



## Special Variation Application Form Part B

Shoalhaven City Council

# Application Form

2025-26

Local Government >>



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## **Acknowledgment of Country**

IPART acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders both past and present.

We recognise the unique cultural and spiritual relationship and celebrate the contributions of First Nations peoples.

## **Contact details**

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## **The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal**

IPART's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Further information on IPART can be obtained from [IPART's website](#).

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## Council Information

Please fill out the table below.

<b>Council name</b>	Shoalhaven City Council
<b>Date submitted to IPART</b>	3 February 2025

# 1 About this application form

This application form is to be completed by councils applying for a special variation (SV) to general income for 2025-26 under section 508(2) or 508A of the *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act). The application form is in two parts:

1. Application Form [Part A](#) (separate Excel spreadsheet)
2. Special Variation Application Form Part B (this MS Word document)

The SV Application Form Part B collects:

- Description and Context information for the SV
- Evidence against:
  - Criterion 1: Need for the variation
  - Criterion 2: Community awareness and engagement
  - Criterion 3: Impact on ratepayers
  - Criterion 4: IP&R documents
  - Criterion 5: Productivity improvements and cost containment strategies
  - Criterion 6: Other relevant matters
- Council certification and contact information

It also provides a List of attachments and checklist to assist councils.

When completing this Application Form, councils should refer to:

- The 'Apply for a SV or minimum rates (MR) increase' page of IPART's [website](#)
- The Office of Local Government (OLG) [Guidelines](#) issued in November 2020
- IPART's SV Guidance Booklet – *Special Variations: How to prepare and apply* available on our [website](#).

We encourage Councils to contact IPART early in their preparation to apply, or potentially apply, for an SV.

## 2 Description and Context

These questions seek information not tied to a specific criterion in the OLG guidelines.

### Question 1: What type and size of SV is the council is applying for?

In Table 1, please use the checkboxes to indicate the type of SV the council is applying for. In Table 2, please provide, rounded to **1 decimal place**, unless otherwise specified in Table 3:

- the total percentage increase (including the rate peg) and,
- for a section 508A SV, the cumulative percentage increase over the SV period.

The percentage increases applied for should match any percentages specified in the council resolution to apply for an SV. That is, the council resolution should be specified to 1 decimal place unless the council specifically wants a different number of decimal places.

Should an SV be approved, the instrument will list the approved percentage(s) and the maximum permitted cumulative increase. If the cumulative increase is not specified in the council resolution, we will use 1 decimal place unless a different number of decimal places is specifically requested in Table 3.

If applying for a Crown Land Adjustment (CLA), please **do not** include the CLA percentage in Table 2. Information about CLAs is collected in Question 2 below.

In Table 3, please explain if the council would like its instrument issued to a different number of decimal places and if it has used an assumed rate peg that is not 2.5%.

Our [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) has an example of these questions completed.

Table 1 Type of special variation

<b>What type of SV is this application for?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Section 508(2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Section 508A	
<b>Are you applying for Permanent or Temporary?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permanent	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary	<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent + Temporary

Table 2 The council's proposed special variation

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Is this year in the SV period?	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no
Percentage increase	12%						
Rate peg	3.8%						

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Cumulative percentage increase over the SV period for s 508A	N/A						
Indicate which years are permanent or temporary	Permanent						

Table 3 Further questions

Question	The council's response
Does the council wish its potential SV instrument to be issued with a different number of decimal places?	No
If the council used an assumed rate peg that is not 2.5%, please briefly justify why it did so.	The 2025/2026 rate peg of 3.8% for Year 1 was known at the time of application. The assumed rate peg for years 2-7 throughout the application is 3.5% as per Council's Long-Term Financial Plan. The 3.5% increase in total rates represents 3.0% rate peg plus a 0.5% growth factor adjustment resulting in a general rate increase of 3.5%. 3.0% aligns with the assumed increase in materials and contracts over the life of the LTFP - being the upper limit of the Reserve Bank of Australia's 2-3% inflation target.

## Question 2: Is the council applying for a Crown Land Adjustment (CLA) in 2025-26?

Please fill out the table below if the council is also applying for a CLA, otherwise leave it blank.

Is the council also applying for a CLA?	N/A
If so, by what percentage?	N/A
What is the dollar (\$) value for the CLA?	N/A
Who was the prior owner of the Crown Land?	N/A
Briefly outline the reason for the land becoming rateable.	N/A



### Question 3: What is the key purpose of the requested SV?

In the text box below please summarise the key purpose(s) of the proposed SV.

Shoalhaven City Council's (Council) financial position has been progressively deteriorating over several years. The combined effects of historically low average rates in conjunction with ongoing rate pegging at levels below actual cost of salaries, materials and other goods, fair value accounting for assets, increasing compliance cost, impacts of natural disasters and a growing community with growing expectations, have significantly impacted Council's financial position.

The impact of these financial pressures is that Council's General Fund is now unsustainable, and a substantial change in the income/expenditure balance is required.

A summary of Council's most recent financial performance is summarised below:

- Council has produced a net operating deficit in the last four financial years. The General Fund's net operating position has been in a deficit position over the past nine years. Financial forecasts indicate a significantly deteriorating operating performance. Without intervention, Council will continue to generate operating deficits over the next ten years.
- There is an underlying structural deficit of \$25-\$35 million within the General Fund, whereby the recurrent revenue is not able to fund the recurrent expenditure. The impact of inflation and relatively flat revenue growth will only continue to increase this structural deficit.
- Council's unrestricted cash position has deteriorated from \$19 million on 30 June 2019 to NIL on 30 June 2024. In 2024, had Council's grants spent in advance not been funded through the temporary reallocation of internally restricted Financial Assistance Grants, the unrestricted cash position on 30 June 2024 would have been negative \$9 million.
- Over the past five years, Council has experienced consecutive natural disasters, most notably the COVID pandemic, bushfires and floods (15 declared natural disasters). These disasters have significantly impacted the normal business operations, including asset maintenance, asset renewal programs and has impacted the availability of cash. Council's revenue base was also impacted due to restricted operations during COVID and the provision of substantial subsidies and waivers to the community and industry that resulted.
- The net cost of the disasters, including the subsidies and waivers on fees and charges, and a \$300 per ratepayer COVID reimbursement reduced the unrestricted cash position of Council by \$14.6 million.

- Each natural disaster declaration costs Council in excess of \$600k in unbudgeted works. Access to Disaster Recovery Funding (DRF) requires the payment of an "Opt In Fee" which is not recoverable. This fee equates to 0.75% of rateable income and is capped at 2% per annum if three or more disasters are declared. In FY2023/24, Council had three disaster declarations, capping the opt in fees at 2% of rateable income totalling \$1.7 million in non-reimbursable costs. This was compared to a 3.7% base rate peg applicable that year.
- Council started to report on its building and infrastructure renewal ratio in 2008. During the 16 years since, Council has failed to meet the required benchmark (on a consolidated basis) for this ratio (of 100%) in each of the 17 years the ratio has been publicly reported. The structural deficits and decrease in cash means that assets are not being planned for replacement or replaced at the rate required. This lack of investment in asset renewal has led to a significant deterioration in the condition of Council's assets and has created infrastructure backlog issues.
- In the 2008 audited financial statements, Council's infrastructure assets were rated as either category 1 or 2, category 1 being assets of excellent condition requiring normal maintenance and category 2 being assets in good condition requiring only minor maintenance work. As reported in the 30 June 2024 financial statements, Council assets now hold 49.9% in category 1 and 2, with 50.1% of assets now reported in categories 3 (satisfactory) to 5 (very poor). The cost to renew and address the backlog increases exponentially, creating a risk that Council will never be able to repair assets and infrastructure and will be forced to decommission many of them. If not corrected it will impact service levels and available assets in the community for future generations. Further, this puts Council at risk of not being able to deliver outcomes articulated for it in its Community Strategic Plan.
- The large majority of asset renewals is funded by external grants and this is not sustainable. In addition to the matters noted above, Council has a number of demographic challenges.

Council is applying for a 12% rate increase (inclusive of 3.8% rate peg) to commence in the financial year 2025/26, including a permanent 8.2% Special Variation (SV).

This proposed SV will assist Council to:

- Move towards achieving financial sustainability and maintaining a greater level of fit for purpose infrastructure
- Have a long-term financially sustainable future, including increasing its capacity to absorb future financial, extreme natural events and growth shocks
- Recover from recent financial impacts, including high inflation, COVID revenue losses, State Award-mandated staff wage increases, and unexpected NSW Government costs
- Be in a stronger position to maintain and renew community assets, attract and retain staff and meet community expectations

- Restore unrestricted cash reserves to a level that can sustain Council's operations (achieve \$15 million in unrestricted cash by year seven)
- Increase Council investment in renewal of infrastructure assets, noting that the proposed SRV does not allow Council to achieve the recommend 100% asset renewal ratio recommend by the Office of Local Government (OLG) at any point in the 10 year Long-Term Financial Plan period, however, does increase the ratio from 63% in year 1 to 82% in year 10.

The SV will be accompanied by a \$10 million efficiency target as outlined in Council's Sustainable Financial Futures Plan which was presented at the Ordinary Meeting on 17 December 2024 and is attached to this application. Under the plan, and consistent with the Long-Term Financial Plan, Council is committed to achieving operational savings/income generation of \$7 million in FY2025/26, and a further \$1 million in each year from 2026/27 to 2028/29.

These savings are in addition to the \$1.8m already achieved when setting the FY2024/25 operational budget. Further to this, Council has adopted a land sales strategy (Property Sales Program | Shoalhaven City Council ) that is planned to generate \$37 million in land sale proceeds from FY2025/26 onwards, assisting Council to meet its financial obligation (which include loan repayments) in the short to medium term.

With the 12% rate increase, \$10 million efficiency target, and endorsed land sales strategy, Council will not achieve an operational surplus for the length of the Long-Term Financial Plan. A further significant increase in revenue or reduction in operating expenses will be required to return the organisation to an operating surplus, allowing Council to meet its required OLG key performance indicators.

Council has acknowledged in its business papers, and throughout the community engagement process, that a future SV will be needed as early as FY2026/27. The volume of this future SV will be more accurately determined once Council completes its asset condition inspections, and asset management plan updates throughout 2025. Based on current depreciation figures, a Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 29.5% is required (in conjunction with the \$10 million efficiency target and land sales strategy) for Council to achieve an Infrastructure Renewal Ratio of 85% only, with no additional funds being available to address Council's significant infrastructure backlog issues.

Without the proposed SV, Council would need to identify further efficiency savings of \$8 million to meet the forecast set in the Long-Term Financial Plan for FY2025/26, bringing the efficiency savings required to \$15 million in year one. Savings of these magnitude are not feasible without significant impacts on service provisions and potential breaches of legislation due to an inability to deliver mandatory services and functions.

Further, Council would be at significant risk of not being able to manage future extreme weather events or financial shocks. As the Council with the most natural disaster declaration in NSW, future weather events are expected to occur and if Council cannot respond this places the community at significant risk.

## Question 4: Is the council proposing to increase minimum rates in conjunction with the special variation?

Complete Table 4 if the council proposes to increase minimum ordinary and/or Table 5 if the council proposes to increase special rates in conjunction with the SV for 2025-26. Otherwise, leave it blank. IPART will also use data provided in Application Form [Part A](#) to understand the details of the proposed SV and minimum amounts of rates.

In some situations, a minimum rates increase will be subject to IPART approval. In these cases, councils will need to also complete *Minimum Rate Increase Application Form Part B 2025-26* (Word document) available on our [website](#). Please see Table 2.4 of the [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) for further information on when an additional MR increase application may be required. Councils do not need to submit another Application form Part A (Excel document).

Table 4 Minimum rates increase for ordinary rates

Does the council have an ordinary rate(s) subject to a minimum amount?	No
Does the council propose to increase the minimum rate(s) above the statutory limit for the first time? (If yes, you must complete a separate minimum rate increase application form.)	No
Does the council propose to increase the minimum rate(s) above the proposed SV percentage(s)? (If yes, you must complete a separate minimum rate increase application form, even if the council has been approved to increase its minimum rate above the statutory limit in the past.)	No
Has the council submitted an application for a minimum rate increase?	No

In the text box below, provide the council's proposed minimum rates increase (both in percentage and dollar terms) and to which rating category (or sub-category) the increase is to apply for each year (this can be in table form).

Not applicable

Worksheets 4, 5 and 7 (WS 4, 5 and 7) of the [Part A](#) application form collects more detailed information about the proposed minimum rates increase.

Table 5 Minimum rates increase for special rates

Does the council propose to increase the minimum amount of a special rate above the statutory limit?	No
What will the minimum amount of the special rate(s) be after the proposed increase?	N/A
Has the council submitted an application for a minimum rate increase?	No

The council must ensure that it has submitted [MR Increase Application Form Part B](#), if required. No separate Part A is required.

### Question 5: Does the council have an expiring SV?

Complete the table below if the council has a temporary SV which is due to expire:

- on 30 June 2025, or
- at the end of any year in the period the requested SV would apply.

To calculate the amount to be removed from general income when the SV expires, councils must follow the terms of the relevant condition in the SV instrument. Councils may find the example in Attachment 1 to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) useful. The OLG's SV Guidelines also specify that councils must contact the OLG to confirm the calculation of this amount.

Does the council have an SV which is due to expire on 30 June 2025?	Yes
Does the council have one or more SV/s due to expire during the proposed SV period?	No
If Yes to either question: a. When does the SV expire?	30 June 2025
b. What is the percentage to be removed from the council's general income?	1.49%
c. What is the dollar amount to be removed from the council's general income?	\$1,424,260
Has OLG confirmed the calculation of the amount to be removed?	Yes

**Attachments required:**

- Instrument(s) approving any SV which expires at 30 June 2025 or during the period covered by the proposed SV.
- OLG advice confirming calculation of the dollar amount to be removed from general income as a result of the expiring SV.

### Question 6: Does the council have an existing (ongoing) section 508A special variation which applies in 2025-26?

Complete this question if the council has an existing section 508A multi-year SV instrument which approves an increase to general income above the rate peg for 2025-26 and future years within the period covered by the council's SV application.

If the council has an ongoing section 508A SV and is seeking additional changes to general income during the term of that existing SV, IPART will need to vary the original instrument if the application is approved, rather than issuing a separate SV instrument to apply for 2025-26 (or later years).

Does the council have a section 508A multi-year SV instrument that applies in 2025-26?	No
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If yes to the above question, in the text box below:

- Specify the percentage increase(s) and duration of the SV
- Outline the council's actions in complying with conditions in the instrument approving the original SV
- Describe any significant changes relevant to the conditions in the instrument since it was issued.

Supporting documents could include extracts from annual reports or any other publications in which compliance with the terms of the SV has been reported to ratepayers.

Not applicable
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**Attachments required:**

- A declaration by the General Manager as to the council's compliance with the conditions specified in the SV instrument on the council's official letterhead.

- Supporting documents providing evidence of the council's actions to comply with the conditions in the instrument. For example, extracts from annual reports or any other publications in which compliance with the terms of the SV has been reported to ratepayers.

### Question 7: Has IPART ever approved a special variation (including additional special variations in 2022-23)?

Complete this question if IPART has ever approved an SV for the council.

You **do not need** to complete the text box for this question if the relevant information has been provided in the council's response to Question 6.

Does the council have a section 508(2) or 508A SV which IPART has approved?	Yes
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If yes, in the text box below, for each SV approved by IPART, briefly:

- Specify the type of SV and the increase to general income approved.
- Outline the council's actions in complying with conditions in the SV instrument(s) or where the council has failed to comply with the conditions, provide reasons and list the corrective actions undertaken.
- Describe any *significant* changes relevant to the conditions in the SV instrument(s) since it was issued.

Supporting documents could include extracts from annual reports (or webpage hyperlinks to them) or any other publications in which compliance with the terms of the SV has been reported to ratepayers.

The types of SV and increases to general income are listed below:

Year	Type	Temp or Perm.	No. of years increase applied	Cumulative % increase incl. rate peg	Increase to notional income (over no of years period)	Reason
2013/2014	508(2)	Perm	1	8%	4,087,021	Increase to fund infrastructure renewal shortfalls

2015/2016	508(2)	Temp	1	3.89%	2,205,585	Service a loan to fund infrastructure works in the Jerberra Estate
2017/2018	508(2)	Temp	1	13.2%	8,024,788	One year temporary approved only. Council was required to re-apply for a permanent increase in 2018/19
2018/2019	508A	Perm	3	29.1%	18,157,097	Improve financial sustainability, fund capital expenditure, reduce infrastructure backlog, reduce operating deficit, fund asset renewal and maintenance, and make repayments on the Verons Estate loan

Compliance reporting can be found in Council's annual report (Section 2) under the title "Special Rate Variation progress" .

The 2013/2014 approved SV was reported appropriately in each of the ten years from 2013/2014 to 2022/2023.

The 2018/2019 approved SV has been reported appropriately each year from 2018/2019 until 2023/2024, and will continue to be reported up to, and including 2028/2029.



Links to the Annual Reports on Council's website, and the respective page numbers, for each year of required disclosure are summarised below:

- [2013/2014 Community Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 49.
- [2014/2015 Community Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 43.
- [2015/2016 Community Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 35.
- [2016/2017 Annual Community Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 41.
- [2017/2018 Annual Community Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 66.
- [2018/2019 Annual Community Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 34.
- [2019/2020 Annual Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 17.
- [2020/2021 Annual Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 18.
- [2021/2022 Annual Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 20.
- [2022/2023 Annual Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 21.
- [2023/2024 Annual Report](#) - with the disclosure included on page 22.

The 2017/2018 temporary one year SV was reported appropriately in the 2017/2018 annual report (page 66). As it was a one-off SV increase only, no further reporting was required.

The 2015/2016 SV relating to Jerberra Estate was not appropriately reporting in Council's annual reports over the life of the SV. Council identified the error prior to the publication of the 2023/2024 Annual Report. To address this oversight, a disclosure was added to the Annual Report as per below:

#### **Special Variations – Jerberra Estate Special Rates**

With approval from IPART in May 2015, Council implemented a special rate via a s.508(2) temporary special rate variation for a limited number of relevant properties within the Jerberra Estate, located at Tomerong, where sealed roads, road drainage and electricity infrastructure was needed to enable development. The additional revenue was needed at the time to fund loan borrowings for the provision of works estimated at \$7.2 million, comprising \$5,434,400 for road infrastructure and \$1,765,600 for electricity infrastructure.

The \$7.2 million loan for the the Jerberra residential estate infrastructure works was approved in early January 2016. A fixed rate loan for a term of 10 years (aligning with the 10-year s.508(2) special variation approval). The infrastructure works were completed in 2019/20, and the special rate will be removed from relevant rate notices from 01 July 2025.

The 10-year temporary approval allowed an initial \$844,288 of additional income in the first year 2015/16. As per the conditions of a S.508(2) temporary special variation, the first year amount must be indexed by the Council's annual permissible increase percentages (rate-peg or special variation maximum percentage increases) for each year from 2016/17 – 2024/25, before the indexed amount is removed (expired) from Council's rate base on 30 June 2025. For Jerberra special rates, Council is required to reduce its rate base by \$1,424,260 (the 10-year indexed total) on 30 June 2025.

The link to the Annual report is: [2023/2024 Annual Report](#) with the disclosure included on page 22.

## Attachments required:

- A declaration by the General Manager as to the council's compliance with the conditions specified in the SV instrument(s).
- Supporting documents providing evidence of the council's actions to comply with the conditions in the instrument(s). For example, extracts from annual reports or any other publications in which compliance with the conditions of the SV instrument has been reported to ratepayers.
- If applicable, supporting documents providing evidence of the corrective actions undertaken in the event of a failure to comply with the conditions in the SV instrument(s).

### Question 8: Does the council have deferred general income increases available to it?

Complete the question box below if the council has decided not to apply the full percentage increases to general income available to it in one or more previous years under sections 506, 508(2) or 508A of the LG Act.

Does the council have deferred general income increases available to it from one or more previous years under section 511 of the LG Act?	No- have responded no to this question as the amount of deferred general income is immaterial (\$2,774 at 1 July 2024 – as per 2024/25 permissible worksheets)
If Yes, has the collection of this additional income been included in the Council's Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP)?	N/A

In the text boxes also explain:

a. The quantum, rationale and timing of any deferred increases in general income.

Not applicable

b. When council plans to catch up on the deferred general income through the catch-up provisions and whether this been included in the LTFP.

Not applicable

c. How does this deferred income impact on the council's need for the SV and its cumulative impact on ratepayers' capacity to pay? The council may also wish to further expand on this question in Table 6 in the OLG Criterion 1 section below.

Not applicable

### 3 OLG SV Criterion 1 – Financial need

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 3 of IPART’s [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and material for completing this section.

In Table 6 below, please explain how the council met each component of Criterion 1. Please also provide a reference to evidence in the IP&R documents.

The [Part A](#) application form also collects information for this criterion in Worksheets 9 (WS 9 - Financial), 10 (WS 10 - LTFP) and 11 (WS 11 - Ratios).

Table 6 OLG Criterion 1 components

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
<p>The need for, and purpose of, a different revenue path for the council's General Fund (as requested through the SV) is clearly articulated and identified in the council's IP&amp;R documents</p>	<p>Council's Community Strategic Plan 2032 (CSP) identifies a key priority is to ensure Council "Manage our infrastructure for long-term sustainability to meet community need (priority 2.1)." Key priority 4.2 is to ensure Council "Provide transparent leadership through effective government and administration".</p> <p>Further, the guiding principles on page 8 of the CSP highlights that "We will contribute to maintaining a strong and stable economy and ensure the delivery of infrastructure is financially sustainable"</p> <p>Council's 2024/25 Delivery Program extends this strategic priority into actions including 2.1.05 – "Infrastructure assets, with a focus on transport and stormwater assets, are accurately captured and condition assessed to facilitate strategic asset renewal planning" with performance measures linked to the development and implementation of Asset Management Plans.</p> <p>Further, strategic priority 4.2.05 – "Promote informed decision making through clear and timely communication of the financial implications of decisions with a focus on long-term financial sustainability" requires Council's principles of Financial Sustainability are considered in financial decision making and Coordinate delivery of the Financial Sustainability Project to address the recommendations outlined in the 2023 financial review across key pillars of Asset and Project Management, Financial Management and Service Planning (page 53).</p>	<p>2032 Community Strategic Plan (Attachment 4)</p> <p>2024-2025 Delivery Program Operational Plan (Attachment 5)</p> <p>2022-2026 (updated 2024) Resourcing Strategy (including Long-Term Financial Plan) (Attachment 6)</p>

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
	<p>Council undertook a review of its financial position in mid 2023, engaging the AEC Group to provide independent advice of the state of Council's finances. This review identified that Council has an annual structural deficit of \$25-\$35 million and made a number of recommendations, including a necessary SRV, to address the financial concerns of Council. This review was reported to Council on 20 November 2023 and formed part of the 2023 engagement on a potential SRV (that would have been applicable for FY2024/25 had Council proceeded with an application).</p> <p>Council's 2022/26 Resourcing Strategy (including Long-Term Financial Plan) was updated and endorsed by Council on 17 December 2024. The Long-Term Financial Plan highlighted a number of significant issues with Council's long-term financial sustainability – key risks are outlined on pages 18-19.</p> <p>Consistent with the findings from the AEC review, the Long-Term Financial Plan highlights that Council is not sustainable, and significant corrective action is required to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of Council. Continuous operating deficits, a failure to adequately fund investment in Council's infrastructure, and limited unrestricted cash balances place Council at a risk of breaching the Local Government Act, Council did in fact breach a TCorp debt covenant at 30 June 2023 due to its poor financial position (reported in the 30 June 2024 annual financial statements). Further the inability to respond to natural disasters places the Council in a precarious position should a safety breach occur.</p> <p>The Long-Term Financial Plan shows an unsustainable base case scenario – despite the scenario including a \$10 million efficiency target, \$35 million land sales program, and income generation from the new Materials Resource Facility. The two additional scenarios presented would enable council to move towards long-term financial sustainability, but without further rate increases in the future, would not achieve sustainability within the next ten years.</p>	
<p>In establishing need for the SV, the relevant IP&amp;R documents should canvass alternatives to the rate rise.</p>	<p>The Long-Term Financial Plan considered alternatives to a rate rise only. All scenarios assume that Council will achieve a \$10 million efficiency target – through the implementation of Council's Sustainable Financial Future Plan (adopted in December 2024) – as well as a land sales program that is expected to generate \$37 million in sale proceeds from FY2026 to FY2030. It also includes income which will be generated from Council's Materials Recovery Facility – a new commercial venture which will generate income from November 2025.</p>	<p>2022-2026 (updated 2024) Resourcing Strategy (including Long-Term Financial Plan) (Attachment 6)</p>
<p>In demonstrating this need, councils must indicate the financial impact in their LTFP by applying the baseline and special variation scenarios.</p>	<p>The Long-Term Financial Plan includes the impact of the three scenarios (base case and two SV options) on the General Fund. It also models the OLG performance ratios under each scenario highlighting Council's inability to meet these ratios and the need for an SV in addition to the other measures already being implemented by Council.</p>	<p>2022-2026 (updated 2024) Resourcing Strategy (including Long-Term Financial Plan) (Attachment 6)</p>

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion from the council's IP&R documents	Reference to IP&R documents
<p>Evidence of community need/desire for service levels/projects and limited council resourcing alternatives.</p>	<p>The proposed SRV is focussed on financial sustainability with adequate investment in renewal of current assets. This includes minor reductions to service levels (through the Sustainable Financial Future Plan) and limited funding for new capital projects that are not tied to existing grant funded programs.</p> <p>Council engages with the community regularly and the key area of concern for ratepayers is the condition of Council roads.</p> <p>Council's last Community Satisfaction Survey was held in February 2023. The largest decrease in satisfaction scores out of 5 were for 'Maintenance of sealed roads' down from 2.5 in 2020 to 1.7 in 2023. 'Maintenance of unsealed roads' also dropped significantly from 2.7 to 2.0. Road maintenance has the lowest satisfaction scores of all 48 services and facilities surveyed.</p>	<p><a href="#">2023 Community Satisfaction Survey</a></p>
<p>Evidence could also include the analysis of the council's financial sustainability conducted by Government agencies</p>	<p>There are no recent examples of other government agencies conducting a financial sustainability assessment of Council. Whilst Council is aware the OLG and NSW Treasury Corporation have performed their own internal reviews of Council for monitoring purposes, no finding reports have been issued.</p> <p>As noted above, Council did engage the AEC Group to perform an individual financial assessment of Council's financial sustainability in 2023.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>If applicable, has the council not applied the full percentage increases available to it in one or more previous years under section 511 of the Local Government Act? If a council has a large amount of revenue yet to be caught up over the next several years, it should explain in its application how that impacts on its need for the SV.</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p>N/A</p>

### 3.1 Additional information required for councils with an existing SV applying for an additional percentage increase

If the council has **an existing SV**, then explain the need for **a variation to that SV** to increase the annual percentage increases.

Not applicable

### 3.2 Any other factors that demonstrate the council's financial need (optional)

In the text box please give a brief explanation of any other factors not already mentioned that may be relevant to demonstrate the council's need.

For instance, the council may wish to discuss the impact of **non-rateable** properties.

Not applicable

Worksheet 12 (WS 12) in the [Part A](#) Excel application form can also be used to provide additional data.

## 4 OLG SV Criterion 2 – Community awareness and engagement

Refer to the OLG SV Guidelines as needed, and section 4 of IPART’s [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and materials for completing this section. Please also note that section 4 of IPART’s [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) is the IPART fact sheet referred to in the OLG SV Guidelines under Criterion 2 that provides guidance to councils on the community awareness and engagement criterion for special variations.

### 4.1 How did the council engage with the community about the proposed special variation?

In Table 7 please provide evidence as to how the council’s community engagement met Criterion 2.

Table 7 Evidence of the council’s community engagement demonstrating Criterion 2

Criteria	Evidence of meeting this criterion	Reference to application supporting documents																																																																										
Evidence that the community is aware of the need for and extent of a rate rise.	<p>During the four week community consultation campaign, 3,880 people reviewed information on the Proposed Special Rate Variation 2024 website (<a href="#">Proposed Special Rate Variation 2024   Get Involved Shoalhaven</a>).</p> <p>Of the 1,966 people who completed the online survey, 98.3% said that they were aware of Council’s financial position. (Question 6 of the online survey).</p>	<p>Question 6 of the Community Engagement Survey in the Community Engagement Report (Attachment 7 - page 21)</p>																																																																										
The council need to communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed SV in percentage terms, and the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer, by rating category.	<p>The proposed rate increase percentages and examples of the annual and weekly increase in cost to the average residential property was included in promotional material, including the letter from the Mayor to all ratepayers and the Flyers that were distributed to communities. This was also featured on the website Get Involved engagement platform as well as the percentage increase and average costs for the proposed rates for all rating categories.</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Proposed rate increase options and costs for average residential properties in 2025-28</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Option</th> <th>Rate rise (annual % increase)</th> <th>Proposed rate increase (annual \$/week)</th> <th>Average residential property annual increase \$/week</th> <th>Average residential property weekly increase \$/week</th> <th>Average residential property monthly increase \$/month</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Rate rise option 1 (2.0%)</td> <td>2.0%</td> <td>\$17.00</td> <td>\$1,348.00</td> <td>\$32.70</td> <td>\$1,021.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rate rise option 2 (3.0%)</td> <td>3.0%</td> <td>\$25.50</td> <td>\$2,022.00</td> <td>\$50.55</td> <td>\$1,531.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rate rise option 3 (4.0%)</td> <td>4.0%</td> <td>\$34.00</td> <td>\$2,696.00</td> <td>\$67.40</td> <td>\$2,042.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1"> <caption>Options Using Council Rates</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Rating Category</th> <th>Average FY2024/25</th> <th>Average FY2025/26</th> <th>Average FY2026/27</th> <th>Average FY2027/28</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Residential</td> <td>\$489.82</td> <td>\$516.58</td> <td>\$543.34</td> <td>\$570.10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Residential medium density</td> <td>\$31.37</td> <td>\$32.15</td> <td>\$32.93</td> <td>\$33.71</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Business ordinary</td> <td>\$33.00</td> <td>\$41.72</td> <td>\$50.44</td> <td>\$59.16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Business Newcomer</td> <td>\$278.94</td> <td>\$327.77</td> <td>\$376.60</td> <td>\$425.43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Business Industrial Commercial</td> <td>\$141.00</td> <td>\$150.31</td> <td>\$159.62</td> <td>\$168.93</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Business Major Retail/Wholesale</td> <td>\$5,705.10</td> <td>\$6,793.21</td> <td>\$7,881.32</td> <td>\$8,969.43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Business Major Retail/Wholesale</td> <td>\$1,000.00</td> <td>\$1,200.00</td> <td>\$1,400.00</td> <td>\$1,600.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Commercial</td> <td>\$1,000.00</td> <td>\$1,100.00</td> <td>\$1,200.00</td> <td>\$1,300.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Residential only</td> <td>\$2,000.00</td> <td>\$2,100.00</td> <td>\$2,200.00</td> <td>\$2,300.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Option	Rate rise (annual % increase)	Proposed rate increase (annual \$/week)	Average residential property annual increase \$/week	Average residential property weekly increase \$/week	Average residential property monthly increase \$/month	Rate rise option 1 (2.0%)	2.0%	\$17.00	\$1,348.00	\$32.70	\$1,021.00	Rate rise option 2 (3.0%)	3.0%	\$25.50	\$2,022.00	\$50.55	\$1,531.50	Rate rise option 3 (4.0%)	4.0%	\$34.00	\$2,696.00	\$67.40	\$2,042.00	Rating Category	Average FY2024/25	Average FY2025/26	Average FY2026/27	Average FY2027/28	Residential	\$489.82	\$516.58	\$543.34	\$570.10	Residential medium density	\$31.37	\$32.15	\$32.93	\$33.71	Business ordinary	\$33.00	\$41.72	\$50.44	\$59.16	Business Newcomer	\$278.94	\$327.77	\$376.60	\$425.43	Business Industrial Commercial	\$141.00	\$150.31	\$159.62	\$168.93	Business Major Retail/Wholesale	\$5,705.10	\$6,793.21	\$7,881.32	\$8,969.43	Business Major Retail/Wholesale	\$1,000.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,600.00	Commercial	\$1,000.00	\$1,100.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,300.00	Residential only	\$2,000.00	\$2,100.00	\$2,200.00	\$2,300.00	<p><a href="#">Photos   Proposed Special Rate Variation   Get Involved Shoalhaven</a></p>
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<p>The Delivery Program and LTTP should clearly set out the extent of the General Fund rate rise under the SV, for the average ratepayer, by rating category.</p>	<p>The 2025-2034 Long-Term Financial Plan provides the full extent of the General Fund rate rise under the SV for average ratepayers by rating category on page 59.</p> <p>Due to the timing of Council elections, and the need to brief the newly elected body on the need for an SRV, the Delivery Program was prepared 4 months prior to the Long-Term Financial Plan being developed. Council ensured that the Delivery Plan made mention of the need for a future SRV (page 1 – Message from the Mayor) and reinforced Council's financial sustainability challenges (page 2 – Welcome from the CEO)</p>	<p>Long-Term Financial Plan 2025-2034 (Attachment 8 – page 59)</p>
<p>Council should include an overview of its ongoing efficiency measures and briefly discuss its progress against these measures, in its explanation of the need for the proposed SV.</p>	<p>The focus of the community consultation campaign for the proposed special variation to rates options was to educate the community about Council's efficiency measures, actions, targets and savings made to date. This information underpinned the communication collateral and conversations with communities during the SV engagement campaign. This included comprehensive information on the Get Involved website engagement platform (Proposed Special Rate Variation 2024   Get Involved Shoalhaven) which detailed activities already taken under the Financial Sustainability Project, and links to more thorough details and background on Council's website (Financial sustainability   Shoalhaven City Council).</p> <p>An informative video was also produced by the acting CEO which referenced what Council was doing to achieve efficiency targets (Hear from our Acting CEO   Get Involved Shoalhaven) as well as an animated video providing context about Council's financial position and actions it is taking (Brief summary of key financial factors).</p> <p>The introduction on the Get Involved website was direct in nature, and similar wording applied to print collateral: "We are forging a path of financial improvement through the actions we're taking to cut expenses and improve the way we work while sustaining services. In February this year, we embarked on a mission to find and enact operational efficiencies and so far, have achieved \$3.2 million in cost savings through a range of revenue generation and workforce initiatives including cuts to overtime, adjustments to fees and charges, reduced recruitment, budget control measures and changes to operating hours of services and facilities. We're committed to doing more and will produce \$10 million efficiency measures by 2029."</p>	<p><a href="#">Proposed Special Rate Variation 2024   Get Involved Shoalhaven</a></p> <p><a href="#">How is Council achieving its efficiency savings   Get Involved Shoalhaven</a></p> <p><a href="#">Financial sustainability   Shoalhaven City Council</a></p> <p><a href="#">Mayor's letter to Property Owners – 8 November 2024</a></p> <p><a href="#">Community information flyer</a></p> <p>Video: <a href="#">Brief summary of key financial factors</a></p> <p>Video: <a href="#">Proposed SRV - Acting CEO Explains</a></p>
<p>The council's community engagement strategy for the SV must demonstrate an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness and input occur.</p>	<p>The proposed options for the SV was promoted through all online channels available to Council, including the homepage of Council's website, Council's Facebook page, digital screens dispersed across the city at community centres and facilities, as well as a letter sent to every ratepayer. Media releases were distributed to all media. Flyers were provided at all libraries, leisure centres and other Council facilities and radio advertising was undertaken in the Shoalhaven, Illawarra and Southern Highlands. The engagement and proposal were extensively covered in local media and beyond, as well as shared across social media pages in the Shoalhaven.</p>	<p>Community Engagement Report (Attachment 7 – page 7)</p>

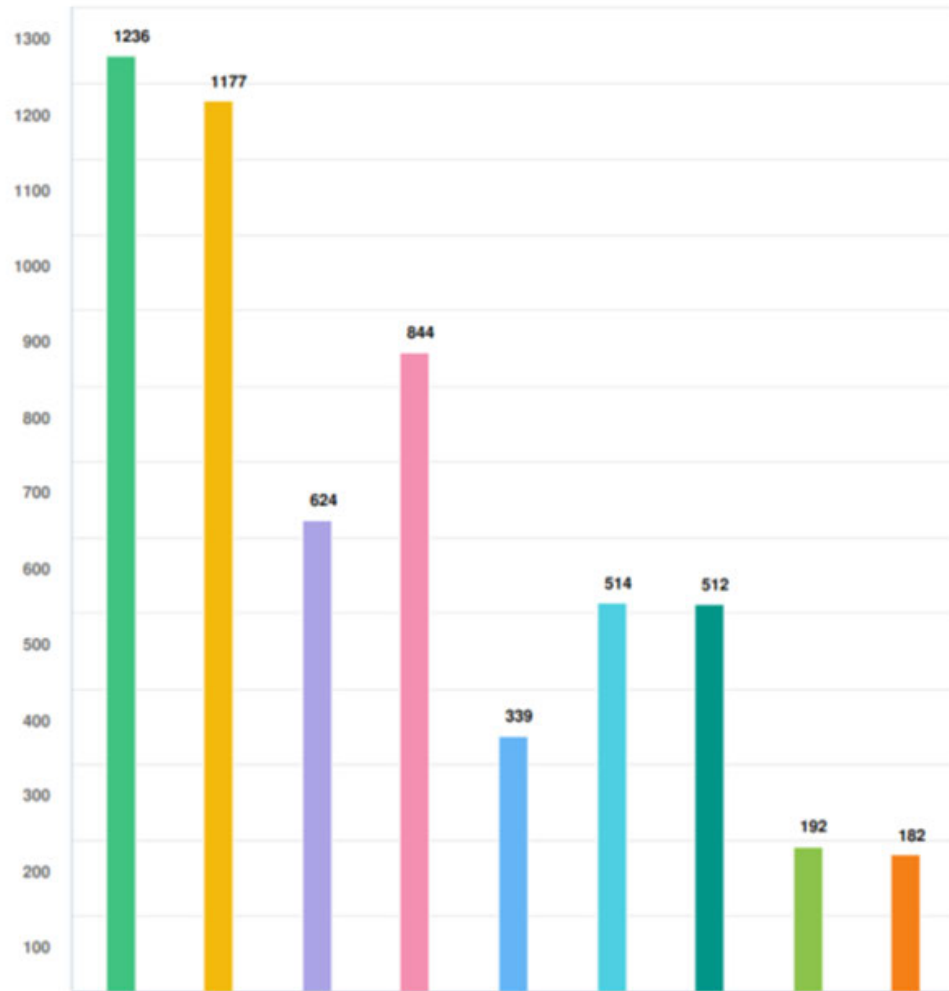
	<p>Two videos were produced to simplify the information and make it readily accessible, including a brief animation and a longer-form presentation by the acting CEO.</p> <p>Drop-in sessions and information kiosks were held in-person by Council staff at shopping centres, markets and a recreation centres in six different locations of the city, where the community could complete hard-copy or online surveys. Community input was received via the online Get Involved Shoalhaven website, as well as submissions made by email and over the phone. Two in-person workshops were held for more interactive and in-depth consultation about efficiency measures, service levels and financial challenges.</p> <p>An in-person meeting was held with representatives of 24 Community Consultative Bodies in November 2024, to share with their communities.</p>	
<p>Explain the action, if any, the council took in response to feedback from the community</p>	<p>There were no substantive changes made to the exhibited Resourcing Strategy and Long-Term Financial Plan documents in response to feedback from the community.</p>	<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>

In the text box below, provide any other details about the council's consultation strategy, timing or materials that were not captured in Table 7.

Significant amount of time was invested in making the information as easy to access on our community engagement platform, Get Involved, and understand as possible. Individual sections were created to segment information by themes so that people could find and digest the information they needed. This included visual aids such as videos, photographs, tables and the interactive rate calculator tool, of which 911 people used.

To further understand if the community supported Council's intention to invest any additional funding raised through a rate increase into road renewal, a question was included in the online survey that asked: 'Which of the following assets do you think Council needs to invest in more?'. The response to this question indicated that there was strong support for increased investment in both urban and rural roads.

Q8 Which of the following assets do you think Council needs to invest in more? (tick all that apply)



**Question options**

- Urban Roads
- Rural Roads
- Footpaths and Cycleways
- Stormwater/Drainage
- Community Buildings and Facilities
- Parks and Recreational Facilities
- Coastal Facilities (e.g. beach access and protection)
- None (Council does not need to invest any more in assets)
- Other (please specify)

Mandatory Question (1966 response(s))  
 Question type: Checkbox Question

#### 4.2 Proposed average rates outlined in the council's community consultation materials

<p>Are the average rates provided in the council's community consultation materials the same as what has been inputted into Table 7.2, Worksheet 7 of the Part A application form?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>If no, please explain why.</p>	<p>There is an immaterial difference between the Average Rates exhibited at the time of consultation and the time of application submission, however it is important to note that despite the small difference in averages, the rating approach did not change – the equity relationship between the total yields of each category did not shift. Refer to Attachment 19 for more information.</p>

#### 4.3 Additional information (optional)

In the text box below, please provide any other details about the community's involvement in, engagement with or support of or opposition to the proposed SV not captured in Table 7.

<p>Nil.</p>
-------------

Please list out any other attachments in Table 8 that the council has relied on to respond to Criterion 2 that was not otherwise outlined in Table 7.

Table 8 Other Criterion 2 attachments

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references

## 5 OLG SV Criterion 3 – Impact on ratepayers

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 5 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and material for completing this section. The [Part A](#) application form also collects information for this criterion in Worksheet 7 (WS 7 - Impact on Rates).

### 5.1 How did the council clearly show the impact of any rate rises on the community?

Please articulate in the text box below how the council demonstrated this question.

In your response, please include references to the Delivery Program, LTFP and relevant community consultation materials to support the council's claims.

Council demonstrated the impact of the proposed SRV on ratepayers by average rate increases for each rating category as detailed in the Council Business Papers 5 November 2024 (Attachment 9) and 17 December 2024 (Attachment 10), the Long-Term Financial Plan (Attachment 8 - page 59), and in a variety of Council's community engagement material including Council's website ([Proposed Special Rate Variation 2024](#)).

The table presenting the average increases per category is as follows:

Options Being Considered	Average FY2024/25	Average FY2024/25 + Base (3.8%)	Average FY2024/25 + 8%	Average FY2024/25 + 12%
Residential	1,499.60	1,556.58	1,619.57	1,679.55
Residential non urban	131.17	136.15	141.66	146.91
Business ordinary	43.10	44.73	46.54	48.27
Business Nowra	4,529.64	4,701.77	4,892.02	5,073.20
Business Industrial Commercial	2,424.19	2,516.31	2,618.12	2,715.09
Business Major Retail Nowra	78,795.10	81,789.31	85,098.71	88,250.51
Business Major Retail Vincentia	41,159.50	42,723.56	44,452.26	46,098.64
Farmland	3,078.83	3,195.82	3,325.13	3,448.29
Farmland dairy	2,289.75	2,376.76	2,472.93	2,546.52

#### Rates Calculator

A simple online tool where ratepayers entered their land valuation as per the latest rates notice, to be shown an estimated increase for their specific property for all scenarios as both a percentage and dollar amount for the 2025/2026 rating year, this calculator was launched during the community engagement phase when three rate SRV scenarios were being considered. The calculator is still available at [Special Rate Variation calculator | Shoalhaven City Council](#)

## 5.2 How has the council considered affordability and the community's capacity and willingness to pay?

Please articulate in the text box below how the council demonstrated this question.

In your response, please provide references to the Delivery Program, LTFP and community consultation materials where the council has considered the affordability and the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Council considered the community's capacity and willingness to pay by:

1. Undertaking research using publicly available information to compare Council's demographics to those of regional NSW. This data was used to assess the level of SRV proposed to the community.

2. Performing a comparison of average rates across OLG group 5 councils to assess whether the proposed SRV scenarios would increase council's current average rate unreasonably above those of our comparable councils.

### Demographic Analysis

A demographic analysis of the Shoalhaven Local Government Area (LGA) has been undertaken to determine the community's capacity to pay, compared to other councils in Regional NSW (Attachment 11). Based on figures from the 2021 Census, this analysis examined several factors, including age profiles, household incomes and occupations, housing tenure, housing stress, and measures of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. These figures were then localised to consider underlying land values, and the potential impact of rate rises on different communities across the Shoalhaven LGA.

Compared to Regional NSW, Shoalhaven has a lower proportion of children (under 18), and a far greater proportion of people aged over 60, reflecting its appeal as a retirement destination. Almost 43% of all households in Shoalhaven own their own home, compared to 36% in regional NSW. In many coastal and high amenity localities, there is also a strong correlation between high proportions of older people and high levels of home ownership, resulting in lower levels of housing stress.

In 2021, the median weekly household income for Shoalhaven was \$1,250 compared to \$1,466 for Regional NSW. This lower figure can be attributed, in part, to the high proportion of older people in Shoalhaven.

The top five industry sectors of employment in Shoalhaven were (in order) Health Care and Social Assistance, Construction, Retail Trade, Public Administration and Safety, and Accommodation and Food Services.

A comparison of Shoalhaven's incomes with NSW indicates that, of the top five industry sectors of employment in Shoalhaven, all except one earned the same or higher average annual salary than NSW in the same sector of employment.

While Shoalhaven sits, on average, within the mid-point for measures of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, there are localised pockets of disadvantage throughout the LGA where incomes, education and qualifications, and workforce participation are lower. However, areas with higher levels of disadvantage typically correspond with lower rates of home ownership and greater reliance on private or social housing rentals. These areas are also observed to have lower underlying land values than other areas in Shoalhaven, which means that landowners in these areas will absorb a lesser impact of any rate increase than more advantaged communities. On balance, this means that those residents at greater disadvantage are less likely to be directly affected by an increase in rates.

There is also a strong correlation between households on higher incomes, high levels of home ownership, and high property values. This is particularly evident in areas with very low levels of disadvantage, for example, Berry and surrounds, Huskisson and surrounds, and Milton, Mollymook and surrounds. Landowners in these areas will absorb a greater proportion of any rate increase due to the higher underlying land values; however, they also have a higher capacity to pay than people in disadvantaged areas.

#### **Average Rate Comparison (OLG Group 5)**

Council has a lower average rate for residential and business rating categories comparable to neighbouring councils. For the period of 1995 (first year of OLG published data) to 2018, Council had the lowest average rates of all comparable councils (OLG Group 5 plus Council's Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation member council, Kiama Municipal City Council).

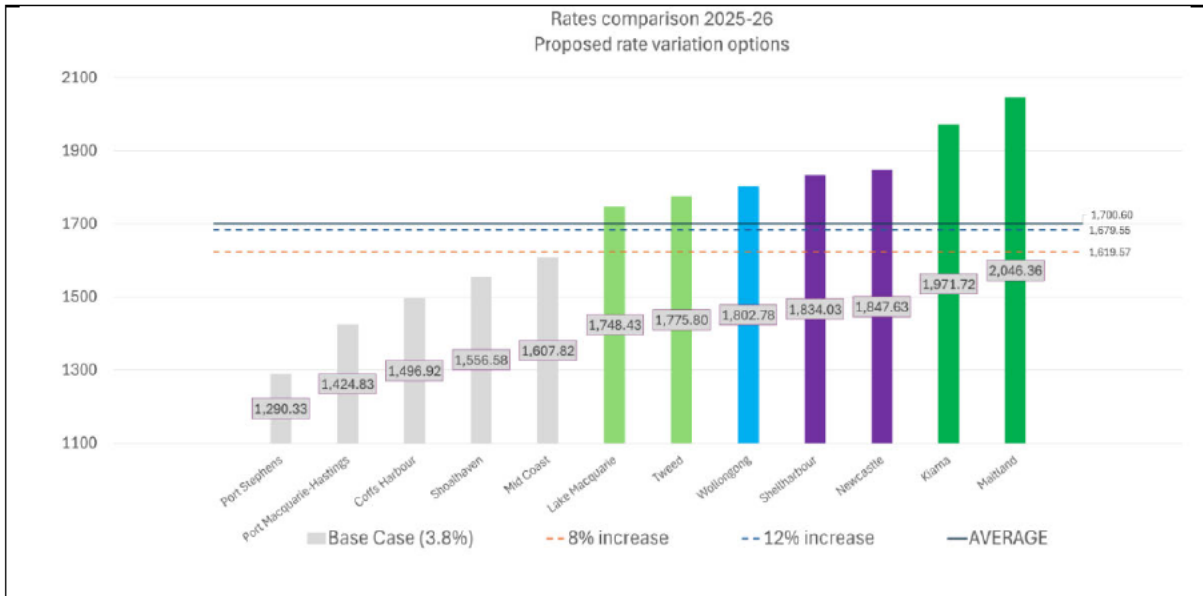
With the introduction of the 2018 SV, Council moved from 12th place to 10th.

While each council is different, and it is difficult to compare levels of service, a general comparable lifestyle is offered by Shoalhaven compared to neighbouring councils (such as Shellharbour) but provided from a lower-value comparable rate base.

A comparison of proposed FY2025/26 Council rates to its neighbouring councils and those within Council's OLG Group (Group 5) is reported below. Average rate data is available on the OLG website for FY2022/23. The annual rate peg applied to each council for FY2023/24 and FY2025/26 are available on the IPART website.

Using this information Council has calculated an estimate of what the OLG Group 5 and Kiama Municipal Council rates would be for FY2025/26, and compared to what Council's proposed average rate would be under each SRV option. This analysis assumes that none of the comparable Council's would apply for their own SRV in FY2025/26.

This analysis shows that a 12% SRV would place Council's rates just below the average of all comparable Council's. Overlaid with the demographic analysis performed, this rate would be appropriate given Council is within the mid-point for measures of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage



### 5.3 How has the council addressed (or intend to address) concerns about affordability?

Does the council have a hardship policy?	Yes
If yes, is an interest charge applied to late rate payments?	Yes

To inform our assessment, Worksheet 12 (WS 12) in the Part A application form also collects data on outstanding rates and annual charges (%) and pensioner concessions and ratepayers subject to hardship provisions.

Please provide the council's response in the text boxes below.

a. Explain the measures the council proposes to use to reduce the impact of the proposed SV on vulnerable ratepayers, or alternatively, explain why no measures are proposed.

Council's Debt Recovery and Hardship Policy (Attachment 12) outlines a range of mechanisms in cases of genuine hardship, including:

- Council entering into payment agreements
- Writing off or reduce interest accrued on rates and charges provided that the ratepayer complies with the agreement
- In the case of eligible pensioners, allowing rates and interest charges to accrue against the property



Alongside receiving this SV if approved, Council will continue to apply this policy, while noting Council had an outstanding rates percentage (8.01%) below the OLG benchmark of 10% in the financial year 2023/24.

Council will also continue to implement its concessions for pensioners, which exceed the statutory minimum. These are outlined below:

- Eligible pensioners receive a statutory reduction of 50% of the combined rates and domestic waste management charge to a maximum of \$250.
- An additional \$87.50 allowed for Water and Sewer charges, bringing the total mandatory pensioner rebate to a maximum of \$425.00 across both Rates and Water/Sewer accounts (disclosed in Delivery Program Operational Plan Attachment 5 - page 68).
- Council continues to fund an additional annual rebate maximum of \$30 across Rates (\$10), Water (\$10) and Sewer (\$10) in 2024/25. This voluntary rebate is entirely funded by Council with no contribution from other levels of government (disclosed in Delivery Program Operational Plan Attachment 5 - page 68).

b. Indicate whether the hardship policy or other measures are referenced in the council's IP&R documents (with relevant page reference or extract provided).

The Debt Recovery and Hardship Policy is referenced in Council's Delivery Program Operational Plan (Attachment 5 - page 69). Pension rebates are mentioned on also page 68.

c. Please explain how the council makes its hardship policy or other measures known to ratepayers.

Council has a webpage dedicated to rates, which includes information on financial hardship arrangements. ([Rates information and FAQs](#))

Ratepayers can complete the "Agreement to pay rates & charges" form (Attachment 13) and submit their application to Council.

Ratepayers can access a copy of the Debt Recovery and Hardship Policy via Council's website. ([Revenue - Debt Recovery and Hardship Policy](#))

Council community engagement on the proposed SRV had FAQs (Attachment 14) specifically addressing hardship concerns.

Council also communicates the availability of measures outlined in its debt recovery and hardship policies in individual communications with affected property owners, for example rates instalment notices and reminder letters. Council has always preferred to work with impacted ratepayers. Council's debt recovery provider will also at an individual level work with ratepayers to facilitate measures outlined in Council's policies.

Below is an extract from Council's annual rates notice:

**Payment Arrangements (section 564)**  
 Council may enter into an agreed payment arrangement to assist ratepayers who experience difficulties in meeting the payment deadlines. For further information please contact Council.

Below is an extract from Council's quarterly instalment notice:

Council appreciate that due to unforeseen circumstances, some ratepayers are unable to pay the rates and charges by the due date shown on their rate notice. If this is the case, please complete Section 2. If you are experiencing severe financial distress, please contact Council to discuss Council's hardship arrangements.

**2. Agreement to Pay Rates & Charges**

- (1) Daily interest will be charged on all overdue rates and charges (Sec 566 Local Government Act 1993).
- (2) Payments are not to be missed or decreased without Council's prior agreement. Failure to maintain your payment agreement with Council could result in legal action to recover the debt.
- (3) Council will only reply to you if the proposed amount requires further negotiation.
- (4) Other repayment agreements will be considered provided the particulars are submitted in writing to Council.
- (5) All agreements may be subject to periodic review by Council.

*(Please tick the box for the most suitable arrangement)*

Pay the amount outstanding as of today's date by weekly / fortnightly / monthly payments of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Commencing \_\_\_\_\_ to cover the remainder of the current rating period.

or

I require an extension of time to pay the outstanding rates and charges as of today's date until

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Reason for Extension \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature Date

**Privacy Notification:** The information requested on this form is being collected by Shoalhaven City Council for the purpose stated. The information will be used solely by Council staff and other parties as nominated by the property owner for the purpose mentioned or a directly related purpose. The ratepayer understands that this information is provided on a voluntary basis and they may apply to Council for access or amendment of the information at any time.  
**Council's agreement to pay Rates & Charges form is also published on Council's website in accordance with Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009**

### 5.4 Are there any other factors that may influence the impact of the council's proposed rate rise on ratepayers (optional)?

Describe the impact of any other anticipated changes in the rating structure (e.g. receipt of new valuations), or any changes to other annual ratepayer charges such as for domestic waste management services.

You may also explain how the number of **non-rateable properties** may impact the council's average rates, if relevant to your council.

You can provide additional data using Worksheet 12 (WS 12) in the **Part A** Excel application form. For instance, providing the number of non-rateable versus rateable properties.

Not applicable

## 6 OLG SV Criterion 4 – Exhibition and adoption of IP&R documents

Refer to the [OLG SV Guidelines](#) as needed, and section 6 of IPART's [Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply](#) when preparing consultation strategy and material for completing this section.

Table 9 seeks information which demonstrates that the council has met the formal requirements (where applicable) for the preparation, exhibition, adoption and publication of the current IP&R documents.

Table 9 IP&R documents

IP&R Document	Exhibition dates	Link to council minutes that outlines the resolution to publicly exhibit	Adoption date	Link to council minutes that outlines the resolution to adopt	Link to the adopted IP&R document on the council's website
Community Strategic Plan	11 May – 10 June 2022	<a href="#">Minutes of Ordinary Meeting - Monday, 9 May 2022</a>	12 September 2022	<a href="#">Minutes of Ordinary Meeting - Monday, 12 September 2022</a>	<a href="#">Shoalhaven 2032 Community Strategic Plan   Shoalhaven City Council</a>  Direct document download link: <a href="http://doc.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Displaydoc.aspx?Record=D22/390974">http://doc.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Displaydoc.aspx?Record=D22/390974</a>
Delivery Program	8 May – 10 June 2024	<a href="#">Minutes of Ordinary Meeting - Monday, 6 May 2024</a>	24 June 2024	<a href="#">Minutes of Ordinary Meeting - Monday, 24 June 2024</a>	<a href="#">Delivery Program Operational Plan   Shoalhaven City Council</a>  Direct document download link: <a href="https://doc.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Displaydoc.aspx?Record=D24/263719">https://doc.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Displaydoc.aspx?Record=D24/263719</a>
Long Term Financial Plan	7 November – 5 December 2024	<a href="#">Minutes of Extra Ordinary Meeting - Tuesday, 5 November 2024</a>	17 December 2024	<a href="#">Minutes of Ordinary Meeting - Tuesday, 17 December 2024</a>	<a href="#">Resourcing Strategy 2022-26</a> Long-Term Financial Plan from page 115 of Resourcing Strategy  Direct document download link: <a href="http://doc.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Displaydoc.aspx?Record=D25/6166">http://doc.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Displaydoc.aspx?Record=D25/6166</a>

Asset Management Plan (which contain long-term projections of asset maintenance, rehabilitation and replace, including forecast costs).	7 November – 5 December 2024	<a href="#">Minutes of Extra Ordinary Meeting - Tuesday, 5 November 2024</a>	17 December 2024	<a href="#">Minutes of Ordinary Meeting - Tuesday, 17 December 2024</a>	<a href="#">Resourcing Strategy 2022-26</a> Asset Management Strategy from page 32 of Resourcing Strategy  Direct document download link: <a href="http://doc.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Displaydoc.aspx?Record=D25/6166">http://doc.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Displaydoc.aspx?Record=D25/6166</a>
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**Note:** The exhibition and adoption dates must match the dates recorded in the council resolution.

## 7 OLG SV Criterion 5 – Productivity improvements and cost-containment

Refer to the OLG SV Guidelines as needed, and section 7 of IPART's Guidance Booklet - Special variations: How to prepare and apply when preparing for and completing this section.

### 7.1 What is the council's strategic approach to improving productivity in its operations and asset management?

Please provide the council's response in the text box below.

A financial sustainability project commenced in December 2023, in response to the independent financial sustainability review received in November 2023. The project coordinates the organisation's efforts to address its financial sustainability challenges, through the delivery of agreed actions and initiatives. The project has 3 workstreams:

- Asset and project management
- Financial Management
- Service Planning

The Project Management Plan (Attachment 15) details the project approach and approved deliverables for each workstream to support the journey to financial sustainability. The approved deliverables are largely resulting from the independent financial sustainability review recommendations, with additional deliverables determined through Council resolutions (MIN23.667 - extraordinary meeting held 20 November 2023 and MIN24.44 - ordinary meeting held 29 January 2024).

In December 2024, a Sustainable Financial Futures Plan (Attachment 16) was published to provide visibility to the community on the actions Council is taking to address the financial sustainability challenges. The plan details Council's financial sustainability vision as 'Council is committed to being a financially sustainable organisation. This means having sufficient funds to deliver services for the community at the agreed level and properly maintaining our assets.'

The following objectives have been established to ensure the Council meets its financial sustainability measures:

1. Council operations are effective, efficient and lean – optimising productivity and efficiency to manage operating costs.
2. Council optimises our revenue-generating services and assets to generate revenue, balancing both cost of service-delivery and accessibility of services to the community.
3. Council delivers services that are relevant, that are delivered at the appropriate service level and that provide value for money to the community.
4. Council generates and maintains sufficient cash reserves to enable community infrastructure and capacity to respond to unforeseen events.
5. Council effectively manages assets, with a focus on investment in and renewal of the right assets.
6. Council effectively manages our finite financial resources through good governance; enabling responsible budget allocation and quality project delivery that aligns to our strategic plans.

The Sustainable Financial Futures Plan details actions to:

- Reduce our costs and improving our efficiency
- Improve how we manage and allocate finances

- Ensure we are delivering services at the right level
- Increase the income we receive
- Improve our processes for better planning and delivery
- Improve how we manage our assets

Council has committed to a minimum of \$10 million in operational savings over the next four years and this is reflected in the Sustainable Financial Future Plan adopted in December 2024.

## 7.2 What outcomes has the council achieved from productivity improvements and cost containment strategies in past years?

Please provide the council's responses to the questions in in the text boxes below.

a. Explain initiatives undertaken and/or processes put in place in the past few years to improve productivity and contain costs.

Under the financial sustainability project, increased cost control has been established to improve the financial position of Council. In March 2024, all Managers were asked to do the following to contain costs within the FY2023/24 and FY2024/25 financial years, including:

- No new tenders
- No discretionary spending
- No consultants or contractors unless approved by Director
- No overtime or leave in lieu unless necessary (such as emergency response)
- Work with teams to reduce leave balances
- Manage budgets closely with no over-spends

The major financial sustainability initiatives delivered to date to improve productivity and contain costs include:

- Reviewing and pausing major capital projects that were partially or fully unfunded.
- Establishing a process to place a staffing freeze on all recruitment, except where the Executive Team determined the recruitment was high priority.
- A land sales strategy was established and enabled to fund critical capital works that otherwise could not be funded due to the financial position of Council and to reduce Council borrowings.

- A 3% challenge initiative was established to gather staff ideas to improve the organisation's efficiency and productivity. Over 450 ideas submitted to date to identify process improvements, cost reduction and income generation initiatives. Staff ideas are triaged, implemented, and realised savings are reported through the financial sustainability project.
- A service review program was established, with priority placed on commercial services and high-cost corporate services. Service reviews completed to date include tourism and visitor services, fleet and mechanical services, and workers compensation. Service reviews in progress include Bereavement Services, Family Day Care, Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre, Communications and Media and Customer Experience. The outcomes from service reviews are being reported through the financial sustainability project.
- A comprehensive review of facility operating hours was conducted, with Council resolving to reduce operating hours for facilities where the community impact was assessed as low.
- To support revenue generation, the budget parameters for FY25 fees and charges were set at 7.5% increase, over the standard 4-5% annual increase.
- An executive level restructure was completed in December 2024, resulting in the rationalisation of the executive structure from six directorates to four directorates and the disestablishment of 20 long-term vacancies.

b. Outline the outcomes which have been achieved, including providing quantitative data where possible.

The productivity and efficiency outcomes achieved from the financial sustainability project are reported to Council quarterly, and as at FY25 QBR1, the financial sustainability actions have resulted in:

- General fund recurrent savings of \$2.49 million
- General fund one-off savings of \$1.7 million in FY24 and \$0.69 million in FY25
- \$105 million in cost avoidance through pausing 13 significant capital projects (unfunded \$65 million). Reduced budgeted loan borrowings by \$2.5 million in FY24 due to cancelled projects.

The quarterly Productivity and Efficiency reports from 24 June 2024 (Attachment 17) and 28 October 2024 (Attachment 18) outline the specific initiatives that have contributed to the recurrent and one-off savings achieved as at FY25 QBR1.

In addition to the reported savings achieved as at FY25 QBR1, the executive restructure has resulted in a recurrent saving of \$1.6 million, to be reported in FY25 QBR2.

Council has responsibility for water and sewerage services for the Shoalhaven LGA. These services are provided through Shoalhaven Water, a category 1 business of Council and a separate reporting entity of Council.



Whilst Shoalhaven Water is not in a financial sustainability crisis, the business has been included in a whole of Council approach to financial sustainability and has been actively seeking ways to improve the productivity and efficiency of Shoalhaven Water. The entity has also financially benefited from the implementation of corporate service review recommendations. The results reported as at FY25 QBR1 include:

- Water and Sewer fund recurrent savings/income of \$13.25 million
- Water and Sewer one-off savings/income of \$180k

### 7.3 What productivity improvements and cost containment strategies are planned for future years?

The council should provide information that details initiatives planned for the next two years when requesting a one-year section 508(2) SV, or match the duration of the proposed SV.

The response should, wherever possible:

- estimate the financial impact of strategies intended to be implemented in the future
- present these as a percentage of operating expenditure
- indicate whether the proposed initiatives have been factored into the council's Long Term Financial Plan.

In the text boxes below:

a. Explain the initiatives which the council intends to implement and their financial impact.

The Sustainable Financial Futures Plan (Attachment 16) details how Council will deliver on the commitment of \$10 million in savings over the next 4 years. The savings plan (pages 10-11) is split by financial year, with a minimum of \$7 million committed savings in FY26, and \$1 million per annum in FY27 – FY29. The detailed action plan (pages 12-19) lists all initiatives that will deliver on the financial sustainability vision and objectives.

Delivering the planned \$10 million in savings over the four years will equate to 2.12% of general fund total operating expenses for the period. However, if depreciation (non-cash) is removed from the calculation, Council will achieve a 2.94% savings of operating expenses.

The critical initiatives planned for delivery in FY26-FY27 with the largest financial impact are:

- Review of corporate functions, focused on areas with the largest cost base
- Rationalisation of under-utilised and excess assets (plant and fleet, land sales)
- Review of fees and charges to reflect cost for services where practical to do so
- Commercial businesses service reviews (Family Day Care, Bereavement Services, Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre and Holiday Haven Tourist Parks)

The priority initiatives that are underway to enable improvements to the organisation's performance and productivity are:

- A centralised and simplified structure
- Improved strategic and technical asset management structure and capability
- Enhanced asset management system integration to enable full asset lifecycle visibility
- Improvement in asset data collection to drive strategic decision making
- Update Community Infrastructure Strategic Plan
- Establish an enterprise project management office
- Improved financial governance, accountability and financial acumen of staff at all levels of management

b. Indicate whether these have been incorporated in the council's Long Term Financial Plan, if not, explain why.

The \$10 million savings commitment that will be delivered through the initiatives listed in the Sustainable Financial Futures Plan are included in Council's adopted Long-Term Financial Plan.

#### 7.4 How has the council's levels of productivity and efficiency changed over time, and compared to similar councils?

In the text box summarise data which demonstrates how the council has improved productivity and indicate its performance against that of comparable councils.

For comparative purposes, Council is part of the OLG Group 5. The figure below shows Council's summary against the Group 5 average for FY23. This shows Council's expenses as a percentage of revenue was 89% in FY23, against the group average of 81%.

Your Council	Result	Group Avg. *
Councillors (No.)	13	11
Population per Councillor (No.)	8,346	10,652
Equivalent Full Time Staff (EFT) (No.)	1,096	810
2022/23 Revenue (\$'000)	387,034	307,371
2022/23 Expenses (\$'000)	345,060	249,736
Residential Pensioner Rebates (%)	21	20
Population Density (residents per Km <sup>2</sup> )	24	243

\* A NSW council group is determined firstly by whether they are Urban or Rural in nature, and then by population size and density. Please refer to OLG Groups in data tab on website for more information on how individual councils are classified. An OLG group average is then calculated by the average of the same group number eg. All Group 5 Regional Towns/City or all Group 8 Rural.

In FY24, Council's expenses as a percentage of revenue dropped to 80% (as per the audited Financial Statements), showing an improvement in performance and bringing Council more in line with the Group 5 average from FY23. This comparison uses Council's consolidated results (including Water and Sewer financial performance) which is consistent with the comparable information provided by the OLG.

If the same metric is compared with general fund results only, the expenses as a percentage of revenue improved from 89% in FY22, to 88% in FY23 to 79% in FY24.

This performance improvement is the result of the organisation's efforts to contain operational costs, particularly throughout FY24, as well as advocacy work in the capital grants space. The end of year result in employee costs showed an increase of 2.5% compared with FY23. This was a good result to hold the increase at just 2.5%, given employee costs increased by approximately 6% through the legislated framework which included the 3.5% award increase, 0.5% superannuation guarantee, annual step increases and minimum (as a result of the NSW State Award) \$1,000 bonus payable to all staff.

With the ongoing implementation of the Sustainable Financial Futures Plan and the realisation of the \$10 million savings, Council's financial performance will continue to improve, with a focus on building the unrestricted cash balance, improving asset renewal ratio, achieving an operating surplus and improving Council's result against the infrastructure backlog benchmark.

Table 10 Criterion 5 attachments

Attachment number	Name of document	Page references
Attachment 15	Project Management Plan	N/A
Attachment 16	Sustainable Financial Futures Plan	N/A
Attachment 17	Council Business Paper – 24 June 2024 – Productivity and Efficiency Report	N/A
Attachment 18	Council Business Paper – 28 Oct 2024 – Productivity and Efficiency Report	N/A

## 8 Council certification and contact information

Councils must submit a declaration in the specified form. It should be completed by the General Manager and the Responsible Accounting Officer.

### 8.1 Certification of application and declaration

Prepare a document in the form indicated below. Please sign (electronic signature is also acceptable), scan and submit it with your application.

This is to be completed by General Manager and Responsible Accounting Officer.

<b>Name of the council:</b>	Shoalhaven City Council
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We certify that to the best of our knowledge the information provided in the Part A application form and this SV Part B application form is correct and complete. We have completed the checklist for the Part A and B application forms and also provided all relevant attachments as requested (see Table 11, Table 12 and Table 13).

<b>General Manager (name):</b>	
<b>Signature and Date:</b>	
<b>Responsible Accounting Officer (name):</b>	
<b>Signature and Date:</b>	

**Note:** These signatures will be redacted before publication of the application.

## 8.2 Council contact information

IPART's formal contact with the council will be with the General Manager.

During the assessment period, IPART officers are likely to contact the council with detailed queries about the application and supporting documents. Councils should provide details of the primary contact for such inquiries where this person is a council officer who is not the General Manager. Council officer direct contact details will be redacted before publication of this application.

### General Manager

<b>General Manager contact phone</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>General Manager contact email</b>	[REDACTED]

Note: These contact details will be redacted before publication of the application.

### Primary council contact

<b>Council contact phone</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Council contact email</b>	<a href="mailto:council@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au">council@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>Council email for inquiries about the SV application</b>	[REDACTED]

Note: These contact details will be redacted before publication of the application.

### Secondary council contact

<b>Council contact phone</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Council contact email</b>	<a href="mailto:council@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au">council@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>Council email for inquiries about the SV application</b>	[REDACTED]

Note: These contact details will be redacted before publication of the application.

## 9 List of required attachments

To complete (adding rows as necessary):

- Name each document.
- Check the box to indicate that the document is being submitted with the application.

Table 11 Required attachments checklist

Name of attachment	The document is included	The document is not applicable
<b>Mandatory forms/attachments:</b>		
Application Form Part A (Excel spreadsheet)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA
Application Form Part B (this Word document)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA
Council resolution to apply for the special variation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA
Completed certification and declaration (see 8.1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA
<b>If applicable, to support the responses provided in Question 5 of Description and Context (see section 2) provide:</b>		
Instrument for expiring special variation/s	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OLG advice confirming calculation of amount to be removed from the council's general income	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If applicable, to support the responses provided in Questions 6 AND/OR 7 of Description and Context (see section 2) provide:</b>		
Declaration of compliance with conditions in past instruments (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of compliance with conditions in past instruments (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mandatory public supporting material (i.e. to be published on IPART's website):</b>		
Community Strategic Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA
Delivery Program	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA
Long Term Financial Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA
Asset Management Plan(s) (required if a key purpose of the SV is related to assets and capital expenditure)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation materials, e.g. copies of media releases, notices of public meetings, newspaper articles, fact sheets used to consult on rate increase and proposed special variation (combined into one document)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA

Name of attachment	The document is included	The document is not applicable
Community feedback (including surveys and results). Confidential information should be redacted, or the entire document marked as confidential.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA
Willingness to pay study (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hardship policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NA
<b>Other public supporting materials:</b>		
Government agency's report on financial sustainability e.g. NSW Treasury Corporation (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(List the additional documents)		
<b>Confidential supporting material (i.e. not to be published on IPART's website):</b>		
(List the documents)		

## 10 Checklists

We provide these checklists to ensure that submitted applications meet a minimum standard.

Meeting the requirements of these checklists **does not** guarantee a council will be approved for the SV it has applied for.

Table 12 Part A Application Form Checklist

Checklist items	Please indicate whether the items have been actioned
Data provided in Part A application (i.e. proposed SV%, rates amount etc) are consistent with those contained in Part B application.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Table 1.2 of "WS1-Application" lists all the tables in worksheets 1 -12 that council must complete, based on the nature of council's application. Please confirm that all the data requirements, as listed in table 1.2, have been completed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
All completed tables (values and units – i.e. \$ or \$'000) have been completed correctly and verified to source. Please pay attention to the units specified for each table in each worksheet.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
WS 10 - LTFP agrees to the council's provided (adopted) LTFP.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dollar numbers provided in "WS10 - LTFP" are in dollars (\$) not thousands (\$'000) or millions (\$M)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If the council has an expiring or existing SV, it has incorporated this when filling out WS 2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Annual and cumulative percentages are rounded to 1 decimal place.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that figures provided in WS 9 – Financials, WS 10 – LTFP and WS 11 – Ratios are at the General Fund level and <i>not</i> consolidated.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If the council proposes an SV with both permanent and temporary components, the council has discussed the relevant data and modelling requirements prior to submission.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Indication whether optional tables in WS 12 has been completed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



Table 13 SV Part B Application Form Checklist

Checklist items	Please indicate whether the items have been actioned
All required text boxes and tables have been completed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
All applicable documents per the List of Attachments (Table 11) have been provided.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council has declared all SVs (including ASVs) approved since 2011-12 and provided annual reports that show compliance with the instrument reporting conditions, or explaining divergences.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council's LTFP includes both the baseline (no-SV) and the SV scenario it is applying for.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The proposed SV annual and cumulative percentages agree to those used in community consultation, or if they differ, the reason has been explained.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If applying for a multi-year SV, the council has correctly calculated the cumulative percentage and dollar impact of the proposed SV using compounding.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The council has referenced community consultation materials that <i>at minimum</i> show the cumulative percentage of the SV and average total dollar increase (cumulative) per rating category.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Figures presented in Application Form Part B are consistent, as relevant, with those in Application Form Part A.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The council has submitted a Minimum Rates Part B Application Form, if required.	<input type="checkbox"/>
For OLG Criterion 5 (section 7), the council has provided concrete evidence and plans for past and future cost-containment and productivity strategies, as far as practicable.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Important information

### **Submitting online**

Applications must be submitted through IPART's [LG Portal](#) by 11:59pm on Monday, 3 February 2025. Councils should note a file size limit of 150MB applies to any individual document uploaded in the portal.

### **Confidential content**

IPART will publish all applications (excluding confidential content) on our website. Examples of confidential content are those parts of a document which disclose the personal identity or other personal information pertaining to a member of the public, a document such as a council working document that does not have formal status, or document which includes commercial-in-confidence content.

Councils should ensure supporting documents are redacted to remove confidential content where possible, or clearly marked as **CONFIDENTIAL**.

### **Publishing the council's application**

Councils should also publish their application on their own website for the community to access.