

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

SPECIAL RATE VARIATION OPTIONS AND MINIMUM RATE

DEC 2019



ASK INSIGHT

engagement, strategy, solutions

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
Feedback on Special Rate Variation	6
Feedback on minimum rate proposals	7
Concerns	7
About this report	8
1. Overview of the community engagement strategy	9
2. Information to all ratepayers and publicising the opportunity to get involved	11
3. Details of the different engagement activities and participation by the community	19
4. Support for Options- SRV	29
5. Minimum Rate	33
6. Survey comments	38
7. Conclusion	44
Feedback on Special Rate Variation	44
Feedback on minimum rate proposals	44
Concerns	44
List of attachments	45

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1: Information session	4
Image 2: Letter 1	11
Image 3: Letter 2 and Survey	12
Image 4: Translated letter 1 to residents in Nepali, Arabic, Chinese and Greek	14
Image 5: Brochure	15
Image 6: Example translated brochure	17
Image 7: Translated advertisements	17
Image 8: Banner examples	18
Image 9: Dedicated Consultation Website	19
Image 10: Hurstville Library Information session	22
Image 11: Information session feedback form	23
Image 12: Information session	23
Image 13: Face painting at drop-in	25
Image 14: Peakhurst Market	26
Image 15: Survey	29
Image 16: Discussion - information session	33

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Telephone survey participation by Ward	27
Figure 2: Option 1	30
Figure 3: Option 2	31
Figure 4: Option 3	32
Figure 5: Support for consistent minimum rate	34
Figure 6: Support for proposed \$965.80 minimum rate	35
Figure 7: Different minimum business rate	36
Figure 8: Frequency of comment category % in each category	39

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Your Say engagement	20
Table 2: Information sessions	22
Table 3: Drop-in details	25
Table 4: Response rates by survey channel and ratepayer status	28
Table 5: Option 1	30
Table 6: Option 2	31
Table 7: Option 3	32
Table 8: Support for consistent minimum rate	34
Table 9: Minimum rates approval ratings (telephone survey)	35
Table 10: Support for proposed consistent minimum rate of \$965.80 across the LGA	36
Table 11: Support for a different minimum business rate of \$1,100 in the major commercial centres of Hurstville and Kogarah	37
Table 12: Comments received	40
Table 13: Examples of comments	40

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).¹

Mail to households – letter one

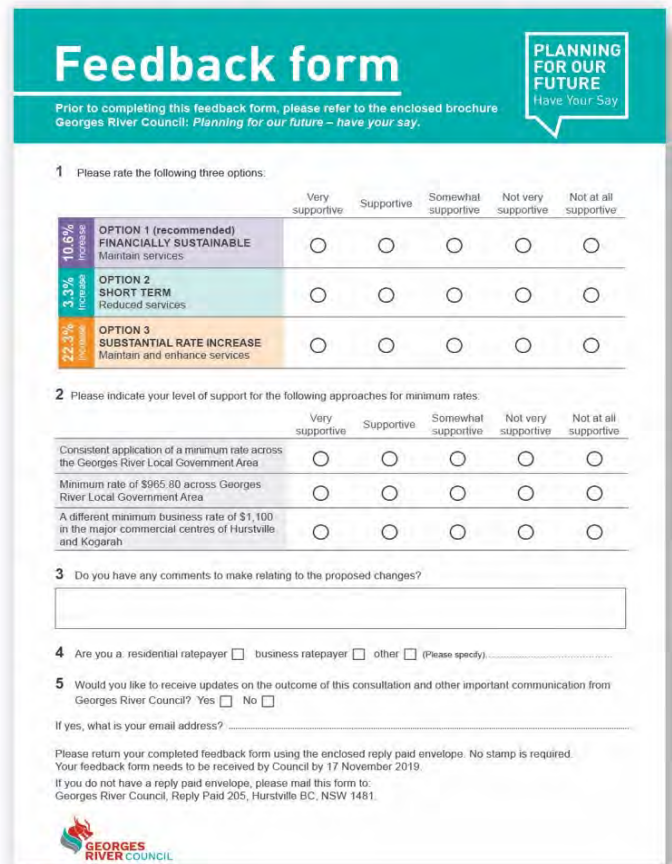
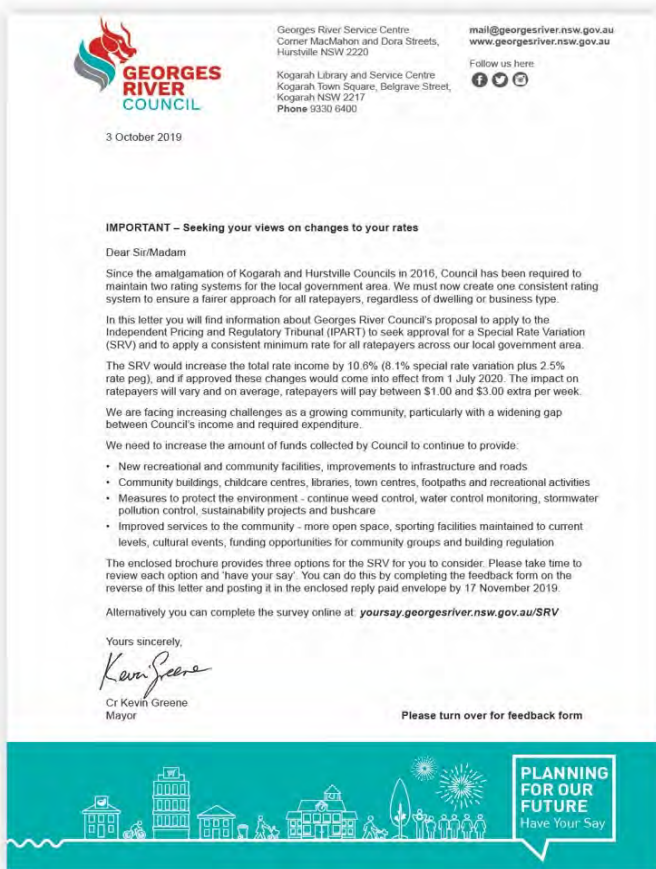
On 11 September 2019, a letter to all households was sent advising that community consultation was coming soon for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) and a new standard minimum rate across all rateable properties in Georges River (letter 1 at image 2).

Image 2: Letter 1



¹ 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 (4,827² 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.

² 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



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11 अक्टोबर २०१९

जसो मूल्त

जनेन रिपलास सवे कर लाने सम्बन्धित बीच विरोध र मिमला (SRV) र एक नयाँ मुद्दामा मायपत्र दार

सामुदायिक परामर्श चाहे आउडिट

विषय सामुदायिक सभा.

सबै वरिष्ठ कर्मचारीहरूको साथै सामुदायिक उपाय सभाको सदस्यहरूको साथै मुद्दाको बारेमा जानकारी प्राप्त गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ। सबै कर्मचारीहरूको साथै उपाय सभाको सभा र पुर्नसंस्थापनाको लागि तयारी गर्ने कार्यहरूको बारेमा जानकारी प्राप्त गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ।

यसमा सामुदायिक सभाको सदस्यहरूको साथै सामुदायिक उपाय सभाको सदस्यहरूको साथै मुद्दाको बारेमा जानकारी प्राप्त गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ। सबै कर्मचारीहरूको साथै उपाय सभाको सभा र पुर्नसंस्थापनाको लागि तयारी गर्ने कार्यहरूको बारेमा जानकारी प्राप्त गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ।

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2019年9月11日

重要通知

关于乔治河市所有可收费用物的特殊市政费率变动(SRV)和标准最低市政费率

Special rate variation (SRV) and a new standard minimum rate across all rateable properties in Georges River

社区咨询即将进行

尊敬的社区居民，

乔治河市政府向你们社区提供持续的优质服务并感谢你们的贡献。如果你们希望继续提供目前水准的服务和设施，我们则需要有效的方法来筹资。

考虑到目前社区的长期发展，我们很高兴地，市政府决定独立制定和调整最低市政费率 (SRV)。市政府将向你们社区收取新的最低市政费率。新的市政费率将比 2018 年 4 月 1 日生效的市政费率增加 2.5% (1.1% 的市政费率增加和 1.4% 的市政费率增加)。这些费用将从 2020 年 7 月 1 日起生效。此费用调整将对你们社区产生不同的影响，平均每个住宅的缴费人将额外多支付 3 元。

自从 1999 年市政府与 Hurstville City Council 和高嘉兰市议会 (Kogarah City Council) 于 2016 年合并以来，存在多种费率系统。无论是住宅或商业类型，我们需要的费率系统，是一个统一的费率系统，以确保对所有缴费人的公平性。

市政府管理道路、人行道和垃圾清运的角色已经改变。现在社区需要更多的服务，如更多的垃圾清运、企业和服务人所支付的水费、用于为你们社区要求提供的服务和设施。

这些包括用水管理、街道照明、社区服务、图书馆、托儿中心、废物控制、环境保护、娱乐和体育设施、社区健康和福祉，以及向你们提供这些服务的机构所提供的服务。



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11 Σεπτεμβρίου 2019

ΣΗΜΑΝΤΙΚΗ ΑΝΑΚΟΙΝΩΣΗ

Ειδική Ποσοστιαία Μεταβολή (SRV) και ένα νέο τυπικό ελάχιστο ποσοστό (rates) σε όλα τα φορολογητέα ακίνητα στην περιοχή του Georges River

Η Κοινωνική Διαβούλευση θα πραγματοποιηθεί σύντομα

Αγαπητοί Μίτρος του Δήμου,

Η Διεύθυνση της περιοχής Georges River είναι πολύ υπέρθελητη για τον ρόλο της στην παροχή και διατήρηση υψηλής ποιότητας τοπικών υπηρεσιών για την κοινότητά μας. Για να μπορούμε τη Διεύθυνση να συνεχίσει να παρέχει το σημερινό επίπεδο υπηρεσιών και εγκαταστάσεων, πρέπει να σχεδιάσουμε αποτελεσματικούς μεθόδους.

Με το μακροπρόθεσμο όραμα για τη Διεύθυνση του Georges River, ήρθαμε για να σας ενημερώσουμε ότι το Δημοτικό Συμβούλιο αποφασίζει να υποβάλει αίτηση στην Αντιθέση της Επιτροπής Ελέγχου και Καθορισμού Τελών (PART) για να αλλάξει τον τρόπο καθορισμού τους τελών των Δημοτικών Τελών (Rates). Η Διεύθυνση θα επικοινωνήσει με εμάς στην περίπτωση ενός κατ' αποκοπή ελάχιστου συντελεστή για όλους τους φορολογούμενους στην περιοχή της κοινότητάς μας και να αυξήσει το συνολικό ποσό κατά 10,6% (8,1% κοινή μεταβολή που αποτελείται από 2,5% αύξηση ποσοστού επιτοκίου) με αυτής της αλλαγής να τεθούν σε ισχύ από την 1η Ιουλίου 2020. Οι επιπτώσεις στους φορολογούμενους της περιοχής θα ποικίλουν και κατά μέσο όρο οι άμεσες φορολογίες θα πληρώσουν επιπλέον \$3.00 την εβδομάδα.

Από τη συγχώνευση των Διευθύνσεων Hurstville και Kogarah το 2016, υπήρξαν δύο συστημάτα ρύθμισης των Δημοτικών Τελών για την περιοχή του Georges River. Πρέπει να αναδιοργανώσουμε και να οργανώσουμε ένα σταθερό σύστημα αξιολόγησης για να διασφαλίσουμε μια διαδοχική προσέγγιση για όλους τους φορολογούμενους, ανεξάρτητα από τον τύπο κατοικίας ή τον τύπο επιχείρησης.

Ο ρόλος της Διεύθυνσης που αποσκοπεί στην φροντίδα των δημόσιων και ταξιδιωτικών και την συνολική των απορριμμάτων αποτελεί πλέον υπεύθυνο. Το έργο των υπηρεσιών και των εγκαταστάσεων που αναμένεται τώρα από την κοινότητά μας είναι πολύ μεγαλύτερο. Τα δημοτικά τέλη (rates) που εισάγονται από τους κατοίκους μας, τις επιχειρήσεις και τους φορολογούμενους συνεισφέρουν στις υπηρεσίες και τις δραστηριότητες που παρέχουμε για να καλύψουμε τις ανάγκες της κοινότητάς μας.



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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

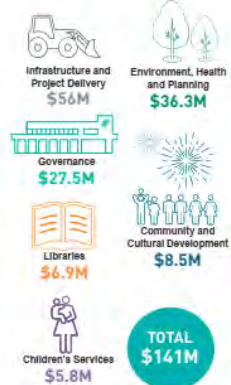
maintaining assets. Our roads will require an additional \$10 million over the next five years to maintain their current standard.

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

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

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	

In a nutshell

Current Average and Minimum Annual Rates



Proposed Average and Minimum Annual Rates from 1 July 2020



*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.

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.



PLANNING
FOR OUR
FUTURE
Have your say



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 or visit 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
COUNCIL

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 | PO Box 205, Hurstville NSW 1481
www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au [f](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgesRiverCouncil) [i](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

Image 7: Translated advertisements

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

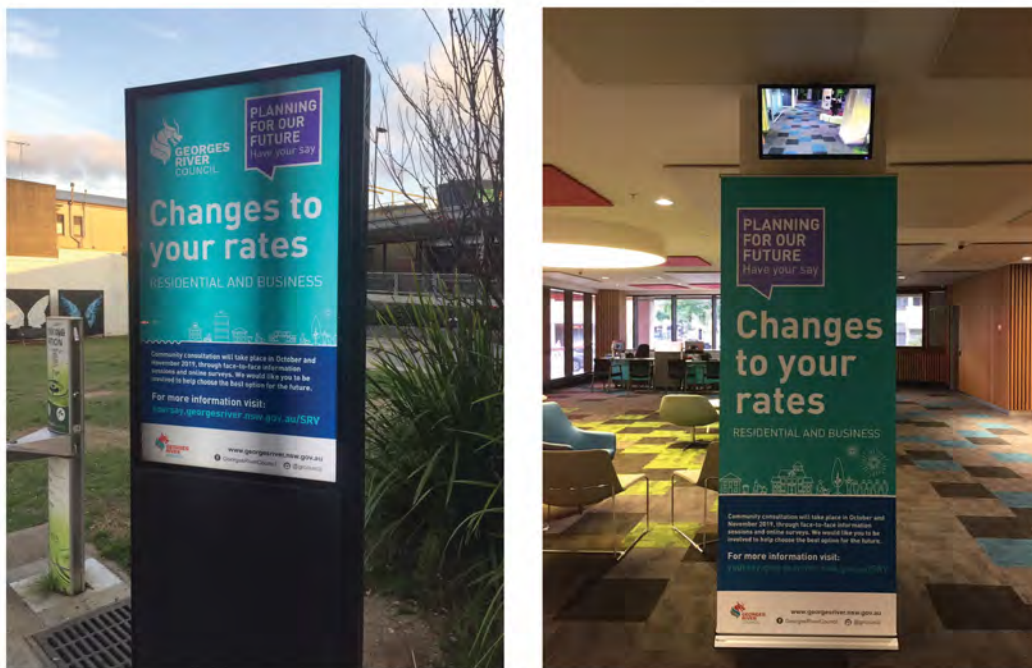
Banners

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.

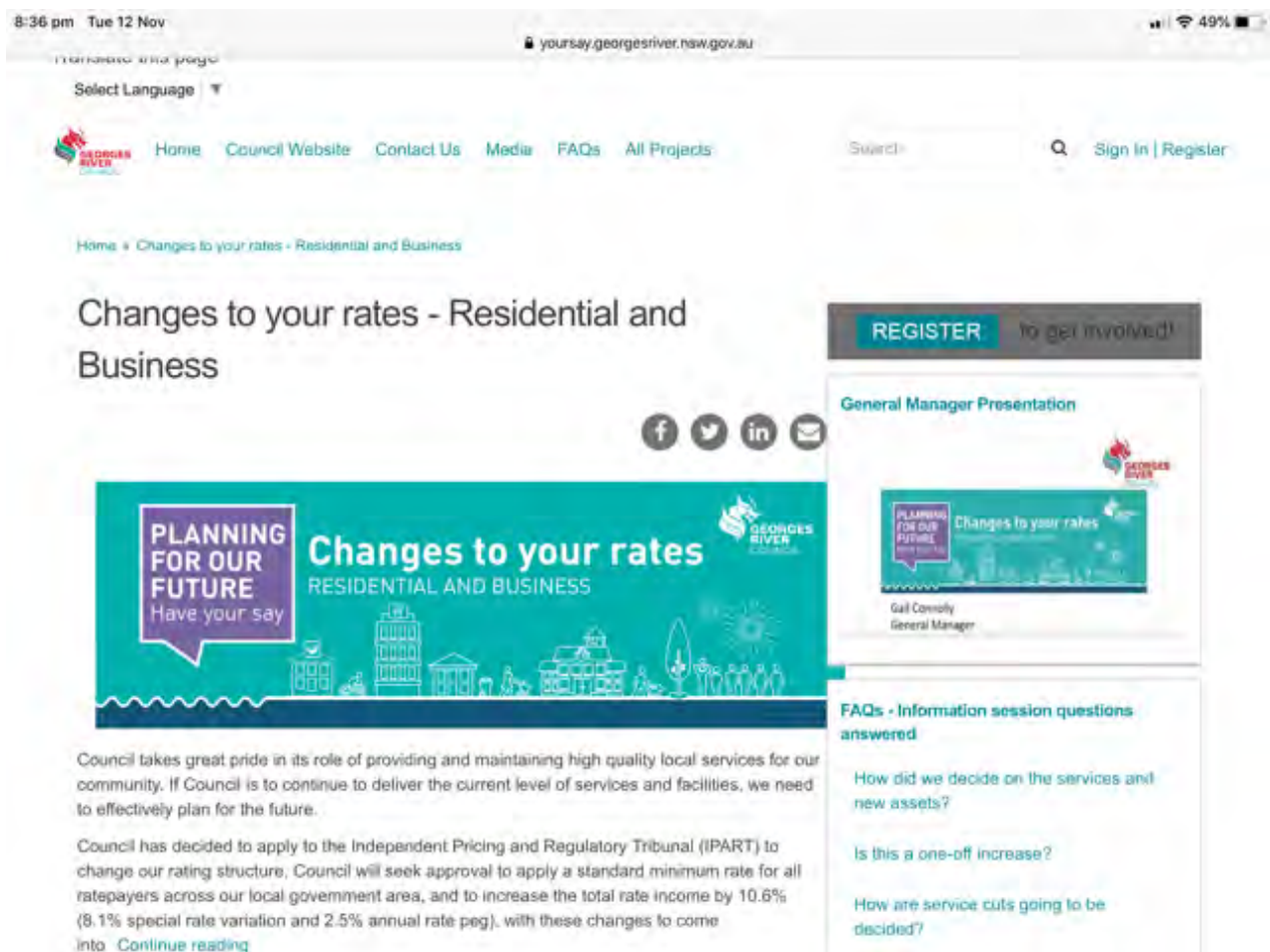
3. Details of the different engagement activities and participation by the community

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)³.

³ <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)⁴

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
	118	Total attendees	

⁴ <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 painting⁵ provided an attraction for families to stop and chat with the Council team.

⁵ 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 nd November (10.00am-12.00pm)
	170	Total engaged in drop-ins

Image 14: Peakhurst Market



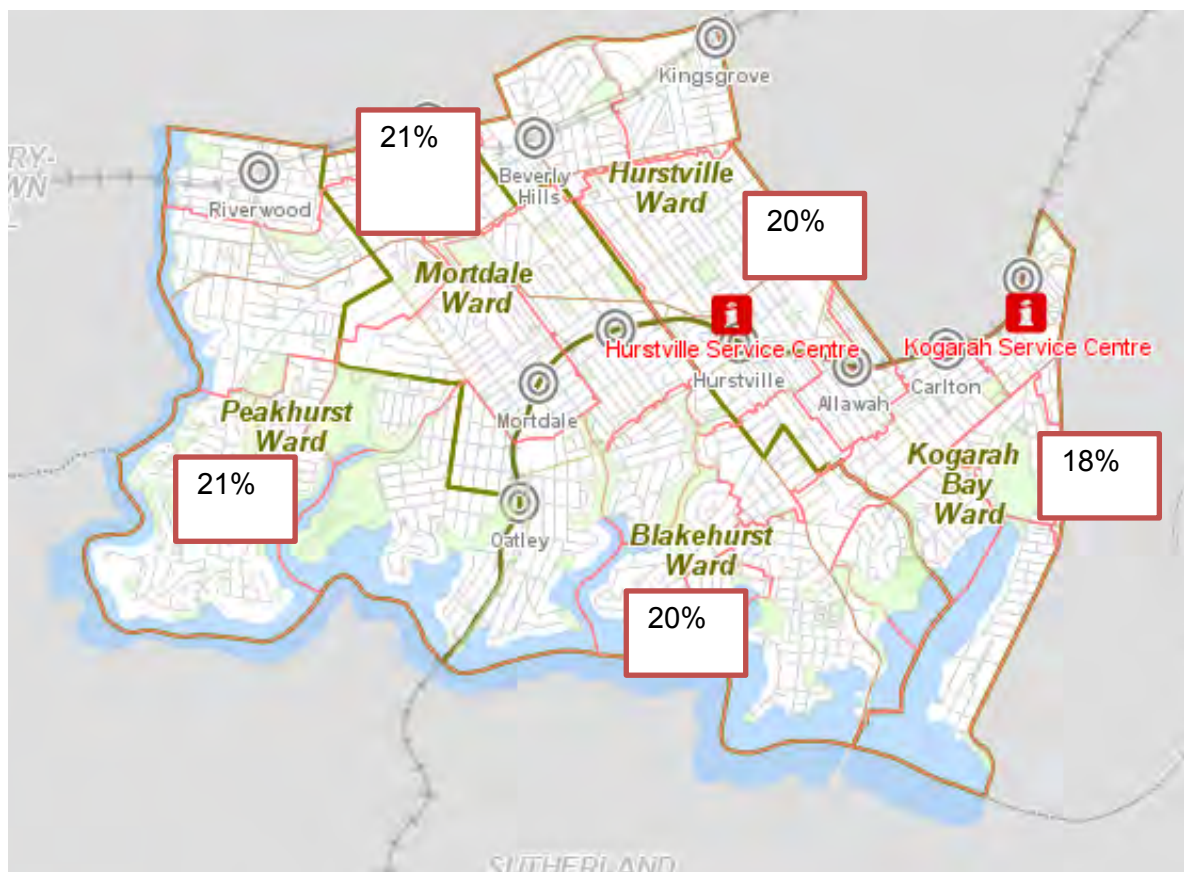
Submissions

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.

5,737⁶ 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%	5734	90%
Online survey	582	97%	12	.02%	0	0%	5	.01%	599	9%
Info/Drop-in survey	29	97%	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	30	1%
Total surveys									6,363	
Total feedback packs									53,646	
Response rate all									11.86%	
Response rate from business/ both									8.13%	

⁶ 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.⁷

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

PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE
Have Your Say

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
10.6% increase OPTION 1 (recommended) FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE Maintain services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.3% increase OPTION 2 SHORT TERM Reduced services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22.3% increase OPTION 3 SUBSTANTIAL RATE INCREASE Maintain and enhance services	<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)

⁷ 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

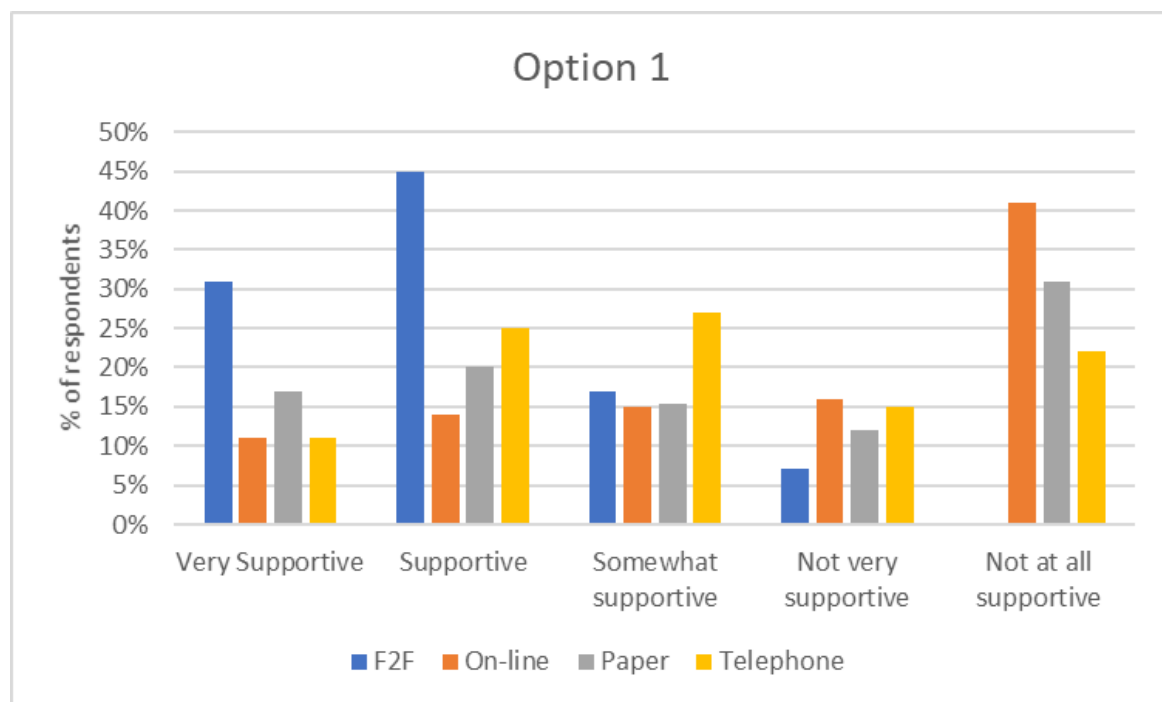


Table 5: Option 1

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%
Total	1101	17%	1372	21%	1117	17%	868	13%	2143	32%	6601		

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

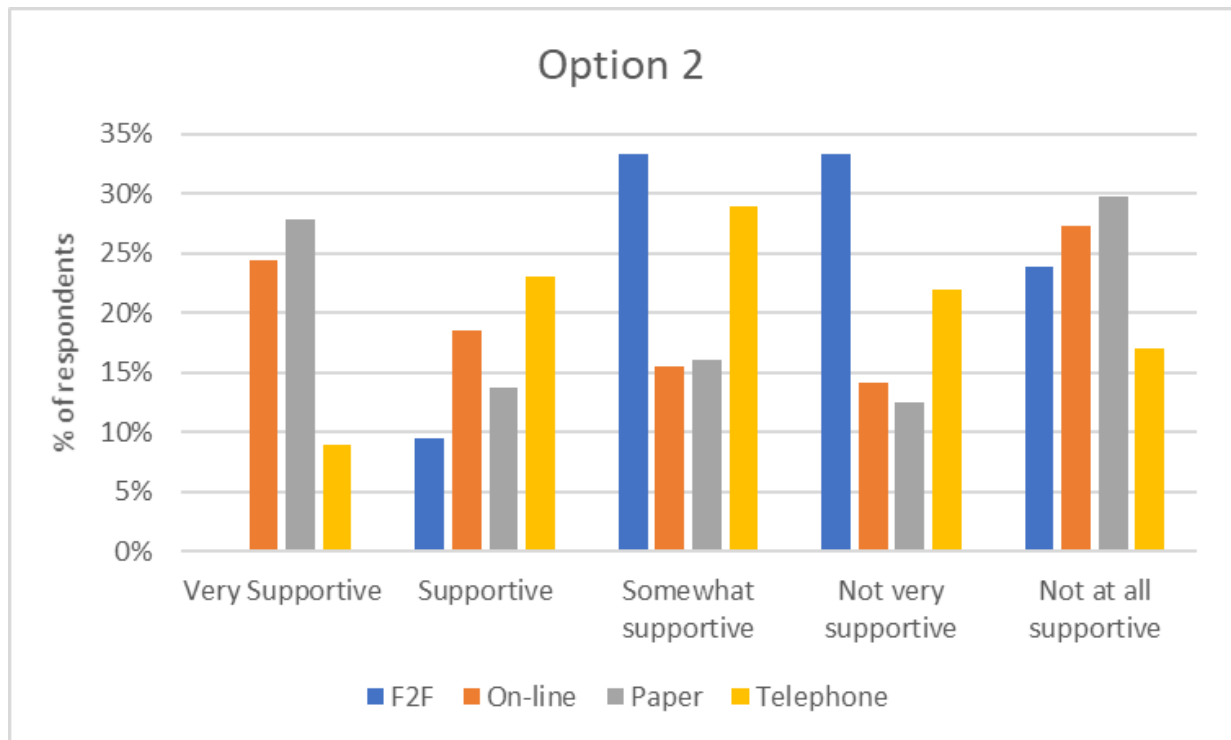


Table 6: Option 2

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%
Total	1634	26%	960	15%	1102	17%	863	14%	1803	28%	6362		

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

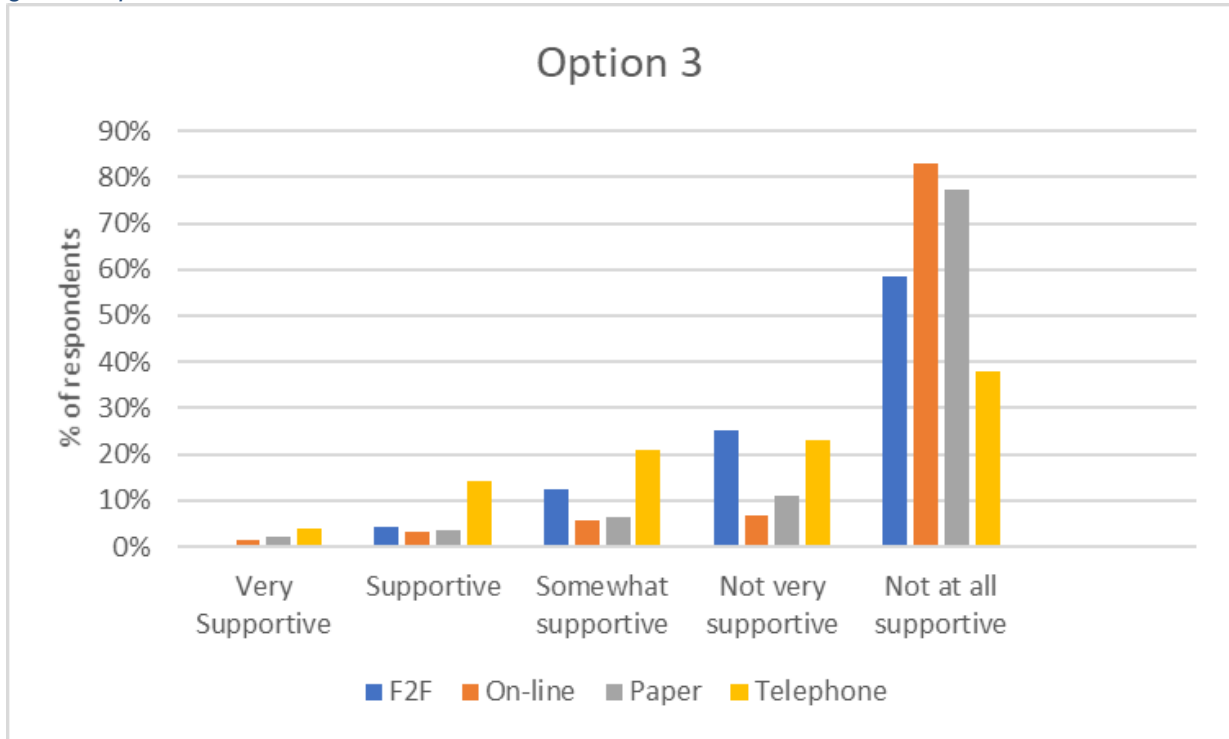


Table 7: Option 3

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%
Total	143	2%	270	4%	479	8%	723	12%	4552	74%	6167		

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 Kogarah⁸.

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



⁸ 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

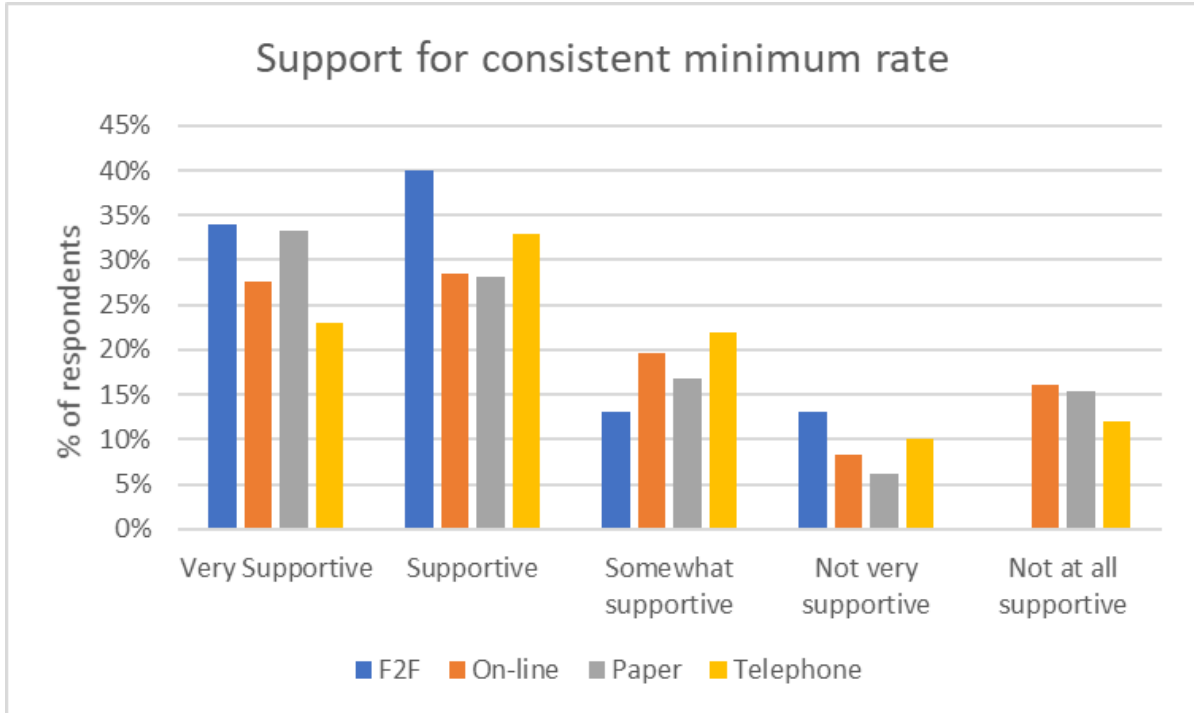


Table 8: Support for consistent minimum rate

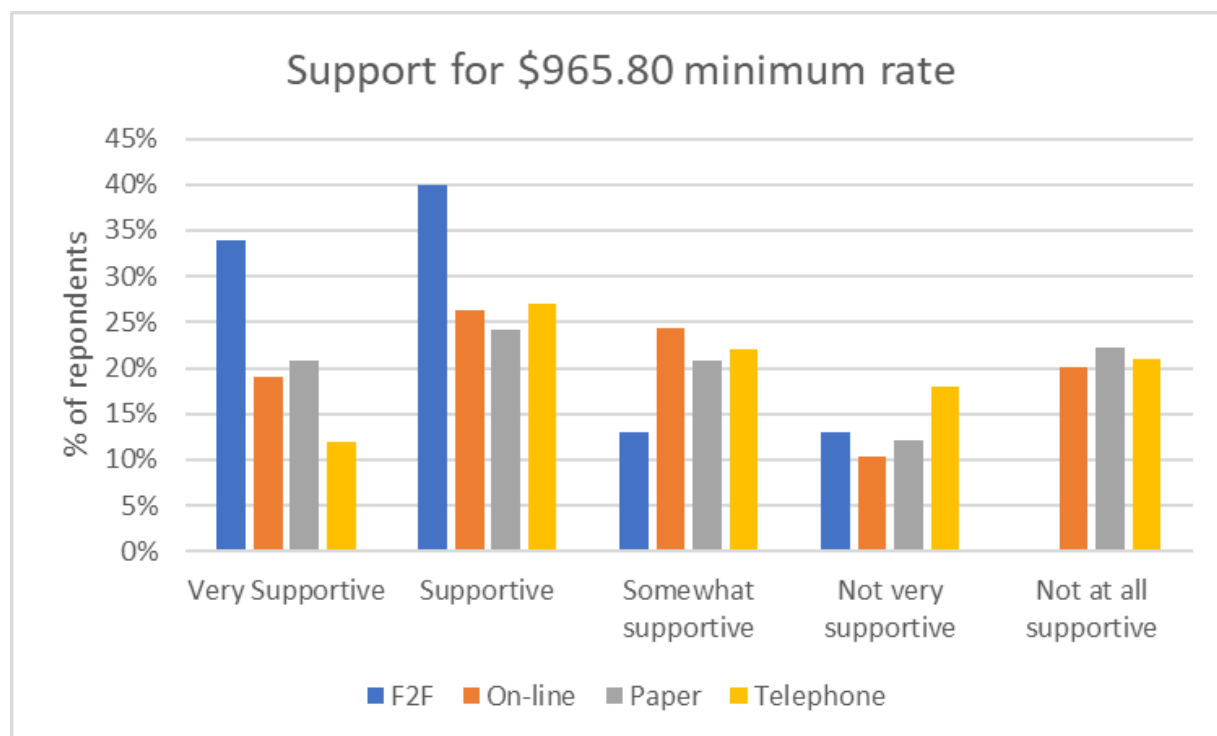
Consistent minimum rate	Very Supportive		Supportive		Somewhat supportive		Not very supportive		Not at all supportive		Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
Drop in & information session	10	34%	12	40%	4	13%	4	13%	0		30	87%	13%
Online	159	28%	164	28%	113	20%	48	8%	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%
Total	2103	32%	1896	29%	1159	18%	449	7%	1000	15%	6607		

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

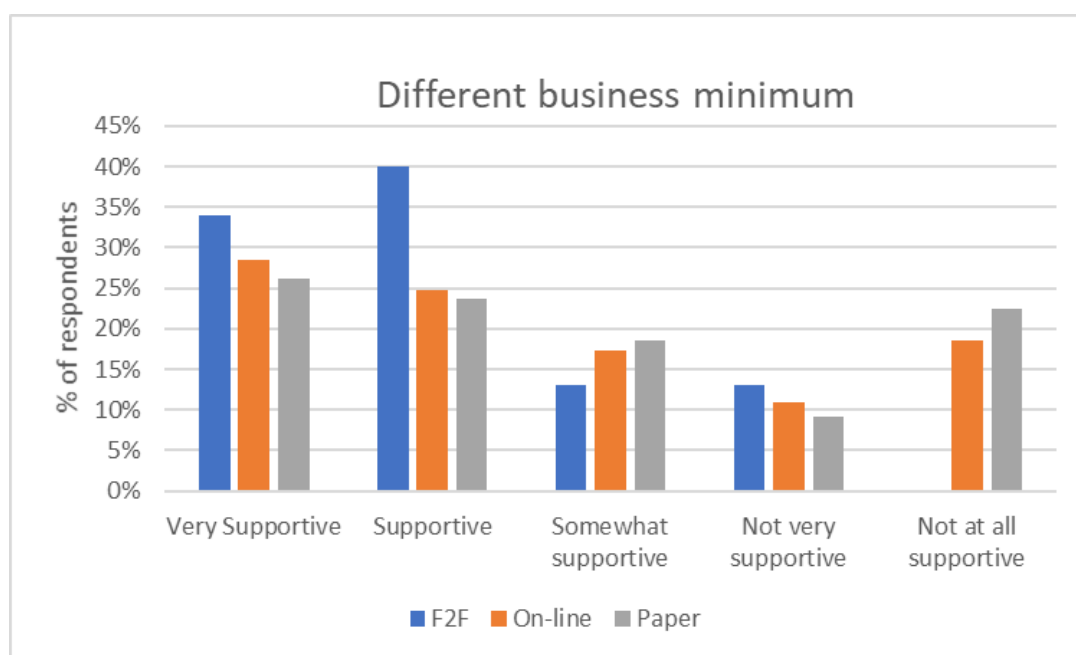
Consistent minimum rate of \$965.80	Very Supportive		Supportive		Somewhat supportive		Not very supportive		Not at all supportive		Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
Drop in & information session	7	34%	12	40%	4	13%	4	13%	0	0%	27	87%	13%
Online	88	19%	122	26%	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%
Total	1227	20%	1520	25%	1303	21%	773	13%	1350	22%	6173		

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

Different minimum business rate⁹

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



⁹ 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%
Total	1477	26%	1332	24%	1025	18%	522	9%	1223	22%	5579		

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 introduce 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

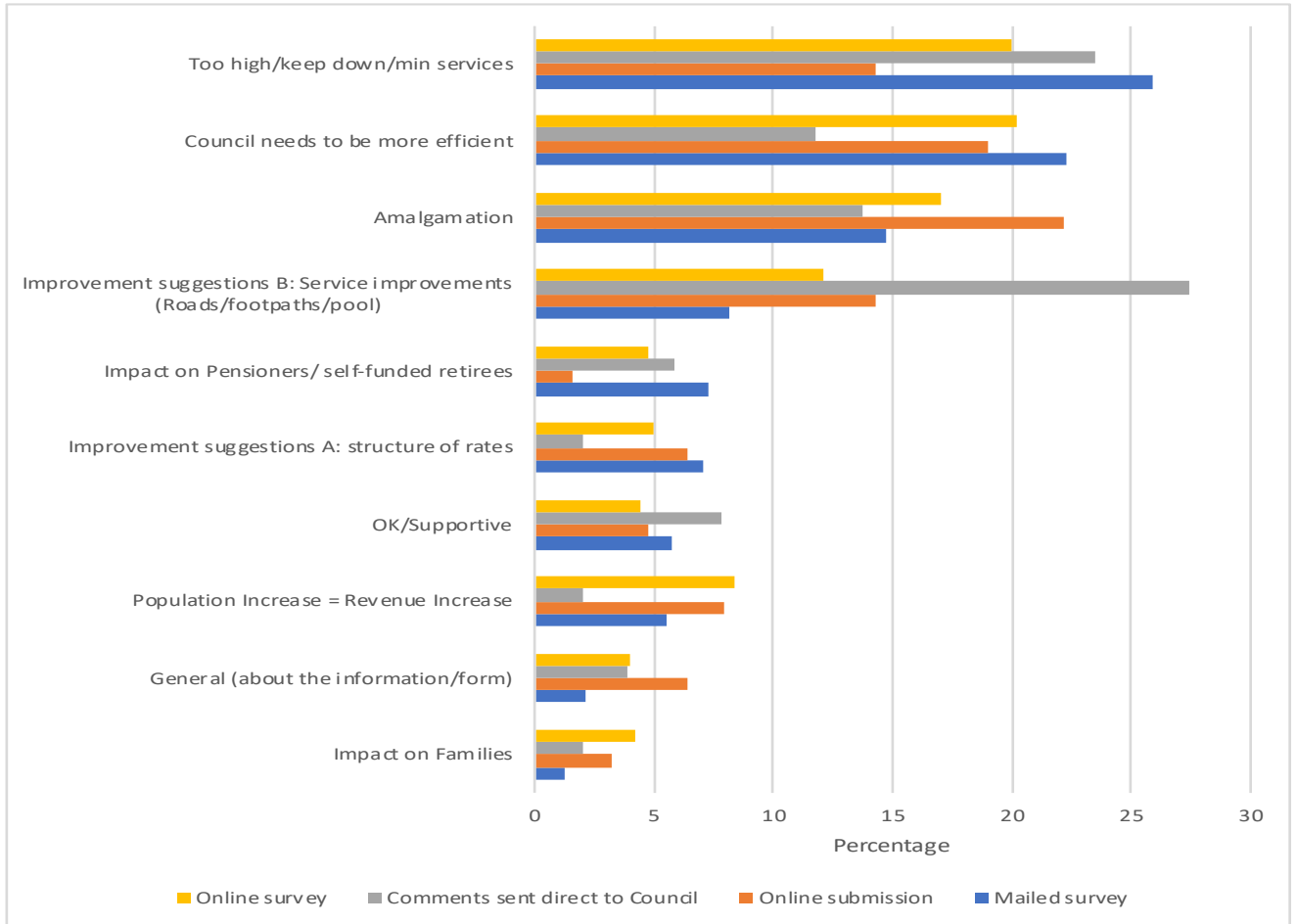


Table 12: Comments received

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

Table 13: Examples of comments

<p>Too high/keep down/min services</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>Council needs to be more efficient</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



Table of Contents

Background and Methodology	3
Sample Profile	5
Key Findings	7
Findings in Detail:	
Awareness of the Special Rate Variation	9
Support for Special Rate Variation	12
Support for Standardised Minimum Rate	25
Community Diagnostics	29
Appendix	32
Questionnaire	41



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 21st– 31st October 2019.

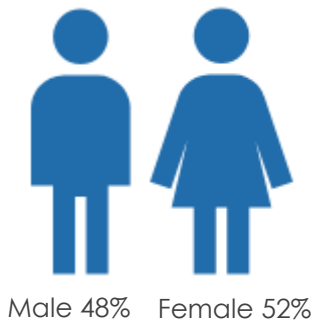


Sample Profile



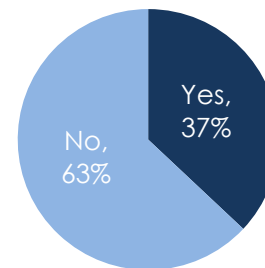
Sample Profile

Gender

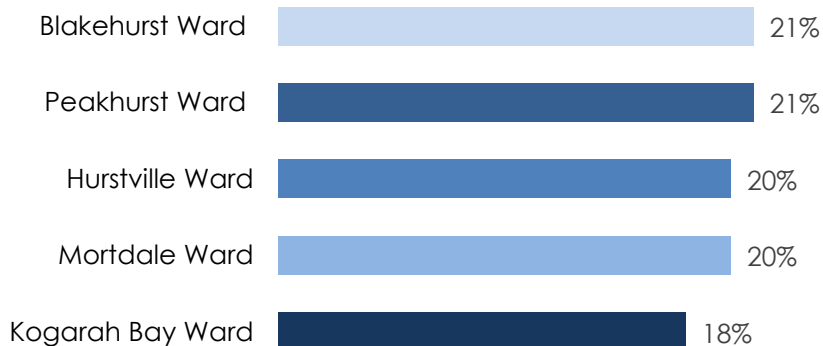


N=600
Telephone Interviews with Georges River Council Residents

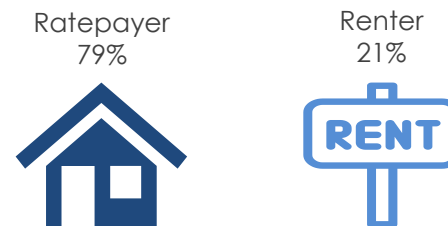
Do you speak a language other than English at home?



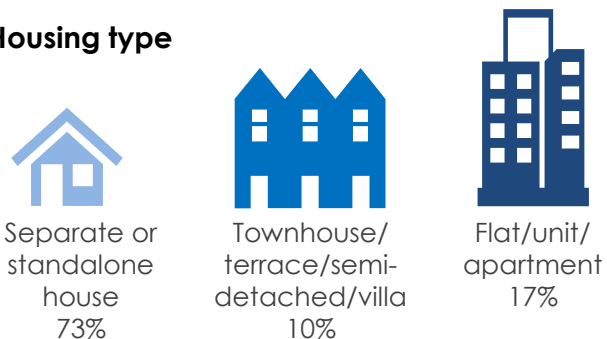
Ward



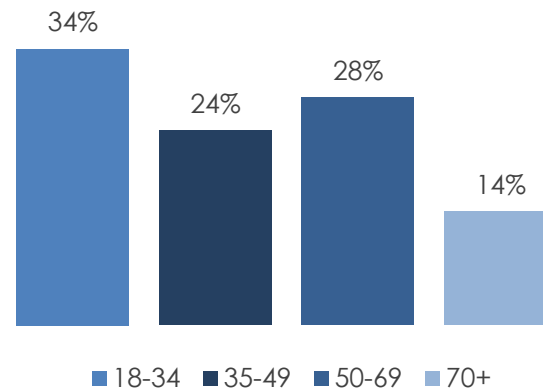
Ratepayer status



Housing type



Age



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

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

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:

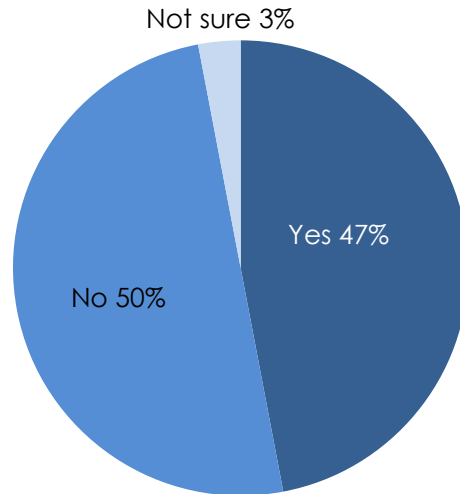
1. Awareness of the Special Rate Variation

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)

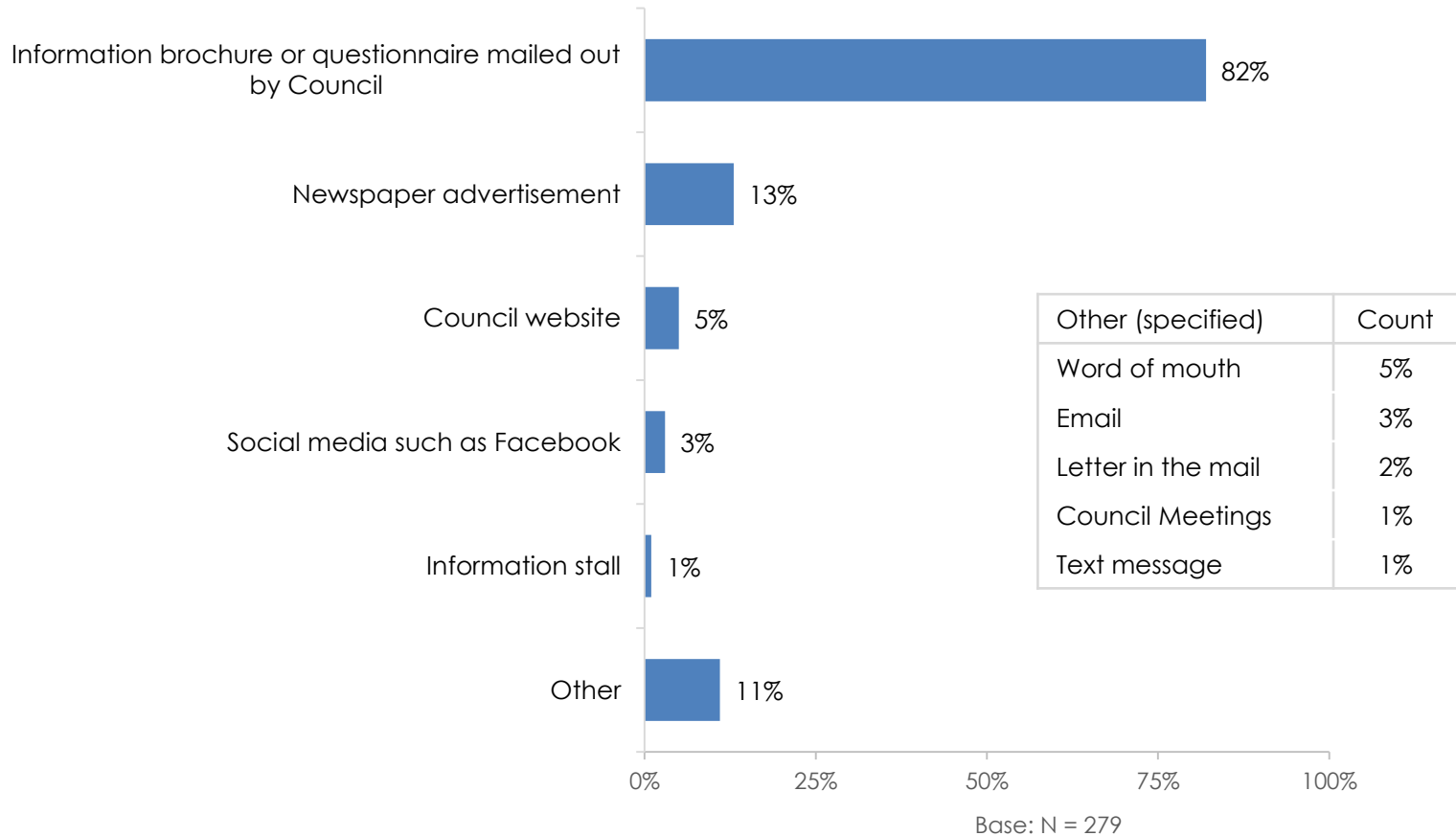
Nearly half (47%) of residents were aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a SRV, in line with the Micromex LGA Benchmark. Those aged 50+ and ratepayers were significantly more likely to be aware.

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.

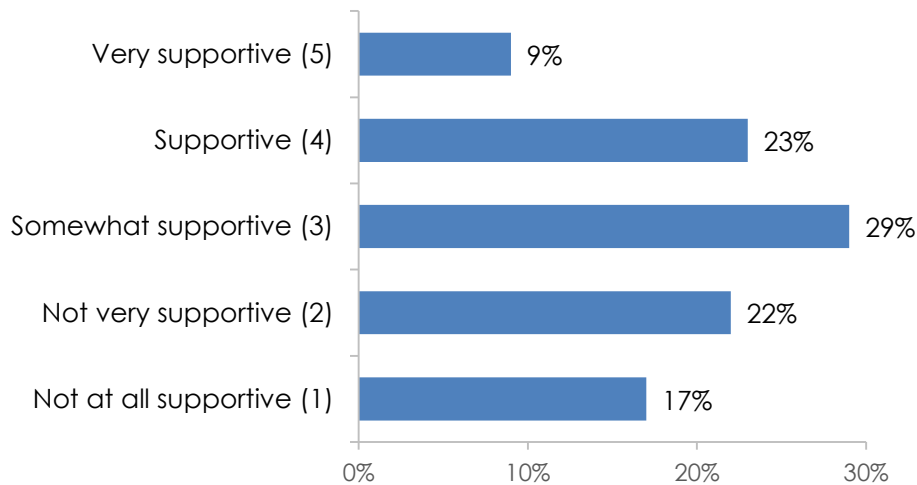


Support for Option A: 3.3% Increase – Replacement of the Current Hurstville SRV Option: Short Term

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

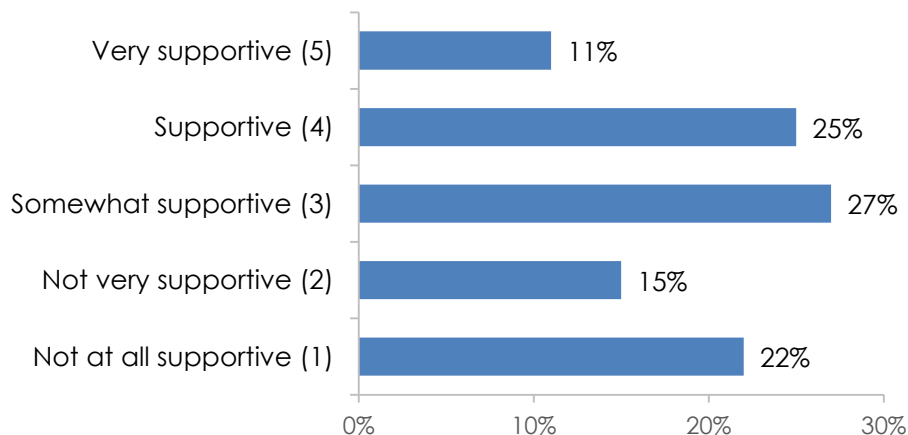


Support for Option B: 10.6% Increase – Financially Sustainable Option (Recommended by Council)

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.

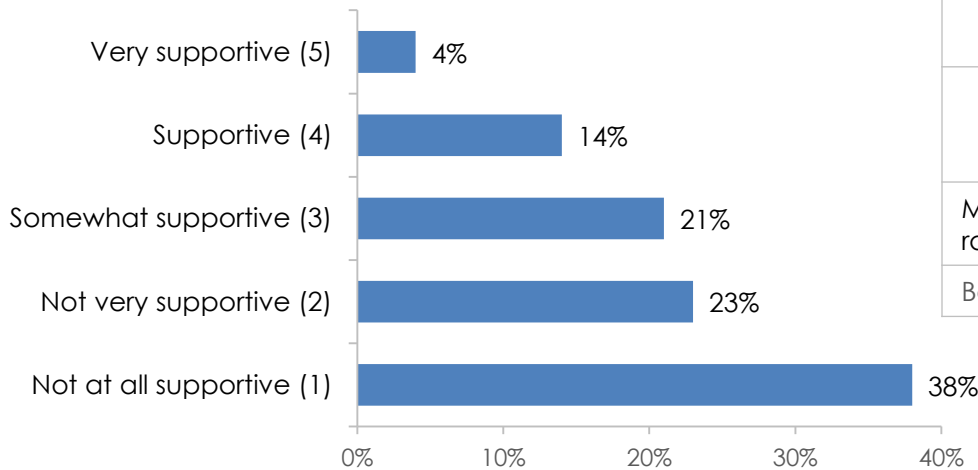


Support for Option C: 22.3% Increase – Substantial Rate Increase Option

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)

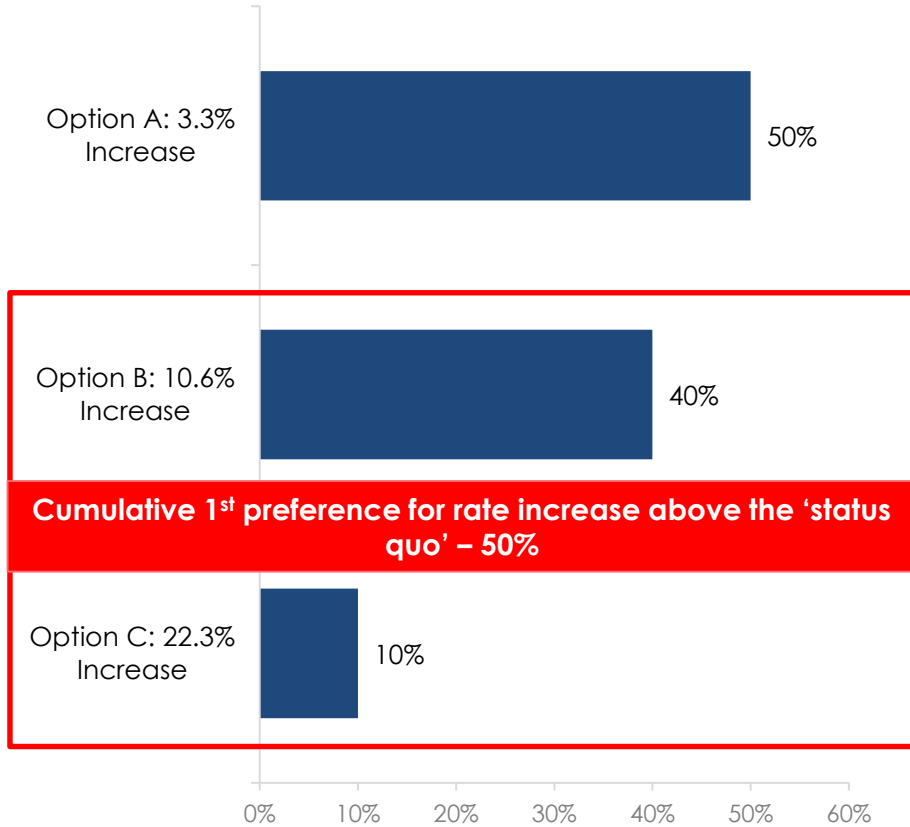
Base: N = 600

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.

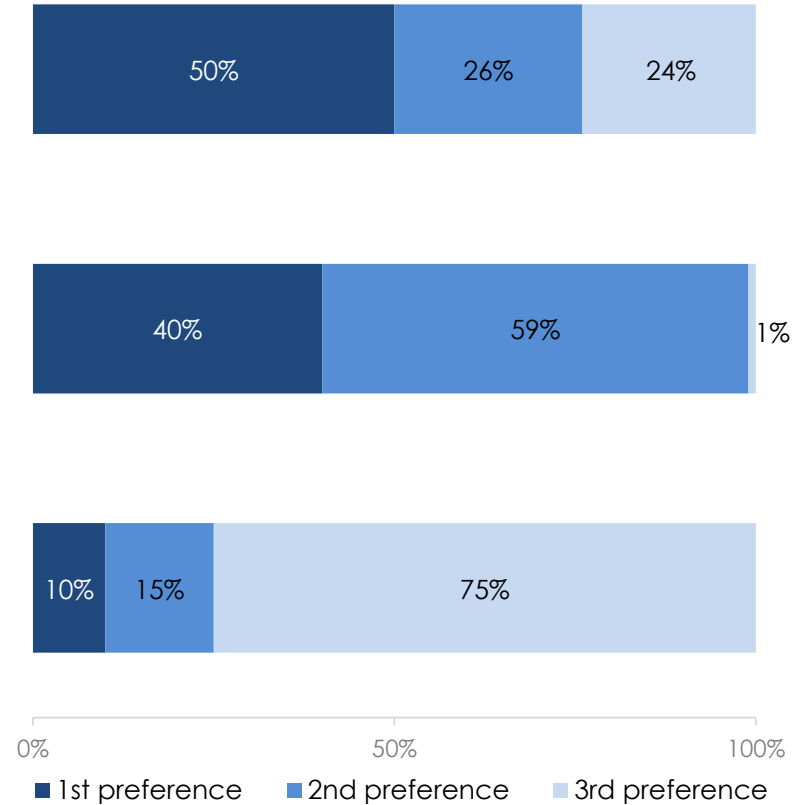
Preferences for Special Rate Variation

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 st 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

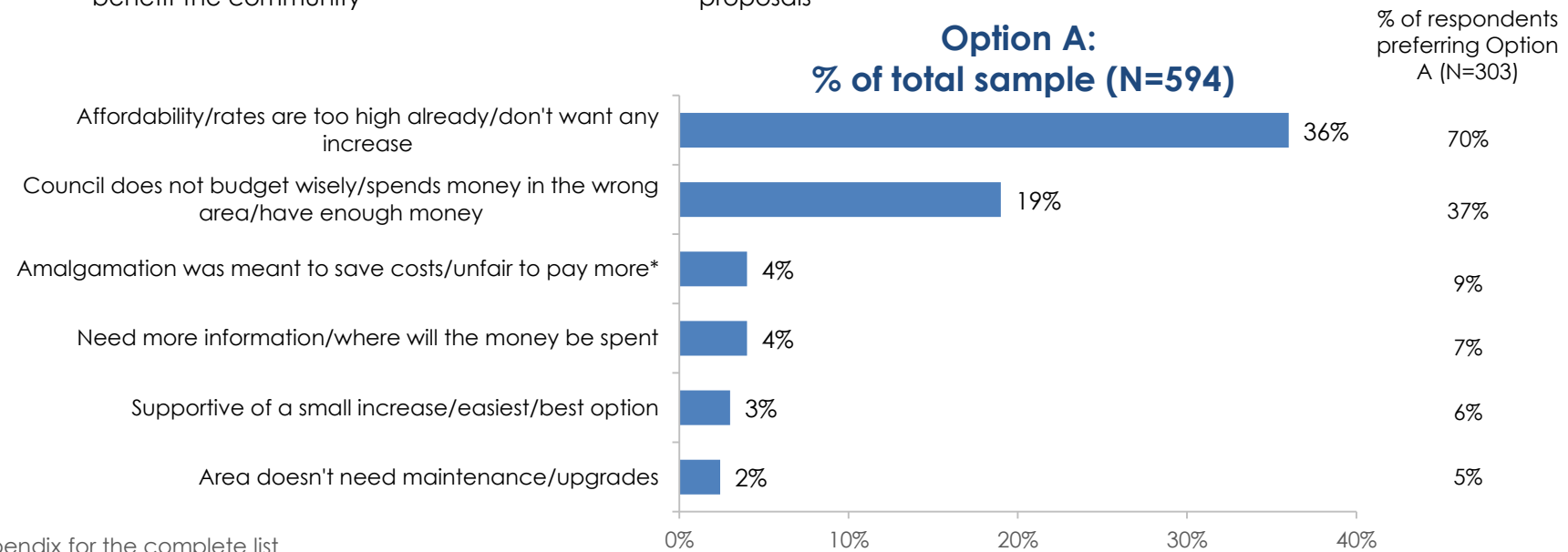
▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (by group)

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”

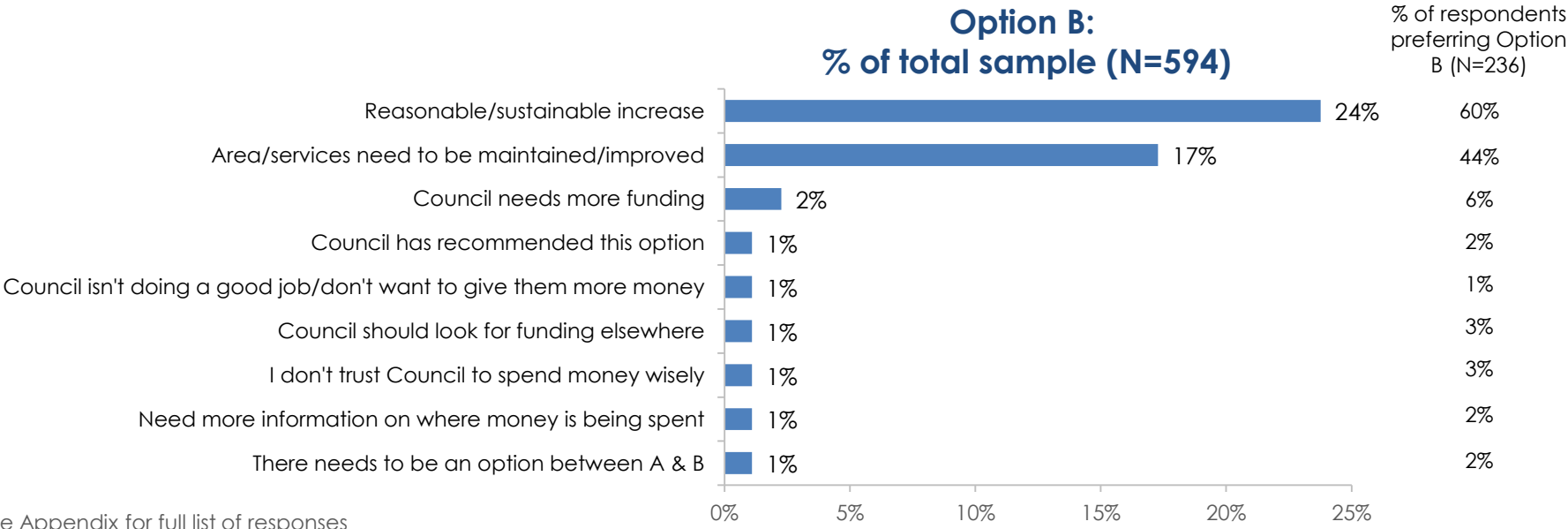
“Sounds the most feasible financially for services and facilities to be maintained”

“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”



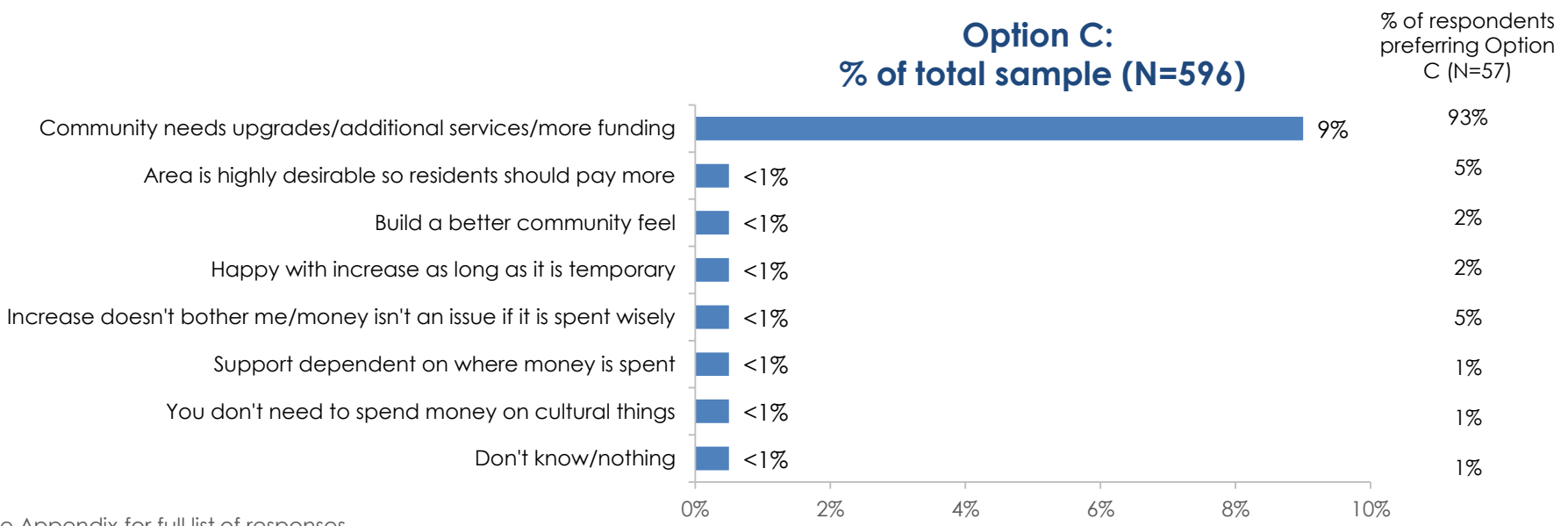
See Appendix for full list of responses

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.

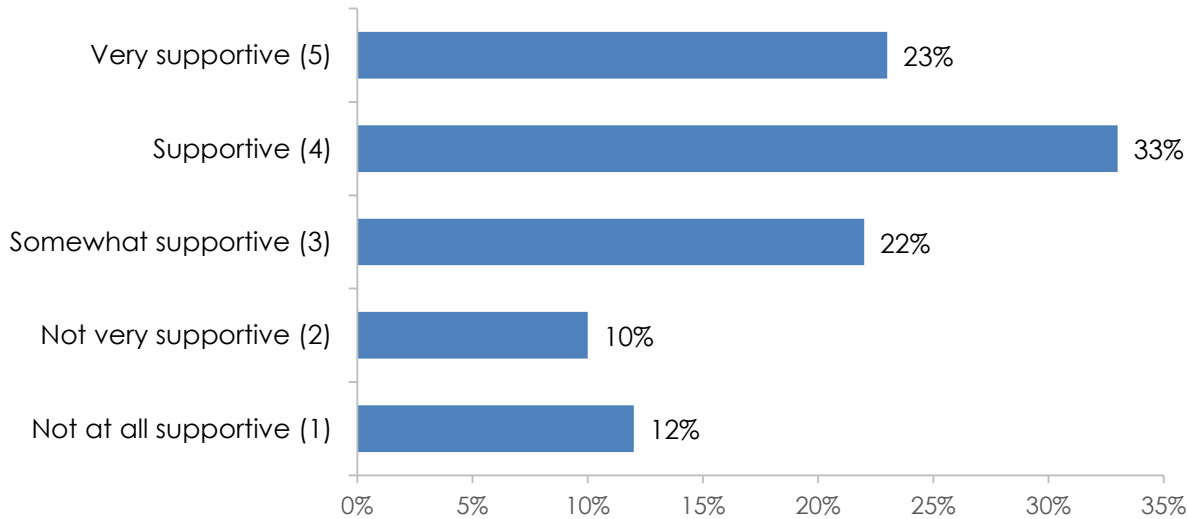


Support for Minimum Rate

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



	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).

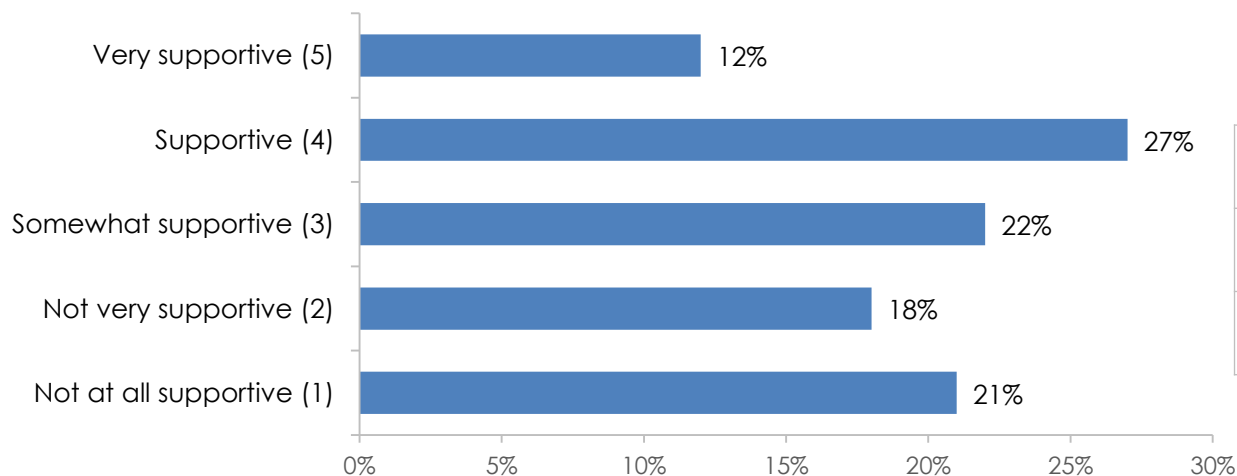
Support Towards Minimum Rate

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

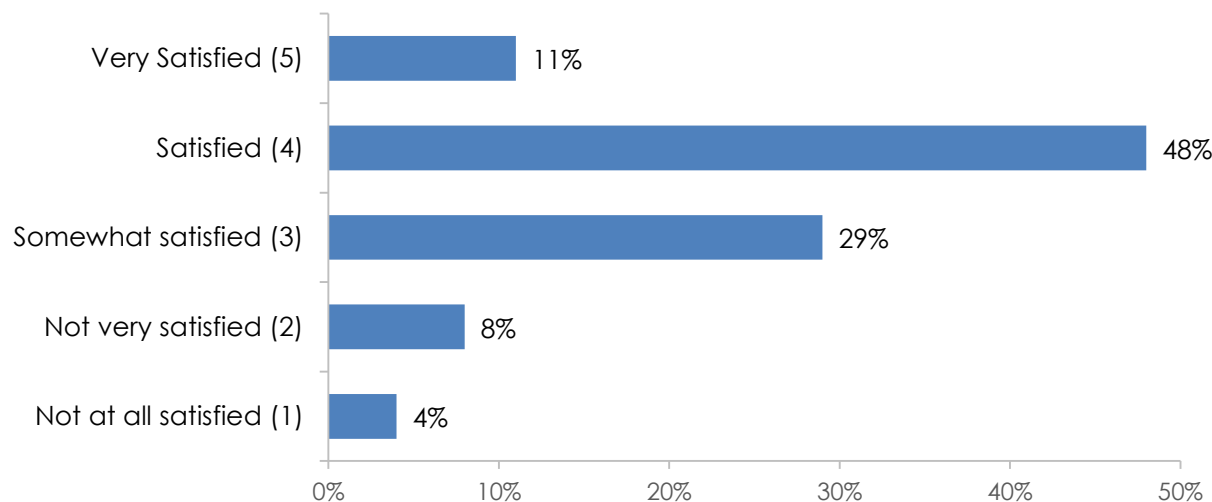


Overall Satisfaction with the Performance of Council

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)

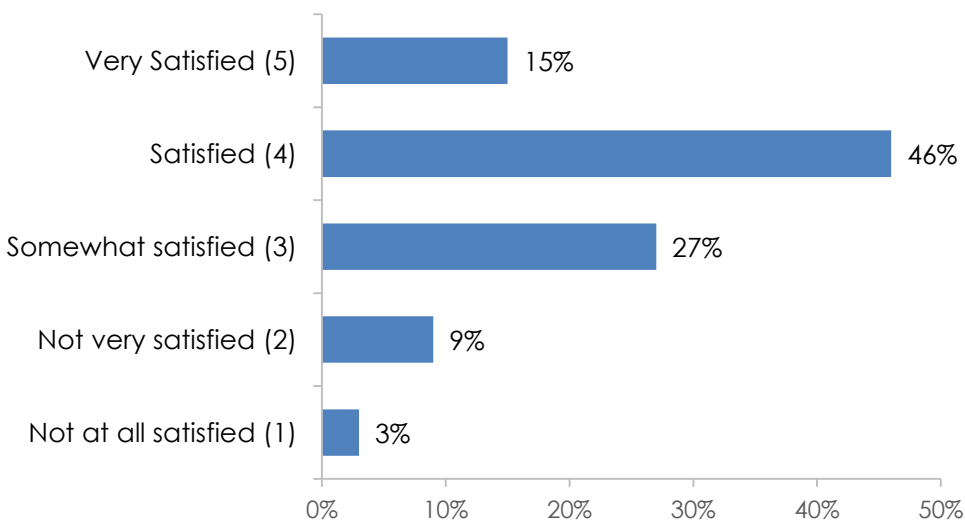
88% of residents stated that they were at least 'somewhat satisfied' with the performance of Council over the last 12 months, on par with the Micromex LGA benchmark. Younger residents (18-34), non-ratepayers and residents of the Mortdale Ward are significantly more satisfied.

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 21st - 31st 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 st 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 st 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 nd 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 nd 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 rd 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 rd 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 st preference	2 nd preference	3 rd 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

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Web: www.micromex.com.au

Email: 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	Georges River Council wants an 8.1 per cent Special Rate Variation	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	Georges River Council introduces a new municipal rate structure	Georges River Council Chinese translated media release	2CR Radio online	N/A
30-Aug-19	Georges River Council introduces a new municipal rate structure	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	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 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	Georges River Council's rates consultation received strong community engagement	Georges River Council Media release/meeting with GM and journalist Jim Gainsford	St George & Sutherland Shire Leader online	40,000
TOTAL			79 COVERAGE CLIPS	2,366,270



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



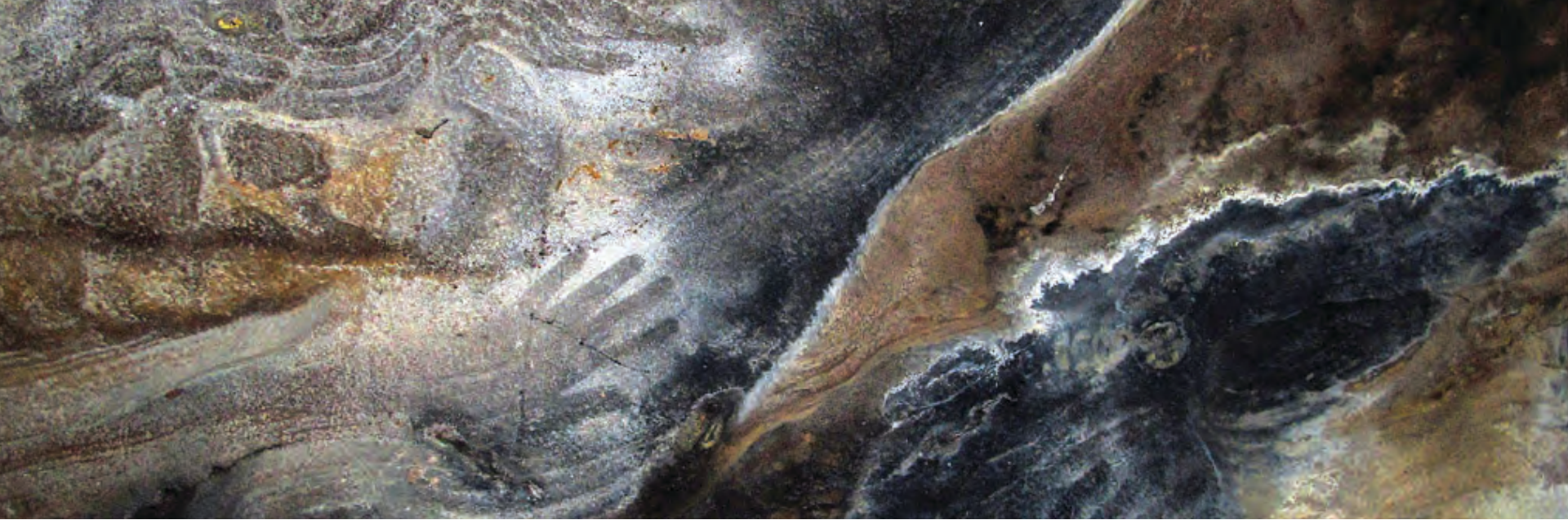
Our commitment to you

- 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

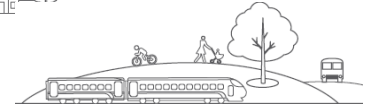
1. A protected environment and green open spaces



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



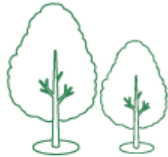
Money we spend

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

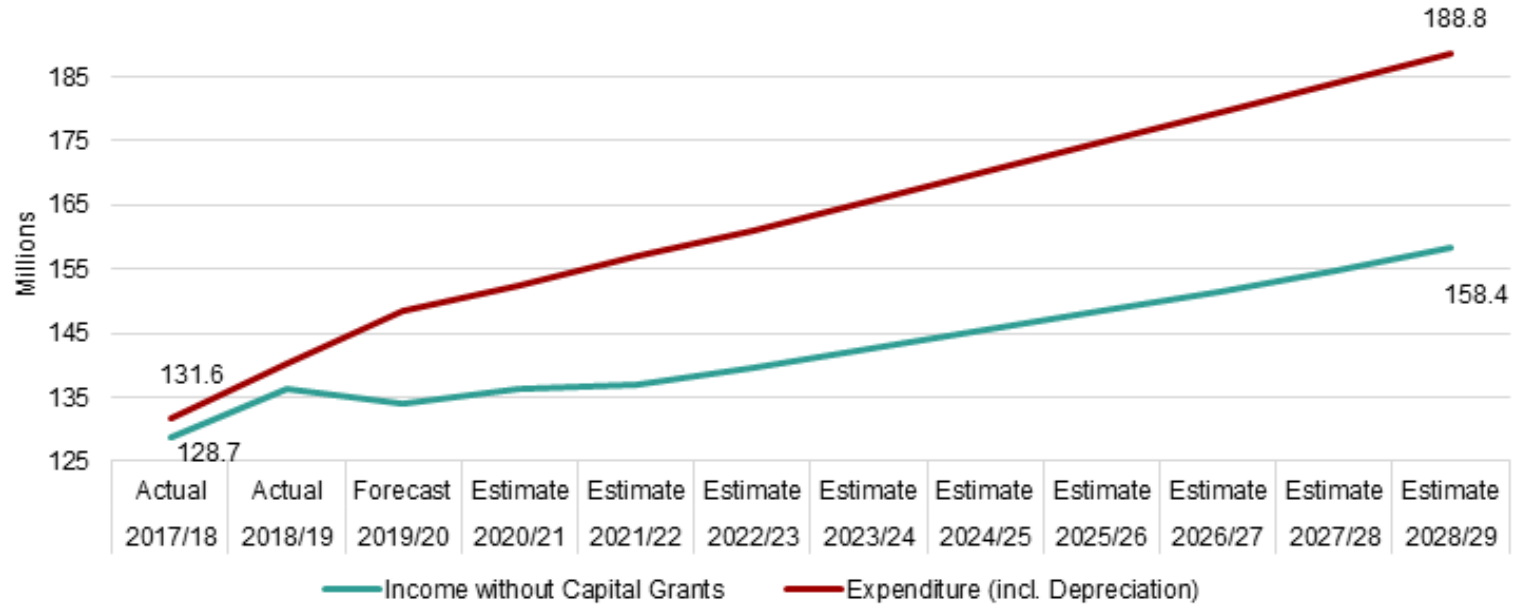
Grants decreasing

Increase in population

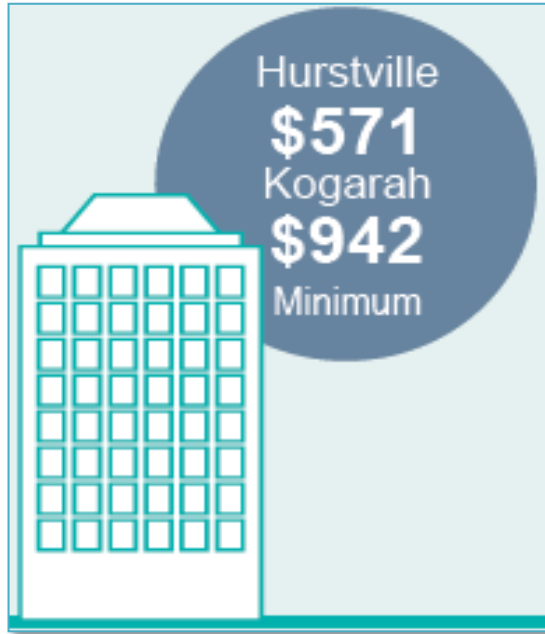


If we do nothing, by 2028/29 the gap between expenditure and income will be \$22m

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

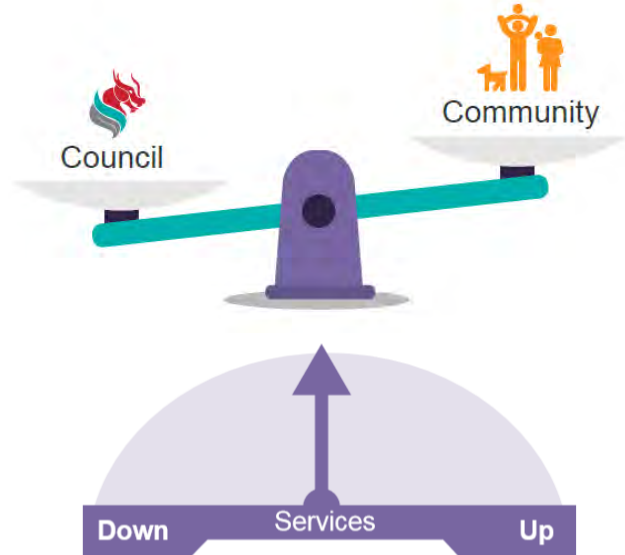


Option 1 Financially Sustainable (recommended)

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	5334	55%	45%
Business	23	25	30	26	59	163	15	178	48%	52%
Both	13	10	12	10	46	91	6	97	38%	62%
Neither*	12	15	13	5	30	75	12	87	53%	47%
Other**	10	9	2	1	14	36	2	38	58%	42%
	962	1123	861	680	1798	5424	310	5734	54%	46%
%	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	5334	57%	43%
Business	52	28	26	24	27	157	21	178	68%	32%
Both	32	16	7	7	27	89	8	97	62%	38%
Neither	21	7	10	14	19	71	16	87	54%	46%
Other	7	6	3	6	10	32	6	38	50%	50%
	1438	712	831	642	1537	5160	574	5734	58%	42%
%	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	4659	675	5334	12%	88%
Business	3	3	18	12	114	150	28	178	16%	84%
Both	1	1	3	7	68	80	17	97	6%	94%
Neither	0	1	3	5	60	69	18	87	6%	94%
Other	2	4	1	3	22	32	6	38	22%	78%
	111	168	318	542	3851	4990	744	5734	12%	88%
%	2%	3%	6%	11%	77%	100%				

*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 ¹⁰	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%
	1796	1522	910	337	835	5400	334	5734	78%	22%
%	33	28	17	6	15	100				

¹⁰ 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 ¹¹	Total	% at least somewhat supportive	% not supportive
Residential	1002	1170	957	586	1026	4741	593	5334	66%	34%
Business	25	27	55	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%
	1060	1224	1054	613	1131	5082	652	5734	66%	34%
%	21	24	21	12	22	100				

¹¹ 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 ¹²	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%
	1308	1186	925	461	1120	5000	734	5734	68%	32%
%	26	24	19	9	22	100				

¹² 13% of all mailed survey respondents did not answer this question

