

A photograph of a woman walking a young child on a sidewalk during golden hour. The woman is wearing a black jacket over a floral top and red pants. The child is wearing a floral top and light-colored pants. They are walking on a concrete sidewalk next to a large tree. The background is filled with warm, golden light from the setting or rising sun, creating a soft, bokeh effect. The overall mood is peaceful and family-oriented.

**Georges River Council  
New Rates 2021  
Community Engagement  
Report  
December 2020**

## Acknowledgement of Country

Georges River Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land in which the Georges River Local Government Area is situated – the Bidjegal people of the Eora Nation.

This report provides a summary of community engagement activities undertaken by Georges River Council to support Council's application to IPART to introduce a new rate structure. It was prepared by ASK Insight Consultants.

Alison Plant and Susan Warth

Directors

ASK Insight Pty Limited

12/20 Pyrmont Bridge Road | Camperdown

NSW 2050

Mobile | 0405 811280

ABN 13631043662

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### Abbreviations and acronyms

CAG	Citizens Advice Group
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
GRC	Georges River Council
IPART	Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
LGA	Local Government Area
SRV	Special Rates Variation

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Georges River Council (Council) is an amalgamated council created in May 2016 by the merger of the former Hurstville and Kogarah City Councils. Both former councils had their own rating systems and pathways which were initially frozen as part of the amalgamation process. Harmonisation to create a single rating structure across the Georges River Local Government Area (LGA) must be in place by July 2021 unless legislative changes are introduced.

In 2019, the Council consulted with the community on options for a new residential and business rates structure for the LGA to begin in the 2020/2021 financial year. The proposals addressed both equity and financial sustainability objectives. However, Council did not proceed with an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for approval of the proposals.

A revised proposal was taken to the community in 2020. Based on 2019 feedback, the proposal included the same residential and minimum rate harmonisation with a differential business minimum for the Kogarah and Hurstville business centres. The Special Rates Variation (SRV) was modified from the set of options tested in 2019, to propose a gradual increase in the total amount of rates collected over the five years to 2024.

Support for the harmonised minimum rate structure and a rate revenue increase was established in 2019. 2020 feedback affirmed support for a single rating system and the minimum rate as proposed in 2019. Increasing the rates revenue base through a gradual five-year increase was supported by the majority of residents under 50 years of age, residents in apartments and town houses and those who are tenants. Older people in single detached dwellings were less likely to support the proposal but it still achieved almost 40% support.

More broadly, the engagement process affirmed Council's learning in 2019 that the NSW rates system is not understood by many ratepayers. The myth that increased population and development means increased rates income to councils is widespread.

The community is supportive of change to see a closer alignment of population and the rates income required by council to provide services. This is also a finding of the Productivity Commission.<sup>1</sup>

### About this report

This report provides a summary of the community engagement and awareness activities undertaken by Georges River Council during 2020 and documents the feedback received. The 2020 activity built on the foundation of the extensive 2019 community engagement and this report should be read in conjunction with the 2019 report. Across both reports there is demonstration of extensive community awareness and engagement and evidence of considerable community support for a new, consistent and harmonised rating structure along with an increase to rate revenue. This proposed new rates structure will provide sustainability for Council's services and activities to 2024 and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://productivity.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-12/Final%20Infrastructure%20Contributions%20Review%20Report.pdf>

This report also presents the community’s views around options for savings and service cuts if the application for the new rates restructure is not successful.

### Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

The 2020 community engagement required accommodating the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. This influenced the range of approaches undertaken in the following ways:

Table 1: COVID-19 responses

<p>Citizens Advice Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initial meeting held online</li> <li>▪ COVID safe plan developed for subsequent two meetings</li> <li>▪ Meetings held in large auditorium (Marana Centre) which enabled extensive physical distancing</li> </ul>
<p>General community consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Online webinars offered in place of face-to-face information sessions</li> <li>▪ Option of direct phone engagement with customer service team</li> <li>▪ Major input channels were online - GRC website and Your Say engagement platform</li> <li>▪ Significant multi-media advertising and promotion used to direct feedback to the online channels</li> <li>▪ Representative community survey undertaken by phone</li> </ul>

## THE FOUNDATION - 2019 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2019, Georges River Council ran an extensive community consultation on its proposals for rate harmonisation and three options for an increase in the total rate income, a Special Rate Variation, to begin in the 2020/2021 financial year. However, Council did not proceed with an application to IPART for approval of the proposals.

The 2019 consultation feedback enabled an updated proposal to be developed and tested in 2020. An important learning from the 2019 consultation was the poor community understanding about how the NSW rating system works and the pervasiveness of a number of “myths” about rates.

### 2019 key outcomes

- There was strong support for one fair, equitable and consistent rating system for Georges River Council ratepayers with a single residential minimum rate
- There was good support for a higher business minimum rate and a greater differential for the main town centres at Kogarah and Hurstville
- There was a strong expectation that Council has efficient operating models with a focus on the services of Council, alongside increased user pay fees and charges
- The community believed it was unfair that Council’s rate income is not permitted to increase in line with development and population growth.

Figure 1 Community drop in 2019 consultations



### Rating myths

The community’s understanding that the total rate income of local government is capped by the State government (and does not increase automatically with either population increase, increases in dwelling numbers or increases in land value) is poor.

It is noted that the November 2020 final report by the NSW Productivity Commission “Review of Infrastructure Contributions”<sup>2</sup> recommends that Council rates in NSW should increase with the LGA’s population, reflecting growth in demand for services. Many in the community already believe (erroneously) this to be the case.

The report further notes that average rates per capita in NSW (\$591 in 2019) are significantly lower than the average for all other states (\$835).

The GRC per capita figure in 2020 has been calculated at \$454 ( or \$448 with the pensioner rebate) which is more than 20% lower than the NSW average.

Figure 2 Consultation meeting 2019



<sup>2</sup> <http://productivity.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-12/Final%20Infrastructure%20Contributions%20Review%20Report.pdf>



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## 2020 PROPOSAL

The 2020 proposal acknowledged the 2019 community support for a consistent residential minimum rate based on the previous Kogarah City Council minimum residential rate, the support for business minimum rates to be higher and the benefits of a gradual increase on household budgets.

### Goals of the 2021 new rating system

- Meet the mandatory NSW Government requirement for one rating system across the Georges River LGA
- Create better equity between houses and apartments
- Maintain service standards now and into the future.

### What is the proposal?

- Minimum rates:
  - creation of a new single minimum residential rate of \$965.80 (this would increase the minimum rate in the former Hurstville LGA to the same level as the current rate paid in the former Kogarah LGA)
  - creation of a single business minimum rate of \$1,100
  - introduce a higher business minimum rate of \$1,500 in the Kogarah and Hurstville strategic centres
- Increase to total rates income (This is called a Special Rate Variation(SRV) by IPart):
  - seek permission from the NSW government for a gradual increase to the total rates income over the next 5 years

The new proposal's total increase of 29% (inclusive of 16.5% SRV and assumed rate pegs of 2.5% per year or total of 12.5%) is equivalent to Council's 2019 proposal of a permanent one-off 10.6% increase (rate peg of 2.5% and 8.1% SRV) that did not proceed.

- The proposed SRV will result in additional rate income of approximately \$23 million over 5 years.

Figure 3 Current and proposed rating arrangements



DRAFT

## 2020 ACTIVITIES

### Overview of 2020 community engagement

The community engagement process and content were designed following consultation with a Citizens Advice Group (CAG) which met in September 2020. (See CAG below). The formal community engagement period ran from 19 October 2020 to 30 November 2020.

A letter from the Mayor of Georges River Council on 17 August 2020 foreshadowed the community engagement.

The main elements<sup>3</sup> were:

- Mailout of a brochure to all 57,720 ratepayers. This was timed to coincide with the second rates notice for 2020 for instalment ratepayers.
- Four community webinars
- Placement of printed materials and briefing of customer service and library team members to ensure they were able to respond to queries
- Random telephone survey of 600 community residents
- Special pages on Council's website as well as a dedicated Your Say page
- Production of two videos available on Council's website and screened during webinars
- A comprehensive FAQ section accessible from both the Council website and Your Say page
- Comprehensive promotional activities including print and social media, signage and targeted emails/newsletters ( a full listing can be found at Appendix 1)

Examples of brochures, translated materials, advertisements, social media are provided in this report.

The reach is estimated to be 1,575,239.

Figure 4 Example of advert for Greek media

**GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL**

**New rates 2021**

**Εργαζόμαστε μαζί για ένα καλύτερο μέλλον**

Για περισσότερες πληροφορίες και για να κατανοήσετε σε τι μπορεί να σας βοηθήσει επισκεφτείτε την παρακάτω ιστοσελίδα:

[www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021](http://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021)

όπου υπάρχει διαθέσιμη αυτόματη μετάφραση από τη Google σε κάθε σελίδα.

Χρησιμοποιήστε το κινητό σας τηλέφωνο προκειμένου να σκανάρετε τον κωδικό QR και να μεταφερθείτε στις μεταφρασμένες σελίδες του site

[www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au](http://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au)

QR code and social media icons (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube)

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1 for full details of the community engagement

Figure 5 : Your Say newsletter



## New Rates 2021 Consultation

Council is planning a new rating system from 1 July 2021 so it can:

- meet the mandatory NSW Government requirement for one rates system across the Georges River local government area
- create better equity between houses and apartments
- maintain the service standards you value for future generations

Council continues to be committed to reducing the burden on our ratepayers by finding savings and efficiencies in all our activities. The planned changes described in this update were developed after comprehensive community consultation in 2019. The total amount of money that can be collected in rates by a council is set by the NSW Government and any changes need the Minister's approval. Before we seek approval we want to explain the proposal and let you know what it means for you.

### What is the proposal?

#### Meeting the mandatory requirement for one rating system

Currently the former Kogarah and Hurstville Council areas have different rating systems. Last year the community told us it wants a single, consistent and more equitable approach to rates across the Georges River. Council will create a new single minimum rate which will in effect increase the minimum rate in the former Hurstville to the same level as the current Kogarah rate. This would reduce the gap between rates charged for houses and apartments.

You can find more information on the proposal [here](#).

### Community feedback

Community views were collected through multiple channels:

- CAG feedback
- Phone survey of 600 households
- Webinar polls
- Online follow-up survey sent to all webinar participants
- Your say online survey and submission option
- Phone interaction with customer service team. 196 rates related enquiries were received in the period 19 October – 30 November 2020. This figure covers all rates related matters (not just new rates consultation).

## Citizens Advice Group (CAG)

### Overview

The 2019 community engagement feedback reinforced the difficulty in conveying complex financial rating information and demonstrated a lack of understanding of the NSW rating system within the community.

In order to improve the key 2020 engagement messages, 2020 consultation planning began with the establishment of a Citizens Advice Group (CAG) to test and explore ideas and proposals in detail with a group of residents.

The group was also used to test the broader education proposed through the production of a generic rates information video and a video specific to the 2021 proposals. Additionally, their advice was sought on possible service cuts and cost savings options.

Membership was voluntary and by invitation. Invitations were generated through a process of random selection from the Georges River Council ratepayer database and members of Council's community forums. Details of the recruitment process, terms of reference (TOR) and group profile are at Appendix 2.

Key advice from the group was the need to dispel a number of myths about rates.

### CAG activities

The CAG met on three occasions as detailed below. In light of COVID-19 pandemic concerns, the initial session was scheduled online. At the conclusion of the work of the CAG, members were sent a follow-up survey to collect feedback on how the CAG had worked from their perspective. Amongst those who responded, the effectiveness of the CAG was rated as 4.2 stars out of a possible 5.

Contact was maintained with the CAG members by the Coordinator, Communications and Engagement who provided updates at every stage of the consultation roll out.

Table 2: CAG meetings

Meeting	#	Details
Initial briefing 15 September 2020- held online	11	Introductions, purpose of group, TOR, rates presentation, opportunity for questions and answers
Second meeting 22 September 2020- face-to face	10	Recap, detail of New rates 2021 proposal, group discussion of key messages
Third meeting 29 September 2020 face-to-face	8	Recap, video feedback Discussion of savings options CAG support for proposal

### Advice about key messages

The CAG provided feedback on the key messages they believed to be important for the community and identified the most useful slides in the presentations. This helped hone the presentations used

for the community webinars and also to refine the text of the final brochure provided to all ratepayers. The CAG group identified different key messages to those outlined in the IPART manual, therefore communications material on the 2020 proposal was based on CAG feedback as a primary and IPART requirements as a secondary.

The key structure of the communications based on CAG feedback was:

- What does it mean for me?
- What is the proposal?
- What happens if the proposal isn't approved?
- Where can I get more information?

## Videos

Two videos were produced for the New Rates 2021 project.

Video 1 is a general introduction to rates and provides information about how rates are calculated. It was designed to have a shelf-life beyond the specifics of the New Rates 2021 proposal and has been captioned in simplified Chinese.

Video 2 is a presentation by the General Manager of GRC describing the key elements of the proposal and its importance to the provision of services to the broader George River community.

Figure 6 : Videos on Council website

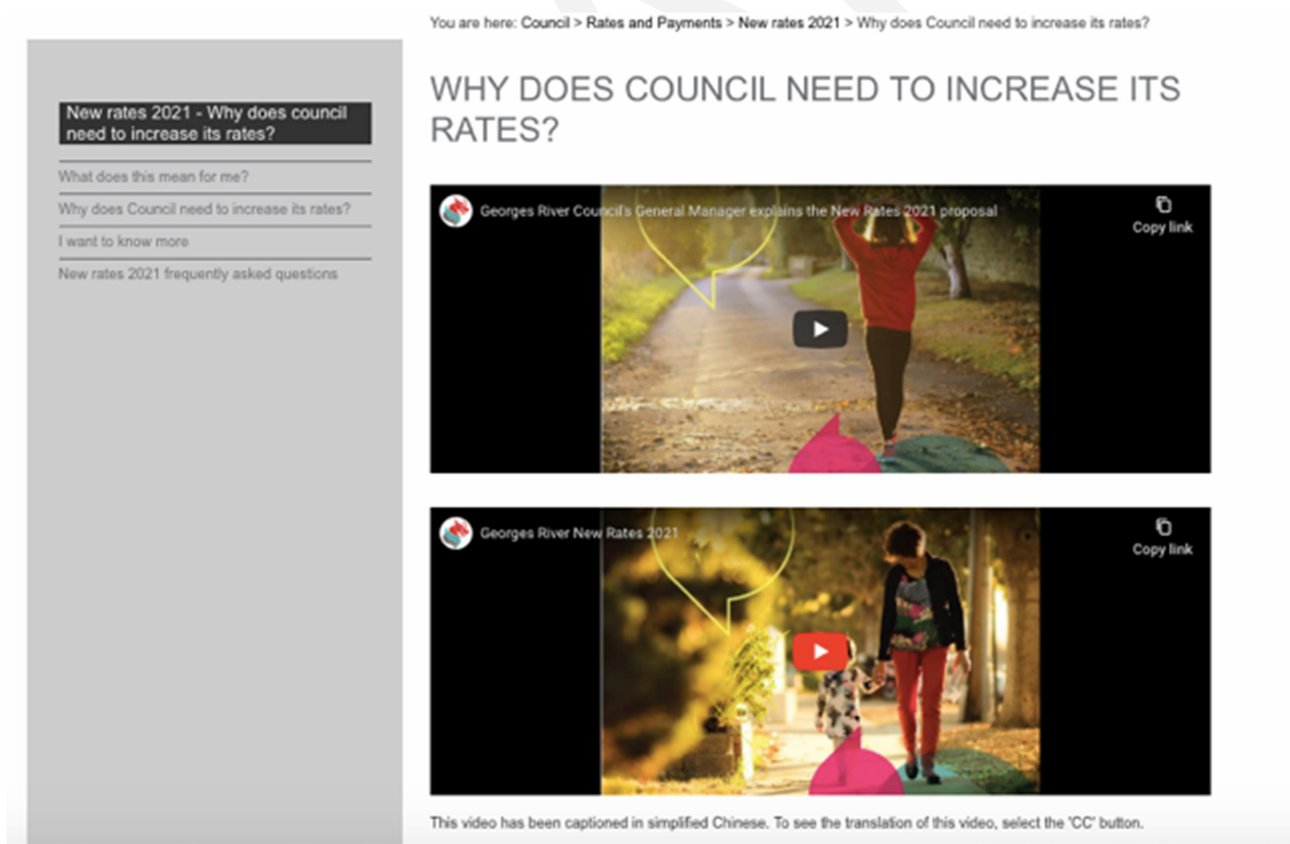



Table 3: CAG feedback

Key messages from CAG	
1.	Keep it simple, there is no choice about harmonisation, we need equity, avoid the SRV acronym
2.	Focus on what it means for “me”
3.	Keep a positive focus on what people love about the area and the breadth of services provided by Council
4.	Address the myth “more people equals more revenue”

Figure 7 CAG meeting and rates calculator

As a result of the CAG feedback, a rates calculator was added to the GRC website rates page. This enabled individuals to enter their land valuation and test directly the impact of the new proposals on their own personal circumstances.





**GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL**  
RATES AND CHARGES NOTICE  
1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021

Georges River Civic Centre  
Corner MacMahon and  
Dora Streets, HURSTVILLE  
02 9330 8400  
mail@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au  
www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au  
ABN 57 789 914 855

Customer Reference No. 123456  
Posting date 26/07/2020  
Instalment due date 31/08/2020  
Deduct payments made since 17/07/2020

**SAMPLE RESIDENTIAL**  
Average

Property location and description Interest on overdue rates is 7.5% pa

ADDRESS	Rating Category
LOT DP	Residential
LV \$600,000	Base Date: 1 July 2019

Rate Type	Value/No. of Services	Rate/Charge	Total
Ordinary Residential Rate	XX	\$XX	1251.00*
Stormwater Residential Charge	1.00	Stormwater Mgmt	25.00
Domestic Waste Service	1.00	Waste Service	484.88*
Less Mandatory Pensioner Rebate*			250.00CR
Less Council Voluntary Pensioner Rebate*			150.00CR

\* Eligible pensioners only (For details refer to Council's website)  
\* Indicate proposed charges  
Please turn over for information on changes for credit card payments and additional rebate for eligible pensioners.

Overdue	1st instalment 31/08/2020	2nd instalment 30/11/2020	3rd instalment 28/02/2021	4th instalment 31/05/2021	TOTAL
NIL	\$XXXX.XX	\$XXXX.XX	\$XXXX.XX	\$XXXX.XX	\$XXXX.XX

**Pay by phone** 1300 276 468  
or online www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/  
RatesPaymentOptions  
Biller Code 34405  
Payments via AMEX attract a 1.4% surcharge.

**Direct Debit** Complete and submit form online at  
www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/  
RatesDirectDebitForm

**iPAY** Biller Code 34405  
Ref: 123456  
BPAY: This payment via internet or phone banking.  
BPAY View: View and pay this bill using  
internet banking.  
BPAY View Registration No: 12345

**Receive your rates notice via email** Complete and submit form online at  
www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/RatesViaEmail

**In Person** Georges River Civic Centre,  
Hurstville Library or  
Kogarah Library and Service Centre

**Pay at Post Office** \*238 123456  
Pay by cash, cheque or EFTPOS at any Post Office

Customer Reference No.	Overdue	Instalment	TOTAL
123456	NIL	\$XXXX.XX	\$XXXX.XX

Please note: Payments via AMEX attract a 1.4% surcharge.

### Proposed New Residential Rates Calculator

Residential Rate in the Dollar

0.0016401

Please enter your Land Value from you Current Rates Notice



# Working together for a better future

## New rates 2021



### This is an update on our plans for a new rating system from 1 July 2021 so we can

- meet the mandatory NSW Government requirement for one rating system across the Georges River local government area
- create better equity between houses and apartments
- maintain the service standards you value for future generations.

We will continue to be prudent in our spending; we have a history of strict budget management and service changes and efficiencies since amalgamation.

Council continues to be committed to reducing the burden on our ratepayers by finding savings and efficiencies in all our activities. The planned changes described in this update were developed after comprehensive community consultation in 2019. The total amount of money that can be collected in rates by a council is set by the NSW Government and any changes need the Minister's approval. Before we seek approval we want to explain the proposal and let you know what it means for you.

#### Current average and minimum annual rates



#### Proposed 2021/22 average and minimum annual rates



For the average residential ratepayer, the proposed changes will mean around **60 cents extra per week** in the first year **followed by \$1.35 per week** increases each year for the following 4 years.



For the average business ratepayer, the proposed changes will mean **\$4.30 extra per week** in the first year **followed by \$5.50 per week** increases each year for the following 4 years.



## You told us

### Our consultation with the community about possible changes to rates, as well as strategic planning revealed:

- You value the things that make Georges River special - green open spaces, our river, convenient location and transport, a diverse culture, strong social services and a varied and productive economy.
- You support one fair, equitable and consistent rating system for Georges River Council ratepayers, in which the minimum rate paid is the same across the entire local government area.
- You support a higher business minimum rate and a differential business rate between the main town centres at Kogarah and Hurstville.
- You don't want to see radical service reduction but expect to see efficient operating models and focus on the core services of Council alongside increased user-pay approaches (fees and charges).
- You would support an increase to the total rates income which Council can collect to provide the services the community value, meet the cost pressures of a growing population and address the loss of \$2.3m from lapsing old Hurstville Council income.
- You think it is unfair that Council's rate income is not permitted to increase consistent with development and population growth.

## What is the proposal?

### Meeting the mandatory requirement for one rating system

Currently the former Kogarah and Hurstville Council areas have different rating systems. Last year the community told us it wants a single, consistent and more equitable approach to rates across the Georges River.

Council will create a new single minimum rate which will in effect increase the minimum rate in the former Hurstville to the same level as the current Kogarah rate.

This would reduce the gap between rates charged for houses and apartments.

### Sustainability

At the same time, Council is proposing to ensure service and financial sustainability by seeking permission to increase its total rates income to manage past and future population growth and increasing service demand. This is proposed as a gradual increase over 5 years.

***Did you know that the rates do not increase as development and population increases?***

## What happens if the proposal isn't approved?

Council's service portfolio is complex and diverse. It provides 200 services which our community members value, and are essential to a thriving and growing community.

If the Council's total rate income does not increase over the next 5 years as proposed by this rate increase, we will be forced to reduce or cease many services. We will be unable to respond to the needs of future population growth which will continue to strain service quality. This will result in higher use/overuse of current assets and poorer condition standards.

Houses in the old Kogarah Council area will pay almost three times what an apartment currently pays (an average increase of \$300) and apartments will drop – broadening the inequity instead of addressing it.

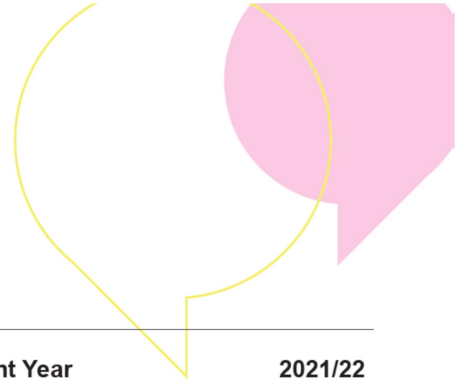
Houses in the old Hurstville Council area will have an average decrease of \$25 and those who had a large rate increase in 2020/21 will not receive a reduction.



Council has and will continue to find savings, efficiencies and implement improved operating models but without the rate income increase, deep cuts to services will be inevitable.

Our previous consultations have told us that the majority of residents support maintaining current service standards but if you think there should be service reductions, we want you to have your say at [yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au](https://yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au).

## I want more information

The tables below summarise the impact of the proposed rate increase and minimum changes.



Former council's average rate		Current Year	2021/22
Total council rate income increase %		2.6%	5.8%
Residential 	Kogarah	\$1,221	\$1,251
	Hurstville	\$1,081	\$1,110
Business 	Kogarah	\$3,167	\$3,006
	Hurstville	\$3,043	\$3,477

	Current Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Residential average</b>	\$1,139	\$1,169	\$1,233	\$1,300	\$1,372	\$1,447
<b>Residential minimum</b>	Kogarah \$967	\$966	\$990	\$1015	\$1,040	\$1,066
	Hurstville \$586					
<b>Business average</b>	\$3,087	\$3,311	\$3,558	\$3,822	\$4,105	\$4,408
<b>Minimum for Kogarah and Hurstville CBD</b>	Kogarah \$967	\$1,500	\$1,538	\$1,576	\$1,615	\$1,656
	Hurstville \$586					
<b>Business minimum other</b>	Kogarah \$967	\$1,100	\$1,128	\$1,156	\$1,185	\$1,214
	Hurstville \$586					
<b>Total council rate income increase %</b>	2.6%	5.8%	5.8%	5.8%	5.8%	5.8%
<b>Total council rate income increase \$</b>		\$4.1 million	\$4.3 million	\$4.6 million	\$4.9 million	\$5.1 million

**Note:** The figures contained in the tables above are based on harmonisation of the rating system, new minimum rates and the application of a special rate variation (SV) to increase Council's total rate income above the rate peg. The new proposal's total increase is equivalent to Council's 2019 proposal of a permanent one-off 10.6% increase (rate peg of 2.5% and 8.1% SV) that did not proceed. The new proposal is a permanent multi-year SV spread over 5 years. The total Council rate income increase is 29% (inclusive of 16.5% SV and assumed rate pegs of 2.5% per year or total of 12.5%). The proposed SV will result in additional rate income of approximately \$23 million over 5 years. If the proposed new rating system is not approved the average residential rate would be \$1,136, the average business rate would be \$3,074 and the minimum rate would be \$598. For future year impacts please refer to our website [www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021](http://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021).

**Disclaimer:** Houses and apartments may be on the minimum, though the majority of minimum rate properties are apartments. The averages quoted within this document have been developed from financial modelling based on current property data and land values as of 1 July 2020. A new set of land values will be supplied by the NSW Valuer General and applied from 1 July 2023. The final 2021/22 rate levies may vary due to Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) decisions and marginal movements due to model sensitivity.

## I want to have input

You can have your say at [yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au](http://yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au)

## I want to know about the rating system and how rates are calculated

Our website contains more detailed information, a rates calculator, and FAQs. See how you may be affected by visiting [www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021](http://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021)

## What if I can't pay my rates?

Council has a range of measures to assist individuals who have difficulty paying their rates. You will find details of Council's *Debt Management and Hardship policy* online.

## I want to find out more about this proposal

There will be two webinars explaining the proposals on:

**Wednesday 4 November 2020, 6.00pm-7.30pm**

**Saturday 7 November 2020, 10.00am-11.30am**

Register here. [www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021](http://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021)



[www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au](http://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au)

 [georgesrivercouncil](https://www.facebook.com/georgesrivercouncil)

 [@grcouncil](https://twitter.com/grcouncil)

Language services



**131 450**



## Phone survey

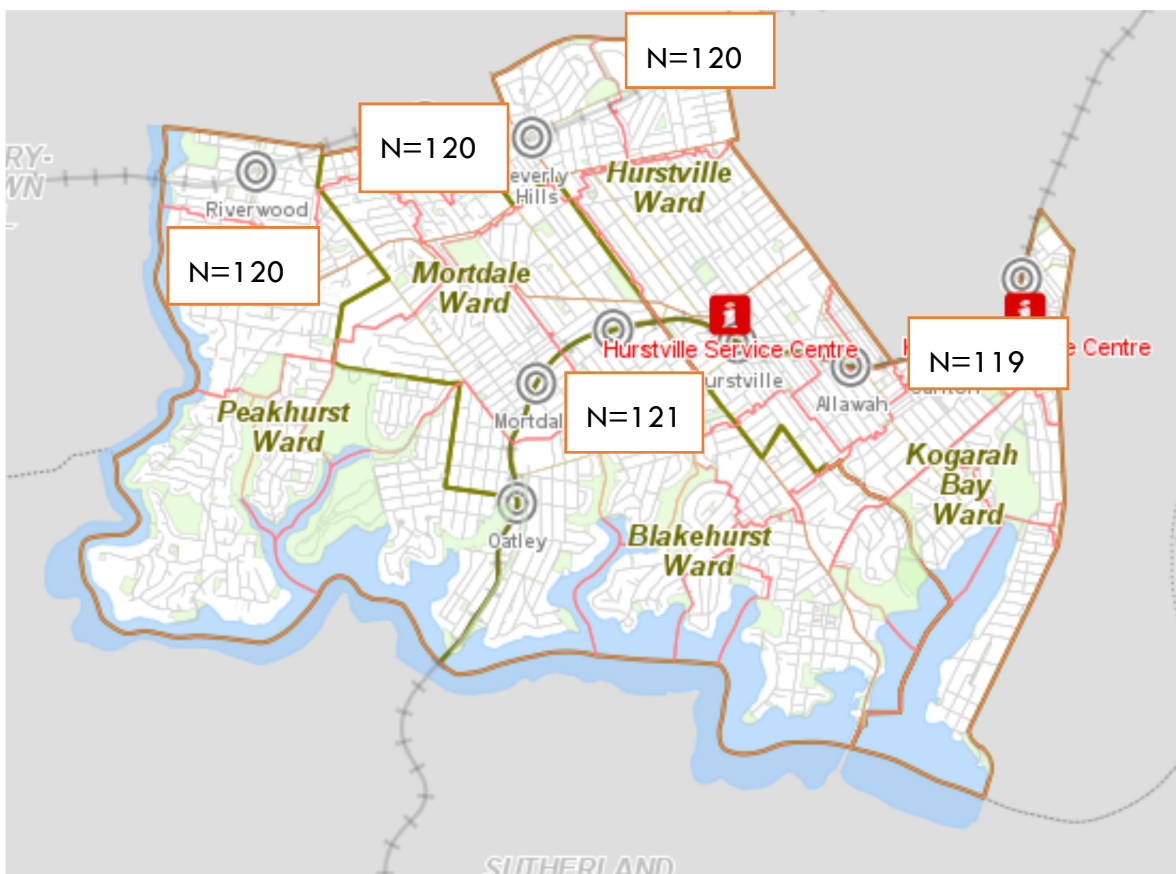
As part of the 2019 consultations, an independent random telephone survey was conducted of 600 residents. This was undertaken and reported on by Micromex research. The 2019 survey measured satisfaction with Council and the quality of community assets, awareness of the Council's proposals and levels of support for a harmonised residential minimum rate of \$965.80, and the 2019 SRV options.

It was decided to include another random phone survey of 600 residents in the 2020 consultation activities. The 2020 survey was designed to explore three topics:

- The level of awareness of the New Rates 2021 campaign
- Level of support for the New Rates 2021 proposed increase over 5 years
- Preferred service areas to be targeted for savings

The 2020 telephone survey was undertaken by IRIS Research<sup>4</sup> in the period Saturday 14 November 2020 to Monday 30 November 2020.

Participants were randomly selected across the five council wards, weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2016 ABS data profile of GRC. 35% of those interviewed spoke a language other than English at home.



The analysis of the phone survey data was completed by ASK Insight. (The detailed questionnaire, and more detailed results are in Appendix 3)

<sup>4</sup> <https://irisresearch.com.au/about-us/>

## Webinars

Four webinars were conducted. The webinars provided an opportunity for participants to hear about Council's proposals in detail and ask questions and have these answered. As part of the webinar presentations, the two videos produced for the New Rates 2021 were also screened.

Details of dates, registration and participant numbers are in the table below.

Table 4: Webinar details

Date	Registrations	Participants
04-Nov	18	9
07-Nov	13	6
12-Nov	27	10
21-Nov	16	3
TOTAL	74	28

Three polls were conducted during the webinars.

All webinar participants were sent an online survey following their session. There were nine (9) responses to the survey.

## GRC website

The rates and payments pages provided information about the proposal. This included:

- Access to the Amalgamation Journey report describing Council's savings and efficiencies post amalgamation
- Planned changes and their relationship to the 2019 consultations
- Summary of 2019 feedback
- Proposal details
- What happens if the proposal isn't approved?
- Council's hardship policy

There were links to four (4) associated pages:

- What does this mean for me? (Online rate calculator)
- Why does Council need to increase its rates? (Access to the brochure online in English, Chinese, Arabic and Nepalese; access to the two videos produced for the project)
- New rates 2021 FAQs- Over 50 questions are posted- (Questions were added as the project rolled out, beginning with questions from the CAG, and also sourced from the webinars and phone calls and submissions). A full list of the FAQs can be found at Appendix 5
- I want to know more (details of webinar opportunities and how to make a submission to IPART)

## GRC Your Say Page

The New Rates 2021 Your Say consultation ran from 19 October to 30 November 2020.

It provided:

- Online bookings for the webinar
- Option to complete an online survey about cost savings
- Online lodgement of a submission
- Links to the videos, rates calculator and FAQs
- Contact details for customer service phone input

A recording of the webinar presentation for 7 November 2020 was posted to the website for general viewing. As at 22 December, there had been 30 views.

At the conclusion of the consultation period, the Your Say statistics revealed 906 page views and 190 informed visitors (people who had open links, documents etc).

Figure 8 : Poster in childcare centre



Figure 9 : Website FAQ page

You are here: Council > Rates and Payments > New rates 2021 > New rates 2021 frequently asked questions

## NEW RATES 2021 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**New rates 2021**

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What does this mean for me?

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Why does Council need to increase its rates?

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I want to know more

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New rates 2021 frequently asked questions

Why are these rate changes required?	+
Why is the Hurstville variation finishing – what was the reason?	+
What is the current Hurstville rate variation?	+
How much additional income will Council get from the Special Rate Variation?	+
What will happen if Council doesn't change the rates? What will it mean for residents?	+
What happened to the money Council received from the State Government when we merged?	+
Do population increases provide an increase in the rates collected by Council?	+
Does Council's rates income increase as new units are built?	+
Why are so many high rises then built in the LGA if the council doesn't get more money via rates but will then have to spend more for services as the population increases?	+
With all the large unit development in the area, why don't the rates for each unit cover the shortfall?	+
Why was the decision deferred last year if consultation was done then and the community agreed?	+
How likely or unlikely is it that the Council defers the proposal again?	+
How many residents (percentage) responded to the surveys last year?	+
Will the presentations / webinars be undertaken in other languages?	+
How will I benefit from paying the increase?	+

## COMMUNITY VIEWS

As the previous section shows, there were a range of channels of information and feedback opportunities available to the community. The following table maps the key questions for the community engagement to the source of feedback and summarises the results.

Table 5: Key question feedback by channel

Key question	CAG	PHONE	WEBINAR POLL	POST WEBINAR SURVEY	2019 engagement
What is the awareness level in the community about the New Rates 2021 proposal?		55%			47%
Do you believe that rate income increases as population grows?( <i>myth</i> )			73% AGREE		
Did you know that the total amount of money Council can collect in rates is fixed by the State Government?		34% YES 66% NO		67% YES 33% NO	
Should the total amount of rates that Council collects increase in line with population growth and new development?	100% YES	44% YES		78% YES	
Do you support a consistent minimum rate?	100% YES		89% YES		78% supportive  61% supportive of proposed rate (\$965.80)
Do you support the proposed SRV increase?	100% YES	42% YES	65% YES		54% supportive of the 2019 recommended option (changed approach in 2020)

### Level of support for Council's proposal

Both the phone survey and the post-webinar survey asked:

*“Using a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 means “not at all supportive” and 5 means “very supportive”, how supportive are you of the Council’s proposal?”*

Ratings of 3 or higher have been considered as support for the proposal.



## Phone survey

Amongst the phone survey respondents, there is more support for Council's proposal from younger age groups. 60% of those under 35 years of age are supportive and almost half of those under 50.

Property type is influential, with more than half of those in apartments, flats, units or townhouses and villas supportive (53%) compared to free-standing houses at 38% support.

Gender influences support with overall support levels from females at 45% compared to males at 39%.

The suburbs which experienced a significant increase in land values in the 2020 NSW Valuer General assessment (Oatley and Mortdale) showed less support for the Council's proposal (34% when compared to all other suburbs 46%)

Renters are more supportive at 69% than those who are homeowners (39%).

## Post-webinar survey

More than half of post-webinar respondents were very supportive or supportive of Council's proposal.

Comments included:

- Extra funds are needed to cover inflation and a growing population which needs extra infrastructure
- I believe it's a fairer system by increasing the minimum rates level as people whether in a unit or a detached house enjoy a similar level of council services
- I think it inevitable even though I would be paying more than the average in rates because of the VG on my property which does NOT generate income. I already had a huge increase this year (Oatley resident). I would like to have been warned of that increase. It came as a shock as it was a VERY large increase.
- The proposal continues to be constrained by land and not population which is the primary user of council services.

## Online submissions

A total of 80 online submissions were received, but of these four made no substantive comments, instead registering to be updated.

A summary of the key theme in each submission can be found at Appendix 4.

Responses have been classified into object, neutral or support, either specifically in respect of the SRV or harmonised minimum rate proposal or more generally. Most submission writers spoke generally about Council's proposal without differentiating the minimum rates harmonisation from the SRV.

Amongst the 76 substantive submissions, nine were specifically supportive of the harmonised minimum rate proposal with four objections. There were seven specific objections to the SRV proposal.

General objections were evident in 44 submissions while 21 were neutral or supportive.

Key themes are summarised in the table below.

*Table 6: Key themes in submissions*

Theme	Example
Support the proposal	Support consistent rates Supportive of increasing equity of minimum rates
Financial stress	Impact of COVID-19 economic downturn Concern for low income residents Proposes a minimum that is between Kogarah and Hurstville if rates need to harmonise.
Amalgamation was supposed to make Council more financially efficient and reduce rates	Rates increasing faster than inflation Amalgamation should have resulted in cost savings Services have declined since amalgamation
Queries about Council's financial management	Improve management efficiencies and effectiveness
Why isn't Council reducing staff/services/costs in line with economic downturn	Suggest that services are restricted Specific projects unnecessary e/g sporting facilities

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## SAVINGS OPTIONS

One of the objectives of the 2020 community engagement was to test community sentiment around preferred areas of savings, should services need to be cut to meet budget needs.

Input around preferred savings was gathered from four sources:

- The CAG
- Online survey on Your Say
- Follow-up survey to webinar participants
- Phone survey respondents

Overall, there is a strong sentiment in the community in favour of service maintenance and there are similarities in the key areas for preservation as well as those which could be potentially targeted for savings across the four groups.

However, response numbers vary from 600 in the phone survey, 63 in the online survey, 9 in the post-webinar survey and 8 from the CAG.

In addition, the way the savings views were collected from the CAG was slightly different as a group-based process was used. For these reasons, the detailed findings from each of these four sources is provided separately below.

### CAG views

Amongst the CAG, the top priority areas which were important to maintain were:

- Parks
- Street cleaning
- Street lighting and other amenities
- Libraries, art and cultural services and economic activity
- Youth, aged person, disabled and community support

Areas that the CAG felt could be reviewed for savings were:

- Community centres and halls
- Aquatic sport and recreation
- Children's services
- Parking
- Development and buildings

## Phone respondent views

Overall, the phone survey showed strong support for keeping services.

The areas that people most wish to keep are:

- Youth, aged persons, disabled and community support (92%)<sup>5</sup>
- Parks (91%)
- Street lighting and amenities (90%)
- Health regulation (87%)
- Footpaths (85%)

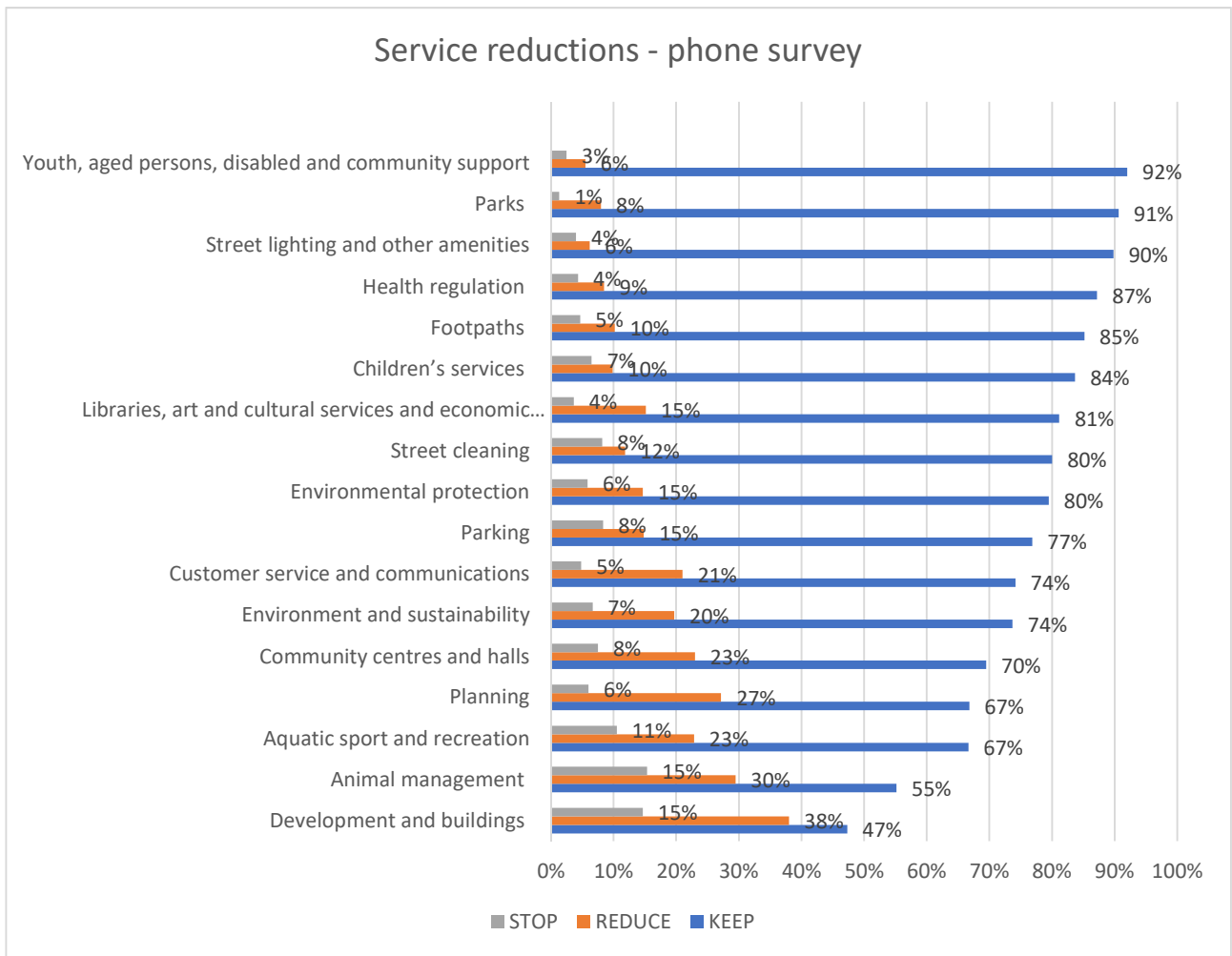
Areas most preferred for savings are:

- Development and buildings (38%)
- Animal management (30%)
- Aquatic and recreation (23%)
- Planning (27%)
- Community centres and halls (23%)

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<sup>5</sup> % shown is the proportion of people indicating service reduction

Figure 10 : Views on service reductions (phone survey)



## Online survey results

The same trends are evident in the online survey results as the phone survey, with a similar pattern of types of services which are priorities for keeping or for savings, but with a higher proportion of people indicating that savings could be made in some areas.

The areas that people most wish to keep are:

- Street lighting and amenities (87%)
- Parks (81%)
- Street cleaning (78%)
- Footpaths (78%)
- Environment and sustainability (73%)

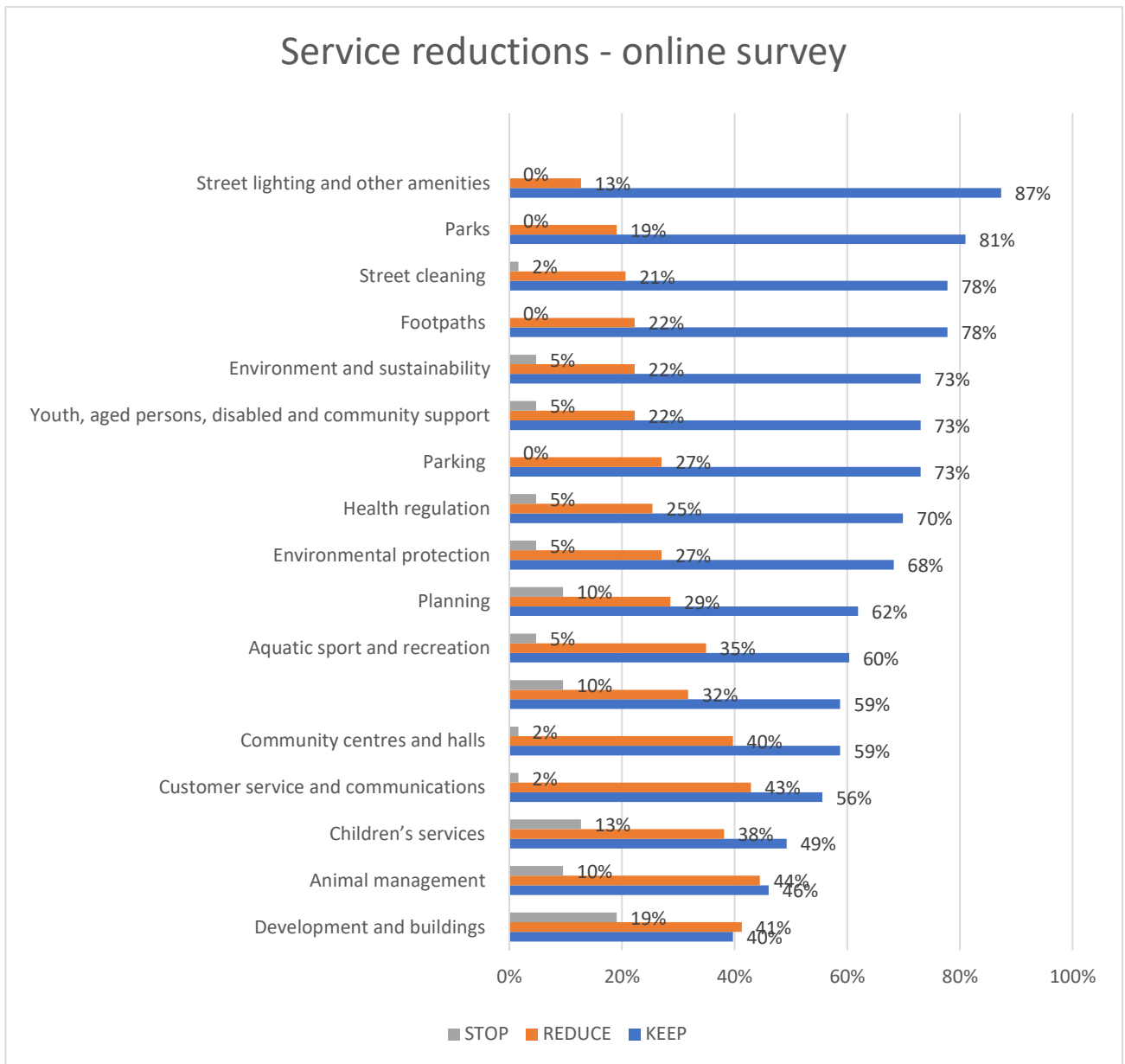
Areas most preferred for savings are:

- Development and buildings (41%)<sup>6</sup>
- Animal management (44%)
- Children's services (38%)
- Customer service and communications (43%)
- Community centres and halls (40%)

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<sup>6</sup> % shown is the proportion of people indicating service reduction

Figure 11 : Views on service reductions – online survey



## Webinar results

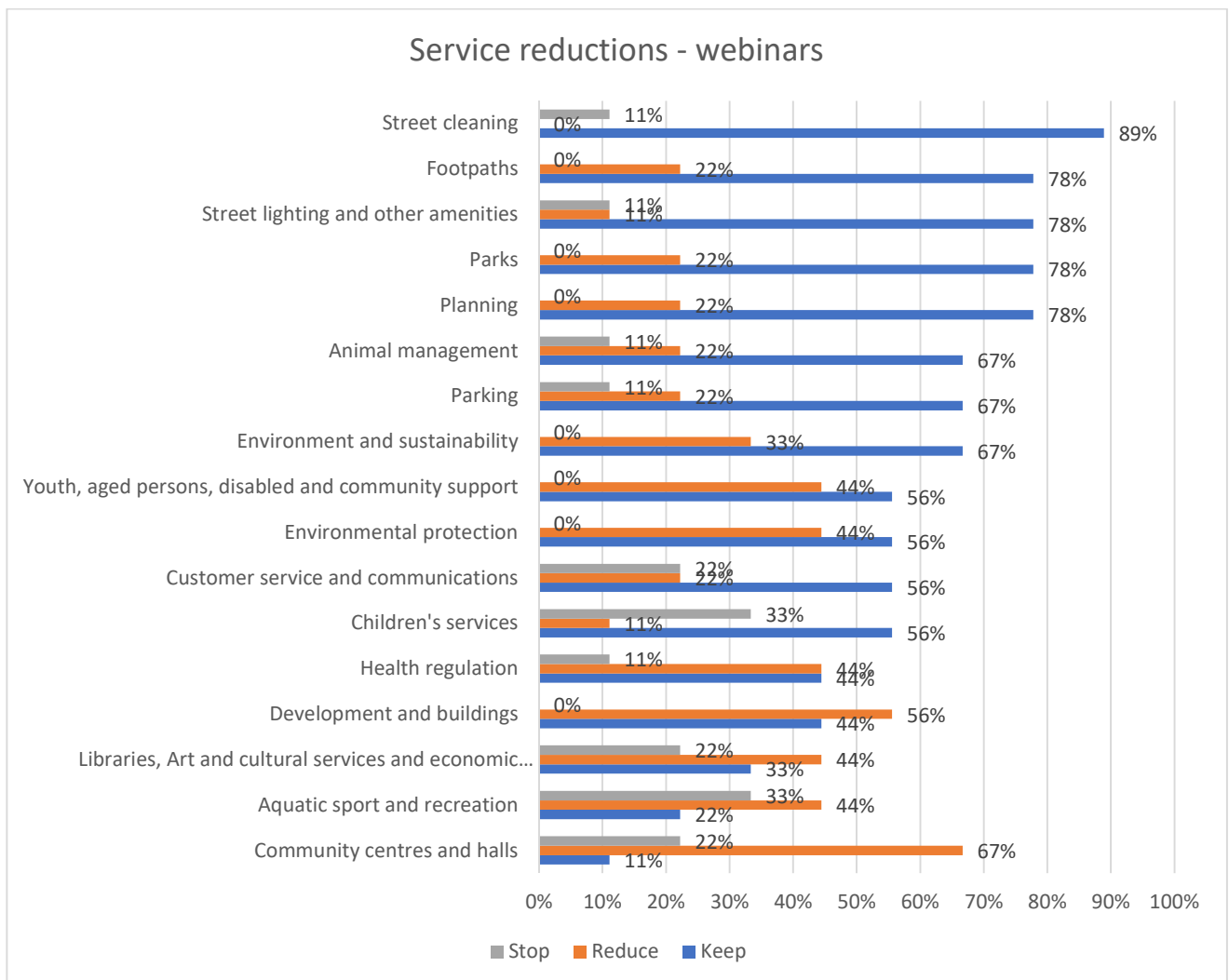
The areas that people most wish to keep are:

- Street cleaning (89%)
- Footpaths (78%)
- Street lighting and amenities (78%)
- Parks (78%)
- Planning (78%)

Areas most preferred for savings are:

- Community centres and halls (67%)
- Aquatic sport and recreation (44%)
- Libraries, art and cultural services and economic development (44%)
- Development and buildings (56%)
- Health regulation (44%)

Figure 12 - Views on service reductions - webinars





## Additional savings areas

Phone survey respondents were also asked for any additional savings areas which had not been covered by the list presented. Around 20% made some additional saving suggestions.

The major categories of additional suggestions and some examples are included in the table below.

Table 7: Additional savings identified in the phone survey

Category	Examples
Reduce councillor costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Councillor costs to be reviewed/ cost benefit analysis</li> <li>▪ Reduce the number of paid councillors</li> <li>▪ Less council meetings and less councillors</li> </ul>
Less staff/wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Look at restructuring of staff at all levels</li> <li>▪ They could reduce the number on customer services as most of it is done online</li> <li>▪ Save some money by not paying managers so much</li> </ul>
User pays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Get people who do the graffiti to clean it up instead of paid council employees</li> <li>▪ Maybe council can charge out some costs to the sporting bodies that use their facilities</li> <li>▪ We could make savings by having bike riders /Uber riders pay some sort of rego/insurance</li> <li>▪ The Oatley Park a fee or parking fee there</li> <li>▪ Charge commercial rates for use of sporting grounds</li> </ul>
IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Newsletters don't need to be printed - send them by email</li> <li>▪ Online work instead of face to face</li> </ul>
Outsourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tree management should be outsourced to someone with more knowledge. I think that council are a little out of their depth</li> <li>▪ Less use of council recommended contractors when a cheaper quote from another contractor could have been employed.</li> </ul>
Festivals/events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A lot of festivals and events should be left to the private sector.</li> <li>▪ Eliminate sister cities</li> <li>▪ Why are we running art competitions and grants?</li> </ul>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Get rid of the bureaucracy... Too many restrictions on buildings when you want to make an extension</li> <li>▪ Stop refinishing car parks that don't need it, don't demolish the pool. Unnecessary public building developments</li> </ul>
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Council should be efficient in what they are undertaking</li> <li>▪ Have more experience in what they do and not take so long to make decision</li> </ul>

Online survey respondents made five suggestions:

- Maybe utilise a volunteer service for some services.
- Services that are better run centrally by Service NSW are better handed over.
- The entire community should not be paying for the minority, those services if wanted must be user pays. Centralise resources with other councils
- Services of a personal nature (as opposed to services for the general public) should be "user pays". e.g. library membership should cost
- The Council does not need to be in childcare, there are plenty of private operators in this space

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## CONCLUSION

The 2020 community consultation on New Rates 2021 built on the 2019 consultations, as did the specifics of the proposal itself. The consultation achieved a high level of awareness of Council's proposals, considerably above the 2019 level of awareness of 47%.

At 55% penetration, Council can be confident that the majority of residents are aware of the New Rates 2021 proposal. At the same time, the relatively low level of participation in active engagement activities in 2020 may be indicative of a level of satisfaction around what is being proposed or overall consultation fatigue.

The 2019 engagement confirmed a high level of community support for the consistent application of a minimum rate across the LGA and the associated business differential rates. It produced the refinement of a higher rate for the strategic centres of Kogarah and Hurstville.

2020 showed that a phased introduction of the SRV preferred rate increase from 2019 has considerable community support. More than half of residents aged under 50 years are supportive of the increase, as are the majority of apartment, unit and townhouse residents.

In the suburbs of Oatley and Mortdale, ratepayers experienced a significant increase in land values in 2020 which has led to less support for Council's proposal, though the proposal would correct the greater than 20% increases due to the land revaluations and see a gradual increase. This highlighted the disconnect in community understanding about the rating system and how it operates.

The current NSW rating system, which does not allow for increased rate revenue in line with increased population growth, leaves councils with no alternative other than an application to IPART to achieve rate revenue growth. Many in the community already believe that rate revenue increases in line with population growth or would prefer this to be the case. There is in principle support for rates revenue growth to support population growth.

The recent recommendations of the NSW Productivity Commission review into infrastructure contributions support a shift to rate revenue growth in line with population growth.

The 2020 GRC per capita rate figure has been calculated at \$454 (or \$448 with the pensioner rebate) which is more than 20% lower than the NSW average rate, further underscoring the appropriateness of the New Rates 2021 proposals. Based on the proposed rate revenue increase over 5 years and assuming 7% population growth, the Georges River Council per capita projection is below the NSW average of \$591, with an increase from \$454 to \$545 projected in 5 years.

## APPENDIX 1 PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement - summary of reach

<b>Georges River Council New rates 2021 Consultation October 2020 – November 2020</b>				
<b>Date</b>	<b>Article title</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Outlet</b>	<b>Reach</b>
17-Aug-20	Letter from the Mayor on New Rates 2021	Georges River Council letter	Attachment to rates notices	57,000
Sept-20	Citizens Advice Group	Meetings	Georges River Councils Citizen Advice Group	15 members 3 meetings (1 online, 2 in person) 30 meeting engagements
9-Oct-20	New rating system coming	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Community e-newsletter	15,784
18-Oct-20	Georges River Council New Rates 2021 video (2min 30 sec)	Short video on the New Rates 2021 proposal	Georges River Council YouTube	67 views
19-Oct-20	New Rates 2021 Consultation	New Rates 2021 Consultation page	Georges River Your Say	906 Page views 190 Informed visitors
19-Oct-20	Have your say on Council services survey	Council services survey	Georges River Your Say	63 survey submissions
19-	New Rates 2021	Submissions	New Rates email	80 submissions

Oct-20	submission		and Your Say Georges River	
23-Oct-20	New rates coming next year	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Community e-newsletter	15,769
28-Oct-20	New Rates 2021 Consultation	Your Say newsletter	Your Say newsletter	2,499
28-Oct-20	It's time to have your say on rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	181,000
29-Oct-20	New Rates 2021 Brochure	Georges River Council information brochure	Delivered to all ratepayers in the local government area via email and hardcopy	57,000
29-Oct-20	It's time to have your say on rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,756 people reached 25 engagements/post clicks 12 likes 3 comments 4 shares
30-Oct-20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	3,187 people reached 311 engagements 15 likes and reactions 16 comments 4 shares
31-Oct-20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,946 people reached

				99 engagements 5 likes and reactions 8 comments 1 share
31- Oct- 20	<a href="#">Georges River Council's rate leap forward</a>	Article in The Leader	The Leader	131,818
3- Nov -20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	535 people reached 5 engagements 0 likes and reactions 0 comments 0 share
4- Nov -20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	276 people reached 2 engagements 1 likes and reactions 0 comments 0 share
4- Nov - 20	It's time to have your say on rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	181,000
5- Nov -20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	294 people reached 8 engagements 0 likes and reactions 6 comments 0 share

6- Nov -20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council e- newsletter	Community e- newsletter	15,754
6 - Nov -20	New Rates 2021 Brochure Arabic	Georges River Council information brochure	Distributed at Civic Centre and Libraries	500 brochures
6 - Nov -20	New Rates 2021 Brochure Nepalese	Georges River Council information brochure	Distributed at Civic Centre and Libraries	500 brochures
6 - Nov -20	New Rates 2021 Brochure Chinese	Georges River Council information brochure	Distributed at Civic Centre and 3 Libraries	1,000 brochures
6 - Nov -20	New Rates 2021 Brochure English	Georges River Council information brochure	Distributed at Civic Centre and 3 Libraries	500 brochures
7- Nov -20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,573 people reached  100 engagements  6 likes and reactions  9 comments  1 share
8- Nov -20	Video: New Rates 2021 – hear from GM Gail Connolly	Video post to Georges River Council Facebook	Georges River Council Facebook	2,300 people reached  101 engagements  56 comments  39 reactions
9- Nov -20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	423 people reached

				24 engagements 0 likes and reactions 2 comments 0 share
10-Nov-20	New Rates 2021 Consultation	Your Say newsletter	Your Say newsletter	2,462
10-Nov-20	GRC New Rates 2021 webinar recording	Webinar recording	Georges River Council YouTube	30 Views
11-Nov-20	It's time to have your say on rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	181,000
11-Nov-20	New Rates 2021	Bulk email to last years Rates Consultants registrants	Georges River Connect	2,096
11-Nov-20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,650 people reached 114 engagements 2 likes and reactions 9 comments 0 share
11-Nov-20	<a href="#">Webinars to explain Georges River Council's new rates system</a>	Article in the St George and Sutherland Shire The Leader	The Leader	131,818
12-Nov-20	Georges River Council's General Manager explains New Rates 2021	Short video explaining new rates	Georges River Council YouTube	26 Views



17- Nov -20	Georges River Council New Rates 2021 video (30 sec)	Short video on the New Rates 2021 proposal	Georges River Council YouTube	277 views
17- Nov -20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,582 people reached 148 engagements 1 likes and reactions 13 comments 0 share
18- Nov - 20	It's time to have your say on rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	181,000
18- Nov -20	New Rates 2021 ad	Georges River Council New rates 2021 ad	Greek Herald	12, 200
20- Nov -20	Our new rates system	Georges River Council e- newsletter	Community e- newsletter	15,743
21- Nov -20	New Rates 2021 ad	Georges River Council New Rates 2021 ad	Australian Chinese Daily	23,000
23- Nov -20	New Rates 2021 Consultation	Your Say newsletter	Your Say newsletter	2,505
25- Nov -20	It's time to have your say on rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	181,000
27- Nov -20	New Rates 2021 webinar	Georges River Council advertisement	El Telegraph (Arabic Newspaper)	30,000
27- Nov	Georges River	Georges River Council	El Telegraph (Arabic)	30,000

-20	Council	advertisement	Newspaper)	
Oct- Nov - 20	New Rates 2021 Frequently Asked Questions	Georges River Council New rates 2021 webpage	Georges River Council website	Web page visits - 16
Oct- Nov - 20	New Rates 2021 I want to know more	Georges River Council New Rates 2021 webpage	Georges River Council website	Web page visits - 447
Oct- Nov - 20	New Rates 2021 Why does Council need to increase its rates	Georges River Council New Rates 2021 webpage	Georges River Council website	Web page visits - 155
Oct- Nov -20	New Rates 2021 What does this mean for me?	Georges River Council New Rates 2021 webpage	Georges River Council website	Web page visits - 167
Oct- Nov -20	New Rates 2021	Georges River Council New Rates 2021 webpage	Georges River Council website	Web page visits - 2562
Oct- Nov -20	Council Services Survey – Hard copy	New Rates 2021 Council Services survey – hard copy	Civic Centre and Libraries	100 hard copies
Oct- Nov -20	Smart signs	Georges River Council Smart Signage	Georges River Council Smart Signage Kogarah and Hurstville	50,000
Nov -20	New Rates 2021 webinars (x4)	Georges River Council Eventbrite page	Georges River Council Eventbrite	342 Eventbrite page views 75 registered attendees 30 Attendees
Nov -20	New Rates 2021 A1 Corflute signs	New Rates 2021 corflute signs	Georges River Council corflute signs	35 distributed throughout the LGA

1- Dec- 20	'New Rates 2021 webinars well received'	Article	Georges River Council Community magazine	50,000
<b>TOTAL potential engagement/reach</b>				<b>1,575,239</b>

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## APPENDIX 2 CITIZENS ADVICE GROUP

### Citizens Advice Group recruitment:

The purpose of the citizens advice group was to provide representative community input to the rate restructure New Rates 2021 project . The detailed terms of reference can be found below.

Recruitment strategies were designed to deliver a group broadly representative of the community. Composition targets were set as follows:

- Group size capped at a maximum of 20
  - Representative from each of the 5 wards of GRC LGA
  - Equal male/female numbers
  - Reflecting age/life stage diversity ( Under 20, young working age, school-age families, middle age, retired)
  - Inclusive of diversity re ethnicity/disability
  - One business ratepayer

There were two strategies used to assemble a group, with a first come, first served approach to satisfy the targets above.

1. Invitations to the following GRC community forums, seeking expressions of interest in membership of the Citizen's Advice Group:
  - a. Access and Inclusion Reference Group
  - b. Youth Advisory Committee
  - c. Multicultural Reference Group
  - d. Aboriginal Reference Group.

Selection was one member from each group on a first come, first serve basis, then matched against the other criteria.

2. Written invitations posted to a random sample drawn from the current ratepayer database (both residential and business ratepayers).(One person in every 200 on the database segmented by ward was initially invited, with an additional 100 invitations sent on the same basis when response rates were low.)

Applications for membership required the completion of an expression of interest form.

### Citizens Advice Group composition

In the end, 17<sup>7</sup> applications were received for the CAG and all were accepted. Welcome phone calls were made to members.

The group profile was as follows:

Ward	Hurstville Ward – 9 Kogarah Bay Ward – 3 Blakehurst Ward – 1 Mortdale Ward – 3 Peakhurst - 1
Age/family profile	20 or under = 2

<sup>7</sup> Of these 17, 11 attended the initial meeting ( 9 and 8 for meeting #2 and #3)

	School aged children at home n=3 Mid-life = 8 Retired = 2 Other = 3 (retiring, part-time work , long service leave)
Gender	Male = 9 Female =8
Language spoken at home	English = 11-13 Chinese/Cantonese/Mandarin = 5 Arabic =1 Croatian = 1
Business ratepayer	N=1
Member of GRC Community forum	N =6

An online survey was distributed to CAG members after its conclusion to seek feedback on the experience of the group, views about its effectiveness and suggestions for improvement. Six members completed the survey.

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# RATE RESTRUCTURE CONSULTATION 2020

## CITIZENS ADVICE GROUP

### Terms of Reference

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**Name of the group:** The GRC RATE RESTRUCTURE CITIZENS ADVICE GROUP

**Membership:** Membership is voluntary and by invitation. Invitations were generated through a process of random selection from the GRC ratepayer data base and members of Council's community forums

Membership is capped at 20

**Facilitation:** ASK Insight Consultants; Alison Plant and Susan Warth

**Meetings:** There will be three or four meetings of the Citizen's Advice Group in September 2020

**The purpose of the group is to provide advice in relation to the following topics:**

1. Consideration and discussion of the rate restructure options proposed by Council.
2. Discussion and advice about which key messages will help the community select their preferred option.
3. Reviewing the proposed community engagement activities.
4. Discussion about how the Citizens Advice group could help in the community engagement activities (video, webinar).
5. The service areas where Council could reduce services to make savings if the proposed rate increase is not achieved.
6. Feedback on the Citizens Advice Group; its effectiveness, lessons and opportunities for improvement.

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# APPENDIX 3 ONLINE SUBMISSION THEMES

**Table of Submissions Summary New rates 2021**

#	Proposal in general	SRV	Minimum	Summary of submission
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#	Proposal in general	SRV	Minimum	Summary of submission
1.	Object	-	-	Resident is of the opinion that many Council services should be cut or reduced, particularly events. Unhappy with impact of the changes to Hurstville residents
2.	-	Object	-	Concerned with different land value between Hurstville and Kogarah as well as financial impact of COVID-19.
3.	Neutral	-	-	Concerned at impact of rates increase during COVID-19 however is supportive of the increase if maintenance and services increase.
4.	Object	-	-	Concerned with another increase and financial impact of this, particularly due to COVID-19. Disagrees with spend on art and events.
5.	-	-	Object	Concerned with financial impact of increase for Hurstville residents. Proposes a minimum that is between Kogarah and Hurstville if rates need to harmonise.
6.	Neutral	-	-	Concerned at financial impact on community impacted by COVID-19 and Council's spending.
7.	-	-	Object	Opposed to increase of rates in Hurstville area. Concerned at rate of development and population increase, stating it should be mitigated.
8.	Object	-	-	Opposed to increase in rates and concerned at service level, eg clean ups.
9.	Neutral	-	-	Issue with engagement and delayed notification of webinars.
10.	Neutral	-	-	Concerned with financial impact of increase due to COVID-19. Queries cost savings from amalgamation.
11.	Neutral	-	-	Proposes new mechanism for rates collection based on average income.
12.	Neutral	-	-	Concerned about cost of tree maintenance and political ideologies that drive tree maintenance impacting rates.
13.	Object	-	-	Opposes rates increase and raised concerns with late notification of webinar
14.	Object	-	-	Opposed to rates increase and states that management of Council assets, eg roads, is poor.



#	Proposal in general	SRV	Minimum	Summary of submission
15.	-	-	Support	Strongly supports rates equalisation and rates increase. States Council could reduce some services such as community halls and libraries.
16.	-	-	-	No content.
17.	-	-	Support	Supportive of reduction in rates for free standing houses and requests increase in Council services including street lighting and footpaths in local area.
18.	Object	-	-	Opposes rates increase and states rates are increasing faster than rate of inflation.
19.	Neutral	-	-	Seeks clarification on the purpose of rates. Requests Council to demonstrate its financial management and cost saving mechanisms.
20.	Object	-	-	Opposes increase, especially amidst service reduction due to COVID-19.
21.	Object	-	-	Questions the promised efficiencies of amalgamation, queries Council's financial management and legitimacy of past consultations in which it was perceived Council ignores community wishes.
22.	Neutral	-	-	Requests that sharp disposal service is reinstated and its renewal should be considered in the new rates consultation.
23.	Object	-	-	Unhappy with increase proposed but is accepting of rates increases of a smaller amount.
24.	Object	-	-	Opposes increase and states that former Hurstville Council had very low deficit. Queries effectiveness of Council services.
25.	-	Object	Support	Raises concerns at Council's financial management. Queries legitimacy of Council consultation. States amalgamation was meant to reduce rates. Queries spend on green spaces, eg Gannon's Park.
26.	Object	-	-	Concerned at rates increase due to economic downturn during COVID-19
27.	-	-	-	No content. Wants to be kept updated on new rates progress.

#	Proposal in general	SRV	Minimum	Summary of submission
28.	-	-	-	No content. Wants to be kept updated on new rates progress.
29.	-	-	Support	Supports consistent rates. Suggests Hurstville residents back pay new rates for 2020, due to delay in proposal.
30.	Neutral	-	-	Queries whether the percentage of land value used to calculate rates above the minimum are to be standardised.
31.	Object	-	-	Raises financial concern for low income residents to afford increase. States the rates based on land value is not equitable.
32.	Neutral	-	-	Raises concern at traffic management and planning.
33.	Object	-	-	States that amalgamation should have resulted in cost savings. Queries Council's financial management capacity and priorities.
34.	Neutral	-	-	Queries Council's financial management capacity and suggests selling Council assets, including swimming pools, to address deficit.
35.	Object	-	-	Queries Council's financial management capacity. Raises concern at financial impact for residents due to economic downturn.
36.	Support	Object	Support	Queries Council's financial management capacity and reliance on consultants.
37.	Support	Object	Support	Queries Council's financial management capacity and reliance on consultants.
38.	Object	-	-	States that services have declined in quality since amalgamation.
39.	Neutral	-	--	Raises concerns about the equity in rental tenants' access to services whilst not paying a share of rates. Is of the opinion that the onus should shift to renters, not landlords.
40.	Neutral	-	-	Raises concern at financial impact for low income households. Queries service standard including road maintenance and tree trimming.
41.	Object	-	-	Opposes new rates, stating that current rates are too high.
42.	-	-	-	No content. Wants to be kept updated on new rates progress.

#	Proposal in general	SRV	Minimum	Summary of submission
43.	Object	-	-	Queries Council's financial management capacity. Suggests raising revenue by fining residents who park illegally.
44.	-	Object	-	Opposes size of current proposed increase but is accepting of a small rates increase. Queries Council's financial management capacity.
45.	Neutral	-	Support	Questions the promised efficiencies of amalgamation and Council's financial management capacity. Queries length of time it is taking to align rates between former Councils.
46.	Object	-	-	Raises concern at financial impact for residents due to economic downturn. Queries Council's financial management and perceived lack of financial cuts during COVID-19.
47.	Object	-	-	Raises concern at financial impact for residents due to economic downturn and rate growth increasing higher than inflation rate and proposed salary increases. Queries Council's financial management capacity. Highlights service reduction due to COVID-19.
48.	Object	-	-	States that amalgamation should have resulted in cost savings. Raises concern at financial impact for residents due to economic downturn/COVID-19. Queries Council's financial management capacity. Supportive of reduction in gap between houses and apartments.
49.	Support	-	Support	Supportive of increasing equity of minimum rates. Notes that land value does not correlate to services required or used.
50.	-	-	-	Requests average and minimum rates for 2019/2020. No other content.
51.	-	Object	-	Queries Council's financial management capacity by highlighting specific projects the resident believes are unnecessary and financially unviable (eg Suburb signs, hydro panels, sporting facilities).
52.	Object	-	-	Queries Council's financial management capacity. Raises concern at financial impact for residents due to economic downturn/COVID-19.
53.	Object	-	-	Queries rate on migration into NSW and the impact this has on rates as well as Council's financial management capacity.

#	Proposal in general	SRV	Minimum	Summary of submission
54.	Object	-	Object	Opposes increase for Hurstville residents and claims that it does not align with improvement in services.
55.	Object	-	-	Raises concern at financial impact for residents due to economic downturn/COVID-19.
56.	Object	-	-	Opposes change in rates.
57.	Object	-	-	Opposes change in rates.
58.	-	-	Object	Concern at financial impact of increase on community given economic downturn due to COVID-19. Queries Council's financial management capacity.
59.	Object	-	-	Opposes rate increase and suggests restriction in services.
60.	Object	-	-	Opposes rate increases and queries Council's financial management capacity.
61.	Object	-	-	Opposes rates increase.
62.	Object	-	-	Concern at financial impact of increase on community given economic downturn due to COVID-19. Questions professionalism of Councillors.
63.	Object	-	-	Strongly opposes increase and questions financial management capacity of Council.
64.	Neutral	-	-	Questions efficiency and benefit of amalgamation.
65.	Object	-	-	Queries Council's financial management capacity.
66.	Object	-	-	Concern at financial impact of increase on community given economic downturn due to COVID-19. Queries Council's financial management capacity.
67.	Object	-	Object	Questions efficiency and benefit of amalgamation. Queries Council's financial management capacity.
68.	Neutral	-	-	Expresses appreciation for consultation and keenness to support Council. However, states that residents should not be burdened with Councils debt. Suggests improving management

#	Proposal in general	SRV	Minimum	Summary of submission
				efficiencies and effectiveness.
69.	Neutral	-	-	Provides positive feedback on 'excellent and professional' webinar. Requests info on rates for new dwellings.
70.	Object	-	-	States that rates increase is 'excessive and unsatisfactory' and suggests that a more gradual increase would be more appropriate.
71.	Neutral	-	-	Questions efficiency and benefit of amalgamation. Queries Council's financial management capacity.
72.	Object	-	Support	Supports consistent rates across the LGA but not the rates increase. Questions efficiency and benefit of amalgamation. Queries Council's financial management capacity.
73.	Object	-	-	Questions efficiency and benefit of amalgamation. Queries Council's financial management capacity.
74.	Object	-	-	Questions efficiency and benefit of amalgamation. Queries Council's financial management capacity.
75.	-	Object	-	Concern at financial impact of increase on community given economic downturn due to COVID-19.
76.	Object	-	-	Queries the equity of rates distribution, stating that rates should be calculated on services use. States that rates system is outdated and encourages local councils to lobby State government to change the laws around rates. Submitted letter in which MP Couré had written to Hancock MP (Min for Local Govt) on behalf of resident.
77.	Object	-	-	States that Council duplicates services of Federal and State government. Opposes the proposal on this basis.
78.	Object	-	-	Queries status of targeted rating system for tenants of Hurstville Westfield. Opposes current proposal, stating it would represent a 275% increase for tenants and shop owners in Hurstville.
79.	Object	-	-	Questions efficiency and benefit of amalgamation.
80.	Object	-	-	Questions efficiency and benefit of amalgamation and the evidence of Council's cost savings. Queries Council's financial management capacity.

**\*neutral indicates instances in which resident did not explicitly support or object to the proposal but offered opinion or comment on Council services, amalgamation and financial management.**

DRAFT

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APPENDIX 4  
LIST OF FAQs

DRAFT

1	Why are these rate changes required?
2	Why is the Hurstville variation finishing – what was the reason?
3	What is the current Hurstville rate variation?
4	How much additional income does Council get from the special rate variation?
5	What will happen if council doesn't change the rates? What will it mean for residents?
6	What happened to the money Council received from the state government when we merged?
7	Do population increases provide an increase in the rates collected by Council?
8	Does Council's rate income increase as new units are built?
9	Why are so many high-rises then built in the LGA if the council doesn't get more money via rates but will then have to spend more for services as the population increases?
10	With all the large unit development in the area, why don't the rates for each unit cover the shortfall?
11	Why was the decision deferred last year if consultation was done then and the community agreed?
12	How likely or unlikely is it that the Council defers the proposal again?
13	How many residents (percentage) responded to the survey's last year?
14	Will the presentation/webinars be undertaken in other languages?
15	How will I benefit from paying the increase?
16	What happens if I can't pay the new rates? What about people doing it tough because of COVID 19?
17	How are my rates calculated?
18	What is a minimum rate?
19	Is there a different minimum rate for houses and apartments?
20	Does the apartment block pay a total of \$965 the entire complex or per-unit?
21	How are rates for units/apartments calculated?



22	Business vs residential – is there a different rate?
23	What are the current residential minimum rates and what is proposed?
24	Does everyone pay the increase in the minimum?
25	Will the rate in the dollar used to calculate rates above the minimum rate be standardised?
26	Why is the Hurstville rates much less than Kogarah?
27	Why is the minimum rate not halfway between both?
28	How much more will I pay owning a detached house if we don't go ahead with the new rates system?
29	If the value of my land increases does that mean Council's total rate income will also increase?
30	Is it at the discretion of each council as to how the overall rates are determined?
31	Why isn't Council proposing a rate system based on population?
32	How many residential units and business units are there in Georges River Council area?
33	What contributed to the (projected) deficits of \$11M for 2021/22 and \$12 M for 2022/23 while the deficit for 20/21 was only \$3 M?
34	Rates for some residential properties in Oatley increased by more than 20% since last year. Will the proposed rate increases also be applicable to these properties?
35	I note from the website an average increase of 16% increase in Oatley – why?
36	How many residential/business units are at present paying \$586 (the minimum rate for Hurstville)? I know of an apartment unit paying around \$1,000 and a house \$2,014
37	The rate in the dollar on the calculator is 0.0016401 but my rate notice showed 0.0019774 Should that figure be the same across all ratepayers?
38	What happens if the new proposal doesn't go ahead? Will it stay with the increase from (property revaluation by the NSW Valuer General) from this year?
39	Over the 5 years, according to your proposal for residential units, the average increase on the 5 <sup>th</sup> year is \$312 [(\$0.6+\$1.35*4)*52] pa. Please explain how this applies to other properties?
40	If the council has increased the minimum rates, will the proposed increase over the 5

	years still go ahead?
41	Wasn't the special rate variation meant to be temporary?
42	How is the deficit funded?
43	Why is there a missing financial year in the table presented at the webinar?
44	Where does a villa complex sit in the rates calculation?
45	How is this proposal different from last years?
46	Doesn't this proposal make the rate system less progressive?
47	What savings and sacrifices is Council prepared to make?
48	Why doesn't the minimum rate's increase produce enough revenue in the first year to offset general increases?
49	What is the plan for the former Kogarah Council building as it could generate income?
50	What have been the synergy costs of the merger on a run rate basis?
51	What is Council's income sources?

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APPENDIX 5  
PHONE SURVEY REPORT

DRAFT



**GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL**  
**Phone Survey**  
**Analysis**



**ASK INSIGHT**  
**8 December 2020**

# Table of Contents

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## Overview

The phone survey was conducted in the period Saturday 14 November to Monday 30 November.

The target of 600 calls to random households across the 5 wards in the LGA was achieved. The distribution is shown in the table below. Thirty-five percent of households spoke a language other than English at home.

Table 8: Ward distribution of phone survey calls

WARD	# of respondents
Blakehurst Ward	121
Hurstville Ward	120
Kogarah Bay Ward	119
Mortdale Ward	120
Peakhurst Ward	120
TOTAL	600

Household distribution type was as follows:

Type of Housing	# of respondents
Apartment, flat or unit	113 (19%)
Free-standing house	420 (70%)
Townhouse, terrace, semi or villa	67 (11%)
TOTAL	600

## Awareness of rates cap

Phone survey respondents were asked “Did you know that the total amount of money Council can collect in rates is fixed by the State Government?”

The phone survey showed that 2 in 3 people are not aware that the amount of money Council can collect in rates is fixed by the State Government.

Table 9: Awareness of rates cap

Awareness that total rates are capped	# of respondents	%
Yes	205	34%
No	395	66%
Total	600	100%

## Rates increase vs population increase

The phone survey sought people’s views on whether the total amount of rates Council collects should increase in line with population growth and new development. If those who were unsure are excluded, respondents are almost equally divided.

Responses were further analysed to see if there was any difference between those who were aware that the total rates that Council can collect is fixed by the State Government and those who were not. There was no influence of this awareness on whether or not an individual believed rates should increase in line with population growth, with the proportion of responses being identical in both groups.

Table 10: Should rates increase in line with population growth?

Increase in line with population growth?	# of respondents	%
Yes	262	44%
No	294	49%
Unsure	44	7%
Total	600	100%

### Awareness of the proposal prior to the phone survey

More than half (55%) of the phone survey sample were aware of the council's New Rates 2021 proposal. This is higher than the awareness rate in the 2019 phone survey which was 47%. It is likely that the 2019 consultations have contributed to this greater awareness.

Table 11: Prior awareness of council's new rates proposal

Awareness of new rates 2021 prior to call	# of respondents	%
Yes	330	55%
No	270	45%
Total	600	100%



## Channels of awareness about New Rates 2021

The table below shows the channels of awareness about New Rates 2021. The brochure was by far the most common source of awareness (45% had seen it) followed by newspaper advertisements (14%) word-of-mouth (12%) and councils e-news (11%).

Awareness channel	# of respondents who had seen	% of total sample
Brochure	268	45%
E-news	65	11%
Website	33	6%
Newspaper advertisement	83	14%
Community newspaper	18	3%
Social media	45	8%
Banner/street sign	11	2%
Word-of-mouth	72	12%
Other	25	4%

Examples of other sources included progress Association, a counsellor, the rates notice, local member, TV news and the SMH.

## Support for Council’s proposal

The council proposal was explained to respondents and then they were asked how supportive they were of this proposal and why they gave the rating that they chose.

A close analysis of the reasons given for the ratings unpacks a number of themes which puts the chosen rating in context.

Amongst those who were most supportive of the proposal (ratings of 4 or 5) most comments from individuals acknowledged the benefits to the community of council services and facilities and their willingness to pay for these. The proposed increases were seen as affordable.

- *It’s not a huge amount and will not hurt anyone if it’s going to be a great help to the community, I will not oppose that*
- *I agree with the need to increase rates to cover the service needs of a growing population*
- *Doesn’t seem like a huge amount of money and everything is getting more expensive and if we want the services we have to pay for them*
- *If it is only a \$1 - \$ 2 a week it affordable*

Themes amongst those who gave a rating of three also included the benefits to the community and affordability but also personal financial difficulty and concerns for the financial difficulties of others and a desire for a smaller increase. Some people chose 3 because it was the midpoint.

- *If it's the lowest rate that it can be increased I support the increase as it has to increase with the population growth*
- *I'm finding it hard to meet ends meet now so an increase in rates is difficult for me to cope with..*
- *There would be a lot of families that could not afford that in the area*
- *I think 6% is too much I would go as high as 3% which I think is pretty fair*

For those who were less supportive, (ratings of 2 or 1) themes included that the proposed rates were too high, more than CPI, financial difficulty, believing the myth that rates increased in line with population increases and the need for Council to be more efficient.

- *They keep increasing my rates by \$700 from last year. There hasn't been an explanation as to why the increase*
- *Far above the CPI and any wage growth that the ratepayers would be receiving*
- *Our situation with COVID-19 mainly a struggling household*
- *Population increase equals more money and rate payers for Council*
- *They need to be more efficient. They need to reduce redundancy from the amalgamation.*

There were only six individuals i.e. 1% of the sample who declined to give a support rating. Those who said they did not really understand the proposal were people who spoke a language other than English at home.

A comparison of levels of support for Council's proposal based on awareness of the proposals prior to the phone call, showed a small trend towards a higher level of support for those with prior awareness. For example, 13% of those who were previously aware of the proposals gave a rating of 4 (supportive) compared to 9% of those who were unaware, with 36% not supportive compared to 39% in the unaware group.

A summary of the overall numbers by themes of comments and individual ratings can be found at Attachment 1.

Table 12: How supportive are you of the Council's proposal?

Level of support for the proposal?	# of respondents	%
1 - Not at all supportive	221	37%
2	123	21%
3	148	25%
4	67	11%
5 - Very supportive	35	6%
Total	594	100%
Blanks	6	

## Support for Council's proposal by ward

Phone survey respondent support for Council's proposal was further analysed by ward and this data is presented in figure 1 below.

Hurstville, Kogarah and Blakehurst wards all show more support for Council's proposal than Peakhurst and Mortdale wards.

Additional comparisons were undertaken with the suburbs of Mortdale and Oatley to test sentiment compared to the average for Georges River Council LGA, against the backdrop of 2020 property valuation increases in these suburbs. If these suburbs are excluded, support for the Council's proposal increases from 42% to 46.3%.

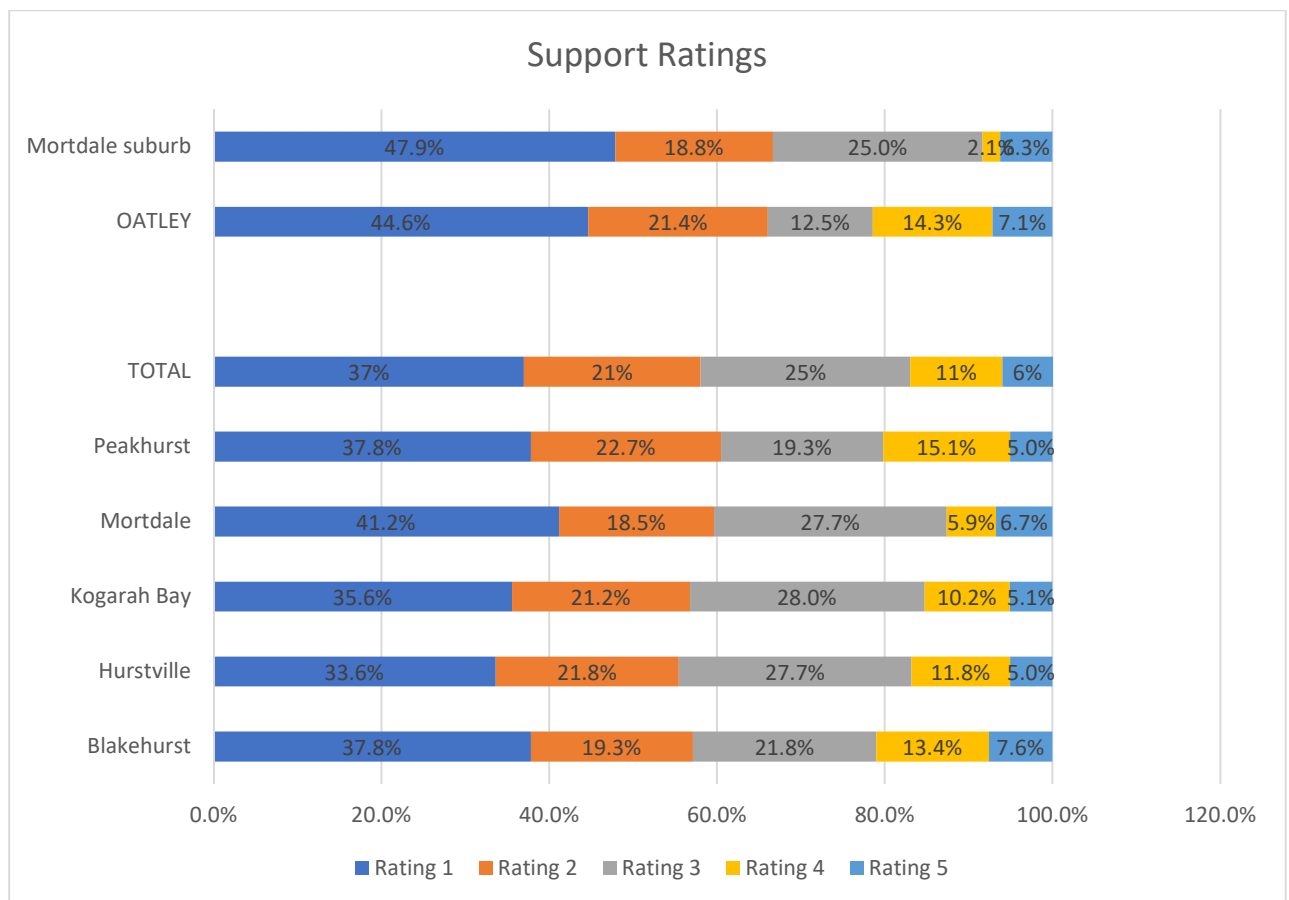


Figure 13: Level of support by Ward

WARD	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	# RESPONDED	Total
Blakehurst Ward	45	37.8%	23	19.3%	26	21.8%	16	13.4%	9	7.6%	119	121
Hurstville Ward	40	33.6%	26	21.8%	33	27.7%	14	11.8%	6	5.0%	119	120
Kogarah Bay Ward	42	35.6%	25	21.2%	33	28.0%	12	10.2%	6	5.1%	118	119
Mortdale Ward	49	41.2%	22	18.5%	33	27.7%	7	5.9%	8	6.7%	119	120
Peakhurst Ward	45	37.8%	27	22.7%	23	19.3%	18	15.1%	6	5.0%	119	120
TOTAL	222	37.4%	125	21.0%	151	25.4%	71	12.0%	40	6.7%	594	600
Oatley Suburb	25	44.6%	12	21.4%	7	12.5%	8	14.3%	4	7.1%	56	
Mortdale Suburb	23	47.9%	9	18.8%	12	25.0%	1	2.1%	3	6.3%	48	

## Support for Council's proposal by age group

Support for Council's proposal is highest amongst the younger age groups, with almost 60% of people under the age of 35 supportive and almost 50% of those under 50.

	18 to 34 years	%	35 to 49 years	%	50 to 64 years	%	65 plus years	%	Grand Total	%
1 - Not at all supportive	7	15.9%	47	29.4%	74	44.6%	92	41.3%	220	37.1%
2	11	25.0%	34	21.3%	32	19.3%	46	20.6%	123	20.7%
3	12	27.3%	53	33.1%	37	22.3%	46	20.6%	148	25.0%
4	11	25.0%	18	11.3%	14	8.4%	24	10.8%	67	11.3%
5 - Very supportive	3	6.8%	8	5.0%	9	5.4%	15	6.7%	35	5.9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>100%</b>
	7.4%		27.0%		28.0%		37.6%		100%	
Proportion supportive	59.1%		49.4%		36.1%		38.1%		42.2%	

### Support for Council’s proposal by gender

There is a higher level of support for Council’s proposal amongst females when compared to males with 45% supportive compared to 39%.

	Female	%	Male	%	Grand Total	
1 - Not at all supportive	112	34.7%	109	40.2%	221	37.2%
2	66	20.4%	57	21.0%	123	20.7%
3	91	28.2%	57	21.0%	148	24.9%
4	40	12.4%	27	10.0%	67	11.3%
5 - Very supportive	14	4.3%	21	7.7%	35	5.9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
%	54.4%		45.6%			
Supportive	44.9%		38.7%			

## Support for Council's proposal by renter/owner status

Support for Council's proposals amongst renters is almost double that of owners with almost 69% supportive compared to 39%.

	Currently renting this property	%	Owning or buying this property	%	Grand Total	%
1 - Not at all supportive	15	21.4%	201	39.1%	216	37.0%
2	7	10.0%	115	22.4%	122	20.9%
3	32	45.7%	114	22.2%	146	25.0%
4	11	15.7%	56	10.9%	67	11.5%
5 - Very supportive	5	7.1%	28	5.4%	33	5.7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>100%</b>

Supportive 68.6% 38.5%

## Support for Council's proposal by property type

More than half of the people who live in apartments, flats, or units or townhouse, terrace, semi or villa are supportive of Council's proposals (52.7% and 52.2% respectively, compared to free-standing households with 37.6% support.

	Apartment, flat/ unit	%	Free-standing house	%	Townhouse, terrace, semi, villa	%	Grand Total
1 - Not at all supportive	34	30.4%	165	39.8%	22	32.8%	221
2	19	17.0%	94	22.7%	10	14.9%	123
3	37	33.0%	91	21.9%	20	29.9%	148
4	12	10.7%	44	10.6%	11	16.4%	67
5 - Very supportive	10	8.9%	21	5.1%	4	6.0%	35
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>594</b>

% 18.9% 69.9% 11.3% 100%

Supportive 52.7% 37.6% 52.2%

Support for Council’s proposal was also tested by whether or not a language other than English was spoken at home, but this did not make any significant difference.

## Savings options

The areas which people most wish to keep are:

- Youth, aged persons, disabled and community support (92%)
- Parks (91%)
- Street lighting and amenities (90%)
- Health regulation (87%)
- Footpaths (85%)

Services seen as least important to keep were:

- Development and buildings (47% keep)
- Animal management (55% keep)

Service	Keep the service	Reduce the service	Stop the service/sell off	% KEEP
Planning	401	163	36	67%
Environment and sustainability	442	118	40	74%
Aquatic sport and recreation	400	137	63	67%
Parking	461	89	50	77%
Community centres and halls	417	138	45	70%
Animal management	331	177	92	55%
Development and buildings	284	228	88	47%
Libraries, art and cultural services and economic development	487	91	22	81%
Health regulation	523	51	26	87%
Parks	544	48	8	91%
Children’s services	502	59	39	84%
Customer service and communications	445	126	29	74%



Environmental protection	477	88	35	80%
Street lighting and other amenities	539	37	24	90%
Youth, aged persons, disabled and community support	552	33	15	92%
Footpaths	511	61	28	85%
Street cleaning	480	71	49	80%

The figure below shows the results ordered by the services most designated as those to keep.

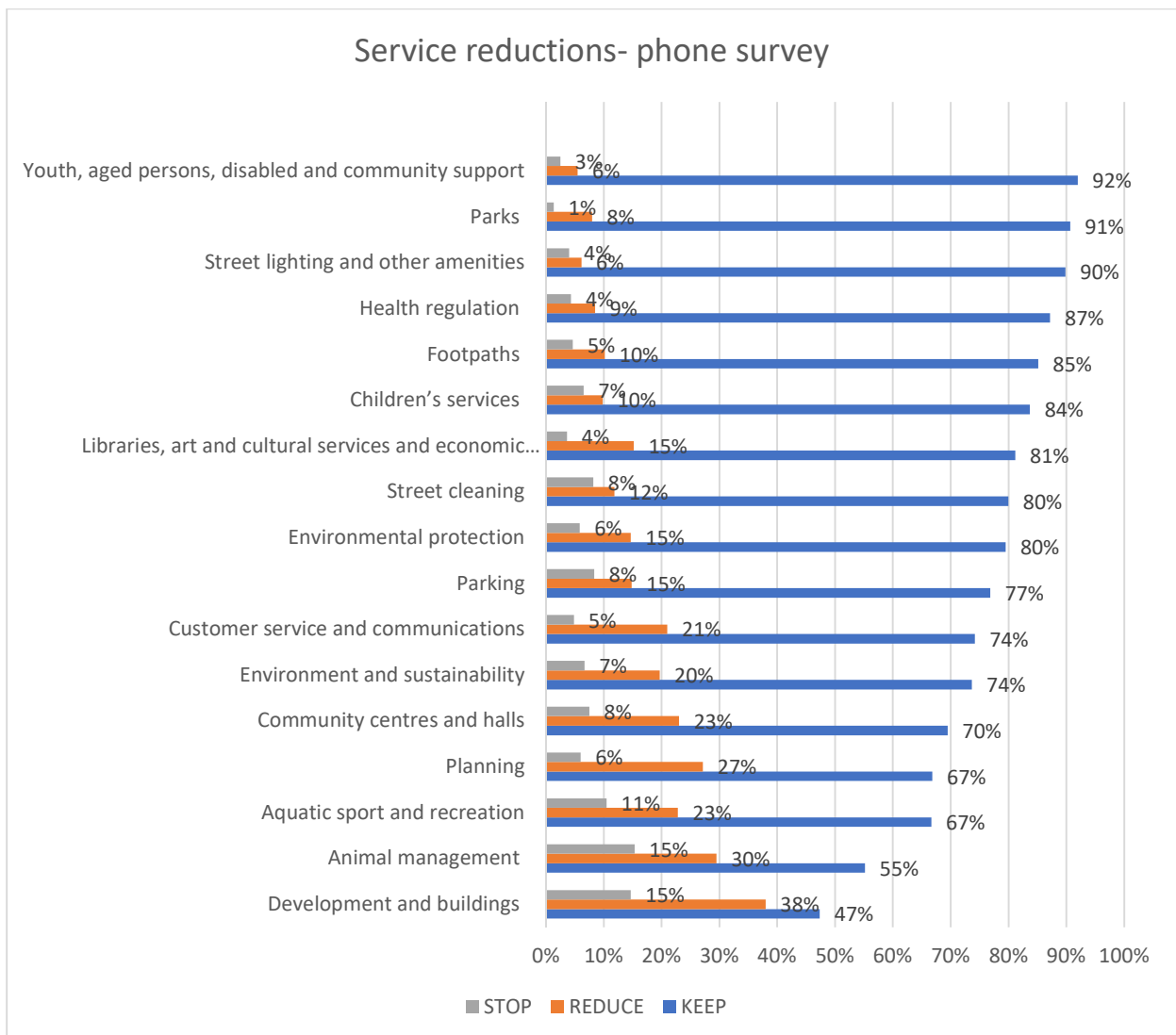


Figure 14: Service savings results

## Additional savings areas

Around 20% of respondents made some additional saving suggestions. But 80% of people had no suggestions or felt that the savings areas were already covered by the previous question.

Some gave some positive feedback, for example:

- *Not really, I think Georges River has done a good job overall*
- *Council does a wonderful job I have no problems*
- *There is actually none the state govt should provide enough money to run the council*

The major categories of suggestions and some examples are included in the table below.

Category	Examples
Reduce councillor costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Councillor costs to be reviewed/ cost benefit analysis</li> <li>▪ Reduce the number of paid councillors</li> <li>▪ Less council meetings and less Councillors</li> </ul>
Less staff/wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Look at restructuring of staff at all levels</li> <li>▪ They could reduce the number on customer services most of it is done online</li> <li>▪ Save some money by not paying managers so much</li> </ul>
User pays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Get people who do the graffiti to clean it up instead of paid council employees</li> <li>▪ Maybe council can charge out some costs to the sporting bodies that use their facilities</li> <li>▪ We could make savings by having bike riders /uber rider pay some sort of rego/insurance</li> <li>▪ The Oatley Park a fee or parking fee there</li> <li>▪ Charge commercial rates for use of sporting grounds</li> </ul>
IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Newsletters don't need to be printed send them by email</li> <li>▪ Online work instead of face to face</li> </ul>
Outsourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tree management should be outsourced to someone with more knowledge. I think that council are a little out of their depth</li> <li>▪ Less use of council recommended contractors when a cheaper quote from another contractor could have been employed.</li> </ul>
Festivals/events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A lot of festivals and event should be left to the private sector.</li> <li>▪ Eliminate sister cities</li> <li>▪ Why are we running art competitions and grants</li> </ul>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Get rid of the bureaucracy... Too many restrictions on buildings when you want to make an extension</li> <li>▪ Stop refinishing car parks that don't need it, don't demolish the pool. Unnecessary public building developments</li> </ul>
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Council should be efficient in what they are undertaking</li> <li>▪ Have more experience in what they do and not take so long to make decision</li> </ul>

## Attachment 1: Copy of phone survey

### GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL

### NEW RATES 2021 SURVEY

Hello, my name is ... and I'm calling from IRIS Research on behalf of Georges River Council. We are conducting a survey about Georges River Council's new rates for 2021. The survey will take about 8 minutes to complete.

I was hoping to speak to a permanent resident of the dwelling over the age of 18. Is that you?  
**[IF NOT TARGET A RESPONDENT OLDER THAN 18. IF NOT AT HOME ARRANGE A CALLBACK]**

Would you be willing to assist us with a survey today?

#### IF NO, OFFER A CALL BACK

This survey will be recorded and monitored for training and quality purposes.

S1. I just have to make sure you qualify. First, do you live in the Georges River Council area?

Yes	<b>CONTINUE</b>
No	<b>THANK &amp; TERMINATE</b>

S2. And do you or an immediate family member work for Georges River Council or are an elected Councillor?

Yes	<b>THANK &amp; TERMINATE</b>
No	<b>CONTINUE</b>

The survey will take about 8 minutes to complete, can we do it now? **[IF NOT ARRANGE A CALLBACK]**

S3. May I please have your first name for the survey?

**PART A – DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

A1A. In which suburb of Georges River do you live?

Allawah	1
Beverley Park	2
Beverly Hills	3
Blakehurst	4
Carlton	5
Carss Park	6
Connells Point	7
Hurstville Grove	8
Hurstville	9
Kingsgrove	10
Kogarah	11
Kogarah Bay	12
Kyle Bay	13
Lugarno	14
Mortdale	15
Narwee	16
Oatley	17
Peakhurst Heights	18
Peakhurst	19
Penshurst	20
Riverwood	21
Sans Souci	22
South Hurstville	23
Other	<b>TERMINATE</b>

**ALLOCATE:**

<b>code</b>	<b>Suburb</b>	<b>Assign to:</b>
1	Allawah	Kogarah Bay Ward
2	Beverley Park	Kogarah Bay Ward
3	Beverly Hills	Hurstville Ward
4	Blakehurst	Blakehurst Ward
5	Carlton	Kogarah Bay Ward
6	Carss Park	Blakehurst Ward
7	Connells Point	Blakehurst Ward
8	Hurstville	Hurstville Ward
9	Hurstville Grove	Blakehurst Ward
10	Kingsgrove	Hurstville Ward
11	Kogarah	Kogarah Bay Ward
12	Kogarah Bay	Kogarah Bay Ward
13	Kyle Bay	Blakehurst Ward

14	Lugarno	Peakhurst Ward
15	Mortdale	Mortdale Ward
16	Narwee	Mortdale Ward
17	Oatley	Blakehurst Ward
18	Peakhurst	Peakhurst Ward
19	Peakhurst Heights	Peakhurst Ward
20	Penshurst	Mortdale Ward
21	Riverwood	Peakhurst Ward
22	Sans Souci	Kogarah Bay Ward

A2. Do you identify as...

Male	1
Female	2
Other	3
Prefer not to say	-

A3. What is your age?

18 to 34 years	1
35 to 49 years	2
50 to 64 years	3
65 plus years	4
Prefer not to say	-

**PART B – NEW RATES**

Q1. Did you know that the total amount of money Council can collect in rates is fixed by the State Government?

Yes	1
No	2

**PREAMBLE TO Q2**

Rates do not increase because the population increases or because of new development. By 2036, the population in the Georges River Council area will increase by 14%. Council needs approval from the State Government to change the amount of money that can be collected.

Council is seeking to increase the total rates that it collects so it can meet the service needs of the growing population. Council is also seeking to reduce the cost of providing these services by becoming more efficient – in 2020/21 it has made \$9m of savings.

Q2. Should the total amount of rates that council collects increase in line with population growth and new development?

Yes	1
No	2
Unsure	3

**PREAMBLE TO Q3**

The following proposal was developed after comprehensive community consultation in 2019.

The proposal is for an increase of 2.6% in the total rates collected in the first year then 5.8% each year for next 4 years. This is to take account of increasing costs (CPI) and to provide services for the growing population. This would be an increase for the average residential ratepayer of around 60c per week in the first year and \$1.35 per week for the following 4 years.

Q3. Using a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 means ‘not at all supportive’ and 5 means ‘very supportive’, how supportive are you of the Council’s proposal?

1 – Not at all supportive	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5 – Very supportive	5
Can’t say	-

Q3. And in a few words, why did you give that rating? **TYPE IN THE BOX**

Q4. If Council does not proceed with the proposed rate increase it will need to reduce expenditure by \$20 million. I'm going to read you a list of services and three options. For each service please tell me whether you think Council should:

1. Keep the service
2. Reduce the service, or
3. Stop the service completely or sell it off.

	<b>Keep the service</b>	<b>Reduce the service</b>	<b>Stop the service/sell off</b>
Planning			
Environment and sustainability			
Aquatic sport and recreation			
Parking			
Community centres and halls			
Animal management			
Development and buildings			
Libraries, art and cultural services and economic development			
Health regulation			
Parks			
Children's services			
Customer service and communications			
Environmental protection			
Street lighting and other amenities			
Youth, aged persons, disabled and community support			
Footpaths			
Street cleaning			

Q5. Are there any other services I haven't listed where you think savings could be made?

Q6. Prior to receiving this call, were you aware that Council was exploring a new rates system for 2021?

Yes	1
No	2

**IF Q6 CODE 1**

Q7. How did you find out about Council's new rates system? **[READ THE LIST] [MULTIPLE CHOICE]**

Mail out or brochure	1
Council E-News	2
Council website	3
Newspaper ad (The Leader)	4
Community newspaper	5
Social media	6
Banner/street sign	7
Word of mouth	8
Other (please specify)	9

Q8. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

Yes	1
No	2

Q9. What type of home do you currently live in?

Free-standing house	1
Townhouse, terrace, semi or villa	2
Apartment, flat or unit	3
Other	4

Q10. Which of the following best describes your housing situation?

Owning or buying this property	1
Currently renting this property	2
Other	3



## **INCLUDE MORE INFO/GIVE FEEDBACK**

**If you would like to find out more about the new rates system you can go to Council's website at <http://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021>**

Thanks, **that concludes the survey.** 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 IRIS Research (02 4285 4446) on behalf of XXXX.

My name is \*\*\*.

If you wish to check that my company is listed with The Research Society (previously AMSRS), I can give you a website address to do so.

**NOTE: If respondent wants the web address read out:**

**<https://researchsociety.com.au/publicationsresources/confirm-a-research-company>**

**If someone does not have the internet we can provide the following phone number - 1300 364 832 - but this is only to be used for those that can't access the website as it is The Research Society's main phone number and not a survey line specific number.**

Have a great afternoon/evening.

## Attachment 2: Rating number and comment themes

Rating	Against harmonisation	Amalgamation	Concerns re Council performance	CPI	Efficiency	Increased population=Inc rates	Other	Struggling	Too high	Smaller increase	Population policy or assumption concerns	Affordability	Selected as midpoint of scale	More info	Needed/ community benefit	Okay with proposal
1	5	12	58	12	17	33	16	38	29							
2		9	23	9	9	16	8	17	20	4	3			5		
3		2	13	2	7	7	11	9	16	13	7	3	14	8	31	5
4				1			5			3		4			54	
5							4					2			29	
No rating							4					2				

## Quotes

Rating	Category	
#1	Concerns re Council performance	Dual occupancy reflects additional ratepayers and services they are offering are of no use to me/ we ask Council to maintain parks for residents for example bindies, we can't picnic because of them/ more bindies than grass/ Council does nothing
	Increased pop = increased rates	Population increase equals more money and rate payers for Council
	Struggling	Everyone under cost restraints and Council proposes to increase above the CPI
	Too high	They keep increasing my rates by \$700 from last year. There hasn't been an explanation as to why the increase. My area is bushfire prone area and the Council has done nothing for preparation for the fire season.
	Other	I think they have to find a different method of finding the money e.g. in line with how many people live in a household
#2	Struggling	Our situation with COVID-19 mainly a struggling household
	Amalgamation	Because I believe the amalgamation should decrease rates not increase and development allows for the collection of more rates
	Concerns	We live in an area that is not increasing in population and we see little improvement in the services in this area e.g. provision of concrete in footpaths
	CPI	Far above the CPI and any wage growth that the ratepayers would be receiving
	Efficiency	I think our rates are expensive enough use the 9 million in savings
	Increase in pop = inc rates	Every block of dirt built on they build a duplex and should get the rates from each occupant so why do they get and increase>
	Too high	First year is fine the following four years the percentage is too high.
#3	Too high	I think the rates are high enough and I think the government should help pay due to the population growth
	Struggling	I'm finding it hard to meet ends meet now so an increase in rates is difficult for me to cope with. I am a self-funded retiree and we don't get any help with the rates
	Smaller increase	I think 6% is too much I would go as high as 3% which I think is pretty fair
	Need/community benefit	If it's the lowest rate that it can be increased, I support the increase as it has to increase with the population growth
#4	Smaller increase	I think 2.6 is in line with our inflation rate
	Need/community benefit	If it's going to make the area better, I don't mind paying the extra
#5	Need/ Community benefit	It's not a huge amount and will not hurt anyone if it's going to be a great help to the community, I will not oppose that
	Affordable	If it is only a \$1 - \$ 2 a week it affordable

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

## SPECIAL RATE VARIATION OPTIONS AND MINIMUM RATE

DEC 2019



**ASK INSIGHT**

engagement, strategy, solutions

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## LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Micromex Research Report – Telephone Survey
- Attachment 2: Full list of media coverage and other activities - reach
- Attachment 3: List of communication materials
- Attachment 4: Presentation PowerPoint slides for information sessions
- Attachment 5: Mailed survey data

Image 1: Information session



## Executive Summary

Georges River Council is an amalgamated Council created in May 2016 by the merger of the former Hurstville and Kogarah City Councils. Part of the amalgamation process was a three-year rate path protection. In 2018/19, the Council resolved to develop a program to prepare a new residential and business rates structure for the local government area (LGA) beginning in 2020/2021. This was to include options to strengthen Council's financial sustainability, including harmonisation of minimum rates and to address the cessation of the former Hurstville City Council's Special Rate Variation (SRV) from July 2021.

Information about the proposed changes to rates achieved a potential reach of over 2.3 million contacts across 79 activities or events in a two-month period. This comprehensive and wide-reaching program included online, social media, publicity in newspapers and newsletters, promotion and information in community languages as well as mailout of a letter, detailed brochure and survey to all households and businesses in the LGA. Face to face information sessions and drop in events were led by the General Manager and included targeted sessions for business and the Chinese-speaking community.

The community's feedback was obtained through four main channels:

- Face to face comments and questions to the General Manager and Senior Managers at information sessions held in each ward, at two drop-in events and at an additional interpreted event. 288 people were reached across eight events. All questions were logged and listed on the Your Say website with responses from Council.
- Surveys – a paper survey was mailed to each residential and business ratepayer in the LGA with an explanatory brochure. The survey was also available to complete online and at each face to face session and drop-in. There were 6,363 surveys returned to Council. A response rate of 11.86% was achieved based on 53,646 feedback packs (letter, brochure and survey) sent out.

### Community engagement at a glance

- Information reach 2.3m contacts
- 79 communication activities
- 8 information events/drop-ins
- Telephone survey of 600 people
- Mailout to 53,646 ratepayers
- 6,363 surveys returned
- Survey response rate 11.86%

### Minimum rate

- 78% of respondents supportive of introducing a consistent minimum rate across the LGA
- 66% supportive of minimum rate of \$965.80
- Community very supportive of different business rate for major commercial centres
- Business rate viewed as low

### SRV

- 54% of survey respondents supportive of Council's recommended option
- Very little support for a substantial rate increase

### Important that Council:

- Demonstrates efficiencies
- Addresses community 'basics'
- Considers user pays
- Continues to explain how the rate system works



- Feedback submissions were also provided by 50 people online using Your Say and a further 50 people made submissions writing direct to Council by email and mail.
- A randomised telephone survey of 600 households by Micromex Research.

Comments were provided through surveys and submissions. In all, 3,220 comments were received and analysed.

Business ratepayers were also invited to participate in the consultation through targeting mailing, briefing and contact with the Business Chamber. 3,544 letters with survey and brochure were sent to business ratepayers and 275 returned (8 %). This includes 97 from respondents indicating they are both residential and business ratepayers.

Council sought feedback to inform proposed changes to rates. Views were sought on:

- A Special Rate Variation. Three options were presented and the community was surveyed on the extent to which they supported each option.
- A consistent minimum rate across the LGA and increased minimum business rate for two commercial centres (Hurstville and Kogarah).

The face to face information sessions were important as it became clear that significant “myths” or misunderstandings of the NSW rates system were widespread. By addressing these myths, Council was able to assist the community to understand that the total rate income of local government is capped by the State government and does not increase automatically as the myths might suggest. Rather, Council needs to make formal applications to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to secure any increase in rate income above the rate peg (an annual adjustment for inflation set by IPART).

The myths are:

1. An increase in the population means there is an increase in rates revenue for Council
2. An increase in the number of dwellings means that there is an increase in rates revenue for Council
3. An increase in land value means there is an increase in rates revenue for Council

The information sessions explained that the total amount of rate income is fixed by State Government so the variables above affect the distribution of rates. More rate payers mean each one needs to contribute slightly less. These impacts are small because the number of new dwellings compared to total dwelling numbers is small; the growth in population is a small percentage and land values growth relates to the unimproved land value. It is another misunderstanding that the value of a building impacts on rate charges.

### Feedback on Special Rate Variation

Feedback on the SRV from the community indicated broad support for Option One (recommended by Council). Under Option One, Council would apply for an SRV of 8.1% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (total 10.6% increase). The proportion of respondents supportive of Option One varied between the different channels. In total 3,590 people across all channels were somewhat supportive, supportive or very supportive (54% n=6601). It appears that the opportunity to discuss the rationale behind the three Options presented by Council resulted in a much higher proportion of people supportive of Council’s recommended Option, 93% of

respondents at Information Sessions and Drop-ins were supportive of this Option. The randomised telephone survey of 600 people also reported a majority supportive of Option One (63% of people interviewed).

Option Two, described as a short-term solution suggested Council apply for an SRV of 0.8% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (Total increase of 3.3%). In total 3,696 people (58%, n=6,362) of respondents across all channels were supportive of Option Two. This Option was favoured by just under 60% of people who mailed surveys or submitted online; those who had an opportunity to discuss the rationale for the changes to rates were much less supportive (43% indicating some support for Option Two).

Option Three proposed an SRV of 19.8% plus rate peg of 2.5% (total 22.3%) to fund enhanced services. It was clearly not preferred. Just 892 people (15% of respondents across all channels, n=6,167) were supportive of Option Three. About 90% of online and mailed survey respondents were not supportive of the substantial increase Option.

Business ratepayer's survey responses broadly matched the wider Community's preference pattern with almost identical proportions for Option Two and Option Three. However, there was less support for Option One (41% somewhat supportive, supportive or very supportive).

### Feedback on minimum rate proposals

An overwhelming majority (78%) of respondents were supportive of a consistent application of a minimum rate across the LGA. This ranged from almost 90% of drop in and information session respondents to more than three quarters of the other groups.

There was also strong support (66%) for the proposed minimum rate of \$965.80 and introducing a different rate for the major commercial centres of Kogarah and Hurstville (69%).

Most Business ratepayers who returned surveys supported the consistent application of a minimum rate (82%) and the majority were in favour of the proposed minimum rate (66%) with 57% supporting the Hurstville/Kogarah higher minimum rate.

### Concerns

Community concerns related to:

- the proposed increases considered high in the context of financial pressure experienced by families, pensioners and self-funded retirees in particular
- the need for Council to make efficiencies and address local issues (footpaths raised frequently as a concern)
- expectations of cost savings as a result of council amalgamations as "promised" by State Government.

In both face to face sessions and surveys, a misconception that population increases and development meant a corresponding increase in rates revenue was evident.

A survey response rate of almost 12% and over 3,200 comments received demonstrates the community interest in engaging with Council on rates and broader issues of strategy. Over 2,500 people chose to provide an email address with their survey so that they could receive Council updates.

## About this report

This report provides a summary of the approach to community engagement taken by Georges River Council (Council) and the feedback received from the community. It was prepared by ASK Insight consultants.

The report is in seven sections :

1. An overview of the community engagement strategy
2. Information to all ratepayers and publicising the opportunity to get involved
3. Details of the different engagement activities and participation by the community
4. The feedback provided on the SRV Options
5. The feedback provided on the proposal to have a consistent minimum rate
6. Survey comments relating to both SRV and minimum rates
7. Conclusions

# 1. Overview of the community engagement strategy

## About Georges River LGA

Georges River Council (GRC) is an amalgamated Council created in May 2016 by the merger of the former Hurstville and Kogarah City Councils. Georges River LGA is 17 kilometres from Sydney CBD and is part of the Greater Sydney's South District.

In 2018 there was an estimated population of 159,000 people living in more than 50,000 households. Projected growth to 2036 is 185,000. The community is culturally rich and diverse with 44.8% born overseas. The top five languages spoken at home are Mandarin, Cantonese, Greek, Arabic and Nepali.

## Rates in the Georges River LGA

Part of the amalgamation process which created GRC was a three-year rate path protection. In 2018/19, the Council resolved to develop a program to prepare a new residential and business rates structure for the LGA beginning in July 2020. This was to include options to strengthen Council's financial sustainability, including harmonisation of minimum rates and to address the cessation of the former Hurstville City Council's Special Rate Variation (SRV) from July 2021.

## Community engagement

Council committed to extensive and wide-ranging consultation. Two months were allocated for public consultation from 18 September 2019 to 17 November 2019.

During the consultation period, a wide variety of engagement activities and information was made available to the community, anchored by the Georges River Council Your Say website. These included:

- mailout of a community awareness letter, followed by an information brochure and survey to all households and businesses in the LGA
- information sessions and drop-in events scheduled at different times of the day/evening to maximise participation
- targeted information sessions for business and the Chinese-speaking community
- surveys with an online option for completion and opportunity to make individual submissions to Council
- one to one briefing of local members of NSW State Parliament: Chris Minns (Member for Kogarah) and Mark Coure (Member for Oatley). The Executive of the Business Chamber was also briefed.

In addition, a separate randomised telephone survey of 600 households was undertaken by Micromex Research in the period 21-31 October 2019. 600 people were interviewed by phone. The full report is at attachment 1.

Information about '*Changes to your rates*' achieved an estimated potential reach of 2.3 million contacts across 79 events or activities. Each of the activities is described in more detail in section 3. This is followed by a summary of the community's feedback.

Council sought feedback to inform proposed changes to rates. Views were invited on:

- A Special Rate Variation. Three Options for a future SRV were detailed in information brochures and discussed in meetings with the community. The rationale for change clearly explained.
  - Under Option One, Council would apply for an SRV of 8.1% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (total 10.6% increase) Recommended by Council.
  - Option Two, described as a short-term solution, suggested Council apply for an SRV of 0.8% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (Total increase of 3.3%).
  - Option Three proposed an SRV of 19.8% plus rate peg of 2.5% (total 22.3%) to fund enhanced services.
- A harmonised minimum rate proposal and a new business minimum rate proposal specifically for Kogarah and Hurstville major commercial centres.

## 2. Information to all ratepayers and publicising the opportunity to get involved

Publicity about the rate restructure and consultation opportunities included two letters mailed to households, emails to Council lists and social media channels, paid media in local newspapers and promotional banners. Sharing information in community languages was also a priority for Council.

Micromex Research's survey of 600 households found that 47% of residents were aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a change to rates (consistent with their broader LGA data which has a norm of 48%), and that the information brochure mailed to residents was the dominant method by which they were informed (mentioned by 82% of those aware).<sup>1</sup>

### Mail to households – letter one

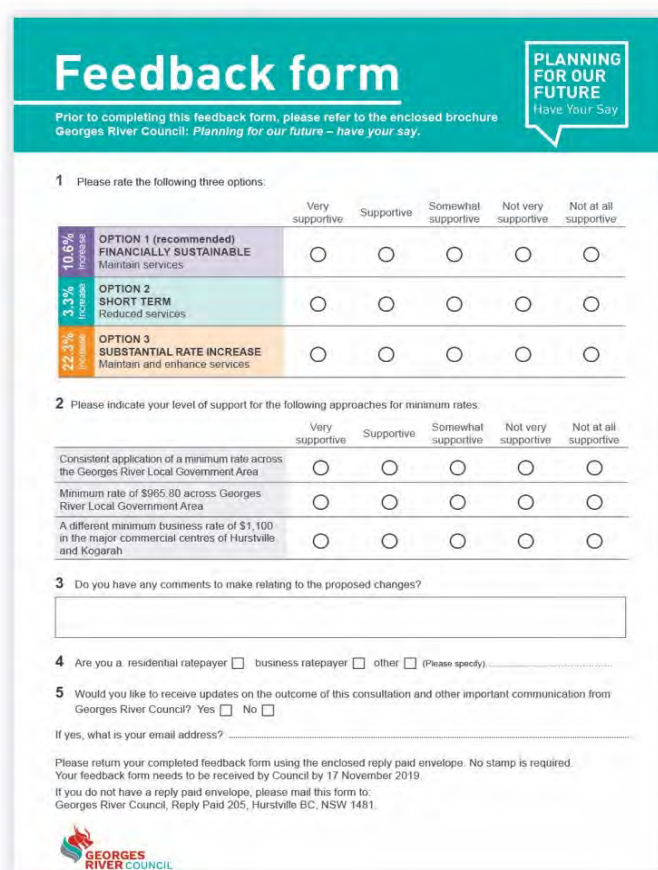
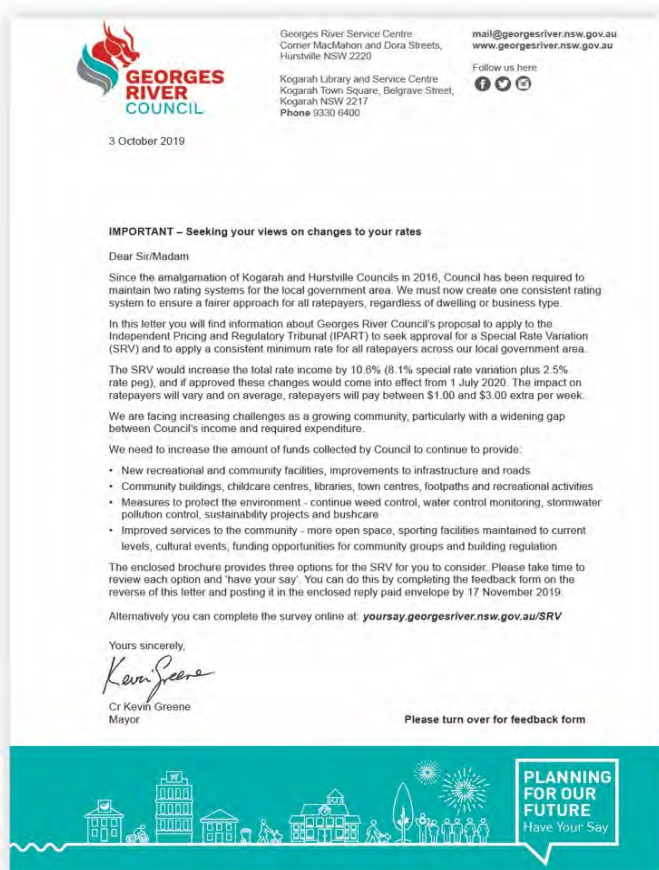
On 11 September 2019, a letter to all households was sent advising that community consultation was coming soon for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) and a new standard minimum rate across all rateable properties in Georges River (letter 1 at image 2).

Image 2: Letter 1



<sup>1</sup> See full report at Attachment 1

Image 3: Letter 2 and Survey



### Mail to households – letter two, brochure and survey

This was followed up by a direct mailout on 30 September 2019 to 53,646 residential and business ratepayers, including letter 2, brochure, rates restructure survey and reply-paid envelope (4,827<sup>2</sup> sent via digital channels and 48,819 via Australia Post). Translated brochures in Simplified Chinese were sent out through community development networks, distributed at events including the Healthy Minds & Wellbeing Expo; the Centreline Payments and Services Seminar and the St George Migrant Information Day. They were also available at the information sessions and drop-ins, from Council’s service centre and on the Your Say website.

Letter 2 and the feedback survey is at Image 3 above. Image 5 overleaf shows the accompanying brochure. This is a key document as it explains the rationale for Council’s proposals.

<sup>2</sup> 1,802 letters were sent by BPay View and 3,025 sent by email. 260 real estate agents received copies in respect of rental properties in the LGA.

## Emails and Social Media

A comprehensive communications program using targeted emails was used to contact Your Say subscribers, E-Newsletter subscribers as well as social media broadcasts using Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

A full list of activities, estimated reach and impacts is provided at attachment 2.

## Paid media/advertising

Advertisements were placed in local publications including the St George Leader and targeted ethnic media. Examples are at image 7 below and a comprehensive list is at attachment 3.

## Community Language materials and activities

The dedicated consultation website Your Say page for the '*Changes to your rates*' project was viewable in 103 different languages.

Print copies of key information materials (letter to ratepayers, rate changes brochure, rates survey) were made available in the following community languages : Simplified Chinese, Arabic , Nepali and Greek. An example is at image 5.

There was also specific promotion in the multicultural media. Images of the advertisements are below.

The Hurstville Library community information session was interpreted in Chinese and about half the group took advantage of the opportunity to provide their feedback and ask questions in Mandarin.



Image 4: Translated letter 1 to residents in Nepali, Arabic, Chinese and Greek

The image displays four panels of translated letters from the Georges River Council, each in a different language: Nepali, Arabic, Chinese, and Greek. Each panel features the council's logo and contact information at the top. The Nepali panel is dated ११ असार २०१९ and discusses the SRV (Special Rate Variation) and a new standard minimum rate. The Arabic panel is dated 11 أيلول/سبتمبر 2019 and discusses the SRV and a new standard minimum rate. The Chinese panel is dated 2019年9月11日 and discusses the SRV and a new standard minimum rate. The Greek panel is dated 11 Σεπτεμβρίου 2019 and discusses the SRV and a new standard minimum rate. Each panel also includes a 'PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE Have Your Say' logo at the bottom.

Image 5: Brochure



**GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL**

## PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

Have your say

# Changes to your rates

## RESIDENTIAL AND BUSINESS



**IMPORTANT – Seeking your views on changes to your rates which on average will increase rates by \$1 to \$3 per week**

### Why does Council need to introduce new rate structures?

Since the amalgamation of Kogarah and Hurstville Councils in 2016, Council has been required to maintain two rating systems for the Georges River area. As a result, there is inconsistency in the amount of rates paid across the former Kogarah and Hurstville Council areas.

We must create one consistent rating system to ensure a fairer approach for all ratepayers.

We are facing a number of cost pressures with providing services to our growing community. Over \$150 million of additional community assets in three years has contributed to a 33% increase in the forecasted costs of operating and

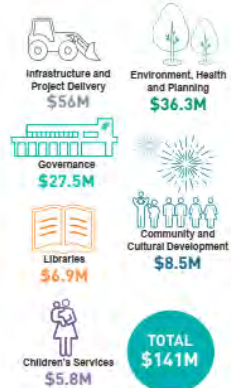
maintaining assets. Our roads will require an additional \$10 million over the next five years to maintain their current standard.

In addition, our income to support the provision of community services and new facilities reduces by \$2.2 million in 2021 when the Hurstville Special Rate Variation (SRV) that is currently in effect ceases. Over the 10 year period of the Community Strategic Plan total income will reduce by \$19.5 million if we do not retain or replace the SRV.

If we do nothing, we will face increasing challenges as a community, particularly with a widening gap between Council's income and expenditure.

### Money we spend

Council's funds are allocated to delivering services to the community.



### Money we receive

Rates are our only stable source of operating income and therefore we must increase them to ensure long-term financial sustainability.



Sourced from: 2019/20 Budget

### Delivering a liveable City

Following extensive consultation with our community in 2018, Council adopted its first ever Community Strategic Plan which details the community's aspirations for the Georges River area over the next 10 years.

This plan highlights many community projects, programs, initiatives and events that require substantial funding to become a reality.

We need to increase our revenue to continue to provide services into the future and meet the demands of our growing population.

For more information and to have your say, use the camera on your smart phone to scan the QR code to go to the Georges River Council Your Say page.



## How will the future be funded?

### COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDED OPTION

#### Proposal for Special Rate Variation (SRV) in addition to the annual rate peg\*

Council is proposing to increase rates by a rate peg amount of 2.5% plus an extra 8.1% Special Rate Variation (SRV) to increase the total rate income by 10.6%. If approved by IPART, these changes will come into effect from 1 July 2020.

Council did consider two other options for the SRV and these are discussed in the tables on page 3 for your consideration.

#### Proposal to set a consistent minimum rate for all ratepayers

Currently ratepayers in the former Hurstville Council area pay a minimum rate of \$570.88. In the former Kogarah Council area the minimum rate is \$942.24. To provide greater fairness and consistency, Council proposes that the minimum rate should be \$965.80 (includes 2.5% rate peg) across the local government area which would come into effect from 1 July 2020.

#### Proposal to set a consistent minimum rate for Major Commercial Centres – business ratepayers

Council has also identified the need to set a new minimum rate for the Major Commercial Centres of Hurstville and Kogarah of \$1,100 to come into effect from 1 July 2020. This recognises the additional works and services, such as parking management, improved public domain, street cleaning and festivals and events that Council provides to these commercial centres.

As these proposals directly affect you, we want your feedback on the proposal and consideration of which option for a SRV you prefer.



### Option 1 FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE

Council will apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 8.1% plus a 2.5% rate peg (total of 10.6%) as well as identifying savings in operating expenditure, and options to increase other income to ensure we become financially sustainable in the long term.

This option is **recommended** by Council as there will be minimal change to the services Council provides.

Total rate income increase  
**\$7.5M - 10.6%**

Continue to deliver new projects

### Residential ratepayers

Current average annual rate **\$1,119**

2020/2021	Weekly average increase	\$3
	Annual average increase	\$132
	Annual average Rate	\$1,251
	Former Hurstville weekly average increase	\$2
	Former Kogarah weekly average increase	\$3
Former Hurstville annual average increase	\$116	
Former Kogarah annual average increase	\$153	

### Business ratepayers

Current average annual rate **\$3,079**

2020/2021	Weekly average increase	\$1
	Annual average increase	\$67
	Annual average Rate	\$3,146
	Former Hurstville weekly average increase	\$1
	Former Kogarah weekly average increase	\$2
Former Hurstville annual average increase	\$56	
Former Kogarah annual average increase	\$90	

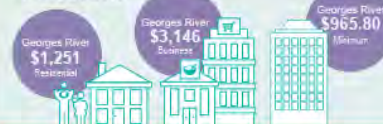
\*RATE PEG - (estimated at 2.5%) is the allowable percentage by which councils can increase rate revenue from one year to the next (as set by IPART). Councils can apply to set rates higher than the rate peg to meet community needs and keep pace with rising costs. This is known as a Special Rate Variation.

### In a nutshell

#### Current Average and Minimum Annual Rates



#### Proposed Average and Minimum Annual Rates from 1 July 2020



## Option 2 SHORT TERM

Council will apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 0.8% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (total increase of 3.3%) which is sufficient to cover the loss of the current SRV which is due to stop in 2021. Council will also identify savings in operating expenditure, and options to increase other income.

This option is **not recommended** by Council and requires Council to significantly review the services it can deliver. This option does not address the issues of increasing costs and the additional costs of meeting the needs of our growing population.

Total rate income increase  
**\$2.3M - 3.3 %**

No new projects delivered and service levels reduced

## Residential ratepayers

Current average annual rate \$1,119

2020/2021	Weekly average increase	\$1
	Annual average increase	\$49
	Annual average Rate	\$1,168
	Former Hurstville weekly average increase	\$1
	Former Kogarah weekly average increase	\$1
	Former Hurstville annual average increase	\$43
	Former Kogarah annual average increase	\$58

## Business ratepayers

Current average annual rate \$3,079

2020/2021	Weekly average decrease	-\$3
	Annual average decrease	-\$140
	Annual average Rate	\$2,939
	Former Hurstville weekly average decrease	-\$3
	Former Kogarah weekly average decrease	-\$2
	Former Hurstville annual average decrease	-\$154
	Former Kogarah annual average decrease	-\$112

## Option 3 SUBSTANTIAL RATE INCREASE

Council will apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 19.8% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (total increase of 22.3%) as well as generating savings in operating expenditure, to ensure we become financially sustainable and to provide enhanced services.

This option will see significant rate increases for all ratepayers and is **not recommended** by Council as it places a greater financial burden on ratepayers.

Total rate income increase  
**\$15.8M - 22.3 %**

Increase in new projects delivered and enhanced services

## Residential ratepayers

Current average annual rate \$1,119

2020/2021	Weekly average increase	\$5
	Annual average increase	\$264
	Annual average Rate	\$1,383
	Former Hurstville weekly average increase	\$5
	Former Kogarah weekly average increase	\$6
	Former Hurstville annual average increase	\$238
	Former Kogarah annual average increase	\$301

## Business ratepayers

Current average annual rate \$3,079

2020/2021	Weekly average increase	\$8
	Annual average increase	\$400
	Annual average Rate	\$3,479
	Former Hurstville weekly average increase	\$8
	Former Kogarah weekly average increase	\$8
	Former Hurstville annual average increase	\$395
	Former Kogarah annual average increase	\$411

DISCLAIMER - The figures quoted in tables within this document have been developed from financial modelling based on current property data and land values as of 1 July 2019 (note: land values are based on the Valuer General's last release from 1 July 2019). Final 2020/21 figures may vary due to changes as a result of new land values, processing supplementary properties and sub-categories. Rounding has been applied throughout the document.



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## Community Information Sessions

Wednesday 23 October, 7.00pm-8.00pm  
Mortdale Community Centre  
2b Boundary Road, Mortdale

Tuesday 29 October, 7.00pm-8.00pm  
Club Rivers, 32 Littleton Street, Riverwood

Thursday 31 October, 7.00pm-8.30pm  
Hurstville Library and Service Centre  
12-22 Dora Street, Hurstville  
Chinese interpreter available at this session

Monday 4 November, 7.00pm-8.00pm  
Georges River Civic Centre  
Corner MacMahon and Dora Streets, Hurstville

Thursday 7 November, 7.00pm-8.00pm  
Kogarah School of Arts  
Corner of Queens Avenue and Bowns Road, Kogarah

Saturday 9 November, 11.00am-12noon  
Oatley RSL, 23 Letitia Street, Oatley

## Drop-in event dates

Friday 25 October, 4.00pm-8.30pm  
Peakhurst Foodies and Farmers Market  
Corner Forest Road and Isaac Street, Peakhurst

Saturday 2 November, 10.00am-12.00noon  
The Green Playground, Kyle Bay  
Corner Meriman Street and Kyle Parade

## Business Information and Feedback Session

Wednesday 30 October, 7.00pm-8.00pm  
Dragon Room, Georges River Council Civic Centre  
Corner MacMahon and Dora Streets, Hurstville  
Register on Your Say Georges River via Council's website

## Get in touch

If you want to speak to a Council Officer about this document please contact Council on 9330 6400 or email [yourrates@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au](mailto:yourrates@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au) or visit [yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/SRV](http://yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/SRV)

## New Major Projects 2019/2020

Since amalgamation of former Hurstville City and Kogarah City Councils, many projects have been delivered, resulting in improved community infrastructure and services for our diverse and growing community.

- New Oatley West Early Learning Centre
- Oatley Park Inclusive Adventure Playground
- Carss Park Foreshore Naturalisation Project
- Charles Pirie Reserve All Abilities Sports Amenities Building
- Peakhurst Park Sports Amenities Building
- Harold Fraser Oval Club House
- Poulton Park Synthetic Sports Fields
- Garnons Park Environmental Water Quality Improvement and Stormwater Harvesting Scheme (Stage 2)
- Kempt Field Inclusive Adventure Playground
- Norm O'Neill Cricket Training Facility
- Cromdale Street Stormwater Project
- Hurstville Plaza
- Bush regeneration programs
- Myles Dunphy Boardwalk
- Hurstville Oval Community Pavilion
- Beverly Hills Park Oval Resurfacing, Irrigation and Drainage and cycleway
- Town Centre Upgrades at Kogarah, Mortdale Shopping Centre and Ormond Parade Hurstville

Future projects such as these cannot be delivered if we do not increase our income.



Georges River Civic Centre Corner MacMahon and Dora Streets, Hurstville  
Kogarah Library and Service Centre Kogarah Town Square, Belgrave Street, Kogarah  
9330 6400 | [mail@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mail@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au) | PO Box 205, Hurstville NSW 1481

[www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au](http://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au) [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgesRiverCouncil) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/Georges_River) [@GRCouncil](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGRCouncil)

Language Assistance 語言援助 مساعدة لغوية Помощь по языку 131 450

Image 6: Example translated brochure

The brochure is divided into several sections:

- Page 1:** '跑到我们的未来' (Run to our future), '市政费变动' (Council fee changes), '重要事实 - 您会对市政费变动的看法, 市政费平均每年将增加1元至3元' (Key facts - your views on council fee changes, council fees will increase by \$1 to \$3 on average each year).
- Page 2:** '未来将如何获得资金?' (How will we get funding in the future?), '市政费推荐的选项' (Council fee options), '为什么市政费需要引入新的市政费结构?' (Why do council fees need a new structure?).
- Page 3:** '选项二' (Option 2), '选项三' (Option 3), '住宅的选项' (Home options), '企业的选项' (Business options).
- Page 4:** '新的重大项目2019/2020' (New major projects 2019/2020), '规划我们的未来' (Plan our future), '投票' (Vote).

Image 7: Translated advertisements

The advertisements include:

- Chinese Ad:** '规划我们的未来 您的市政费即将调涨' (Plan our future, your council fees will increase). It details the council's decision to increase fees and provides information on public consultation meetings.
- Arabic Ad:** 'الخطاب والامانة' (The speech and trust), discussing community issues and council responsibilities.
- Greek Ad:** 'Τον Γερούσιαστή Θανάση Συνοδινό τιμήσε η Ελληνική Κοινότητα Μελβούρνης' (Honouring Councilor Thanasis Synodinos by the Greek Community of Melbourne).
- Community Meetings:** Several smaller ads for public consultations on council fees, including dates and locations like '10月23日 7:00pm-8:00pm' and '11月4日 7:00pm-8:00pm'.
- Local Services:** Ads for 'Rosh Makhadmeh' and other community-oriented businesses.

Image: Advertisements in Chinese Daily, El Telegraph 25 October and Greek Herald 1 November 2019

## Banners

Banners promoted the project and were used for each of the information sessions and drop-ins. One banner was permanently on display in the Georges River Council Civic Centre throughout the consultation period. In addition, an electronic smart display was used in Hurstville library and Hurstville Plaza, see image 8.

## Community engagement - summary of reach

Across all channels, including paid print advertising, radio, website and social media as well as face to face engagement, information about 'Changes to your rates' achieved an estimated potential reach of 2.3 million contacts across 79 events or activities. A full list of activities and assumptions of reach are at attachment 2.

*Image 8: Banner examples*



**Images:** Screen image near Hurstville Station and pull-up banner at the Georges River Civic Centre customer service area advertising the proposed rate changes.

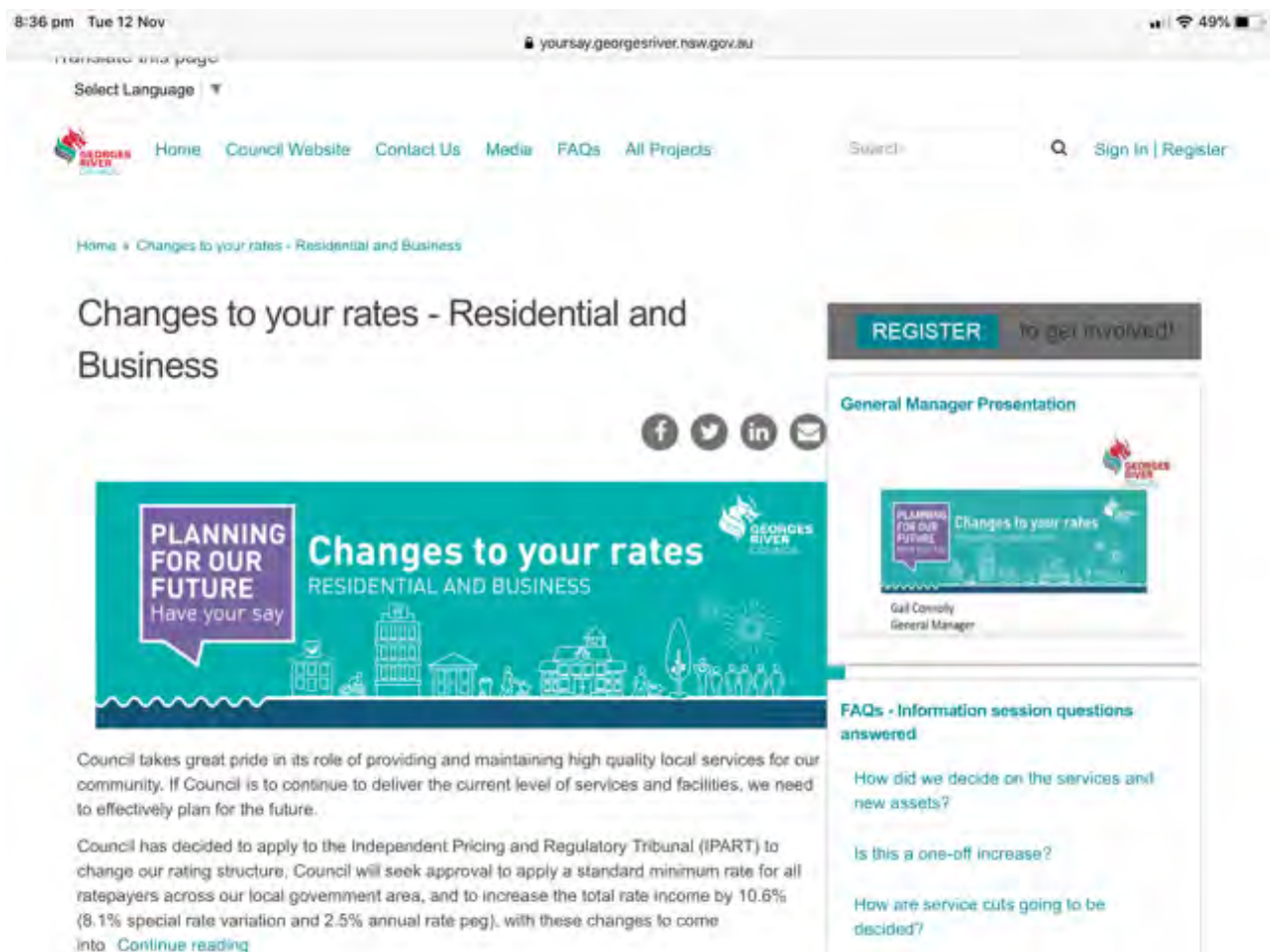
### 3. Details of the different engagement activities and participation by the community

#### Dedicated Consultation Website

The Georges River Your Say website <https://yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/SRV> introduced the proposal to change the rating structure and provided a central point for gathering feedback. Questions raised in face to face information sessions were listed and answered on the site.

See a sample screen shot below (image 9).

Image 9: Dedicated Consultation Website



The website allowed people to:

- Read about the proposal to change rates
- Register for an information session
- Complete an online version of the survey mailed to all households and businesses in the LGA
- Make an individual submission
- View FAQs
- Download the information brochure mailed to households and businesses
- Download the PowerPoint presentation slides used at the information sessions
- View the video of the General Manager’s presentation to information sessions

As the project unfolded, additional FAQ responses were posted based on questions raised at each information session.

The presentation made by the General Manager at an early information session was video recorded and posted to the website for viewing by those people unable to attend a session and by the general community more broadly.

At the conclusion of the consultation period, the Your Say statistics revealed over 3,900 contacts.

*Table 1: Your Say engagement*

Contact	Number
Number of website visits	2780
Online Feedback (Survey)	599
Number of document downloads or views	511
Online submissions	50
TOTAL	3940

### Community Information Sessions

Five ward-based (one in each ward) plus an additional interpreted session in Hurstville, Information Sessions were designed to provide an opportunity for a detailed information presentation and for people to ask questions and receive answers. In all but one of the sessions, the presentation was delivered by the General Manager. The Mayor observed the majority of sessions.

The full presentation by the General Manager is at attachment 4. A recording of the presentation was made at the second Information session and was available on Council's website carousel and on the Your Say site (General Manager Presentation)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J153sErv8W8>

Detailed printed materials were also available including copies of the 'Changes to your rates' brochure, details of each of the 3 options, FAQ sheets, sample rate notices and photo examples of recent projects. ( see attachment 3 for a full list of communication materials).

The presentation covered the key areas of the community strategic plan and examples of initiatives and projects undertaken by Council in each of these areas, information about Council's budget and the major income and expenditure categories and levels. Budget projections and shortfalls were explained as were the proposals for harmonisation of minimum rates. This was followed by 3 options for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) with Council's recommended option clearly identified.

## Myths

The face to face information sessions provided important insights to Council. It became clear that three significant "myths" or misunderstandings of the NSW rating system are widespread.

The myths are:

- An increase in the population means there is an increase in rates revenue for Council
- An increase in the number of dwellings means that there is an increase in rates revenue for Council
- An increase in land value means there is an increase in rates revenue for Council

By addressing these myths, Council was able to assist the community to understand that the total rate income of local government is capped by the State Government and does not increase automatically as the myths might suggest. Rather, Council needs to make formal applications to IPART to secure any increase in rate income above the rate peg (an annual adjustment for cost increases set by IPART).

The information sessions explained that the total amount of rate income is fixed so the variables above affect the distribution of rates. More rate payers mean each one needs to contribute slightly less. These impacts are small because the number of new dwellings compared to total dwelling numbers is small; the growth in population is a small percentage and land values growth relates to the unimproved land value. It is another misunderstanding that the value of a building impacts on rate charges.

Review of the comments made in submissions, mailed and online surveys indicate that many people responded to Council without understanding the NSW rating system and holding the "myths" to be true.

## Hardship

Georges River Council's Debt Management and Hardship Policy was also outlined at the presentation. The purpose of this policy is to provide a consistent, fair and transparent framework that outlines Council's position on how it will collect monies owing, assess hardship claims, provide assistance to those ratepayers who suffer genuine financial hardship and, where necessary, recover overdue payments to manage debt.

## Questions in small groups

A small group format with each group hosted by senior council personnel was chosen to maximise the opportunities for all individuals attending to express their views following the



presentation. Council staff were also available to discuss individual matters of concern or interest to residents, whether or not these were related to rates.

All questions raised in the information session groups were logged and subsequently listed, with responses, on the Your Say site. (FAQs)<sup>4</sup>

Individuals who had not otherwise completed the rates restructure survey were able to do so at the information session if they chose.

*Image 10: Hurstville Library Information session*



*Table 2: Information sessions*

Session #	Attendance	Location	Date
1	17	Mortdale	23 October 2019
2	15	Riverwood	29 October 2019
3	25	Hurstville Library (Chinese Interpreted session)	31 October 2019
4	10	Hurstville Civic Centre	4 November 2019
5	23	Kogarah	7 November 2019
6	28	Oatley	9 November 2019
	<b>118</b>	<b>Total attendees</b>	

<sup>4</sup> <https://yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/SRV>

## Information session evaluation feedback

A session evaluation sheet was distributed (See Image 11). 67 responses (57% of attendees) were received. Amongst these individuals, 70% indicated that they had a lot, or some increased understanding of the changes proposed to Georges River Council rates as a result of their attendance at the session.

20% said their questions were completely answered, with another 55% indicating that their questions were mostly answered.

*Image 11: Information session feedback form*



### Georges River Community Information Session - Feedback

Did the workshop increase your understanding of the changes proposed to Georges River Council rates? (please tick one)

- A lot
- Some
- A little
- Not at all

Were your questions answered?

- Yes - Completely answered
- Mostly answered
- No - I still have unanswered questions\*

\* Please write any unanswered questions on the back.

Any suggestions to improve the workshop?

Please circle a face to tell us how much you enjoyed the workshop.



*Image 12: Information session*



## Business Briefing and communications

Over 90 people attended a Business Breakfast held on 18 September 2019. They were informed about the upcoming community engagement and the rate restructures and SRV and given leaflets about the Business Information and Feedback Session.

All business ratepayers were posted letters from the Mayor and surveys (Images 1 and 3 above).

Over 100 business ratepayers who returned surveys providing a contact email were sent a reminder invitation to the Business Information and Feedback Session which was held on 30 October 2019. One person attended.

Overall, a survey response rate of 8% across all business ratepayers was achieved. The LGA has 3,544 business ratepayers and 275 surveys were returned.

## Drop-In opportunities

Two drop-in sessions were held at events which attracted significant community participation. The drop-ins gave an opportunity for one to one conversation with Council staff about the proposed changes and strengthened Council's visibility in the community. Information materials and surveys were distributed. Face painting<sup>5</sup> provided an attraction for families to stop and chat with the Council team.

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<sup>5</sup> Images used with permission

Image 13: Face painting at drop-in



Table 3: Drop-in details

Location	# of people engaged	Date (Time)
Peakhurst Market	93	25th October (4.00pm-8.30pm)
Kyle Bay	77	2 <sup>nd</sup> November (10.00am-12.00pm)
	<b>170</b>	<b>Total engaged in drop-ins</b>

Image 14: Peakhurst Market



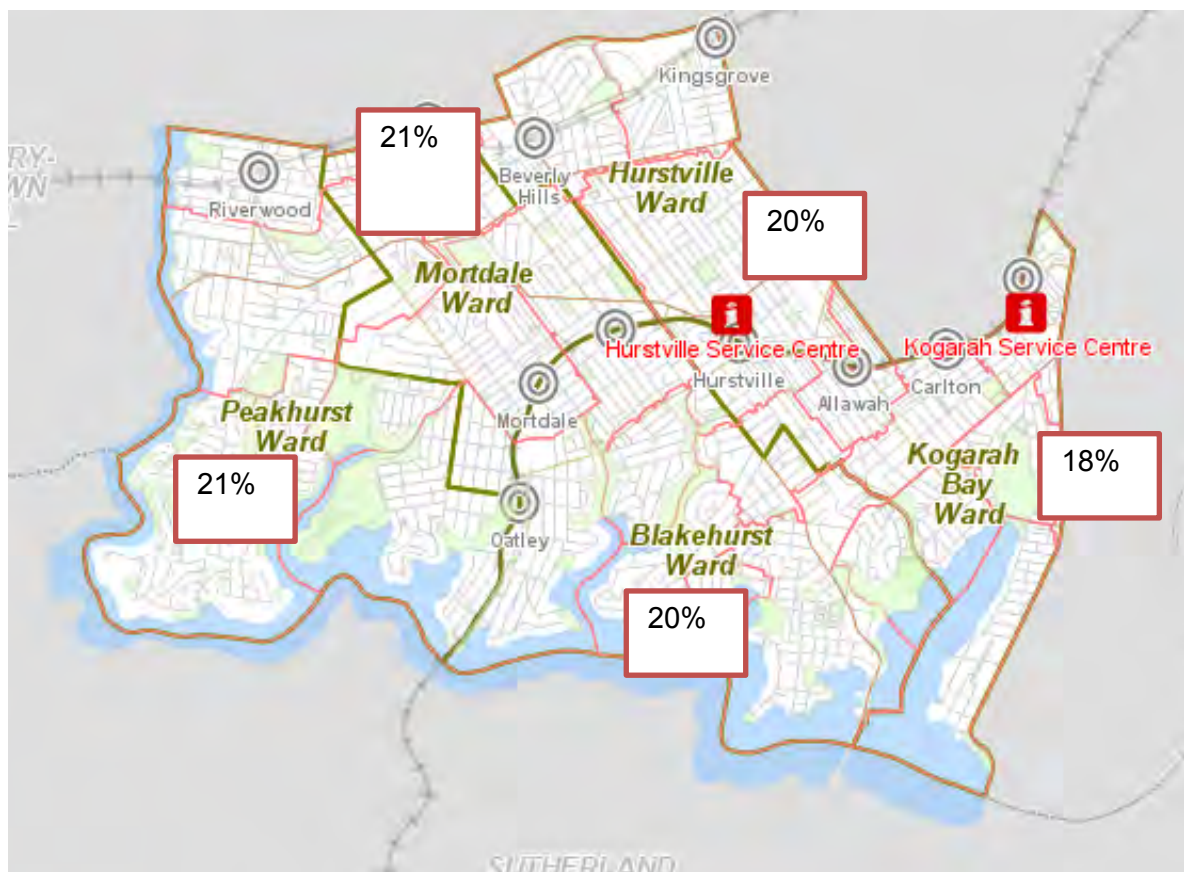
## Submissions

Throughout the consultation period comments and submissions were made by the community online and direct to the General Manager/Mayor. 50 online submissions through the Council's Your Say website and a further 50 letters or emails were received. All the comments made were analysed and the information has been included in Table 12.

## Telephone Survey

Micromex Research undertook a telephone survey of 600 households in the Georges River LGA. Participants were called between 4:30pm and 8:30pm (Monday to Friday) during the period 21-31 October 2019. The sample was weighted by age and gender to match the profile of Georges River LGA in the 2016 ABS Census. Participants were drawn across each of the Council Wards. 37% of those interviewed spoke a language other than English. 20 interviews were conducted in Cantonese, Mandarin, Greek and Arabic using multilingual interviewers. Participation by Ward is summarised in the map below. 79% of informants were ratepayers, and 21% rent their home

Figure 1: Telephone survey participation by Ward



## Rate Restructure Survey

There were three channels available to complete the survey. At 5,734 responses, the largest category was mailed survey responses. This was followed by the online survey and finally, surveys completed at either an information session or drop-in event.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their ratepayer status. As can be seen from the table below, the majority of respondents who returned mailed surveys were residential ratepayers at 93%. This percentage was even higher amongst the online and face-to-face event respondents. Approximately 8% of all survey respondents were business ratepayers, including those business ratepayers who also had residential property.

Examples of other respondent types included relative of a ratepayer, former resident, and other tenant types e.g. Church, pensioner, and townhouse renter. Some people identified as landlord rather than ratepayer.

5,737<sup>6</sup> surveys were mailed back to Council. The survey was also available to complete online (599 responses) and at each face to face session and drop-in (30 responses). A response rate of 11.86% was achieved based on 53,646 feedback packs (letter, brochure and survey) sent out. Approximately 6% of rateable properties are business properties and this proportion was reflected in the survey returns with 8.13% of respondents being business rate payers or both business and residential ratepayers.

*Table 4: Response rates by survey channel and ratepayer status*

Channel	Residential ratepayers		Business ratepayers		Both		Other/not known		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	% of all surveys
Mailed surveys	5334	93%	178	3%	97	2%	125	2%	<b>5734</b>	90%
Online survey	582	97%	12	.02%	0	0%	5	.01%	<b>599</b>	9%
Info/Drop-in survey	29	97%	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	<b>30</b>	1%
Total surveys									<b>6,363</b>	
Total feedback packs									<b>53,646</b>	
Response rate all									<b>11.86%</b>	
Response rate from business/ both									<b>8.13%</b>	

<sup>6</sup> A figure of 5,737 was reported to Council – this included 3 blank surveys. The report uses the 5,734 responses which contained data

## 4. Support for Options- SRV

The rates restructure survey and the telephone survey asked for feedback on the three SRV Options suggested by Council.<sup>7</sup>

The findings were examined by four subsets of respondents, mailed back paper survey, online completion, telephone and completed at an information session or drop-in.

A comparison of business and residential respondents did not generally reveal any major differences in preference for Options One, Two and Three.

The tables and graphs following present the feedback by Option from each engagement channel.

Image 15: Survey

**Feedback form**

Prior to completing this feedback form, please refer to the enclosed brochure  
Georges River Council: *Planning for our future – have your say.*

**1** Please rate the following three options:

	Very supportive	Supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive
<b>OPTION 1 (recommended)</b> FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE Maintain services 10.6% increase	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>OPTION 2</b> SHORT TERM Reduced services 3.3% increase	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>OPTION 3</b> SUBSTANTIAL RATE INCREASE Maintain and enhance services 22.3% increase	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**2** Please indicate your level of support for the following approaches for minimum rates:

	Very supportive	Supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive
Consistent application of a minimum rate across the Georges River Local Government Area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Minimum rate of \$965.80 across Georges River Local Government Area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A different minimum business rate of \$1,100 in the major commercial centres of Hurstville and Kogarah	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**3** Do you have any comments to make relating to the proposed changes?

**4** Are you a: residential ratepayer  business ratepayer  other  (Please specify).....

**5** Would you like to receive updates on the outcome of this consultation and other important communication from Georges River Council? Yes  No

If yes, what is your email address? .....

Please return your completed feedback form using the enclosed reply paid envelope. No stamp is required.  
Your feedback form needs to be received by Council by 17 November 2019.  
If you do not have a reply paid envelope, please mail this form to:  
Georges River Council, Reply Paid 205, Hurstville BC, NSW 1481.

**GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL**

### Option One – financially sustainable (recommended Option)

<sup>7</sup> Please note that not all respondents answered all questions. Analysis has been completed on the numbers who responded for each individual question. 5% of mail respondents did not give their views about option one.



Feedback on the SRV from the community indicated broad support for Option One (recommended by Council). Under Option One, Council would apply for an SRV of 8.1% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (total 10.6% increase). The proportion of respondents supportive of Option One varied between the different channels. In total 3,590 people across all channels were somewhat supportive, supportive or very supportive (54% n=6601). It appears that the opportunity to discuss the rationale behind the three Options presented by Council resulted in a much higher proportion of people supportive of Council's recommended Option, 93% of respondents at Information Sessions and Drop-ins were supportive of this Option. The randomised telephone survey of 600 people also reported a majority supportive of Option One (63% of people interviewed).

Figure 2: Option 1

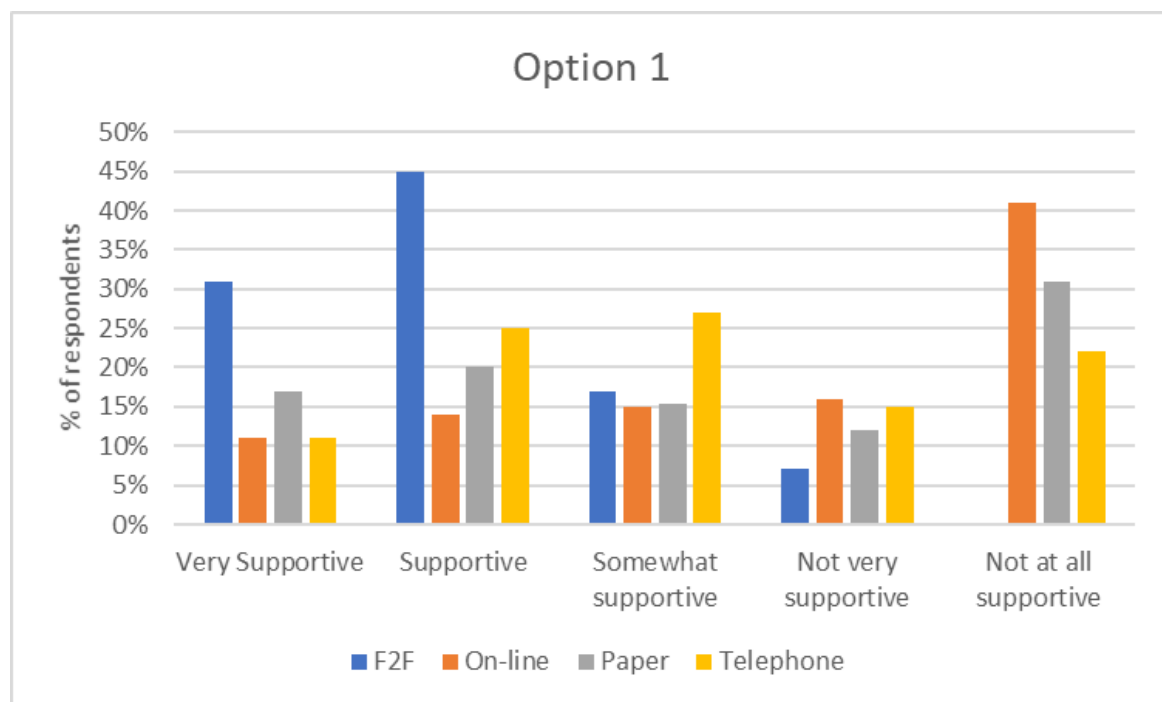


Table 5: Option 1

OPTION 1	Very Supportive		Supportive		Somewhat supportive		Not very supportive		Not at all supportive		Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
Drop in & information session	9	31%	13	45%	5	17%	2	7%	0	0%	29	93%	7%
Online	64	11%	86	15%	89	15%	96	17%	243	42%	578	41%	59%
Mail survey	962	18%	1123	21%	861	16%	680	13%	1768	33%	5394	55%	45%
Telephone	66	11%	150	25%	162	27%	90	15%	132	22%	600	63%	37%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1101</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>1372</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>2143</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>6601</b>		

Note: 5% of mailed survey respondents did not answer this question

## Option Two – short term

Option Two, described as a short-term solution, suggested Council apply for an SRV of 0.8% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (total increase of 3.3%). In total 3,696 people (58%, n=6,362) of respondents across all channels were supportive of Option Two. This Option was favoured by just under 60% of people who mailed surveys or submitted online; those who had an opportunity to discuss the rationale for the changes to rates were much less supportive (43% indicating some support for Option Two).

Figure 3: Option 2

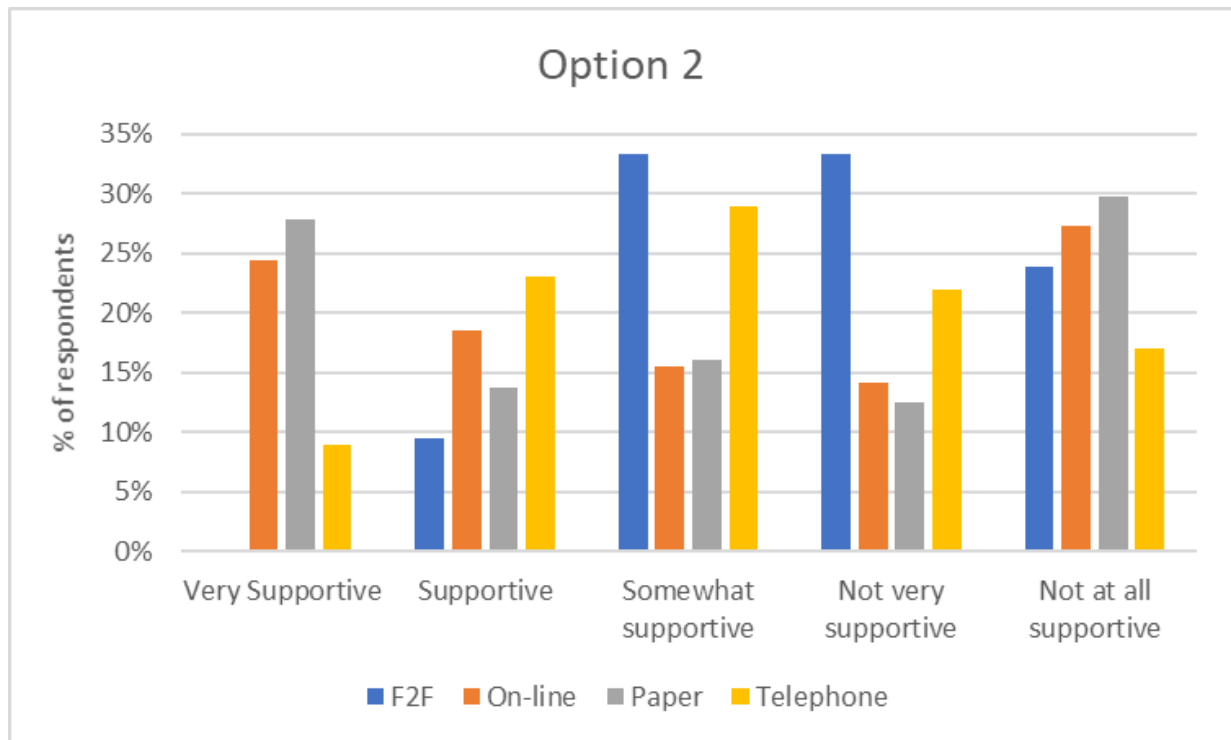


Table 6: Option 2

OPTION 2	Very Supportive		Supportive		Somewhat supportive		Not very supportive		Not at all supportive		Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
Drop in & information session	0	0%	2	10%	7	33%	7	33%	5	24%	21	43%	57%
Online	142	24%	108	19%	90	15%	82	14%	159	27%	581	59%	41%
Mail survey	1438	28%	712	14%	831	16%	642	12%	1537	30%	5160	58%	42%
Telephone	54	9%	138	23%	174	29%	132	22%	102	17%	600	61%	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1634</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>1102</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>1803</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>6362</b>		

Note: 10% of mailed survey respondents did not answer this question

### Option Three – substantial increase

Option Three proposed a substantial SRV of 19.8% plus rate peg of 2.5% (total 22.3%) to fund enhanced services. It was clearly not preferred. Just 892 people (15% of respondents across all channels, n=6,167) were supportive of Option Three. About 90% of online and mailed survey respondents were not supportive of the substantial increase Option.

Figure 4: Option 3

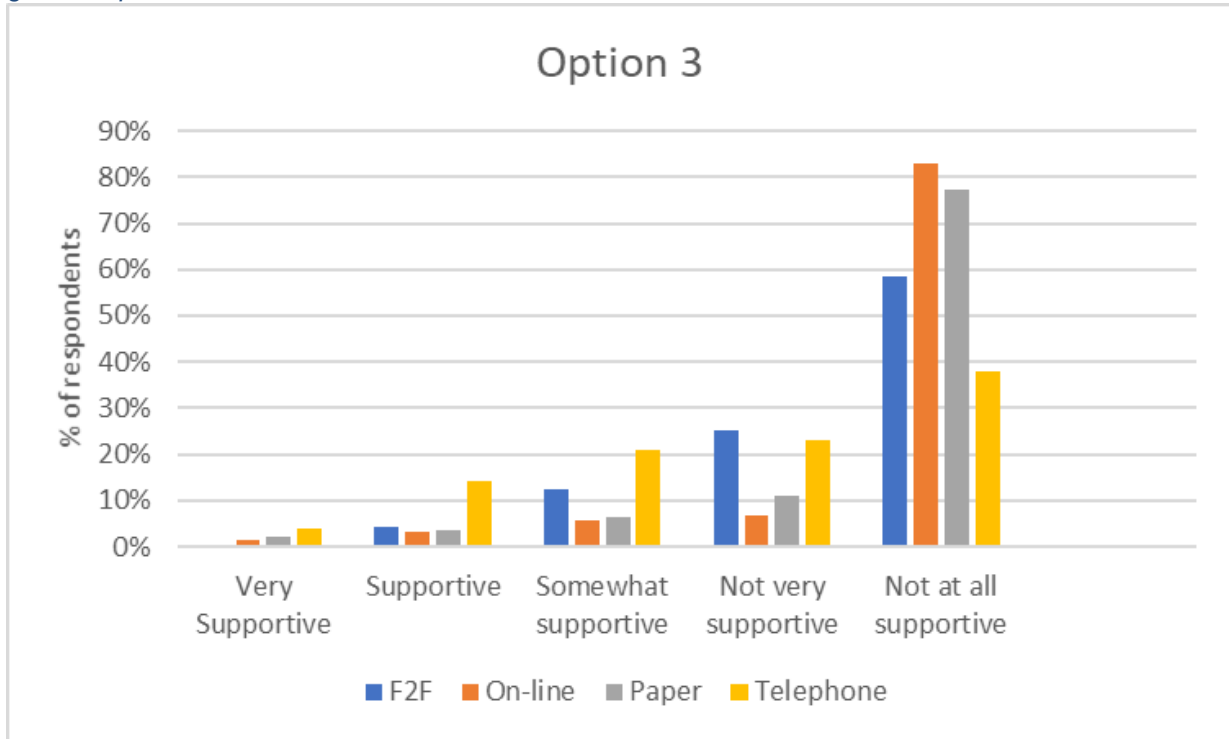


Table 7: Option 3

OPTION 3	Very Supportive		Supportive		Somewhat supportive		Not very supportive		Not at all supportive		Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
Drop in & information session	0	0%	1	4%	3	13%	6	25%	14	58%	24	17%	83%
Online	8	1%	17	3%	32	6%	37	7%	459	83%	553	10%	90%
Mail survey	111	2%	168	3%	318	6%	542	11%	3851	77%	4990	12%	88%
Telephone	24	4%	84	14%	126	21%	138	23%	228	38%	600	39%	61%
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>4552</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>6167</b>		

Note: 13% of mailed survey respondents did not answer this question

## 5. Minimum Rate

A second set of three survey questions sought feedback on the approaches proposed for the changes to minimum rates. These comprised:

- having a consistent minimum rate across the whole Council area
- the proposed specific minimum rate (\$965.80) and
- whether there should be a different minimum business rate (\$1,100) for the major Centres of Hurstville and Kogarah<sup>8</sup>.

A comparison of business and residential survey respondents did not generally reveal any major differences for the first two minimum rate questions. However, the question of a higher minimum business rate in Hurstville and Kogarah major commercial centres was examined by both ratepayer types. This survey analysis showed that a higher proportion of residential ratepayers were in favour of the higher minimum rate, when compared with business ratepayer respondents. While 57% of business respondents were very supportive or supportive, amongst residential ratepayers the proportion rose to 69%. Information is at attachment 5.

*Image 16: Discussion - information session*



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<sup>8</sup> The question about a higher minimum rate for businesses in the commercial centres of Hurstville and Kogarah was not included in the telephone survey.

## Consistent minimum rate

An overwhelming majority of respondents were supportive of a **consistent** application of a minimum rate across the LGA. This ranged from almost 90% of drop in and information session respondents, to more than 75% of the other respondents. Across all channels 78% of respondents were supportive of a consistent minimum rate.

Figure 5: Support for consistent minimum rate

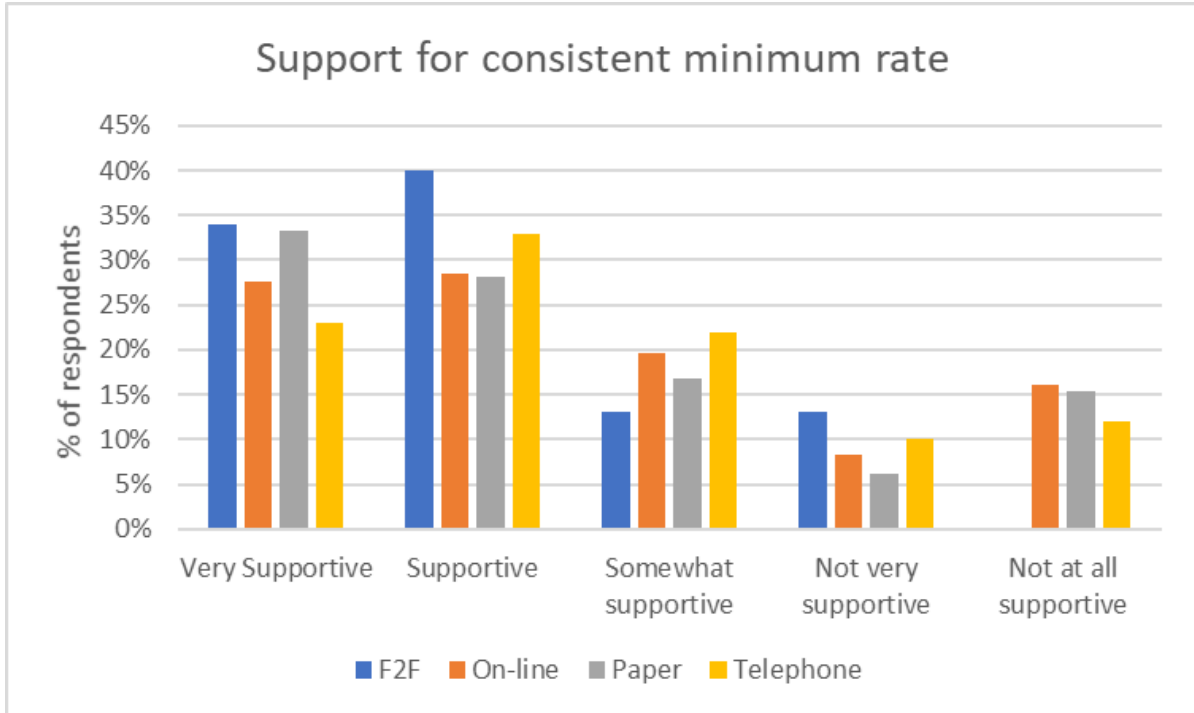


Table 8: Support for consistent minimum rate

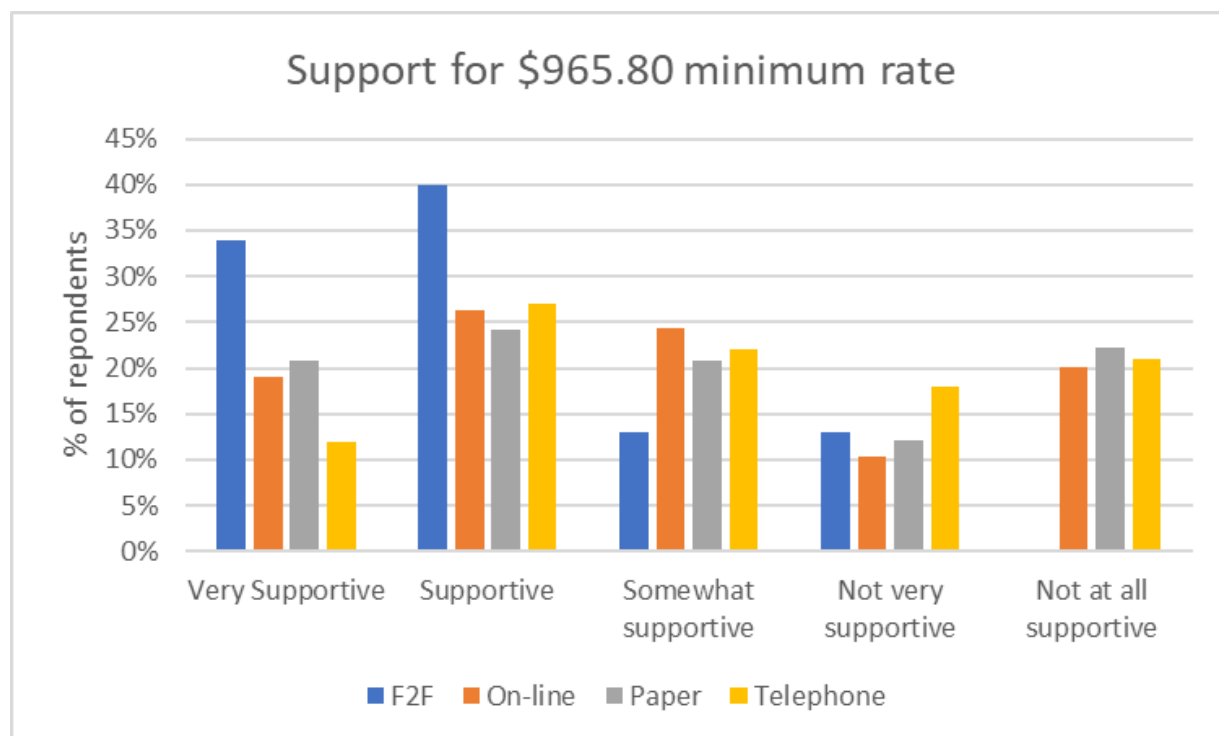
Consistent minimum rate	Very Supportive		Supportive		Somewhat supportive		Not very supportive		Not at all supportive		Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
Drop in & information session	10	34%	12	40%	4	13%	4	13%	0		30	87%	13%
Online	159	28%	164	28%	113	20%	48	8%	93	16%	577	76%	24%
Mail survey	1796	33%	1522	28%	910	17%	337	6%	835	15%	5400	78%	22%
Telephone	138	23%	198	33%	132	22%	60	10%	72	12%	600	78%	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2103</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>1896</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>1159</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>6607</b>		

Note: 7% of mailed survey respondents did not answer this question

## Proposed minimum rate

There was a very high level of support for the proposed minimum rate (\$965.80) amongst survey respondents. Across all channels, 66% of respondents supported the proposed minimum, and 87% of drop in and information session respondents were supportive.

Figure 6: Support for proposed \$965.80 minimum rate



The telephone survey collected information on suburb of residence, which was not available for the other respondents. This indicated that Hurstville residents (the area of the LGA that would see the largest increase in minimum rate should it be approved) were not as supportive of the proposed new minimum as interviewees in other Wards.

Table 9: Minimum rates approval ratings (telephone survey)

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay
Mean rating	2.97 ▼	3.78 ▲	3.37	3.61	3.50
Base	122	123	121	125	110

Table 10: Support for proposed consistent minimum rate of \$965.80 across the LGA

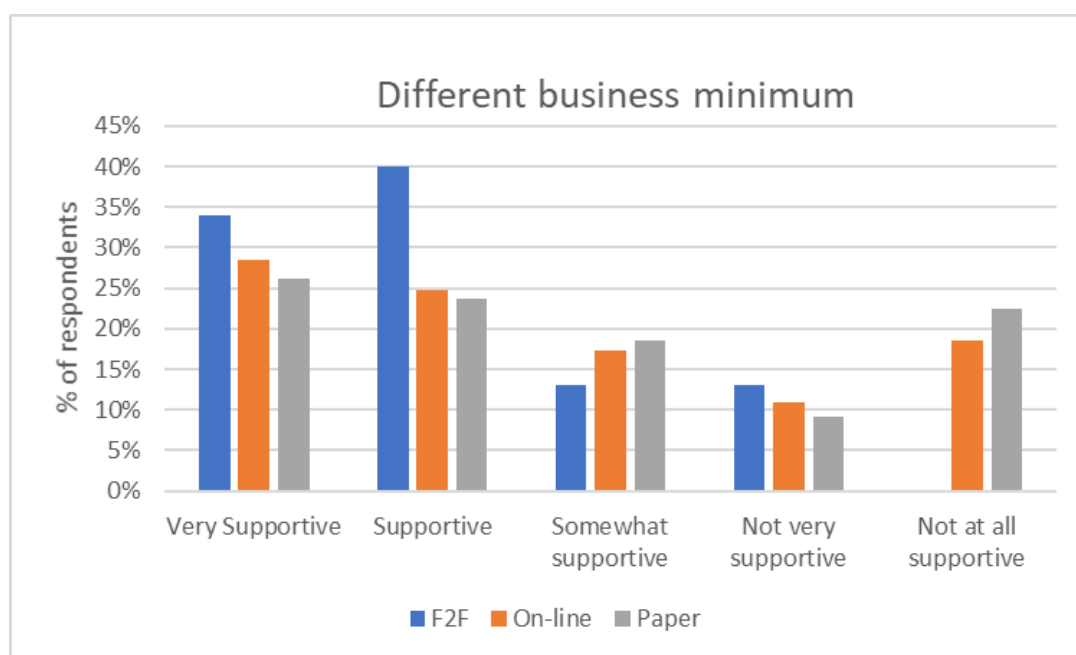
Consistent minimum rate of \$965.80	Very Supportive		Supportive		Somewhat supportive		Not very supportive		Not at all supportive		Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
Drop in & information session	7	34%	12	40%	4	13%	4	13%	0	0%	27	87%	13%
Online	88	19%	122	26%	113	24%	48	10%	93	20%	464	70%	30%
Mail survey	1060	24%	1224	28%	1054	21%	613	12%	1131	22%	5082	66%	34%
Telephone	72	12%	162	27%	132	22%	108	18%	126	21%	600	61%	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1227</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>1520</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>1303</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1350</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>6173</b>		

Note: 11% of mailed survey respondents did not answer this question

### Different minimum business rate<sup>9</sup>

The final survey question sought views on a higher minimum business rate of \$1,100 for the major commercial centres of Hurstville and Kogarah reflecting the additional services provided by Council. There was a very high level of support (69% across all channels) for the different rate for the major commercial centres. 68% of mail survey respondents and 87% of drop in/information session respondents indicated support, with high numbers very supportive. Some comments suggested the minimum business rate could be set at a higher level than that proposed.

Figure 7: Different minimum business rate



<sup>9</sup> A differential minimum business rate was not canvassed in the telephone survey

Table 11: Support for a different minimum business rate of \$1,100 in the major commercial centres of Hurstville and Kogarah

A different minimum business rate	Very Supportive		Supportive		Somewhat supportive		Not very supportive		Not at all supportive		Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
Drop in & information session	12	34%	9	40%	4	13%	1	13%	1	0%	27	87%	13%
Online	157	28%	137	25%	96	17%	60	11%	102	18%	552	71%	29%
Mail survey	1308	26%	1186	24%	925	19%	461	9%	1120	22%	5000	68%	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1477</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>1332</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>1025</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>1223</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>5579</b>		

Note: 13% of mailed survey respondents did not answer this question



## 6. Survey comments

The survey contained space to make comments relating to the proposed changes (SRV and minimum rate). Approximately one-third of print copy respondents made a comment and half of online respondents. 2,725 comments were received in mailed surveys. Comments / submissions were also received online through Your Say, in surveys completed online and via emails/letters direct to Council (totalling 3,220 in all).

All comments were reviewed. Nine major categories emerged from the 3,220 comments received.

1. Amalgamation
2. Improvement suggestions
3. Council should increase efficiency
4. Population increase results in increased income
5. General (about information leaflet /survey)
6. Supportive of the changes
7. Impact on families
8. Too high/reduce services
9. Impact on pensioners

The most frequently occurring comments related to:

- the proposed increases being too high (25%)
- the need for Council to make efficiencies (22%)
- expectations of cost savings as a result of council amalgamations (15%)

In several comments it was clear that respondents held the misconception that a population increase meant a corresponding increase in rates revenue. This myth was also raised and addressed at each information session and is discussed earlier in this report.

Examples across the nine categories are provided in table 11 following. The graph indicates the number of comments in each category as percentages of the total received through each method. Note: most comments were able to be categorised into one theme but where comments covered multiple categories they were logged in each category.

Community concern about pavements and roads was raised in several information sessions and in some surveys. The cost of governance was also queried in each information session and it was important for the General Manager to explain how the figure was made up and the inclusion of mandatory items such as the Fire and Emergency Services Levy. Some respondents were keen to see user-pays models introduced and there appears to be an opportunity for Council to increase awareness across the LGA of the new facilities and infrastructure.

Figure 8: Frequency of comment category % in each category

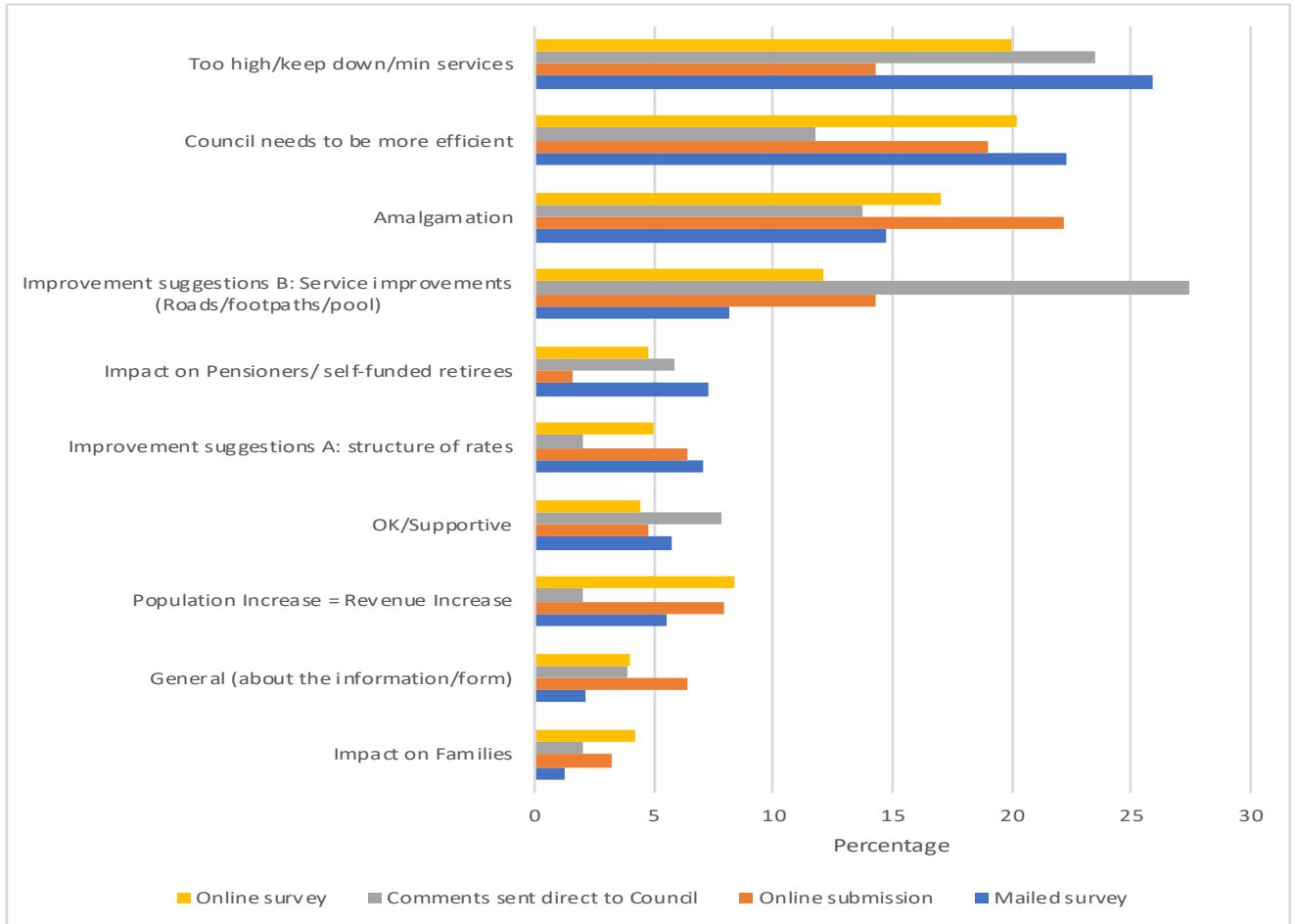


Table 12: Comments received

Comment	Mailed survey	Online submission	Comments direct to Council	Online survey	Total
Too high/keep down/min services	706	9	12	76	<b>803</b>
Council needs to be more efficient	608	12	6	77	<b>703</b>
Amalgamation	400	14	7	65	<b>486</b>
Improvement suggestions B: Service improvements (Roads/footpaths/pool)	222	9	14	46	<b>291</b>
Impact on pensioners/ self-funded retirees	198	1	3	18	<b>220</b>
Improvement suggestions A: structure of rates	193	4	1	19	<b>217</b>
OK/Supportive	155	3	4	17	<b>179</b>
Population Increase = Revenue Increase	151	5	1	32	<b>189</b>
General (about the information/form)	59	4	2	15	<b>80</b>
Impact on Families	33	2	1	16	<b>52</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2725</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>3220</b>

Table 13: Examples of comments

<p><b>Too high/keep down/min services</b></p>	<p>Already really expensive – only for rubbish and general clean!</p> <p>We choose to pay the minimum. Do not wish an increase due to the amalgamation of councils</p> <p>Increased rate doesn't mean improved services</p> <p>Keep rates as low as possible. No worker gets a 10.6% pay rise any time! Charge more for developments and builders</p> <p>We pay plenty enough</p> <p>Our economy is down and there is hardly increases in salaries so why raise rates by 10.6%</p> <p>No increases to existing rates</p> <p>We are finding it difficult to keep up with the current rate charges. Increasing them further is not recommended</p> <p>The less money paid the better</p>
<p><b>Council needs to be more efficient</b></p>	<p>Council should maintain current rate structure and reduce unnecessary expenditure and wasteful spending. Expenditure should be based on your income and not the other way around.</p> <p>To control \$\$ costs, cutbacks are needed in services and HR, avoid overpriced service providers, tender out and manage costs</p> <p>Maybe you should make savings, starting with council staff</p> <p>Work within budget like the rest of us – review non-essential capital works</p>

You don't need more money, look internally to cost save and improve efficiencies

Cut down on governance costs (\$27.5m!), community and cultural development and libraries

Council needs to cut back on councillor perks

Council needs to tighten its belt the same as the ratepayers have to

It's time council got back to what it's supposed to do "Maintenance". 27.5m governance, 36m on environment. NOT YOUR JOB

With the current inflation rate of 1.6%, I think it is time the council looked at reducing its internal costs

## Amalgamation

The main purpose of council amalgamation was to achieve reduced costs. Why was this not achieved resulting in lower rates?

No one wanted the amalgamation. Why are we paying for other rate payer needs?

Since the amalgamation in 2016 council rates have increased. We were told they would decrease due to amalgamation. In our opinion services have not changed, just the rates!

I thought the amalgamation of councils was to reduce costs, the rates should be going down!!! Not up!!! Why is this?

We were told amalgamating the councils would save money, not make things more expensive. Little consideration is given to the older residents who have built up the community, the major projects are geared toward the younger and newer residents.

Surprised to see these proposals. There should have been substantial savings due to merging of 2 councils and at least for a few years there should have not been any rate increase.

We should have economies of scale due to the merger

## Impact on pensioners

I'm a self-funded retiree. My income has not increased it has decreased. I have got to live within my means, so should council

Give concessions to pensioners

Too much for pensioners, this takes away their pension rise.

Pensioner discount must be maintained!

As a pensioner, it is hard enough paying these rates

## Improvement suggestions

It doesn't make sense – Increase of \$3 per week for residents and business owners only \$1 per week????

Businesses should be charged at a much higher rate than residential

A poll tax – everyone who lives and votes in the council area pay the same rate.

Charge medium and high-density developers who are the cause of the infrastructure shortages

Where have the development contributions disappeared? They generally fund those projects. Developers should foot the bill and council manage money carefully, not recklessly

High rise apartments are creating the pressure on our services and environmental and recreation – so need to pay much more. Also hit developers hard with higher contributions to the council to compensate

Council should not put so much into childcare – it should be a business particularly as currently council centres charge the same as everyone else

Please consider that not everyone has unlimited funds and a user pay system seems fair

Sports facilities should be paid for by users

Find cheaper tradesmen to do roads, footpaths and services. There are plenty of cheap tradespeople in country areas.

Would have liked a 4th option of 6% (between 1 & 2)

Developers should pay for infrastructure and parking. Roads congested.

Size of land should represent the rates

Allow a discount to pay for a full year in advance

Stop allowing so many residential buildings

The new parks for kids are excellent!

Important projects are inevitable, Council is doing a good job.

Cough up now or it only gets harder down the track. Just don't waste our money please 😊

Thank you for well-presented options

If you want services, you have to be prepared to pay for them as long as council is financially accountable.

Hopefully the increase will not be wasted and will support the community

Happy for the harmonising of rates

We need to increase the amount of funds collected by Council to continue to provide services to the growing community...We support Council's Option 1 (recommended) FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE to increase our rates

I support council in raising funds to continue its current level of service and would even consider a higher rate

## Supportive

**Population  
Increase =  
Revenue  
Increase**

The leaflet mentioned increased population, may I say the thousands of units built therefore thousands of more people paying rates. Council is rich

Your income is increasing automatically by increasing the number of rate payers

Council receives extra rates from more developments

Have you even considered the increase in rates revenue you have enjoyed from all the multi-story apartments you have approved? Still not enough?

I don't understand how an increase in population necessitates an increase in rates given each new person pays rates so there is a positive correlation between revenue & expenses.

Each block of high rise has contributed a lot more rates for the Council

The information in the brochure didn't mention the increased rate income from apartments

**Impact on  
Families**

In this extremely difficult economic environment, families do not need an increase in charges

Run a council budget just as a family budget

As a family, budgets are squeezed so should the council budget. Families are struggling! This is not the time to be introducing higher rates as more and more people struggle paying for food on the table.

Families are experiencing great financial stress. Adding to the cost of living will cause hardship.

Comments were also made relating to the information provided, such as "Don't have enough information on 'savings in operating expenditure'"; Not enough detail given [on the form] to provide accurate feedback". Some people commented that question 2 (relating to the minimum rate) was difficult to understand.

## 7. Conclusion

### Feedback on Special Rate Variation

Feedback on the SRV from the community indicated support for Option One (recommended by Council). Under Option One, Council would apply for an SRV of 8.1% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (total 10.6% increase). The proportion of respondents supportive of Option One varied between the different channels. In total, 3,590 people across all channels were at least somewhat supportive (54% n=6601). It appears that the opportunity to discuss the rationale behind the three Options presented by Council resulted in a much higher proportion of people supportive of Council's recommended Option, 93% of respondents at Information Sessions and Drop-ins were supportive of this Option.

Option Two, described as a short-term solution, suggested Council apply for an SRV of 0.8% plus a rate peg of 2.5% (Total increase of 3.3%). This Option was favoured by people who mailed surveys or submitted online, while those who had an opportunity to discuss the rationale for the changes to rates were much less supportive. In total, 3,696 people (58% , n=6,362) of respondents across all channels were supportive of Option Two.

Option Three proposed a substantial SRV of 19.8% plus rate peg of 2.5% (total 22.3%) to fund enhanced services. It is clearly not preferred. 15% of respondents across all channels (n=6,167) were supportive of Option Three. Amongst online respondents, 90% are not supportive of the substantial increase Option.

### Feedback on minimum rate proposals

An overwhelming majority of respondents were supportive of a consistent application of a minimum rate across the LGA. This ranged from almost 90% of drop in and information session respondents to more than three quarters of the other groups.

There was also strong support for the proposed minimum rate of \$965.80 and introducing a higher rate for the commercial centres of Kogarah and Hurstville.

### Concerns

Community concerns related to:

- the proposed increases were considered high in the context of financial pressure experienced by families, pensioners and self-funded retirees in particular
- the need for Council to make efficiencies and address local issues (footpaths and roads raised frequently as a concern for example)
- expectations of cost savings as a result of council amalgamations as "promised" by State Government
- support for user-pays approaches to some services and activities.

A survey response rate of almost 12% and over 3,200 comments received demonstrates the community interest in engaging with Council on rates and broader issues of strategy. Over 2,500 people chose to provide an email address with their survey so that they could receive Council updates.

## List of attachments

*Attachment 1: Micromex Research Report – Telephone Survey*

*Attachment 2: Full list of media coverage and other activities - reach*

*Attachment 3: List of communication materials:*

- *Media release 1 x 2 (including Chinese translation) - Council to introduce new rate structures to provide equity to ratepayers*
- *Media release 2 - Changes to your rates: community consultation for residents and businesses*
- *Media release 3 - Rates consultation receives strong community engagement*
- *Letter to residents (English, Chinese, Arabic, Greek, Nepali languages) – this includes a household survey form*
- *Letter to investment property owners*
- *Changes to your rates newsletter*
- *Frequently Asked Questions document*
- *St George & Sutherland Shire Leader Newspaper - Highlight articles*
- *St George & Sutherland Shire Leader Newspaper - Council advertisement example*
- *Ethnic media - coverage example*
- *Ethnic media - Council advertisement examples (Chinese/Greek/Arabic)*
- *Pull up banner*
- *Digital signage*
- *Community e-news example*
- *Your Say Georges River example*
- *Social media examples (including reminder to submit survey)*
- *Facebook*
- *Twitter*
- *Instagram*
- *LinkedIn*
- *YouTube Video (Presentation from General Manager Gail Connolly)*

*Attachment 4: Presentation PowerPoint slides for information sessions*

*Attachment 5: Mailed survey data*

- *Mailed surveys x respondents (options)*
- *Mailed surveys x respondents (consistent rate and minimum rate)*



*Attachment 1: Micromex Research Report – Telephone Survey*



# Georges River Council

## Special Rate Variation – Community Survey

Prepared by: Micromex Research

Date: December 3, 2019



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# Background & Methodology

# Background & Methodology

## Why?

- Measure community satisfaction with the performance of Council and the quality of community assets
- Measure community awareness levels and sources of information about a proposed Special Rate Variation
- Measure levels of support and preference for different SRV options
- Measure levels of support for a minimum rate across the whole Council area

## How?

- Telephone survey (landline and mobile) to N=600 households.
- 20 of the resident interviews were conducted with non-English speaking residents (5 surveys were conducted in each of the following languages, Cantonese, Mandarin, Greek and Arabic) using multilingual interviewers.
- 122 interviews were conducted in the Mortdale Ward, 120 interviews in the Hurstville, Blakehurst and Peakhurst Wards and 118 interviews in the Kogarah Bay Ward.
- 112 acquired through number harvesting (balance from EWP and SamplePages).
- Greatest margin of error +/- 4.0%.

## When?

- Implementation 21<sup>st</sup>– 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

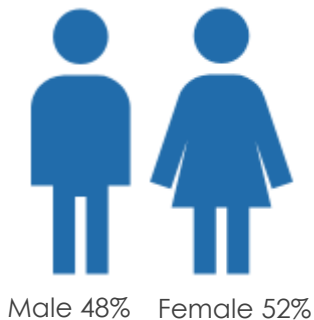


# Sample Profile



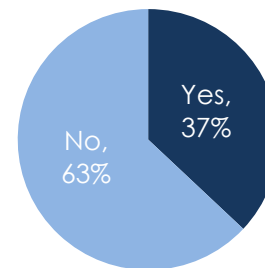
# Sample Profile

## Gender

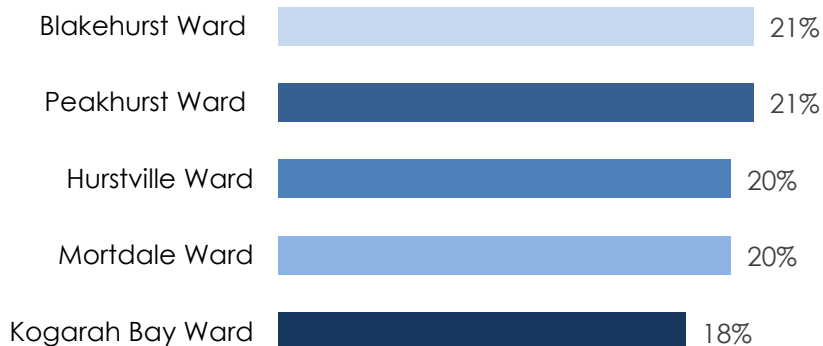


N=600  
Telephone Interviews with  
Georges River Council Residents

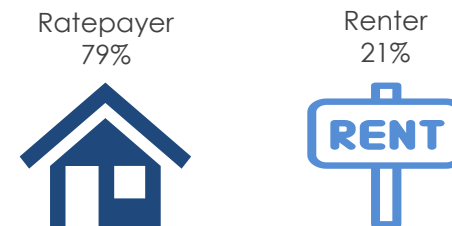
## Do you speak a language other than English at home?



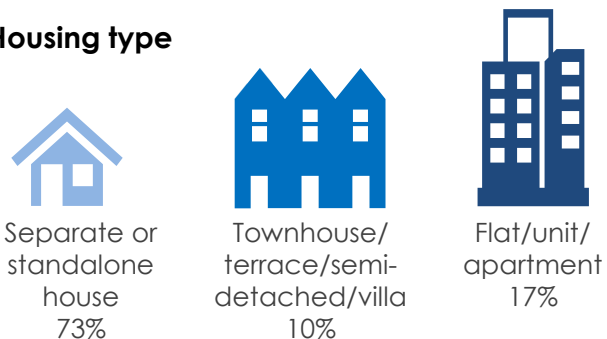
## Ward



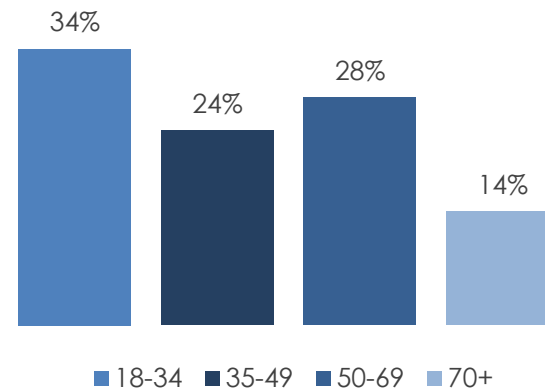
## Ratepayer status



## Housing type



## Age



Note: 1 respondent refused to answer housing type and ratepayer status

The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2016 ABS community profile of Georges River Council.

# Key Findings





# Key Findings

## Awareness of Special Rate Variation

- 47% of residents were aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards an SRV – this is in line with our norm of 48%.
- An information brochure or questionnaire mailed out by Council was the dominant method by which residents were aware (82% of those aware of the SRV mentioned the brochure/questionnaire).


## Support for SRV Options & Minimum Rate

- The community is seemingly polarised, with 50% of residents opting for the 3.3% status quo Option A as Option 1, and 50% stating that some form of rate increase above the 'status quo' was their first preference, with 40% selecting Option B. Interestingly, Option B was only relegated to third preference by 1% of residents.
- Option's A (3.3% increase) and B (10.6% increase) received similar levels of monadic support, with 61%, and 63% of residents indicating they were at least somewhat supportive, respectively.
- Option C received the lowest level of support, with just 39% stating they were at least 'somewhat supportive.'
- 78% of residents were at least 'somewhat supportive' of introducing a single, consistent minimum rate across the whole Council region. However, this dropped to 61% at least 'somewhat supportive' when an actual minimum amount of \$965.80 was specifically mentioned. On both questions about a standardised minimum rate, those in the Hurstville Ward were significantly less supportive than were residents of other wards.

## Satisfaction with the Performance of Council

- 88% of residents stated that they were at least 'somewhat satisfied' with the performance of Council over the last 12 months – and 88% also indicated they were at least 'somewhat satisfied' with the quality of community assets. However, those who were not satisfied with the quality of assets were less likely to support the two SRV options (B and C) – perhaps the message about the benefits of the SRV is not getting through?





# Findings in Detail:

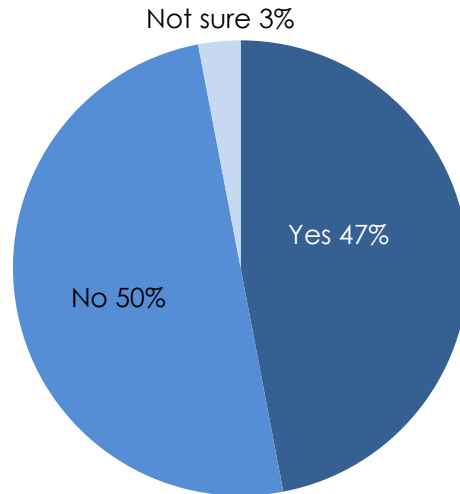
## 1. Awareness of the Special Rate Variation

# Awareness of the Special Rate Variation

Q5a. 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	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Yes	47%	48%	46%	25%▼	48%	62%▲	64%▲	56%▲	12%
No/not sure	53%	52%	54%	75%	52%	38%	36%	44%	88%
Base	600	289	311	202	147	169	82	473	126

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay
Yes	48%	49%	44%	56%	35%▼
No/not sure	52%	51%	56%	44%	65%
Base	122	123	121	125	110



Base: N = 600

	Georges River	Micromex LGA Benchmark
Yes (aware)	47%	48%

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

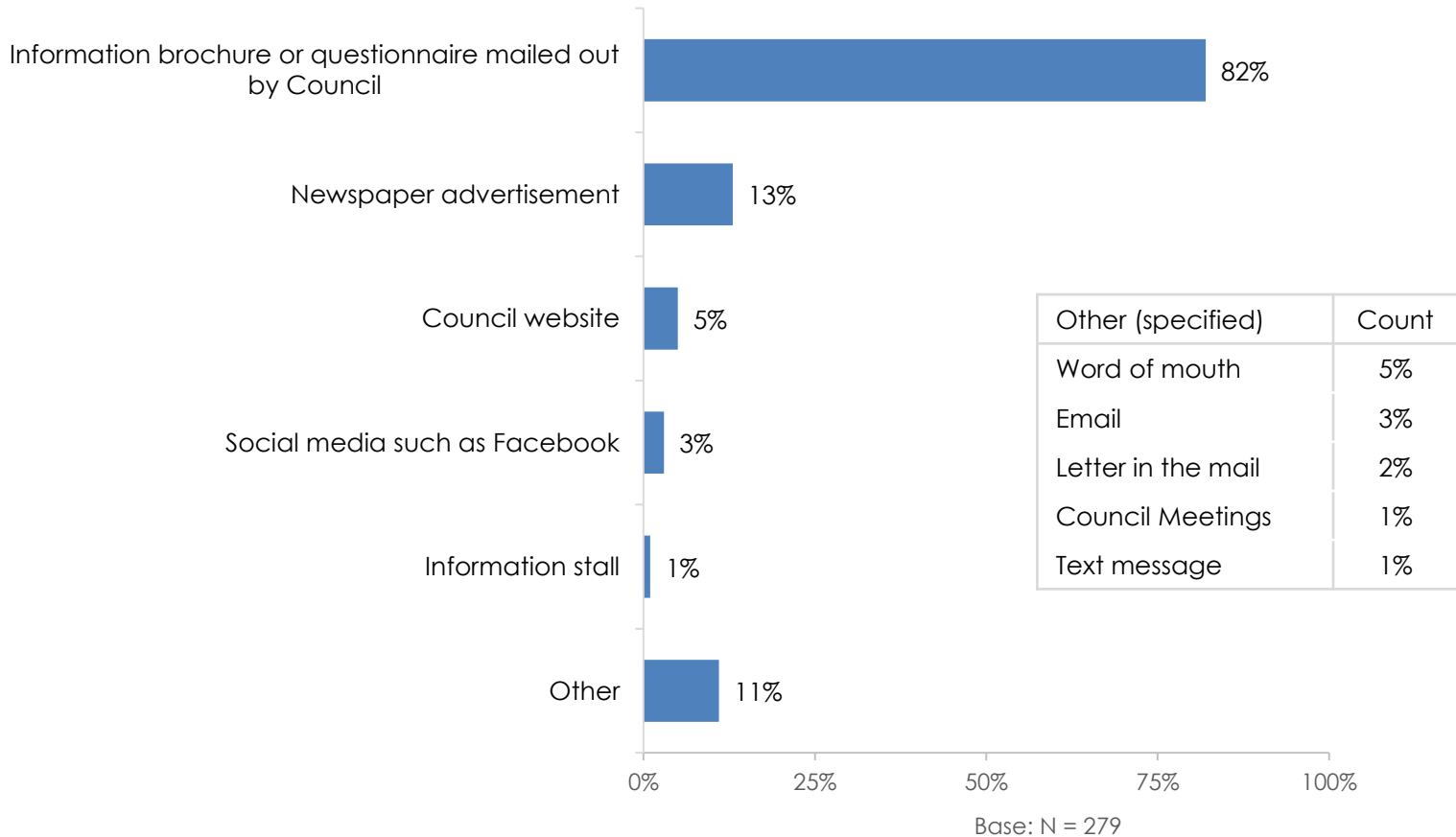
Nearly half (47%) of residents were aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a SRV, in line with the Micromex LGA Benchmark. Those aged 50+ and ratepayers were significantly more likely to be aware.

# Source of Information on SRV

Q5a. Prior to this call, were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?

Q5b. (If yes), how were you informed of the Special Rate Variation?

## Of those aware of the SRV



**82% of the residents that were aware of the SRV were informed of it by an information brochure or questionnaire mailed out by Council.**



# Findings in Detail:

## 2. Support for Special Rate Variation

# Concept Statement

*Residents were read the following concept statements prior to being asked to rate their support:*

Currently Georges River Council delivers a broad range of services such as roads and rubbish collection, parks and playgrounds, cultural facilities and events, libraries, swimming pools, environmental protection and much more.

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 2.5%.

Council is facing the challenge of balancing community expectations with future financial sustainability. There is a growing gap between the cost of providing services and facilities and the available funding to meet those costs. Put simply, costs are rising more than the 2.5% rate peg.

The situation will be made worse in 2021 when additional funds Council receives each year from a Hurstville Special Rate Variation expires.

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

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.

Georges River Council is considering applying for a permanent SRV, which will apply to the 2020-21 financial year. There are three options which I would like you to consider. Each option will have varying impacts on the services and facilities that Council can deliver.

Let's look at the options in more detail.

**The concept statement was read to participants.  
Option exposure was rotated to reduce order effect.**

# Option A: 3.3% Increase – Replacement of the Current Hurstville SRV Option: Short Term

This option would essentially continue the status quo with rates increasing by the assumed rate peg amount of 2.5% in 2020-21 plus an extra 0.8% SRV to offset the end of the current Hurstville SRV – so an overall increase of 3.3% in 2020-21. The average residential ratepayer currently paying \$1,119 in 2019-20 would pay approximately \$49 more or \$1 per week in the 2020-21 financial year, so \$1,168. In the following years the annual rate peg would be added to the previous year's amount.

Under this option Council would generate \$2.3mill in 2020-21, to offset the current Hurstville SRV – however, the shortfall in revenue versus costs will continue to increase, meaning Council would need to significantly review what services it can deliver in the future to meet the needs of a growing population – no new projects would be delivered and existing service levels would likely have to reduce.

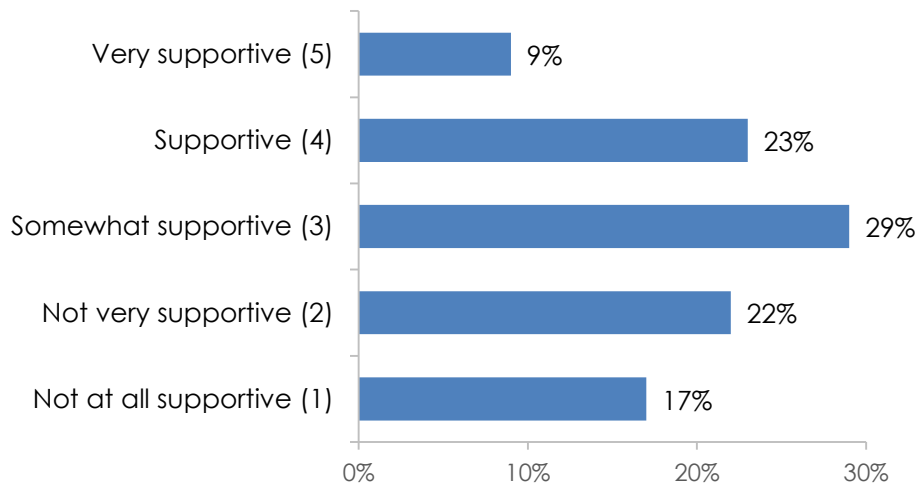


# Support for Option A: 3.3% Increase – Replacement of the Current Hurstville SRV Option: Short Term

Q3a. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with this option?

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean rating	2.84	2.92	2.77	3.07▲	2.73	2.68	2.79	2.82	2.90
Base	600	289	311	202	147	169	82	473	126

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay	Aware of the SRV prior to call	Not aware/not sure
Mean rating	2.88	2.69	3.01	2.93	2.68	2.85	2.83
Base	122	123	121	125	110	279	321



	Level of support by satisfaction with assets			
	Not at all /not very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied /satisfied	Overall
Mean rating	2.41▼	2.53▼	3.06▲	2.84
Base	73	159	368	600

Base: N = 600

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = very supportive  
▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of support (by group)

**61% of residents were at least 'somewhat supportive' of this option, with younger residents (18-34) significantly more likely to be supportive. Note also that, as we may expect, those who were Satisfied/Very Satisfied with the quality of community assets were significantly more supportive of this 'business as usual' option.**



# Option B: 10.6% Increase – Financially Sustainable Option (Recommended by Council)

This option would see rates increasing by the assumed rate peg amount of 2.5% in 2020-21 plus an extra 8.1% SRV – so an overall increase of 10.6% in 2020-21. The average residential ratepayer currently paying \$1,119 in 2019-20 would pay approximately \$132 more or \$3 per week in the 2020-21 financial year, so \$1,251. In the following years the annual rate peg would be added to the previous year's amount.

Under this option Council would generate an additional \$7.5mill in 2020-21 – which would allow Council to continue delivering services and facilities as it currently does, plus deliver some new projects such as improving the condition of local roads

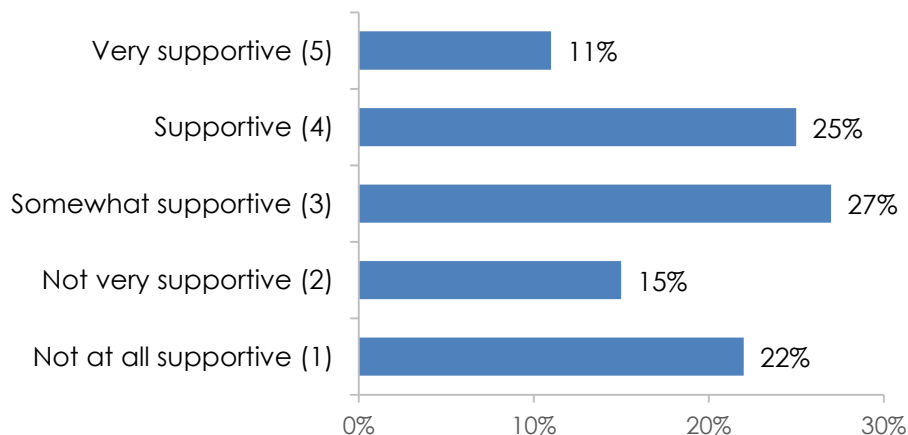


# Support for Option B: 10.6% Increase – Financially Sustainable Option (Recommended by Council)

Q3b. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with this option?

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean rating	2.88	2.78	2.97	3.34▲	2.65▼	2.66▼	2.59▼	2.72	3.48▲
Base	600	289	311	202	147	169	82	473	126

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay	Aware of the SRV prior to call	Not aware/not sure
Mean rating	2.72	3.08	2.98	2.83	2.75	2.71	3.02▲
Base	122	123	121	125	110	279	321



	Level of support by satisfaction with assets			
	Not at all /not very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied /satisfied	Overall
Mean rating	2.21▼	2.53▼	3.16▲	2.88
Base	73	159	368	600

Base: N = 600

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = very supportive  
▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower level of support (by group)

**63% of residents were at least 'somewhat supportive' of Option B. Younger residents (18-34) and non-ratepayers were significantly more supportive of this option. Perhaps surprisingly, those who were Satisfied/Very Satisfied with the quality of community assets were again significantly more supportive of this increased spend option – we could have expected those who were not satisfied with assets to be more supportive of an SRV.**

# Option C: 22.3% Increase – Substantial Rate Increase Option

This option would see rates increasing by the assumed rate peg amount of 2.5% in 2020-21 plus an extra 19.8% SRV – so an overall increase of 22.3% in 2020-21. The average residential ratepayer currently paying \$1,119 in 2019-20 would pay approximately \$264 more or \$5 per week in the 2020-21 financial year, so \$1,383. In the following years the annual rate peg would be added to the previous year's amount.

Under this option Council would generate an additional \$15.8mill in 2020-21 – which would allow Council to not only continue delivering services and facilities as it currently does, but also increase the delivery of new projects such as adventure playgrounds and town centre upgrades at our shopping centres.

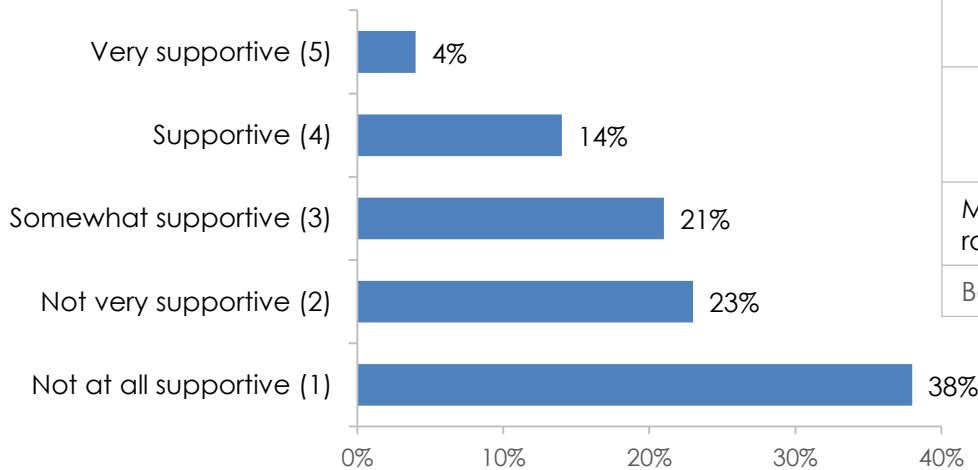


# Support for Option C: 22.3% Increase – Substantial Rate Increase Option

Q3c. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with this option?

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean rating	2.23	2.08	2.37▲	2.56▲	2.11	2.04▼	2.02▼	2.07	2.84▲
Base	600	289	311	202	147	169	82	473	126

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay	Aware of the SRV prior to call	Not aware/not sure
Mean rating	2.17	2.42	2.22	2.09	2.24	1.95	2.47▲
Base	122	123	121	125	110	279	321



	Level of support by satisfaction with assets			
	Not at all /not very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied /satisfied	Overall
Mean rating	1.79▼	2.13	2.36▲	2.23
Base	73	159	368	600

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

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

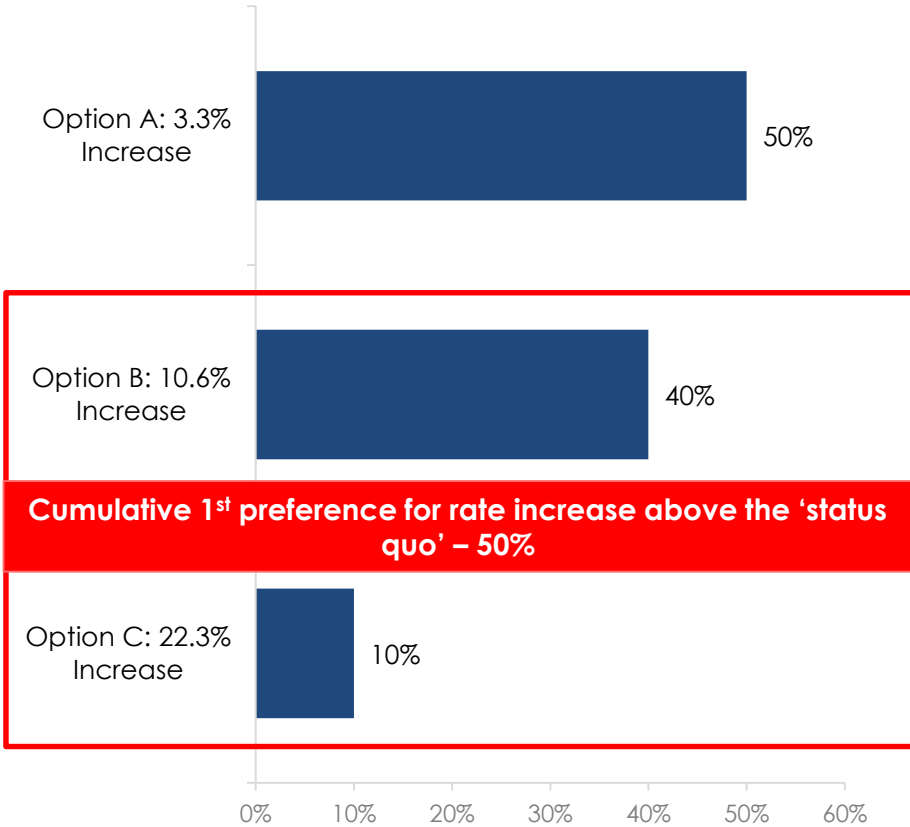
Base: N = 600

**Just 39% of residents were at least 'somewhat supportive' towards Option C. Females, younger residents (18-34) and non-ratepayers were significantly more likely to support this option. And once again, those who were Satisfied/Very Satisfied with the quality of community assets were significantly more supportive of this increased spend option – we could have expected the opposite to occur.**

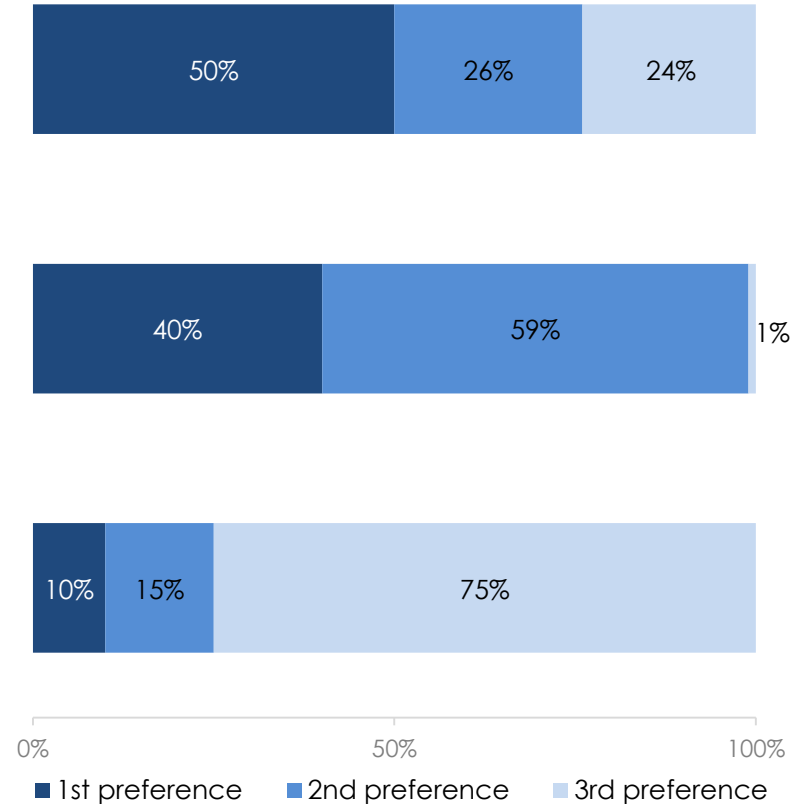
# Preferences for Special Rate Variation

Q4a. Please rank the 3 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference?

### First Preference



### Combined Preferences



Base: N = 596  
4 respondent refused to provide their preference

Note: see the Appendix for data cross analysed by demographics

The community is seemingly polarised, with 50% selecting the status quo Option A as their first preference, and the remaining 50% selecting one of the two 'SRV/above the status quo' options as their first preference. Younger residents (18-34) and non-ratepayers were significantly more likely to select an increase above 3.3% as their first preference.

Taking a different perspective, only 1% of residents relegated Option B to their lowest (third) preference.

# First Preference by Awareness

Q4a. Please rank the 3 options in order of preference:

Q5a. Prior to this call, were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?

1 <sup>st</sup> preference	Aware of the SRV prior to call	Not aware/not sure
Option A	56%▲	46%
Option B	38%	41%
Option C	6%	13%▲
Base	277	320

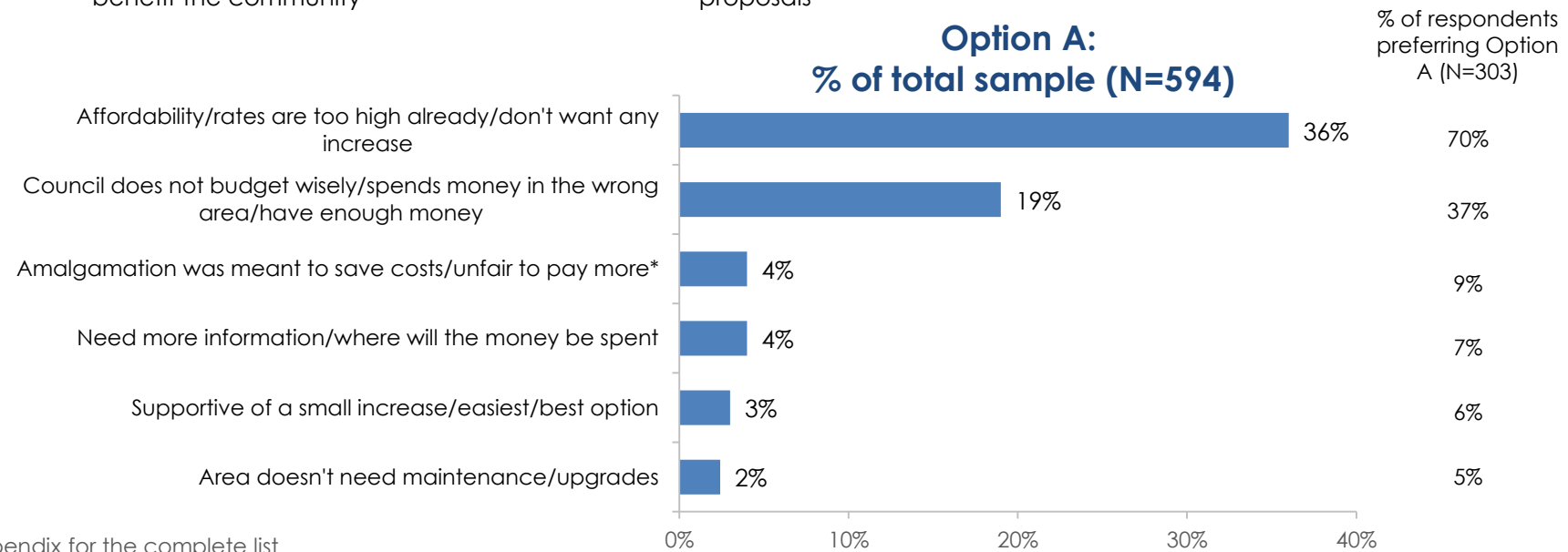
▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (by group)

The above table suggests that those who were aware of the proposed SRV prior to our interview were significantly more likely to favour the status quo Option A – whereas those who were not aware were significantly more likely to favour an increased SRV of some sort.

# Reasons for Preferring Option A: 3.3% Increase – Replacement of the Current Hurstville SRV Option: Short Term

Q4b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

- “The community cannot afford the big increase”
- “More information is required as to how much is required to sustain the current services”
- “Council is spending money on unnecessary things”
- “Rates are already too high, I don't want them going up at all”
- “Don't believe Council needs the money”
- “After the amalgamation the rate rise is not fair across the old former Council areas, therefore am not willing to pay more than rate peg”
- “Council doesn't spend their money correctly, so a big increase would not benefit the community”
- “Without seeing detailed plans of expenditure, it'd be hard to support the proposals”
- “Do not want an increase at all”



See Appendix for the complete list  
\*unhappy with merge

**36% of residents selected Option A as their first preference as they do not want to pay increased rates/it is the smallest increase. 19% also discussed poor financial management by Council, with Council already having sufficient funds.**

# Reasons for Preferring Option B: 10.6% Increase – Financially Sustainable Option (Recommended by Council)

Q4b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

“Seems to be the most reasonable increase, affordable for most people”

“Council has a good idea of what they are doing so if they recommend it, then go for it”

“Rates have to go up in order for our area to progress and move forward”

“Obviously Council needs the money so this would be a good option. However, I am sceptical about how the money will be spent”

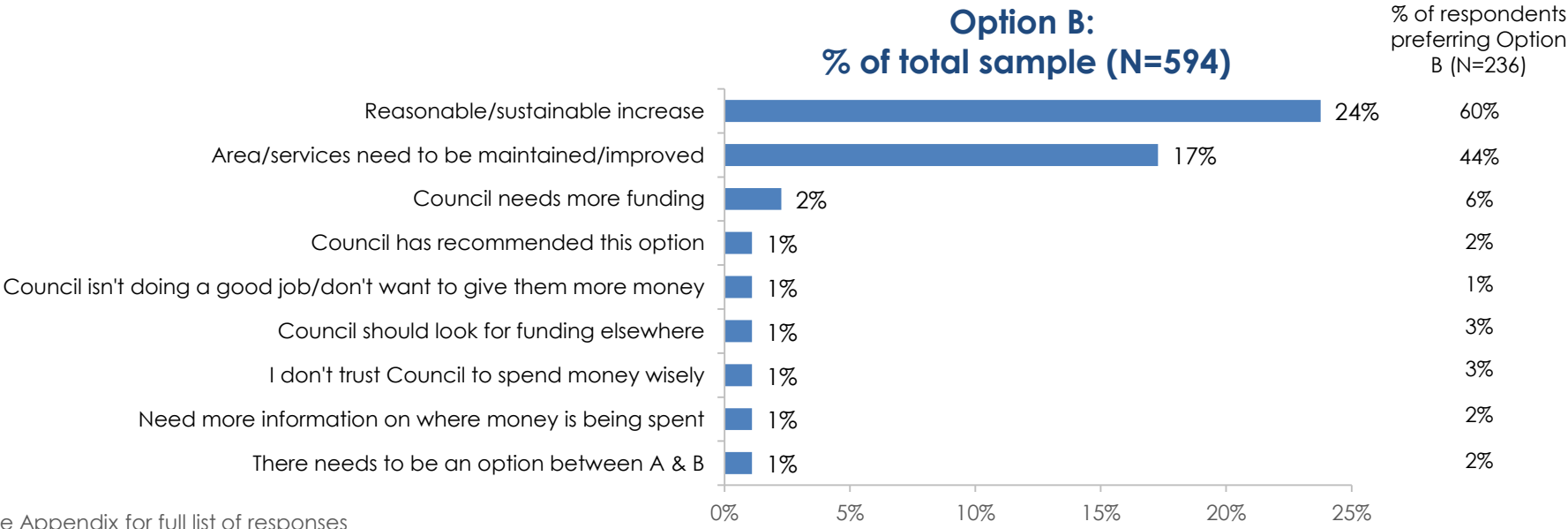
“Sounds the most feasible financially for services and facilities to be maintained”

“This increase allows for Council to maintain and increase services for the community members while being more affordable than option 3”

“Desperate for upgrades so the Council needs extra funding”

“Important to build a sustainable environment where my family and friends can enjoy”

“Without money the Council can't do anything but the larger increase is too much”



See Appendix for full list of responses

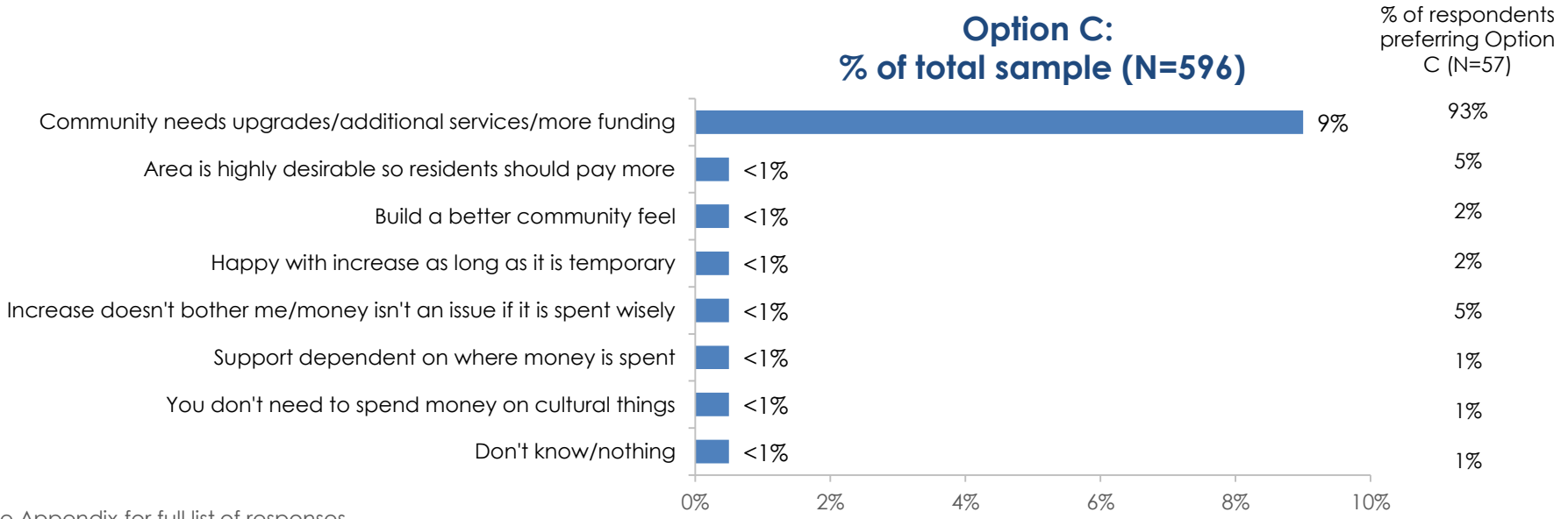
**24% of residents believe Option B is the most reasonable/sustainable increase, with 17% stating the area/services need to be maintained/improved.**



# Reasons for Preferring Support for Option C: 22.3% Increase – Substantial Rate Increase Option

Q4b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

- “Maintaining and enhancing services sounds like the best option”
- “Services are great currently and additional funding will be needed to maintain them to this standard”
- “Substantial amount of money needs to be spent to make a difference”
- “Build a better community feel”
- “Very important to improve infrastructure in our community”
- I believe local governments need the extra funding”
- “Current Council revenue versus cost is not sustainable, increase is needed”
- “I can see the improvements already done by Council so support continuing improvements for the community”
- “More income is needed to deliver the services required”



See Appendix for full list of responses

**9% of residents chose Option C as their first preference because they believe that the 'community needs upgrades and additional services/more funding' in the area.**

Findings in Detail:

### 3. Support for Standardised Minimum Rate

# Concept Statement

Councils have what is called a 'minimum rate', which is the lowest rate that can be charged to a household. This minimum rate usually applies to high-rise apartments because there are numerous apartments on the one block of land – whereas standalone houses, townhouses, etc tend to pay more than the minimum rate. Ratepayers in the former Hurstville Council area currently pay a minimum rate of \$571 per annum – whereas those in the former Kogarah Council area currently pay a minimum rate of \$942 per annum.

To provide greater fairness and consistency across the Georges River Council area, Council proposes to introduce a single, standardised minimum rate.

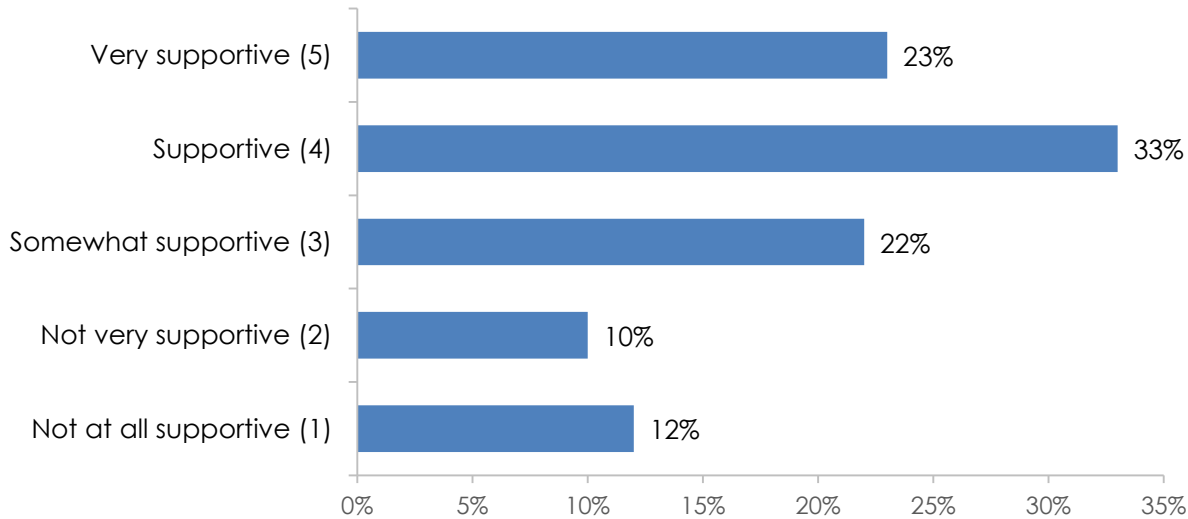


# Support for Minimum Rate

Q6a. How supportive are you of Council introducing a single, consistent minimum rate across the whole council area?

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean rating	3.45	3.36	3.53	3.49	3.50	3.40	3.32	3.40	3.61
Base	600	289	311	202	147	169	82	473	126

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay	Aware of the SRV prior to call	Not aware/not sure
Mean rating	2.97▼	3.78▲	3.37	3.61	3.50	3.50	3.40
Base	122	123	121	125	110	279	321



Previous Council Areas

	Hurstville	Kogarah
Mean rating	3.35	3.59
Base	359	241

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

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

Base: N = 600

**78% of residents were at least 'somewhat supportive' of introducing a single, consistent rate across the whole Council region – with over half (56%) committing to the top two codes. However, those in the Hurstville ward were significantly less supportive towards a minimum rate (although there was no significant difference by previous LGA).**

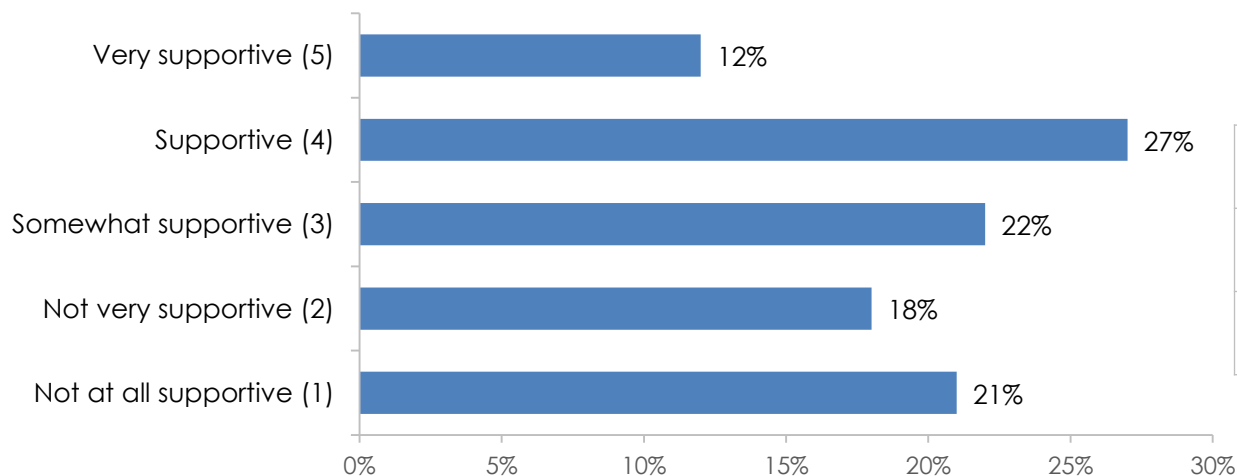
# Support Towards Minimum Rate

Q6b. As I mentioned, Ratepayers in the former Hurstville Council area currently pay a minimum rate of \$571 per annum – whereas those in the former Kogarah Council area currently pay a minimum rate of \$942 per annum. For the 2020-21 year, Council is considering introducing a new consistent minimum rate of \$965.80, which is the current rate paid by those in the former Kogarah Council area plus the 2.5% rate peg.

How supportive are you of Council introducing a consistent minimum rate across the whole Council area of \$965.80 in 2020-21?

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean rating	2.91	2.99	2.84	2.89	2.89	2.89	3.04	2.90	2.98
Base	600	289	311	202	147	169	82	473	126

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay	Aware of the SRV prior to call	Not aware/not sure
Mean rating	2.63▼	3.17▲	2.72	2.93	3.14	2.90	2.92
Base	122	123	121	125	110	279	321



Previous Council Areas

	Hurstville	Kogarah
Mean rating	2.72	3.20▲
Base	359	241

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

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

Base: N = 600

**When a specific dollar amount for the minimum rate was mentioned, 61% of residents were at least 'somewhat supportive' of a minimum rate increase – still a majority, but down from 78% on the previous measure. Mean scores for both previous LGA's are lower than for the previous question – and on this more specific question, the previous Hurstville LGA residents are significantly less supportive than are the previous Kogarah LGA residents.**

# Findings in Detail:

## 4. Community Diagnostics

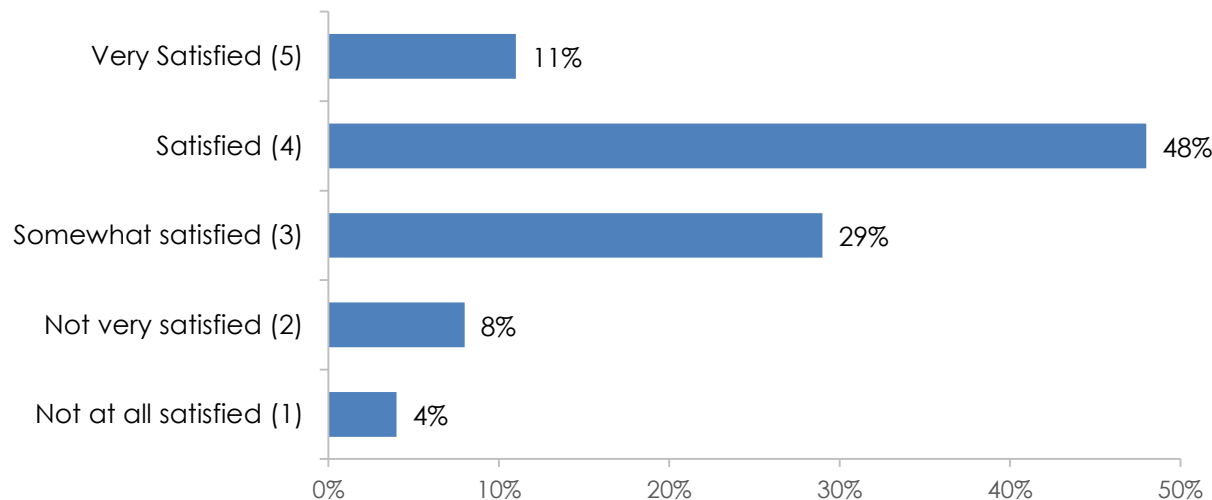


# Overall Satisfaction with the Performance of Council

Q2a. 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	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean rating	3.53	3.51	3.56	3.77▲	3.50	3.31▼	3.48	3.45	3.86▲
Base	600	289	311	202	147	169	82	473	126

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay	Aware of the SRV prior to call	Not aware/not sure
Mean rating	3.40	3.59	3.71▲	3.55	3.40	3.43	3.62▲
Base	122	123	121	125	110	279	321



	Georges River	Micromex LGA Benchmark Metro
Mean	3.53	3.55
T3B	88%	90%
Base	600	19937

Base: N = 600

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

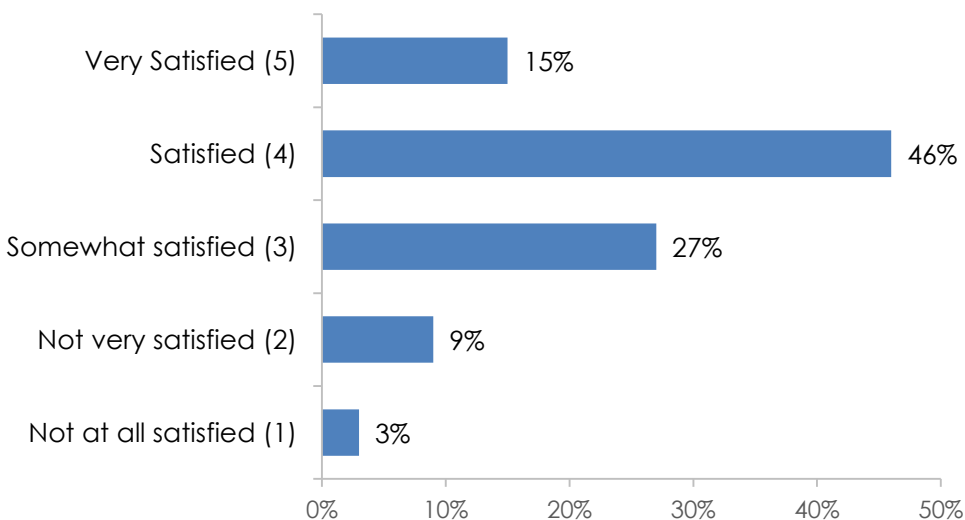
**88% of residents stated that they were at least 'somewhat satisfied' with the performance of Council over the last 12 months, on par with the Micromex LGA benchmark. Younger residents (18-34), non-ratepayers and residents of the Mortdale Ward are significantly more satisfied.**

# Satisfaction with Community Assets

Q2b. Thinking generally about community assets provided by Council, which include local roads, footpaths, cycle ways, parks and play grounds, public buildings, public toilets, libraries, etc. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of community assets currently provided by Council?

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean rating	3.62	3.63	3.61	3.77▲	3.63	3.48▼	3.53	3.57	3.80
Base	600	289	311	202	147	169	82	473	126

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay
Mean rating	3.40▼	3.70	3.73	3.73	3.52
Base	122	123	121	125	110



	Satisfaction with assets by overall satisfaction			Overall
	Not at all /not very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied /satisfied	
Mean rating	2.72▼	3.28▼	3.98▲	3.62
Base	74	174	353	600

Base: N = 600

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

**88% of residents were at least 'somewhat satisfied' with Community Assets in the Georges River Council area.**



# Appendix – Background, Methodology and Additional Analysis



# Background & Methodology

Micromex Research, together with Georges River, developed the questionnaire.

The sample consisted of a total of 600 residents. Respondents were selected by means of a computer based random selection process using the electronic White Pages.

For the survey under discussion the greatest margin of error is 4.0%. This means, for example that the answer 'yes' (50%) to a question could vary from 46% to 54%.

## Data collection

The survey was conducted during the period 21<sup>st</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019 from 4:30pm to 8:30pm Monday to Friday.

## Interviewing

488 of the 600 of respondents were selected by means of a computer based random selection process using the electronic White Pages and SamplePages.

In addition 112 respondents were recruited face-to-face, this was conducted at a number of areas around Georges River, i.e. Hurstville Train Station, Kogarah Train Station/town centre, Mortdale Train Station, Oatley Train Station, Oatley Festival, Hurstville Westfield/Shops and Penshurst Train Station.

## Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using Q Professional.

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

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.

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

## Micromex LGA Benchmark

Micromex has worked for over 90 LGAs in the last 10 years and conducted over 70 community satisfaction surveys since 2016. We have compared Georges River Council results against the developed Metro Council Benchmarks based on over 19,000 interviews.

'Awareness of the SRV' Benchmark has been created from results from 23 SRV surveys with 22 different Councils.



# Sample Profile

Q1c. Which suburb do you live in?

Suburb	N=600	Suburb	N=600
Oatley	15%	Connells Point	2%
Hurstville	14%	Hurstville Grove	2%
Mortdale	11%	Kogarah Bay	2%
Penshurst	10%	Narwee	2%
Peakhurst	7%	Peakhurst Heights	2%
Beverly Hills	5%	Sans Souci	2%
Lugarno	5%	Beverley Park	1%
Carlton	4%	Carss Park	1%
Kogarah	4%	Riverwood	1%
Kingsgrove	3%	South Hurstville	1%
Allawah	2%	Kyle Bay	<1%
Blakehurst	2%		



# Source of Information on SRV

Q5a. Prior to this call, were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?

Q5b. (If yes), how were you informed of the Special Rate Variation?

	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Information brochure or questionnaire mailed out by Council	84%	80%	68%	81%	83%	93%▲	85%▲	23%
Council website	3%	8%	0%	10%▲	5%	5%	5%▼	20%
Newspaper advertisement	12%	13%	11%	4%▼	20%▲	12%	12%	31%
Social media such as Facebook	4%	2%	5%	7%	0%	0%	3%	7%
Information stall	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	3%	1%	0%
Other	10%	11%	21%	13%	7%	4%	10%	26%
Base	138	142	51	71	105	52	264	14

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



# Source of Information on SRV

Q5a. Prior to this call, were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?

Q5b. (If yes), how were you informed of the Special Rate Variation?

	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay
Information brochure or questionnaire mailed out by Council	85%	81%	73%	83%	89%
Council website	5%	1%▼	4%	6%	12%▲
Newspaper advertisement	17%	12%	16%	11%	6%
Social media such as Facebook	0%	8%▲	0%	4%	0%
Information stall	1%	1%	3%	1%	0%
Other	8%	8%	13%	18%	2%
Base	59	60	53	69	39

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



# Preferences for Special Rate Variation

Q4a. Please rank the 3 options in order of preference:

1 <sup>st</sup> preference	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Option A	50%	54%	48%	36%▼	56%	60%▲	59%▲	56%▲	32%
Option B	40%	36%	43%	48%▲	36%	36%	34%	36%▼	52%
Option C	10%	10%	9%	16%▲	8%	4%▼	7%	8%	16%

1 <sup>st</sup> preference	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay
Option A	57%	41%▼	48%	51%	57%
Option B	36%	43%	44%	41%	33%
Option C	7%	16%	7%	8%	10%

2 <sup>nd</sup> preference	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Option A	26%	26%	25%	31%	22%	23%	26%	25%	28%
Option B	59%	62%	56%	51%▼	62%	63%	66%	63%▲	46%
Option C	15%	11%	19%▲	19%	16%	14%	8%▼	12%▼	26%

2 <sup>nd</sup> preference	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay
Option A	24%	25%	33%	27%	18%
Option B	64%	56%	55%	57%	65%
Option C	12%	19%	12%	16%	17%

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



# Preferences for Special Rate Variation

Q4a. Please rank the 3 options in order of preference:

3 <sup>rd</sup> preference	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Option A	24%	19%	27%	33%▲	22%	17%▼	15%▼	19%▼	39%
Option B	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Option C	75%	79%	72%	65%▼	76%	81%▲	85%▲	80%▲	59%

3 <sup>rd</sup> preference	Hurstville	Blakehurst	Mortdale	Peakhurst	Kogarah Bay
Option A	19%	34%▲	19%	22%	24%
Option B	1%	1%	1%	2%	3%
Option C	80%	66%▼	80%	76%	73%

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



# Reasons for Preferring Option A: 3.3% Increase – Replacement of the Current Hurstville SRV Option: Short Term

Q4b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

Option A – First Preference	% of total sample (N = 594)	% of those preferring Option A (N = 302)
Affordability/rates are too high already/don't want any increase	36%	70%
Council does not budget wisely/spends money in the wrong area/have enough money	19%	37%
Amalgamation was meant to save costs/unfair to pay more/unhappy with merge	4%	7%
Need more information/where will the money be spent	4%	9%
Supportive of a small increase/easiest/best option	3%	6%
Area doesn't need maintenance/upgrades	2%	5%
Council workers should take a pay cut/decrease the amount of Council workers	1%	1%
Does not effect me	1%	1%
Need select upgrades to services/roads/parks	1%	2%
Need to cut back on services/facilities	1%	1%
Needs a fixed rate	1%	1%
High density buildings should be paying more	<1%	1%
Lots of people want to downsize and move out	<1%	<1%
Stop over development	<1%	1%
Don't know/nothing	<1%	<1%





# Reasons for Preferring Option B: 10.6% Increase – Financially Sustainable Option (Recommended by Council)

Q4b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

Option B – First Preference	% of total sample (N = 594)	% of those preferring Option B (N = 236)
Reasonable/sustainable increase	24%	60%
Area/services need to be maintained/improved	17%	44%
Council needs more funding	2%	6%
Council has recommended this option	1%	2%
Council isn't doing a good job/don't want to give them more money	1%	1%
Council should look for funding elsewhere	1%	3%
I don't trust Council to spend money wisely	1%	3%
Need more information on where money is being spent	1%	2%
There needs to be an option between A and B	1%	2%
Council should have consideration for residents with larger blocks	<1%	<1%
Council will just do what they want anyway	<1%	1%
Don't want an increase in rates/rates are already too high	<1%	1%
Residents in high density housing should pay more first	<1%	<1%
This option wont make a difference	<1%	<1%
Wages also need to increase	<1%	1%
Don't know/nothing	<1%	1%



# Questionnaire



Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is..... from Micromex Research and we are conducting a survey on behalf of Georges River Council on a range of local issues. The survey will take about 12 minutes, would you be able to assist us please?

**QA1. Can I please confirm that you do live in the Georges River Council area?**

- Yes  
 No (Terminate)

**QA2. And do you or an immediate family member work for Council?**

- Yes (Terminate)  
 No

**Q1a. Which of these age groups do you fit into? Prompt**

- Under 18 (Terminate)  
 18 – 24  
 25 – 29  
 30 – 34  
 35 – 39  
 40 – 44  
 45 – 49  
 50 – 59  
 60 – 69  
 70+  
 Refused (Do NOT Prompt) (Terminate)

**Q1b. Gender (determine by voice):**

- Male  
 Female

**Q1c. Which suburb do you live in? (Quotas of approx. 120 per Ward) \*crosses ward**

**Blakehurst Ward**

- Blakehurst  
 Carrs Park  
 Connells Point  
 Hurstville Grove  
 Kyle Bay  
 South Hurstville\*  
 Mortdale\*  
 Penshurst\*  
 Hurstville\*  
 Oatley\*

**Hurstville Ward**

- Beverly Hills\*  
 Carlton\*  
 Hurstville\*  
 Kingsgrove  
 Narwee\*  
 Penshurst\*

**Kogarah Bay Ward**

- Allawah  
 Beverley Park  
 Carlton\*  
 Hurstville\*  
 Kogarah  
 Kogarah Bay  
 Sans Souci  
 South Hurstville\*

**Mortdale Ward**

- Hurstville\*  
 Mortdale\*  
 Narwee\*  
 Oatley\*  
 Peakhurst\*  
 Penshurst\*  
 Riverwood\*  
 Beverly Hills\*

**Peakhurst Ward**

- Oatley\*  
 Peakhurst Heights  
 Lugarno  
 Mortdale\*  
 Peakhurst\*  
 Riverwood\*

- Other (Terminate)

**Q2a. 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

**Q2b. Thinking generally about community assets provided by Council, which include local roads, footpaths, cycle ways, parks and play grounds, public buildings, public toilets, libraries, etc. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of community assets currently provided by Council? Prompt**

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

**SRV Options - Concept statement:**

Currently Georges River Council delivers a broad range of services such as roads and rubbish collection, parks and playgrounds, cultural facilities and events, libraries, swimming pools, environmental protection and much more.

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 2.5%.

Council is facing the challenge of balancing community expectations with future financial sustainability. There is a growing gap between the cost of providing services and facilities and the available funding to meet those costs. Put simply, costs are rising more than the 2.5% rate peg.

The situation will be made worse in 2021 when additional funds Council receives each year from a Hurstville Special Rate Variation expires.

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

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.

Georges River Council is considering applying for a permanent SRV, which will apply to the 2020-21 financial year. There are three options which I would like you to consider. Each option will have varying impacts on the services and facilities that Council can deliver.

Let's look at the options in more detail.

**a. 3.3% Increase – Replacement of the Current Hurstville SRV Option: Short Term**

This option would essentially continue the status quo with rates increasing by the assumed rate peg amount of 2.5% in 2020-21 plus an extra 0.8% SRV to offset the end of the current Hurstville SRV – so an overall increase of 3.3% in 2020-21. The average residential ratepayer currently paying \$1,119 in 2019-20 would pay approximately \$49 more or \$1 per week in the 2020-21 financial year, so \$1,168. In the following years the annual rate peg would be added to the previous year's amount.

Under this option Council would generate \$2.3mill in 2020-21, to offset the current Hurstville SRV – however, the shortfall in revenue versus costs will continue to increase, meaning Council would need to significantly review what services it can deliver in the future to meet the needs of a growing population – no new projects would be delivered and existing service levels would likely have to reduce.

**Q3a. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with this option? Prompt**

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

**b. 10.6% Increase – Financially Sustainable Option (Recommended by Council)**

This option would see rates increasing by the assumed rate peg amount of 2.5% in 2020-21 plus an extra 8.1% SRV – so an overall increase of 10.6% in 2020-21. The average residential ratepayer currently paying \$1,119 in 2019-20 would pay approximately \$132 more or \$3 per week in the 2020-21 financial year, so \$1,251. In the following years the annual rate peg would be added to the previous year's amount.

Under this option Council would generate an additional \$7.5mill in 2020-21 – which would allow Council to continue delivering services and facilities as it currently does, plus deliver some new projects such as improving the condition of local roads

**Q3b. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with this option? Prompt**

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

**c. 22.3% Increase – Substantial Rate Increase Option**

This option would see rates increasing by the assumed rate peg amount of 2.5% in 2020-21 plus an extra 19.8% SRV – so an overall increase of 22.3% in 2020-21. The average residential ratepayer currently paying \$1,119 in 2019-20 would pay approximately \$264 more or \$5 per week in the 2020-21 financial year, so \$1,383. In the following years the annual rate peg would be added to the previous year's amount.

Under this option Council would generate an additional \$15.8mill in 2020-21 – which would allow Council to not only continue delivering services and facilities as it currently does, but also increase the delivery of new projects such as adventure playgrounds and town centre upgrades at our shopping centres.

**Q3c. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with this option? Prompt**

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

**Q4a. Please rank the 3 options in order of preference. Which is your first preference? And second? Prompt**

	1 <sup>st</sup> preference	2 <sup>nd</sup> preference	3 <sup>rd</sup> preference
(Short Term) Overall 3.3% increase in 2020-21, reduced services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(Financially Sustainable) Overall 10.6% increase in 2020-21, maintain services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(Substantial Rate Increase) Overall 22.3% increase in 2020-21, maintain and enhance services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q4b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?**

.....

**Q5a. Prior to this call, were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?**

- Yes
- No (Go to Q6a)
- Not sure (Go to Q6a)

**Q5b. How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation? Please answer yes or no as I read each one. Prompt**

- Information brochure or questionnaire mailed out by Council
- Council website
- Newspaper advertisement
- Social media such as Facebook
- Information stall
- Other (please specify).....

### Minimum Rate - Concept statement

Councils have what is called a 'minimum rate', which is the lowest rate that can be charged to a household. This minimum rate usually applies to high-rise apartments because there are numerous apartments on the one block of land – whereas standalone houses, townhouses, etc tend to pay more than the minimum rate. Ratepayers in the former Hurstville Council area currently pay a minimum rate of \$571 per annum – whereas those in the former Kogarah Council area currently pay a minimum rate of \$942 per annum.

To provide greater fairness and consistency across the Georges River Council area, Council proposes to introduce a single, standardised minimum rate.

**Q6a. How supportive are you of Council introducing a single, consistent minimum rate across the whole council area? Prompt**

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

**Q6b. As I mentioned, Ratepayers in the former Hurstville Council area currently pay a minimum rate of \$571 per annum – whereas those in the former Kogarah Council area currently pay a minimum rate of \$942 per annum. For the 2020-21 year, Council is considering introducing a new consistent minimum rate of \$965.80, which is the current rate paid by those in the former Kogarah Council area plus the 2.5% rate peg.**

**How supportive are you of Council introducing a consistent minimum rate across the whole council area of \$965.80 in 2020-21? Prompt**

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

### Demographics

The following information is used for demographic purposes only.

**Q7a. What type of home do you currently live in?**

- Separate or standalone house
- Townhouse/terrace house/semi-detached/villa
- Flat/unit/apartment
- Other

**Q7b. Which of the following best describes the home where you are currently living? Prompt**

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

**Q7c. Do you speak a language other than English at home?**

- Yes
- No

Council may wish to conduct some further research with residents in the coming weeks to discuss this issue in more detail.

**Q8a. Would you like to receive updates on the outcome of this consultation and other important communication from Georges River Council?**

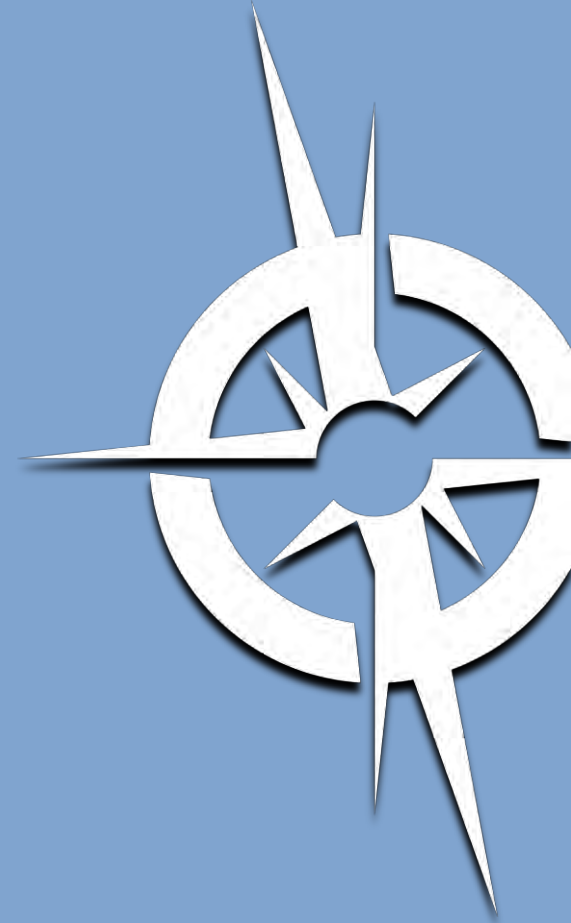
- Yes
- No

**Q8b. Please provide relevant contact details.**

Name:.....  
Email:.....  
Phone:.....  
Postcode:.....

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. Just to remind you, I am calling from Micromex Research on behalf of Georges River Council (1800 639 599).

(If respondent wants more details about Council's proposed SRV or Minimum Rate, refer to Danielle Parker 9330 9306 at Council.)



**micromex**  
research

Telephone: (02) 4352 2388

Fax: (02) 4352 2117

Web: [www.micromex.com.au](http://www.micromex.com.au)

Email: [mark@micromex.com.au](mailto:mark@micromex.com.au)

Attachment 2: Community engagement - summary of reach

The table provides the timeline of activities and estimates reach at 2.3 million contacts across 79 events or activities.

Georges River Council Changes to your Rates Project coverage August 2019 - November 2019				
Date	Article title	Format	Outlet	Reach
27-Aug-19	<a href="#">Georges River Council wants an 8.1 per cent Special Rate Variation</a>	Georges River Council Media release	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader online	40,000
28-Aug-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,657 people reached 190 engagements 6 reactions 3 comments 3 shares
29-Aug-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	1 retweet
29-Aug-19	Council Reviews Rate structure	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Community e-news	16,000
30-Aug-19	<a href="#">Georges River Council introduces a new municipal rate structure</a>	Georges River Council Chinese translated media release	2CR Radio online	N/A
30-Aug-19	<a href="#">Georges River Council introduces a new municipal rate structure</a>	Georges River Council Chinese translated media release	Koala News	N/A
1-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council information brochure and reply-paid survey	Delivered to all ratepayers in the local government area	53,000
1-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council information brochure and reply-paid survey	Delivered to all ratepayers in the local government area	53,000
2-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Instagram post	Georges River Council Instagram	5 likes
2-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	967 impressions 6 likes
4-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Chinese translated media release	Sing Tao Newspaper	40,000

11-Sep-19	New Rate Structures	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
18-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
18-Sep-19	Business Breakfast	Attendees informed and given leaflets about the Business Information and Feedback	Face-to-face communications	90
19-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,478 people reached 112 engagements 2 likes 4 comments 2 shares
19-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	1 retweet 1 like
19-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	529 impressions 2 likes
19-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Instagram post	Georges River Council Instagram	4 likes
25-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Community e-news	16,000
25-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates (inc community info sessions)	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
25-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	2,577 people reached 310 engagements 19 reactions 18 comments 3 shares
25-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	1 comment 1 retweet 2 likes
25-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	671 impressions 3 likes
25-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Instagram post	Georges River Council Instagram	4 likes
25-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Community e-news	16,000



29-Sep-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,297 115 engagements 3 reactions 9 comments 3 shares
Oct-Nov 19	Smart Signage	Georges River Council Smart Signage	Georges River Council Smart Signage in Kogarah and Hurstville	50,000
2-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
3-Oct-19	<a href="#">Council facing \$20 million funding shortfall by 2028</a>	Georges River Council Media release/meeting with GM and journalist Jim Gainsford	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader online	40,000
4-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,155 people reached 49 engagements 5 reactions 2 comments
4-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	1 comment
4-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	171 impressions
4-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Instagram post	Georges River Council Instagram	7 likes
9-Oct-19	Council facing \$20 million funding shortfall by 2028	Georges River Council Media release/meeting with GM and journalist Jim Gainsford	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
9-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
10-Oct-19	Early Bird Registrations	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Your Say Georges River	1,608
10-Oct-19	Frequently Asked Questions	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	2,225 people reached 288 engagements 16 reactions 15 comments 3 shares
11-Oct-19	Your say	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Community e-news	16,000

11-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Instagram post	Georges River Council Instagram	3 likes 1 comment
11-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	152 impressions
11-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	0 engagement
16-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
16-Oct-19	Latest Consultations and Public Exhibitions	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Your Say Georges River	1,626
17-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,693 people reached 179 engagements 8 reactions 11 comments
17-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,448 people reached 100 engagements 8 reactions 6 comments
17-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	0 engagement
17-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	252 impressions 1 likes
22-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Instagram post	Georges River Council Instagram	4 likes
23-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Leader Ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
23-Oct-19	Last Minute Registrations - changes to your rates	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Your Say Georges River	1,634
23-Oct-19	Your Say	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Community e-news	16,000
23-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	697 people reached 18 engagements 5 reactions 1 comment
23-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council advertisement	Chinese Daily	60,000
25-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	0 engagement

25-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	216 impressions
25-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Instagram post	Georges River Council Instagram	7 likes
25-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council advertisement	El Telegraph (Arabic Newspaper)	30,000
28-Oct-19	Special Rate Variation Information Sessions	Georges River Council Facebook event page created	Georges River Council Facebook	407 people reached 9 engagements
30-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council advertisement	Chinese Daily	60,000
30-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
31-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	0 engagement
31-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	245 impressions 1 like
31-Oct-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Instagram post	Georges River Council Instagram	4 likes
1-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council advertisement	El Telegraph (Arabic Newspaper)	30,000
1-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council advertisement	Greek Herald	20,000
2-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council advertisement	Chinese Daily	60,000
5-Nov-19	Special Rate Variation - presentation from Gail Connolly	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	0 engagement
6-Nov-19	Presentation from Gail Connolly	Georges River Council presentation	YouTube Video	155 views
6-Nov-19	Special Rate Variation - presentation from Gail Connolly	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	850 people reached 27 engagements 1 share
6-Nov-19	Special Rate Variation - presentation from Gail Connolly	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	392 impressions 2 likes
6-Nov-19	Your Say	Georges River Council e-newsletter	Community e-news	16,000

6-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates (inc community info sessions)	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
13-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Leader ad	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader	151,513
13-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	1,039 people reached 18 engagements 1 like 3 shares
13-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Twitter post	Georges River Council Twitter	1 comment
13-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council LinkedIn post	Georges River Council LinkedIn	145 impressions
13-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Instagram post	Georges River Council Instagram	5 likes
16-Nov-19	Changes to your Rates	Georges River Council Facebook post	Georges River Council Facebook	601 people reached 7 engagements
21-Nov-19	<a href="#">Georges River Council's rates consultation received strong community engagement</a>	Georges River Council Media release/meeting with GM and journalist Jim Gainsford	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader online	40,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>79 COVERAGE CLIPS</b>	<b>2,366,270</b>



# Changes to your rates Community Information Sessions





# Changes to your rates

# Community Information Sessions

# Welcome

- ASK Insight:
  - Alison
  - Susan



# Purpose of Information Sessions

- To explain the three special rate variation options and the minimum rate proposals
- To ask and answer questions
- Receive your feedback on the 3 Options





# Our commitment to you

- Providing information
- Recording your questions and concerns
- Answering your questions

## We need

- Your participation
- Mutual respect





Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which this meeting is being held - the Biddegal people of the Eora Nation.



# Community Strategic Plan

**A progressive, environmentally and culturally rich community enjoying a unique lifestyle.**



# Your priorities

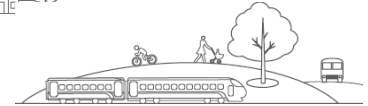
1. A protected environment and green open spaces



2. Quality, well planned development



3. Active and accessible places and spaces



4. A diverse and productive economy



5. A harmonious and proud community with strong social services and infrastructure



6. Leadership and transparency



# Protecting our environment and green open spaces



# Active and accessible places and space



# A harmonious and proud community with strong social services and infrastructure



# Our budget





# Money we spend

Council's funds are allocated to delivering services to the community

**TOTAL  
\$141M**



**Infrastructure and  
Project Delivery  
\$56M**



**Environment, Health  
and Planning  
\$36.3M**



**Community and  
Cultural Development  
\$8.5M**



**Children's Services  
\$5.8M**



**Libraries  
\$6.9M**



**Governance  
\$27.5M**



# Money we receive

Rates are our only stable source of operating income and therefore we must increase them to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

**TOTAL  
\$133M**



**Rates  
\$69.4M**



**Fees and Charges  
\$15.5M**



**Waste and  
Stormwater Charges  
\$25.6M**



**Other Revenues  
\$10.2M**



**Operating Grants and  
Contributions  
\$8.9M**



**Interest Income  
\$3.4M**

# Rating Myths - Busted

1. Population increase  $\neq$  Rate income increase
2. Dwellings increase  $\neq$  Rate income increase
3. Land Valuation increase  $\neq$  Rate income increase

Because: **Total** Rate income is capped by State Government



# Increasing costs

Operating and maintenance costs

Costs rising faster than income

Ageing infrastructure

Expectations and demand

**Budget pressures**

# Decreasing income

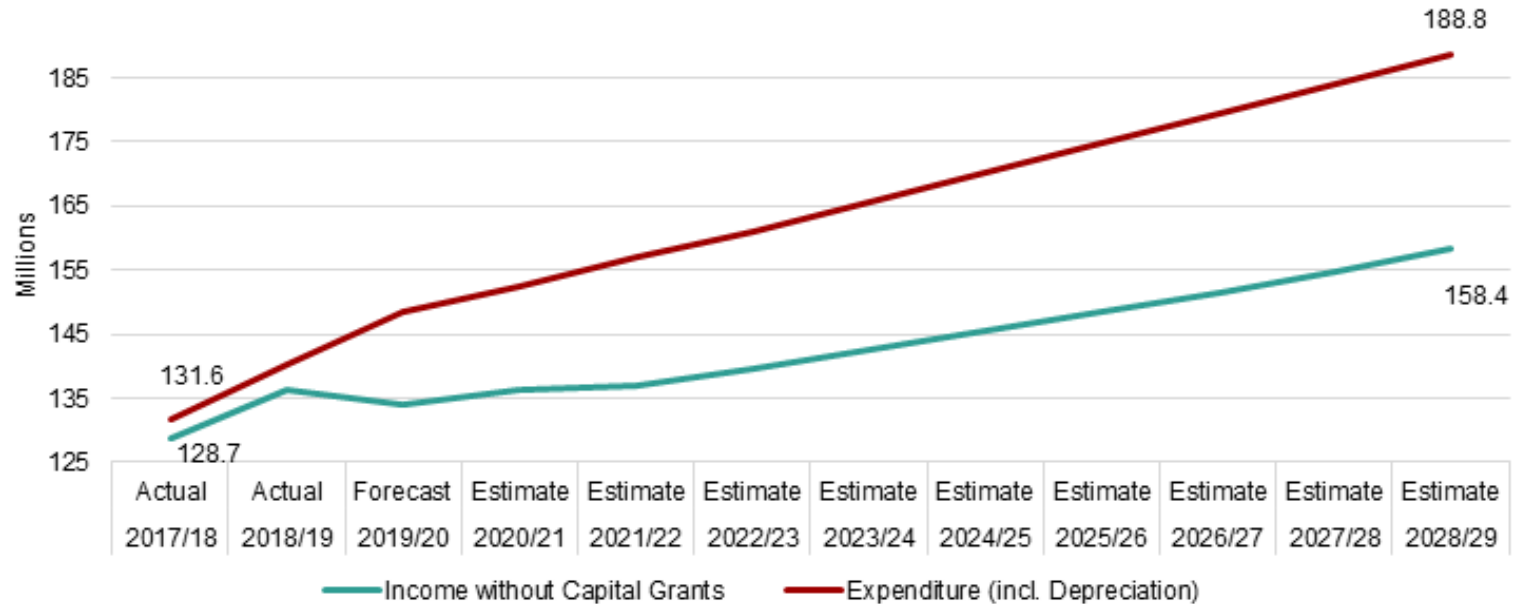
Loss of Hurstville Special Rate Variation

Grants decreasing

Increase in population

# If we do nothing, by 2028/29 the gap between expenditure and income will be \$22m

Current - widening gap of Expenditure over Income  
(without Capital Grants)



# One Council One consistent rating system



# New minimum business rate for large commercial centres

- Hurstville and Kogarah **\$1,100**
- Additional works and services – parking management; street cleaning; events
- Other centres \$965 (same as residential)

# Options for the Special Rate Variation



# Option 1 Financially Sustainable (recommended)

8.1% + 2.5% rate peg = 10.6%

- Average weekly increase \$1 - \$3
- Annual average increase \$132
- **Annual average Rate \$1,251**

Council to find savings and income to cover a \$12m gap





# Option 2 Short term fix (reduced services)

0.8% + 2.5% rate peg = 3.3%

- Average weekly increase \$1
- Annual average increase \$49
- **Annual average Rate \$1,168**



OPTION 2: Short Term



Covers loss of Hurstville Special Rate only. Significant operating gap in future years will lead to reduced service levels in the future.

# Option 3 Substantial rate increase (Maintain and enhance services)

19.8% + 2.5% rate peg = 22.3%

- Average weekly increase **\$5**
- Annual average increase **\$264**
- **Annual average Rate \$1,383**

Will cover complete operating deficit, no new income required and no change to service levels



# Impact on individual ratepayers and households

Pensioner Rebate

Draft Debt Management and Hardship Policy

- Payment plans
- Deferral of payments



# Questions in your groups



# Further Information and Timing

Oct / Nov '19 - Community Consultation

Dec '19 - Analysis

10 Feb '20 - Extraordinary Council Meeting

10 Feb '20 - Application to IPART

Your say Georges River changes to your rates



# Thank you



Attachment 5: Survey data

Mailed survey data x respondent category

Option 1

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive	Total responses	BLANK	Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
Residential	904	1064	804	638	1649	5059	275	<b>5334</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>45%</b>
Business	23	25	30	26	59	163	15	<b>178</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>52%</b>
Both	13	10	12	10	46	91	6	<b>97</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>62%</b>
Neither*	12	15	13	5	30	75	12	<b>87</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>47%</b>
Other**	10	9	2	1	14	36	2	<b>38</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>42%</b>
	<b>962</b>	<b>1123</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>1798</b>	<b>5424</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>5734</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>
%	18%	21%	16%	13%	33%	100%				

Option 2

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive	Total responses	BLANK	Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
Residential	1326	655	785	591	1454	4811	523	<b>5334</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>43%</b>
Business	52	28	26	24	27	157	21	<b>178</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>32%</b>
Both	32	16	7	7	27	89	8	<b>97</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>
Neither	21	7	10	14	19	71	16	<b>87</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>
Other	7	6	3	6	10	32	6	<b>38</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>
	<b>1438</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>831</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>1537</b>	<b>5160</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>5734</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>42%</b>
%	28%	14%	16%	12%	30%	100%				

Option 3

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive	Total responses	BLANK	Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
Residential	105	159	293	515	3587	<b>4659</b>	675	<b>5334</b>	12%	88%
Business	3	3	18	12	114	<b>150</b>	28	<b>178</b>	16%	84%
Both	1	1	3	7	68	<b>80</b>	17	<b>97</b>	6%	94%
Neither	0	1	3	5	60	<b>69</b>	18	<b>87</b>	6%	94%
Other	2	4	1	3	22	<b>32</b>	6	<b>38</b>	22%	78%
	<b>111</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>3851</b>	<b>4990</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>5734</b>	12%	88%
%	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>100%</b>				

\*Neither indicates field blank

\*\*Other entries include : Industrial, rented townhouse, landlord, Unit ratepayer, Daughter caretaker, Church, retail, pensioner, Disability pensioner, Owner Unit holder, Investor, Tenant, Absentee landlord

CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF A MINIMUM RATE

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive	Total responses	BLANK K <sup>10</sup>	Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
Residential	1666	1431	857	322	761	5037	297	5334	78%	22%
Business	69	43	25	7	24	168	10	178	82%	18%
Both	30	20	14	1	27	92	5	97	70%	30%
Neither	19	16	12	5	15	67	20	87	70%	30%
Other	12	12	2	2	8	36	2	38	72%	28%
	<b>1796</b>	<b>1522</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>5400</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>5734</b>	78%	22%
%	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>				

<sup>10</sup> 7% of all mailed survey respondents did not answer this question



MINIMUM RATE OF \$965.80

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive	Total responses	BLAN K <sup>11</sup>	Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
Residential	1002	<b>1170</b>	957	586	1026	4741	593	5334	66%	34%
Business	25	27	<b>55</b>	15	40	162	16	178	66%	34%
Both	16	11	20	6	33	86	11	97	55%	45%
Neither	9	11	16	6	19	61	26	87	59%	41%
Other	8	5	6	0	13	32	6	38	59%	41%
	<b>1060</b>	<b>1224</b>	<b>1054</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>1131</b>	<b>5082</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>5734</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>34%</b>
%	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>				

<sup>11</sup> 11% of all mailed survey respondents did not answer this question

A DIFFERENT MINIMUM BUSINESS RATE OF \$1,100 IN THE MAJOR COMMERCIAL CENTRES

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive	Total responses	BLAN K <sup>12</sup>	Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
Residential	1244	1131	845	434	1000	4654	680	5334	69%	31%
Business	27	23	44	14	58	166	12	178	57%	43%
Both	17	16	13	8	33	87	10	97	53%	47%
Neither	16	11	14	4	17	62	25	87	66%	34%
Other	4	5	9	1	12	31	7	38	58%	42%
	<b>1308</b>	<b>1186</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>1120</b>	<b>5000</b>	<b>734</b>	<b>5734</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>32%</b>
%	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>				

<sup>12</sup> 13% of all mailed survey respondents did not answer this question

