided by the community.
- Question around project timeline – when does CT Management finalise its reports and provide those to Council before a decision is made on submitting the SRV application?
- Question regarding land valuations for properties in the Liverpool Plains Shire.

Spring Ridge – Wednesday, 06 January 2020

Community comments/questions:

- Clarification sought on impact of SRV revenue on addressing the organisation's operating deficit. How much will the SRV actually raise each year, and will that revenue actually be enough to address the issues the organisation is facing?
- Comments around grant funding from State and Federal Governments. Will the grant funding dry up?
- Query around Council's reserves and retained earnings from operations. Can Council draw on reserves to make up the shortfall?
- Queries around efficiencies to be made by Council – if you're asking ratepayers to more, will you become more efficient? You said that Council has achieved efficiencies totalling \$500,000 over the past 12 months – what have you done, and do you have those documented? You have very clear figures around how we will pay through the SRV, but do you have clear figures on how much you're going to save through the Efficiency Plan?
- Queries around the functional review. You're saying you will generate efficiencies and potentially reduce expenditure on workforce, but the LTFP is projecting further increases? Are the efficiencies captured in the LTFP?
- Question around property valuations. Is modelling in the LTFP and SRV application based on current valuation assessment levels? Will the burden be redistributed equitably via next Revenue Policy?
- Clarification sought on IPART determination of SRV application. What if IPART comes back and says "No" to Council's SRV application? What is the likelihood of Council's SRV application being rejected?

- Has the last rate increase been factored in?
- Has Council employed more staff over the past five years? Total expenditure on staff has increased significantly over the past five years.
- What happens after the three years – will the SRV be lifted at the end of the three-year period?
- Does the community have any recourse against the decision? If Council decides to press ahead with the SRV application, and IPART approves it, does the community have any options of recourse?
- Queries around Council's long-term sustainability. Council is not “fit for the future”. Will the SRV result in Council becoming “fit for the future”? Is there a risk of Council becoming insolvent and an Administrator being appointed?
- Our agriculture industry contributes significantly to local, regional, state and national economies. We already pay so much, we subsidise infrastructure in the towns, and yet we're being asked to pay more for Council to maintain the roads and bridges that we actually use to provide jobs and generate economic activity.
- Comment around rates paid compared to land valuation.
- Question around Asset Management Plan. Why wasn't the Asset Management Plan updated since 2012?
- How is Council getting on with State funding for the Currabubula and Spring Ridge roads?

Premer – Wednesday, 06 January 2020

Community comments/questions:

- Comment around the SRV project timeframe. You're going in for an 8/8/8 SRV, but you haven't completed the Efficiency Plan – wouldn't it have made sense to complete the Efficiency Plan and achieve efficiencies first?
- Comment around the \$1.5 million and how that is calculated. Confusion around the 8 per cent and whether that includes the rate peg.
- Comment that Council is being very optimistic in terms of the planned works it intends to deliver via the SRV revenue. The projected revenue seems unlikely to cover the works Council is planning to deliver. Query around how those figures (for Capital Works Program) have been reached.
- Query around community's capacity to pay. Land prices are going up, rates are going up, but plenty of farmers don't benefit from services provided by Council (roads aren't graded, waste services aren't provided).
- Comment on Namoi Joint Organisation and capacity to explore shared services through shared services arrangements. Certain functions (governance, risk management, IT, planning) would lend themselves well to shared services arrangements. Has this been actively explored, and if not, will it be explored through the Efficiency Plan?
- Comment on whether Council has explored contracting out certain functions (mowing, light maintenance) in rural villages to farmers/locals in those villages? That would save Council money and be far more efficient (and potentially deliver better outcomes for ratepayers).
- How much of a proposition is it to sell the graders and get contractors to do all of it? I have contacted Council countless times about specific roads and causeways

(poorly maintained, never cleaned). Contractors could do this better. I've also contacted Council countless times about the steel guideposts all over the Shire that are damaged (risk to people, risk to animals) and nothing is done.

- Does the community have any input into the Service Efficiency Plan, and will that document be made publicly available?
- Queries around Council's Revenue Policy and how the rate burden is currently shared amongst ratepayers. Farmers are paying high rates already (compared against other councils), will this be reviewed?
- Query around amalgamation. If Council isn't sustainable, then can amalgamation be reconsidered?
- Comment around the *Fit for the Future* Improvement Plan. If this wasn't implemented, what is the guarantee that the Service Efficiency Plan will be implemented? Will the outstanding actions from that document be captured in the new Service Efficiency Plan?
- Moving forward, Council needs to outline the asset improvements that the SRV will deliver in each community – this should have been done as part of the consultation. If all the money is going into Quirindi, then that's a bitter pill to swallow.
- Query around the Service Efficiency Plan and how that feeds into the SRV application. If Council is successful in achieving an SRV, will it avoid making those efficiencies?
- With respect to Council's Revenue Policy – if the SRV gets up, how do we know the burden won't be redistributed to make farmers pay more? Property valuations may have gone up, but that doesn't translate in terms of income – it doesn't mean we can earn more money from that property.
- Comment around Council's workforce and the skill level of the workforce. Sometimes the problem isn't with the equipment, it's with the operators. What is Council doing to attract, retain and develop high-quality staff?
- If the community, in its feedback, says "No" – to what extent does IPART take that into account?

Willow Tree – Thursday, 07 January 2020

Community comments/questions:

- Why are you comparing our Shire to others which have different issues and different land usage?
- What about the money spent on the Quirindi library, where did that come from and do you think it was good use of funding?
- Questions around who is paying for the consultants. We the ratepayers? Why couldn't council have engaged someone local to do this consultation work?
- Who is IPART? What is their function and what ministry do they sit under?
- Questions around the depreciation of assets and the replacement thereof.
- How will pensioners afford to pay the extra increases when the pension has not been increased to the same percentage?
- Questions around where the money is currently being spent? Observation made that there is no obvious value for money.

- Work in and around the shire is not being done properly; therefore, money is being wasted.
- Has Council identified any assets or services which are not sustainable?
- How much has been spent on gravel re-sheeting and bitumen resealing previously?
- Does Council recognise the extra burden the SRV will put on landholders; especially in addition to the drought?
- How will the extra burden be distributed over farmland, mining, business and residential?
- Do ratepayers have to apply to Council as to where the money is being spent in relation to prioritising road maintenance and grass cutting?
- How is Council demonstrating to the community the efficiencies of spending the current income on their operations?
- How is Council reducing spending?
- Existing ratepayers are an under-utilised asset; suggestion that local farmers and contractors be engaged to maintain areas such as grass cutting, maintenance, filling potholes and grading,
- How many of the council staff are ratepayers in this shire?
- One person requested a show of hands as to who in the room is in favour of the SRV – this was declined
- Why isn't council living within its means?
- Concerns around how the SRV funds will contribute to the operating deficit. What will happen in 10 years' time? Will we be back in the same position and will council be asking for another SRV or will they learn to live within their means?
- Comments on how private businesses need to be efficient and regulate where their money is spent; they cannot go asking people for more money just because they have not prepared for the future and managed their money efficiently.
- Community wanted to know out of the total budget, how much has been spent on infrastructure compared to operational/administration
- Why wasn't Council addressing efficiencies/inefficiencies prior to this point in time?
- Why isn't Council working harder to encourage more business growth; ie, bring more business to the shire
- Senior staff should be managing the assets better; why is this not the case?
- Are all the graders still working?
- Why isn't council putting money aside for the maintenance of assets and infrastructure?
- Why is the percentage of 6% so high and how did you come to this figure?
- Many agreed there should be more community engagement; the community should be engaged and kept up to date, not just when something like this happens. It's one thing to have the documents on the website, but another to engage the community
- At what point are assets turned over for maximum depreciation?
- What has gone wrong; what systemic changes does Council need to make to ensure better efficiencies?
- Is council taking into consideration the previous three years of drought and the impact on the whole community and its ability to absorb the rate rises?

- Why is wages expenditure so high, can we cut back in this area?
- How did we get into this situation when the audit says the assets are in good condition, yet you are telling us you need to raise the rates to maintain assets and infrastructure?

8.7 Appendix G – Telephone survey results



Liverpool Plains Shire Council

SRV and Community Research

Prepared by: Micromex Research

Date: January 2021





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Background & Methodology - Summary

Why?

- Identify the community's overall level of satisfaction with Council performance
- Measure importance and satisfaction with Council services and facilities across the LGA
- Measure awareness levels and information received about the SRV
- Measure levels of support and preference for different SRV options

How?

- Telephone survey (landline and mobile) to N = 307 residents
- We use a 5 point scale (e.g. 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = very supportive)
- Greatest margin of error +/- 5.6%

When?

- Implementation 6th – 12th January 2021

Please see Appendix A for detailed background and methodology



Sample Profile

The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2016 ABS community profile of Liverpool Plains Shire Council.

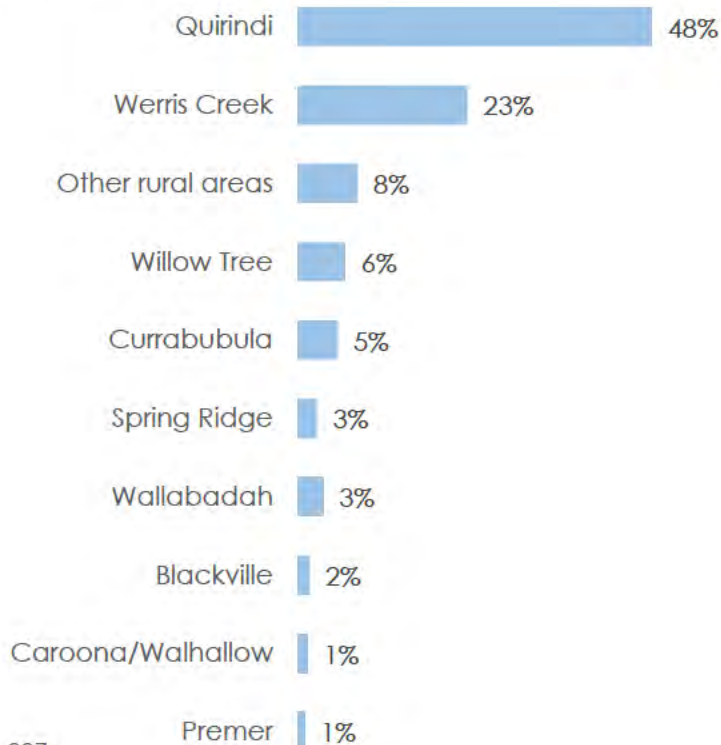
Gender



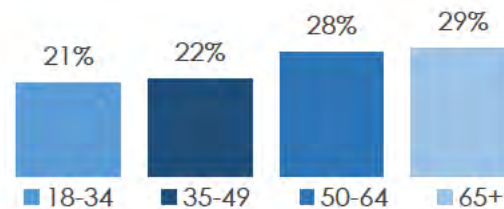
Type of rates paid*



Suburb



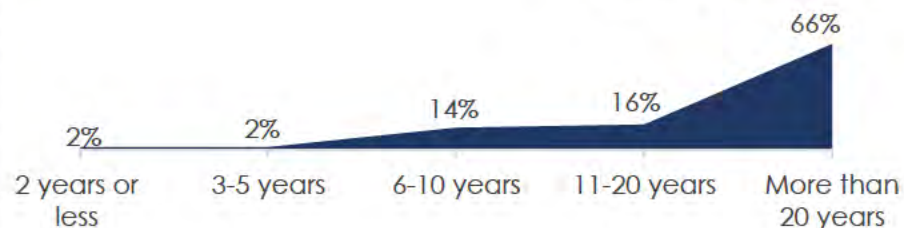
Age



Ratepayer status



Time lived in the area



Base: N = 307

*Please note: total percentages exceed 100% as residents could select multiple options



Key Findings



Summary Stats – Liverpool Plains Shire Council

Key Priorities For the Area



Concerns with Council e.g. overall, financial management, planning, lack of communication, and staffing



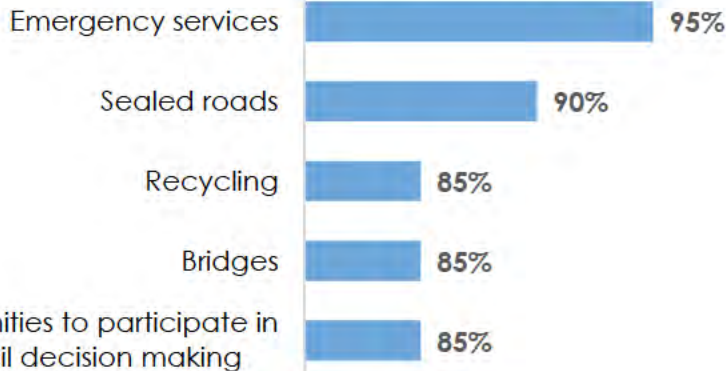
Condition/maintenance of roads and supporting infrastructure



More/improved community services, facilities, and activities

High 5 – Importance Areas

(Top 2 box % important/very important)

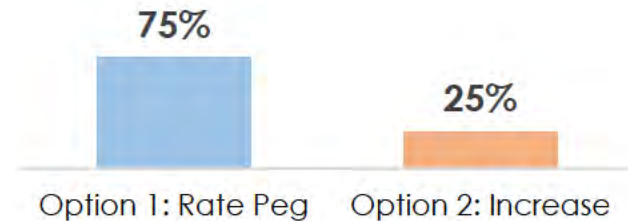


Overall Satisfaction



Are at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Council over the last 12 months

SRV Preference

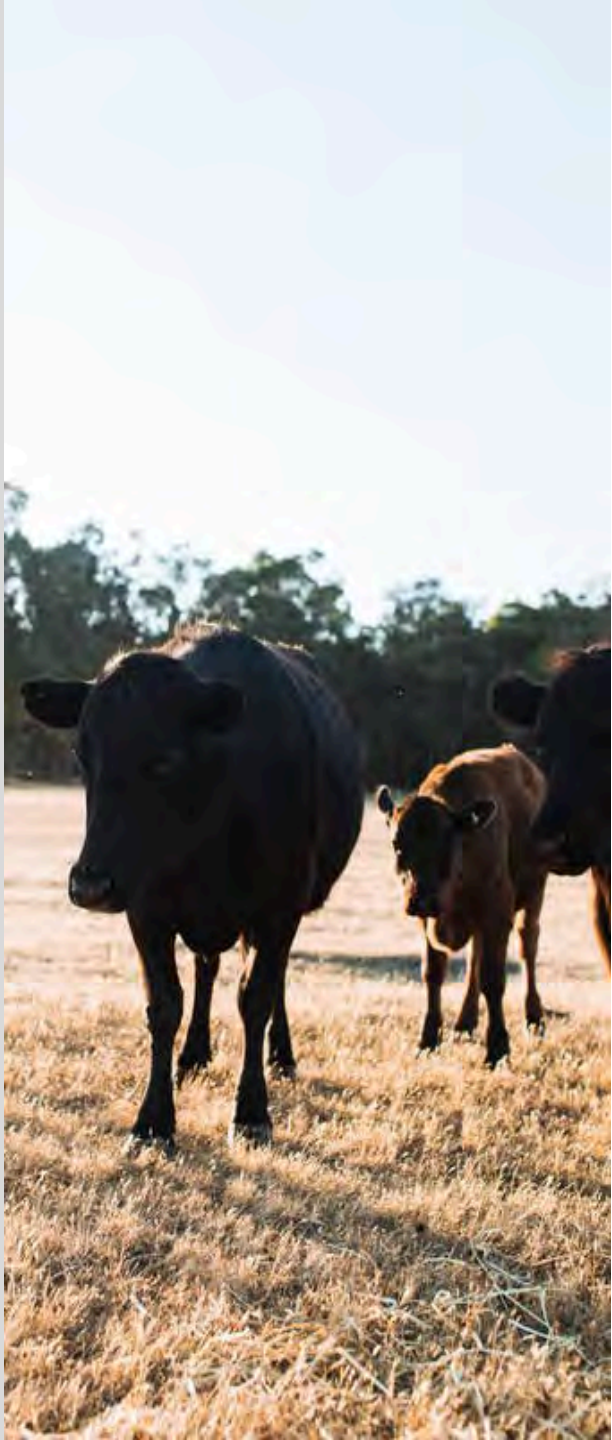


Awareness of SRV



Detailed Results





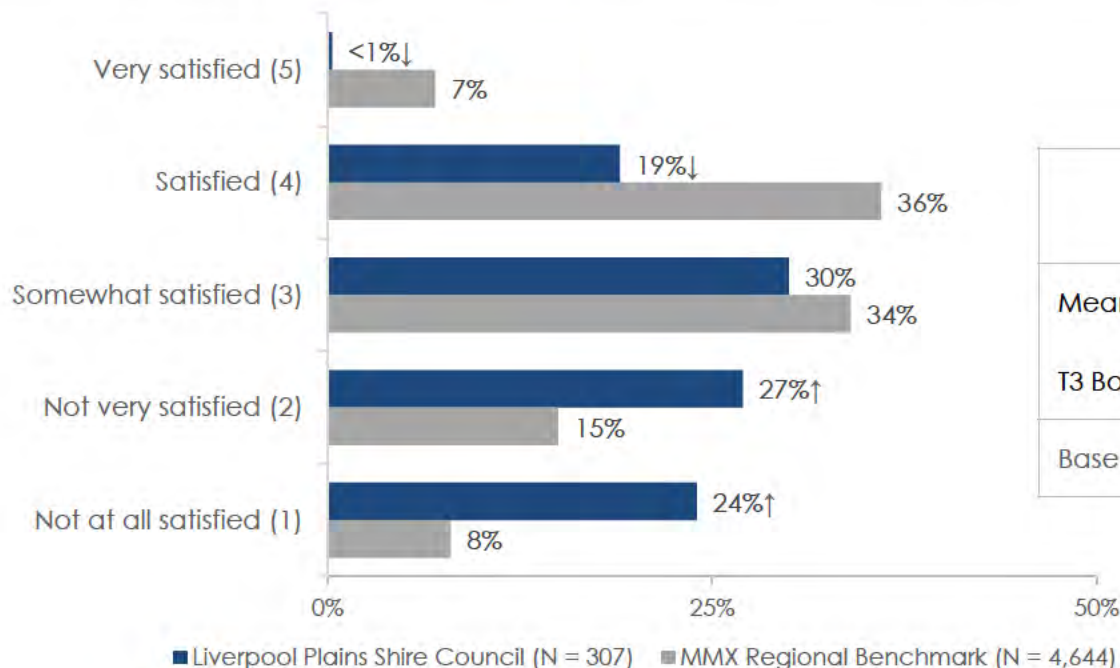
Detailed Results

1. Performance of Council
2. Awareness of SRV
3. SRV Options

Overall Satisfaction

Q4. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues, but across all responsibility areas?

	Overall	Gender		Age				Ratepayer status		Aware of the SRV	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Yes	No
Mean rating	2.46	2.34	2.58	2.28	2.50	2.52	2.49	2.41	2.89	2.39	2.90▲
Base	307	152	155	64	67	87	88	277	30	265	42



	Liverpool Plains Shire Council	Micromex LGA Benchmark - Regional
Mean rating	2.46↓	3.18
T3 Box	49%↓	77%
Base	307	4,644

Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

↑↓ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (compared to the Benchmark)

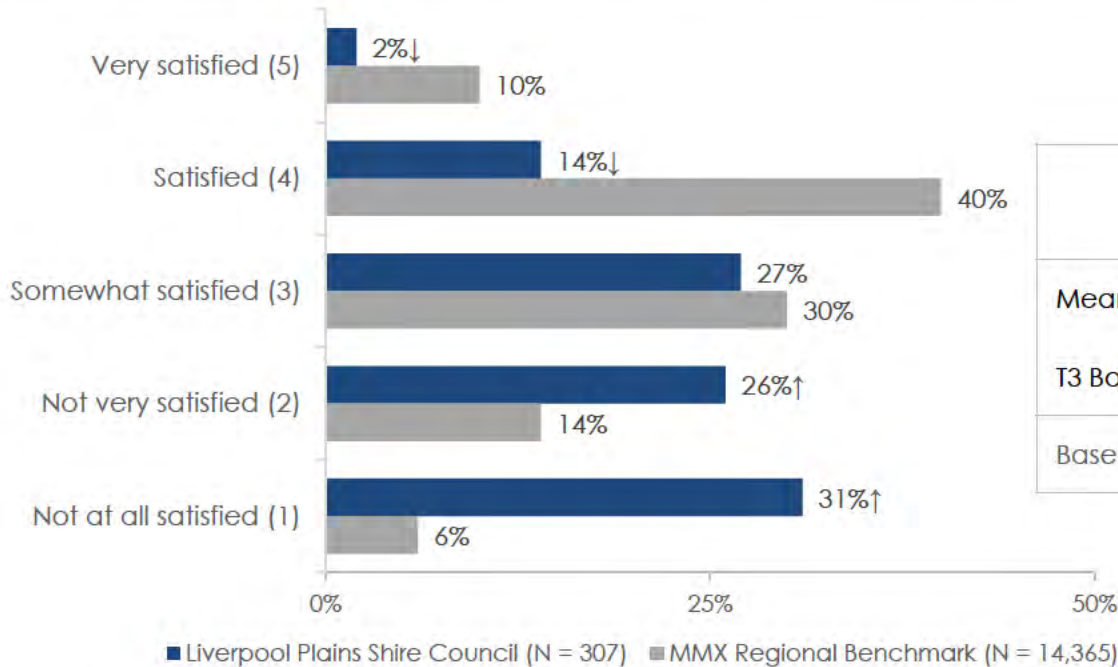
▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (by group)

49% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Council over the last 12 months. This is below our Regional benchmark norms for Councils that have applied for an SRV. There is no doubt that the proposed SRV is impacting satisfaction. As 74% of those not aware of the SRV are at least somewhat satisfied with Council performance.

Satisfaction with Level of Communication

Q3. How satisfied are you currently with the level of communication Council has with the community?

	Overall	Gender		Age				Ratepayer status		Aware of the SRV	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Yes	No
Mean rating	2.30	2.18	2.42	2.16	2.24	2.27	2.46	2.26	2.62	2.22	2.79▲
Base	307	152	155	64	67	87	88	277	30	265	42



	Liverpool Plains Shire Council	Micromex LGA Benchmark - Regional
Mean rating	2.30↓	3.32
T3 Box	43%↓	80%
Base	307	14,365

Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

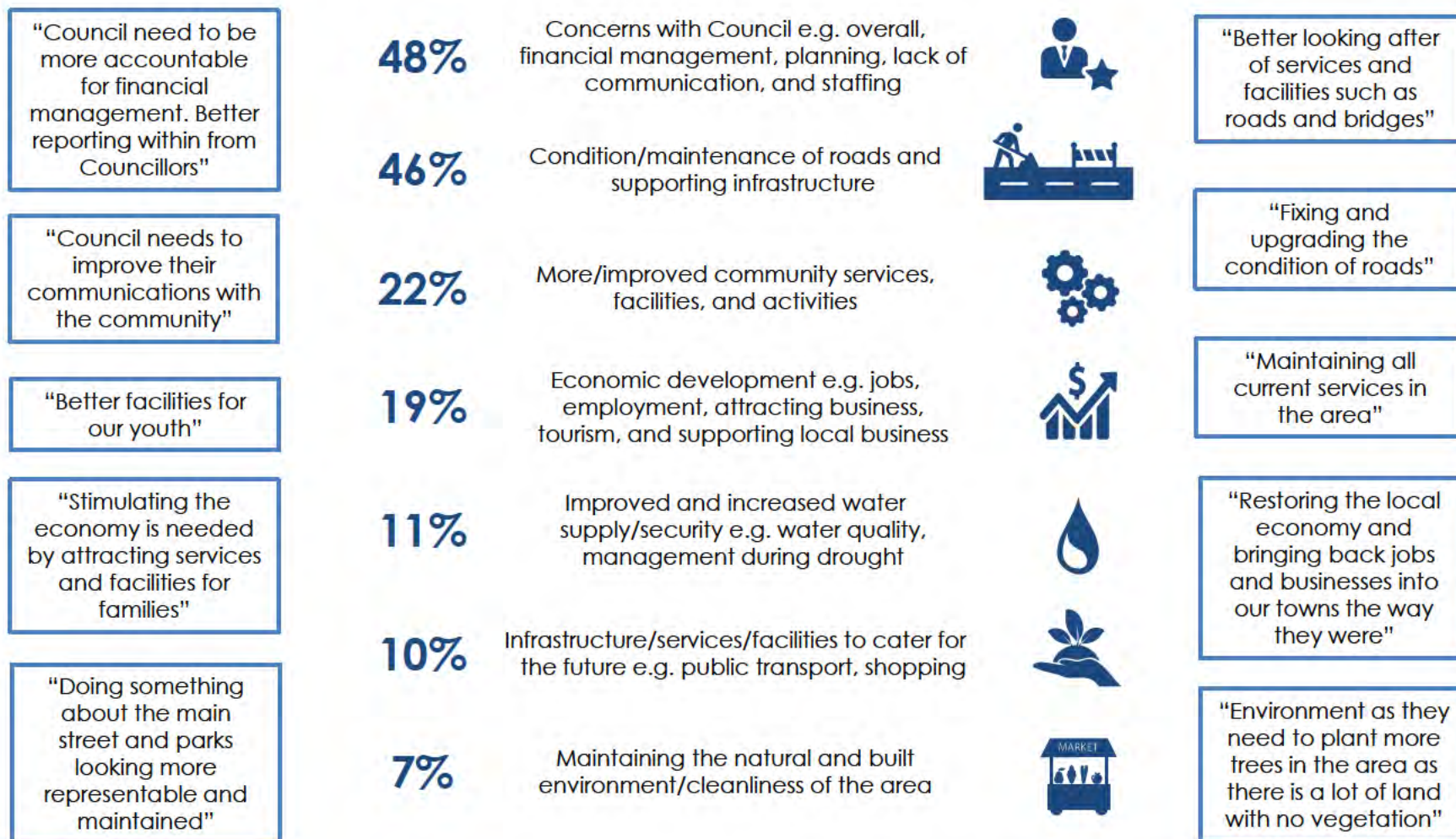
↑↓ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (compared to the Benchmark)

▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (by group)

43% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the level of communication Council currently has with the community, this score is below our Regional Benchmark norms.

Key Priorities within the Local Area

Q2. What do you think are the key priorities for Council in the local area?



Base: N = 307

Please see Appendix B for complete list of responses.

Residents are concerned with Council's financial management, communications and transparency. Specific priority areas include roads infrastructure, community services and facilities, and economic development.

Importance & Satisfaction – High 5 Low 5

Importance

The following services/facilities received the highest importance mean ratings:

High 5 importance	Mean	T2 Box
Emergency Services	4.69	95%
Sealed roads	4.61	90%
Recycling	4.40	85%
Bridges	4.39	85%
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	4.35	85%

The following services/facilities received the lowest importance mean ratings:

Low 5 importance	Mean	T2 Box
Plains Fitness Gym	2.97	42%
Libraries	3.23	46%
Public buildings and village halls	3.35	46%
Racecourse/Showgrounds	3.39	54%
Child care services	3.40	56%

Satisfaction

The following services/facilities received the highest satisfaction mean ratings:

High 5 satisfaction	Mean	T3 Box
Emergency Services	3.99	91%
Libraries	3.93	91%
General garbage collection	3.93	88%
Sewerage management	3.85	90%
Plains Fitness Gym	3.76	86%

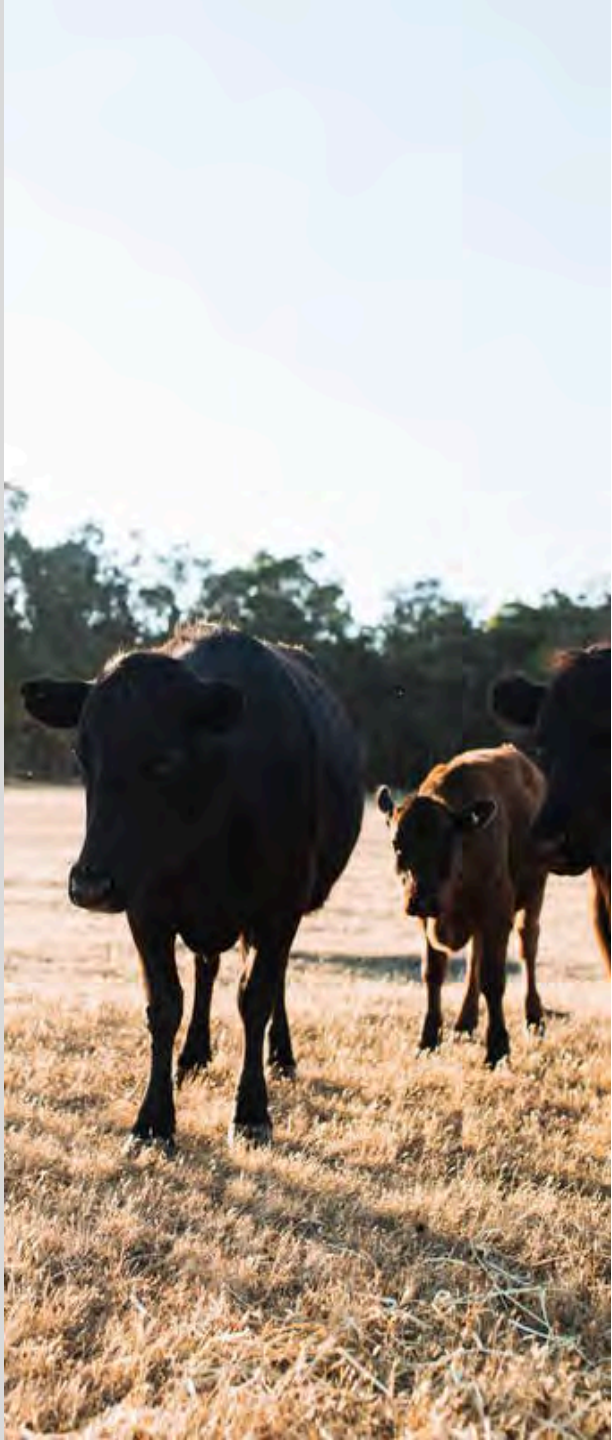
The following services/facilities received the lowest satisfaction mean ratings:

Low 5 satisfaction	Mean	T3 Box
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	2.04	31%
Unsealed roads	2.17	36%
Economic development	2.19	41%
Management of development	2.29	43%
Sealed roads	2.46	48%

Scale: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important
Top 2 box = Important/Very Important

Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied
Top 3 box = Somewhat Satisfied – Very satisfied

A core element of this community survey was the rating of 31 facilities/services in terms of Importance and Satisfaction. These results will be further analysed and reported on to assist with the development of the Community Strategic Plan.



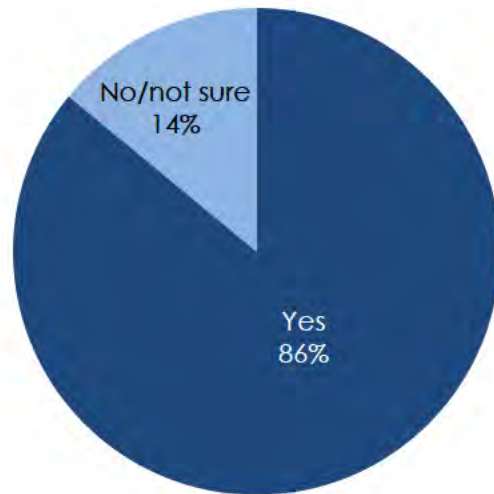
Detailed Results

1. Performance of Council
2. **Awareness of SRV**
3. SRV Options

Awareness of SRV

Q6a. Prior to this call, were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Yes %	86%	87%	86%	90%	86%	90%	81%	88%▲	70%
Base	307	152	155	64	67	87	88	277	30



Base: N = 307

	Liverpool Plains Shire Council	Micromex LGA Benchmark - Regional
Yes %	86%↑	49%
Base	307	5,443

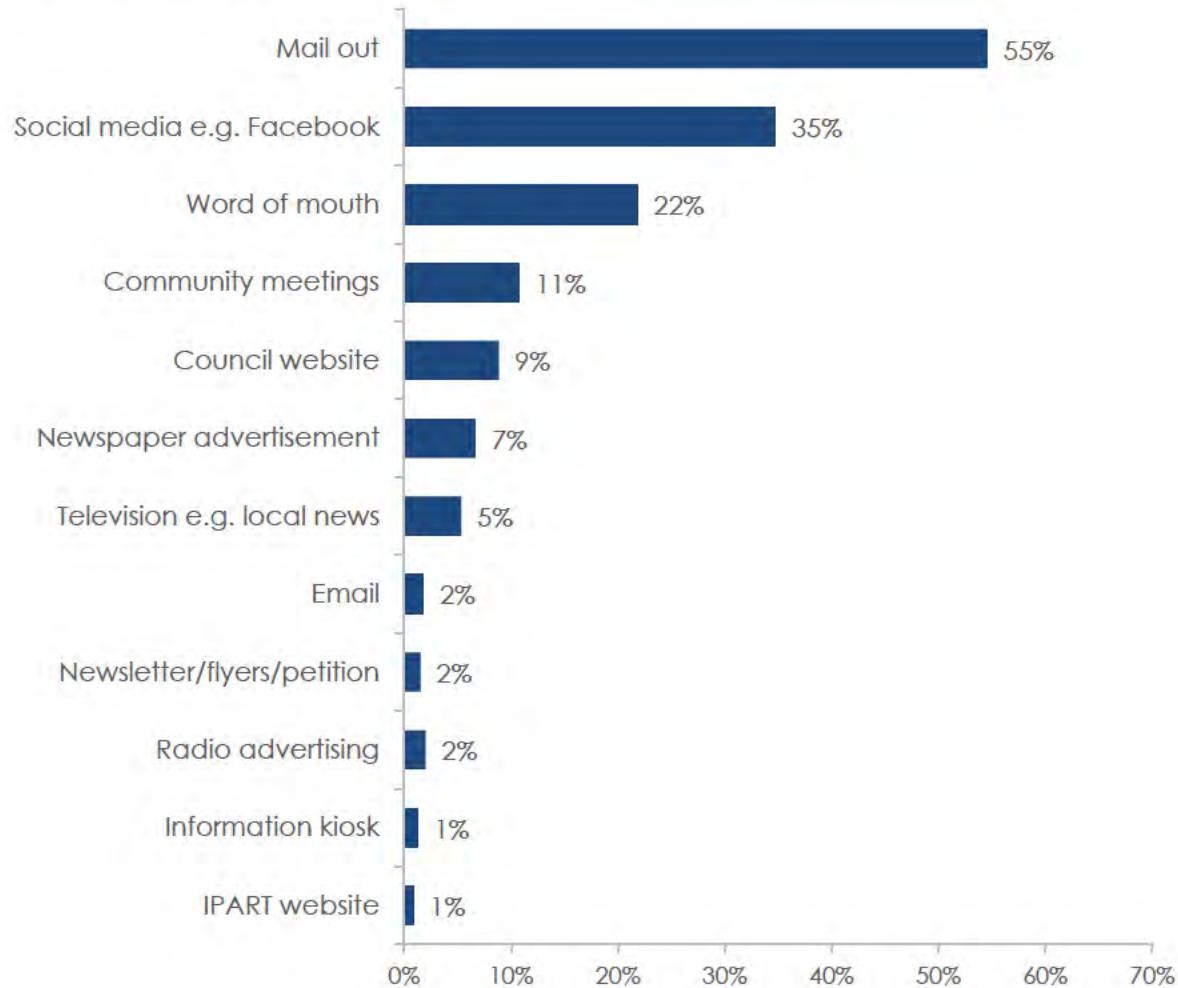
↑↓ = A significantly higher/lower level of awareness (compared to the Benchmark)

▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (by group)

Overall 86% of residents were aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards an SRV, ratepayers being significantly more aware. This is significantly above our SRV awareness score.

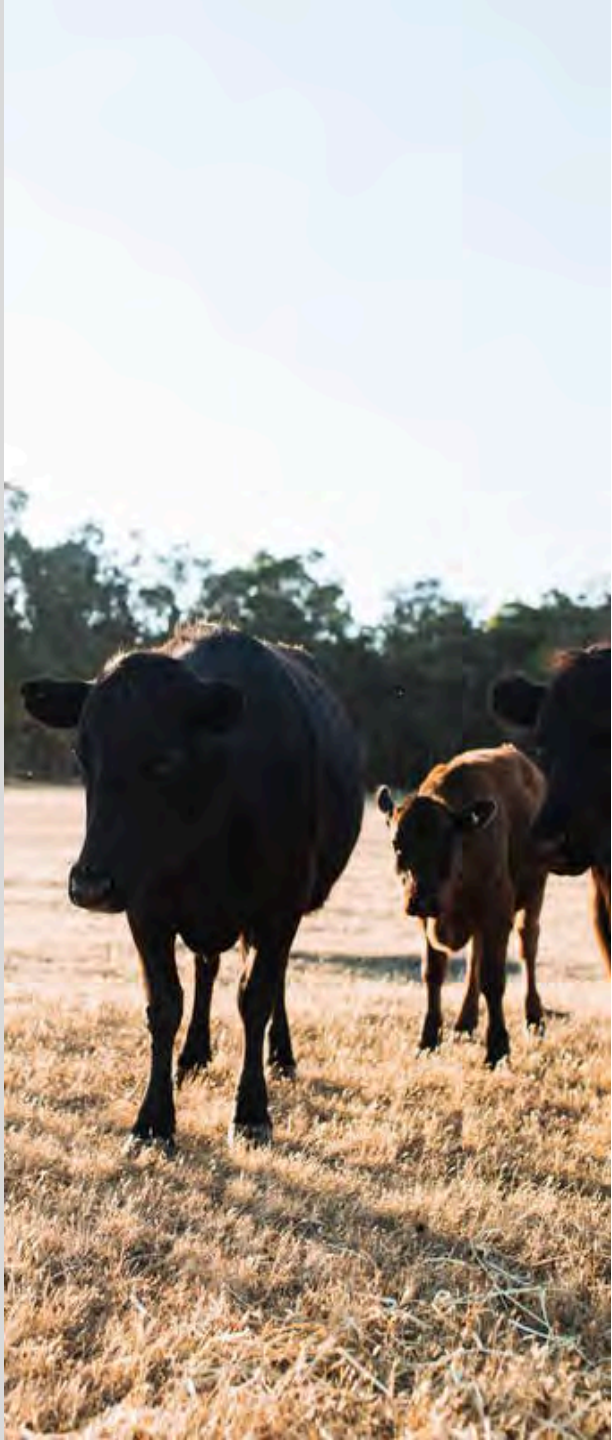
Being Informed of the SRV

Q6b. How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation?



Base: N = 265

Of those aware of the SRV, direct mail out (55%) and social media (35%) were the most common ways for being informed.



Detailed Results

1. Performance of Council
2. Awareness of SRV
3. SRV Options

Introduction: Concept Statement

At present, Council's revenue is regulated by the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART limits the amount by which councils can increase rates from one year to the next. At the moment, that amount, known as the rate peg, is an annual increase of 2.0%.

Over recent years, Council has implemented a range of productivity savings, reduced costs across our operations, but there are no easy solutions to addressing an increasing funding gap. If Council does not address this gap now, our community assets (such as our roads, drainage, swimming pools and public buildings) will deteriorate. To address this situation, councils are able to apply for rate increases above rate peg. This is called a Special Rate Variation.

Liverpool Plains Shire Council is considering applying for a permanent SRV there are two options which I would like you to consider.

Let's look at the options in more detail:

- **Option 1 – Rate Peg Only.** We will need to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise our range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term
- **Option 2 – Maintain.** The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund existing services and maintenance of local infrastructure





Council acknowledges that any rate increase may adversely impact some community members. Council has a Hardship Policy and alternative payment options to assist ratepayers should they have difficulty keeping up with their rate payments.

The concept statement above was read to participants and option exposure was randomised to nullify order effect.

Option 1: Rate Peg

No special rate variation. This option would continue the status quo with rates only increasing by the rate peg amount (assumed to be 2.0% per year).

Under this option over the next three financial years:

-  1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$772 per annum, will increase by approximately \$15 in Year 1, \$16 in Year 2, and a further \$16 in year 3 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$819 in 2023/2024.
-  2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$1,977 per annum, will increase by approximately \$40 in Year 1, \$40 in Year 2, and a further \$41 in year 3 – meaning the average Business rate will be \$2098 in 2023/2024.
-  3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$4,441 per annum, will increase by approximately \$89 in Year 1, \$91 in Year 2, and a further \$92 in year 3 – meaning the average Farmland rate will be \$4,713 in 2023/2024.
-  4. Mining – The average Mining rates, which are currently \$109,947 per annum, will increase by approximately \$2,199 in Year 1, \$2,243 in Year 2, and a further \$2,288 in year 3 – meaning the average Mining rate will be \$116,676 in 2023/2024.

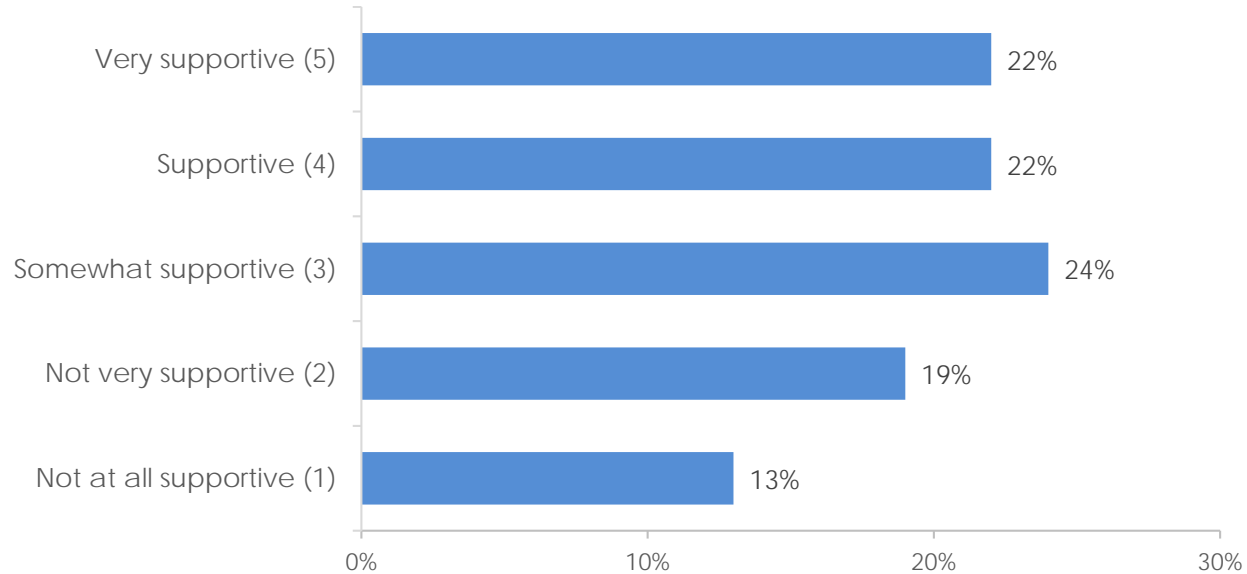
Under this option the impact would be:

- Our sealed and gravel road networks would deteriorate.
- Council would not be able to maintain the range of facilities and services currently provided.
- Council would rely heavily on grant funding to renew existing assets.
- Community and recreational facilities such as pools and buildings will continue to deteriorate if grant funding is not successful, and potentially closed when the risk of operating becomes unacceptable.
- Council's backlog of roadworks would continue to increase and gravel roads would not be improved.

Support for Option 1: Rate Peg

Q5a. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with option 1?

	Overall	Gender		Age				Ratepayer status		Aware of the SRV	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Yes	No
Mean rating	3.22	3.22	3.22	3.07	3.39	3.34	3.07	3.25	2.89	3.24	3.05
Base	307	138	169	29	56	80	142	282	25	261	46



Base: N = 307

68% of residents are at least somewhat supportive of the rate peg only increase.





Option 2: Increase

Under Option 2, Council would apply for an SRV of 8% per annum for three years to enhance infrastructure and services. At the end of the period the Special Rate Variation increase would be built into the rate base.

If implemented, the SRV will apply to your general rates only and will not apply to the waste management, water and sewerage charges on your rates notices. SRV funds would not be used on waste management, water and sewerage services, which are all funded through direct fees and charges.

This would represent a cumulative rise of 26% over the three years. This figure includes the rate peg increase of 2.0% each year.

Under this option over the next three financial years:

-  1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$772 per annum, will increase by approximately \$62 in Year 1, \$67 in Year 2, and a further \$72 in year 3 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$972 in 2023/2024.
-  2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$1,977 per annum, will increase by approximately \$158 in Year 1, \$171 in Year 2, and a further \$184 in year 3 – meaning the average Business rate will be \$2,490 in 2023/2024.
-  3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$4,441 per annum, will increase by approximately \$355 in Year 1, \$384 in Year 2, and a further \$414 in year 3 – meaning the average Farmland rate will be \$5,594 in 2023/2024.
-  4. Mining – The average Mining rates, which are currently \$109,947 per annum, will increase by approximately \$8,796 in Year 1, \$9,499 in Year 2, and a further \$10,259 in year 3 – meaning the average Mining rate will be \$138,501 in 2023/2024.

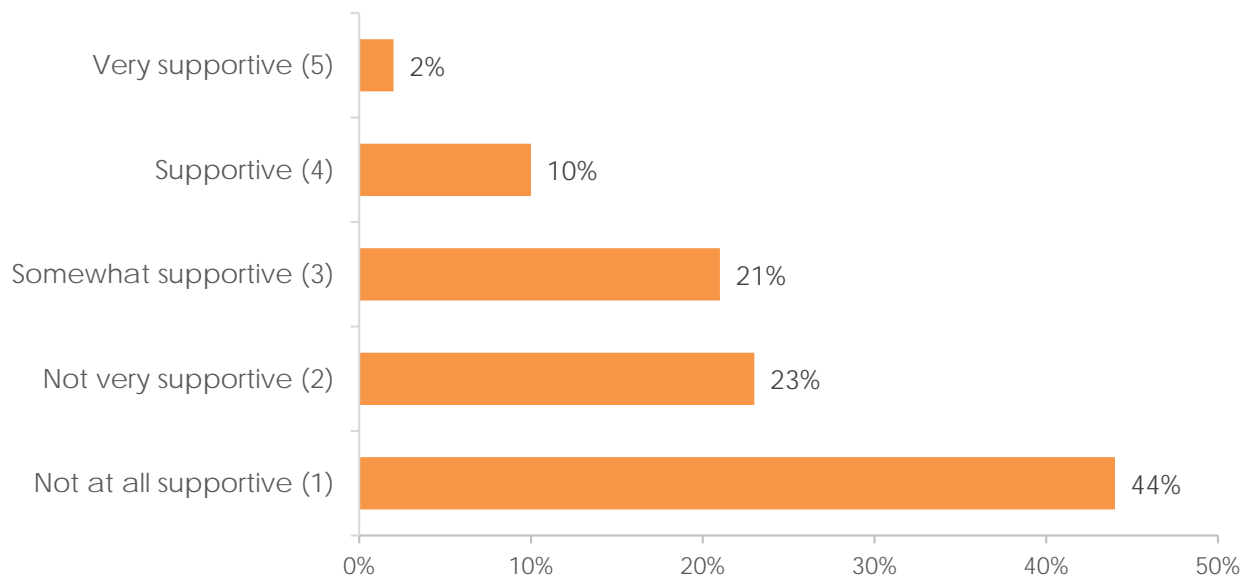
The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate an additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund maintenance of local infrastructure, including:

- Grading unsealed local roads to meet existing service levels;
- Additional maintenance of rural roads;
- Roadwork and renewal of urban streets;
- Increased funding to maintain existing services across Council operations
- Additional bitumen resealing and gravel re-sheeting to keep our roads at a good standard and prevent them from deteriorating;
- Culverts, causeways, drainage and footpath renewal; and
- Community assets renewal.

Support for Option 2: Increase

Q5b. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with option 2?

	Overall	Gender		Age				Ratepayer status		Aware of the SRV	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Yes	No
Mean rating	2.03	1.97	2.10	2.15	2.01	1.85	2.15	1.98▼	2.53	1.96▼	2.50
Base	307	152	155	64	67	87	88	277	30	265	42



Base: N = 307

Note: Please see Appendix B for results by suburb

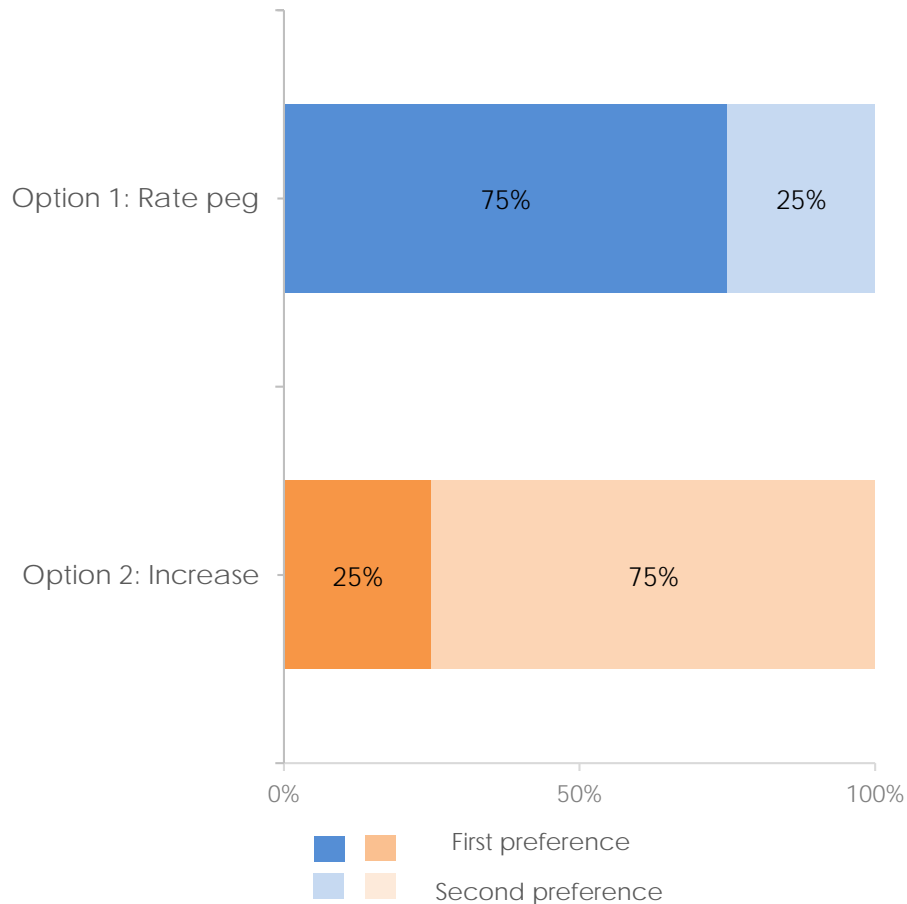
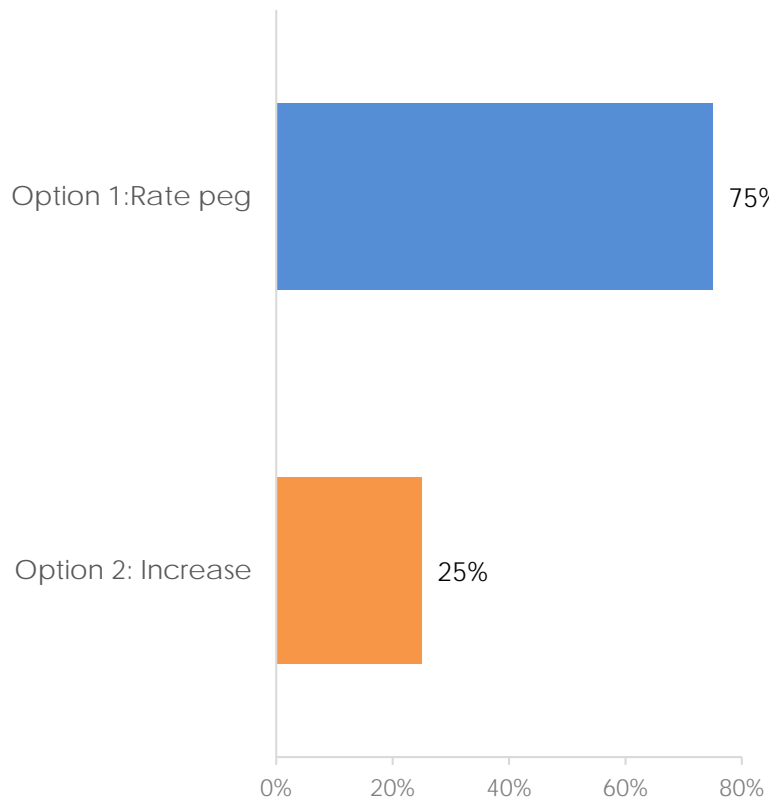
▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of support (by group)

33% of residents are at least somewhat supportive of an increase above the rate peg. Ratepayers and those who were aware of the SRV prior to the research are significantly less supportive of this option.

Preferences for SRV Options

Q5c. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference?

First Preference



Base: N = 307

Option 1 (rate peg) was the preferred choice for residents, with 75% selecting this as their first preference.

Preferences for SRV Options – By Demographics

Q5a. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference?

First Preference

	Overall	Gender		Age				Aware of the SRV	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Yes	No
First preference: Option 1: Rate peg	75%	82%▲	68%	73%	74%	82%	70%	75%	76%
First preference: Option 2: Increase	25%	18%	32%▲	27%	26%	18%	30%	25%	24%
Base	307	152	155	64	67	87	88	265	42

	Ratepayer status		Exposed to residential rates spiel	Exposed to farmland rates spiel
	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer		
First preference: Option 1: Rate peg	77%▲	52%	74%	77%
First preference: Option 2: Increase	23%	48%▲	26%	23%
Base	277	30	217	80

▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (by group)

Residents first preference is option 1: rate peg (75%), additionally males and ratepayers are significantly more likely to prefer this option.

Reasons for Preferring Option 1: Rate Peg

Q5c. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference?

Q5d. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

"Most community members are on a fixed income and cannot afford the extra increase"

"Council needs to look into other options for funding rather than increasing rates"

"Council do not do enough with the current rates"

"Why should us residents be funding Councils mismanagement of funds?"

Option 1: Rate peg (75%)	N = 307
Rates are high already/cannot afford a rate increase/most affordable option	32%
Do not trust Council will spend their money wisely/investing in the wrong areas	25%
Improvements are needed with Councils financial management	24%
Not getting value for the rates currently paid	20%
Other sources of revenue should be sought e.g. state of federal funding	11%
A better option than the SRV	4%
Happy as things are currently	1%
Not supportive of either option	1%
Ratepayers shouldn't have to pay more	1%
Not sure	1%

"We already pay some of the highest rates in the state"

"Dishonesty of the Council as they will not spend the funds where they suggest they would and are already mismanaging their finances"

"Financial circumstances - money wouldn't go towards the area as the residents have lost trust in the Council. They would just take the money"

"Not good value for ratepayers dollars"

32% of residents feel that rates are already too high, followed by a lack of trust that Council will spend rates in the right areas (25%), and improvements are needed with Councils financial management (24%).

Reasons for Preferring Option 2: Increase

Q5c. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference?

Q5d. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

"There is a need for rates to be raised for the continuance of the community"

"Beneficial for everyone in terms of the Shire"

"Increased spending is necessary"

"Affordable increase in order for our area to not go backwards. However, they need to do what they say they will"

Option 2: Increase (25%)	N = 307
It is necessary/improvements are needed in the area/benefits the community and the future	22%
Happy to pay the increase for benefits/reasonable amount to pay/affordable for me	3%
Support an increase/but should be under 8%'	2%
We don't have a choice	<1%
Don't know/no particular reason	1%

"Hoping this option would benefit the community in where things are needed to get done"

"SRV rate rise is too high. I understand that there may need to be a rate rise, but can that amount of 8% be reconsidered to a lower rate?"

"Means they can actually maintain the facilities, services and infrastructure in the area"

Those supportive of the SRV feel that the increase is necessary to improve the area, and will ultimately benefit the community.

Summary of SRV Findings

1. Prior to contact 86% of residents were already aware of the proposed SRV.
 - This is significantly above our regional awareness score and demonstrates that Council has successfully communicated the proposal to the Liverpool Plains Community.
2. Despite the stated need for an SRV the Liverpool Plains Shire Community are not in favour of the proposal.
 - 75% of residents selected Option 1: rate peg as their first preference
 - Primary reasons are: 'rates are high already/cannot afford a rate increase/not affordable' (32%), 'Do not trust Council will spend their money wisely/investing in the wrong areas' (25%) and 'improvements are needed with Councils financial management' (24%).
 - 25% of residents selected Option 2: Increase as their first preference
 - The primary reason is: 'It is necessary/improvements are needed in the area/benefits the community and the future' (22%).





Appendix A: Background & Methodology

Background & Methodology

Sample selection and error

A total of 307 resident interviews were completed. Respondents were selected by means of a computer based random selection process using the electronic White Pages and SamplePages.

A sample size of 307 residents provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 5.6% at 95% confidence. This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of N = 307 residents, 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 5.6%.

For the survey under discussion the greatest margin of error is 5.6%. This means, for example, that an answer such as 'yes' (50%) to a question could vary from 56% to 44%.

The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2016 ABS Census data for Liverpool Plains Shire Council.

Interviewing

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with The Research Society Code of Professional Behaviour.

Prequalification

Participants in this survey were pre-qualified as being over the age of 18, and not working for, nor having an immediate family member working for, Liverpool Plains Shire Council.

Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using Q Professional.

Within the report, ▲▼ and blue and red font colours are used to identify statistically significant differences between groups, i.e., gender, age, ratepayer status and awareness.

Significance difference testing is a statistical test performed to evaluate the difference between two measurements. To identify the statistically significant differences between the groups of means, 'One-Way Anova tests' and 'Independent Samples T-tests' were used. 'Z Tests' were also used to determine statistically significant differences between column percentages.



Background & Methodology

Ratings questions

The Unipolar Scale of 1 to 5 was used in all rating questions, where 1 was the lowest importance or satisfaction and 5 the highest importance or satisfaction.

This scale allowed us to identify different levels of importance and satisfaction across respondents.

Top 2 (T2) Box: refers to the aggregate percentage (%) score of the top two scores for importance. (i.e. important & very important)

Note: Only respondents who rated services/facilities a 4 or 5 in importance were asked to rate their satisfaction with that service/facility.

Top 3 (T3) Box: refers to the aggregate percentage (%) score of the top three scores for satisfaction or support. (i.e. somewhat satisfied, satisfied & very satisfied and somewhat supportive, supportive & very supportive)

We refer to T3 Box Satisfaction in order to express moderate to high levels of satisfaction in a non-discretionary category. We only report T2 Box Importance in order to provide differentiation and allow us to demonstrate the hierarchy of community priorities.

Percentages

All percentages are calculated to the nearest whole number and therefore the total may not exactly equal 100%.

Micromex LGA Benchmark


Micromex has developed Community Satisfaction Benchmarks using normative data from over 60 unique councils, more than 130 surveys and over 75,000 interviews since 2012.



Councils Used to Create the Micromex Regional Benchmark

The Regional Benchmark was composed from the Council areas listed below:		
Albury	Hawkesbury	Narrandera
Ballina	Kempsey	Parkes
Bathurst	Lachlan Shire	Port Macquarie-Hastings
Bland Shire	Lake Macquarie	Richmond Valley
Blue Mountains	Leeton Shire Council	Singleton
Byron Shire	Lismore	Tamworth
Central Coast	Lithgow	Tenterfield
Cessnock	Maitland	Tweed Shire
Coffs Harbour	MidCoast	Upper Hunter
Eurobodalla	Midwestern Regional	Wagga Wagga
Forbes	Moree Plains	Wingecarribee
Glen Innes	Murray River	Wollondilly
Gosford (Central Coast)	Murrumbidgee Shire	Yass Valley
Great Lakes	Narrabri	





Appendix B: Additional Analyses

Key Priorities within the Local Area

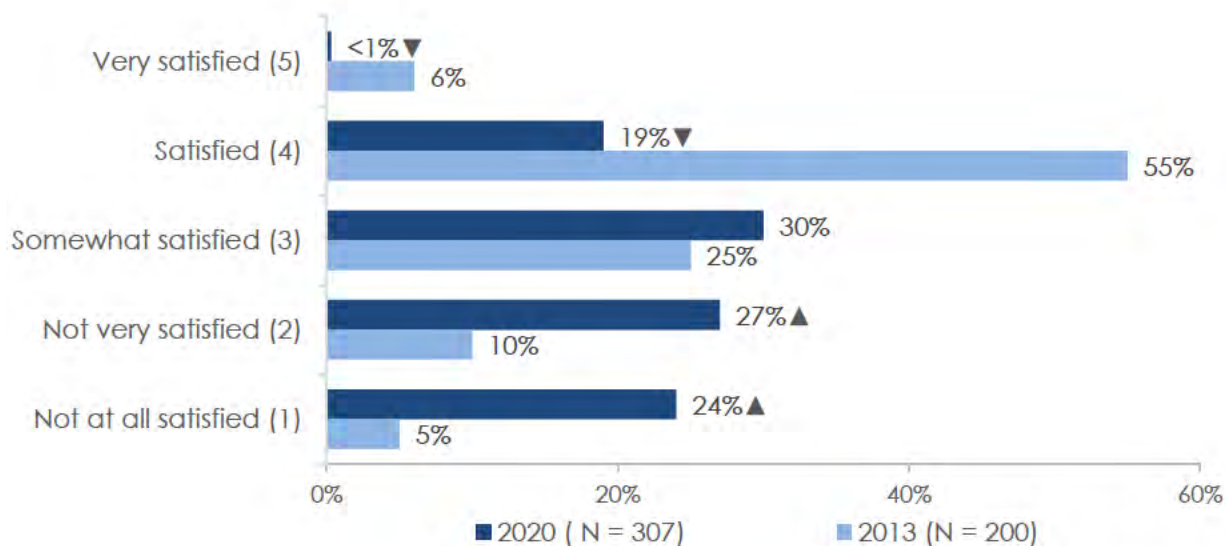
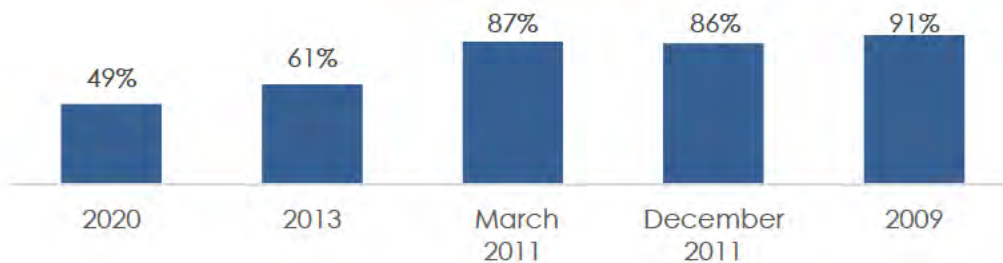
Q2. What do you think are the key priorities for Council in the local area?

	N = 307
Concerns with Council e.g. overall, financial management, planning, lack of communication, and staffing	48%
Condition/maintenance of roads and supporting infrastructure	46%
More/improved community services, facilities, and activities	22%
Economic development e.g. jobs, employment, attracting business, tourism, and supporting local business	19%
Improved and increased water supply/security e.g. water quality, management during drought	11%
Infrastructure/services/facilities to cater for the future e.g. public transport, shopping	10%
Maintaining the natural and built environment/cleanliness of the area	7%
Addressing pollution	1%
Community safety e.g. more police	1%
Increased/improved health/medical services/facilities	1%
Cultural awareness	<1%
Happy with the way things are	<1%
Don't know nothing	4%

Overview – Overall Satisfaction

Q4. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues, but across all responsibility areas?

T3B Satisfaction Scores



Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied
 ▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (by year)

Overall satisfaction with Councils performance has continued to soften since 2009.

Appendix C: Questionnaire



**Liverpool Plains Shire Council
Community Survey
January 2021**

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is _____ from Micromex Research and we are conducting a survey on behalf of Liverpool Plains Shire Council. The survey will take about 15 minutes.

It is a random sample survey and accordingly I would like to speak to the person who has the next birthday in your household and is over the age of 18 years, would you be able to assist us please?

Thank you for agreeing to assist us with this survey.

QA. Before we start, I would like to check whether you work for Liverpool Plains Shire Council?

- Yes (Terminate survey)
 No

QB. Please stop me when I read out your age bracket: Prompt

- Under 18 (Terminate survey)
 18-34
 35-49
 50-64
 65+

QC. How long have you lived in the Liverpool Plains Shire Council area? Prompt

- Under 6 months
 6 months – 2 years
 3 – 5 years
 6 – 10 years
 11 – 20 years
 More than 20 years

QD. In which area of the shire do you live?

- Quirindi
 Werris Creek
 Willow Tree
 Wallabadah
 Currabubula
 Spring Ridge
 Premer
 Blackville
 Caroon/Walallow
 Other rural areas

QE. Does your household pay Council rates to Liverpool Plains Shire Council, if so, which type(s) do you pay? Prompt

- Residential (1)
 Business (2)
 Farmland (3)
 Mining (4)
 None of these (Default to residential script)

IF MULTI - PLEASE NOTE THAT RESIDENT WILL ALWAYS BE ASKED FOR THE HIGHEST RATES THEY PAY.

Part A

Q1. In the first part could you please indicate which best describes your opinion of the importance of the following services/facilities to you, and in the second part, the level of satisfaction with the performance of that service. The scale is from 1 to 5 where 1 is low importance and low satisfaction, and 5 is high importance and high satisfaction. Prompt ONLY ASK SAT IF IMP 4 OR 5

Community facilities

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5
Parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public buildings and village halls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Libraries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sporting ovals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of town centres and public spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swimming pools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plains Fitness Gym	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Infrastructure

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5
Unsealed roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sealed roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bridges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racecourse/Showgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sewerage management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Footpaths	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water supply	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General garbage collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Landfills and waste transfer stations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recycling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drainage/flood management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Human services

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5
Access to government services (i.e. Centrelink, Service NSW)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child care services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Home Support services (i.e. Meals on Wheels)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationship with indigenous residents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support for volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disability access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emergency Services (i.e. SES, VRA, RFS)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Corporate services and management

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low		High			Low		High		
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management of development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental and sustainability initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heritage conservation/promotion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Definitions to be read out for Part A – ‘Corporate services and management’

- Economic development is attracting and assisting new businesses and creating jobs
- Management of development is policing building construction and what types of developments can be located in which areas

Q2. What do you think are the key priorities for Council in the local area?

.....

Part B

Q3. How satisfied are you currently with the level of communication Council has with the community?

Prompt

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not very satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

Q4. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues, but across all responsibility areas? Prompt

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not very satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

As we have just discussed Liverpool Plains Shire Council delivers a broad range of services and has the responsibility to maintain the facilities and infrastructure across the shire

At present, Council’s revenue is regulated by the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART limits the amount by which councils can increase rates from one year to the next. At the moment, that amount, known as the rate peg, is an annual increase of 2.0%.

Over recent years, Council has implemented a range of productivity savings, reduced costs across our operations, but there are no easy solutions to addressing an increasing funding gap. If Council does not address this gap now, our community assets (such as our roads, drainage, swimming pools and public buildings) will deteriorate. To address this situation, councils are able to apply for rate increases above rate peg. This is called a Special Rate Variation.

Liverpool Plains Shire Council is considering applying for a permanent SRV there are two options which I would like you to consider.

Let’s look at the options in more detail:

- **Option 1 – Rate Peg Only.** We will need to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise our range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term
- **Option 2 – Maintain.** The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund existing services and maintenance of local infrastructure

Council acknowledges that any rate increase may adversely impact some community members. Council has a Hardship Policy and alternative payment options to assist ratepayers should they have difficulty keeping up with their rate payments.

Programmer note: Rotate Order

Option 1: Rate peg only

No special rate variation. This option would continue the status quo with rates only increasing by the rate peg amount (assumed to be 2.0% per year).

Under this option over the next three financial years: (READ OUT/SHOW APPROPRIATE SCRIPT BASED ON ANSWERS AT QE, but only 1)

1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$772 per annum, will increase by approximately \$15 in Year 1, \$16 in Year 2, and a further \$16 in year 3 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$819 in 2023/2024.
2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$1,977 per annum, will increase by approximately \$40 in Year 1, \$40 in Year 2, and a further \$41 in year 3 – meaning the average Business rate will be \$2098 in 2023/2024.
3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$4,441 per annum, will increase by approximately \$89 in Year 1, \$91 in Year 2, and a further \$92 in year 3 – meaning the average Farmland rate will be \$4,713 in 2023/2024.
4. Mining – The average Mining rates, which are currently \$109,947 per annum, will increase by approximately \$2,199 in Year 1, \$2,243 in Year 2, and a further \$2,288 in year 3 – meaning the average Mining rate will be \$116,676 in 2023/2024.

Under this option the impact would be:

- Our sealed and gravel road networks would deteriorate.
- Council would not be able to maintain the range of facilities and services currently provided.
- Council would rely heavily on grant funding to renew existing assets.
- Community and recreational facilities such as pools and buildings will continue to deteriorate if grant funding is not successful, and potentially closed when the risk of operating becomes unacceptable.
- Council’s backlog of roadworks would continue to increase and gravel roads would not be improved.

Q5a. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with Option 1? Prompt

- Very supportive
- Supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Not very supportive
- Not at all supportive

Option 2: Special Rate Variation

Under Option 2, Council would apply for an SRV of 8% per annum for three years to enhance infrastructure and services. At the end of the period the Special Rate Variation increase would be built into the rate base.

If implemented, the SRV will apply to your general rates only and will not apply to the waste management, water and sewerage charges on your rates notices. SRV funds would not be used on waste management, water and sewerage services, which are all funded through direct fees and charges.

This would represent a cumulative rise of 26% over the three years. This figure includes the rate peg increase of 2.0% each year.

Under this option over the next three financial years: (READ OUT/SHOW APPROPRIATE SCRIPT BASED ON ANSWERS AT QE, but only 1)

1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$772 per annum, will increase by approximately \$62 in Year 1, \$67 in Year 2, and a further \$72 in year 3 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$972 in 2023/2024.
2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$1,977 per annum, will increase by approximately \$158 in Year 1, \$171 in Year 2, and a further \$184 in year 3 – meaning the average Business rate will be \$2,490 in 2023/2024.
3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$4,441 per annum, will increase by approximately \$355 in Year 1, \$384 in Year 2, and a further \$414 in year 3 – meaning the average Farmland rate will be \$5,594 in 2023/2024.
4. Mining – The average Mining rates, which are currently \$109,947 per annum, will increase by approximately \$8,796 in Year 1, \$9,499 in Year 2, and a further \$10,259 in year 3 – meaning the average Mining rate will be \$138,501 in 2023/2024.

The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate and additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund maintenance of local infrastructure, including:

- Grading unsealed local roads to meet existing service levels;
- Additional maintenance of rural roads;
- Roadwork and renewal of urban streets;
- Increased funding to maintain existing services across Council operations
- Additional bitumen resealing and gravel re-sheeting to keep our roads at a good standard and prevent them from deteriorating;
- Culverts, causeways, drainage and footpath renewal; and
- Community assets renewal.

Q5b. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with Option 2? Prompt

- Very supportive
- Supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Not very supportive
- Not at all supportive

Q5c. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference:

- Option 1 – Rate Peg Only
- Option 2 – Special Rate Variation

Q5d. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

.....

Q6a. Prior to this call, were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?

- Yes
- No (Go to Q7)
- Not sure (Go to Q7)

Q6b. How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation? Prompt

- Mail out
- Council website
- Newspaper advertisement
- Radio advertising
- Information kiosk
- Other (please specify).....

Demographics

Q7. Which of the following best describes the house where you are currently living? Prompt

- I/We own/are currently buying this property
- I/We currently rent this property

Q8. Gender by voice:

- Male
- Female

Thank you for your time and assistance. This market research is carried out in compliance with the Privacy Act, and the information you provided will be used only for research purposes. The research has been conducted by Micromex Research on behalf of Liverpool Plains Shire Council.

If you have any further questions regarding this special rate variation please contact Customer Service on 6746 1755 or visit the Liverpool Plains Shire Council website.

Thank you very much for your time. Enjoy the rest of your evening.

The logo for micromex research features the word "micromex" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. A stylized compass rose is positioned over the letter 'o', with a red needle pointing towards the top-left. Below "micromex", the word "research" is written in a smaller, grey, lowercase, sans-serif font. The background of the entire image is a landscape of a dry, brown field under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

micromex research

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Web: www.micromex.com.au

Email: [REDACTED]

8.8 Appendix H – Online survey results



Liverpool Plains Shire Council

SRV and Community Research - Online

Prepared by: Micromex Research

Date: January 2021



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Background & Methodology - Summary

Why?

- Identify the community's overall level of satisfaction with Council performance
- Measure importance and satisfaction with Council services and facilities across the LGA
- Measure awareness levels and information received about the SRV
- Measure levels of support and preference for different SRV options

How?

- An opt-in online survey was hosted on the council website from 23rd December 2020 – 19th January 2021

Who?

- 215 respondents completed the survey. Their responses have been compared against the representative community telephone survey conducted between 6th – 12th January 2021

Please see Appendix A for detailed background and methodology

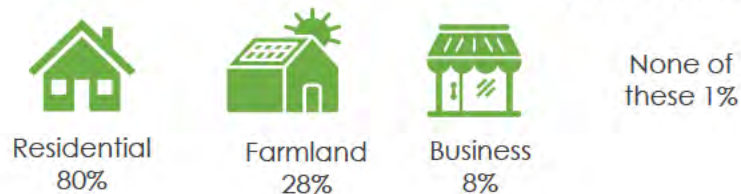
The results contained within are only reflective of respondents that took part in this survey.

Sample Profile - Online

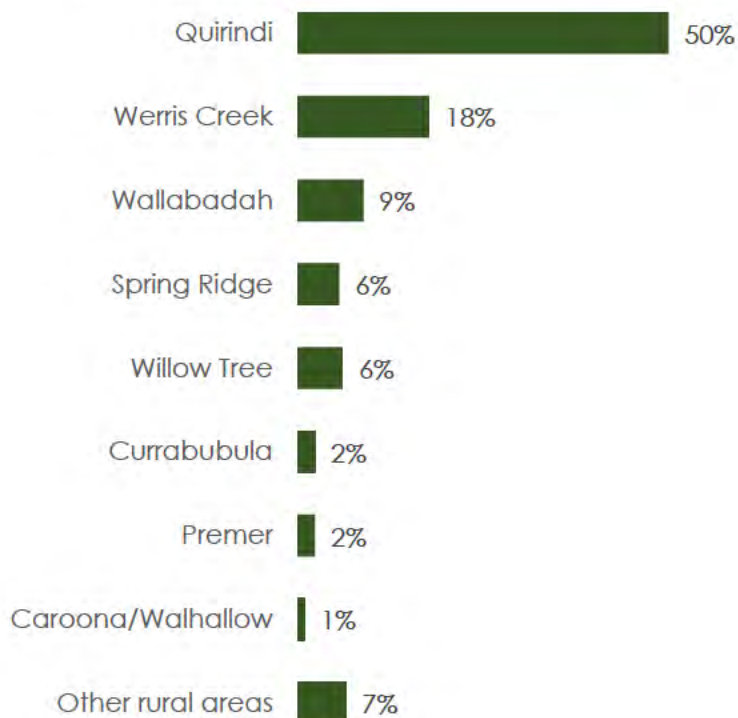
Gender



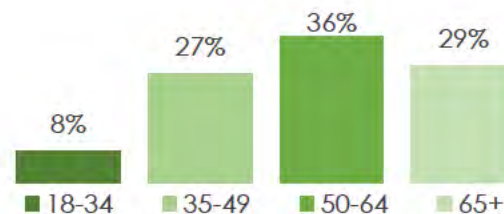
Type of rates paid*



Suburb



Age



Ratepayer status



Time lived in the area



Base: N = 215

*Please note: total percentages exceed 100% as residents could select multiple options



Key Findings

Summary of SRV Findings - Online

We have identified some clear differences between the results of the representative phone survey results and the non-representative online survey results.

Respondent who took part in this online survey tended to be much less satisfied with Council on nearly all comparable measure. This is to be expected as opt-in respondents tend to have stronger more polarised views.

Only 50% of online respondents claimed previous awareness of the proposed SRV. This is a curious anomaly, as nearly 90% of residents in the phone survey who claimed awareness.

- 81% of online respondents selected **Option 1: Rate Peg** as their first preference. The primary reasons were affordability and mistrust of Councils financial management.
- 19% of online respondents selected **Option 2: Increase** as their first preference. They indicated that they believed that improvements are needed in the area and that any increase will ultimately benefit the whole community.

Detailed Results





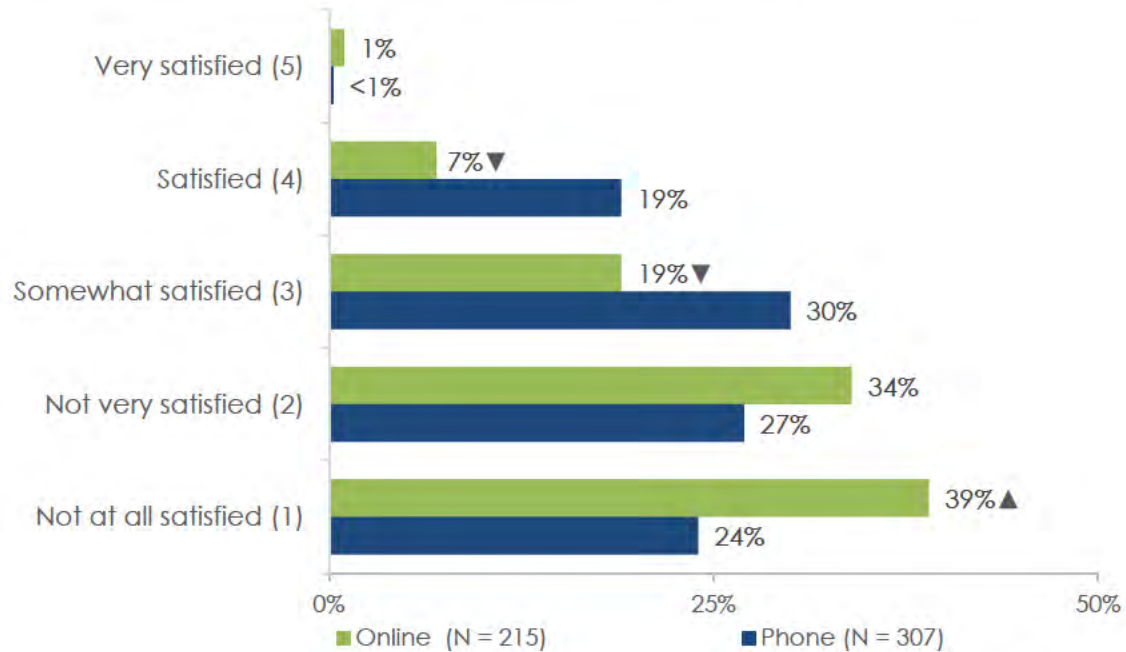
Detailed Results

1. Performance of Council
2. Awareness of SRV
3. SRV Options

Overall Satisfaction

Q4. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues, but across all responsibility areas?

	Response mode		Gender		Age				Ratepayer status		Aware of the SRV	
	Online	Phone	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Yes	No/not sure
Mean rating	1.96▼	2.46	1.92	2.03	1.89	1.98	2.00	1.92	1.94	2.67	1.91	2.02
Base	215	307	86	117	18	58	76	63	209	*6	107	108



Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (by sample)

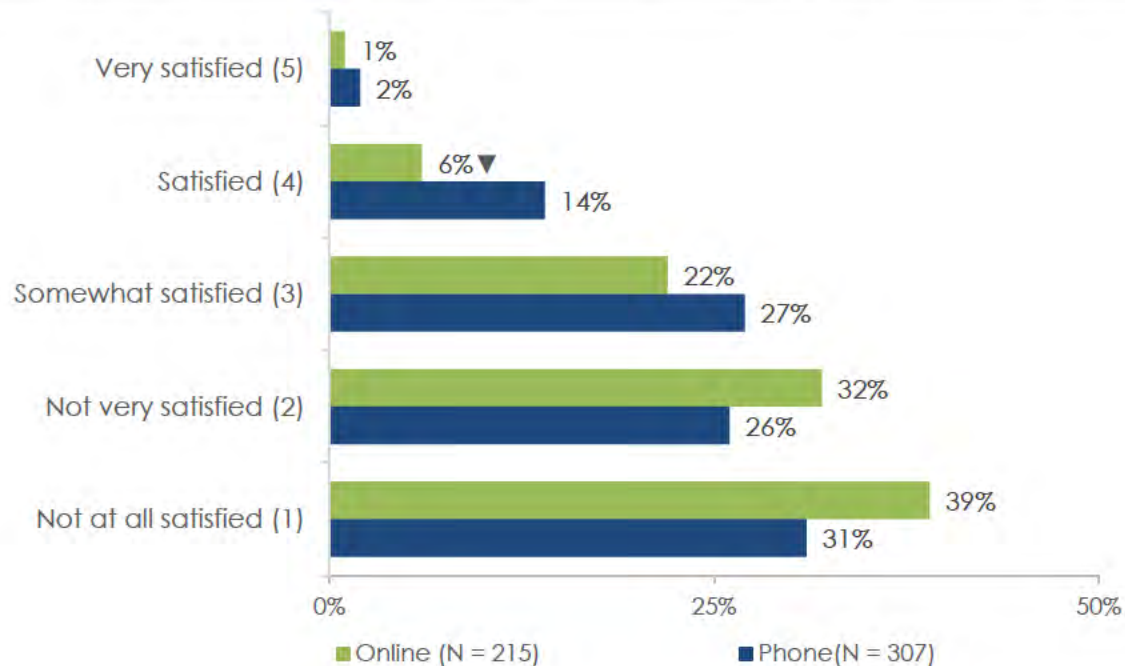
*Caution small base size

Only 27% of online respondents claim to be at least somewhat satisfied with overall performance of Council over the last 12 months, this is significantly lower than results obtained by phone.

Satisfaction with Level of Communication

Q3. How satisfied are you currently with the level of communication Council has with the community?

	Mode		Gender		Age				Ratepayer status		Aware of the SRV	
	Online	Phone	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Yes	No/not sure
Mean rating	1.99 ▼	2.30	2.02	2.02	1.78	2.02	2.09	1.89	1.97	2.50	2.10	1.87
Base	215	307	86	117	18	58	76	63	209	*6	107	108



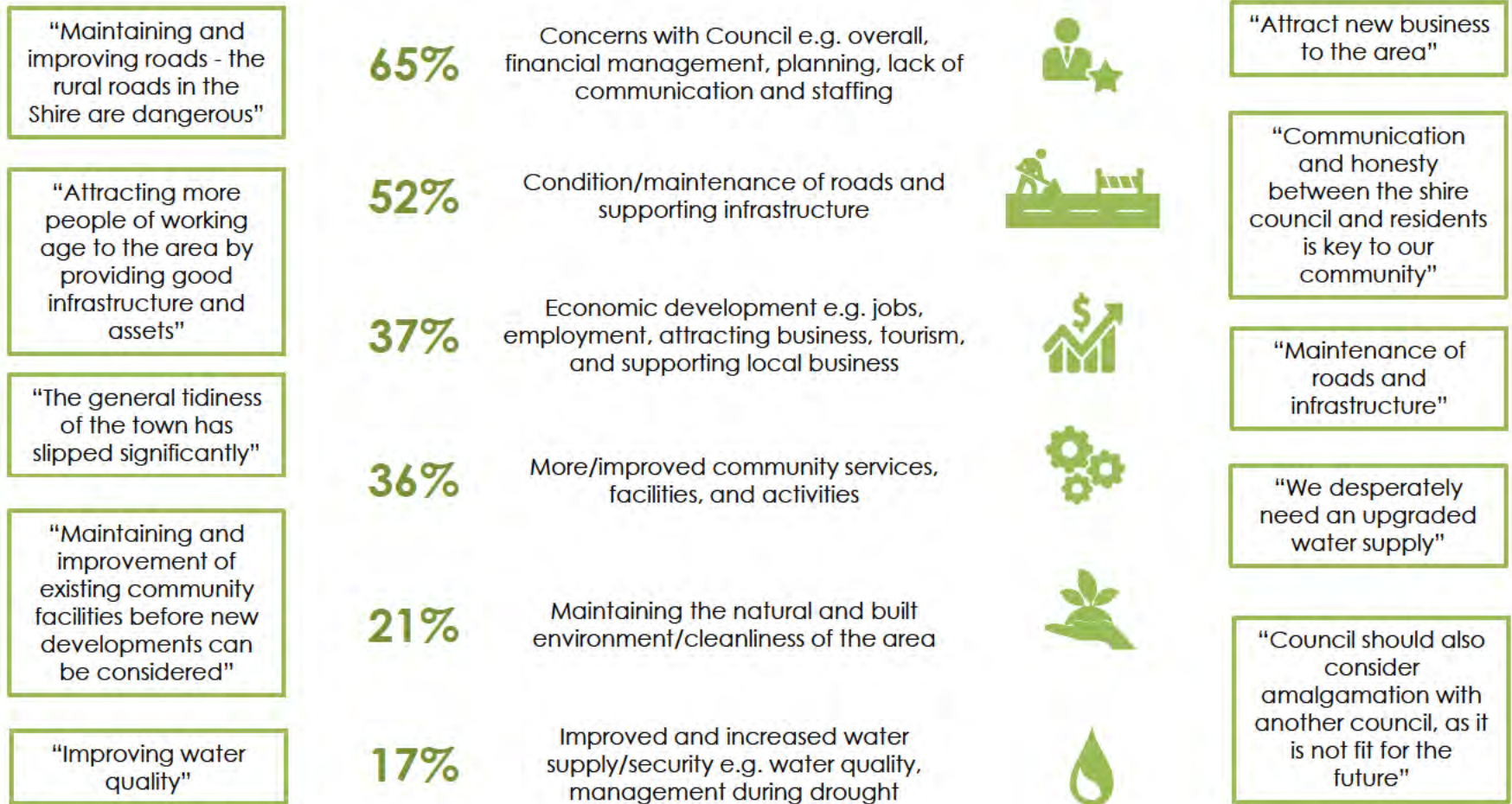
*Caution small base size

Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied
 ▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (by sample)

Again we can see that the opt-in respondents have significantly lower level of satisfaction compared to those of the broader community.

Key Priorities within the Local Area

Q2. What do you think are the key priorities for Council in the local area?



Base: N = 215

Please see Appendix B for complete list of responses.

Opt-in respondents indicated that they are concerned with the general performance of council. Road infrastructure, economic developments and the need to improve community services and facilities are also seen as important.

Importance & Satisfaction – High 5 Low 5

Importance

The following services/facilities received the highest importance mean ratings:

High 5 importance	Online	Phone
Sealed roads	4.62	4.61
Emergency Services	4.51	4.69
Economic development	4.40	4.31
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	4.33	4.35
Water supply	4.25	4.35

The following services/facilities received the lowest importance mean ratings:

Low 5 importance	Online	Phone
Plains Fitness Gym	2.43	2.97
Racecourse/Showgrounds	2.86	3.39
Child care services	2.95	3.40
Libraries	3.18	3.23
Youth services	3.26	3.61

Satisfaction

The following services/facilities received the highest satisfaction mean ratings:

High 5 satisfaction	Online	Phone
Emergency Services	3.73	3.99
General garbage collection	3.59	3.93
Sewerage management	3.53	3.85
Bridges	3.40	3.52
Libraries	3.36	3.93

The following services/facilities received the lowest satisfaction mean ratings:

Low 5 satisfaction	Online	Phone
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	1.75	2.04
Management of development	1.85	2.29
Economic development	1.87	2.19
Youth services	2.22	2.50
Environmental and sustainability initiatives	2.22	2.66

Scale: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important

Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

Whilst the High 5 importance scores are similar to the community survey - The data from the opt-in respondents clearly show that they have lower levels of satisfaction with service delivery across most areas.



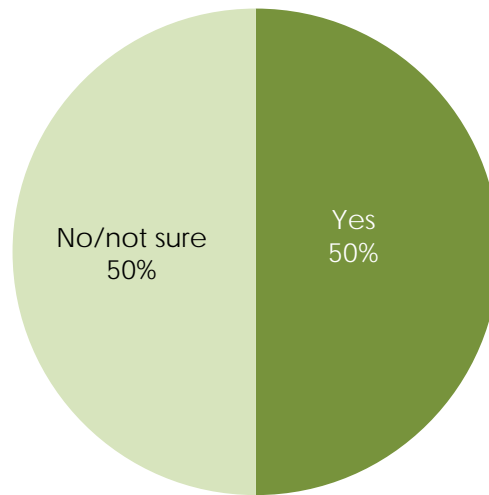
Detailed Results

1. Performance of Council
2. **Awareness of SRV**
3. SRV Options

Awareness of SRV

Q6a. Prior to this survey were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?

	Online	Phone	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Yes %	50%▼	86%	56%	46%	56%	48%	58%	40%	50%	50%
Base	215	307	86	117	18	58	76	63	209	*6



Base: N = 215

*Caution small base size

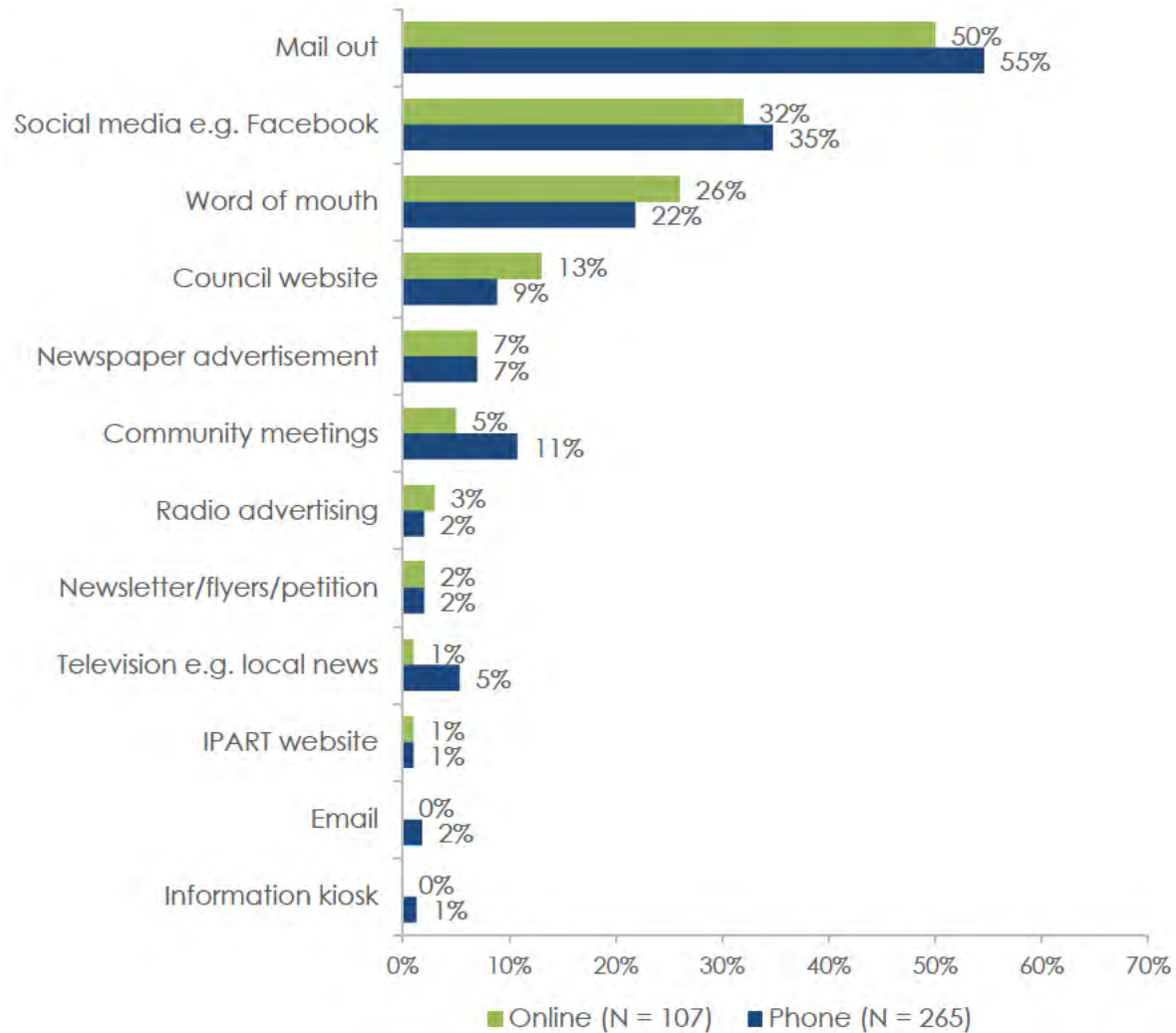
▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of awareness (by sample)

The random phone survey had nearly 90% of residents claiming to be aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation.

A 50/50 result for this question from an opt-in sample should be treated with caution.

Being Informed of the SRV

Q6b. How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation?



Of those that were aware of the SRV (50%) the most common way for respondents to be aware was via mail out (50%) followed by social media (32%).



Detailed Results

1. Performance of Council
2. Awareness of SRV
3. SRV Options

Introduction: Concept Statement

At present, Council's revenue is regulated by the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART limits the amount by which councils can increase rates from one year to the next. At the moment, that amount, known as the rate peg, is an annual increase of 2.0%.

Over recent years, Council has implemented a range of productivity savings, reduced costs across our operations, but there are no easy solutions to addressing an increasing funding gap. If Council does not address this gap now, our community assets (such as our roads, drainage, swimming pools and public buildings) will deteriorate. To address this situation, councils are able to apply for rate increases above rate peg. This is called a Special Rate Variation.

Liverpool Plains Shire Council is considering applying for a permanent SRV there are two options which I would like you to consider.

Let's look at the options in more detail:

- **Option 1 – Rate Peg Only.** We will need to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise our range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term
- **Option 2 – Maintain.** The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund existing services and maintenance of local infrastructure





Council acknowledges that any rate increase may adversely impact some community members. Council has a Hardship Policy and alternative payment options to assist ratepayers should they have difficulty keeping up with their rate payments.

The concept statement above was read to participants and option exposure was randomised to nullify order effect.

Option 1: Rate Peg

No special rate variation. This option would continue the status quo with rates only increasing by the rate peg amount (assumed to be 2.0% per year).

Under this option over the next three financial years:

-  1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$772 per annum, will increase by approximately \$15 in Year 1, \$16 in Year 2, and a further \$16 in year 3 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$819 in 2023/2024.
-  2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$1,977 per annum, will increase by approximately \$40 in Year 1, \$40 in Year 2, and a further \$41 in year 3 – meaning the average Business rate will be \$2098 in 2023/2024.
-  3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$4,441 per annum, will increase by approximately \$89 in Year 1, \$91 in Year 2, and a further \$92 in year 3 – meaning the average Farmland rate will be \$4,713 in 2023/2024.
-  4. Mining – The average Mining rates, which are currently \$109,947 per annum, will increase by approximately \$2,199 in Year 1, \$2,243 in Year 2, and a further \$2,288 in year 3 – meaning the average Mining rate will be \$116,676 in 2023/2024.

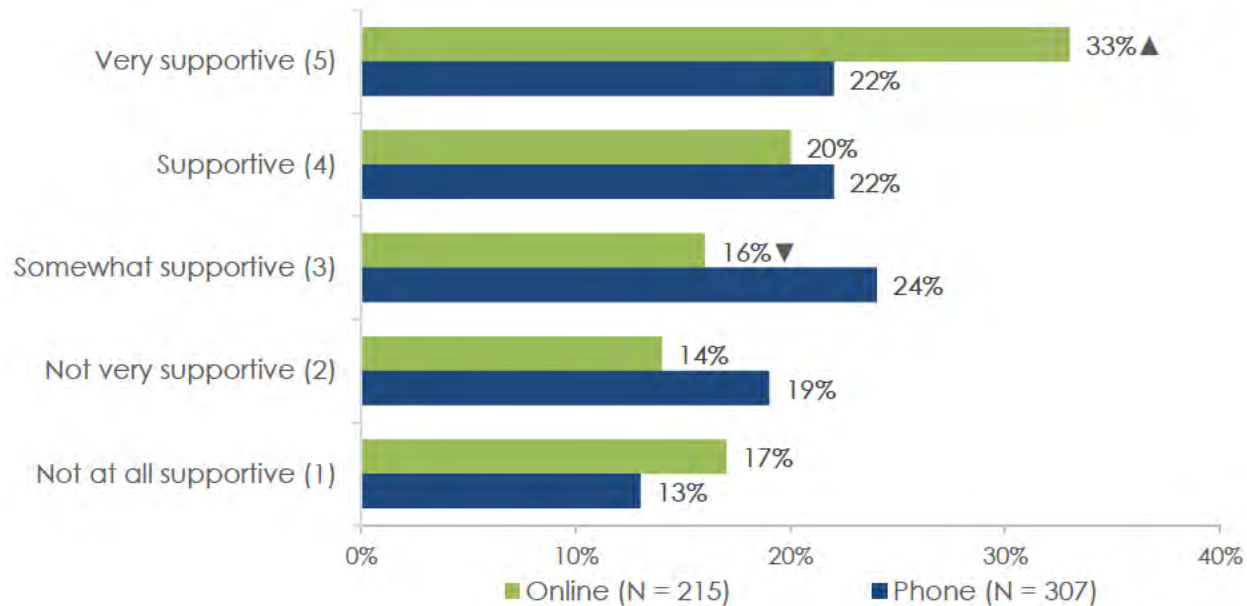
Under this option the impact would be:

- Our sealed and gravel road networks would deteriorate.
- Council would not be able to maintain the range of facilities and services currently provided.
- Council would rely heavily on grant funding to renew existing assets.
- Community and recreational facilities such as pools and buildings will continue to deteriorate if grant funding is not successful, and potentially closed when the risk of operating becomes unacceptable.
- Council's backlog of roadworks would continue to increase and gravel roads would not be improved.

Support for Option 1: Rate Peg

Q5a. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with option 1?

	Response mode		Gender		Age				Ratepayer status		Aware of the SRV	
	Online	Phone	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Yes	No/not sure
Mean rating	3.40	3.22	3.53	3.26	3.50	3.14	3.46	3.54	3.40	3.33	3.31	3.49
Base	215	307	86	117	18	58	76	63	209	*6	107	108



*Caution small base size

▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of support (by sample)

The online respondents are significantly more likely to be 'very supportive' of Option 1.





Option 2: Increase

Under Option 2, Council would apply for an SRV of 8% per annum for three years to enhance infrastructure and services. At the end of the period the Special Rate Variation increase would be built into the rate base.

If implemented, the SRV will apply to your general rates only and will not apply to the waste management, water and sewerage charges on your rates notices. SRV funds would not be used on waste management, water and sewerage services, which are all funded through direct fees and charges.

This would represent a cumulative rise of 26% over the three years. This figure includes the rate peg increase of 2.0% each year.

Under this option over the next three financial years:

-  1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$772 per annum, will increase by approximately \$62 in Year 1, \$67 in Year 2, and a further \$72 in year 3 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$972 in 2023/2024.
-  2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$1,977 per annum, will increase by approximately \$158 in Year 1, \$171 in Year 2, and a further \$184 in year 3 – meaning the average Business rate will be \$2,490 in 2023/2024.
-  3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$4,441 per annum, will increase by approximately \$355 in Year 1, \$384 in Year 2, and a further \$414 in year 3 – meaning the average Farmland rate will be \$5,594 in 2023/2024.
-  4. Mining – The average Mining rates, which are currently \$109,947 per annum, will increase by approximately \$8,796 in Year 1, \$9,499 in Year 2, and a further \$10,259 in year 3 – meaning the average Mining rate will be \$138,501 in 2023/2024.

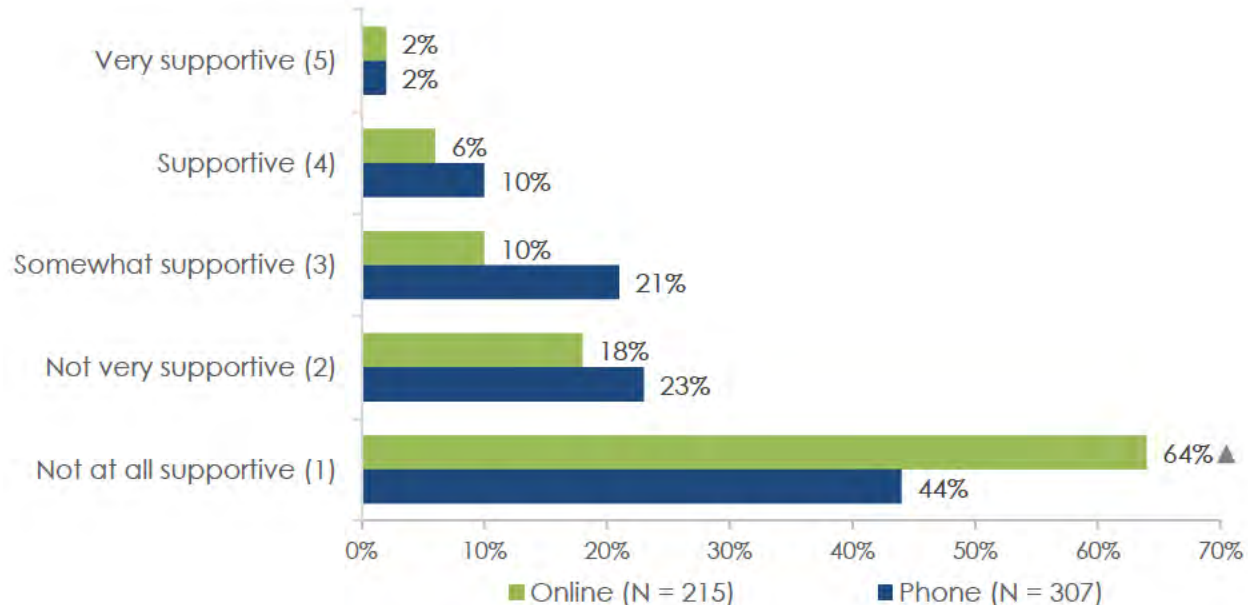
The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate an additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund maintenance of local infrastructure, including:

- Grading unsealed local roads to meet existing service levels;
- Additional maintenance of rural roads;
- Roadwork and renewal of urban streets;
- Increased funding to maintain existing services across Council operations
- Additional bitumen resealing and gravel re-sheeting to keep our roads at a good standard and prevent them from deteriorating;
- Culverts, causeways, drainage and footpath renewal; and
- Community assets renewal.

Support for Option 2: Increase

Q5b. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with option 2?

	Response mode		Gender		Age				Ratepayer status		Aware of the SRV	
	Online	Phone	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Yes	No/not sure
Mean rating	1.65 ▼	2.03	1.76	1.61	1.33 ▼	1.67	1.67	1.68	1.64	2.00	1.66	1.63
Base	215	307	86	117	18	58	76	63	209	*6	107	108



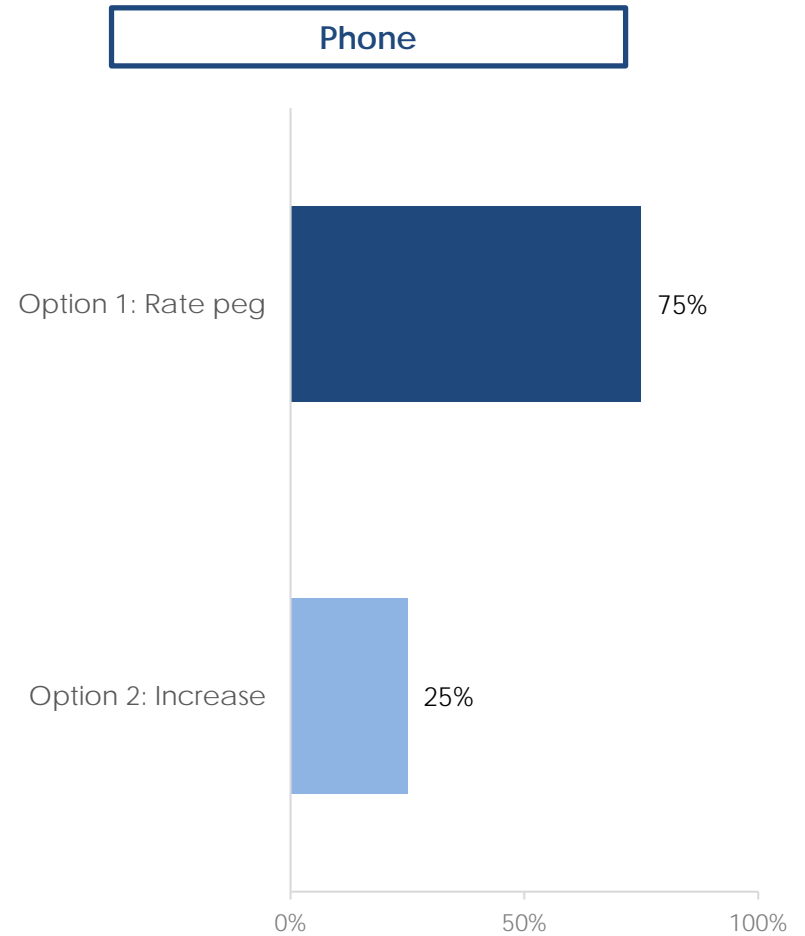
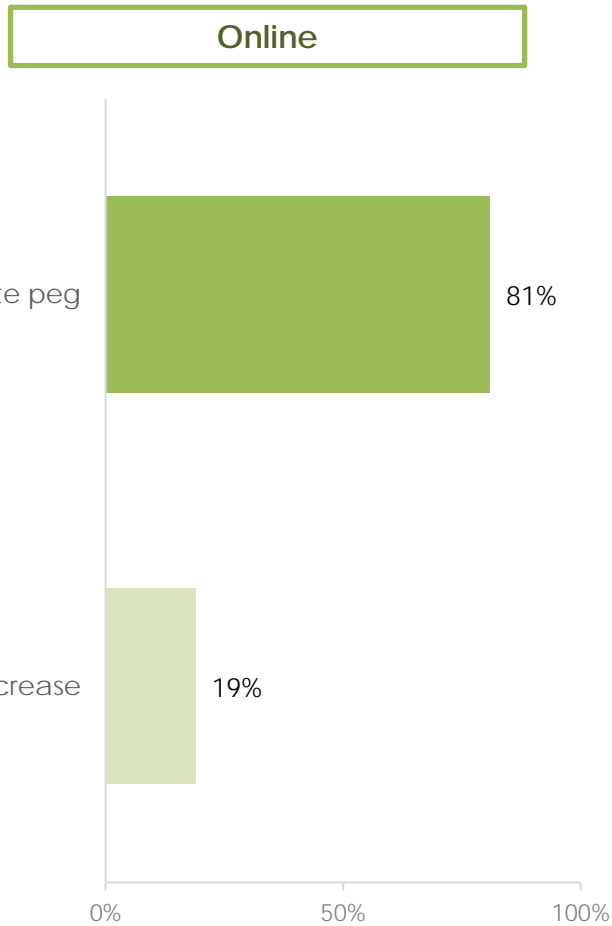
*Caution small base size

▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of support (by group)

Nearly 2/3 of the online respondents indicated that they were 'not at all supportive' of Option 2.

Preferences for SRV Options

Q5c. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference?



Base: N = 215

Option 1 (rate peg) was the preferred choice for online respondents, with 81% selecting this as their first preference.

Preferences for SRV Options – By Demographics

Q5a. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference?

First Preference

	First Preference		Gender		Age				Ratepayer status		Aware of the SRV	
	Online	Phone	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Yes	No/not sure
First preference: Option 1: Rate peg	81%	75%	78%	81%	83%	81%	82%	79%	81%	83%	79%	83%
First preference: Option 2: Increase	19%	25%	22%	19%	17%	19%	18%	21%	19%	17%	21%	17%
Base	215	307	86	117	18	58	76	63	209	*6	107	108

*Caution small base size

Residents first preference is option 1: rate peg (81%), online results are on par with results obtained by phone.

Reasons for Preferring Option 1: Rate Peg

Q5c. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference?

Q5d. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

	Option 1: Rate peg (81%)	N = 215	
"Lack of transparency"	Rates are high already/cannot afford a rate increase/most affordable option	55%	"Affordability, I will not be getting a pay rise in the next 3 years so where do you expect the money to come from?"
"I am not satisfied that Council has undertaken significant cost saving initiatives"	Improvements are needed with Councils financial management	39%	"I see numerous council workers wasting time while on the job - I am not prepared to pay more towards rates when our money is being wasted on employees who bludge"
"Rates are too high now"	Do not trust they will spend their money wisely/investing in the wrong areas	16%	
	Not getting value for the rates currently paid	16%	"Council has mismanaged small funds and should not be given more to mismanage"
	Other sources of revenue should be sought e.g. state of federal funding	15%	
	Council should look to amalgamate with other Councils	7%	"There is already a lack of services provided by council "
	Not supportive of either option	6%	
	A better option than the SRV	5%	
	An increase is needed to maintain services, facilities and infrastructure	3%	
	Ratepayers shouldn't have to pay more	1%	
	Don't know/no response	62%	
"Cost of living is already high enough and our rates are higher than most places that have wonderful facilities. Why would I pay high rates when the town has absolutely nothing to offer? I would rather sell and move somewhere that does have great facilities "			

Affordability and concern with Council's financial management are the primary drivers of preference for the Rate Peg option.

Reasons for Preferring Option 2: Increase

Q5c. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference?

Q5d. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

"While I am not particularly keen to see and 8% rate increase over the next 3 years I see this as necessary to keep, Council going and avoid amalgamation. I do feel that it is imperative that Council displays and carries out significant efficiencies as part of this SRV "

"The increase is not that much in the scheme of things"

Option 2: Increase (19%)	N = 215
It is necessary/improvements are needed in the area/benefits the community and the future	16%
Happy for an increase as long as Council spends money wisely	3%
We don't have a choice	3%
Happy to pay the increase for benefits/reasonable amount to pay/affordable for me	2%
Support an increase/but should be under 8%	<1%
Don't know/no particular reason	19%

"I feel we need to maintain/improve the work around our town. However, I have big doubts about Council's ability to manage this money"

"Services need to improve"

"I do not want families to move away because of a lack of services"

Those supportive of the SRV option indicated that the increase is necessary to improve the area, and that it will ultimately benefit the community.



Appendix A: Background & Methodology

Background & Methodology

Prequalification

Participants in this survey were pre-qualified as being over the age of 18, and not working for, nor having an immediate family member working for, Liverpool Plains Shire Council.

Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using Q Professional.

Within the report, ▲▼ and blue and red font colours are used to identify statistically significant differences between groups, i.e., gender, age, ratepayer status and awareness.

Significance difference testing is a statistical test performed to evaluate the difference between two measurements. To identify the statistically significant differences between the groups of means, 'One-Way Anova tests' and 'Independent Samples T-tests' were used. 'Z Tests' were also used to determine statistically significant differences between column percentages.

Ratings questions

The Unipolar Scale of 1 to 5 was used in all rating questions, where 1 was the lowest importance or satisfaction and 5 the highest importance or satisfaction.

This scale allowed us to identify different levels of importance and satisfaction across respondents.

Note: Only respondents who rated services/facilities a 4 or 5 in importance were asked to rate their satisfaction with that service/facility.

Top 3 (T3) Box: refers to the aggregate percentage (%) score of the top three scores for satisfaction or support. (i.e. somewhat satisfied, satisfied & very satisfied and somewhat supportive, supportive & very supportive)

We refer to T3 Box Satisfaction in order to express moderate to high levels of satisfaction in a non-discretionary category.


Percentages

All percentages are calculated to the nearest whole number and therefore the total may not exactly equal 100%.

Reporting Note:

This report has been compared to results obtained by phone (report 1). This is report 2 of 3 for Liverpool Plains Shire Council. A more detailed analysis of community results will also be provided as the final report.





Appendix B: Additional Analyses

Key Priorities within the Local Area

Q2. What do you think are the key priorities for Council in the local area?

	N = 215
Concerns with Council e.g. overall, financial management, planning, lack of communication and staffing	65%
Condition/maintenance of roads and supporting infrastructure	52%
Economic development e.g. jobs, employment, attracting business, tourism, and supporting local business	37%
More/improved community services, facilities, and activities	36%
Maintaining the natural and built environment/cleanliness of the area	21%
Improved and increased water supply/security e.g. water quality, management during drought	17%
Increased/improved health/medical services/facilities	6%
Infrastructure/services/facilities to cater for the future e.g. public transport, shopping	5%
Community safety e.g. more police	2%
Support for the community	2%
Drought protection and prevention	<1%
Effects of COVID-19	<1%
Encourage a cohesive community	<1%
No roosters in town backyards	<1%
Don't know nothing/no response	55%

Appendix C: Questionnaire



**Liverpool Plains Shire Council
Community Survey
January 2021**

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is _____ from Micromex Research and we are conducting a survey on behalf of Liverpool Plains Shire Council. The survey will take about 15 minutes.

It is a random sample survey and accordingly I would like to speak to the person who has the next birthday in your household and is over the age of 18 years, would you be able to assist us please?

Thank you for agreeing to assist us with this survey.

QA. Before we start, I would like to check whether you work for Liverpool Plains Shire Council?

- Yes (Terminate survey)
 No

QB. Please stop me when I read out your age bracket: Prompt

- Under 18 (Terminate survey)
 18-34
 35-49
 50-64
 65+

QC. How long have you lived in the Liverpool Plains Shire Council area? Prompt

- Under 6 months
 6 months – 2 years
 3 – 5 years
 6 – 10 years
 11 – 20 years
 More than 20 years

QD. In which area of the shire do you live?

- Quirindi
 Werris Creek
 Willow Tree
 Wallabadah
 Currabubula
 Spring Ridge
 Premer
 Blackville
 Caroon/Walallow
 Other rural areas

QE. Does your household pay Council rates to Liverpool Plains Shire Council, if so, which type(s) do you pay? Prompt

- Residential (1)
 Business (2)
 Farmland (3)
 Mining (4)
 None of these (Default to residential script)

IF MULTI - PLEASE NOTE THAT RESIDENT WILL ALWAYS BE ASKED FOR THE HIGHEST RATES THEY PAY.

Part A

Q1. In the first part could you please indicate which best describes your opinion of the importance of the following services/facilities to you, and in the second part, the level of satisfaction with the performance of that service. The scale is from 1 to 5 where 1 is low importance and low satisfaction, and 5 is high importance and high satisfaction. Prompt ONLY ASK SAT IF IMP 4 OR 5

Community facilities

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5
Parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public buildings and village halls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Libraries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sporting ovals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of town centres and public spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swimming pools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plains Fitness Gym	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Infrastructure

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5
Unsealed roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sealed roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bridges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racecourse/Showgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sewerage management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Footpaths	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water supply	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General garbage collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Landfills and waste transfer stations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recycling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drainage/flood management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Human services

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5
Access to government services (i.e. Centrelink, Service NSW)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child care services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Home Support services (i.e. Meals on Wheels)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationship with indigenous residents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support for volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disability access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emergency Services (i.e. SES, VRA, RFS)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Corporate services and management

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low		High			Low		High		
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management of development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental and sustainability initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heritage conservation/promotion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Definitions to be read out for Part A – ‘Corporate services and management’

- Economic development is attracting and assisting new businesses and creating jobs
- Management of development is policing building construction and what types of developments can be located in which areas

Q2. What do you think are the key priorities for Council in the local area?

.....

Part B

Q3. How satisfied are you currently with the level of communication Council has with the community?

Prompt

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not very satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

Q4. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues, but across all responsibility areas? Prompt

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not very satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

As we have just discussed Liverpool Plains Shire Council delivers a broad range of services and has the responsibility to maintain the facilities and infrastructure across the shire

At present, Council’s revenue is regulated by the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART limits the amount by which councils can increase rates from one year to the next. At the moment, that amount, known as the rate peg, is an annual increase of 2.0%.

Over recent years, Council has implemented a range of productivity savings, reduced costs across our operations, but there are no easy solutions to addressing an increasing funding gap. If Council does not address this gap now, our community assets (such as our roads, drainage, swimming pools and public buildings) will deteriorate. To address this situation, councils are able to apply for rate increases above rate peg. This is called a Special Rate Variation.

Liverpool Plains Shire Council is considering applying for a permanent SRV there are two options which I would like you to consider.

Let’s look at the options in more detail:

- Option 1 – Rate Peg Only. We will need to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise our range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term
- Option 2 – Maintain. The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund existing services and maintenance of local infrastructure

Council acknowledges that any rate increase may adversely impact some community members. Council has a Hardship Policy and alternative payment options to assist ratepayers should they have difficulty keeping up with their rate payments.

Programmer note: Rotate Order

Option 1: Rate peg only

No special rate variation. This option would continue the status quo with rates only increasing by the rate peg amount (assumed to be 2.0% per year).

Under this option over the next three financial years: (READ OUT/SHOW APPROPRIATE SCRIPT BASED ON ANSWERS AT QE, but only 1)

1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$772 per annum, will increase by approximately \$15 in Year 1, \$16 in Year 2, and a further \$16 in year 3 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$819 in 2023/2024.
2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$1,977 per annum, will increase by approximately \$40 in Year 1, \$40 in Year 2, and a further \$41 in year 3 – meaning the average Business rate will be \$2098 in 2023/2024.
3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$4,441 per annum, will increase by approximately \$89 in Year 1, \$91 in Year 2, and a further \$92 in year 3 – meaning the average Farmland rate will be \$4,713 in 2023/2024.
4. Mining – The average Mining rates, which are currently \$109,947 per annum, will increase by approximately \$2,199 in Year 1, \$2,243 in Year 2, and a further \$2,288 in year 3 – meaning the average Mining rate will be \$116,676 in 2023/2024.

Under this option the impact would be:

- Our sealed and gravel road networks would deteriorate.
- Council would not be able to maintain the range of facilities and services currently provided.
- Council would rely heavily on grant funding to renew existing assets.
- Community and recreational facilities such as pools and buildings will continue to deteriorate if grant funding is not successful, and potentially closed when the risk of operating becomes unacceptable.
- Council’s backlog of roadworks would continue to increase and gravel roads would not be improved.

Q5a. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with Option 1? Prompt

- Very supportive
- Supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Not very supportive
- Not at all supportive

Option 2: Special Rate Variation

Under Option 2, Council would apply for an SRV of 8% per annum for three years to enhance infrastructure and services. At the end of the period the Special Rate Variation increase would be built into the rate base.

If implemented, the SRV will apply to your general rates only and will not apply to the waste management, water and sewerage charges on your rates notices. SRV funds would not be used on waste management, water and sewerage services, which are all funded through direct fees and charges.

This would represent a cumulative rise of 26% over the three years. This figure includes the rate peg increase of 2.0% each year.

Under this option over the next three financial years: (READ OUT/SHOW APPROPRIATE SCRIPT BASED ON ANSWERS AT QE, but only 1)

1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$772 per annum, will increase by approximately \$62 in Year 1, \$67 in Year 2, and a further \$72 in year 3 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$972 in 2023/2024.
2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$1,977 per annum, will increase by approximately \$158 in Year 1, \$171 in Year 2, and a further \$184 in year 3 – meaning the average Business rate will be \$2,490 in 2023/2024.
3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$4,441 per annum, will increase by approximately \$355 in Year 1, \$384 in Year 2, and a further \$414 in year 3 – meaning the average Farmland rate will be \$5,594 in 2023/2024.
4. Mining – The average Mining rates, which are currently \$109,947 per annum, will increase by approximately \$8,796 in Year 1, \$9,499 in Year 2, and a further \$10,259 in year 3 – meaning the average Mining rate will be \$138,501 in 2023/2024.

The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate and additional revenue of \$1.527 million over a three-year period from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and will be used to fund maintenance of local infrastructure, including:

- Grading unsealed local roads to meet existing service levels;
- Additional maintenance of rural roads;
- Roadwork and renewal of urban streets;
- Increased funding to maintain existing services across Council operations
- Additional bitumen resealing and gravel re-sheeting to keep our roads at a good standard and prevent them from deteriorating;
- Culverts, causeways, drainage and footpath renewal; and
- Community assets renewal.

Q5b. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with Option 2? Prompt

- Very supportive
- Supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Not very supportive
- Not at all supportive

Q5c. Please rank the 2 options in order of preference:

- Option 1 – Rate Peg Only
- Option 2 – Special Rate Variation

Q5d. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

.....

Q6a. Prior to this call, were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?

- Yes
- No (Go to Q7)
- Not sure (Go to Q7)

Q6b. How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation? Prompt

- Mail out
- Council website
- Newspaper advertisement
- Radio advertising
- Information kiosk
- Other (please specify).....

Demographics

Q7. Which of the following best describes the house where you are currently living? Prompt

- I/We own/are currently buying this property
- I/We currently rent this property

Q8. Gender by voice:

- Male
- Female

Thank you for your time and assistance. This market research is carried out in compliance with the Privacy Act, and the information you provided will be used only for research purposes. The research has been conducted by Micromex Research on behalf of Liverpool Plains Shire Council.

If you have any further questions regarding this special rate variation please contact Customer Service on 6746 1755 or visit the Liverpool Plains Shire Council website.

Thank you very much for your time. Enjoy the rest of your evening.

The logo for micromex research features the word "micromex" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. A stylized compass rose is integrated into the letter "o", with a red needle pointing towards the top-left. Below "micromex", the word "research" is written in a smaller, grey, lowercase, sans-serif font. The background of the entire image is a landscape of a dry, brown field under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

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