

A photograph of a woman walking a young child on a sidewalk during golden hour. The woman is wearing a black jacket over a floral top and red pants. The child is wearing a floral top and light-colored pants. They are walking on a concrete sidewalk next to a large tree. The background is filled with trees and foliage, creating a warm, golden glow.

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

Acknowledgement of Country

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

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

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
The Foundation - 2019 Community engagement	7
2020 proposal.....	9
2020 activities	11
Community views	24
Savings options	27
Conclusion.....	35
Appendix 1 - Promotional activities and engagement	36
Appendix 2 – Citizens Advice Group	44
Appendix 3 – Online submission themes.....	47
Appendix 4 – List of FAQs	55
Appendix 5 – Phone Survey report.....	59

List of figures and tables

Figure 1 Community drop in 2019 consultations	7
Figure 2 Consultation meeting 2019	8
Figure 3 Current and proposed rating arrangements.....	10
Figure 4 Example of advert for Greek media	11
Figure 5 : Your Say newsletter	12
Figure 10 : Videos on Council website	14
Figure 6 CAG meeting and rates calculator	15
Figure 8 : Poster in childcare centre	22
Figure 9 : Website FAQ page.....	23
Figure 11 : Views on service reductions (phone survey).....	29
Figure 12 : Views on service reductions – online survey	31
Figure 13 - Views on service reductions - webinars	32
Figure 14: Level of support by Ward.....	Appendix 5 p 9
Figure 15: Service savings results.....	Appendix 5 p14
Table 1: COVID-19 responses.....	6
Table 2: CAG meetings.....	13

Table 3: CAG feedback	14
Table 4: Webinar details	21
Table 5: Key question feedback by channel	24
Table 6: Key themes in submissions.....	25
Table 7: Additional savings identified in the phone survey	33
Table 8: Ward distribution of phone survey calls.....	Appendix 5 p3
Table 9: Awareness of rates cap	Appendix 5 p4
Table 10: Should rates increase in line with population growth?.....	Appendix 5 p5
Table 11: Prior awareness of council's new rates proposal.....	Appendix 5 p5
Table 12: How supportive are you of the Council's proposal?	Appendix 5 p7

Abbreviations and acronyms

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

About this report

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

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

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

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

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

Table 1: COVID-19 responses

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

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THE FOUNDATION - 2019 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

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

2019 key outcomes

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

Figure 1 Community drop in 2019 consultations



Rating myths

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

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

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

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

Figure 2 Consultation meeting 2019



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

2020 PROPOSAL

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

Goals of the 2021 new rating system

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

What is the proposal?

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

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

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

Figure 3 Current and proposed rating arrangements



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2020 ACTIVITIES

Overview of 2020 community engagement

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

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

The main elements³ were:

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

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

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

Figure 4 Example of advert for Greek media



The advertisement is a vertical poster for Georges River Council. At the top left is the council's logo, a stylized white bird, with the text 'GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL' below it. The background is a photograph of a woman in a black jacket and red pants walking a small child on a path through a park with trees. A large blue speech bubble on the right contains the text 'New rates 2021' in yellow. Below the photo, the main headline in Greek reads 'Εργαζόμαστε μαζί για ένα καλύτερο μέλλον'. Underneath, it says 'Για περισσότερες πληροφορίες και για να κατανοήσετε σε τι μπορεί να σας βοηθήσει επισκεφτείτε την παρακάτω ιστοσελίδα:'. The website address 'www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021' is provided in yellow. Below that, it states 'όπου υπάρχει διαθέσιμη αυτόματη μετάφραση από τη Google σε κάθε σελίδα.' At the bottom, there is a QR code and the text 'Χρησιμοποιήστε το κινητό σας τηλέφωνο προκειμένου να σκανάρετε τον κωδικό QR και να μεταφερθείτε στις μεταφρασμένες σελίδες του site'. The website URL 'www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au' and social media icons for Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube are at the very bottom.

³ See Appendix 1 for full details of the community engagement

Figure 5 : Your Say newsletter



New Rates 2021 Consultation

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

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

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

What is the proposal?

Meeting the mandatory requirement for one rating system

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

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

Community feedback

Community views were collected through multiple channels:

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

Citizens Advice Group (CAG)

Overview

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

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

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

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

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

CAG activities

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

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

Table 2: CAG meetings

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

Advice about key messages

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

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

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

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

Videos

Two videos were produced for the New Rates 2021 project.

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

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

Figure 6 : Videos on Council website

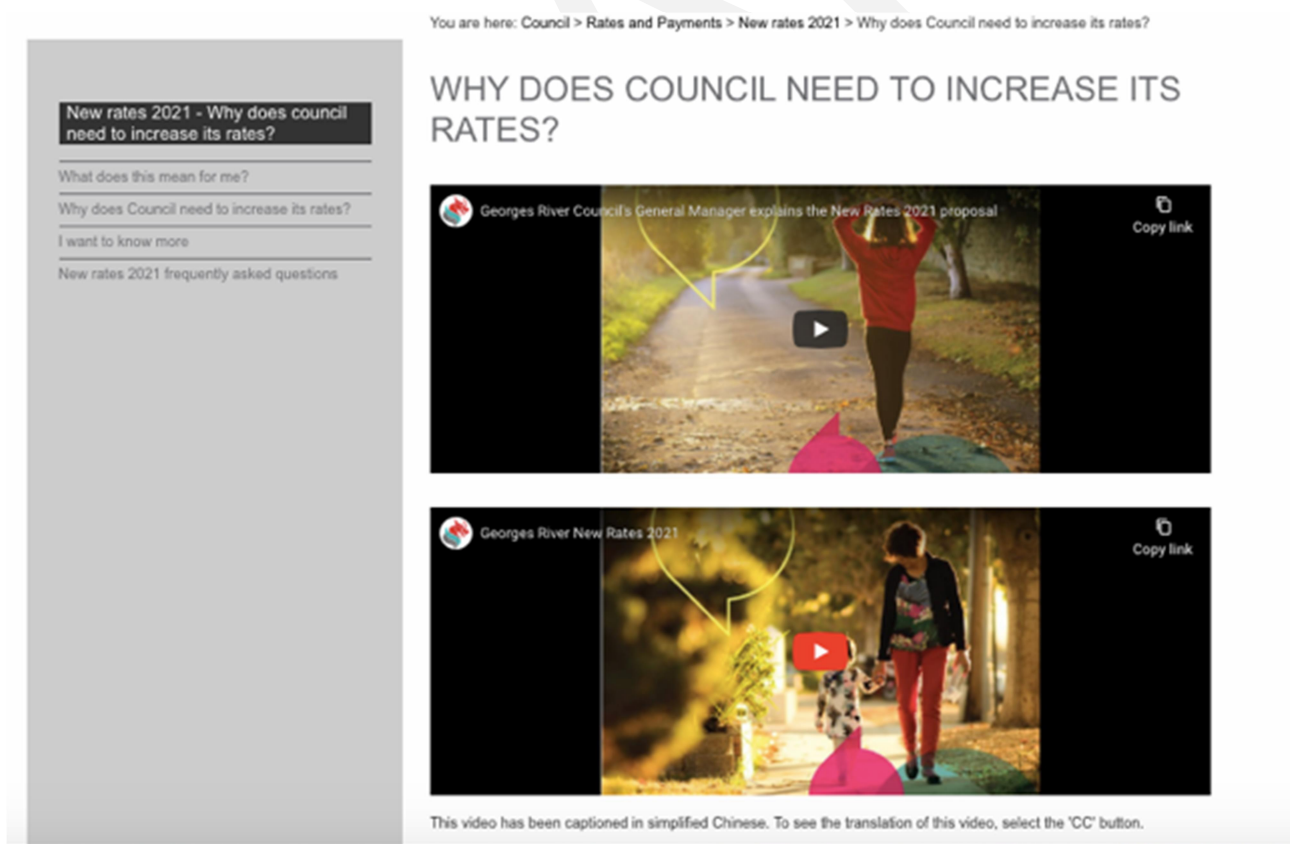



Table 3: CAG feedback

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

Figure 7 CAG meeting and rates calculator

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





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

Georges River Civic Centre
Corner MacMahon and
Dora Streets, HURSTVILLE
02 8330 8400
mail@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au
www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au
ABN 57 789 914 855

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

SAMPLE RESIDENTIAL
Average

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

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

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

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

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

Pay by phone 1300 276 488
or online www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/
RatesPaymentOptions
Biller Code: 34405
Payments via AMEX attract a 1.4% surcharge.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Proposed New Residential Rates Calculator

Residential Rate in the Dollar

Please enter your Land Value from you Current Rates Notice



Working together for a better future

New rates 2021



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

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

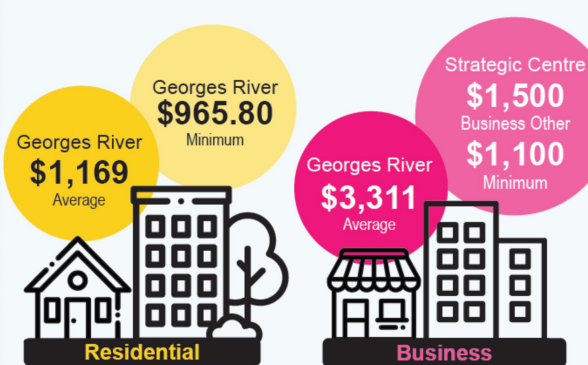
We will continue to be prudent in our spending; we have a history of strict budget management and service changes and efficiencies since amalgamation.

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

Current average and minimum annual rates



Proposed 2021/22 average and minimum annual rates



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



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

You told us

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

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

What is the proposal?

Meeting the mandatory requirement for one rating system

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

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

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

Sustainability

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

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

What happens if the proposal isn't approved?

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

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

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

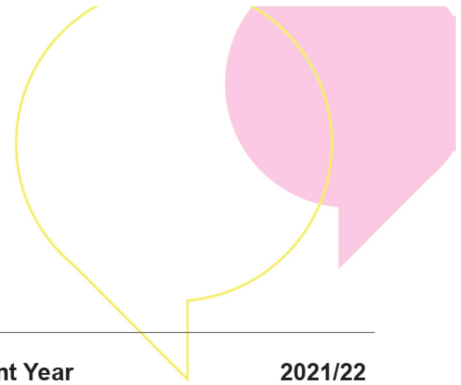
Houses in the old Hurstville Council area will have an average decrease of \$25 and those who had a large rate increase in 2020/21 will not receive a reduction.



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

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

I want more information

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



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

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

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

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

I want to have input

You can have your say at yoursay.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au

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

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

What if I can't pay my rates?

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

I want to find out more about this proposal

There will be two webinars explaining the proposals on:

Wednesday 4 November 2020, 6.00pm-7.30pm

Saturday 7 November 2020, 10.00am-11.30am

Register here. www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/New-rates-2021



www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au

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

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

Language services



131 450



Phone survey

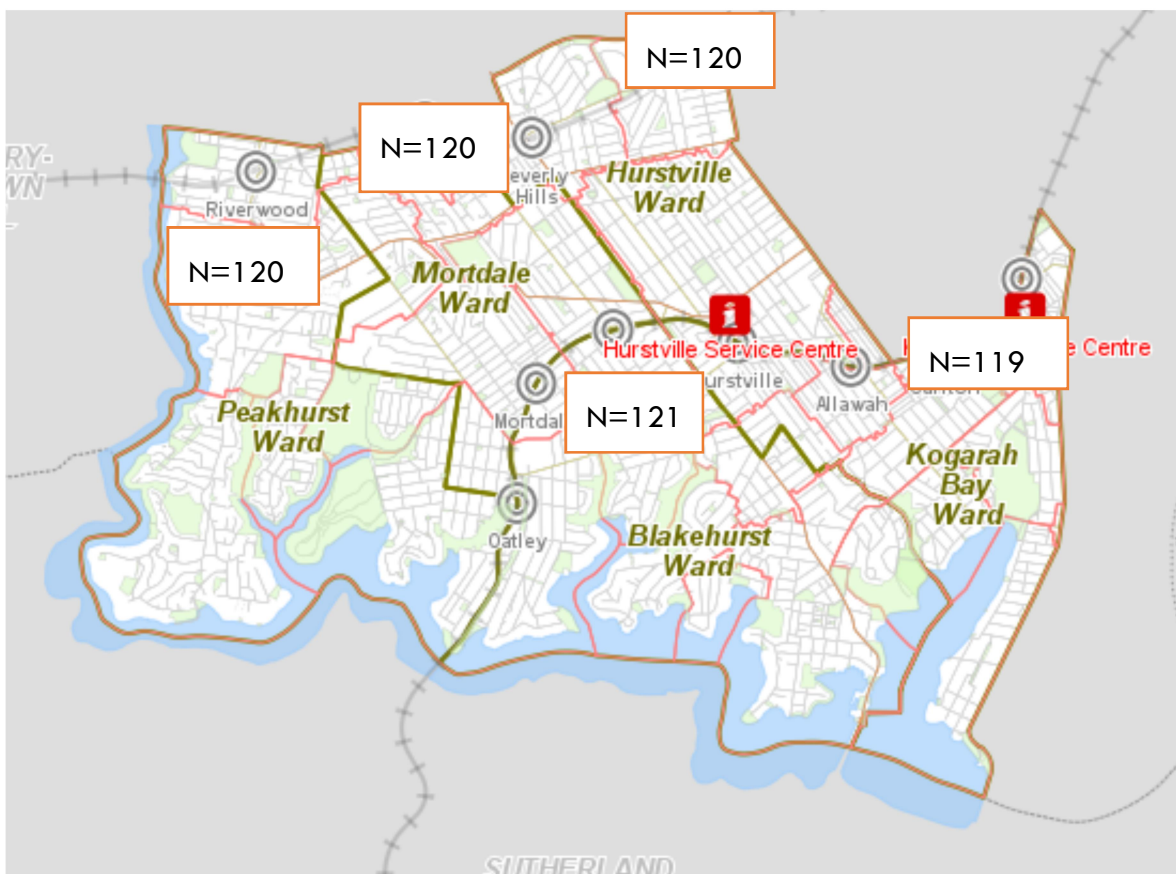
As part of the 2019 consultations, an independent random telephone survey was conducted of 600 residents. This was undertaken and reported on by Micromex research. The 2019 survey measured satisfaction with Council and the quality of community assets, awareness of the Council's proposals and levels of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

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

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

The 2020 telephone survey was undertaken by IRIS Research⁴ in the period Saturday 14 November 2020 to Monday 30 November 2020.

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



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

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

Webinars

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

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

Table 4: Webinar details

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

Three polls were conducted during the webinars.

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

GRC website

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

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

There were links to four (4) associated pages:

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

GRC Your Say Page

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

It provided:

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

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

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

Figure 8 : Poster in childcare centre



Figure 9 : Website FAQ page

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

NEW RATES 2021 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

New rates 2021

What does this mean for me?

Why does Council need to increase its rates?

I want to know more

New rates 2021 frequently asked questions

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

COMMUNITY VIEWS

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

Table 5: Key question feedback by channel

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

Level of support for Council's proposal

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

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

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

Phone survey

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

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

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

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

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

Post-webinar survey

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

Comments included:

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

Online submissions

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

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

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

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

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

Key themes are summarised in the table below.

Table 6: Key themes in submissions

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

SAVINGS OPTIONS

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

Input around preferred savings was gathered from four sources:

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

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

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

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

CAG views

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

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

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

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

Phone respondent views

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

The areas that people most wish to keep are:

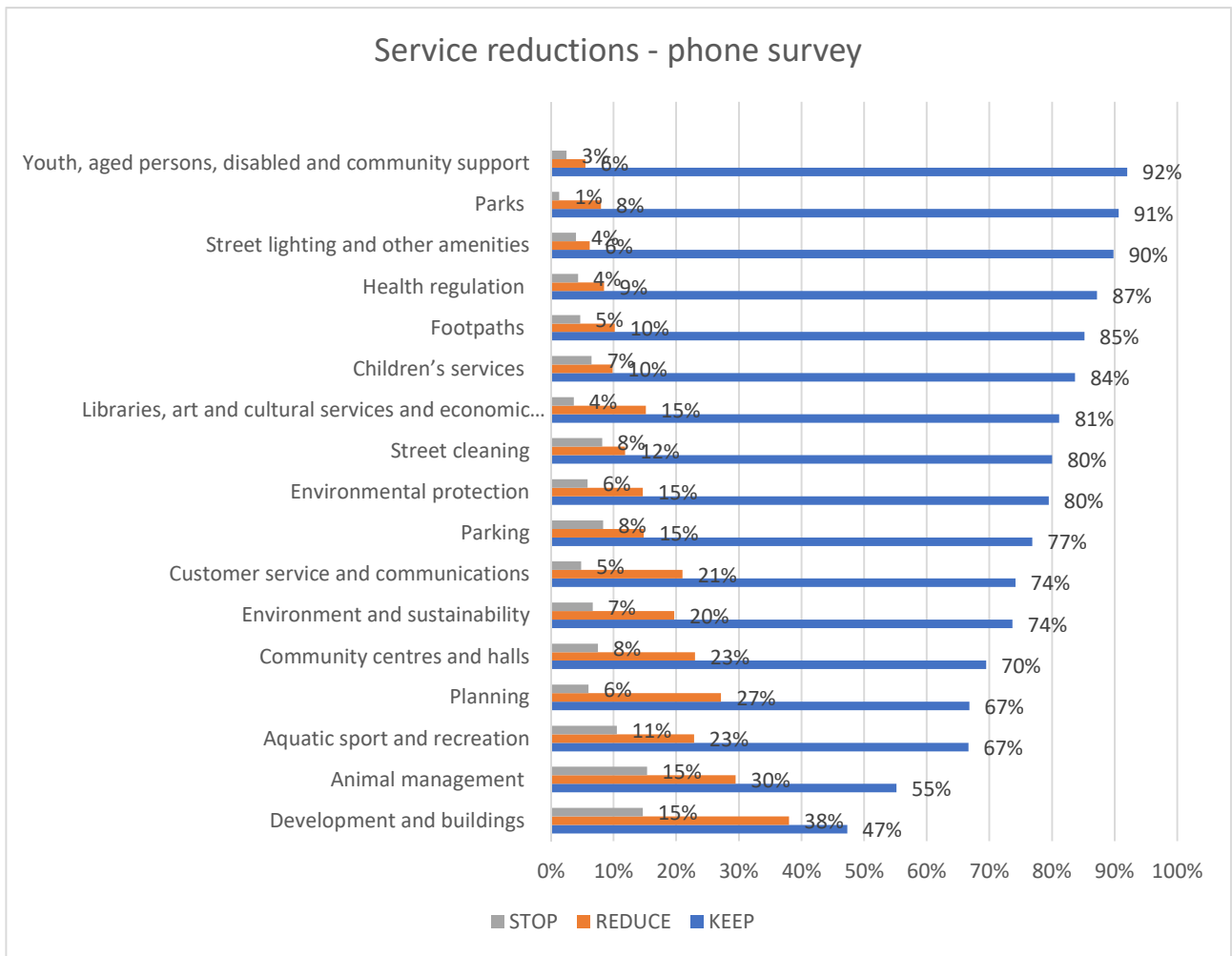
- Youth, aged persons, disabled and community support (92%)⁵
- Parks (91%)
- Street lighting and amenities (90%)
- Health regulation (87%)
- Footpaths (85%)

Areas most preferred for savings are:

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

⁵ % shown is the proportion of people indicating service reduction

Figure 10 : Views on service reductions (phone survey)



Online survey results

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

The areas that people most wish to keep are:

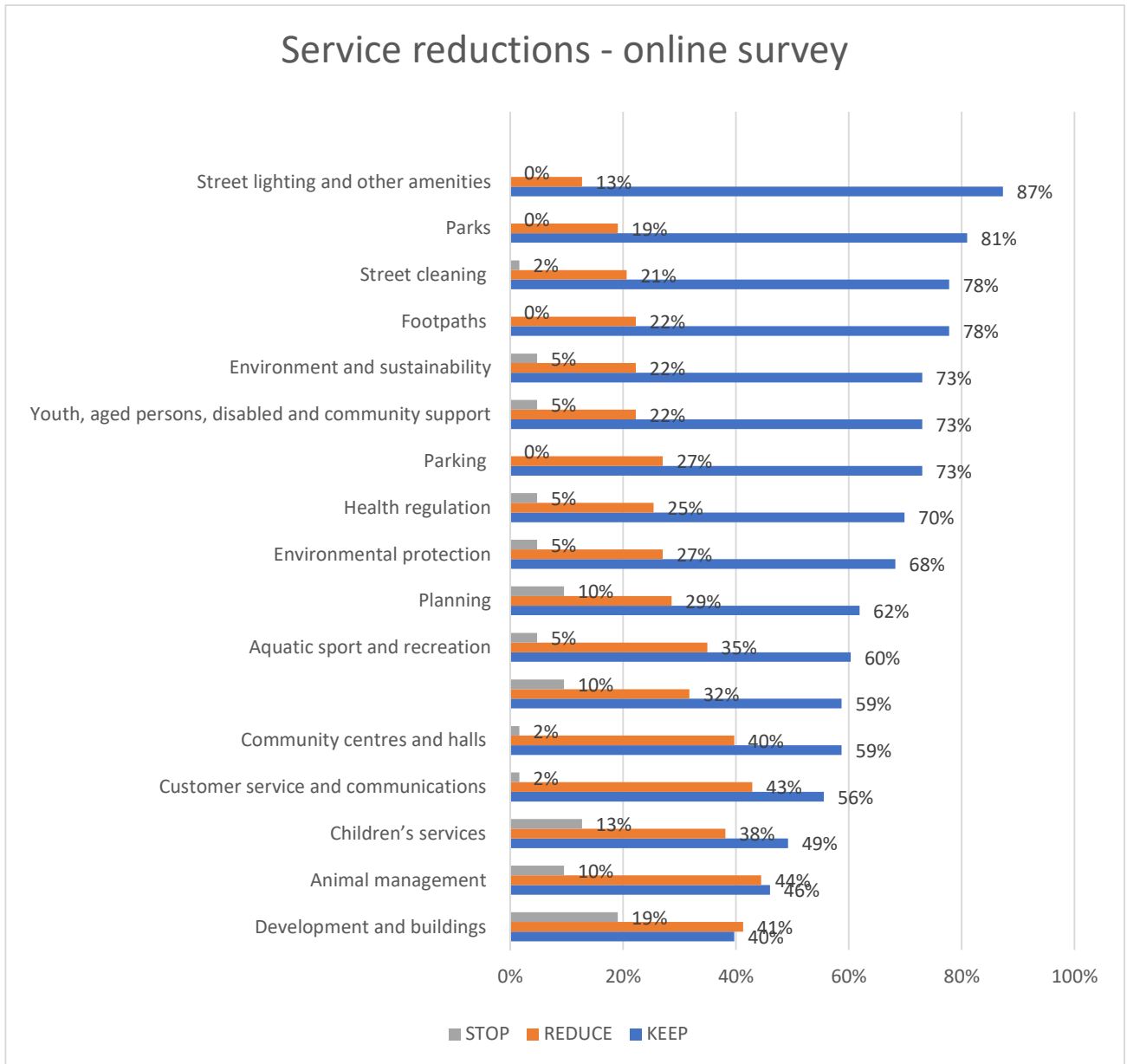
- Street lighting and amenities (87%)
- Parks (81%)
- Street cleaning (78%)
- Footpaths (78%)
- Environment and sustainability (73%)

Areas most preferred for savings are:

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

⁶ % shown is the proportion of people indicating service reduction

Figure 11 : Views on service reductions – online survey



Webinar results

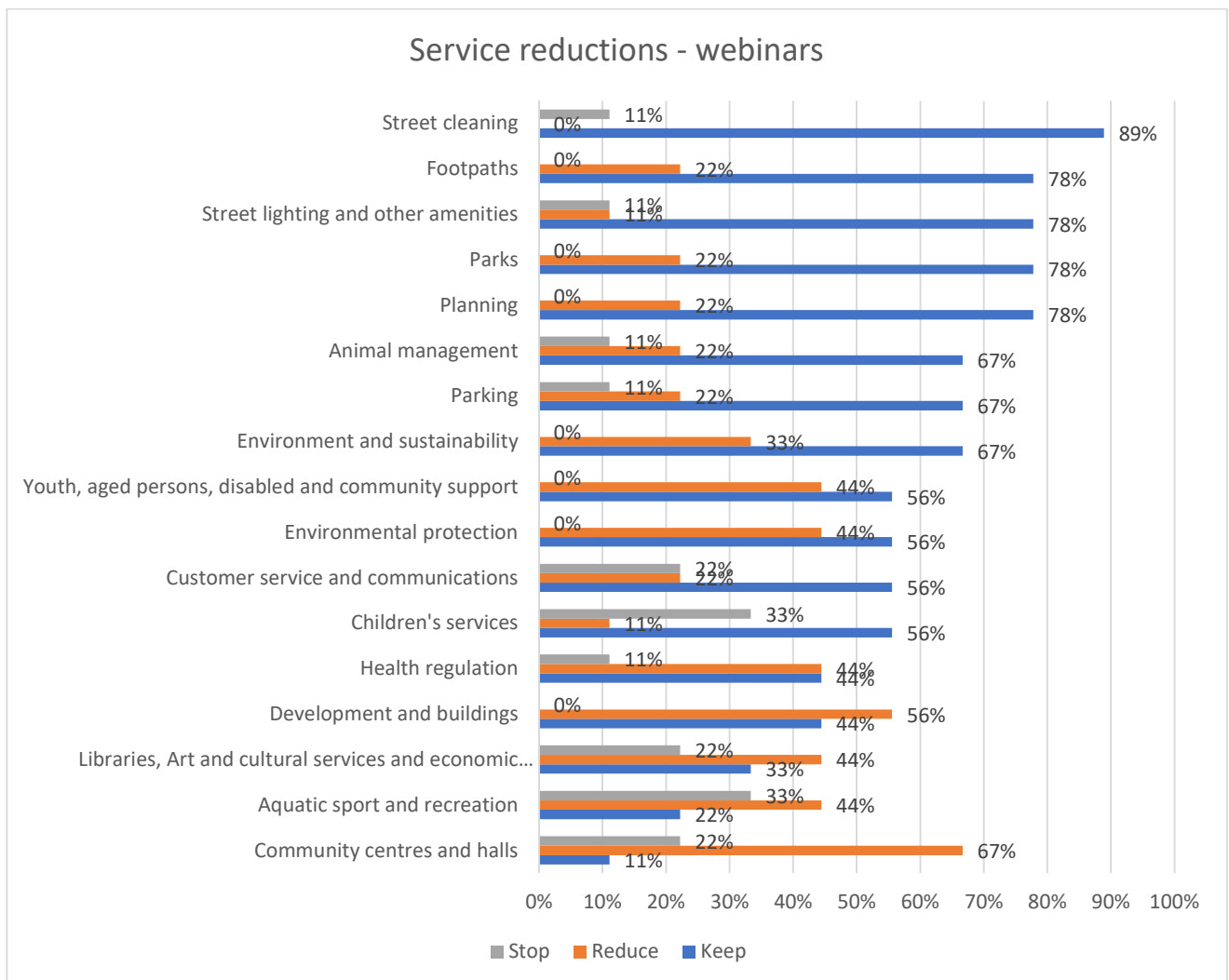
The areas that people most wish to keep are:

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

Areas most preferred for savings are:

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

Figure 12 - Views on service reductions - webinars



Additional savings areas

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

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

Table 7: Additional savings identified in the phone survey

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

Online survey respondents made five suggestions:

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX 1 PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement - summary of reach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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APPENDIX 2 CITIZENS ADVICE GROUP

Citizens Advice Group recruitment:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Citizens Advice Group composition

In the end, 17⁷ applications were received for the CAG and all were accepted. Welcome phone calls were made to members.

The group profile was as follows:

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

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

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

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

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RATE RESTRUCTURE CONSULTATION 2020

CITIZENS ADVICE GROUP

Terms of Reference

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

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

Membership is capped at 20

Facilitation: ASK Insight Consultants; Alison Plant and Susan Warth

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

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

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

APPENDIX 3 ONLINE SUBMISSION THEMES

Table of Submissions Summary New rates 2021

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DRAFT

APPENDIX 4
LIST OF FAQs

DRAFT

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

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

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

APPENDIX 5
PHONE SURVEY REPORT

DRAFT



GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL
Phone Survey
Analysis



ASK INSIGHT
8 December 2020

Table of Contents

Phone Survey Report

- Overview 3
- Awareness of rates cap..... 4
- Rates increase vs population increase 4
- Awareness of the proposal prior to the phone survey 5
- Channels of awareness about New rates 2021 6
- Support for Council's proposal..... 6
- Support for Council's proposal by ward..... 8
- Support for Council's proposal by age group 10
- Support for Council's proposal by gender 11
- Support for Council's proposal by renter/owner status..... 12
- Support for Council's proposal by property type..... 12
- Savings options..... 13
- Additional savings areas..... 15
- Attachment 1: Copy of phone survey 16
- Attachment 2: Rating number and comment themes..... 23

Overview

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

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

Table 8: Ward distribution of phone survey calls

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

Household distribution type was as follows:

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

Awareness of rates cap

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

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

Table 9: Awareness of rates cap

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

Rates increase vs population increase

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

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

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

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

Awareness of the proposal prior to the phone survey

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

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

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

Channels of awareness about New Rates 2021

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

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

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

Support for Council’s proposal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Support for Council's proposal by ward

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

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

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

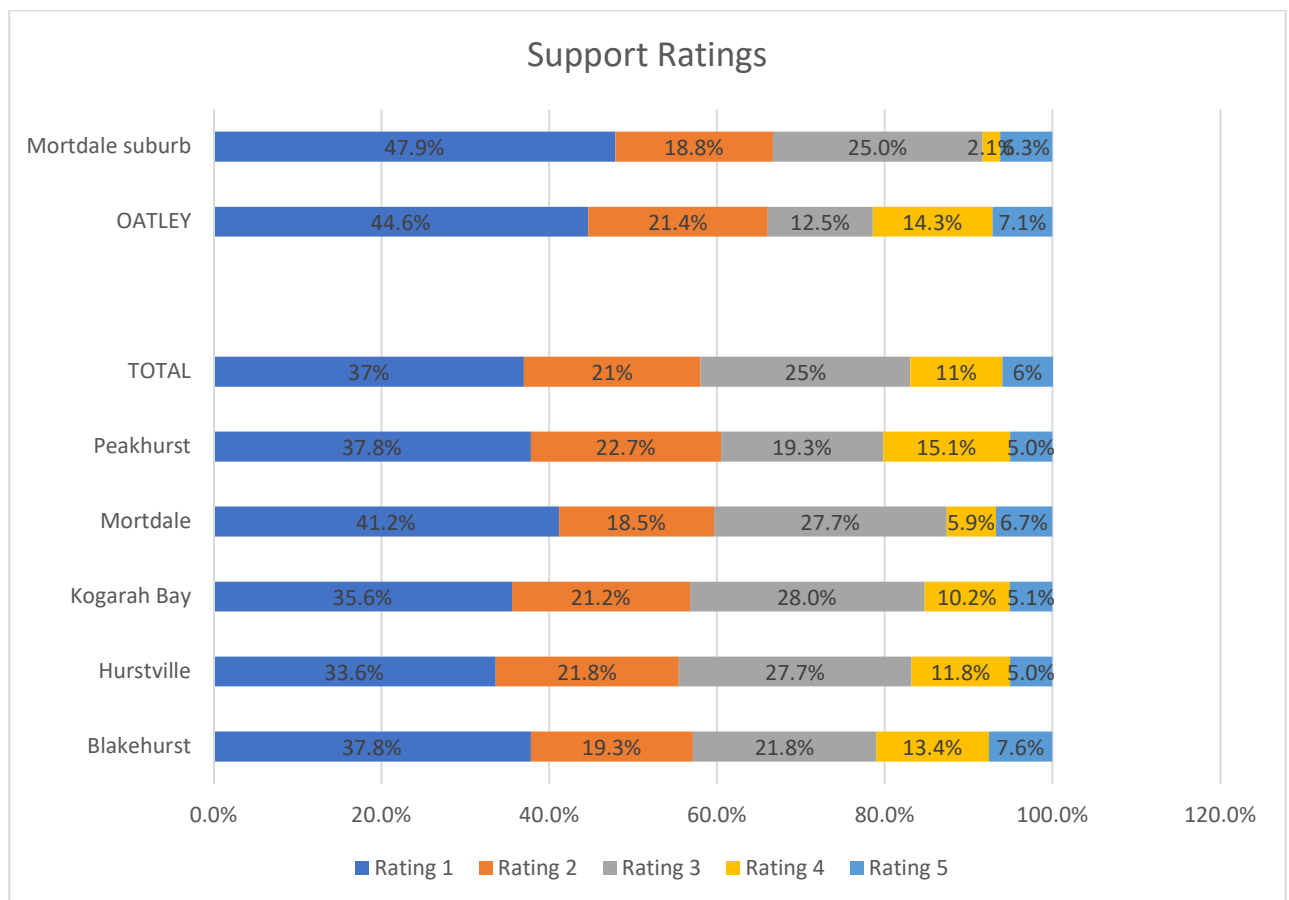


Figure 13: Level of support by Ward

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

Support for Council's proposal by age group

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

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

Support for Council’s proposal by gender

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

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

Support for Council's proposal by renter/owner status

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

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

Supportive 68.6% 38.5%

Support for Council's proposal by property type

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

	Apart', flat/ unit	%	Free-standing house	%	Townh'se, tce, semi, villa	%	Grand Total	%
1 - Not at all supportive	34	30.4%	165	39.8%	22	32.8%	221	37.2%
2	19	17.0%	94	22.7%	10	14.9%	123	20.7%
3	37	33.0%	91	21.9%	20	29.9%	148	24.9%
4	12	10.7%	44	10.6%	11	16.4%	67	11.3%
5 - Very supportive	10	8.9%	21	5.1%	4	6.0%	35	5.9%
Grand Total	112	100%	415	100.0%	67	100%	594	100%
%	18.9%		69.9%		11.3%		100%	
Supportive	52.7%		37.6%		52.2%			

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

Savings options

The areas which people most wish to keep are:

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

Services seen as least important to keep were:

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

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

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

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

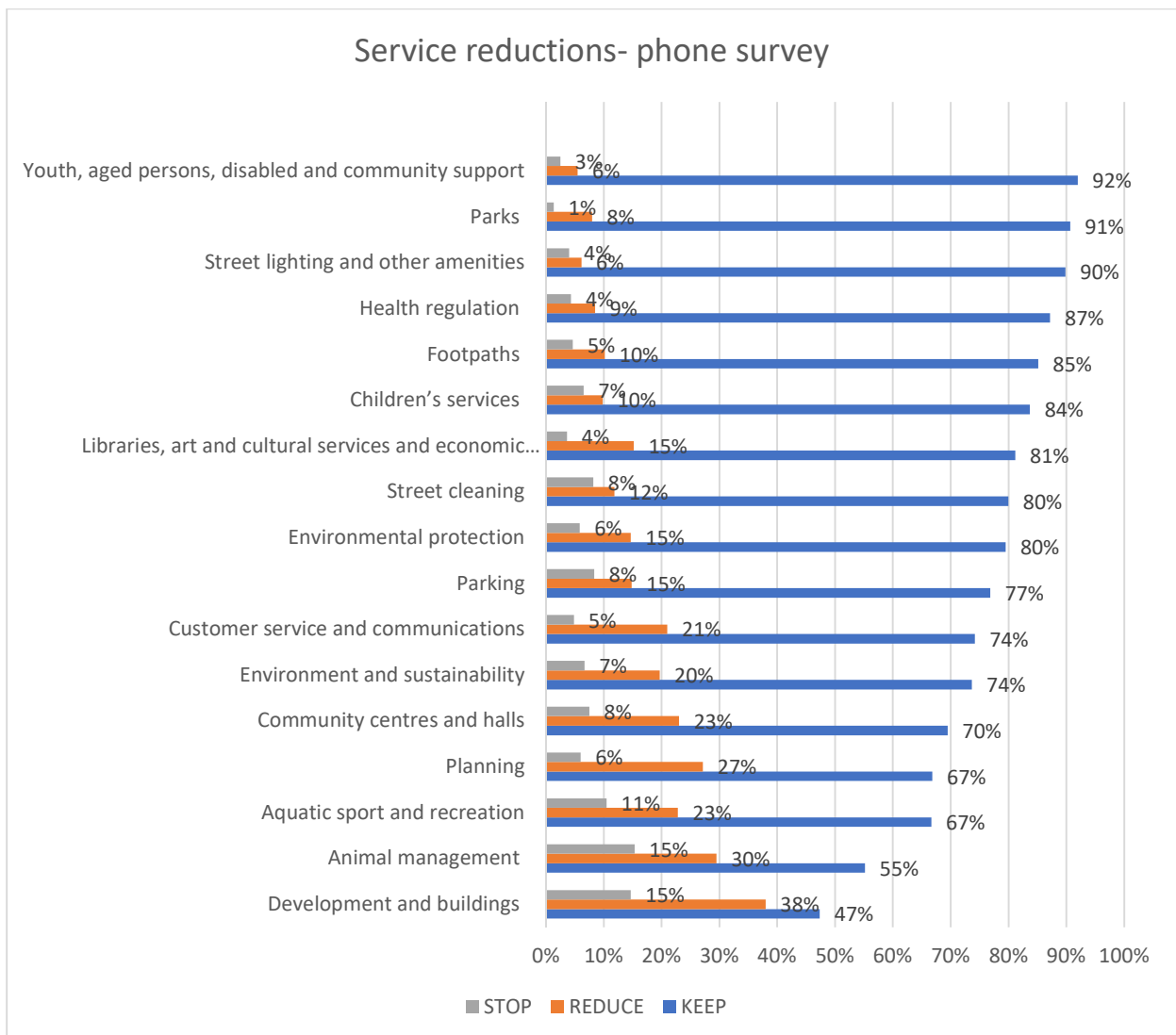


Figure 14: Service savings results

Additional savings areas

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

Some gave some positive feedback, for example:

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

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

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

Attachment 1: Copy of phone survey

GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL

NEW RATES 2021 SURVEY

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

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

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

IF NO, OFFER A CALL BACK

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

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

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK & TERMINATE

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

Yes	THANK & TERMINATE
No	CONTINUE

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

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

PART A – DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

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

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

ALLOCATE:

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

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

A2. Do you identify as...

Male	1
Female	2
Other	3
Prefer not to say	-

A3. What is your age?

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

PART B – NEW RATES

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

Yes	1
No	2

PREAMBLE TO Q2

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

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

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

Yes	1
No	2
Unsure	3

PREAMBLE TO Q3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yes	1
No	2

IF Q6 CODE 1

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

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

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

Yes	1
No	2

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

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

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

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

INCLUDE MORE INFO/GIVE FEEDBACK

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

Thanks, **that concludes the survey.** Thank you for your time and assistance. This market research is carried out in compliance with the Privacy Act, and the information you provided will be used only for research purposes.

The research has been conducted by IRIS Research (02 4285 4446) on behalf of XXXX.

My name is ***.

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

NOTE: If respondent wants the web address read out:

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

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

Have a great afternoon/evening.

Attachment 2: Rating number and comment themes

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

Quotes

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