



Community Consultation Report

Gunnedah Shire Council – Revised Proposed SRV

December 2024

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Executive Summary

Gunnedah Shire Council (GSC) is committed to providing quality services and infrastructure to its residents, ratepayers, and visitors in an efficient manner.

Like many councils in NSW, GSC has been impacted by the effects of high inflation, rising fuel and electricity costs, ongoing cost shifting from the state and federal governments, reduced 'real' financial support from other levels of government for operational works, including the fact that the rate peg has failed to keep up with the increase in Council's expenditure as well as the impacts of natural disasters such as drought, bushfires, and flooding.

It has led to Council facing a financially unsustainable outlook without an increase in funding and/or decrease in service levels. During the preparation of Council's Operational Plan and Budget for the 2024/25 financial year, which was endorsed on 19 June 2024, Council committed to having a conversation with the community regarding a potential Special Rate Variation (SRV) and undertook an initial engagement across August and September 2024.

The goals of the engagement were to:

- provide public awareness of Council's financial position and need for additional funding to maintain Council's Infrastructure at current service levels,
- provide understanding regarding the necessity of and potential impacts of an SRV
- provide understanding and service level impacts of not progressing with an SRV
- gauge the community's opinion for the potential SRV, knowing that in the current environment, any potential increase in rates was likely to face heavy resistance from ratepayers

The engagement was based around a potential SRV for a permanent increase of 38.88%, split over two years, comprising a 24% increase in year one ('25/26) and a 12% increase in year two ('26/27).

The key feedback from the community during this engagement was:

- The community does not want to pay higher rates (noting current difficult times and costs),
- The community does not want to see a reduction in service levels and wants to see an increase in some areas (especially in the condition of Council's roads),
- If an SRV is required, it should be for a smaller amount and/or phased in over a longer period to reduce the single year impact on residents and ratepayers (especially those on fixed incomes),
- The split of how an SRV is applied should be reviewed so the balance is right between the various rating categories of residential, business, farmland and mining,
- Council needs to ensure it is operating as efficiently as possible, is engaging with the community and is transparent in its decision-making, and
- Council needs to look at non-rate revenue that can help address the asset renewal gap and find a solution to ensure large SRVs are not needed in the future.

This information was presented to Council at an extraordinary meeting on 6 November 2024 along with six potential SRV options, developed including the community's feedback, for consideration.

At this meeting, Council made the decision to proceed with an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW (IPART) for a Special Rate Variation for a 37.67% cumulative increase to be implemented over two years and retained permanently, comprised of:

- A capped **15%** increase per year or **32.25%** cumulative increase applied to the **Residential, Business, Farmland** rating categories, and
- An **85.13%** cumulative increase applied to the **Mining** rating category.

At the same meeting, Council also resolved to:

- make application to increase Minimum rates in line with the proposed SRV, and
- strive to achieve **\$930,000** of savings and efficiency gains over the next three years with a report be brought to Council each May to outline progress.

The revised SRV proposal reduced the burden for the Residential, Business, Farmland rating categories by 6.63% to 32.25% over two years. Whilst there was strong support for no SRV indicated in the community feedback, there was equally strong support for levels of service to at least be maintained or even improved, which is not possible without an SRV.

Council considered six scenarios prior to endorsing the application for the 37.67% SRV and the below table shows how the community feedback influenced the decision on the revised SRV proposal.

Community Feedback	Influence on SRV Proposal
The community does not want to pay higher rates (noting current difficult times and costs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly heard, however, this is not an option whilst being financially responsible and undertaking appropriate asset maintenance and renewal. • Council is investigating options to consider freezing or limiting increases to Water, Sewerage and Waste annual charges to partly offset the SRV increase, should it be approved. Note that while these are all shown on the 'Rates and Charges' notice the SRV only applies to rates.
The community does not want to see a reduction in service levels and wants to see an increase in some areas (especially in the condition of Council's roads).	Clearly heard and the key factor in the scale of the revised proposed SRV and implementation timeframe, especially the ability to commence addressing the backlog of works with rising costs.
If an SRV is required, then it should be for a smaller amount and/or phased in over a longer period to reduce the single year impact on residents and ratepayers (especially those on fixed incomes).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed cumulative increase to residential, business and farmland rating categories reduced from 38.88% to 32.25%. • The proposed first year increase applicable to residential, business and farmland rating categories reduced from 24% to 15%.
The split of how an SRV is applied should be reviewed so the balance is right between the various rating categories of residential, business, farmland and mining.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed SRV implementation retained as two years to address the unrestricted cash position and commence addressing the backlog of works.
Council needs to ensure it is operating as efficiently as possible, is engaging with the community and is transparent in its decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The driver behind Council's decision that it strive to achieve \$930,000 of efficiency gains over the next three years. • Council has committed to regular public reporting on savings and efficiency gains and ongoing engagement with the community.
Council needs to look at non-rate revenue that can help address the asset renewal gap and find a solution to ensure large SRVs are not needed in the future.	Council is continuing to advocate that the State and Federal governments return total taxation revenue provided to Local Government for operational purposes to 1% of total taxation revenue, as this has reduced to approximately 0.55%.

Following this Council resolution, further engagement was undertaken between 7 November 2024 and 19 December 2024 based on the revised 37.67% SRV proposal.

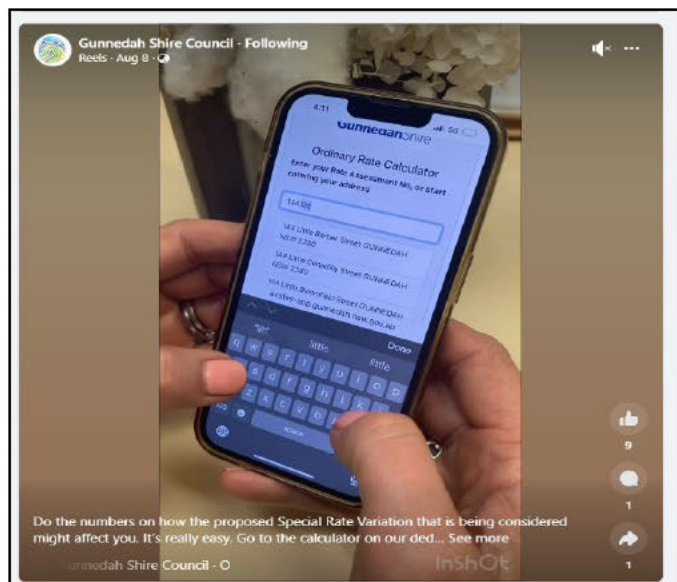
This report summarises the feedback received during the engagement period. It highlights prominent community questions and themes that arose during community consultations, particularly around affordability, services and economic sustainability.

How did we engage:



Having held numerous community engagement sessions during the first round of engagement and noting the time of year and feedback received, Council used a variety of methods and tools to engage with the community including:

- A letter to all ratepayers outlining the revised SRV being proposed,
- Social media including Facebook,
- Council’s website,
- Updated rates calculator accessible via Council’s website,
- Radio,
- Newspaper, and
- Media releases.



Who did we Reach?

Throughout the engagement process, we achieved the following reach:

Type of Engagement	Reach
Direct letter to ratepayers	6,451 ratepayers (over 10,000 property owners including shared property owners)
Council SRV webpage	214 views by 100 visitors
Social Media	2,386 post reach
News articles	Multiple articles across radio, TV and print
Media releases and media calls	Significant community reach



What did the Community tell us

In summary, Council sent letters to over 6,000 ratepayers and received 27 formal submissions regarding the revised SRV proposal. The key points of feedback were similar to those raised during the initial engagement process along with additional feedback with respect to the disproportionate increases for the mining sector given the importance this sector has for the Gunnedah Shire.

The key points of the feedback were:

- The community does not want an increase in rates given the current cost of living challenges,
- The community wants/expects to see an improvement in Council services (roads in particular),
- Rural ratepayers, particularly farmers, and those living within the outlying villages, expressed concern, and in some cases anger, about paying higher rates with limited visible benefits, especially regarding road maintenance and other critical infrastructure, they suggested the increased rate burden associated with the special rate variation should be more highly attributed to ratepayers closer to or in the Gunnedah township e.g. residential ratepayers
- Council should tighten its belt and reduce its expense rather than just raising rates, and
- They want Council to ensure it has the right balance of indoor/outdoor staff and Council needs to ensure it is operating as efficiently as possible.

These points are in addition to those items raised in the initial engagement which included:

- The community wants to see increased engagement and transparency. It was also noted that there is lots of information available to the community that can be accessed
- The community wants/expects to see an improvement in Council communications (response to customer requests in particular)
- The mining sector should be paying a larger portion of Council's rate base.
- Council needs to find other (non-rate) methods to raise revenue rather than just raising rates
- Address the NSW local government sustainability root cause issues that have led to the SRV requirements and work with the community to address the ineffectiveness of the rate peg process and seek increased funding from the state and federal government
- Important to note only 26% of the 38.88% is above the rate peg that will occur regardless of SRV

What common questions did the Community ask?

- What is Council doing to ensure it is operating as efficiency as possible?
- What is Council doing to improve its roads management?
- How can Council justify raising rates with the wider higher cost of living?
- What is the rationale for the disproportionate increase for the mining sector?
- Is it true Council's rates purely pay for staff wages?
- What are the costs for the funding/spending on the Airport, Saleyards, Koala Sanctuary and the Dog Park? and have there been cost blow outs as raised by some community members.

- The community letter states the increase will not apply to Water, Sewerage and Waste Charges. How is this fair to farmers who do not benefit like business and residential occupants that are town located?

Conclusion of Executive Summary

Council committed to having a conversation with the community about ensuring its financial sustainability and this included a discussion for a potential SRV. Council used many methods and channels to provide many opportunities for the community to provide feedback.

The feedback from the first round of engagement was presented to the newly elected Council on the 6th of November 2024 and a second round of engagement was undertaken between the 7th of November and the 19th of December 2024. To ensure Council engaged with all ratepayers, Council sent a dedicated letter to all ratepayers outlining the revised SRV proposal. This letter, sent to over 6,000 ratepayers resulted in 27 formal submissions to Council.

As with the initial engagement, emotion came into the discussion when it was canvassed that the matter of addressing these higher costs would require a large rate rise (i.e. if the increased costs were addressed through increased state and/or federal government grants, there was less discussion).

The key feedback regarding the potential SRV of 37.67% implemented over two years was;

- The community does not want an increase in rates given the current cost of living challenges,
- The community wants/expects to see an improvement in Council services (roads in particular),
- Rural ratepayers, particularly a number of farmers, expressed concern, and in some cases anger, about paying higher rates with limited visible benefits, especially regarding road maintenance. They suggested the increased rate burden associated with the SRV should be more attributed on a user pays model and allocated to residential ratepayers, and
- Council should tighten its belt and reduce its expense rather than just raising rates, and they want Council to ensure it is operating as efficiently as possible and has the right balance of indoor/outdoor staff.

It is important to note that with the reduced impact for the residential, business and farmland categories in the revised proposal (down from 38.88% to 32.25%), it was expected there would be limited feedback from many parts of the community and no feedback was expected from those areas that showed support for the original SRV proposal (39% of the independent phone survey respondents “**somewhat supportive**” of the proposed 38.88% SRV option).

While questions were raised about Council being as efficient as possible and questioned the use of contractors compared to using internal staff, most people were understanding that Council’s costs have gone up significantly due to recent inflation rises.

As with the initial feedback, the feedback provided by the community indicated a clear view of not wanting a rate rise combined a clear expectation of no service level reduction. Without additional funding, maintaining current service levels will not be possible.

The key is achieving the right balance of rates and service levels that will ultimately result in a sustainable Council providing quality services and infrastructure that the current and future residents of Gunnedah expect and deserve.

Engagement Methodology

Engagement Approach

The Community Consultation and Engagement Plan was designed and delivered following Gunnedah Shire Council’s Engagement Framework to inform and consult the community on the impact of the proposed SRV and the repercussions of not applying for an SRV at this time. Key focus areas of this framework include social justice principles: equity, access, participation and rights. The framework is also guided by key elements of, and in accordance with, the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). These elements are:

- **Inform** – giving information to the local community
- **Consult** – seeking feedback from the local community
- **Involve** – working directly with the local community
- **Collaborate** – create partnerships with the local community to produce recommendations and solutions
- **Empower** – putting final decision-making into the hands of the community

How the IAP2 elements guide Community Consultation:

These key elements are instrumental in shaping effective community consultation processes. Promoting meaningful engagement with stakeholders, as well as emphasizing transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness. The framework provides a structured approach, helping to ensure community voices are heard and considered in decision-making, fostering trust and collaboration between Council and local constituents.

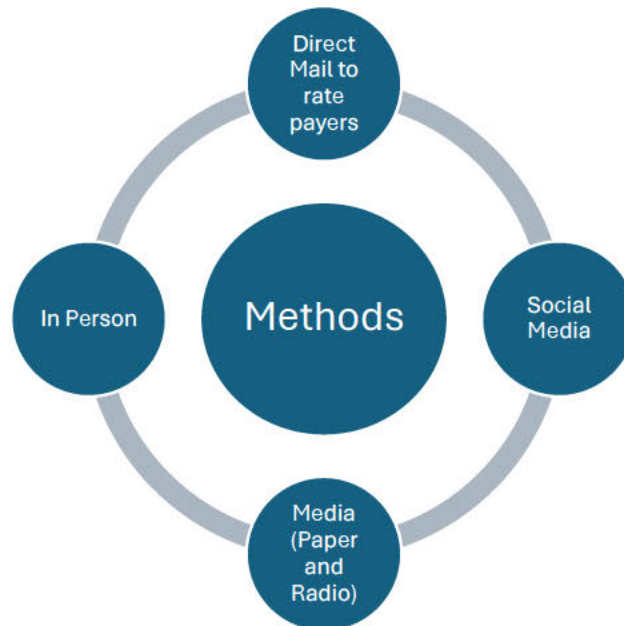
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
Promise to Public	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide

Key Community Stakeholders

The community consultation and engagement sessions were designed to reach as many parts of the community as possible and to ensure a diverse array of voices from the community could be heard. To achieve this, key stakeholder groupings were identified (below), each encompassing various demographics.

Stakeholder Group	Considerations
Residential ratepayers	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders.
Rural ratepayers	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders.
Residential renters	Landlords will be responsible for determining if rate increases are passed on to renters.
Landlord ratepayers	Landlords will be responsible for determining if rate increases are passed on to renters.
Business property owners	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders. Where commercial leases are in place, it will depend on the contract terms as to whether and when any increase will be passed to tenants.
Community stakeholders	Community groups, sports and recreation groups, environmental groups, cultural groups and local business have a direct interest in their members/residents and therefore need to understand why Council is proposing an SRV.

Communication and Engagement Methods



The community engagement sessions were undertaken over a six-week period from the 7th of November 2024 to the 19th of December 2024. Using an integrated engagement approach, Council provided members of the community with access to information and the opportunity to engage in the conversation.

With this being the second round of engagement, the approach varied from the first round to maximise the opportunity to communicate with as many ratepayers as possible.

To ensure Council engaged with all ratepayers, Council sent a dedicated letter to all ratepayers outlining the revised SRV proposal.

This letter was sent, either via email or by physical letter, to all ratepayers (over 6,000 letters).

GSC social media channels provided updated posts in relation to requesting feedback on the revised proposal during the period.

The landing page on Council's website was updated to reflect the revised Proposed SRV, including essential elements such as 'Frequently Asked Questions' and a Rates Calculator App where ratepayers could input their details and receive an estimate of their rates if the SRV was to be applied for and approved by IPART at the proposed percentage (see <https://www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au/index.php/council/the-future-of-gunnedah/proposed-special-rate-variation>).

The information the original SRV remained on the website for viewers to use for comparison purposes.

The Proposed SRV web page received **100** visitors and **214** views over the engagement period, with multiple ratepayers utilising the Rates Calculator App.

Apart from the engagement methods outlined above, the option of making a written submission via Council's website, email or letter was also made available and promoted. Council received **27 submissions** via these methods.

The overarching goal of having a planned approach to community consultation and engagement was to ensure the community was made aware of the opportunities to engage with Council on the potential SRV, and to provide an easy and accessible way to supply Council with informed feedback.

A key focus of the engagement approach was to ensure Council reached as many ratepayers and residents as possible, to provide sufficient coverage and affording as many community members as possible an opportunity to participate.

Direct Letter to Ratepayers

To ensure Council engaged with all ratepayers, Council sent a dedicated letter to all ratepayers outlining the revised SRV proposal.

This letter was sent, either via email or by physical letter, to over 6,000 ratepayers.

A copy of this letter is attached as Appendix A of the attachments

Public Relations

Following the Council meeting on the 6th of November a media release was made on the morning of the 7th of November.

<https://www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au/index.php/council/keep-in-touch/latest-news-media/item/2764-council-determines-special-rate-variation-srv>

Media Coverage

Considering the coverage from the first round of engagement along with the relevance of the SRV topic due to several neighbouring Councils having recently undertaken SRVs, (Tamworth Regional Council recently announced an SRV – 14th May), and the potential impact on Gunnedah’s residents, local media interest was high.

Gunnedah Times:

Report on the options being considered by Council

<https://gunnedahtimes.com.au/2024/11/07/all-options-on-the-table-for-shires-proposed-special-rate-variation/>

Report on Councils decision for proposed SRV

<https://gunnedahtimes.com.au/2024/11/07/gunnedah-shire-council-makes-decision-on-special-rate-variation/>

New England Times:

<https://www.netimes.com.au/2024/11/14/gunnedah-shire-council-welcomes-submissions-for-special-rate-variation/>

Date - 2024	Media Coverage - GSC Potential SRV
7 th November	Gunnedah Times article - https://gunnedahtimes.com.au/2024/11/07/gunnedah-shire-council-makes-decision-on-special-rate-variation/
13 th November	New England Times article - https://www.netimes.com.au/2024/11/14/gunnedah-shire-council-welcomes-submissions-for-special-rate-variation/
15 th November	Gunnedah Times article - https://gunnedahtimes.com.au/2024/11/15/difficult-decision-for-gunnedah-council-on-rate-rise/
15 th November	Gunnedah Times article - https://gunnedahtimes.com.au/2024/11/15/compromise-reached-for-proposed-gunnedah-rate-rise/

Radio

To complement the direct letter and online engagement, radio was also utilised to spread the message.

ABC Radio Breakfast held an interview with Mayor Councillor Colleen Fuller on 8/11/2024 following the Council’s resolution on the 6th of November 2024.

TV

To complement the direct letter and online engagement, television was also utilised to spread the message.

Channel Seven Tamworth news journalist James Carter interviewed Mayor Cr Colleen Fuller outside Council chambers on 8/11/2024.

Social Media

Gunnedah Shire Council utilised its existing social media platforms to boost online engagement and increase awareness about feedback opportunities.

Council posted multiple Facebook updates informing the community about various aspects of the proposed special rate variation, including promotion of the website information page, how to access the rates calculator.

The Facebook posts had a collective reach of more than 2,386.

Date - 2024	Social Media Posts - GSC Potential SRV
7 th November	GSC social posts: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15fg69aDgk/ 1 Facebook post – Community wide post
13 th November	GSC social posts: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1A5dd4fyx3/ 1 Facebook post – Community wide post
17 th December	https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=894731369516109&id=100069377612219&_rdr

Frequently Asked Questions

The second round of engagement raised several of the same questions that were asked during the first round of engagement.

Additional questions raised during the second set of submissions include:

Q. There appears very little has been done to streamline operations or to outline cost saving ideas?

Response: Council runs the following processes to improve operations and/or reduce risk:

1. A formal service program,
2. An internal audit program,
3. An annual financial external audit,
4. Continuous improvement opportunity reviews as resources allow.

Q. Is the total amount of rates purely used to pay staff wages?

Response: No, whilst the value of Council's rates income is similar in size to Council's total wages bill, Council receives non-rate income for the wages that pay a significant portion of wages (for example, the Go-Co wages are fully self-funded).

Q. What is the breakdown of spending on the airport? How much were the grants? What's the upkeep? Why did Council invest so much money in the Gunnedah airport when there's no commercial airline operating and it's unlikely, they ever will?

Response: The information related to the funding of this project is provided in the community presentation pack from the first round of engagement.

Q. What is the breakdown of spending on the Koala Sanctuary? And how much will it cost the community (Council) to maintain this?

Response: The information related to the funding of the construction of this project is provided in the community presentation pack from the first round of engagement.

The operating costs are being finalised as the agreement with the operator is finalised. This information, once finalised, will be included in Council's future operational plans and budgets.

Q. What do the mines contribute? Do we have costs of mining impacts and can VPAs be publicly released? Should mines pay a greater overall proportion of rates?

Response: The mining rates paid is provided in Council's operational plans. The VPAs were set by the State government approvals (to which Council had made a submission).

The revised proposal has the mines paying a larger portion of rates; however, it is important the contribution is appropriate, and the right balance of rates and investment is achieved.

Q. How are you ensuring you capture everyone in your community consultation?

Response: A direct letter has been sent to all ratepayers with the details of the revised SRV proposal. This was supplemented with social media posts, radio and media releases.

Correction of comments in submission

A number of statements were made in the submissions that were not correct. These are reflected in the table below with the associated response.

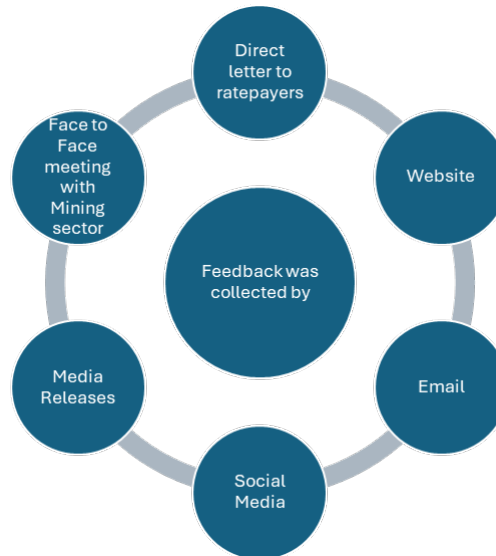
Comment in Submission	Response
<p>The rate payers have already made it very clear we are all opposed and disgusted at the thought of an exorbitant rate rise and cost to our business that brings us NOTHING in return! To rub salt into the wound we have a General Manager that after hiding behind the wasted money spent on consultancy firms to liaise with us has the hide to big note and pat yourself on the back that you have changed the rate rise from 38.88% to 32.25%. Wow how good are you? But then you add on the approved rate peg of 4.7% and 3.5% to total 37.67%.</p>	<p>For residential, business and farmland rates the revised value has reduced from 38.88% to 32.25%.</p> <p>The 32.25% value includes the rate peg values. The rate peg value is not added to the 32.25% as implied in the submission.</p> <p>The decrease from 38.88% to 37.67% is across Councils total rate base change.</p>
<p>Good on you and thanks for insulting me by ignoring all previous letters and then pretending to have our best interests at heart for knocking off a grand total of 1.21% from the 38.88%.</p>	<p>For residential, business and farmland rates the revised value has reduced from 38.88% to 32.25%.</p> <p>The 32.25% value includes the rate peg values. The rate peg value is not added to the 32.25% as implied in the submission.</p> <p>The decrease from 38.88% to 37.67% is across the total rate base change.</p>
<p>Don't trust that the funds, if the SRV is approved, will be spent on Roads. Comment made it will be spent on wages.</p>	<p>The application is required to state where the funds will be spent and this needs to be reported to the community in its annual report.</p> <p>A portion may be spent on wages, but that portion must be related to the works committed to by the SRV.</p>

Consultation Process, Key Themes and Feedback

Consultation

Having held numerous community engagement sessions during the first round of engagement and noting the time of year and feedback received, Council used a variety of methods and tools to engage with the community including:

- A letter to all ratepayers outlining the revised SRV being proposed,
- Social media including Facebook,
- Council’s website
- Updated rates calculator accessible from Council’s website
- Radio
- Newspaper, and
- Media releases



Key Themes

Service Delivery and Efficiency Concerns

Many community members felt the services they receive are insufficient compared to the rates they are paying currently. Rural ratepayers, particularly farmers, and those living within the outlying villages, expressed concern about paying higher rates with limited visible benefits, especially regarding road maintenance and other critical infrastructure. It was noted that while they have access to all of Council’s services, they do not use most of these services.

A common concern raised by rural ratepayers was around their perception of the unsatisfactory condition of their unsealed rural roads and the lack of frequency of maintenance of these roads, such as road grading. Many of those in attendance at the session felt their local unsealed roads were being maintained less than ever before, and were in very poor condition, in their opinion.

Multiple comments shared by those in consultation reflected a frustration with Council operations, expressing their perception around Council staffing and resource allocation. Some locals felt Council workers were not operating as efficiently as possible, with a particular focus on the perceived growth in numbers of indoor staff (i.e. those based within the Elgin Street office) and expressing a wish to see more investment on outdoor Council workers who were perceived to be the staff who were able to fix infrastructure such as roads.

Internal Council operations and efficiency was often called into question at the start of consultation sessions, with residents calling for internal reviews to reduce costs and improve accountability, before asking rate payers to meet the shortfall, by way of an SRV.

Questions regarding project costs and the use of Contractors

Projects such as the Gunnedah Airport, the Koala Sanctuary and the Saleyards were commonly raised by community members, due to the significant size of the expenditure, versus the perceived usage and value of the facility by the wider public.

The submissions also raised dissatisfaction around Council's use of contractors even though during the first round of engagement, Council was very open around the use of contractors, explaining the benefit of the skills and independent support the contractors bring, and the ultimate savings brought by not having to incur the costs of employing them in full time employment.

A small number of community members raised concerns over the high operational costs attributed to Council staff, including questions around staff being based in Tamworth and being supplied a work vehicle to travel back and forth to work each day, wages of Council workers was also raised, as was the wage of the General Manager. There were concerns about the number of Council employees and whether their roles were necessary and/or productive.

There was a response advising that Council's structure and efficiency is reviewed regularly with a view of maximising Council's resources while meeting Council's statutory obligations and meeting as many of the community's expectations as possible.

Perception of Inequity

Dissatisfaction around the perceived imbalance of services between Gunnedah and the surrounding villages contributed to the negative sentiment towards the proposed SRV.

Feedback indicated residents in the villages, particularly the farmland ratepayers, felt they paid a high level of rates for the infrastructure in their local areas (e.g., lack of sewer, stormwater drainage, and public amenities with disability access) compared to the larger townships. These examples were given in comparison to Gunnedah's parks and community infrastructure such as the new dog park, swimming pool complex, library and civic precinct.

There is a clear feeling amongst rural ratepayers, especially farmers, that they are shouldering what they believe is a disproportionate burden of rate increases while receiving fewer services in return. Rural residents voiced concern that they feel they're being unfairly impacted compared to other sectors of the community, such as mining or village residents, and suggested the percentage mix of rate contributions should be reconsidered. There was also a clear message from the broader rate base that the mining sector should be paying a larger portion of Council's rate base.

The flip side of this discussion is that the rural ratepayers use a larger portion of certain assets per ratepayers (e.g., there are a number of roads that may service as few as 2-3 households).

It was also raised that Mining is extremely important to the Gunnedah region and that this proposed rise will mean that the mining ratepayers will be paying a disproportionate amount of Council's rate base and that the right balance of mining rates and mining investment needs to be found.

Community Submissions

Community members were encouraged to submit questions and feedback to Gunnedah Shire Council in relation to the proposed SRV. The Council's request for feedback further demonstrates Council's intention to hear from the community throughout the consultation and engagement process, providing another method of gathering insights to inform future decision-making.

A total of 27 formal submissions were received by council via email, typed and handwritten letter (redacted submissions in Appendix F of the attachments).

The submissions, some of which included assumptions which were not correct, showed six recurring themes:

Key Themes

Opposition to Rate Increase

Of the 27 submissions received, most expressed strong opposition to the proposed rate rise, citing concerns about the impact on farmers and businesses already facing financial strain.

Several correspondents express anger and disbelief at the scale of the proposed rate increases, especially given the limited services received in rural areas.

Dissatisfaction with Infrastructure

A recurring point raised by rate payers who made submissions, was that the primary service utilised by them is road maintenance.

Submitters feel the roads are in a poor state for the existing rates they pay and reiterate these roads are critical for their livelihoods. Many emails mention opinions around the inadequate upkeep and ordinary condition of roads and infrastructure.

Demand for Accountability for Councils operations and Management

Submitters questioned the Council's efficiency and spending, including the use of consultants and current Council staffing levels. Submissions made suggestions that cost-cutting measures within Council should be prioritised over raising rates within the Shire.

There was a recurring sentiment from submitters that they, as business operators who run business and farming operations across the district, so too should the Council take a similar approach and run Council operations like a business.

Inequity of Service Delivery

Many submissions were from rural landholders and stated they feel they're subsidising services they don't use in town (like parks and arts facilities) and want a more equitable system that focuses funding on essential services more relevant to their locality, like road maintenance.

Conclusion

During this second round of engagement period regarding a potential SRV for Gunnedah Shire, a more targeted variety of engagement methods were utilised to reach as many people in our community as possible.

The engagement supplemented the first round of engagement and clearly outlined;

1. how Council listened to the community,
2. how the feedback has been considered, and
3. Council's revised position including the feedback

The engagement methods included a direct letter to all ratepayers, a media releases to the local outlets, comprehensive digital resources including custom rates calculator; radio interviews and print editorial coverage.

The multiple engagement methods used, particularly the direct mail out to all ratepayers, ensured the greatest possible number of residents and ratepayers were able to access information on the proposed SRV and were afforded the opportunity to seek further understanding and provide feedback.

Submissions for feedback were available via phone, social media, in person via one-on-one conversations, online website landing page form, email, and through printed feedback forms.

Overall, the general feedback landed on four key points and largely mirrored that of the first round of engagement.

The first is, as expected and understandable, that ratepayers do want to pay higher rates.

The second is that the community want to see improved services from Council and in particular, improved roads and improved responses to customer enquiries.

The third was focused on Council's operations and ensuring Council is operating as lean and transparent and efficient as possible.

The fourth point was related to the appropriateness of how the rates are recovered across the various rating categories.

Unfortunately, the first and second points conflict with each other in that to significantly improve service levels, additional and sustainable funding is required.

By sending a letter to all ratepayers, Council ensured it engaged with all ratepayers and provided the largest opportunity for meaningful community feedback.

As outlined earlier in the report, it is important to note that with the reduced impact for the residential, business and farmland categories in the revised proposal (down from 38.88% to 32.25%), it was expected there would be limited feedback from many parts of the community and no feedback was expected from those areas that showed support for the original SRV proposal

(39% of the independent phone survey respondents “**somewhat supportive**” of the proposed 38.88% SRV option).

While questions were raised about Council being as efficient as possible and questioned the use of contractors compared to using internal staff, most people were understanding that Council’s costs have gone up significantly due to recent inflation rises.

As with the initial feedback, the feedback provided by the community indicated a clear view of not wanting a rate rise combined a clear expectation of no service level reduction. Without additional funding, maintaining current service levels will not be possible.

A significant portion of the farmland discussion was the focus on local roads and maintenance of those roads and key infrastructure. Farmers and primary producers were particularly frustrated by the idea of paying more rates, and readily expressed how the state of their local roads is a constant source of frustration for them given they rely upon them every day - to live, to do business, and to safely access their properties, and wanted to see an improved level of service. There was also a common theme that those paying farmland rates do not use most of the services available in town and as such they don’t value the contribution their rates make towards those services.

It is also very important work with the mining sector to get the right balance of the sectors contribution. Whilst the first round outlined the community wanting to see the mining sector pay a larger portion of the Council’s rates, which is reflected in the revised proposal, the feedback from the second round noted the importance of not having the mining sector pay a disproportionate amount of rates and having the right balance of rates and investment for the sector noting one of the submissions clearly states *“Proposals for the mining sector to bear the disproportionate burden of cumulative rates increases of 85.13 per cent - extraordinarily beyond the rate peg of 5.6 per cent for 2024/25 set by IPART – appear to be based on the assumption that the mining sector has the capacity to bear this additional cost, and it will not have any unintended consequences”*

Overall, whilst the feedback provided by the community indicated a strong view of not wanting to pay more rates, there was also a clear view that the community does not want to see any service level reduction and, in most cases, wants to see improved services, improved evidence of Council’s operational efficiency and an equitable distribution of Council’s rates across all categories.

This provides an opportunity for Council to be better engaged with locals around key financial decision making. There is also an opportunity to further educate the community around the benefits of attending Council meetings, accessing the information available and encouraging community to be more actively engaged with their locally elected Councillors.

Without additional funding, maintaining current service levels will not be possible. The key is to find the right and most acceptable balance that will ultimately result in a sustainable Council that provides quality services and infrastructure that the current and future residents of Gunnedah expect and deserve.

APPENDIX 1: Frequently Asked Questions from Jul-Sept Consultation

Across the many community consultation sessions held during the period, several of the same questions were asked. During every session, the community was invited to ask questions and interact with Council's representatives (Executive, staff and external support), fostering an open and proactive conversation around the potential for an SRV and the related implications.

As a result of these commonly asked questions, and to help answer them in a more visual sense during the community sessions, the GSC SRV Information Presentation was regularly updated to include details regarding items that the community wanted more information about (see Appendix L). For example, details were commonly sought on projects such as the Gunnedah Saleyards upgrade, the Airport, and the Koala Sanctuary.

Here are some examples of questions asked at the consultation sessions that weren't already captured on the FAQs on the landing page:

Q. Why wasn't this bought up sooner? If we were in this situation for some time, why hasn't the community heard about it sooner?

Response: This has been raised during previous plans, however, the recent significant cost increases and the need to be proactive with managing Council's poor cash position outlook has required the matter to be addressed in the near future.

Q. Can the SRV be spread over a longer period to make it easier on ratepayers?

Response: Yes, any potential increase could be implemented over a longer period of time. It is important to note that the longer the implementation period, the larger the negative impact on Council's cash position.

Q. Why weren't our rates gradually raised over each year of the past ten years to avoid this big rate rise?

Response: The current SRV process does not allow for this. This type of approach could be considered for the future and has been suggested as a part addressing the rate peg review.

Q. Are these the only four options (referring to options on presentation)?

Response: No, the four options supplied in the [GSC – Community SRV Information Pack](#) can be changed and adapted to suit the direction the community wants to move forward in.

Q. Do you have a breakdown of what amount from Council rates is currently spent on the community?

Response: Yes, Council's budget detail is provided in the operational plan and more detailed information can be provided on request.

Q. If we had to sell assets, what assets would be sold? How much percentage would that account for?

Response: This is yet to be determined and would require further community consultation before any decisions could be made.

Q. Does the community get a say in what community services get cut if SRV doesn't go ahead?

Response: Yes, if the SRV does not go ahead, the community will have a say in what services they would like to be cut/reduced. Further community consultation will take place to gather feedback to inform Council which services the community would like to see cut/reduced.

Q. How much money is being spent on staff wages? (relating to GoCo as well as general internal/external Council staff wages)?

Response: Council's budget detail is provided in the operational plan and more detailed information can be provided on request.

Q. What is the breakdown of spending on the airport? How much were the grants? What's the upkeep? Why did Council invest so much money in the Gunnedah airport when there's no commercial airline operating and it's unlikely, they ever will?

Response: The information related to the funding of this project is provided in the community presentation pack along with the project benefits and consequences of not proceeding with the project.

Q. What is the breakdown of spending on the Koala Sanctuary? And how much will it cost the community (Council) to maintain this?

Response: The information related to the funding of the construction of this project is provided in the community presentation pack along with the community benefits expected to be realised from the project. The operating costs are being finalised as the agreement with the operator is finalised. This information, once finalised, will be included in Council's future operational plans and budgets.

Q. What do the mines contribute? Do we have costs of mining impacts and can VPAs be publicly released? Should mines pay a greater overall proportion of rates?

Response: The mining rates paid is provided in Council's operational plans. The VPAs were set by the State Government approvals (to which Council had made a submission). VPAs are publicly accessible under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

Q. How are you ensuring you capture everyone in your community consultation?

Response: We have used several communication methods including an independent phone survey that is designed to achieve a >90% level of confidence in the response representing the community's views. In addition, Council also used Community Information Sessions both in Gunnedah and the surrounding villages along with radio, TV, print and social media methods.

Q. Why do we say the increase is 38.88% when the increase associated with the SRV above the rate peg is 26%? Response: The IPART process requires Council to engage based on the full value of the potential rate rise, inclusive of the rate peg component that will occur regardless of an SRV application.

Q. Can these community sessions continue after the election?

Response: Yes. This is the first phase of community consultation. Once the new Council is elected, they will be presented with the initial consultation report, along with the financials from

Council Executive. Councillors will then discuss and determine whether or not to apply for an SRV. Once that decision is made, there will be further consultation with the community.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Direct letter to ratepayers

Gunnedah
Shire Council



29 November 2024

Dear Ratepayer

Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase

Like many councils across NSW, Gunnedah Shire Council is facing the difficulty of maintaining its infrastructure and services within our existing income levels. Our long-term financial projections show that we are currently operating with an average \$3.1 million annual deficit in the General Fund.

This essentially means that we are spending \$3.1 million per annum less than we should be to maintain our assets and services to our current targeted service levels.

The Gunnedah Shire is a wonderful place to live, work and visit and maintaining our assets and services is essential to retaining the high quality of life we enjoy as residents, businesses, investors and tourists.

Council recently undertook an extensive community engagement process regarding a potential Special Rate Variation (SRV) driven by a need to address our financial and asset sustainability.

The additional income generated by the SRV would ensure Council has sufficient funds to maintain and renew its assets and address the backlog of works.

We have listened to the community's feedback and, at a meeting held on 6 November 2024, Council made the difficult but necessary decision to proceed with an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW (IPART) for a Special Rate Variation that is an overall 37.67% cumulative increase to be implemented over two years and retained permanently, comprised of:

- A capped 15% increase per year or 32.25% cumulative increase applied to the **Residential, Business, Farmland** rating categories, and
- An 85.13% cumulative increase applied to the **Mining** rating category.

At the same meeting, Council also resolved to:

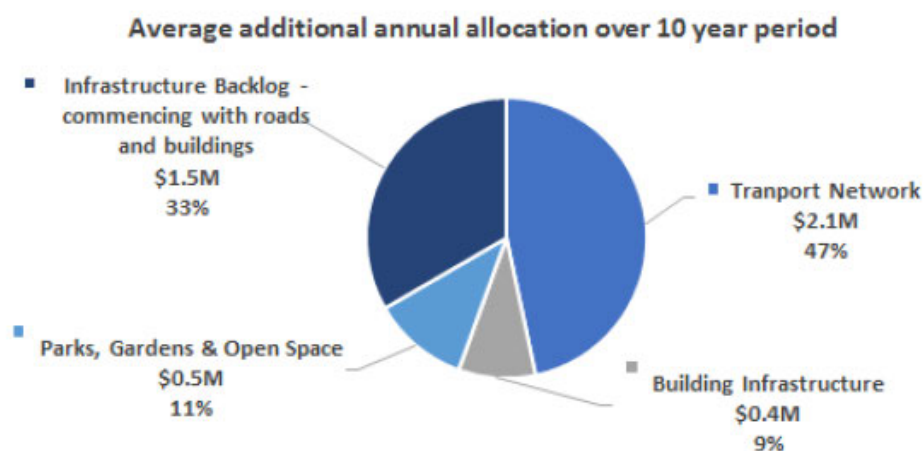
- make application to increase Minimum rates in line with the proposed SRV, and
- strive to achieve \$930,000 of savings and efficiency gains over the next three years along with a report to Council each May to outline progress.

If Council's application is successful, the SRV would be implemented over the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years.

The current SRV proposal is lower for Residential, Business, Farmland rating categories than what was previously consulted on. In the original SRV proposal, these rating categories would have experienced an increase of 38.88% over two years. Under the revised SRV proposal we have been able to reduce the burden for these rating categories by 6.63% to 32.25% over two years.

Whilst there was strong support for no SRV indicated in the community feedback, there was equally strong support for levels of service to at least be maintained or even improved, which is not possible without an SRV.

The proposed SRV would generate additional revenue to address the maintenance and renewal of Council's assets and address our unsustainable unrestricted cash forecast. The graph below shows the annual allocation of the additional funding that would be generated by the proposed SRV following the two-year implementation period.



Council considered six scenarios prior to endorsing the application for the 37.67% SRV and the below table shows how the community feedback influenced the decision on the revised SRV proposal.

Council considered six scenarios prior to endorsing the application for the 37.67% SRV and the below table shows how the community feedback influenced the decision on the revised SRV proposal.

Community Feedback	Influence on SRV Proposal
The community does not want to pay higher rates (noting current difficult times and costs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly heard, however, this is not an option whilst being financially responsible and undertaking appropriate asset maintenance and renewal. Council is investigating options to consider freezing or limiting increases to Water, Sewerage and Waste annual charges to partly offset the SRV increase, should it be approved. Note that while these are all shown on the 'Rates and Charges' notice the SRV only applies to rates.
The community does not want to see a reduction in service levels and wants to see an increase in some areas (especially in the condition of Council's roads).	Clearly heard and the key factor in the scale of the revised proposed SRV and implementation timeframe, especially the ability to commence addressing the backlog of works with rising costs.
If an SRV is required, then it should be for a smaller amount and/or phased in over a longer period to reduce the single year impact on residents and ratepayers (especially those on fixed incomes).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed cumulative increase to residential, business and farmland rating categories reduced from 38.88% to 32.25%. The proposed first year increase applicable to residential, business and farmland rating categories reduced from 24% to 15%.
The split of how an SRV is applied should be reviewed so the balance is right between the various rating categories of residential, business, farmland and mining.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed SRV implementation retained as two years to address the unrestricted cash position and commence addressing the backlog of works.
Council needs to ensure it is operating as efficiently as possible, is engaging with the community and is transparent in its decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The driver behind Council's decision that it strive to achieve \$930,000 of efficiency gains over the next three years. Council has committed to regular public reporting on savings and efficiency gains and ongoing engagement with the community.
Council needs to look at non-rate revenue that can help address the asset renewal gap and find a solution to ensure large SRVs are not needed in the future.	Council is continuing to advocate that the State and Federal governments return total taxation revenue provided to Local Government for operational purposes to 1% of total taxation revenue, as this has reduced to approximately 0.55%.

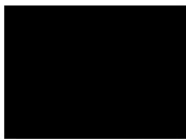
Council would like to hear from the community regarding this revised proposal and we invite you to provide your views on the revised SRV proposal by **5pm Thursday, 19 December 2024**.

Following this engagement, Council will prepare, finalise and lodge applications to IPART to apply for a Special Rate Variation and Minimum rate increase. A copy of the application and submissions from the revised proposal will be formally presented to Council in January 2025 prior to lodgement with IPART by 3 February 2025.

Once an application is submitted, IPART will also undertake their own community consultation where residents and ratepayers will have the ability to lodge submissions directly to IPART regarding the applications.

The enclosed Fact Sheet provides information on the SRV, where you can obtain further information and how you can have your say.

Yours faithfully



Eric Groth
GENERAL MANAGER

Contact: 02 6740 2100

See what the SRV means for you

Use our rates calculator to see how the SRV could affect your property by going to:

<https://rates-app.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au/>

And entering your address or assessment number. Below is an example of what the rates calculator will show you.

Ordinary Rate Calculator	
Assessment No	13279251
Property Address	144 Little Conadilly Street GUNNEDAH NSW 2380
2022 Rateable Land Value	\$49,900.00
Rate Category/Sub Category	Residential Gunnedah
Current (24-25)	
Ordinary Rates Payable	\$585.15
Proposed Rate Structure (25-26)	
Ordinary Rates Payable	\$672.96
Movement between rating years	\$87.81
% movement	15.01%
Weekly Variance	\$1.69
Proposed Rate Structure (26-27)	
Ordinary Rates Payable	\$773.96
Movement between rating years	\$101.00
% movement	15.01%
Weekly Variance	\$1.94
Cumulative % increase	32.27%
Disclaimer	Please note that these are indicative rates based upon current information utilising Land Valuations base dated 1 July 2022. The actual rate amount will be dependent upon future valuation changes, categorisation changes and land value movements and final approval of the rating structure by Council during the finalisation of the Special Rate Variation process. The special rate variation is applicable to the general rate only and does not include annual charges for Council services such as stormwater, water supply, sewer supply, waste services or government levies.

What SRV is now proposed?

Council considered a range of scenarios in response to the community feedback and has determined to proceed with an application to IPART for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) as follows:

1. a section 508(A) permanent SRV to address Council's financial sustainability and maintain essential community infrastructure and service levels,
2. the total SRV is 37.67% cumulative to be implemented over two years commencing in the 2025/26 financial year,
3. the increase on Residential, Business and Farmland rating categories is capped at 15% per year (32.25% cumulative) with the balance of the revised SRV to be sourced from the Mining rating category (85.13% cumulative), and
4. An application to increase the Maximum value of the Minimum ordinary rate to match the section 508(A) permanent SRV application value.

Council was mindful of community feedback regarding efficiency and productivity and included an action to strive to find \$930,000 through efficiency gains and operational savings and report on progress in May each year.

The following tables show the revised proposed SRV by year.

	2025/26	2026/27	Cumulative
Permanent increase above rate peg	13.30%	13.17%	
Rate Peg (2025/26 actual, 2026/27 forecast)	4.70%	3.50%	
Total SRV	18.00%	16.67%	37.67%

Rating Category	2025/26	2026/27	Compounded Increase %
Residential	15.00%	15.00%	32.25%
Business	15.00%	15.00%	32.25%
Farmland	15.00%	15.00%	32.25%
Mining	43.66%	28.87%	85.13%

The impact on individual ratepayers will vary according to the rating category their property is in. The below information shows the indicative impact of the SRV on the average ratepayer in each main rating category.

Rating Category	2024/25 Average	2025/26 Year 1 Increase	2025/26 Year 1 Increase	2026/27 Year 2 Increase	2026/27 Year 2 Increase	2026/27 Average
	Per Annum	Per Annum	Per Week	Per Annum	Per Week	Per Annum
Residential	\$1,106.16	\$165.93	\$3.19	\$190.81	\$3.67	\$1,462.90
Business	\$5,899.02	\$884.85	\$17.02	\$1,017.58	\$19.57	\$7,801.45
Farmland	\$5,336.54	\$800.49	\$15.39	\$920.55	\$17.70	\$7,057.58
Mining	\$316,615.92	\$138,232.82	\$2,658.32	\$131,297.32	\$2,524.95	\$586,146.06

To apply the SRV as proposed, Council will also be applying for an increase in the Maximum value of its Minimum rates, as follows:

Rating Category	2024/25	2025/26	2025/26 Year 1 Increase	% Increase	2026/27	2026/27 Year 2 Increase	% Increase	Cumulative % Increase
Residential – Ordinary								
Residential – Rural	\$555.00	\$638.00	\$83.00	14.95%	\$733.00	\$95.00	14.89%	32.07%
Residential – Gunnedah								
Business – Gunnedah	\$544.00	\$625.00	\$81.00	14.89%	\$718.00	\$93.00	14.88%	31.99%
Farmland	\$555.00	\$638.00	\$83.00	14.95%	\$733.00	\$95.00	14.89%	32.07%

The above increase is designed to ensure an equitable rating distribution across all ratepayers.

What is a Special Rate Variation?

IPART sets the amount councils in NSW can increase total rates by each year, which is called the rate peg. A Special Rate Variation is a request by a council to increase rates by more than the rate peg amount. The value of the SRV must include the value of the rate peg applicable in each year of the SRV.

Where can I obtain further information?

Further information on the proposed SRV is available from Council's website www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au including access to a calculator that will show you the impact of the proposed SRV on your property's rates, based on the current land value as set by the NSW Valuer General. It is important to note that changes in land value will likely impact rates, however, Council's overall revenue from rates does not increase due to changes in land valuations.



Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documents have been updated to include additional information on the proposed SRV. These are currently on public exhibition until Thursday, 19 December 2024 and can be viewed on Council's website under 'Draft Documents & Exhibition'. These documents include:

- Community Engagement Strategy
- Amended Delivery Program 2022/23-2025/26
- Amended Resourcing Strategy 2022/23-2025/26; including the Long Term Financial Plan 2025/26-2034/35
- Amended Operational Plan 2024/25

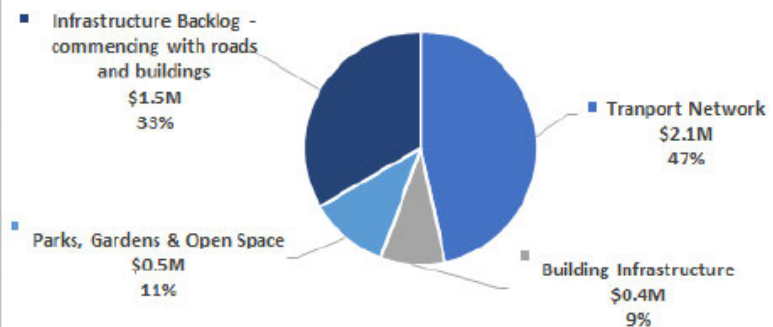
Enquiries regarding this SRV proposal should be directed to Council's customer service team on (02) 6740 2100 or via email: council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

What would the SRV be used for?

The proposed SRV would generate additional revenue to address the maintenance and renewal of Council's assets and the forecast unsustainable unrestricted cash position. The portion above the rate peg component and funds required to address the unrestricted cash position would be used to fund maintenance and renewal of assets, including:

1. Transport Network <i>Sealed and unsealed roads, bridges, footpaths, kerb and gutter.</i>
2. Building Infrastructure <i>Community halls, cultural precinct, library, Council offices, community housing.</i>
3. Parks, Gardens and Open Space

Average additional annual allocation over 10 year period



The above graph shows the annual allocation of additional funding generated by the SRV following the two-year implementation period.

If the SRV application is successful, Council would be required to account for and report on the allocation of SRV-related expenditure each year via the Annual Report, which is a public document. Council has also committed to quarterly reporting on SRV expenditure that will be publicly available.

What is Council doing to be more efficient?

Council has made significant efforts to improve operations and deliver services to the community without increasing rates over several years. Council has a focus on continuous improvement and has introduced a program of service reviews to improve operations and maximise the use and efficiency of resources. This program is overseen by the Audit, Risk & Improvement Committee and, while the reviews are showing that a number of improvements have already been achieved and more are possible, the reality is that any drop in funding will translate to a drop in service levels.

A key criteria for the SRV application is that Council can demonstrate the achievement of past efficiencies and what is planned for the future. Council also included the following action as part of the endorsement of the SRV: *That Council strive to achieve \$930,000 through efficiency gains and operational savings over the 3-year period 2025 to 2028 with a report to council by May 30th annually during this period on the progress of achieving these savings and/or efficiency gains.*

Why is an SRV needed?

Like many councils across NSW, Gunnedah Shire Council is facing the difficulty of maintaining its infrastructure and services within our existing income levels and our long-term financial plan shows that we are currently operating with an average \$3.1 million annual deficit in the General Fund (excluding domestic waste).

This essentially means that we are spending \$3.1 million per annum less than we should be to maintain our assets and services to our current targeted service levels.

Council's role in the community includes managing a vast network of infrastructure assets used by the general public on a daily basis. The SRV funding is needed to maintain existing infrastructure and service levels.

The SRV is also needed to address Council's current and forecast cash position. Our current forecast shows that our projected cash reserves will be in decline and the unrestricted cash position in the General Fund will potentially move into a negative balance within two years without intervention. A negative unrestricted cash balance cannot be allowed to occur.

The SRV is required to address:

- Current and forecast General Fund operating deficits (averaging around \$3.1m/year for the next 10 years),
- Council's unrestricted cash position (currently forecast to become negative during 2027/28), and
- The current asset renewal gap and backlog of works (\$15m over 10 years for roads and buildings).

The following has contributed to the current unsustainable financial outlook:

- the cost to deliver services and maintain community assets to current service levels has been increasing above the value of rate peg each year,
- reduced financial assistance and ongoing cost shifting to Local Government by other levels of government with limited or no financial compensation, and
- high inflation that has contributed to an increase in Council's costs in a range of areas.

If no SRV is implemented, Council would need to defer necessary capital works and revise the basic range and levels of services provided to the community to avoid a deteriorating cash position, which is not sustainable in the long term. Service levels would need to reduce in the absence of additional funding being available.

What would the SRV apply to?

The proposed SRV would only apply to the rates portion of the 'Rates and Charges Notice' (usually listed as the first item e.g. "Residential Gunnedah"). It does not apply to the separately listed essential charges such as waste, water and sewer.

Council is investigating options to consider freezing or limiting increases to Water, Sewerage and Waste annual charges to partly offset the SRV increase, should it be approved.

What happens now?

Residents and ratepayers are invited to read about the proposed SRV and have their say. You can provide a submission in writing by **5pm Thursday, 19 December 2024** in the following ways:

Mail	The General Manager Gunnedah Shire Council PO Box 63 Gunnedah NSW 2380
Email	council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au
Web Form	Accessible from Council's website from the 'Contact Us' page

At the conclusion of the current period of community engagement, Council will prepare, finalise and lodge an application to IPART to apply for a Special Rate Variation by 3 February 2025. A copy of this application, including any submissions to the revised SRV proposal, will be presented to Council at an extraordinary meeting in January 2025 prior to lodgement.

IPART will then assess Council's SRV application and conduct their own process of consultation, which the community can directly make submissions to. Further information on the SRV process, including the timeline, fact sheets and information papers are available on IPART's website: www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

Appendix B – Updated SRV Website

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Gunnedah Shire Council website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the council's logo and name, a search bar, and a menu of service categories: EVERYDAY LIVING (life in gunnedah), LIFESTYLE (arts & recreation), COMMUNITY (services & safety), BUSINESS & INDUSTRY, DEVELOPMENT (planning & building), ENVIRONMENT (wildlife & waste), and COUNCIL (what we do). The main content area features a large banner image of a road through a forest with the text "Facelift for village signs". To the right of the banner are three smaller promotional tiles: "Proposed Special Rate Variation" (with a "Click for more information" link), "Council Christmas Closure Information", and "Visit Gunnedah" (with the website URL www.visitgunnedah.com.au). Below these are several service tiles: "Draft Documents & Exhibition", "GunnedahShire What's On", and "GUNNEDAH CULTURAL PRECINCT" (with the website URL www.thecivic.com.au). A grid of ten service icons follows, including NSW PLANNING PORTAL, PLANNING & BUILDING, PETS & ANIMALS, ROAD CLOSURES, EVENTS CALENDAR, BUSINESS PAPERS, COUNCIL MEETINGS, FUNDING FINDER, COUNCIL CAREERS, and CONTACT US. At the bottom of the page is a "LATEST NEWS & MEDIA" section.

The screenshot shows the "Proposed Special Rate Variation" page on the Gunnedah Shire Council website. The breadcrumb trail at the top reads "HOME / COUNCIL / The Future of Gunnedah". The page title is "PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION" with a sub-heading "Special Rates Calculator". A large image of a sunset over a body of water is featured. Below the image, the title "PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION" is repeated, followed by a zoom control and a "Rates Calculator" button. A "Make a Submission" button is also present. The page is dated "Updated November 2024". An "Overview" section follows, containing the text: "Council has identified that a Special Rate Variation is needed to address Council's financial sustainability and maintain essential community infrastructure and service levels. In June 2024, Gunnedah Shire Council included an action to start a conversation with the community about a potential Special Rate Variation in the 2024/25 Operational Plan. Council subsequently undertook an extensive community engagement process to gauge the community's feedback about..."

Council subsequently undertook an extensive community engagement process to gauge the community's feedback about a Special Rate Variation proposal from Friday, 2 August to Friday, 6 September 2024.

At an **Extraordinary Meeting held on Wednesday, 6 November 2024**, Council committed to proceeding with a section 508(A) (permanent) Special Rate Variation, which has been varied in response to the feedback received by the community.

What is an SRV?

A Special Rate Variation (SRV) allows a council to increase its general rates income above the rate peg to provide the services and infrastructure desired by their communities. SRVs can be either for a single year or over multiple years and can be permanent or temporary.

What is the Rate Peg?

Rates increase every year in line with an amount set by the NSW State Government. This amount is calculated every year and is called the 'rate peg'. It is decided by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). The rate peg for Gunnedah Shire Council in the 2024/25 financial year is 5.6%. This figure varies year to year and has been as low as 0.7% in the past five years.

Why is an SRV needed?

Like many councils across NSW, Gunnedah Shire Council is facing the difficulty of maintaining its infrastructure and services within our existing income levels.

The cost to deliver services and maintain community assets to current service levels increases above the rate peg amount each year. Combined with reduced financial assistance and ongoing cost shifting to Local Government by other levels of government, councils are under constant financial pressure to deliver the same services for less, which is not a sustainable model.

Without addressing this gap, the residents and visitors of the Shire will see a deterioration in service levels. Each year we fall behind, the cost of renewing infrastructure will rise and we will eventually have to catch up.

Council also has an expanding infrastructure base as our community is growing. We view the fact that our population is increasing as very positive but we need to be able to maintain the associated infrastructure to support this.

Council has very limited opportunity to increase other sources of revenue and, as a result, an increase in rates is the most viable solution for a financially sustainable council.

Council's long-term financial plan shows that we are currently operating with an approximately \$3.1m operating deficit in the General Fund (excluding domestic waste services). This essentially means that we are spending \$3.1m less than we should be to maintain our assets and services to our current targeted service levels.

The SRV is also needed to address Council's current and forecast cash position. Our 2024/25 budget forecast shows that our projected cash reserves will be in decline and the unrestricted cash position will potentially move into a negative balance

within the General Fund within two years without intervention. A negative unrestricted cash balance cannot be allowed to occur.

Further information on Council's financial position can be found in our 2024/25 Operational Plan, which is available here: [2024/25 Operational Plan](#).

What would happen if the SRV is not implemented?

Council would need to defer necessary capital works and revise the basic range and levels of services provided to the community to avoid a deteriorating cash position, which is not sustainable in the long term. Service levels would need to reduce in the absence of additional funding being available.

What SRV did Council consult on?

Council consulted on a permanent SRV of 38.88% over two years. The 38.88% is comprised of a 24% increase in the first year (2025/26) and a 12% increase in year two (2026/27). This included an assumed rate peg of 5% in both years.

	2025/26	2026/27	Cumulative
Permanent increase above rate peg	19%	7%	
Rate Peg (forecast)	5%	5%	
Total Increase	24%	12%	38.88%

The rationale behind these two values is as follows:

1. The 24% increase in Year One will allow Council to address the current operating deficit and the current forecast unrestricted cash challenges,
2. The 12% increase in Year Two will allow Council to commence addressing the backlog of works to bring our assets to the current targeted service levels.

The distribution of the rate increase was proposed to be equally applied across all rate categories.

What did the Community tell us in the first round of the SRV consultation?

A large range of feedback was provided and key feedback received was:

1. The Community does not want to see an increase in rates,
2. The Community want to see better services for their rates, in particular the community wants to see improved roads,
3. If an SRV is required, the first-year increase is too high and it should be for a smaller amount and implemented over a longer period of time,
4. Council needs to tighten its belt and make sure it is operating as efficiently as possible, and
5. Council needs to look at how rates are distributed and ensure that each rating category is paying an appropriate proportion of Council's income.

What SRV is now proposed?

Council has committed to an application for a permanent cumulative SRV of 37.67% over two years.

The SRV is to be applied based on:

- a **32.25%** cumulative increase (21.80% above rate peg) applied to the Residential, Business, Farmland rating categories, and
- an **85.13%** cumulative increase (64.33% above rate peg) applied to the Mining rating category.

	2025/26	2026/27	Cumulative
Permanent increase above rate peg	13.30%	13.17%	
Rate Peg (forecast)	4.70%	3.50%	
Total Increase	18.00%	16.67%	37.67%

The yearly increases would be applied as follows:

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Compounded Increase % Change
Residential	15.00%	15.00%	32.25%
Business	15.00%	15.00%	32.25%
Farmland	15.00%	15.00%	32.25%
Mining	43.66%	28.87%	85.13%

These values include a rate peg of 4.7% in Year 1 and 3.5% in Year 2. The SRV is 26.47% above the rate peg limit.

This SRV is lower for Residential, Business, Farmland rating categories than what was originally proposed. In the original SRV proposal, these rating categories would have experienced an increase of 38.88% over two years. Under the revised SRV

proposal the increase is capped to 32.25% over two years.

The SRV proposal will also necessitate that Council make an application to IPART under section 548 of the *Local Government Act 1993* for the Maximum value of the Minimum ordinary rate for Residential, Business and Farmland categories to be set as follows to match the section 508(A) permanent SRV application value:

Category	2025-2026	2026-2027
Residential - Ordinary		
Residential - Rural	\$638.00	\$733.00
Residential - Gunnedah		
Business - Gunnedah	\$625.00	\$718.00
Farmland	\$638.00	\$733.00

What does the SRV apply to?

The proposed SRV would only apply to the rates portion of the bill (usually listed as the first item on the bill e.g. "Residential Gunnedah") and not the separately listed essential charges such as waste and water.

RATES AND CHARGES NOTICE
01/07/2024 to 30/06/2025

RATES ACCOUNT NUMBER
[REDACTED]

DATE OF POSTING
17/07/2024

DUE DATE
31/08/2024

RATEABLE VALUE BASE DATE
1/07/2022

RATE CATEGORY
Residential Gunnedah

ARTICULARS OF RATES AND CHARGES

	CENTS IN \$	RATEABLE VALUE	AMOUNT
Residential Gunnedah	0.01172653	49,900	\$585.15
GWS Availability Charge	242.50	1	\$242.50
Sewer Availability Charge	688.40	1	\$688.40
DWMS 1- 140L waste/240L rec/240L green	440.00	1	\$440.00
Waste Management Facility Fee	86.90	1	\$86.90

The SRV would apply to general rates only and would not apply to other charges shown on your rates notice.

What the SRV funds would be used for

The proposed SRV would be used to fund maintenance and renewal of Council assets, specifically:

- Council's Transport network (roads, bridges and associated services),
- Council's Building infrastructure, and
- Council's Parks, Gardens and Open Space.

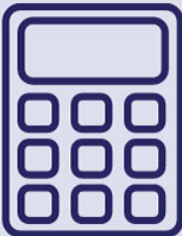
How would the increase impact me?

The below tables show the impact of the increase based on averages for rates categories.

Category	2024/25 Average per annum	2025/26 Year 1 Increase / per annum	2025/26 Year 1 Increase / per week	2026/27 Year 2 Increase / per annum	2026/27 Year 2 Increase / per week	2026/27 Average per annum
Residential	\$1,106.16	\$165.93	\$3.19	\$190.81	\$3.67	\$1,462.90
Business	\$5,899.02	\$884.85	\$17.02	\$1,017.58	\$19.57	\$7,801.45
Farmland	\$5,336.54	\$800.49	\$15.39	\$920.55	\$17.70	\$7,057.58
Mining	\$316,615.92	\$138,232.82	\$2,658.32	\$131,297.32	\$2,524.95	\$586,146.06

		2024/25	Year One Increase (2025/26)			Cumulative Year Two Increase (2026/27)				
Rating Category	Sub-Category	Average Rate by Category	Average Rate by Category	Increase in Average rate per annum	Additional Cost per week	Average Rate by Category	Increase in Average rate per annum	Year two weekly increase	Cumulative increase in Average rate per annum	Cumulative Additional Cost per week
Residential	Ordinary	\$947.34	\$1,089.47	\$142.13	\$2.73	\$1,252.95	\$163.48	\$3.14	\$305.61	\$5.88
	Rural	\$1,234.73	\$1,419.96	\$185.23	\$3.56	\$1,632.99	\$213.03	\$4.10	\$398.26	\$7.66
	Gunnedah	\$1,190.36	\$1,368.93	\$178.57	\$3.43	\$1,574.29	\$205.36	\$3.95	\$383.93	\$7.38
	Village	\$586.03	\$673.76	\$87.73	\$1.69	\$774.63	\$100.87	\$1.94	\$188.60	\$3.63
Business	Ordinary	\$979.84	\$1,126.74	\$146.90	\$2.83	\$1,295.57	\$168.83	\$3.25	\$315.73	\$6.07
	Gunnedah	\$6,951.51	\$7,994.26	\$1,042.75	\$20.05	\$9,193.43	\$1,199.17	\$23.06	\$2,241.92	\$43.11
	Business Power Generation	\$11,588.83	\$13,327.19	\$1,738.36	\$33.43	\$15,326.35	\$1,999.16	\$38.45	\$3,737.52	\$71.88
Farmland		\$5,336.54	\$6,137.03	\$800.49	\$15.39	\$7,057.58	\$920.55	\$17.70	\$1,721.04	\$33.10
Mining		\$316,615.92	\$454,848.74	\$138,232.82	\$2,658.32	\$586,146.06	\$131,297.32	\$2,524.95	\$269,530.14	\$5,183.27
	Additional Yield			\$2,857,561.19			\$3,147,820.10			

Use the below rates calculator to estimate the impact on your property.



CLICK HERE TO USE OUR
RATES CALCULATOR

NB: This rates calculator is an estimate only of how the special rate variation could affect your property – it does not include any change in property valuations or charges related to water, wastewater/sewerage or waste.

What happens now?

Council is providing community members with an opportunity to have their say about the revised SRV proposal.

At the conclusion of the current period of community engagement, Council will finalise an application to IPART to apply for a Special Rate Variation application in February 2025.

Access the updated community information pack [here](#).

IPART

IPART will then assess Council's SRV application and conduct their own period of consultation. Further information on the SRV process, including the timeline, fact sheets and information papers are available on the IPART website that can be accessed via the following link: www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home/Industries/Local-Government/For-Councils/Apply-for-a-special-variation-or-minimum-rate-increase

How can people have their say?

Residents and ratepayers are invited to read about the proposed SRV and have their say in a number of ways.

You can provide a submission in writing by **5pm Thursday, 19 December 2024** in the following ways:

Mail:

The General Manager,
Gunnedah Shire Council,
PO Box 63,
Gunnedah NSW 2380

Email: council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

Web Form: [Click here to access form](#)

Learn more

If you would like to learn more about the ways in which local government differs from a business, [click here to view a presentation by Professor Joesph Drew](#).

Additional FAQs

How does the Revised SRV address the Community feedback?

1. The Community does not want to see an increase in Rates.

Response

Council understands this and does want to increase rates more than required to maintained assets.

The revised SRV proposal is for a lower increase that what was originally proposed for Residential, Business, Farmland rating categories. It is also higher than what was originally proposed for the Mining rating category.

The option of a lower SRV offset by savings was considered by Council. However, it was also acknowledged that Council operates in a highly legislatively constrained environment and there are minimum levels of service that Council is required to support. In this environment, it is difficult to nominate guaranteed savings that could assist with reducing the impact of an SRV. The decision that Council has made is responsible but allows for flexibility in that we will continue to strive for efficiency in the way we can deliver services.

2. The Community want to see better services for their rates, in particular the community wants to see improved roads.

Response

While there was strong support for no SRV indicated in the community feedback, there was equally strong support for levels of service to at least be maintained or even improved, which is not possible without an SRV.

Without additional funds, Council will not be able to provide the levels of service the community is seeking. The core reason behind this proposal is to allow Council to maintain its assets, with a key focus on roads, closer to the level the community expects.

3. If an SRV is required, the first year's increase is too high and it should be for a smaller amount and implemented over a longer period of time.

Response

For the Residential, Business and Farmland rating categories, the revised proposal is for a smaller increase in the first year. The original proposal was for a 24% increase in Year 1 and this has been reduced to a 15% increase in Year 1. The second year is slightly higher than what was originally proposed but the overall cumulative increase under the revised proposal is 6.63% lower than the original proposal for these rating categories.

The revised proposal does mean a larger increase for the Mining category than the original proposal.

4. Councils needs to tighten its belt and make sure it is operating as efficiency as possible.

Response

Council operates an Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee who oversee a service review program to deliver ongoing efficiencies and improvements to Council's operations.

Council has documented efficiencies and improvements already achieved as part of the SRV process and is required to demonstrate its progress in this area in the SRV application to IPART.

Additionally, in approving the revised SRV proposal, Council included an action to strive for improvement through efficiency gains and operational savings and report on progress in May each year.

5. Council needs to look at how rates are distributed and ensure that each rating category is paying an appropriate proportion of Council's income.

Response

Council has reviewed the proposed contributions by rating category and the revised proposal seeks to re-balance the contributions by category to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of rates across all ratepayers.

If the revised proposal was implemented, the contribution to Council's total rate income would change as per the below table.

Category	Current	Proposed	Movement
Residential	33.10%	31.85%	-1.26%
Business	18.89%	18.17%	-0.72%
Farmland	38.13%	36.68%	-1.45%
Mining	9.88%	13.30%	3.42%

What is a Minimum Rate?

Gunnedah Shire Council applies an ad valorem amount that is subject to a minimum amount for properties classified as Residential, Business and Farmland and a base amount and an ad valorem amount for properties classified as Mining.

With base amounts, every assessment starts off with the same level of rate, to which an ad valorem component is added.

Under a structure with minimum rates, the ad valorem amount is calculated and then compared with the minimum amount, and the ratepayer is charged the greater amount.

Where a council adopts a minimum rate for a particular category or sub-category, all ratepayers within that category or sub-category will pay at least that minimum amount regardless of their land value. Therefore, in most cases the use of minimum rates will impact ratepayers with relatively lower land values.

What is Council doing to save money?

No matter what Council does, an SRV is required to restore the real cost of maintaining assets and providing services to grow and be sustainable. Council has a focus on continuous improvement and we work hard to keep costs under strict control. Council has introduced a program of service reviews to improve operations and maximise the use and efficiency of resources. These reviews are showing that a number of improvements have already been achieved and that, while further improvements are possible, any drop in funding will translate to a drop in service levels.

Recent improvement and savings include:

- Insurance savings
- Reduced electricity costs (street lighting and Sewer Treatment Plant)
- Service Review program commenced
- Changed unsealed roads techniques (compaction versus dry grading)
- Parks and Gardens (GPS line marking, irrigation systems)
- IT system improvements and Planning portal integration
- Library service improvements

Are other Councils in our area getting SRVs?

Yes. Across the North-West and New England, the following Councils have applied for and received SRVs.

- Tamworth Regional Council – 36.3% over two years (24/25)
- Armidale Regional Council – 58.8% over three years (23/24)
- Walcha Council – 57.74% across three years (23/24)
- Tenterfield Council – 43% in one year (23/24)
- Liverpool Plains Shire Council – 18.1% in one year (23/24)

What can ratepayers expect in cases of hardship?

Council recognises the community has been doing it tough and has held off as long as possible to request an increase (9 other NSW councils made applications in 24/25 and 17 in 23/24). Unfortunately, additional money is required to keep infrastructure adequately maintained so we can continue to deliver the same level of service the community expects.

For ratepayers experiencing financial hardship, Council has a "Hardship Policy" that has recently been updated to ensure we work with the most vulnerable in our community to support them as best we can during these challenging times.

How will the new land valuation from the Valuer General impact the proposed Special Rate Variation?

Residents across the Gunnedah Shire Council will be receiving new Notice of Valuation from the NSW Valuer General from January 2025. This is provided every 2 to 3 years and reflects the unimproved value of land of a property.

The new valuations will apply from 1 July 2025 for calculating general rates.

It's important to note an increase in land value does not necessarily mean an increase in rates. Council does not receive any more money because land values increase – some people may pay more or less on their rates depending on the change in value of their land relative to changes in land values across the Shire.

Does an increase in land values mean Council can collect more general income?

Council will be receiving new land valuations from the Valuer General effective 1 July 2025.

An increase in land valuations does not result in any additional general income for councils.

The total income that Council can source from land rates is capped at the approved rate pegged amount or any approved special rate variation.

It simply means it changes the way rates are distributed within each rate category/subcategory. Some people will pay more rates, some less, some the same.

Will my rates increase if my land valuation does?

An increase in your land valuation does not necessarily mean your rates will increase. The difference is how the rates revenue is shared across ratepayers, based on the change in their property value. Some people may pay more or less on their rates depending on the change in value of their land relative to changes in land values across the Shire.

Generally, properties whose land valuation increase is lower than the average increase for that rates category (residential, business, farmland or mining) will see a reduction in rates. However, properties whose valuation increase is higher than the average for the rating category may see a rise in rates.

Appendix C – Media Release - Council Determines Special Rate Variation

MEDIA RELEASE

Council Determines Special Rate Variation

7 November 2024

Following an extensive community engagement process, Gunnedah Shire Council has made the difficult but necessary decision to proceed with a Special Rate Variation at an Extraordinary Meeting yesterday.

It was noted that a Special Rate Variation (SRV) was needed to address Council's financial sustainability and maintain essential community infrastructure and service levels.

While there was strong support for no SRV indicated in the community feedback, there was equally strong support for levels of service to at least be maintained or even improved, which is not possible without an SRV.

The original SRV proposal was for a permanent cumulative 38.88% increase over two years with a 24% increase in year one and 12% increase in year two. The community feedback indicated that the year one increase was too high.

Council considered a range of scenarios in response to the community feedback and has determined to proceed with a Special Rate Variation over two years that is 37.67% cumulative but caps the increase on Residential, Business and Farmland rate categories at 15% per year (32.25% cumulative). The balance of the revised SRV of 37.67% cumulative is to be sourced from the Mining rating category.

Six SRV scenarios were included in the report to Council for consideration and the options were robustly debated at the meeting.

Given the current financial position of the Council and the significant challenges that face local government in relation to increased costs associated with cost-shifting, high inflation and natural disasters, Council has made a balanced determination on the SRV that considers the potential impacts on Council's services and the essential infrastructure it supports and the community.

Council was also mindful of community feedback regarding efficiency and productivity and included an action to strive for improvement through efficiency gains and operational savings and report on progress in May each year.

The option of a lower SRV offset by savings was considered by Council. However, it was also acknowledged that Council operates in a highly legislatively constrained environment and there are minimum levels of service that Council is required to support. In this environment, it is difficult to nominate guaranteed savings that could assist with reducing the impact of a Special Rate Variation. The decision that Council has made is responsible but allows for flexibility in that we will continue to strive for efficiency in the way we can deliver services.

The community will be invited to have their say on the revised SRV proposal and information about the way to do this will be provided on Council's website.

Key points from Council’s Extraordinary Meeting on 6 November 2024 are:

- Gunnedah Shire Council committed to proceed with a section 508(A) permanent Special Rate Variation (SRV) to address its financial sustainability and maintain essential community infrastructure and service levels.
- In response to the community feedback, Council determined a position on the SRV as follows:
 - An SRV application to be made to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) under section 508(A) be endorsed at 37.67% cumulative to be phased in over two years and retained permanently commencing in 2025-2026.
 - This scenario spreads the SRV more evenly over two years and caps the Residential, Business and Farmland rating categories to an SRV of 15% per annum (32.25% cumulative) with the balance to be sourced from the Mining rating category.
- Council makes an application to IPART under section 548 of the Local Government Act 1993 for the Maximum value of the Minimum ordinary rate for Residential, Business and Farmland categories to be set as follows to match the section 508(A) permanent SRV application value:

Category	2025-2026	2026-2027
Residential – Ordinary		
Residential – Rural	\$638.00	\$733.00
Residential – Gunnedah		
Business – Gunnedah	\$625.00	\$718.00
Farmland	\$638.00	\$733.00

- Council, prior to 29 November 2024, will formally notify IPART that it intends to submit a Special Rate Variation application for the 2025-2026 financial year.
- Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) documentation will be updated to meet the SRV application requirements, and the amended IP&R documents will be presented to a future Council meeting for the purpose of being endorsed by Council for public exhibition.
- Council will convene an Extraordinary Council meeting in January 2025 for the purpose of receiving any submissions on the revised IP&R documentation and to endorse the SRV application, including Council's approach to continuous improvement, efficiency gains and operational savings, prior to the submission to IPART by February 3, 2025.
- Council will strive to achieve \$930,000 through efficiency gains and operational savings over the 3-year period 2025 to 2028 with a report to council by May 30th annually during this period.

QUOTES FROM MAYOR CR COLLEEN FULLER:

“It’s time to plan for the future of our Shire.

“Gunnedah Shire Council spoke with the community about a proposed application for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to maintain and potentially enhance the services it currently receives.

“We listened to what the community told us and have developed a revised proposal based on the feedback we received which is crucial in shaping Gunnedah’s future.

“I would like to thank my fellow councillors and staff for what has been a great team approach to this very important process and to ensuring the outcomes meet the needs of our community as best as possible while also maintaining a range of efficiency and productivity measures.”

ENDS

Media and communications team contact: (02) 6740 2100.

Appendix D – Media Release - Council Welcomes Submissions for Special Rate Variation

MEDIA RELEASE

Council Welcomes Submissions for Special Rate Variation

13 November 2024

Following last week's difficult but necessary decision to proceed with a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to address its financial sustainability and maintain essential community infrastructure and service levels, Gunnedah Shire Council is now welcoming written submissions from the local community. These can be provided to Council until Thursday, 19 December 2024.

Council's original SRV proposal was for a permanent cumulative 38.88% increase over two years with a 24% increase in year one and 12% increase in year two. The community feedback indicated that the year one increase was too high.

Council considered a range of scenarios in response to the community feedback and has determined to proceed with a permanent Special Rate Variation over two years that is 37.67% cumulative but caps the increase on Residential, Business and Farmland rate categories at 15% per year (32.25% cumulative). The balance of the revised SRV of 37.67% cumulative is to be sourced from the Mining rating category.

This week Council formally notified IPART that it intends to submit a Special Rate Variation application for the 2025-2026 financial year.

Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) documentation will be updated to meet the SRV application requirements, and the amended IP&R documents will be presented to a future Council meeting for the purpose of being endorsed by Council for public exhibition.

Council will convene an Extraordinary Council meeting in January 2025 for the purpose of receiving any submissions on the revised IP&R documentation and to endorse the SRV application prior to the submission to IPART by February 3, 2025.

Council also resolved to strive to achieve \$930,000 through efficiency gains and operational savings over the 3-year period 2025 to 2028 with a report to council by May 30th annually during this period.

Members of the community can measure how they will be directly affected by the Special Rate Variation by accessing the rates calculator now available on the dedicated SRV page on Council's website www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au.

General enquiries on the Special Rate Variation can be made to Council's customer service team on 6740 2100 or council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

Written public submissions will be accepted until December 19, 2024, and can be made via post:

The General Manager,
Gunnedah Shire Council,
PO Box 63,
Gunnedah NSW 2380

Or

Email: council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au and

webform <https://www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au/index.php/council/keep-in-touch/contact-us> .

Submissions can also be dropped into Council's office at 63 Elgin Street, Gunnedah.

ENDS

Media and communications team contact: (02) 6740 2100.

Appendix E – Facebook Posts

 **Gunnedah Shire Council**
6 November 2024 · 🌐


COUNCIL DETERMINES POSITION ON SPECIAL RATE VARIATION (SRV)

Read more 📄 <https://www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au/.../2764-council...>



Gunnedah Shire Council
Government organisation

Send message

 **Gunnedah Shire Council**
12 November 2024 · 🌐

COUNCIL WELCOMES SUBMISSIONS FOR SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

Following last week's difficult but necessary decision to proceed with a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to address its financial sustainability and maintain essential community infrastructure and service levels, Gunnedah Shire Council is now welcoming written submissions from the local community.

These can be provided to Council until Thursday, 19 December 2024.

Council's original SRV proposal was for a permanent cumulative 38.88% increase over two years with a 24% increase in year one and 12% increase in year two.

The community feedback indicated that the year one increase was too high.

Council considered a range of scenarios in response to the community feedback and has determined to proceed with a permanent Special Rate Variation over two years that is 37.67% cumulative but caps the increase on Residential, Business and Farmland rate categories at 15% per year (32.25% cumulative). The balance of the revised SRV of 37.67% cumulative is to be sourced from the Mining rating category.

This week Council formally notified IPART that it intends to submit a Special Rate Variation application for the 2025-2026 financial year.

Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) documentation will be updated to meet the SRV application requirements, and the amended IP&R documents will be presented to a future Council meeting for the purpose of being endorsed by Council for public exhibition.

Council will convene an Extraordinary Council meeting in January 2025 for the purpose of receiving any submissions on the revised IP&R documentation and to endorse the SRV application prior to the submission to IPART by February 3, 2025.

Council also resolved to strive to achieve \$930,000 through efficiency gains and operational savings over the 3-year period 2025 to 2028 with a report to council by May 30th annually during this period.

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General enquiries on the Special Rate Variation can be made to Council's customer service team on 6740 2100 or council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

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The General Manager,
Gunnedah Shire Council,
PO Box 63,
Gunnedah NSW 2380

Or

Email: council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au and webform <https://www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au/.../keep-in-touch/contact-us>.

Submissions can also be dropped into Council's office at 63 Elgin Street, Gunnedah.



Gunnedah Shire Council

16 December 2024 at 14:45 · 🌐

A reminder that submissions on the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) close this Thursday at 5pm.

You can find out more about the proposed SRV here -

<https://www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au/.../proposed-special-rate...>

You can provide a submission in writing by 5pm Thursday, 19 December 2024 in the following ways:

Mail:

The General Manager,
Gunnedah Shire Council,
PO Box 63,
Gunnedah NSW 2380

Email: council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

Web Form: <https://www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au/.../keep-in-touch/contact-us>



[GUNNEDAH.NSW.GOV.AU](https://www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au)

Proposed Special Rate Variation - Gunnedah Shire Council

Information, resources, rates calculator and feedback opportunities related to the Gunnedah S...

Appendix F – Community Submissions

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 21 November 2024 3:07 PM
To: Council Email
Subject: SRV

Dear Sir/Madam
21/11/2024

I have read the results of the November 15th council meeting, to find the council have voted unanimously in favor of the SRV increase, when at the polls I made a point of asked candidates if they were going to support the rate increase? With all but two that I spoke with saying they would not support the rate increase, hence they being the candidates I did vote for, when I see them I will question them on this matter, this is very disappointing to say that least there was not one votes against, as it would be for a lot of other voters on the same page, and again it appears very little has be done to streamline operations or to outline cost saving ideas, I did hear of some major cost cutting ideas at these meetings which have not been pursued or openly been recognized, there is talk about waste that has accrued from the shire since the rate meetings started. I understand these are difficult and time-consuming activities however they needed to be fully investigated. Thank you for allowing me to vent on what I believe has been a poor decision from the start by senior management to present the only solution to solve a short fall is to increase rates to the rate payers of Gunnedah.

If cost cutting strategies have been put in place I would be keen to see a copy of this report.

I also understand council does not make its money directly but given money via(grants and rates etc.) to administer services which make it a unique service, this can make budgeting difficult, this is why the shire pay the big dollars to the GM.

[REDACTED]
Gunnedah

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 3 December 2024 3:19 PM
To: Council Email
Subject: Re: Important update on proposed Special Rate Variation

Please explain why we are increasing rates when you have a blown budget and timeline in the sale yards and donate \$100k per year to Agquip?
Sent from my iPhone

On 2 Dec 2024, at 10:04 PM, Council Email <council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au> wrote:

Dear Ratepayer

Please see attached important update on the Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase for Gunnedah Shire Ratepayers.

Thank you

 **Gunnedah Shire Council**
T 02 6740 2100
E council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au
PO Box 63 (63 Elgin Street), GUNNEDAH NSW 2380
www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au or www.facebook.com/gunnedahshire

<Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase.pdf>

[REDACTED]

From:

Sent:

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Tuesday, 3 December 2024 9:11 AM

To:

Council Email

Subject:

[REDACTED]

Dear Councillors, do you think a great deal of the costs in mainting gunnedah is also due to not having a flood mitigation strategy ? I can't imagine the cost you incurred in the clean ups of two years ago . Has the council considered building a levi bank in section to prevent the flood water from entering the road and community networks . This accumulative clean up cost and requirement of our services must add a significant cost overall to your budget . Possibly addressing longer term , bigger picture issues may assist us all .

regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 3 December 2024 7:30 AM
To: Council Email
Subject: RE: Important update on proposed Special Rate Variation

In this age of computers and internet how many event co-ordinaters does council employ surely one enough ! seems to be a good saving right there !

From: Council Email <council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 2 December 2024 10:00 PM
Subject: Important update on proposed Special Rate Variation

Dear Ratepayer

Please see attached important update on the Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase for Gunnedah Shire Ratepayers.

Thank you



Gunnedah Shire Council
T 02 6740 2100
E council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au
PO Box 63 (63 Elgin Street), GUNNEDAH NSW 2380
www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au or www.facebook.com/gunnedahshire

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 8 December 2024 8:47 PM
To: Council Email
Subject: Proposed SRV

Good evening.

I wish to voice my disapproval of the proposed SRV!

As we receive minimal services yet paid already elevated farm land rates, I feel this SRV is totally unreasonable.

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Gunnedah Shire Council
Elgin Street
Gunnedah 2380
council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

RE: SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

We believe the following points, below, must be addressed by Council to the ratepayers before any decision is made for a Special Rate Variation. These points come from the Council Financial Statements 2024. Our concerns are that savings can be made in many, many areas.

- Rates and Charges
- Employee numbers, benefits and oncosts
- Why an increase of 34 employees 2024
- Net operating result for the year to be explained
- Assets and liabilities to be fully explained
- Grants to be explained and their priorities
- No inclusion of ongoing costs for the Koala Park
- Saleyard costs
- Unspent contributions
- Contractor employment and blow outs
- Councillors should have all financial details, from the staff, at their fingertips.
Councillors are the representatives of the people and therefore responsible for the decision making
- List of Council owned equipment for maintenance works. eg roads

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From:

Sent:

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Thursday, 5 December 2024 4:58 PM

To:

Council Email

Subject:

Special rates variation

To gunnedah council

It is my understanding that due to lack of funds the council is deciding to go ahead with the srv.

I own my house on less than a quarter acre and i am already paying over \$2000 in rates each year! For you to increase the rates especially while the cost of living is increasing, In my opinion only goes to show how inadequate this council is with handling money.

And while i do understand it does take money to keep things going and to maintain the town, i do also KNOW that the council does not always spend wisely, especially in regards to some of the new infrastructure being built, and the maintenance of the existing infrastructure, along with some of the people it hires to maintain this town, as there are a lot of people to take a council job to bludge and get paid well.

Council should not be assuming that the way that it runs the maintenance and construction of infrastructure is the most efficient and economic, and should be seeking to improve this (even if it in a radical way...) before going to rate rises.

If this SRV does go through however i WILL be expecting the council to do more in this town.

Sincerely [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 6 December 2024 7:00 AM
To: Council Email
Subject: Re: Important update on proposed Special Rate Variation

Maybe don't stuff up jobs like the sale yards and do half ass jobs on roads and then have to come back fix several times

Thank you
[REDACTED]

From: Council Email <council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, December 2, 2024 10:04:42 PM
Subject: Important update on proposed Special Rate Variation
Dear Ratepayer

Please see attached important update on the Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase for Gunnedah Shire Ratepayers.

Thank you



Gunnedah Shire Council
T 02 6740 2100
E council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au
PO Box 63 (63 Elgin Street), GUNNEDAH NSW 2380
www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au or www.facebook.com/gunnedahshire

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 13 December 2024 4:19 PM
To: Council Email
Subject: Re: Important update on proposed Special Rate Variation

Dear Council

I have read through the proposal and I have yet to see where the Council has indicated where they can achieve cost reductions by contracting out council services. It would seem to me to be more cost effective to dispose of council staff and equipment and subcontract services current performed by Council to contractors who can employ existing equipment and employees to perform those services. This has already been done with waste collection services and should be rolled out to most Council services. Employing more effective management should assist.

Upping rates to those who cannot afford increases is the lazy way of increasing revenue streams as we have seen with the Labor government flogging the poor taxpayer to implement their misguided renewable energy policy. PLEASE postpone the proposed rate increase and implement broad based productivity improvements and then measure their impact.

[REDACTED]
On 2/12/2024 10:04 pm, Council Email wrote:

Dear Ratepayer

Please see attached important update on the Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase for Gunnedah Shire Ratepayers.

Thank you



Gunnedah Shire Council
T 02 6740 2100
E council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au
PO Box 63 (63 Elgin Street), GUNNEDAH NSW 2380
www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au or www.facebook.com/gunnedahshire



Virus-free. www.avg.com

[REDACTED]

12th December 2024

[REDACTED]
Gunnedah Shire Council
PO Box 63
Gunnedah NSW 2380

I wish to lodge my strong objection to the Council's proposed application to IPART for a Special Rate Variation for farming land use. I am personally affected as a partner in a farming business as well as a superannuation member in farming land holdings.

For over fifty years I have had to manage my business based on projected income without the luxury of being able to increase commodity prices to manage a short fall. Surely Council must do the same, a rate rise of over 30% is offensive and places a heavy burden on all ratepayers.

Your letter states the increase will not apply to Water, Sewerage and Waste charges. This is a benefit to businesses and residential occupants that are town located. It is discrimination against farmers.

Yours sincerely
[REDACTED]

09/12/2024 ①



SCANNED

16 DEC 2024



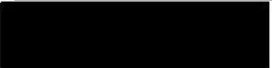
Gunnedah Shire Council

PO Box 63

Gunnedah NSW 2380

RE: Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase dated 29 November 2024

Submission from [REDACTED]



Dear Sir, I am writing to you today in response to your letter dated 29 November 2024.

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself as [REDACTED] as residential property owner in the Gunnedah Shire Council Area. My residential property is located at [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I was squeezed out of the Sydney Property market at 54 years old and I have searched for a place to call home for the past 10 years. This will be my retirement home. I purchased the above address at my age for the affordability. I am living and renting in the [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. The reasons that I chose to live in Gunnedah is the country lifestyle and because of my retirement age as a Senior Citizen. Also, I have leased the above property to give another family a place to live. I had previously visited the Gunnedah Shire prior to my purchase of the above address. I have contributed to local businesses' Service station, local cafes, shops and local Motels.

It took me 4 years to find a suitable property in the Gunnedah Shire Area. I have invested \$240 K in the Gunnedah Shire.

A Tennant has been living in the property for the last 15 Years and is a single parent income earner with 3 children.

She has never missed a rental payment in the last 2 years and 10 months.

I as a landlord have not raised \$1 since I became the owner of this property.

Currently the Gunnedah Council Shire rates are manageable.

I myself working 20 hours a fortnight as a cleaner working minimum award wage.

Real Estate Agents within the Gunnedah Shire Council area have advised me to raise the rent on 11 occasions equal with Sydney rental rate rises.

09/12/2022 (2)

I was not consulted about these rent rises as I don't live in Gunnedah.

It would have been a courtesy if a letter had been sent to my [REDACTED] [REDACTED] address about the community engagement process about the SRV proposal.

Australia is currently involved in a rental crisis.

Under the current Labour Albanese Government I have had 13 interest rate rises,

The cost of living has gone thru the roof under the current Labour Albanese Government.

Inflation in Australia has gone thru the roof currently now at 4.1% + - Under the current Labour Albanese Government.

The cost of Fuel under the Labour Albanese Government has spiralled out of control.

The cost of Electricity and Gas has increased out of control under the current Labour Albanese Government. We have not seen the Cash rebate that he promised. Electricity is not cheaper than he said it would be before his election win.

The cost of Insurance's has increased way above what it was before the Election of the Labour Albanese government.

I have been working since 11 years of age and have never relied on charity to pay for my energy bills.

I have never asked for food vouchers in my life.

The Strata fees have increased by over \$800 P/A for my property.

Under the current Labour NSW Government Department of Housing waiting list for a woman of my age is 22 years waiting list. This is an area where Gunnedah Shire Council should consider looking to. Affordable housing.

I don't understand how you can Justify jacking up the rates at this level.

Wages have not increased by this amount.

Inflation has not been this bad!

Local councils should just concentrate on the 3 R,s Rates Roads and Rubbish.

To save money Local councils should not get involved with affair's that do not concern Gunnedah Shire people. Affairs outside of the shire should not receive any funding what so ever. Don't get political on Indigenous issues. Don't waste money on affairs overseas. This is a federal issue. Don't use consultants when common sense prevails as local people know what's best. Only get involved in local issues.

If this rate increase is to go ahead, I will be forced to increase the rent I am asking to an unacceptable amount there by forcing out my long-term tenant. She won't be able to pay the increase in rent per week.

09/12/2024 (3)

I do not see any good outcome come out of the SRV rate rise.

I probably will consider selling my property if this is to happen.

We can only hope that common sense prevails.

Also, the new year hopefully Australia will get a new Federal Government that is in touch with people's feelings and thoughts and living in reality. Not living in another place or country.

If Councils have not learnt from Covid Business will still fail and continue to do so.

Without resident's, business, tourists, Gunnedah will suffer as a regional area.

Keep Gunnedah for our future.

Gunnedah needs to Strive Thrive and Survive.

Please do not go down this rate increase!

Look for other ways to sort out the cash flow.

Not slash and burn either.

Yours Faithfully

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

9/12/2024

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 19 December 2024 3:41 PM
To: Council Email
Subject: Re: Special Rate Variation proposal - Director Corporate Services

Dear [REDACTED]

Based upon the information identified by you this morning in relation to my request for further information, I object to the proposal in its detail contained within the SRV, upon the following essential grounds:

1. It seems to me that the growth in consulting fees and services expenditure over the last several years is entirely unjustified and constitutes a significant component of expenditure by council. This needs to be reviewed in detail and a plan put forward as part of the SRV indicating where reductions this expenditure are able to be made and what the effect of those red might have on the overall SRV proposal might have on the overall SRV proposal;
2. In relation to the expenditure on the airport., library services, and other matters which reflect significant blowouts of cancel monies, the SRV proposal does not appear to me to contain a well researched and detailed plan going forward identifying reductions and expenditure reasonably to be made so as to reduce overall the burden on the taxpayer.
It is an essential feature. I feel of a proposal such as the SRV that even before monies are sought to be increased as a particularly heavy burden on the tax at this time, there needs to be a lot of time research and detail spent on formulating plans to reduce expenditure rather than simply seeking approval for more tax monies.

Thank you for accepting my submission.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

- > On 19 Dec 2024, at 9:25 AM, [REDACTED]
- >
- > Dear [REDACTED]
- >
- > Re: Special Rate Variation Submission
- >
- > Council wishes to acknowledge receipt of your submission to the Special Rate Variation (SRV) process.
- >
- > Your submission will be included in the information provided to the Council when the SRV application is presented for endorsement, prior to submission to IPART, at the Extraordinary Meeting on 15 January 2025.
- >
- > Council will endeavour to keep the latest information on the SRV updated on our website. All information pertaining to the SRV is located at:
 - > <https://www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au/index.php/council/the-future-of-gunnedah/proposed-special-rate-variation>
- >
- > For any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Council on 02 6740 2100 or council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au.

>
> Kind regards,
>
> [REDACTED]
>
> [REDACTED]
> Gunnedah Shire Council
> T 6740 2100
> E council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au
> PO Box 63 (63 Elgin Street), GUNNEDAH NSW 2380 www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au
> or www.facebook.com/gunnedahshire
>

> I acknowledge the Kamilaroi Aboriginal Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which I live, work and play. I pay my respect to Elders past and present.

> _____
> Privacy and Confidentiality Notice The information contained in this email is intended for the named recipients only. It may contain privileged, private and confidential information and if you are not the named intended recipient, you must not copy, distribute or take any action in reliance on it. If you have received this email in error, please notify us immediately by email or by the telephone number listed above.

>
> -----Original Message-----
> From: [REDACTED]
> Sent: Monday, December 16, 2024 10:12 AM
> To: Council Email <council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au>
> Subject: Special Rate Variation proposal - Director Corporate Services

>
> Attention:

> [REDACTED]

> Dear Sir/Madam,

> In order to finalise a submission to Council re the above SRV, I am hoping you might be able to assist me by providing the following information:

- > 1. Expenditure in relation to commissioning and obtaining consultancy reports, 2020 to date;
- > 2. Local government benchmarks relating to proportion of administration to total expenditure applying to Gunnedah and as compared to other Councils, in the same period;
- > 3. Expenditure breakup for the same period for administration costs - fees wages and all related expenditure - compared to expenditure on capital and maintenance items in the period;
- > 4. Breakup of areas/ items to which expenditure will be directed if the SRV is approved, and percentage increase accordingly;
- > 5. What areas of inefficiency and wasted/unjustified expenditure have been identified, and what steps are proposed to be taken to address and rectify such; including costs savings in relation to \$970.000 already identified
- > 6. What monies were spent on the signage opposite Zeds, and what was the justification;
- > 7. It appears that in relation to the swimming pool, approximately \$1.3 million operating loss was incurred last year. Will SRV monies be utilised to subsidise this and continuing operating losses in future years? Is there a plan to reduce operating losses apart from directing SRV monies into the situation?

> 8. In relation to the Gunnedah Airport, the Library services, and the Gunnedah Theatre, a total of some \$750,000 is being incurred as operating losses on an annual basis. Will SRV monies be utilised to subsidise these losses? Is there a plan to reduce these losses apart from directing SRV monies into those situations?

>
> I apologise for the late submission of this request, and look forward to your response.

>
> Yours sincerely,

>
> 

>
>
>
>
>
> Sent from my iPad

[REDACTED]

13th December, 2024

[REDACTED]

Gunnedah Shire Council
P.O. Box 63
Gunnedah. 2380.

Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to you in reply to the proposed SRV.

I am a ratepayer in three of the four categories, namely residential, business and farmland.

If Council is running at \$3.18M below what they would like to spend it is a clear indication of very poor management of operating within their means, which the rest of us have to do to survive. Council is grossly overstaffed in their outdoors gangs and in the office and this has come about by ~~is~~ largely by empire building by certain people in the past. It is a common site to see work gangs of 6 or 7 people with only two working at a given time and the rest standing or sitting around waiting their turn. I questioned the foreman of one of these gangs of 7 and he said that if they weren't all on the work site they would be just hanging around at the depot. I also think if multi skilling was implemented you

could halve the work force and get pretty close to the same amount of work done.

I am not advocating sacking half the staff but think there should be a freeze on employing more people and let the numbers come down by natural attrition - retirements + people leaving, until the numbers reach an efficient level - I would expect about half the present number of employees.

On my rural property I pay about four to five times as much in rates as residential for probably only a quarter of the service.

On farmland we get no water, sewerage, kerb + guttering, drainage, garbage and many other services that residential properties get. In fact the only service we get from the shire is the roads. There are other services like the library, pool, and rubbish tip but I think you will find that most rural landholders don't use at all.

Our gravel roads maintenance has been cut back drastically in the last year or two so the standard of the roads has at times been the worst since about 1960. We have been told that we can only expect a grader once a year now instead of 4 to 6 times/year that we got when [redacted]

[redacted] was running the show at a good standard. We have had sections of Voca Road where you had to either cross to the oncoming lane or drive along in the table drain to avoid serious holes 4 to 6 inches

deep that can cause damage to vehicles and put people's safety at risk, and I think that was pretty much typical of the shires gravel roads a year ago. A lot of resheeting was done to repair the damage but the roads are being neglected again now and deteriorating accordingly. There is already one place between "Carinya" and Wandobah where you have to cross to the southern lane to avoid a significant hole.

The arrogant person responsible for our rural roads ignores ratepayers completely so what is it going to take to get something done about the roads - a serious accident or a fatality? Getting rid of this overpaid and underqualified person would save council a significant amount of money.

When they do undertake any maintenance grading now there is also a water truck and driver and roller + driver there too who spend at least half their time sitting around waiting for their turn, which trebles the labour cost of doing the job for only a small benefit. One multi skilled person could easily do these two jobs if they are needed at all.

If there is to be any SRV I believe that farmland rates should be completely exempt because we are paying about 4 to 5 times as much for an unfairly small benefit which is diminishing greatly.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Signature]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 16 December 2024 4:48 PM
To: Council Email
Subject: Proposed Special Rate Variation and minimum rate rise for Gunnedah shire ratepayers

I submit to you my objections to the above

! AS a self funded retiree my income has been reduced /like all members of the community. We have all had to pay large increases in cost on all goods with no council rates and governments benefits, which are not given to non pensioners So how do we manage the only way we have to do is cut back on our expenditures to survive .NOT like the Gunnedah mayor and councillors received a increase in costs of 68% for financial years 2023 and 2024 for themselves where most self funded rate payers would have been lucky to have received from 4to5% on our investments

Councillors got us into this mess was it poor management and now to get the council out of trouble they have placed this rate on the community the same as they did to cover abattoir loss so they are doing it again to cover excessive costs they had on town projects like airport /saleyards.and what else you should find out with your investigations

2 Has the council considered the hardship this increase will cause young families with high interest rates/ pensioners/farmers/business in town all living in our community all having higher costs to find.each week..

What are they thinking when they decided to increase mining rates by 85% without the mines what would Gunnedah be .They employ a lot of people associated with mining/

local industries/ shops and business have all gone ahead/ mining companies they also have to manage with costs If the mines go what will happen to gunnedah council should think back when the town lost the mines and abattoir how bad things were.

3 The NSW government should consider and have an investigation into the Gunnedah council and give a reason why they think they should Allow Gunnedah Shire to Increase rates and tell the Gunnedah Shire Council they will have to manage a business in a proper manner. without a special rate rise [REDACTED] Gunnedah rate payer.

To IPART
Response to Gunnedah Shire Council
SRV rate rise.

Gunnedah Shire Council , General Manager Eric GROTH, held numerous public meetings in the shire at various locations regarding the proposed SRV rate rise. At all meetings the proposed rate rise was rejected.

At Gunnedah Town Hall meeting, the GM Groth was deceitful in regards to Council money being spent on then saleyards upgrade. The saleyard upgrade being funded by grants. The council receives money generated by the saleyards and is not a burden on Council rate payers as Groth purported.

The Gunnedah council Staff has increased from 160 to 242 since Eric Groth became GM, claiming his staff are highly efficient .

As a example of gross inefficient work practise, I recently observed 3 council staff taking the majority of the day replacing approximately 10 metal guide posts spending most of the time in the vehicle. As a rural land owner I would be broke if I employed three men to install 10 star picket posts in a fence line.


On the subject of efficiency, one would have to question why every Administration Council vehicle is driven home by staff with numerous vehicles travelling to Tamworth by a single staff member without any thought of car pooling. This practise costs rate payers enormous expenditure.

As a rural producer I cannot increase my produce income to match the proposed SRV, I have to work within my budget with efficient work practises. I would be bankrupt if I ran my rural business as incompetently and inefficient as the GM Groth and his staff. If Eric GROTH was in private business employment he would not hold his position, there for his contract should not be renewed.

The elected councillors prior to being elected stated in the local press that they were against a rate rise. Once elected these uneducated and unemployed people have bowed to the GM Groth to enforce a rate rise.

As of current incompetent management, all rates collected solely covers employee salaries only. This considering the staff increase of 33% leaves no surplus for works other then grants. No private company business would ever retain Management of this standard.

If all rate payers delayed their payments until legal action was proposed, the Council would have a cash flow issue which would prevent salary payment. This would create a hurdle that the current Management would fail and high light their gross inability at running council as a business.


16 December 2024.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 17 December 2024 9:45 PM
To: Council Email
Subject: Rate Increase

Importance: High

[REDACTED]

To [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Gunnedah Shire Council

I am writing in regards to the Rate Increase proposed by the Gunnedah Shire Council.

I feel the rate rise is too high for a few reasons:

1. Over staffing
2. We pay our rates on time all the time and as part of our rates we pay for a waste service that we do not receive.
3. The condition of our road is not great.
4. We need more bitumen on orange grove road, the rates should not just cover the councils staff wages.
5. Why with what we already pay for rates are we bringing in staff from other areas including Sydney to carry out council work.
6. And the rate increase is simply to pay wages at Gunnedah Shire Council, while all are struggling to put food on the table for their families.

The council is simply spending money not your own easy come easy go. Just like the new major said on ABC Radio "have less coffee to pay the rate rise." Just as well she is unemployed and does not own a coffee shop.

If we were to run our farms and businesses like you are running the council and we asked for a 38% increase from the council that would not happen. So why should we face a steep rate increase.

Concerned rate payer

[REDACTED]

18 December 2024

██████████
██████████
Gunnedah Shire Council
PO Box 63
GUNNEDAH NSW 2380

By email: council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

Dear ██████████

RE: Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase

Whitehaven Coal (Whitehaven) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Gunnedah Shire Council's proposed Special Rate Variation and minimum rate increase. Whitehaven will also be providing a submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

Whitehaven is proud to be a part of the Gunnedah community, and we recognise the important role we have to play as one of the largest employers in the region in supporting locals and local businesses.

Whitehaven, and mining more broadly, contribute materially to the economic wellbeing of the region by creating jobs, buying locally, supporting community organisations, and funding community infrastructure through mechanisms like planning agreements.

Proposals for the mining sector to bear the disproportionate burden of cumulative rates increases of 85.13 per cent - extraordinarily beyond the rate peg of 5.6 per cent for 2024/25 set by IPART – appear to be based on the assumption that the mining sector has the capacity to bear this additional cost, and it will not have any unintended consequences.

Mining has a significant positive economic impact on Gunnedah Shire. According to the 2022-23 NSW Mining Industry Expenditure Impact Survey, mining contributed \$492.6 million in total gross value added in Gunnedah Shire and indirectly supported 4,196 jobs. This contribution is equivalent to 66.8 per cent of total employment in the Shire and around 44.5 per cent of the Gross Regional Product of the Local Government Area (LGA).¹

Mining also contributes to the revenues of Gunnedah Shire Council indirectly through royalties via State grants, and directly through rates and Planning Agreements.

Whitehaven looks forward to being able to continue to work closely with Council, support the local community, and invest in Gunnedah for decades to come.

Whitehaven's Contribution to Gunnedah Shire

In addition to rate payments, Whitehaven continues to contribute financially to the region in many other ways.

Last financial year, Whitehaven injected \$669 million in our North-West NSW regional communities via procurement, salaries and wages, and corporate community partnerships and donations.

As the leading single private sector employer in the North-West NSW region, Whitehaven is helping to continue to transform the region in which we operate, providing much needed economic stimulus and employment opportunities.

Whitehaven paid \$106 million in wages and salaries to employees and contractors living in the Gunnedah Shire last financial year.

¹ NSW mining Industry Expenditure Impact Survey 2022-23, NSW Minerals Council

With approximately 550 Whitehaven employees living in Gunnedah Shire, representing around 52 per cent of our regional NSW workforce, these individuals personally contribute to the local economy and community infrastructure as rate payers and community members.

Whitehaven has provided more than \$3 million to initiatives in the Gunnedah Shire over the last two financial years alone. This includes supporting Council by contributing to the Gunnedah Koala Sanctuary, the Crime Prevention Expo, Get Ready and Resilience Expo, Gunnedah Shire Council Scholarship Fund, and the Community Resilience Network. We also align with Council's strategic plan by funding numerous community organisations, sporting clubs, and service providers.

Whitehaven also paid a record \$352.6 million to around 90 local Gunnedah businesses and suppliers last financial year. Since 2014, Whitehaven has spent \$2.5 billion on regional suppliers in the Gunnedah Shire.

Since the grant of the development consent for the Vickery Extension Project, Whitehaven has also made more than \$1 million in payments to the Gunnedah Shire Council as part of our \$7.5 million Planning Agreement.

While coal mining is a major contributor in the region, it represents a very small geographic 'footprint' of the Local Government Area and our use of Council infrastructure is disproportionately small. The coal industry does utilise Council infrastructure, however, this is a minor portion of the entire infrastructure use and Whitehaven, in most instances, contributes directly on a 'user pays' principle for the use of these facilities, particularly roads.

Future Projects

On September 15, 2021, approval was granted under the *Environmental Protection, Biodiversity and Conservation Act* for the Vickery Extension Project (Vickery), and in April 2023, the Whitehaven Coal Board approved investment to commence the early mining of the Vickery coal deposit.

Construction commenced in June 2023 and first coal was produced in the June quarter 2024, with production ramping up in FY25.

With a capital cost of above \$700 million, Vickery represents the largest and single most important economic investment underway in the local area, and will create approximately 500 jobs during its construction phase and 450 jobs during operations over its 25-year life.

As with other Whitehaven projects, there will be substantial direct economic benefits locally, including \$271 million in incremental disposable incomes that will help stimulate and support the local economy and businesses.

It will generate approximately 170 new jobs in locally-based businesses that will provide contracting and mine-support services.

Over its 25-year life, Vickery will contribute \$1.2 billion in net benefits to NSW including royalties, which will help fund community infrastructure like schools, hospitals, and roads.

A decision around further investment and commencement of full-scale operations at Vickery is yet to be considered by the Board. Whitehaven maintains a clear capital allocation framework and capital expenditure decisions are made based on return hurdles and cost of capital and are carefully weighed against other uses of funds.

Ratings Comparisons

It should be noted the mining industry already pays a higher rate than most other ratepayers in the Shire, and this disproportionate increase amplifies the inequity we observe in the proposed SRV.

The current mining rate in the dollar compared to other rates categories as shown below in the table indicate the mining rate is as much as 9.5 times above the comparable figures for other categories, which would rise to 13.4 times higher after a Special Rate Variation.

The mining category ad-valorem rate is currently 3.2 times higher than the average of all other rates and would rise to 4.5 times higher than the average.

This highlights that, even under current circumstances, the mining category is already required to pay disproportionately high rates prior to any potential increases in this category.

Rate / Charge Type	Category	Sub-Category	Ad-Valorem Cents in \$ (2024/25)	Proposed Avg Increased Cumulative Rate
Ordinary	Residential	Ordinary	0.00507172	0.00670735
		Rural	0.00530625	0.007017516
		Gunnedah	0.01172653	0.015508336
		Village	0.01433216	0.018954282
	Business	Ordinary	0.00970182	0.012830657
		Gunnedah	0.02771949	0.036659026
		Power Generation	0.00970182	0.012830657
	Farmland		0.00214712	0.002839566
	Mining		0.02050704	0.037964683

Compare this with the ad valorem mining rate of \$0.0009479 in neighbouring Local Government Area, the Narrabri Shire Council, where Whitehaven also has operations.

It is clear that Gunnedah has a disproportionately high ad-valorem rate for mining – 21 times higher than Narrabri – and would rise to 40 times higher after a Special Rate Variation.

Increased and substantial ratings burden falling upon the mining industry

This is not the first time the Gunnedah Shire Council has placed a disproportionate increase onto the mining category, having previously increased mining rates by 120 per cent over four years from 2013-14 to 2016-17. Notably, Council used the same arguments then as now that the increase will make the proportions of total revenue more equitable.

However, Gunnedah Shire experienced a 6.4 per cent increase in population between 2013 and 2023 – from 12,481 to 13,280 – and a decrease in the number of operating mines in the shire from 3 to 2 (excluding sites in rehabilitation).

The rationale for increasing the proportion of total revenue from the mining category is unclear in circumstances where there are fewer operating mines, increasing the burden to be borne by each individual mine.

It should be noted that Whitehaven is still paying mining rates on properties that are no longer in operation.

The last time the Council increased mining rates by 120 per cent, was the same year that the Sunnyside Mine ceased operations in 2012. Since then, the Rocglen Mine has also entered into rehabilitation (in 2019).

This leaves only two operating mines to bear the burden of funding rates increases of 85.13 per cent to reach the proposed proportion of total revenue.

Of the proposed \$1.4 million increase in rates payable – from \$1.77 million to \$3.17 million – by Whitehaven in Gunnedah Shire, \$1.25 million of that increase would come from a single mine, the Vickery Extension Project, before full scale mining occurs.

While we are opposed to the proposed increase, it is worth emphasising we are not advocating for the mining sector to be treated like residential rate payers – we recognise the important role we play in the region and we have demonstrated over the last decade that we are willing to pay disproportionately high rates in order to support the communities in which we operate.

We remain committed to paying our fair share to the Gunnedah Shire Council, and all LGAs that we operate in.

However, issues arise where governments at all levels put short-term gains ahead of long-term sustainability. This is equally applicable to Council rates, State royalties and broader taxes.

We urge Council to consider that while higher rates might deliver short-term revenue increases for the Shire, they will increase costs and have the potential to place additional pressure on future investment at a time where cost inflation is being felt across the board.

Setting rates is a balancing act that needs to focus on what is sustainable and in the long-term interests of the people of Gunnedah Shire.

Whitehaven is proud of the important role it plays in supporting the region and contributing to local infrastructure, both directly and through rates revenue, however, would encourage the Council to reevaluate its draft plan to ensure the rates burden does not unduly impact on future investment in Gunnedah.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

[Redacted address]

Whitehaven Coal Limited

Gunnedah Shire Council

18th December 2024

Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase :

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Gunnedah Shire Council :

I attended a Rates Increase meeting at Town Hall some months back .

To my knowledge at that meeting, that all RATE payers of the Gunnedah Shire, Only pay for the employees? (Is this correct?)

Plus the Under Budget on the Gunnedah Airport, as cost has blown out??

Saleyards another facility has blown out of budget also :

What about the Saleyard Canteen that has never opened, Now that the Garden wall has falling in :
Road access to the Saleyards ??

Roof covering the Saleyards:

HOW WILL FARMERS be ABLE to AFFORD to SELL there live stock through these Facility?

(If costs need to increase .to support your budget blowout ?)

Yes Gunnedah is a wonderful place to raise a young family:

As I moved to Gunnedah 37 years ago, with my young family. Gunnedah supports good Education and has a wonderful Sporting Facilities.

Two of my Children have also moved back to Gunnedah to raise their young family:

I am a huge Rate payer to the Gunnedah Shire - Farmland -Residential Rural

- Residential / Commercial.

NOW on my farming Rates Notice I pay for -FARMLAND

Plus

-WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITY FEE

(but the I also get charged at the facility to take out my house hold rubbish to this facility)

(or I pay for a SKIP bin to COLLECT my house hold rubbish) Council double dip !!

On my Residential Rural Rate Notice , I also pay WASTE Facility .

(BUT there is only one of ME I have this on all Farming and Residential RATE NOTICE) Council double DIP again.)

Residential / Commercial, in Gunnedah. Yes pay for Residential

GWS Charges

Sewer Chargers

DWWMS 1-140 L waste/240L rec/ 240L green

Waste Management Facility fee

Storm water.

I receive little from the Gunnedah Shire Council on my farming enterprise

* only SLASHING may be 3-4times per year, plus they only do 2 width of the slasher ,but a number of times I do this myself from the road side to my fence line to make a FIRE break .

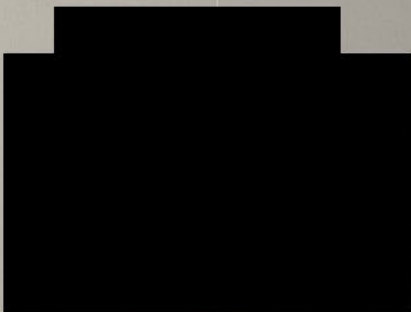
* receive NO garbage pickup or NO VOUCHER , to help cover our fees that are paid .

* On dirt road properties – only receive GRADER may be once every 12 months plus NO waste VOUCHERS .

(what will COUNCIL give us for a RATE rise ?)

SO YES I DON'T WANT A 32.25% rate rise !

Kind Regards



To whomever it concerns,

I am completely opposed to the rate change and the proposed SRV. Mine and my family's home is in the heart of the liver pool planes, some of the best farming country in Australia and we feel that our area of the shire is being neglected.

What you are asking is unreasonable and you have proven to not care about how the rate payers feel about this. The meetings that were held to "gauge community feedback" are rubbish. I don't understand how you are able to gauge feedback when you couldn't even be bothered to come and talk to the community and instead paid a consultant to do so. Not to mention you took no notice to what the majority wanted, basically saying: We hear that you're unhappy but guess what, we're doing it anyway.

I saw in a recent edition of the paper that the council is funding a golf tournament. This is an absolutely absurd and a ridiculous waste of rates payer money. If this event was not able to be funded by golfing Australia or the people that benefit (moteliars, clubs, and pubs) then it should not be happening and certainly not happening at the expense of the rate payers, most of who will see zero benefits from this. Not only is this an absurd amount of money for us to be spending on golf, but the tournament is advertised to attract people into Gunnedah to attend. It's not even for us!!

Our business uses the Trinkey Forest road and the Box Forest road daily so it is devastating seeing that our money is paying for someone else to play golf when we struggle to leave the house most days. I drive these roads a minimum of 16 times a fortnight for work. I travel this road the early hours of the morning at 4:40am before the sunrise and return home in late afternoon, meaning in winter I almost always only drive this road in the dark. The road is unfit to be driving on, especially in low visibility due to the severe damage to the road and the lack of any form of indication warning drivers of potholes, corrugations and floodway's that have proven to cause serious damage to vehicles. People that do not travel this road as often as me and know where the potholes are *will* damage their cars and are highly likely to have an accident. You say, "We urge drivers to drive to the conditions and keep a look out." There are many sections of the road that due to potholes and corrugations cause the car to skid out when going over 25ish k/hrs. The speed limit for this road is 100ks. To drive to the conditions of this road you expect us to drive 20k/hrs for 29ks. I expect: drive to the conditions, pay to the conditions.

I have to leave my house at 4:40am for work each day and after this recent rain event and the damage it has done to the roads, this has been pushed even earlier to 4:30. And imagine my excitement when I saw that the road was actually being repaired and receiving maintenance after the rain, and I was hoping I would be able to get that extra 10 min sleep-in back (which really does make a difference at 4 in the morning). Only to find out that no, the road isn't being repaired only the damage caused by the rain. You have dozers driving through massive potholes and ridiculous corrugation and you refuse to do nothing about them. What is the point of paying for that dozer to be here when its not even doing anything!

Not to mention I don't even know what this money is being spent on! I have searched your website and can't find any section that states exactly what the money is going to be or even planned to be spent on! Not to mention the absolute BS that is on the rates page. Your opening line states, "Special Rate Variation is needed to address Council's financial sustainability and maintain essential community infrastructure." I don't believe that a golf tournament is essential infrastructure, but I believe a road that is our only way into town is. You also stated that you would "start a conversation with the community about a potential Special Rate Variation" and that the feedback was "varied in

response." You had no involvement with our community, not even attending the meetings instead ending that consultant and the varied response was that some people didn't like it and some people hated it.

To propose a rate, increase that my family, coworkers, neighbours and friends will see no benefit for while I am driving in unsafe conditions, on roads that have caused serious damage to my car is ridiculous and extremely upsetting. If you want to start saving money you can scrap the dozer that is here doing nothing.

Regards,

██████████

Dear Shire council.

I'm writing this letter to discuss the greatly unwanted rate rise you are bestowing on the Gunnedah community I say greatly unwanted because I am yet to find a fellow rate payer and resident to the Gunnedah shire that has agreed with the rise. This consisted of mainly people in the rural areas however many of the townsfolk are quite against it as well. The constant poor management in at the council has led to a distrust among the people that the money will be spent in a way it is needed and spent effectively as time and time again the Gunnedah shire council proves to us that it loves to waste the rate payer's money. Is it correct that there are around 160 people working in the offices at the shire council I believe that this means the people in the office outnumber the shire workers in the construction sector. I don't know what these people in the office achieve during their day but planning roadwork and budgeting construction as major construction improvements seem to constantly go over budget the saleyards project is an example and the constant road patching on the blackstump way on repaired roads that were only completed last year it seems that when the council finally get around to fixing the absolutely appalling roads infrastructure that you make the problem worse as the section of 'new road' around Mullaly mountain is already breaking through the surface. On the topic of the road around Mulley mountain who's the [REDACTED] that thought is was safe to leave that road open for so long when it was in such a dangerous condition the council is extremely lucky that there were no deaths on that stretch going up the hill to Mullaly and upon finishing construction there the two sections of new road are connected by a bone shaking suspension shearing strap snapping excuse for a bitumen road why was this section left any sensible business would have re done the road from the Mullaly mountain right into the township dose the council like doing things twice? I don't think any of the 160 odd people in those offices have done their job to maximise the amount of road surface fixed with their roads budget as the rate payers money is squandered on patchwork and constantly moving the entire road works fleet to do 50 meters of repairs to move again and be back in the same spot a week later stay in one spot and fix the road don't just expect the rate payer to bridge the gaps of your poor management do the job correctly and you might have more money.

The council relies heavily on the rates from rural rate payers and as a rural rate payer I am I already see the large rates that we pay to be a waste of money as personally in the last year the only council infrastructure I have used is the public toilet in town one rest area on the side of the road and the roads themselves I cannot believe that the shire can receive the money in rates that is dose and somehow the most important piece of infrastructure that it has is in dire straits, falling apart and destroying rate payers vehicles the local tyre shops and suspension places in the town must love the shires

neglect of their roads as it seems anyone living on one of the many gravel roads in the Gunnedah shire seem to be constantly needing repairs to their vehicles as the corrugations shake the vehicles apart if the shire wants the rise the rates and get more funding prove to the rural rate payers that our rates can actually fix our roads because the broken record of more money will make the roads better isn't working anymore as no one trusts that the council can make any improvements even with the rate rise I'm sure the money will be spent in the town on the absolutely ridiculous Wandobah dog park and other expenses that help a very few select people in the town and no one else the roads are the life blood of a rural based shire council like Gunnedah as your rate payers need roads every day to keep their businesses going and pay their rates. Apparently \$2.1 million will be spent on roads and \$1.5 million on the backlog no one believes this the roads will not improve you have said it before, and you will say it again this money will be spent moving roadwork signs around and patching holes FIX THE ROAD PROPERLY. Spend your current rates on the transport network and prove that you can fix one road properly then you can lobby for more money. The Trinkey forest road is in pathetic condition if I was running the shire I would be absolutely disgusted at the thought of taking people's money that have to put up with a 28 kilometre goat track to enter and exit their business and home when in most parts 20 or 30 kilometres an hour is the fastest you can go the road needs more gravel and reforming not a light grade in the washouts. I believe we shouldn't pay any rates at all as the poor management in there is just wasting everyone's money time and time again the reason that the shire council is falling apart is the overspending and under planning like I say I don't know what anyone dose in there but if the shire council was a business like the rest of us it would have gone bankrupt years ago fix your problems don't just off load the problems to us we shouldn't have to pick up your slack WE DON'T WANT A RATE RISE.

██████████ Gunnedah shire resident.



19 December 2024

[REDACTED]
Gunnedah Shire Council PO Box 63
GUNNEDAH NSW 2380

By email: council@gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

Proposed Special Rate Variation

Dear [REDACTED],

I am writing in relation to Gunnedah Shire Council's (GSC) proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) and minimum rate increase.

Mining makes a significant economic contribution to Gunnedah.

According to the NSW Minerals Council (NSWMC) 2022-23 NSW Mining Industry Expenditure Impact Survey, mining contributed \$492.6 million in total gross value added in Gunnedah Shire and supported 4,196 jobs either directly and indirectly.

This was equivalent to 66.8 per cent of total employment in the Gunnedah Local Government Area (LGA), and around 44.5 per cent of the Gross Regional Product of the LGA.

Furthermore, the NSW mining industry directly spent around \$220 million, and supported 164 local business suppliers in the LGA.¹

Mining also contributes to the revenues of GSC indirectly through royalties via State grants, and directly through council rates and Planning Agreements.

Proposed Special Rate Variation

The SRV application to be made to IPART proposes a cumulative value of 37.67% phased in over two years and retained permanently, commencing in 2025-2026. The proposed increase caps the increase on Residential, Business and Farmland rating categories at 15% per year (32.25% cumulative), with the balance of the revised SRV of 37.67% cumulative to be sourced from the Mining rating, resulting in an 85.13% cumulative increase for this category. The portion

¹ [NSW Mining Industry Expenditure Impact Survey 2022/23](#)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
19th December 2024

[REDACTED]
Gunnedah Shire Council
Elgin St
Gunnedah

Dear Sir,

RE: Proposed Special Rate Variation

Writing this letter is a big waste of time as it was building a dog park on the Wandabah Rd.

The rate payers have already made it very clear we are all opposed and disgusted at the thought of an exorbitant rate rise and cost to our business that brings us NOTHING in return! To rub salt into the wound we have a General Manager that after hiding behind the wasted money spent on consultancy firms to liaise with us has the hide to big note and pat yourself on the back that you have changed the rate rise from 38.88% to 32.25%. Wow how good are you? But then you add on the approved rate peg of 4.7% and 3.5% to total 37.67%.

Good on you and thanks for insulting me by ignoring all previous letters and then pretending to have our best interests at heart for knocking off a grand total of 1.21% from the 38.88%.

Wake up to yourself and understand we are running a business unlike yourself and need roads to generate an income to pay your rates and wages so you can build your dog parks and Koala parks that return nothing to the rural rate payers or the community.

Yet again let me say it so it is crystal clear. I am opposed to the Special variation rate rise. Could you please respond and have the decency to acknowledge that you hear me and understand I am opposed to this rate rise.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
13th December 2024

[REDACTED]
Gunnedah Shire Council
Elgin St
Gunnedah

Dear Sir,

RE: Proposed Special Rate Variation

I will keep this letter to the point and short. I do not support the SRV and did not during the consultation process!

We are currently in a cost-of-living crisis with high inflation, high interest rates and large variations in commodity and input costs. Large variation in weather with climate change being a huge risk to our businesses. If Gunnedah Shire can't operate within its normal approved rate increases and is unsustainable then you as a general manager need to work out what you as a business need to do better, change, sell or downsize. Relying on taking more from the people of this community who are living within their budgets and working sustainably is grossly unfair.

Essential services like roads, water and waste should be the priority of the council. As a rural rate payer, we need roads repaired and maintained to operate our farming business. The fact that you are not increasing waste or water unfairly disadvantages the rural rate payers who will be where you are getting the most money from for this outrageous increase. You should be spending the money we as rural rate payers are generating on the services we are using. ROADS! ROADS! ROADS!

Will we see an improvement in service for the \$14,542.08 extra we will be paying over the next two years if you increase our rates with a SRV? Even if you said we would we don't believe that you will actually repair and maintain the roads we rely upon for our sustainability. Reading the paper is an exercise in frustration to see money being wasted by Gunnedah Shire council.

If you need to raise money for specific works you can't pay for because you are not able to manage a budget and keep spending on projects you already have in check then put in a levy to the rate payers who use the services and non-essential services will need to get reduced or cut. No bonuses or increases in wages for council workers until you can manage the money you have. If you keep running in a deficit then salary reductions should reflect the poor management and deficit percentages.

WE DON'T WANT THE SRV!

WE DON'T WANT OUR RATES TO RISE BY 37.67%! YOU HAVE A PEG INCREASE WORK WITH THAT!

Regards,

[REDACTED]

9 DEC 2024

[REDACTED]
Gunnedah Shire Council
Elgin St
Gunnedah

Dear Sir,

RE: Proposed Special Rate Variation

As a rural rate payer, I am totally opposed to your rate increase of 32.25%. Out here on Trinkey Forest Road we get nothing for the exorbitant amount of rates that we already pay. We should be paying less, not more. As usual Trinkey Forest road is in a disgraceful state, an accident waiting to happen and you have the audacity to expect us to pay more to get nothing in return. Wake up to yourselves!! It was two years between gradings on Trinkey Forest road, no wonder the road is always in a disgraceful state. You people have no idea. And what was the point of having these community meetings when you took NO notice of what the overall majority of rate payers wanted?

When you paid that consultant to deliver your message to the meetings that were held, to try and soft soap the rate payers by pitching a sob story and crying poor mouth. The rate payers didn't buy it. You as general manager should have been delivering the message. How many thousands and thousands of \$'s was his firm paid by the Shire??

Like wise with the phone survey. I believe it was a different company. How many thousands of dollars were they paid?? You are really good at one thing, that is wasting rate payers money.

It appears to me that it was just to go through the motions and then tell the rate payers we heard what you said but we will do as we want, that is to have an exorbitant rate hike. The [REDACTED] that you have tried to feed the rate payers about the income generated by the SRV would address the backlog of works we heard that last time there was a huge increase in rates and nothing has happened to the backlog of works.

Proposed Golf event

Sir I read in the Gunnedah Times dated 24/11/24: Funding for Gunnedah to host prestigious Golf event. The Shire certainly likes to big note itself by agreeing to financially supporting the Golf event for \$15,000 over three years. As a rate payer I am totally opposed to this. This is just Squandering rate payers funds. The event has no benefit to most of the rate payers whatsoever. The only ones to benefit from this is the Moteliers, the pubs and the clubs. If Golf NSW can't fund the event let them go without, they've got a hide expecting the council to fund their own Golf event. If you stopped to think about it more traffic on the roads – MORE potholes. You need less traffic, you can't keep the roads in order now.

The Koala Park

This would have to be one of the greatest wastes of money I have ever seen. Gunnedah already had a Koala Park the Waterways Wildlife Park owned and operated by the late Nancy Small and her

husband. As usual the authorities couldn't leave anything that is working well without interfering and as a result it closed. With the new facility it will require more council employees to run it, the question is how many? and at what cost to the rate payers? It will probably run at a loss and will become another burden on rate payers. How many million dollars has this project run over budget? And where has the money come from?

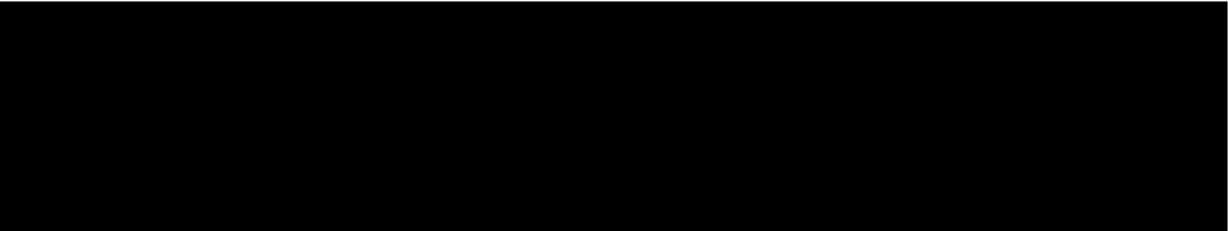
The sale yards

When this project was first announced it came out in the local paper that 17 million dollars was to be spent on the upgrade to make it a state of the art selling complex. The trouble with this was it was out of date 40 years ago and it wouldn't matter how much was spent on it will never be state of the art. You talk about state of the art you should have had a look at Wagga before the project started. They have a state of the art selling center. Questions: How much of the 17 Million was grant money? Q2. How many Millions has this run over budget? Q3. Where has the funding come from to bridge the short fall?

The dog park on Wandobah Road

Another great waste of money when we see so many rural roads in such a disgraceful state. Q1. What was the cost of the dog park? Q2. How was it funded? Was it a grant or was it funded from the general fund? ie. Funded by the Shire ie. The rate payers? If the owners want to walk their dogs they could have gone out to one of the TSR's.

The sign in Woolsley Park



Rural rate payers have been getting a raw deal from Gunnedah Shire ever since the amalgamation of the two shires. There's far too much of the rural rate money taken from where it is collected and spent around the town. The shire is held in very poor esteem by the rural rate payers. Gunnedah Shire is like a giant overgrown tree that is full of dead wood and needs a good severe pruning!!

There is no productivity, very little accountability and little transparency and no respect for the rate payers or their wishes. I with all other rate payers would like answers to ALL of the above question and you as general manager should be able to answer every question and when and IF I get the answers I am going to the local paper to get them to Print questions and answers so that all rate payers can read about what is happening.

At one of the SRV meetings I attended the subject came up about how many shire employees were driving from Tamworth every day to work in the Shire office. No one would answer the question it seemed to be a sore point. Question. How many employees are coming from Tamworth and are they being supplied with Shire vehicles and fuel??

With regards to saving money we could start by slashing salaries and yours would be a good starting point. Say a 75% reduction, you could lead by setting an example.

Today I attended the village store at Tambar Springs, and as I walked out of the store to get in my vehicle, I noticed two people sitting in the park adjacent to the shop. They were having lunch. I

noticed a Shire ute parked in front of the park. I drove very slowly to where the Shire Vehicle was parked and pulled up along side of it to find out the vehicle was running with the windows up and no doubt the air conditioning would have been on. There was a good shady tree only a few meters away. Most people with any common sense would have parked under the shade and left the windows down and turned the motor off, but of course when it's someone else's money they are frittering away who cares. I'll bet if it were their own personal vehicle they wouldn't do it.

Gunnedah Shire should be known as the land of lost opportunities, the Shire of willful waste and gross mismanagement!!

Yours a totally disgruntled rate payer, who is sick of being ripped off,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 19 December 2024 3:31 PM
To: Council Email
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Proposed Special Rate Variation Submission

Good afternoon.

We are responding to your recent correspondence to all ratepayers dated 29th November 2024 in regards to the Gunnedah Shire Council's Proposed Special Rate Variation and Minimum Rate Increase following the new councils meeting held 6th November 2024 and would like to use this opportunity to comment on this revised proposal being submitted as an application to Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW (IPART).

Reducing our farmland rates from a Cumulative 38.88% to 37.67% is effectively a 1.26% reduction from the original proposal presented to us the ratepayer back in August over the upcoming next 2 years and we find totally unacceptable. As proposed in our submission in September 2024, if everyone of the 6,451 ratepayer's in the Gunnedah Shire paid an extra flat rate \$490.00 per annum council would raise over the \$3.1 Million shortfall of funding to "maintain assets and services to the current targeted service levels would be achieved." We understand this shortfall is due to state and federal government's reduced funding and cost shifting. Gunnedah Shire Council along with the local Government Association need to keep lobbying the NSW Government to comprehensively review its funding model to ensure adequate funding and stop relying on ratepayer increases like Special Rate Variations (SRV).

Farmland rate payers in this shire paying over \$10,000 would be a very small proportion of rate payers and are the very ones that are going to be absolutely slugged with this proposal, and the ones with less voice.

Have witnessed much waste in funds over the years, however the latest was just recently. The Tambar Springs Rubbish Facility is opened on certain days for a few hours each week. The attendant was a contractor not an employee. The council has a huge number of people employed yet still using contractors when short of funds.

The town pool runs at a \$3.1 Million loss a year and the Airport reportedly is running at a \$300,000 deficit annually. This is unbelievable, yet there's the expectation that ratepayers can just pay more by applying for more SRV's.

We do support increasing the Mining rate to maintain infrastructure and services that are required for day to day functionality.

Will be submitting our comments to IPART after your proposed application is lodged as we believe its unrealistic for a small number of farmland ratepayers with excessive rates in the tens of thousands to support this massive rate rise when a fairer and more equitable option should have been considered and endorsed.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 19 December 2024 8:56 PM
To: Council Email; Council Email
Subject: SRV Application - Submission - [REDACTED]

Hi GSC Staff,

I would have to say that the SRV I would believe is as good as done. So, there is not much sense in complaining about that.

I do believe there will be some within the community that will suffer and find that the increase will put a great strain on their home, business or farming enterprise.

Our farm operation is on a small scale and won't be adversely affected, but I feel sorry for the larger farms which already pay a large amount of rates.

I also feel for the Mining Industry as I understand they are going to wear a larger burden to cover for the rate rise only being 32% instead of 38% (rounded off).

The Council needs to remember that mining is a huge and integral part of the fabric of Gunnedah, which I'm sure most of the Council and Councillors would appreciate.

There has already been a lot of comment around that the Council also needs to look internally for some productivity and cost saving methods of improving the budget.

I would like to make the following quick comments in that regard.

1. I would like to think that the Council Management will not see the SRV as a green light to go and increase staff numbers. Instead of looking at increasing staff numbers, productivity of existing staff should be a priority. May also be an opportunity to get rid of some "dead wood" that exists in all businesses.
2. There should be a good serious look at the productivity of Council operations and that includes contracting/consultants. I am sure the Council does have some very clever staff, but we continually see consultants brought in to rehash plans that were only done 3 or 4 years prior. There may be some reason why that is continually done but from a ratepayer's perspective it looks like a waste of money rehashing a plan so quickly and which in a lot of cases doesn't get implemented. If the Council is not sure of funding of matters than delay a further rehash of a recent

Thank you for reading my email. I feel there is more I could say but that will do for the moment.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 19 December 2024 5:00 PM
To: Council Email
Subject: SRV Submission.

The General Manager,
Gunnedah Shire Council

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you regarding the proposed Special Rate Variation proposed by Gunnedah Shire Council. At a time when the majority of ratepayers are struggling with the effects of a severe cost of living crisis it is almost unconscionable that Council believes it can impose such a significant increase without it severely affecting ratepayers. Ordinary families are making decisions everyday on ways to cut and prioritize their spending but Council believes this restraint should not be applied to their spending. Council are in debt based on their decisions on how ratepayers money was spent and because of their overspending now turn to ratepayers and say we need more of your hard earned money to rectify our poor decisions.

The Koala park that has no tenant or no immediate prospect of opening and functioning
New proposed Dog pound- Council spending too much money on the accommodation conditions as they are better than some humans live in. Also they are proposing extra staff to run it. Proposed Kitchener Park Upgrade is not needed at this stage, it works adequately as is, why consider spending money on an unnecessary project at a time of financial crisis.

PREVIOUS WASTE OF MONEY

1. The airport upgrade as we are not going to get new air service to Gunnedah as we have been trying unsuccessfully since the 1970's
2. Chandos Street being reconfigured to one way then changed back to the original usage. Was anyone ever held accountable for this poor and costly decision?
3. Change from Koala signs to new ugly thumb print council logo mess, how many thousands did that cost with new signs and new stationery etc and how many staff hours wasted?
4. Off leash Dog Area. Money wasted for a limited number of ratepayers who should be responsible for their own dogs exercise.for. There is still large dog droppings all around the golf course and great big dogs are roaming free all over town.
5. Council over the years keep changing their minds as in the main street for instance with the trees, they have been on the footpath then removed onto the street.
6. Incredibly expensive LED signs in Kitchener and Wolseley Parks.

In the real world if you don't have the money you go without but in the world of local government it seems you just hit the ratepayer over and over again. If we are in a financial mess the Council needs to accept responsibility for their poor decisions and make significant cuts in their overheads including staff and accept their share of the financial pain and not just put all the strain on ratepayers.

Regards

[REDACTED]