

RANDWICK CITY COUNCIL

Environmental Levy Community Consultation Report

23 January 2024



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1. Summary

This section provides a summary of the community consultation outcomes of Council's ratepayer survey, telephone survey, information sessions and submissions received.

Consultation activity	Level of support	Participants	Summary and notes	Conducted by
Telephone survey	92%	750	A random and representative survey of Randwick City residents with +- 3.6% error margin. Surveys of this type are statistically considered a reliable indicator of community sentiment.	Micromex Research
Ratepayer survey	55%	7,639	Opt-in survey open to Randwick City ratepayers	WebSurvey
Submissions	46%	194	Submissions provide the opportunity for interested community members, groups and businesses to provide feedback.	Randwick Council
Drop-in sessions	NA	178	Nine drop-in sessions totalling 21 hours, attended by 178 attendees.	Randwick Council

Table: Executive summary of main consultation outcomes.

Key findings from the consultation:

- An extensive engagement program was undertaken using a wide range of channels including direct mail, outdoor advertising, social media, cinema advertising, electronic direct mail, media, print advertising, telephone survey, community survey, information packs and translated material.
- Based on the engagement program and high level of engagement and response, there is a good level of awareness of the proposal to continue and make permanent the Environmental Levy.
- Respondents show a good level of understanding of the proposed projects, costs and impact to rates.
- There is general community support for continuing and making permanent the Levy.
- Support for continuing the levy varies with slightly higher levels of support in the eastern part of the City including East Ward and Coogee and South Coogee, while there is slightly less

support in the western part of the City including West Ward and Kensington and Kingsford.

- While all proposed projects received some support from respondents, the most important projects for the community are:
 - tree planting
 - water management
 - food waste
 - Coastal Walkway and
 - sustainability rebates

2. Community engagement strategy

2.1. Background and objectives

Randwick City Council is proposing to continue Council's Environmental Levy and make it permanent. The levy funds a range of sustainability initiatives across our City. The Levy has been in place since 2004 and was extended in 2009, 2014 and 2019. It is currently due to expire on 30 June 2024.

Randwick City Council conducted a comprehensive engagement program on the proposed continuation and permanency of the Environmental Levy. The goal was to engage openly and constructively with the Randwick City community about the levy, in line with Council's Community Engagement Strategy and meeting IPART's requirements for consulting with the community regarding a Special Rate Variation (SRV).

The objectives of the consultation were:

- To ensure the Randwick City community, residents and ratepayers are comprehensively informed about Council's proposal to continue and make permanent the Environmental Levy.
- To obtain a measure of community attitudes towards continuing to pay the Environmental Levy.
- To provide an opportunity for the community to input into their preferred programs and projects to be delivered as part of the Environmental Levy, should it continue.
- To communicate to the Randwick City community, residents and ratepayers what impact the Levy has had in its 20-year history.
- To determine levels of support and priorities for the proposed projects under the Environmental Levy.
- To ensure IPART's requirements for local councils applying for SRVs are met to a high standard, primarily around the requirements to deliver sufficient information and consultation with its community.

2.2. Consultation period

The consultation was open for 42 days from 7 November to 19 December 2023.

The community was asked to specify whether or not they supported the continuation of the Environmental Levy to make it permanent, and to identify the projects they felt were the most important. They were also given the opportunity to comment in general.

The information booklet and information sheets on key projects were available in hard copy at all Randwick City Council Libraries, at the Customer Service Centre and online at www.yoursay.randwick.nsw.gov.au/envirolevy2024

Using Randwick City Council's adopted Community Engagement Strategy which is modelled on the IAP2 Engagement Spectrum, this project is assessed as having a higher level, City Wide impact.

3. Community engagement activities

The engagement strategy included opportunities for public participation and employed targeted communications, using the following activities to facilitate community engagement.



3.1. Ratepayer mailout



Image: Letter, information booklet and survey sent to every ratepayer in Randwick City

Letter from The Mayor, information booklet and reply paid survey (with online option) posted or emailed to every ratepayer in Randwick City (46,414).

3.2. Translated materials – letter and information booklet



Image: Simplified Chinese translation

Image: Greek translation

Image: Spanish translation

Image: Indonesian translation

Translated versions of the Mayor’s Letter and Information Booklet were available in Simplified Chinese, Greek, Spanish and Indonesian by scanning the QR code on the ratepayers letter or downloading from the Your Say Randwick website.

3.3. Dedicated consultation website

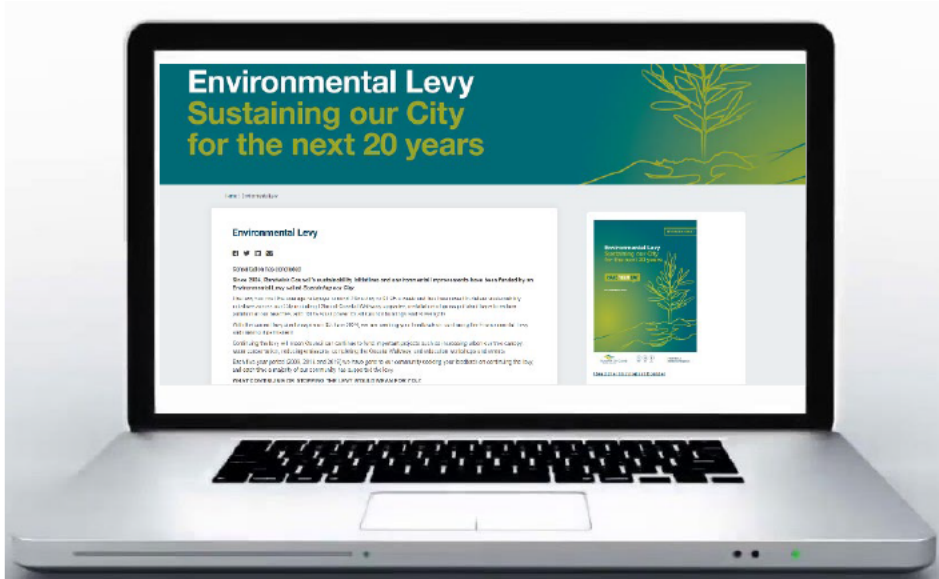


Image: Your Say Randwick website

A dedicated Your Say Randwick website was created to help inform residents of the consultation, all the ways they could be involved, and/or to make a submission:

www.yoursay.randwick.nsw.gov.au/envirolevy2024

A number of documents were available to download, including the information booklet sent to all ratepayers translated into Simplified Chinese, Greek, Spanish and Indonesian and project information sheets.

The website was launched on 7 November 2023 and was open for 42 days, closing 19 December 2023.

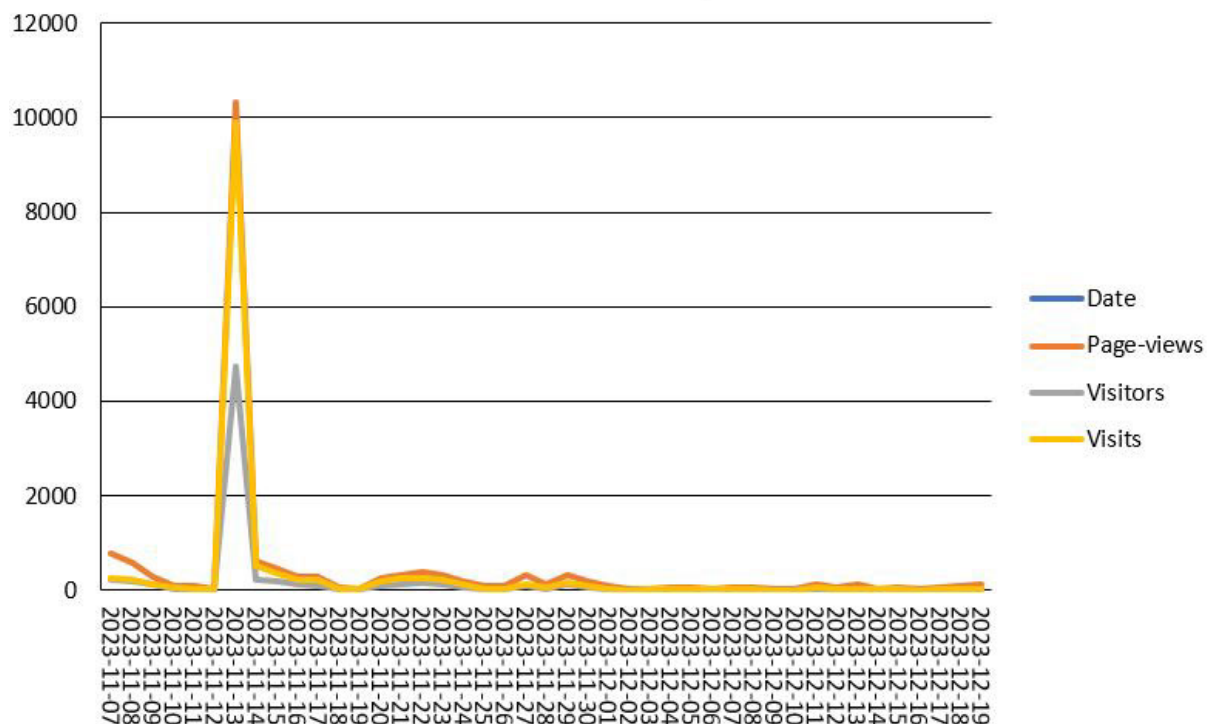
During this time, the site experienced the following:

- 13,873 visits to the Your Say Randwick webpage
- 12,766 document downloads

Document	Downloads
Information Booklet	226
Project information sheets (14 projects)	294
Impact on rates information sheet “What the levy will cost you”	65
Greek translation – Mayor’s Letter and Booklet	3,085
Indonesian translation – Mayor’s Letter and Booklet	3,076
Simplified Chinese translation – Mayor’s Letter and Booklet	3,023
Spanish translation – Mayor’s Letter and Booklet	2,997

Table: Documents downloaded via consultation website.

Visitors Summary



Graph: Visitation to the Your Say Randwick website.

There was very high visitation to the website that primarily occurred on 13 November 2023 and subsequent days.

This correlates with the emailing of the digital version of the survey and Mayor’s letter to approximately 14,000 ratepayers who elect to receive their rates digitally. The Mayor’s letter included QR codes to directly view the translated material.

3.4. Advertising

Environmental Levy Sustaining our City for the next 20 years

ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY

Since 2004, Randwick Council's sustainability initiatives and environmental improvements have been funded by an Environmental Levy. The levy has low key priority areas:

- Greening our coast
- Tackling climate change
- Reducing blackwater
- Reducing consumption of resources
- Community engagement and education

WHAT CONTINUING OR STOPPING THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY WOULD MEAN FOR YOU

OPTION 1 CONTINUE LEVY

11.67%

OPTION 2 DISCONTINUE LEVY

5.00%

ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY ACHIEVEMENTS 2004-2024

- 12km of coastal revegetation
- 38 Council projects
- \$1.1M in annual savings
- 7,800 tonnes of waste diverted
- 6.5 tonnes of greenhouse gas avoided

Randwick City Council **HAVE YOUR SAY** 1300 722 542 yoursay.randwick.nsw.gov.au

Image: Full page advertisement in *Eastern Suburbs Life* November 2023 edition, p15

Environmental Levy Sustaining our City for the next 20 years

PROPOSED PROJECTS

- Coastal revegetation
- Council wellbeing
- Green infrastructure
- Community gardens

WHAT CONTINUING OR STOPPING THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY WOULD MEAN FOR YOU

OPTION 1 CONTINUE LEVY

11.67%

OPTION 2 DISCONTINUE LEVY

5.00%

Randwick City Council **HAVE YOUR SAY** 1300 722 542 yoursay.randwick.nsw.gov.au

Image: Double page advertisement in *The Beast* December 2023 edition, pps 4-5



Image: Feature story in Randwick Council's SCENE magazine summer 2023/24 edition

Full page advertisement in local newspaper *Eastern Suburbs Life* November 2023 edition and Double page advertisement in local magazine *The Beast* December 2023 edition.

Feature story in Randwick City Council's SCENE magazine summer 2023/24 edition distributed to 62,000 households.

3.5. Drop-in sessions and exhibition of documents



Image: Drop-in session and information display at Margaret Martin Library

Drop-in sessions

Council held **nine** drop-in sessions, totalling **21 hours** talking with 178 residents at locations across Randwick City:

- 14-16 Nov, 12-2pm daily, Margaret Martin Library, Royal Randwick Shopping Centre
- 21-22 Nov, 12-2pm daily, Pacific Square, Anzac Parade, Maroubra Junction
- 23 Nov, 5-8pm, Pacific Square, Anzac Parade, Maroubra Junction
- 2 Dec, 9-11am Kensington Community Centre
- 3 December, 10am - 2pm, Best Gift Market, Coogee Beach

Approximately 178 residents attended the sessions, the most popular drop-in being the Best Gift Market at Coogee.

The drop-ins were designed to inform residents about the Environmental Levy; what it has funded over the past 20 years, proposed future projects, and how the levy will impact on their rates.

The sessions were facilitated by Council's Sustainability, Rates and Communications teams.

Exhibition of documents

Council publicly exhibited printed versions of the Environmental Levy and Updated Long Term Financial Plan at the following locations:

- Randwick Council Administration Building, Randwick
- Lionel Bowen Library, Maroubra
- Margaret Martin Library, Randwick
- Malabar Community Library, Matraville

3.6. Outdoor advertising



Image: Outdoor signage, Avoca Street Randwick

Outdoor advertising on telephone booths at 11 locations in Randwick City.

3.7. Digital communications

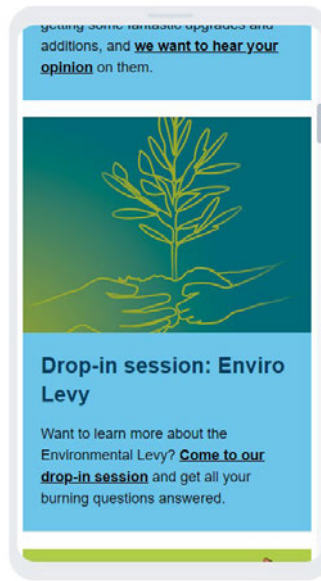
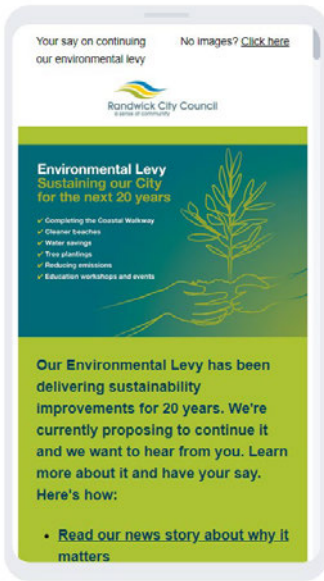


Image: Randwick eNews 8 November 2023

Image: Randwick eNews 15 November 2023

Weekly content in Council’s Randwick eNews email to 51,000 subscribers throughout the consultation period (8, 15, 22, 29 Nov and 6, 13 December 2023), content in Council’s Sustainability Newsletter December 2023 edition, and media release issued 7 November 2023 and published on [Council’s website](#)

3.8. Social Media



Topic: Coastal Walkway
 Channel: Facebook
 Reach: 6.4K
 Engagement: 50 reactions, 46 comments



Topic: Communal gardens
 Channel: Facebook
 Reach: 6.1K
 Engagement: 76 reactions, 72 comments

Comprehensive social media campaign across Facebook and Instagram with 25 posts reaching 46,000 users and posts on Council’s Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) accounts.

This content included videos, images and animated GIFs aimed at informing the broader Randwick City community about the levy, proposed projects and encouraging feedback.

3.9. Videos and cinema advertising



Video

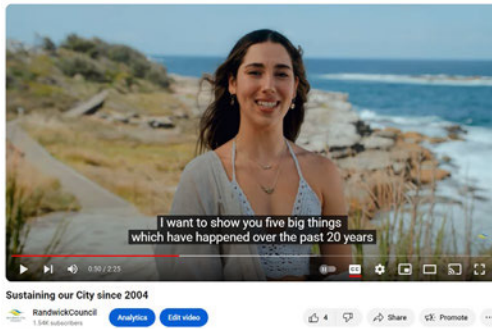
Name: Environmental Levy explainer

Purpose: Clearly communicate the financial impact of continuing or discontinuing the levy.

Length: 2:20

Views: 449

[Watch on Youtube](#)



Video

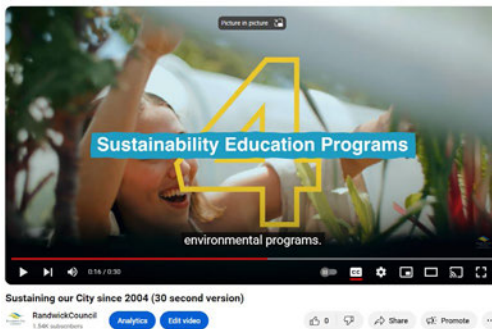
Name: Sustaining Our City since 2004

Purpose: Communicating the Environmental Levy's achievements since 2004.

Length: 2:25

Views: 462

[Watch on Youtube](#)



Cinema advertisement

Name: Sustaining Our City since 2004

Purpose: Communicating the Environmental Levy's achievements since 2004.

Length: 30s

Views: Played at every movie screening at Randwick Ritz 24 Nov – 19 Dec 2023.

[Watch on Youtube](#)

Council produced a [2-minute Explainer Video](#) promoted on Council's website, Your Say Randwick, digital display screens at all libraries and customer service centre, and on social media communicating the financial impact and options of the levy, as well as a cinema advertising campaign at Randwick Ritz Cinema from November 24 to December 19.

4. Consultation outcomes summary

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES



92%
SUPPORT

TELEPHONE SURVEY
RANDOM AND
REPRESENTATIVE



55%
SUPPORT

RATEPAYER SURVEY
7,639 RESPONSES



46%
SUPPORT

194 SUBMISSIONS



REASONS FOR SUPPORTING LEVY

1. GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
2. VALUES PAST AND CURRENT PROJECTS
3. VALUES IMPROVING THE AREA



REASONS FOR NOT SUPPORTING THE LEVY

1. EXPENSIVE AND UNFAIR
2. COUNCIL SHOULD FUND PROJECTS WITHOUT A LEVY
3. SCEPTICISM ABOUT USE OF FUNDS



21 HOURS
TALKING WITH 178 PEOPLE
AT 9 DROP-IN SESSIONS



TOP 3 PROJECTS

1. INCREASING URBAN GREENING
2. INSTALLING GPTS TO REDUCE WATER POLLUTION
3. CONSERVING AND REUSING WATER

5. Telephone survey

5.1. Background

In October and November 2023, Randwick Council engaged independent research agency Micromex Research to conduct a random telephone survey with residents living in the Randwick LGA.

The survey aimed to:

- Identify the community's overall level of satisfaction with Council performance and quality of life living in Randwick
- Assess and establish the community's priorities, level of agreement with statements and satisfaction in relation to Council activities, services, and facilities
- Explore resident experiences contacting Council, and accessing information about Council services and facilities
- Identify the residents' awareness and support of the Environmental Levy in the Randwick area

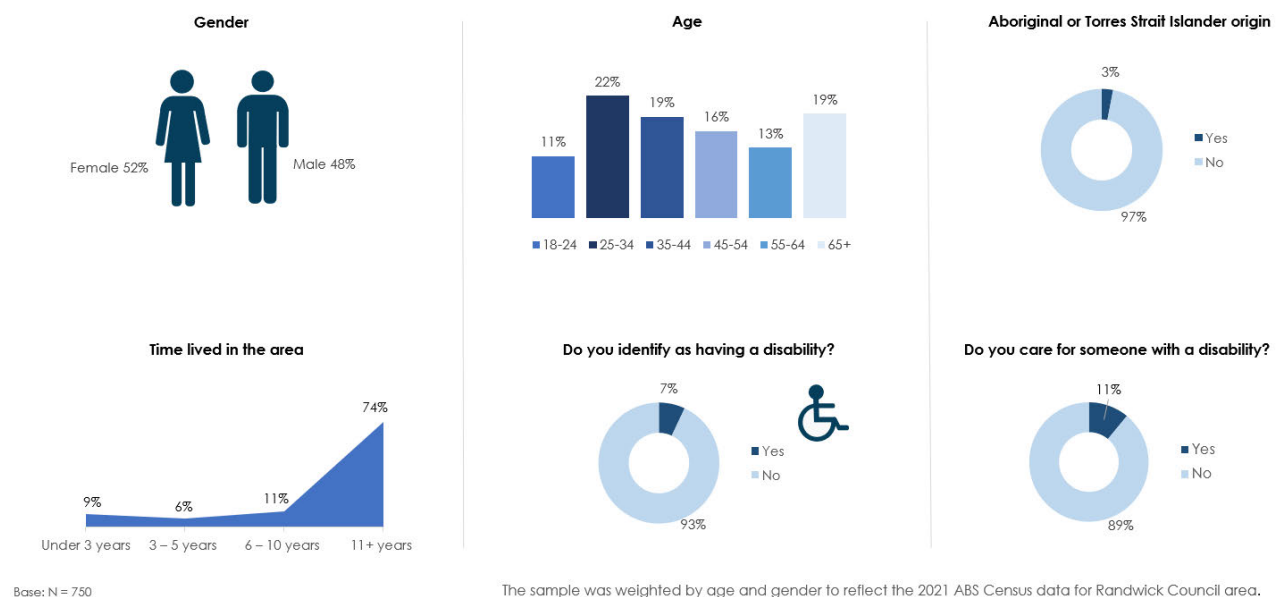
5.2. Methodology

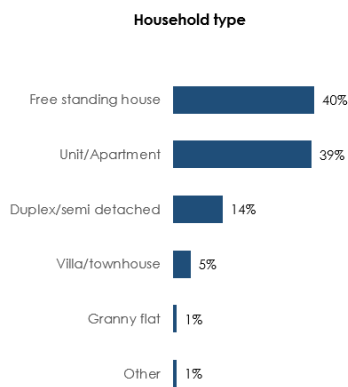
A total of 750 resident interviews were completed. 713 of the 750 respondents were chosen by means of a computer based random selection process using the Australian marketing lists, Sample Pages, List Brokers and Lead Lists. The remaining 37 respondents were 'number harvested' via face-to-face intercept at several locations around the Randwick LGA; Woolworths Matraville, Pacific Square Maroubra, UNSW/UNSW Anzac Pde Light rail station Randwick, and Corner of Perouse Road and St Pauls St near the restaurants Randwick.

A sample size of 750 residents provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 3.6% at 95% confidence. This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of N=750 residents, 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 3.6%.

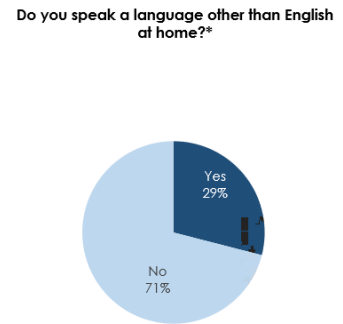
For the ratepayer survey the greatest margin of error is 3.6%. This means, for example, that an answer such as 'yes' (50%) to a question could vary from 46.4% to 53.6%.

5.3. Sample Profile





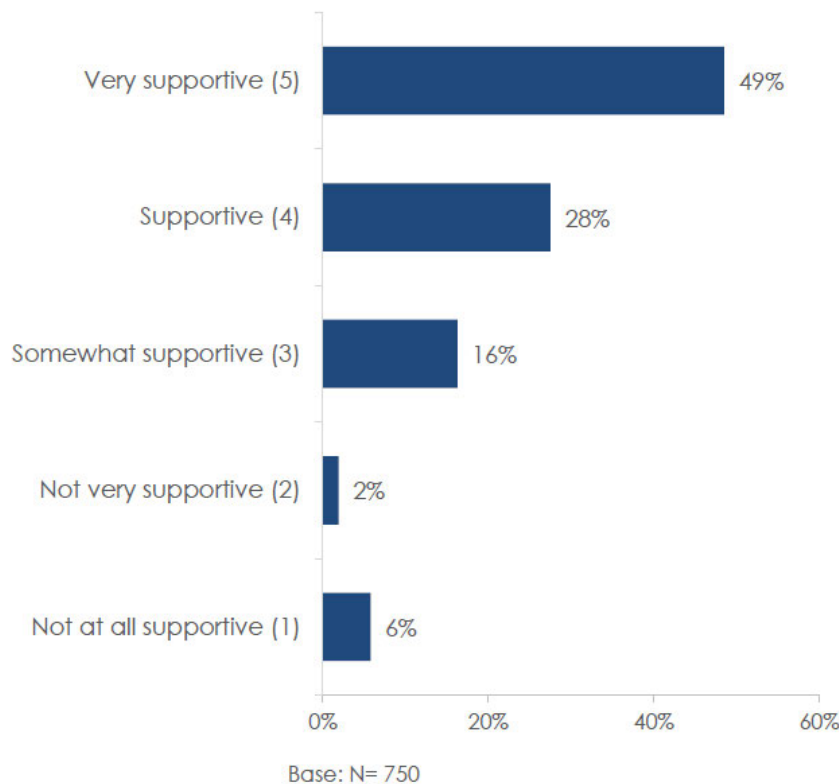
Suburb	%
Maroubra	26%
Randwick	23%
Coogee	10%
Kingsford	9%
Kensington	6%
Matraville	6%
South Coogee	5%
Clovelly	4%
Little Bay	3%
Malabar	3%
Chifley	2%
La Perouse	1%
Phillip Bay	1%



Base: N = 750

The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2021 ABS Census data for Randwick Council area.

5.4. Results – overall



Graph: Summary of results for telephone survey. Source: Micromex Research

The above graph shows that of the 750 people interviewed in the telephone survey, 92% were at least somewhat supportive of the proposal to continue the Environmental Levy.

5.5. Reasons for support level

76% of residents were supportive/very supportive of the proposal. The main reasons for being supportive were about the importance of the protection of the environment, affordable Levy, and responsibility for environmental preservation.

Only 8% of respondents were not supportive of the proposal, which are mainly owed to the cost of the levy and/or other necessary improvement outside of environmental projects.

Supportive/Very supportive (76%)	N=570	Total %	Somewhat supportive (16%)	N=122	Total %
Supportive of environmental projects and protection of the environment	47%	36%	Lack of knowledge or details about the levy	25%	4%
Importance of the environment and these projects to the local community	30%	23%	Supportive of environmental projects and protection of the environment	16%	3%
Levy is AFFORDABLE for the services/facilities provided	11%	8%	Opposition to the levy due to cost	15%	2%
Responsibility for environmental preservation and maintenance	11%	8%	Affordability and cost of the levy	11%	2%
Not at all supportive/not very supportive (8%)	N=58	Total %			
Opposition to the levy due to cost	34%	3%			
Council/the Government should pay for environmental initiatives	20%	2%			
Some environmental projects are not needed/disagree with some projects	15%	1%			
Council needs to be more transparent about where funding is used	14%	1%			
Need improvements to other services/facilities outside of the environmental projects	12%	1%			

Tables: Reasons for support level. Source: Micromex Research

6. Ratepayer survey

6.1. Background

Randwick City Council mailed a letter, information booklet, survey and reply paid envelope to every ratepayer (46,414 total including 31,571 printed notices and 14,843 emails) in mid-November 2023. The purpose of the mailout was to inform ratepayers of the SRV proposal and to obtain the views of the community on the levy and levy projects.

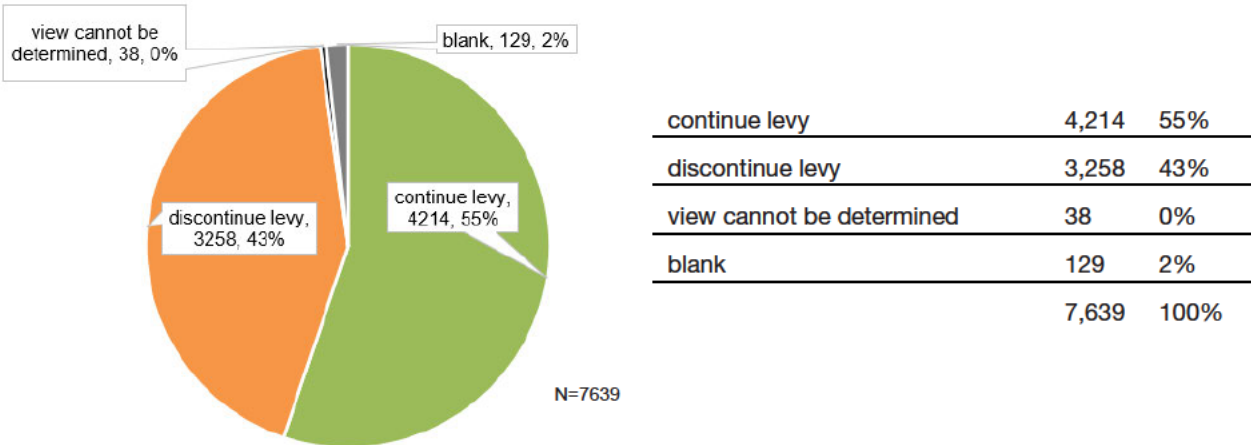
Ratepayers could elect to return the completed survey via the free reply paid envelope or complete the survey online using a supplied QR code and unique login details.

Randwick Council engaged WebSurvey – a specialist Australian research firm – to scan and data enter returned postal surveys as well as host the online survey.

Survey responses were accepted up until close of business 19 December 2023.

6.2. Results – overall

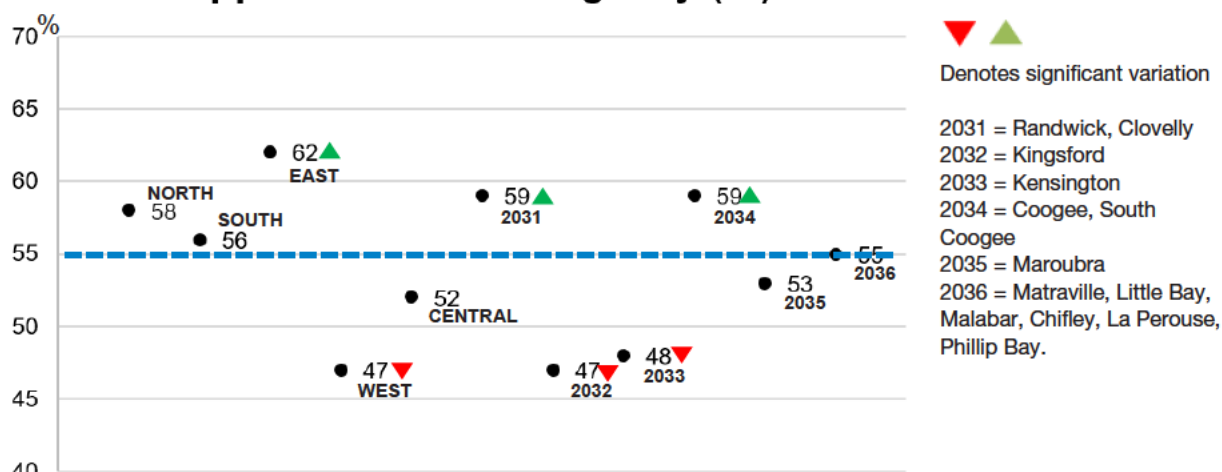
In total 7,639 completed surveys were returned by ratepayers. There was a fairly even split between surveys being completed online (51%) and via reply paid mail (49%).



Graph: Overall results for continuing Environmental Levy

There was a majority support (55%) for the levy to continue, while 43% of respondents opposed the levy continuing. Two per cent (2%) of responses could be not categorised as they were either blank or the text response was not sufficient to determine the respondent’s view.

Support for continuing levy (%)



Graph: Level of support by Ward and suburb

	All	By Ward					By postcode					
		North	South	East	West	Central	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036
continue levy	55%	58%	56%	62%▲	47%▼	52%	59%▲	47%▼	48%▼	59%▲	53%	55%
discontinue levy	43%	40%	41%	35%▼	52%▲	46%	39%▼	52%▲	51%▲	38%▼	45%	42%

Support for the levy is strongest in East Ward (62%) and the suburbs of Randwick and Clovelly (59%) and Coogee and South Coogee (59%). Support is relatively less in West Ward (47%) and the suburbs of Kingsford (47%) and Kensington (48%).

6.3. Support for continuing levy – free text analysis



Graph: Ratepayer survey – Categorisation of free text comments of those supportive of levy

Philosophical value for environmental sustainability (1388 mentions)

Respondents who have been categorised under this reason code generally refer to the importance of the environment for both current and future generations often citing that they feel it's everyone's responsibility to chip in to ensure a sustainable future for the greater Randwick area.

Commonly used phrases:

- "Environment is important"
- "Everyone's responsibility to look after environment"
- "Improve the environment"
- "Happy to support the environment"

Quotes that typify this reason code:

"Must preserve environment for future generations."

2. Values past and current projects (513 mentions)

Respondents who have been categorised under this reason code generally refer to the current or past projects undertaken by Randwick Council they've seen come to fruition, and the benefits of aforementioned projects to both them personally and the community as a whole.

Commonly used phrases:

- "Council has done a good job"
- "Noticed the improvements"
- "Don't want these projects to be delayed"

Quotes that typify this reason code are:

- "Believe in the work being done"
- "I have seen progress in these projects and don't want them to stop"

3. Values ongoing projects and the continued improvement of the area (346 mentions)

Respondents who have been categorised under this reason code generally refer to philosophically believing that constantly improving the local environment through a variety of projects and initiatives holds great value to them personally and the community as a whole.

Commonly used phrases:

- "Believe in improving my community"
- "Support environmental causes being funded by Levy"
- "levy making positive difference"

4. Good value reasonable price (299 mentions)

Respondents categorised under this reason code tend to refer to feeling the cost of the levy is reasonable and inexpensive.

Commonly used phrases:

- "Environment is worth the cost"
- "Not much to pay"
- "Low cost if we all contribute"

5. Project specific issues (231 mentions)

Respondents categorised under this reason code support the levy, but generally refer to issues they have with specific projects.

Commonly used phrases:

- "Cycleway is unnecessary"
- "Cutting down trees for cycleway is wasteful and unwanted"
- "Support the coastal walkway"
- "Keep our beaches and water clean"

6. Miscellaneous issues not directly addressed (220 mentions)

Respondents categorised under this reason code are supportive but refer to various issues they have with local government and the community but don't refer to a specific project or a reason that does not align with any other theme.

Commonly used phrases:

- “Sceptical about council’s use of funds”
- “Council’s support of developers runs adverse to environmental projects.”
- “No more high rise developments”

7. Support for Council taking action (122 mentions)

Respondents categorised under this reason code refer to feeling other levels of government don’t do enough for the environment and appreciate Council taking responsibility for local environment and reducing emissions and pollutants.

Commonly used phrases:

- “Appreciate local council taking responsibility”
- “Local Council does a good job”
- “Federal and state government dropping the ball”

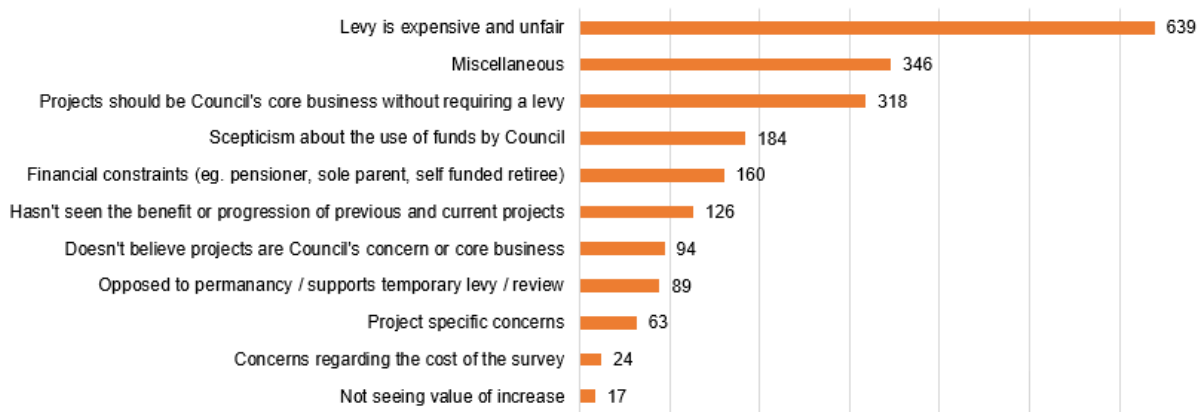
8. Accustomed to levy and the way things are going (61 mentions)

Respondents classified with this reason code generally refer to being accustomed or content with the levy and subsequent projects.

Commonly used phrases:

- “Satisfied with works”
- “Used to paying the levy”
- “Good for community”
- “Levy is worthwhile”

6.4. Support for discontinuing levy – free text analysis



Graph: Ratepayer survey – Categorisation of free text comments of those not supportive of levy

1. Levy is expensive and unfair (639 mentions)

Respondents classified with this reason code generally refer to non-specific financial restraints or claim the levy is unfair for a wide variety of reasons.

Commonly used phrases:

- “Financial reasons”
- “Need a break”
- “Rate reduction”

Quotes that typify this reason code are:

- “Can’t have SRV and this levy at the same time.”

2. Miscellaneous (346 mentions)

Respondents classified under this reason code has miscellaneous issues or comments.

Quotes that typify this reason code are:

- "I choose not to."
- "You are too far to the left."
- "Climate change not real."

3. Projects should be Council's core business without requiring a levy (318 mentions)

Respondents classified with this reason code generally refer to feeling the council should be providing these projects and services within the core budget, not with a levy.

Commonly used phrases:

- "Pay enough rates"
- "Fund from normal rates"
- "reduce administration costs"

Quotes that typify this reason code are:

- "This service should be something that the council does and pays for, without a levy."
- "Increased dwellings and high rises approved by council can afford to continue the same direction without the levy."

4. Scepticism about the use of funds by Council (184 mentions)

Respondents classified with this reason code exhibit a general suspicion of the use of funds by Council or government in general.

Commonly used phrases:

- "Waste of money"
- "Rates are too high" (noticeably frequently used phrase)
- "We pay enough"
- "No transparency"

5. Financial constraints (eg. pensioner, sole parent, self funded retiree) (160 mentions)

Respondents classified with this reason code generally refer to specific financial constraints such as being a pensioner, sole parent or self funded retiree etc.

Commonly used phrases:

- "Only income is the pension." (noticeably frequently used phrase)
- "Single parent"
- "Struggling to make ends meet"

6. Hasn't seen the benefit or progression of previous and current projects (126 mentions)

Respondents classified under this reason code claim to not see the progression or benefit of the undertaken projects.

Quotes that typify this reason code are:

- "We never asked for it in the first place and Coogee beach still a sewer"
- "Honestly never seen any of those environmental programs been implemented"
- "Overpaid yet underperforming"

7. Doesn't believe projects are Council's concern or part of their core business (94 mentions)

Respondents classified with this reason code generally refer to feeling the council has more pressing concerns and these matters are better left to higher jurisdictions of government (state or federal).

Commonly used phrases:

- "Just pick up my rubbish"
- "Just stick to core business"

8. Opposed to permanency / supports temporary levy / review (89 mentions)

These respondents expressed concern about the proposal to make the levy permanent. Some cited the lack of accountability and others mentioned they would have supported the levy if it was for a set

period rather permanent. A further 20 respondents who supported the levy also raised concern about its permanency.

Quotes that typify this reason code are:

- "Would have opted for option 1 except that the proposed levy is permanent."
- "Cost of living crisis! Don't want it permanent at this stage."
- "I want to continue the environmental levy but not make it permanent. I want the levy reviewed every five years."

9. Project specific concerns (63 mentions)

Respondents classified under this reason code have projects specific concerns.

Commonly used phrases:

- "I do not agree with removing the trees along Bundock St."
- "Cycleway a waste of money."
- "Coastal walkway is good enough."

10. Concerns regarding the cost of the survey (24 mentions)

Respondents classified under this reason code generally had concerns regarding the cost of the survey.

Quotes that typify this reason code are:

- "If council cut back on colourful multi page self promoting booklets they could use this to do all their "feel good" projects."
- "The cost to the ratepayers or the paperwork is also environmentally irresponsible and costly."

11. Not seeing value of increase (17 mentions)

Respondents classified under this reason code refer to not seeing the value of the increase to them personally or for the community as a whole

Commonly used phrases:

- "Do not see value"
- "No benefit"

Quotes that typify this reason code are:

- "Happy with current environment"
- "These programmes will not make any difference"

6.5. Support for Environmental Levy projects

Survey respondents who supported the Levy continuing were asked to nominate the most important projects to them from a list of 11 proposed projects. Participants were encouraged to select three or more projects.

Rank	Project	Selections
1	Increase urban greening and tree canopy to reduce urban heat island effect	3278
2	Installing more Gross Pollutant Traps to reduce water pollution	2618
3	Conserving and reusing water	2569
4	Urban greening and upkeep of coastal, town centres and residential areas	2520
5	Reducing food waste and promote the circular economy	2329
6	Completing the Coastal Walkway and whale watching platforms	2231
7	Community renewables and sustainability rebates for households	2111

Rank	Project	Selections
8	Community gardens	1435
9	EV charging	1390
10	Cycling infrastructure	1252
11	Community workshops, programs and events such as the Eco-Living Festival	645

Table: Results from Ratepayer Survey question about most important projects, ranked by total number of selections.

While all proposed projects received some support from respondents, the most important projects for the majority of the community focus on tree planting, water management, food waste, Coastal Walkway and sustainability rebates.

7. Submissions summary

Randwick Council actively encouraged the community throughout November and December 2023 to tell Council what they thought about continuing the levy.

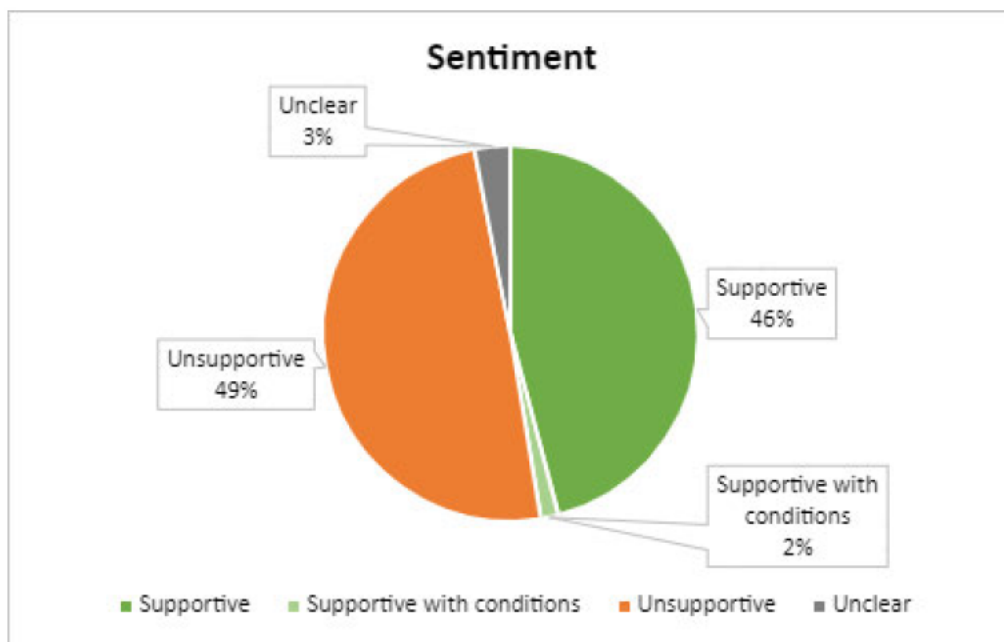
In addition to specific engagement activities such as the ratepayer survey and telephone survey, Council welcomed submissions via its consultation website and via letter and email.

In total 194 submissions were received. Of these submissions, 81% were received through Council's Your Say Randwick consultation website and 19% were via email.

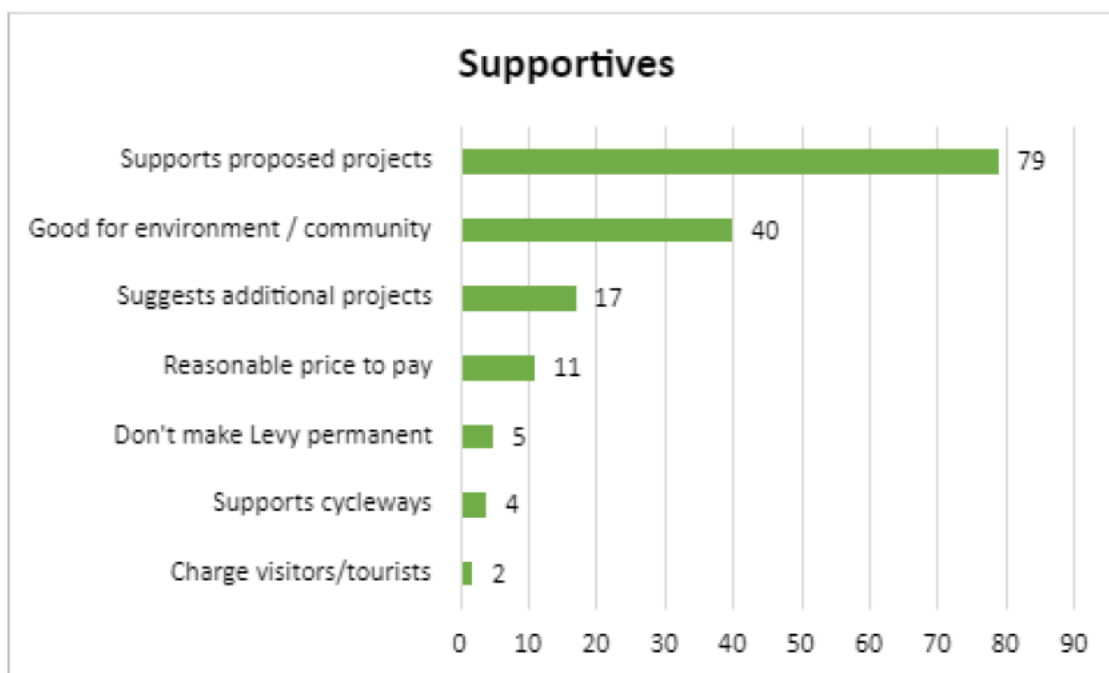
Submissions may have come from ratepayers, businesses, community groups and renters.

Some people may have lodged a submission as well as completing the ratepayer survey.

Of the 194 submissions received 89 were in favour of continuing the levy, 3 were supportive with conditions, 96 did not want to continue the levy, and 6 were unclear.



Graph: Sentiment of submission



Graph: Reasons for supporting the levy

Examples of submissions supportive of continuing levy

I strongly support the proposed permanent continuation of the Environmental Levy. What has been achieved so far with such a small weekly contribution by ratepayers proves its value.

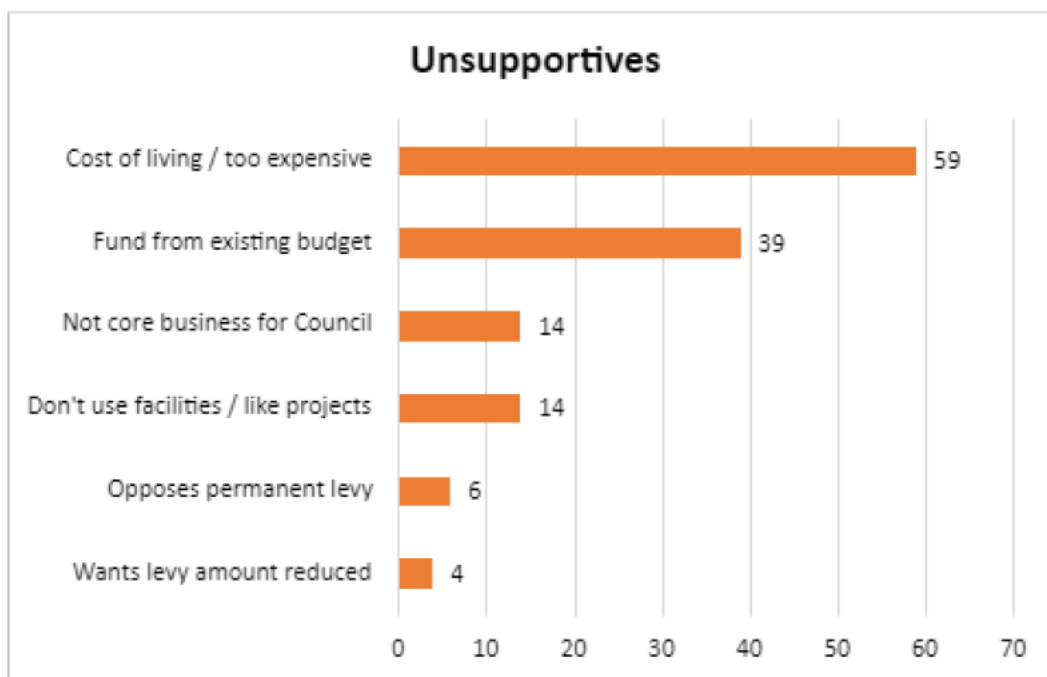
This is the kind of initiative that is an essential first step in ensuring livability, sustainability, and quality of life for generations to come. Randwick needs to continue its position as a leader in taking our environmental needs and challenges seriously.

Very much in favour of keeping the environmental levy! We need to do everything we can to help conserve our environment!

The environmental levy has been fantastic and funded a range of initiatives that we are very proud to have in our local area, making a practical difference for our communities. I hope the levy will be made permanent (I thought it already was!).

Its a very small amount for the long lasting benefits to the community and accessible to the majority

I think the Environmental Levy is an excellent Council initiative. It enables Council to fund and support a range of initiatives to make life...more sustainable...healthier and happier for all its residents.



Graph: Reasons for not supporting the levy

Examples of submissions opposed to continuing levy

Please consider the current economic situation and the cost of living crisis residents are experiencing. The Levy should be discontinued for the time being. If you stick to core business you may still be able to spend on environmental issues from rates.

If I have to choose between paying the environmental levy forever or not at all, I say not at all, given the cost of living crisis. Which is a shame, as I can see that RCC has done a lot of good things with the Enviro Levy

Why a separate levy? Just factor the 'levy' amount into annual council rates and allocate that amount to the 'Environment Levy' budget.

I don't believe environment should be a special charge but something already covered by the high rates and taxes we pay. It's up to the Council to reallocate funds and reduce funding in another area if necessary to take care of environmental needs.

I can barely afford to pay my rates now. Unless you introduce a reduction in rates for pensioners and those on low incomes I'd vote no. I'm for the levy in principle.

Sustainability projects should be central to the Council's daily business. It should not be an optional add on.

See Attachment for all submissions.

A. Attachment – Ratepayer survey, letter and information booklet

Environmental Levy Ratepayer survey

RE: Your property – [insert location address]

To have your say, please consider one of the following two survey options below:



Complete the survey online

Scan this QR code or visit <http://begin.ws/cf3d14a1-c55f-43e4-afb6-e130fa4d5bd8>

Note this is a unique code and link just for you.

OR

Return the paper survey

Complete this paper survey and return it to Council using the Reply Paid envelope (no stamp required).

If you complete the survey online using the above link or QR code DO NOT complete the survey below. If you complete both the online and paper versions, we may not be able to accept your survey response. Please take the time to review the information booklet about the Environmental Levy included in this pack to help you provide your feedback.

Q1. Which option do you prefer?

Option 1: Continue Levy

Under this option, ratepayers continue paying an Environmental Levy of approximately \$101p.a. for the average ratepayer and it is made permanent. The levy will fund important sustainability improvements and projects.

Option 2: Discontinue Levy

Under this option the Environmental Levy would be discontinued and the average residential ratepayer would receive a reduction on their rates of approximately \$101p.a. Without the levy, Council will have to cancel, reduce or delay many sustainability projects.

Q2. Why have you chosen this option?

Q3. If you support the Levy continuing, please tick the projects that are most important to you (select 3 or more).

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Increase urban greening and tree canopy to reduce urban heat island effect | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community renewables and sustainability rebates for households | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Installing more Gross Pollutant Traps to reduce water pollution | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Completing the Coastal Walkway and whale watching platforms | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community gardens | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cycling infrastructure | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| EV charging | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community workshops, programs and events such as the Eco-Living Festival | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reducing food waste and promote the circular economy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Conserving and reusing water | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Urban greening and upkeep of coastal, town centres and residential areas | <input type="checkbox"/> |

How to return this form

If you've completed the paper survey above, please mail it to us using the enclosed reply paid envelope. No stamp is required. If you do not have a reply paid envelope, please address it to: Randwick Council Community Feedback, Reply Paid 89388, Randwick NSW 2031. No stamp is required. Your completed survey needs to be received by **5pm Tuesday 19 December 2023**.



[ratepayer address 1]

[ratepayer address 2]

[ratepayer address 3]

Monday 6 November 2023

Dear [insert name]

RE: Your property – [insert location address]

Randwick, leading the way on sustainability and the environment

Twenty years ago, Randwick Council introduced one of the most innovative and progressive initiatives ever seen in local government.

We called it Sustaining our City – a small environmental levy paid by ratepayers as part of annual rates for sustainability improvements in Randwick City.

Because of the levy we have been able to save households \$1M annually on your energy bills through sustainability rebates, use 100% solar for Council buildings and streetlights and build 12km of Coastal Walkway including the Malabar Headland Western Escarpment.

Each five-year period (2009, 2014 and 2019) we have gone back to our community seeking your feedback on continuing the levy. Given the positive impact and popularity of the program, we are now proposing to make the Environmental Levy permanent.

While the levy has achieved a lot to date, more work is needed to protect our beaches, complete the Coastal Walkway and take meaningful action to address climate change by switching to renewables, conserving water and increasing our urban tree canopy coverage.

With the current levy due to expire on 30 June 2024, I'm writing to seek your feedback on continuing the Environmental Levy into the future.

I know that the cost of living is putting pressure on households. But the cost of not taking action on avoiding waste, protecting our beaches and addressing climate change will cost us and our children more in the future.

For around 28c a day or \$1.95 a week, I believe continuing our Environmental Levy is the right thing to do for our residents and families, now and into the future.

Included with this letter is a detailed booklet explaining the pros and cons of continuing and stopping the levy. Please read this carefully.

I thank you for taking the time to read this information and welcome your feedback to help us decide the best way forward for our community.

Yours sincerely

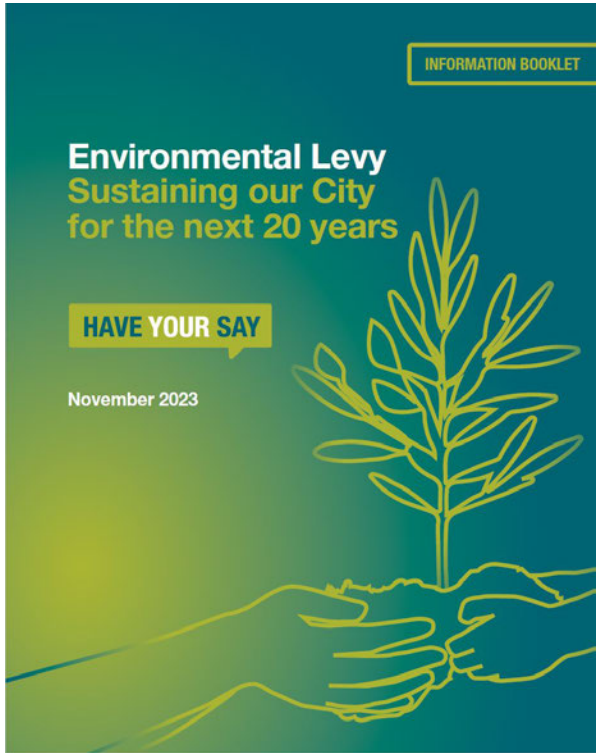


Councillor Philipa Veitch
Mayor of Randwick

Environmental Levy Sustaining our City for the next 20 years

HAVE YOUR SAY

November 2023



1300 722 542
randwick.nsw.gov.au



Sustaining our City for the next 20 years

It's sometimes easy to forget how far we've come as a City in 20 years.

2004 is etched in my mind as it was about this time that my husband and I made the decision to settle in Maroubra in Randwick City and raise our family here.

Like many people, we loved the location, the coastal environment and the sense of community.

Coincidentally, it was also the same year that Randwick Council – long before I was elected to Council – embarked on its ambitious Sustaining our City program.

At the time sustainability was still seen as 'optional' – something nice to have. But our community embraced it and agreed that paying a little extra to improve water quality at our beaches, reduce energy consumption and avoid waste was worth it.

Every five years we've gone back to you and asked for your feedback on continuing the levy and each time a majority of our community has supported the levy.

For around 28c a day or \$1.95 a week, the Sustaining our City Environmental Levy represents excellent value for what we've been able to deliver for our community.

All Council buildings and streetlights are now powered by 100% solar from NSW solar farms and we've built 12km of Coastal Walkway – including reinstating public access to Malabar Headland for the first time in over 100 years. Both of which has been made possible due to the levy.

With the levy due to expire on 30 June 2024, we have a choice to make – continue paying what you've always paid for 20 years and keep delivering for our environment, or cease the levy meaning Council will have to delay, reduce in scope or cancel many sustainability projects.

I know many households are suffering from rising cost of living pressures. However I fear that not investing in our environment will cost us and our children more in the future.

Please take a few minutes to read this booklet – it will give you some important information about what the levy means for you. It is important for you to have your say so that we make the right decision for our community's future.

Philippa Welch

Councillor Philippa Welch
Mayor of Randwick



About the Environmental Levy

Since 2004, Randwick Council's sustainability initiatives and environmental improvements have been funded by an Environmental Levy. The levy has five key priority areas:

- Conserving our coast
- Tackling climate change
- Protecting biodiversity
- Reducing consumption of resources
- Community engagement and education

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT WASTEWATER REUSE

After the drought conditions of 2006, Council commenced an extensive investment in water re-use encompassing rainwater, stormwater, borewater and other wastewater.

There are currently 25 parks and playing fields across Randwick irrigated with treated stormwater, borewater and wastewater systems.

These capture, treatment and re-use systems are conservatively saving Council in the order of 350 million to 450 million litres of potable water each year.

They also provide upwards of 60 percent of all of Council's operational water use – not just for irrigation but toilet flushing in public toilets.

This provides financial savings of about \$1.1M each year in water costs.

Over approximately 15 years of Environmental Levy investment in stormwater and wastewater re-use, Council has saved in the order of 6,000ML and \$15 million in water costs. That's more than the equivalent water in 1,800 Olympic-sized swimming pools!

Recognition for Environmental Levy

Randwick Council's Sustaining our City Environmental Levy program has won 74 awards since 2004.

These include the Local Government NSW Excellence Awards, Excellence in the Environment Awards, Greater Sydney Planning Awards, Local Government Professionals Awards, Local Government NSW Awards, Green Globe Awards, Bankasia Awards, World Environment Day Awards and more.



ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY HIGHLIGHTS 2004-2024



12km

Coastal Walkway upgrades completed including Malabar Headland, Cape Banks and Randwick Environment Park boardwalk.



38

Gross Pollutant Traps installed preventing more than 300 tonnes of rubbish entering our oceans each year.



\$1.1M

The amount householders are saving on annual energy costs through Council's Sustainability Rebates program.



Moree, Hillston & Nevertire

The NSW towns where our solar power is collected to power Council buildings and streetlights with 100% renewable energy.



16

Public EV charging stations installed.



7,800

Compost bins and worm farms provided to households since 2004.



6.5 tonnes

The amount of food waste diverted from landfill through Council's Compost Revolution program.




7

Community gardens opened.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

SUSTAINABILITY REBATES

Helping households save energy and water



Since 2020 Randwick Council has been helping households implement energy and water saving improvements in their own homes by offering up to \$5,000 per household in rebates.

FUNDING AREA	SUSTAINABILITY REBATE	PROVIDED TO DATE
Climate and resilience	Rooftop solar installations	551
	Solar battery storage	85
BUDGET \$5.5M	Electric vehicle health checks	72
	LED lighting upgrades	65
TIMEFRAME 2024-29	Insulation installs	69
	Headpump hotwater replacement	47
LOCATION LGA-wide	Energy assessments	28
	Rainwater tank installations	22
STATUS Commenced 2020, ongoing	Cooktop replacement (induction for gas)	22
	Solar system health checks	16
DID YOU KNOW? In September 2023 Randwick Council provided its 1000th Sustainability Rebate for a family in Maroubra limiting solar panels. The extra funding meant they could stretch their budget to also install a solar battery system.	Energy efficient pool pumps	15
	Waterfit upgrades in conjunction with Sydney Water Waterfit program	8


MEETING OUR CLIMATE CHANGE TARGETS

The Environmental Levy is critical to help meet Council's commitments on climate change.

EMISSIONS

60%

Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions across Randwick City by 2030 - but aspiring to a 100% reduction in same timeframe.




HOW WE'RE TRACKING
Achieving a 60% reduction in emissions across the entire Randwick LGA is a challenging target and requires a whole of community approach. Council's programs such as our Sustainability Rebates program, Solar my School, Solar my Club, Compost Revolution and Public EV chargers are aimed at positively influencing and encouraging Randwick homes and businesses to reduce emissions by using renewable energy and making more sustainable transport decisions whether in cars or 'active' transport such as walking, cycling or taking public transport.

LGA-wide greenhouse gas emissions are down about 12% over the past few years and Council's own emissions have been slashed by 42% over the same timeframe. 100% of Council's electricity needs have been supplied by renewable solar energy since 2022.

WATER

30%

Reduction in the consumption of water across Randwick City per capita by 2030, from a 2017 baseline.



HOW WE'RE TRACKING
Randwick Council is leading by example when it comes to water conservation with 320 to 450 million litres of drinking water saved every year through stormwater re-use and treatment systems installed as part of our environmental levy across 25 of our parks and playing fields. The parkland treehouses of Coogee Beach and Maroubra Beach are now irrigated by 100% recycled water.

TREES

40%

Council's target tree canopy coverage for Council-managed land by 2040.



HOW WE'RE TRACKING
Council is accelerating its tree planting through a variety of programs including Plant With Us which saw 4,400 established trees and 28,000 understory shrubs, grasses and groundcovers planted in 2022 and 2023. An additional 2,000 advanced trees are being planted in 2023 and 2024 as part of a State Government grant. New Council planning controls require development on private property to include more trees. As an inner-city council with limited land area, increasing our canopy from 17% to 40% represents a challenge that we are continuing to tackle.

What continuing or stopping the Environmental Levy would mean for you

	OPTION 1 CONTINUE LEVY			OPTION 2 DISCONTINUE LEVY				
What continuing/discontinuing the levy will cost you	Residential ratepayers	\$101 per year	\$1.05 per week	\$0.28 per day	Residential ratepayers	-\$101 per year	-\$1.05 per week	-\$0.28 per day
	Business ratepayers	\$139 per year	\$2.68 per week	\$0.38 per day	Business ratepayers	-\$139 per year	-\$2.68 per week	-\$0.38 per day
Overall rate increase (including/excluding Environmental Levy) over one year		11.67%				5.00%		
Overall cumulative increase by 2024/25 including:								
		• Rate peg (estimated at 0%)	• Continuing Environmental Levy			• Rate peg (estimated at 0%)	• Discontinuing Environmental Levy	

	For residential ratepayers - retaining levy		For residential ratepayers - ceasing levy	
	Current year 2023-24	Year 1 2024-25	Current year 2023-24	Year 1 2024-25
Average annual rate	\$1,449	\$1,449	\$1,449	\$1,449
Annual rate increase rate peg	\$72	\$72	\$72	\$72
Total average residential rate	\$1,521	\$1,521	\$1,521	\$1,521
ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY	\$57	\$57	\$0	\$0
Total average residential rate and Environmental Levy	\$1,578	\$1,578	\$1,521	\$1,521
Rate savings if levy not continued	N/A	N/A	-\$57	-\$57

	For business ratepayers - retaining levy		For business ratepayers - ceasing levy	
	Current year 2023-4	Year 1 2024-5	Current year 2023-4	Year 1 2024-5
Average annual rate	\$7,153	\$7,153	\$7,153	\$7,153
Annual rate increase rate peg	\$358	\$358	\$358	\$358
Total average business rate	\$7,511	\$7,511	\$7,511	\$7,511
ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY	\$133	\$133	\$0	\$0
Total average business rate and Environmental Levy	\$7,644	\$7,644	\$7,511	\$7,511
Rate savings if levy not continued	N/A	N/A	-\$133	-\$133

*Annual rate increase (rate peg) is set by IPART. The Council's financial forecasts rely on the assumptions outlined in our Long-Term Financial Plan 2023-31, adopted by Council in September 2023. The rate peg by IPART has not been determined at the time of this publication. Any variance between the assumptions in the Long-Term Financial Plan and the Council's activities will directly affect the financial outcomes.
** includes Post-Binary businesses (B) proposed.

Frequently asked questions

What is the Environmental Levy?
Since 2004 ratepayers in Randwick City have paid a little bit more on their rates each year to go towards sustainability initiatives. This levy has delivered important improvements across our City and Council is seeking to continue it.

What is the rate peg?
The rate peg is the percentage that councils in NSW are permitted to increase their overall rates revenue by each year. The rate peg amount varies each year and is determined by an independent organisation called IPART - The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

Who is responsible for deciding whether the Levy continues?
As the Environmental Levy is an increase to your rates over and above the set rate peg, councils must apply to IPART for approval to vary rates income above the set rate peg. This process is known as a Special Rate Variation. IPART conducts a thorough assessment of applications from councils taking into consideration the need for the extra revenue, how it will be spent, council financial efficiencies and community feedback. IPART may approve proposals completely, in part or reject them.

Will my rates go up by 11.67% in real terms?
No! This figure shows how much Council's total rates income is proposed to increase in 2024/25 from a baseline of no Environmental Levy and no rate peg increase. As you're already paying the Environmental Levy, in real terms your increase will be the mandatory rate peg (estimated to be 5%).

How do I work out how much Environmental Levy I will pay?
Your levy amount is listed on your July rates notice. Each property owner pays a slightly different amount depending on the value of your property. The figures on the table on the opposite page show how much the average residential or business ratepayer will pay. Most residential ratepayers will actually pay less than the average.

When will the Environmental Levy end?
We are proposing to retain the Environmental Levy permanently in the rates base, rather than seeking approval for another 5-year timeframe (as we have done previously).

What is Council's view?
We support continuing the levy and believe this is the best financial, social and sustainable outcome.


What happens if the levy doesn't continue?
Council will be worse off by about \$6M in annual funding. This means that the projects proposed in this information booklet either won't happen, be reduced in scale or delayed.



Have your say

We are seeking your feedback on the Environmental Levy for 42 days from 7 November to 19 December 2023. You can obtain information about the Environmental Levy in the following ways:

- Electronically on Council's 'Your Say Randwick' website www.yoursay.randwick.nsw.gov.au
- In hard copy at the following locations:
 - Randwick Council Administration Building, 30 Frances Street Randwick
 - Lionel Bowen Library, 669-673 Anzac Parade Maroubra
 - Margaret Martin Library, Level 1, Royal Randwick Shopping Centre, Randwick
 - Malabar Community Library, 203 Anzac Parade, Malabar
- Survey
Every Randwick City ratepayer will receive a letter and survey in the mail. Follow the instructions to complete the survey online using the supplied unique URL and QR code, or complete the paper survey and mail it back to Council. Note you only need to complete one survey option.
- Telephone survey
We'll be phoning 750 randomly selected Randwick City residents in November 2023 to seek your views. If we phone you, please consider taking part.
- Submissions
If you wish to provide a submission to Council, you may do so through the following means:
 - Online at Council's 'Your Say Randwick' website www.yoursay.randwick.nsw.gov.au
 - Via email to council@randwick.nsw.gov.au marked "Submission: Environmental Levy"
 - In writing to Randwick City Council, "Submission: Environmental Levy", 30 Frances Street, Randwick NSW 2031.




Pop-up sessions
Council staff will be at various locations during November and December to talk about the Environmental Levy.

14-16 November
Margaret Martin Library, Level 1, Royal Randwick Shopping Centre, Randwick

21-23 November
Pacific Squares, Anzac Parade, Maroubra Junction

Scan the QR code or phone 9093 6000 for more dates and locations to drop by and see us. No appointment is required.

1300 722 542
randwick.nsw.gov.au



Our plan for the future 2024-2029

What continuing the Environmental Levy will achieve

COASTAL Budget: \$5M

- Coastal Walkway upgrades and enhancements, South Coogee, Lurline Bay and Little Bay National Park
- New Gross Pollutant Traps (GPTs) and rain gardens to minimise pollution entering our coasts
- Crayweed and posidonia citizen science restoration

CLIMATE AND RESILIENCE Budget: \$5.5M

- Upgrade solar on Council buildings
- Solar storage batteries
- Sustainability rebates for residents and businesses
- New fast public EV charging points
- Microgrid investigations
- Installation of community batteries
- Power purchasing agreement
- Solar farm at DRLC
- Urban greening and maintenance for cooler town centres and residential areas

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT Budget: \$4.5M

- Sustainability workshops & courses
- Eco Living Festival
- Marine & Coastal Discovery program
- Sustainability education 'hub' improvements
- Environmental school grants
- First Nations stewardship collaborations
- Sustainability Street community program
- Community resilience hubs

WATER SAVING Budget: \$2M

- Stormwater re-use and recycling at Randwick Community Centre
- Rainwater tank re-use at Council sites
- Blackwater recycling and re-use (Heffron Park and Frenchmans Bay)
- Reedbed irrigation amenities at Randwick Environment Park

FOOD Budget: \$2M

- Community gardens
- Edible garden support in schools

BIODIVERSITY & HABITAT Budget: \$2.5M

- Native and indigenous planting and greening for town centres and residential areas
- WIREs Wildlife Rescue re-location & interpretive facilities
- Whale watching platforms
- Tree planting on every verge
- Revitalise Bunnerong Creek
- Green roofs and walls on new developments
- Heffron Park wetland
- Expanded ClimateWatch citizen science trails

WASTE AVOIDANCE Budget: \$1M

- Food waste avoidance, schools, cafes and restaurants
- Circular Economy procurement
- Construction and demolition waste recovery initiative
- Randwick Collaboration Precinct

ACTIVE TRANSPORT Budget: \$4M

- North-south cycleway completion
- First Nations walking trail, La Perouse
- Sydney Great Coastal Walk - partnership with Walking Volunteers
- EV infrastructure partnerships and incentives
- End of trip facilities for cyclists and walkers
- 'Green grid' walking and cycling connections

OTHER Budget: \$2M

- Landfill monitoring program
- First Nations art trail
- Sustainable markets
- Green living plan for public land developments
- Environmental sculptures on Coastal Walkway
- Children's environmental art at Munda Street Reserve sustainability hub

Note: The above projects show total budget allocations based on the next five years of the Environmental Levy. Some of these projects will take longer than five years to achieve and will likely be carried over and funded by the Levy in future years if required. All projects listed are subject to Council's usual community engagement and decision-making processes and are subject to change depending on circumstances at the time.

B. Attachment – Submissions verbatim

C. Attachment – Ratepayer survey free text

