



Community Awareness and Engagement Strategy Outcomes Report

Proposed Special Variation (SV) Application

November 2023



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Executive summary

This Community Awareness and Engagement Strategy Outcomes Report details the outcomes of the community awareness and engagement strategy undertaken by Tamworth Regional Council (“Council”) in relation to a proposed application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (“IPART”) for a Special Variation (“SV”), which was delivered from Wednesday, 13 September to Tuesday, 31 October 2023.

The engagement was planned with two (2) key objectives:

1. **Inform:** to raise awareness of why an SV is needed and inform the community of the options being considered and resulting impacts on service levels.
2. **Consult:** to publicly exhibit the draft Long-Term Financial Plan (“LTFP”) and seek community feedback on the preferred option, being the introduction of a permanent SV of 36.3 per cent over two years, comprising an increase of 18.5 per cent (inclusive of rate peg) in 2024-2025 and an additional 15 per cent (inclusive of rate peg) in 2025-2026 (“the proposed two-year permanent SV”).

Implementation of this engagement was carried out in accordance with Council’s Communications Strategy and the Communications Plan considered by Council at its Ordinary Meeting held 12 September 2023. Significant effort was made to effectively promote the engagement, with a wide range of communication tools and platforms utilised to inform the community of the engagement and explain how members of the community could participate and provide feedback on the options being considered by Council, including the proposed two-year permanent SV.

As part of the engagement, Council facilitated an online survey to gather community feedback on the proposed SV. The survey was made available via Council’s online consultation platform, *MyTRC Online Community*. In total, 872 responses to the survey were received. Self-initiated written feedback received by Council up to 31 October 2023 totalled 114 letters, emails and online inquiries, as well as a petition expressing opposition to the proposed SV, which was signed by 1,006 people.

Key findings

- Council’s communication and awareness efforts were successful, with respondents largely understanding why Council was proposing an SV. Of the 872 survey respondents, 89.0 per cent indicated they understand why an SV was under consideration compared to only 11.0 per cent who did not.
- Respondents overwhelmingly opposed an SV, with 97.0 per cent of respondents opposed and only 3.0 per cent of respondents expressing support. Most respondents raised concerns about the affordability of the proposed SV, with many citing ongoing cost-of-living pressures and increasing financial hardship as key reasons for their opposition to the proposed SV.
- All respondents (100.0 per cent) opposed to an SV understand that, in the absence of an SV, Council will need to review and potentially reduce services, service levels and asset conditions. Many respondents expressed the view that Council needs to refocus on its core responsibilities and essential service delivery, suggesting that discretionary services, programs and projects be reconsidered. Frequently cited projects and services included the planned Tamworth Regional Skywalk at Victoria Park; the Tamworth Country Music Festival and the Central Northern Regional Library.

- Ongoing cost of living pressures were cited by 44.2 per cent of respondents as a reason for their opposition to the proposed SV.
- Affordability was raised as an issue by approximately 7.1 per cent of respondents. These respondents indicated that the proposed SV was unaffordable and would result in financial hardship. Some of these respondents identified as pensioners.
- Approximately 18.8 per cent respondents believe that Council needs to achieve further operational efficiencies, productivity improvements and cost savings before seeking an SV. Many respondents indicated that Council should prioritise achieving further internal cost containment opportunities, with suggestions including (but not limited to) reducing staffing levels, reviewing staff remuneration, and achieving business process improvements.
- Some respondents believe that the extent of the proposed SV is too significant. Approximately 7.1 per cent of respondents suggested that the proposed two-year cumulative increase of 36.3 per cent is excessive.
- Some respondents believe that Council has not effectively communicated the need or purpose of the proposed SV. Several respondents suggested that Council needs to undertake further community consultation on the proposed SV, and provide more detailed information on the specific services, projects and programs that will be funded via the proposed SV, if implemented.
- Some respondents believe that the proposed SV, if implemented, will only benefit Tamworth city rather than other localities within the greater Tamworth region, such as Barraba, Manilla and Nundle. These respondents indicated that existing service levels within these localities are already poor, and do not believe that the proposed SV would result in any improvement to those services and accompanying levels of service. Some of these respondents queried whether the SV revenue would be used to fund projects in rural areas, suggesting that the revenue would instead be directed towards projects in Tamworth city.

Next steps

We appreciate the high degree of public interest in Council's proposed SV application and thank all members of the community who took the opportunity to learn more about the proposed SV, attend one of the community information sessions, and provide feedback. Responses to the themes identified and issues raised via the community consultation process are detailed in Part 4 of this report. Additional information resources are available from Council's online consultation platform, *MyTRC Online Community*, at www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au.

It is expected that Council will further consider the proposed SV at its Ordinary Meeting scheduled to be held Tuesday, 28 November 2023. The business paper for that meeting, as well as the subsequent minutes, will be made available from Council's website at www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au.

Should Council proceed in applying to IPART for an SV, it will need to prepare and submit an application to IPART by 05 February 2024. After this deadline, IPART will publish the application (if any) and accompanying materials to its website, and invite public submissions from members of the community via a three-week consultation period, commencing in February 2024 and concluding March 2024. IPART will review and consider all submissions it receives, prior to releasing its final decision in May 2024.

Further information on the SV process, including how IPART assesses SV applications, is available from IPART's website at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Council's Community Strategic Plan has been developed and endorsed to deliver on *Blueprint 100*, Council's strategy to grow Tamworth to a region of 100,000 by year 2041. Since the adoption of the Community Strategic Plan in 2021, Council has delivered the actions in these strategies to actively encourage population growth and facilitate continued economic development across the region.

To ensure sustainable infrastructure and services for a growing population, Council must:

- Invest adequately in its infrastructure to maintain assets at fit for purpose conditions.
- Invest more on its transport and road network to meet community expectation and address the adverse impact of climate change on their quality.
- Deliver key approved projects such as the Skywalk and the remediation of Ray Walsh House.
- Deliver the actions in sports and recreation strategies and masterplans for key sites such as Victoria Park, Bicentennial Park and Chaffey Park.
- Re-invest in Council's ageing aquatics facilities.
- Undertake key transport upgrades such as Jewry Street, Moore Creek Road, and in the CBD.
- Bring key assets classes back to a satisfactory condition, particularly in stormwater and buildings (such as Town Hall, Community Centre and Tamworth Regional Events and Conference Centre).
- Build a new animal rehoming pound.

Up to now, Council has supported a steadily growing population and maintained its infrastructure and services within the scope of its revenue growth in line with the rate peg increases set by the State Government. However, in recent years this has become increasingly difficult. The recent COVID pandemic, impacts on infrastructure of recent weather events, historic low interest rates returning low returns on investments, and the current highly volatile inflationary environment have increased Council's costs faster than its revenue growth. These issues have continued to put pressure on Council's budget.

Due to its challenging financial position, Council has looked inward to identify efficiency improvements and cost containment strategies, successfully completing 189 initiatives to achieve \$7.9 million in annual savings or additional revenue and \$3.2 million in one-off savings. Moving forward, Council has identified a further 24 improvement initiatives that will be programmed for delivery in the coming years and are expected to provide further annual net benefits of \$1.6 million and one-off net benefits of \$2.2 million.

Notwithstanding its success in achieving efficiency improvements and cost containment; with costs outstripping revenue, resulting in operating deficits, Council has reduced infrastructure renewal and maintenance to ensure a balanced budget. In some areas, Council has been able to utilise State and Federal Grants, as well as loans, to fund infrastructure renewal and operations. However, these sources of funds are unreliable and unsustainable. Servicing and paying back loans is becoming more costly. Council must now consider increasing rates revenue to adequately fund its current services and infrastructure needs.

In its 2023-25 Delivery Program, Council identified the need to consider an SV for rates to ensure its ongoing financial sustainability. In the 2023-33 LTFP, Council commenced the process of modelling an SV in its financial planning scenarios.

Further analysis of Council’s long-term financial position was undertaken in early- to mid-2023, which has established that an SV is required to achieve Council’s financial sustainability and maintain fit-for-purpose infrastructure. Accordingly, Council’s LTFP (within the Resourcing Strategy) has been updated to reflect this analysis. Importantly, the revised LTFP models two (2) SV scenarios designed to ensure the organisation can successfully:

- generate an operating surplus, before capital income
- fully fund all required asset renewals and maintenance
- return to, and maintain, a positive unrestricted cash position
- deliver all improvement program initiatives.

At its Ordinary Meeting held 12 September 2023, Council endorsed the public exhibition of the revised LTFP and accompanying revised Resourcing Strategy as well as the undertaking of community consultation on a potential application to IPART for the proposed permanent two-year SV [Resolution 228/23].

1.2 Proposed SV options

The three (3) options set out in the revised LTFP included the Base Case (Rate Peg Only), which would not entail Council seeking an SV, as well as the two (2) SV scenarios contained in the revised LTFP. Both SV options were for a relatively similar overall increase, with the key difference being the number of years required to implement the full extent of the rate rise. The three (3) options are detailed in *Table 1*, below.

Table 1 SV Options

SV Option	2024-2025	2025-26	Cumulative SV Increase
1. Base Case – Rate Peg Only	3.5%	2.5%	6.1%
2. Sustainability Scenario 1: One-year SV	30.0%	-	30.0%
3. Sustainability Scenario 2: Two-year SV	18.5%	15.0%	36.3%

Of the three (3) scenarios detailed above, **Sustainability Scenario 2: Two-year SV** is the preferred option as it balances Council’s sustainability needs with reducing the impact on household budgets through implementing the SV over two (2) years as compared to one (1) year, as modelled in Sustainability Scenario 1: One-year SV.

1.2.1 Option 1 – Base Case (No SV – Rate Peg Only)

Under the Base Case scenario, Council would not introduce an SV, and rates would increase by the Rate Peg set by IPART, forecast at 3.5 per cent in 2024/2025 and 2.5 per cent thereafter. The Base Case will not enable Council to be fit for the future and will negatively impact the organisation’s service levels and asset renewal and maintenance programs. As a result, Council’s financial position is likely to deteriorate under this scenario.

1.2.2 Option 2 – Sustainability Scenario 1: One-year SV

Option 2 models a single-year SV to rates of 30.0 per cent (inclusive of rate peg) in 2024-25 before returning to the Rate Peg assumption. Under this scenario, Council’s financial sustainability needs would be addressed, but the significant rate increase in a single year may shock ratepayers. This scenario may affect many ratepayers’ capacity to pay in the current economic climate and add undue pressures to their household budgets. For these reasons, Option 2 is not recommended. The impact of Option 2 on annual rates is detailed in *Table 2*, below.

Table 2 Average annual rates: Option 2 – Sustainability Scenario 1: One-year SV

Rating Category	2023-24	2024-25	Cumulative SV Increase
Residential	\$1,197.28	\$1,556.46	\$359.18
Business	\$4,154.01	\$5,400.21	\$1,246.20
Farmland	2,147.96	\$2,792.35	\$644.39
Mining	\$10,073.39	\$11,936.97	\$1,863.58

1.2.3 Option 3 – Sustainability Scenario 2: Two-year SV

This scenario models an SV of 18.5 per cent in 2024-2025, followed by 15.0 per cent in 2025-2026, representing a permanent cumulative increase of 36.3 per cent (inclusive of rate peg). This scenario would address Council’s financial needs, however, unlike Option 2 (Sustainability Scenario 1), the rate rise would be implemented over two (2) financial years, rather than one, which would reduce the shock to household budgets. As such, Option 3 is the recommended option. The impact of Option 2 on annual rates is detailed in *Table 3*, below.

Table 3 Average annual rates: Option 3 – Sustainability Scenario 2: Two-year SV

Rating Category	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Cumulative SV Increase
Residential	\$1,197.28	\$1,418.78	\$1,631.59	\$434.31
Business	\$4,154.01	\$4,922.50	\$5,660.88	\$1,506.87
Farmland	2,147.96	\$2,545.33	\$2,927.13	\$779.17
Mining	\$10,073.39	\$11,936.97	\$13,727.51	\$3,654.12

2 Engagement approach

2.1 Engagement purpose and objectives

The purpose of the engagement was to ensure that the community was adequately informed about the need for Council to pursue an SV and the options being considered and consult the community on the three (3) options under consideration, including the preferred option, being the proposed permanent two-year SV.

Specific objectives of the engagement included:

- to present the case for the proposed SV to the community
- to identify the impact of the proposed SV on the average rates across each rating category
- to publicly exhibit a revised LTFP (within the Resourcing Strategy) demonstrating the impact of the proposed SV on Council's operating results from 2023-2024 for feedback and final endorsement by Council
- to communicate the timeline and process for any potential SV application
- to gather and consider the community's feedback to inform Council's final decision on whether, and how, to proceed in making application to IPART for an SV.

2.2 Engagement framework

Council's Communications Strategy is built on the principle that all members of the Tamworth region community have a right and responsibility to contribute to their community and its prospective plans. The Communications Strategy can be accessed [here](#).

Accordingly, the Communications Strategy reflects the following five (5) principles:

1. **Relevant & Timely:** We communicate the right information to the right audience at the right time. We are innovative in our communication methods and ensure our methods are applicable and appropriate.
2. **Access:** Our messages are communicated with integrity to ensure the community sees us as a source of truth. We seek to build trust between the community and Council by communicating authentically and honestly.
3. **Responsive:** We are agile and perceptive in our communications. We consider a range of perspective in our communications and close the loop on two-way dialogue with the community.
4. **Inclusive & Accessible:** Our communications reach all areas of our community to support inclusivity across our region. Our services and communications are accessible for all.
5. **Respectful:** Council communications will always be respectful.


In designing the engagement process, Council considered the above principles and intentionally incorporated a range of engagement tools and methods to facilitate a strong level of public participation in the process.

A Communications Plan was developed to guide Council's engagement with the community in relation to the proposed SV. The plan clearly set out the tools and methods to be used in engaging with the community on the proposed SV, including how engagement opportunities would be communicated and the ways in which members of the community could provide feedback. The plan is included at *Appendix A*.

2.3 Engagement levels and tools

The Public Participation Spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation and reproduced in *Figure 1*, below, illustrates the difference levels of participation that defines the public's role in an engagement process. Noting the aims and objectives of the engagement, Council designed the engagement process to align with the Inform and Consult levels.

Figure 1 IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

As detailed in *Table 4*, below, engagement was carried out using three (3) channels, namely public information sessions, a survey, and self-initiated feedback.

Table 4 Engagement tools

Engagement tool	Summary	Engagements
Community information sessions	<p>Several community information sessions were facilitated during the engagement period to enable members of the community to learn more about why an SV is proposed, as well as the two (2) SV scenarios contained in the revised LTFP, and how they could provide feedback on the proposed SV prior to Council making a decision on whether to apply to IPART for an SV.</p> <p>Eight (8) community information sessions were held in total, comprising six (6) in-person sessions at Barraba, Manilla, Moonbi, Nundle and Tamworth, along with two (2) online webinar sessions.</p> <p>The PowerPoint presentation used at these sessions was made available online via Council's online consultation platform, <i>MyTRC Online Community</i>, and has been included as <i>Appendix B</i>.</p> <p>Approximately 456 people attended at least one of the community information sessions (including webinars).</p>	Approx. 456

Engagement tool	Summary	Engagements
Survey	<p>A survey was facilitated via Council’s online consultation platform, <i>MyTRC Online Community</i>, for the duration of the engagement, allowing respondents to provide feedback on whether they understand the reasons for Council proposing an SV, and whether they support Council in seeking an SV.</p> <p>In total, 872 survey responses were received.</p> <p>A copy of the survey is included as <i>Appendix C</i>.</p>	872
Submissions – revised LTFP	<p>During the engagement period, the draft LTFP was placed on public exhibition and members of the community were invited to review and provide feedback on the draft LTFP.</p> <p>In total, 29 submissions on the draft LTFP were received.</p>	29
Self-initiated feedback	<p>In addition to the survey, Council received self-initiated feedback in various written formats, such as letters, emails and inquiries lodged via Council’s standard online inquiry form, as well as a petition signed by members of the community expressing opposition to the proposed SV.</p> <p>In total, 114 letters, emails and inquiries were received.</p> <p>A petition was also provided to Council, objecting to the proposed SV and requesting Council not proceed in making application to IPART for an SV.</p> <p>The petition was signed by 1,006 people.</p>	1,120

2.4 Engagement promotion

Given the significance of the engagement and the likely impact of a proposed SV on ratepayers throughout the Tamworth region local government area; Council designed and facilitated a survey which all members of the community were invited to complete.

As detailed above, Council designed and implemented a Communications Plan to ensure that a wide range of communication tools were utilised to raise awareness of the need for an SV and promote the engagement. Importantly, the avenues through which members of the community could contribute to the process and provide feedback for Council’s consideration, prior to a final decision being made in relation to making application to IPART for an SV, were also communicated.

The awareness and engagement strategy was promoted extensively via a combination of Council and third-party channels. A post-campaign insights report is included at *Appendix D*.

Table 5 Engagement promotion

Mechanism	Description	Reach
Advertising - Print	<p>Advertisements were placed in various local newspapers and accompanying news sites for the duration of the engagement period, promoting the engagement period and raising awareness of the proposed SV.</p> <p>Advertisements appeared in the following news publications on the specified dates:</p> <p><i>Barraba Community News</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wednesday, 20 September 2023 (Half-page) - Wednesday, 11 October 2023 (Half-page) 	<p>Consumers of the <i>Barraba Community News</i>, <i>Manilla Express</i>, <i>Northern Daily Leader</i> and <i>Nundle</i></p>

Mechanism	Description	Reach
	<p>Manilla Express</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tuesday, 19 September 2023 (Half-page) - Tuesday, 10 October 2023 (Half-page) <p>Northern Daily Leader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Saturday, 16 September 2023 (Half-page and digital) - Saturday, 07 October 2023 (Half-page) - Saturday, 14 October 2023 (Half-page) - Saturday, 28 September 2023 (Half-page) <p>Nundle Community News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - October 2023 (Half-page) <p>Samples of print advertisements are included at <i>Appendix E</i>.</p>	Community News
Advertising – Radio	<p>Advertisements appeared across local radio channels between 01 October and 30 October 2023 promoting the engagement period, raising awareness of the proposed SV and directing members of the public to access further information from the <i>MyTRC Community Consultation</i> page.</p> <p>Regular 30 second advertisements appeared across three (3) local radio stations, namely 88.9FM, 2TM and 92.9FM.</p>	Consumers of 88.9FM, 2TM and 92.9FM
Advertising – Television	<p>Advertisements appeared on local TV channels between 01 October and 30 October 2023 promoting the engagement period, raising awareness of the proposed SV and directing members of the public to access further information from the <i>MyTRC Community Consultation</i> page.</p> <p>The four-week TV campaign saw advertisements appear across three (3) commercial TV channels, namely NBN, Network 10 and Prime.</p>	Consumers of NBN, Network 10 and Prime
Community fact sheet	<p>Council produced a community fact sheet providing further information about the proposed SV, including responses to Frequently Asked Questions (“FAQs”).</p> <p>The fact sheet was included in the routine quarterly Rates Notice mail-out, which was distributed to approximately 18,000 ratepayers. (Note: ratepayers who pay their rates in full in July did not receive this notice).</p> <p>The fact sheet was also made available online via Council’s <i>MyTRC Online Community</i> platform.</p> <p>The fact sheet is included at <i>Appendix F</i>.</p>	Approx. 18,000
Facebook campaign	<p>Over the engagement period, 17 posts were published to Council’s Facebook page to raise awareness of the need for an SV, promote opportunities to participate in the engagement, and advise members of the public on how they could access further information in relation to the proposal and provide feedback on the proposal.</p> <p>Further information, including specific posts and individual reach and engagement metrics, is included at <i>Appendix G</i>.</p>	Reach: 9,904 Engagement: 126,717
Letterbox drop	<p>Noting connectivity challenges and poor internet service in Hanging Rock and Nundle; Council undertook a targeted letterbox drop of flyers in these communities prior to the local community information session being held, aimed at raising awareness of the community information session and encouraging attendance.</p> <p>The postcard distributed via the letterbox drop is included at <i>Appendix H</i>.</p>	Approx. 300

Mechanism	Description	Reach
Media releases and statements	<p>Council prepared and distributed three (3) media releases and statements in relation to the engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media Statement – Organisational Savings (11 October 2023): Advising of internal reviews undertaken and improvements implemented to achieve cost savings. - Response to Enquiry – Organisation Savings (04 October 2023): In response to a media enquiry, Council issued a response clarifying certain issues addressed via the Organisation Sustainability Improvement Plan, which was available from Council’s website. - Council Meeting Update (12 September 2023): Advising of Council resolutions made at the Ordinary Meeting held 12 September 2023, including the decision to undertake community engagement on a proposed SV and details on the SV options contained in the revised LTFP. <p>Details of media coverage is included at <i>Appendix I</i>.</p>	All local media
MyTRC Online Community consultation platform	<p>A dedicated page was published to Council’s online consultation platform, <i>MyTRC Online Community</i>, for the duration of the engagement and was the central point for all information and resources relating to the proposed SV.</p> <p>This consultation page allowed members of the community to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand Council’s financial situation and the need for an SV - Learn more about the three (3) options, including the two (2) SV scenarios - Use the Rates Calculator to understand the impact of the preferred SV scenario - Access various publications and materials, including the draft LTFP, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), Capacity to Pay Report and Organisation Sustainability Improvement Plan - View the dates, times and venues of the community information sessions and register their attendance - View the video presentation from the community information sessions - Complete the survey - Understand how feedback and submissions could be provided. <p>Between the period commencing 13 September and concluding 01 November 2023, the page achieved 6,613 views from 3,850 unique visitors.</p> <p>The SV Rates Calculator was downloaded 944 times.</p>	Views: 6,613 Visitors: 3,850
Printed communications collateral	<p>Council produced supplementary printed communications collateral to raise awareness of the proposed SV, encourage community feedback and increase visitation to the <i>MyTRC Online Community</i> page.</p> <p>Collateral included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A4 Postcards - Posters, which were displayed in local shops, as well as town and village noticeboards - FAQs and flyers, which were left in local stores and businesses and handed out at the community information session. 	

Mechanism	Description	Reach
	All printed collateral featured a QR code linking to the <i>MyTRC Online Community</i> page. Examples are included at <i>Appendix J</i> .	

3 Engagement findings

3.1 Survey

An online survey was facilitated to understand community awareness of the need for the proposed SV, as well as public sentiment towards the three (3) options proposed by Council, including the two (2) SV scenarios. The survey was open from Monday, 18 September to Tuesday, 31 October 2023.

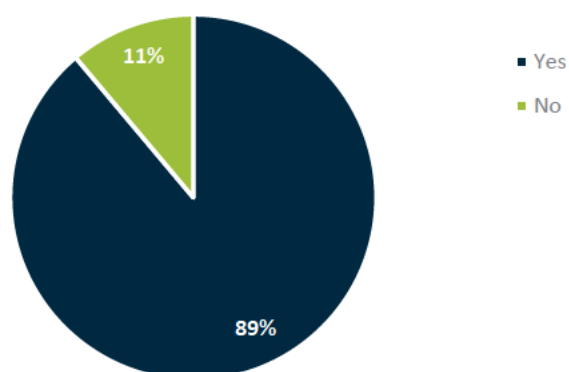
Council received 872 responses to the survey.

3.1.1 Understanding of need for SV

In assessing SV applications, IPART considers whether or not the community is aware of the need for, and extent of, a rate rise. As such, respondents to the survey were asked if they understood why Council was proposing to seek an SV. Of the 872 survey respondents, 775 (representing 89.0 per cent) indicated they understood why Council was proposing to seek an SV, compared to 97 (representing 11.0 per cent) who indicated that they did not understand.

Figure 2 Survey results: Understanding of need for SV

Do you understand why Council is seeking a Special Rate Variation?

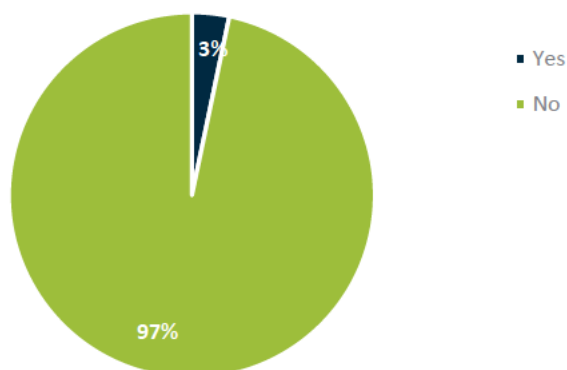


3.1.2 Community willingness to pay

Council also used the survey to gauge the community’s willingness to pay for the proposed SV. The survey revealed that respondents were overwhelmingly opposed to Council pursuing an SV, with 853 of the 872 respondents (representing 97.0 per cent) indicating they did not support Council in seeking an SV. In contrast, just 29 respondents (representing 3.0 per cent) indicated support for Council’s proposal to seek an SV.

Figure 3 Survey results: Support for SV

Do you support Council in seeking Special Rate Variation?

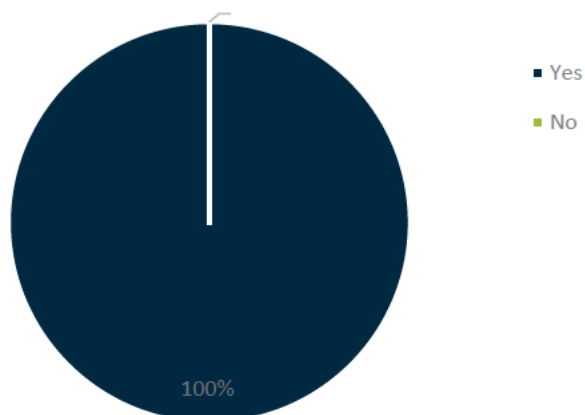


3.1.3 Understanding of need to review and potentially reduce services, service levels and asset conditions

As noted previously, Council’s LTFP projects that the organisation’s financial sustainability will continue to deteriorate should it fail to implement an SV. As such, those respondents who did not express support for Council seeking an SV were asked if they were aware that Council’s services, service levels and asset conditions would need to be reviewed and potentially reduced, should an SV not be implemented. Of the 853 respondents who did not support Council pursuing an SV, all 853 (representing 100.0 per cent) indicated they were aware Council would need to review and potentially reduce services, service levels and asset conditions.

Figure 4 Survey results: Understanding of need to review and potentially reduce services, service levels and asset conditions

Do you understand that Council may need to consider a reduction in services, service levels and/or the agreed condition of assets if it does not seek an SRV?



3.2 Self-initiated feedback

In addition to the survey, Council received self-initiated feedback in various written formats, including letters, emails and inquiries submitted via the online form available on Council's website. A total of 114 written submissions were received.

Themes and issues raised in self-initiated feedback were consistent with those raised in the survey. Some members of the community who submitted self-initiated feedback also submitted feedback via the survey.

Additionally, Council received a petition objecting to the proposed SV and requesting Council not proceed in making application to IPART for an SV. The petition was signed by 1,006 people.

4 Key themes and issues

4.1 Data collection

Data handling and analysis was carried out using Council's online survey software and spreadsheets. All open-ended responses were read and then coded by theme. A guide on how each theme was coded has been included at *Appendix K*.

Where open-ended responses have raised more than one issue, they have been coded to multiple issues.

4.1.1 Affordability and hardship

Approximately 10.8 per cent of respondents raised affordability/hardship as an issue. Many respondents indicated that the proposed SV increases were unaffordable, and that they would struggle to pay their rates if an SV was implemented.

Response:

- Prior to commencing community engagement on the proposed SV, Council commissioned a Capacity to Pay assessment, which explored the potential impact of an SV on the community, and considered the relative wealth, financial capacity and financial vulnerability of the community. The increases proposed are relatively proportionate, generally aligning to the levels of advantage and disadvantage across the Tamworth region local government area.
- Council's *Ratepayers Hardship Policy* provides a framework for those ratepayers experiencing genuine financial hardship to seek relief and enter hardship arrangements and payment arrangement plans. This policy provides for a range of hardship arrangements and can be accessed from Council's General Policy Register, which is available from Council's website.

4.1.2 Cost of Living

Approximately 44.2 per cent of respondents cited current cost of living pressures, including rising inflation and interest rates, as a reason for their opposition to a proposed SV.

Response:

- As with any other business, Council is also dealing with the impacts of the highly volatile inflationary environment. Costs are increasing faster than revenue growth, and this has placed greater stress on Council's budget and financial position.
- As noted above, Council's *Ratepayer Hardship Policy* provides a framework for those ratepayers who are experiencing genuine financial hardship to enter into hardship arrangements. This policy is available from Council's website.

4.1.3 Extent of proposed SV

The extent of the proposed SV was cited as an issue by approximately 7.1 per cent of respondents. Some respondents understood the need for an SV, but believed the extent proposed was too significant.

Response:

- When compared to similar regional town/city councils (OLG Group 4), Tamworth Regional Council's current average rates for residential and farmland sit well below the average and median levels and towards the bottom end of the range for comparable councils. For business, it sits below the average level of comparable councils. If the proposed SV is implemented, Council's average residential rates will move towards the upper end of comparable councils (estimated to rank 6th), while average farmland rates will be slightly below the average (estimated 10th), and business will sit just above the average (at 9th).

4.1.4 Service level reduction and major project review

Approximately 30.0 per cent of respondents expressed the view that Council should review and reduce service levels, prior to pursuing an SV. Many respondents indicated that Council should refocus on core responsibilities and essential service delivery, suggesting that discretionary services, programs and projects be reviewed. The Tamworth Regional Skywalk at Victoria Park was frequently nominated as a project that should be reconsidered, as was the Tamworth Country Music Festival. Some respondents questioned the value of current service levels provided by the Central Northern Regional Library.

Response:

- Council has achieved significant cost savings and productivity improvements over recent years, with more improvements planned and underway. Council has also established an ongoing service review program, ensuring that its services and accompanying service levels are subject to regular review and refinement. Through this process, Council can continue to ensure that its services meet community expectations and are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- If Council does not implement an SV, then it will not be able to adequately fund its asset renewal and maintenance, particularly in roads. Council would also not be able to deliver the projects identified to address key areas of asset backlog, especially in sports and recreation facilities (including pools), stormwater, roads and buildings.
- The Tamworth region is rapidly growing, and this growth is projected to continue well into the future. Between 2021 and 2041, the local population is forecast to increase by 17,092 residents (26.84 per cent growth), at an average annual change of 1.2 per cent. With our population growing, Council needs to invest more into services and infrastructure, not less, so this growth can be facilitated.
- There is already a need for Council to address pedestrian safety on the road to the Oxley Scenic Lookout. Council has secured grant funding totalling \$14 million that will not only address the pedestrian safety concerns, but also assist in creating a new regional attraction that will support our local visitor economy. Council's modest contribution of \$3 million is necessary to secure that grant.

4.1.5 Council efficiencies and cost savings

Approximately 18.8 per cent of respondents suggested that Council needs to achieve further operational efficiencies, productivity improvements and cost savings prior to seeking an SV. Suggestions included initiatives such as reducing staff levels, reviewing staff remuneration and achieving further business process improvements.

Response:

- Council has been able to hold off on seeking an SV until now through an impressive track record of sound financial management. Many neighbouring and nearby local councils have already been granted significant SVs in recent years. While every effort has been made to avoid seeking an SV, Council is not at a point where it must be seriously considered.

- Council has identified, costed and delivered 189 improvements which have improved the organisation's overall long-term sustainability. Of these improvements, 55 have increased cost savings, 111 have enabled productivity and efficiency gains, 18 increased revenue generation and 35 improved operational sustainability. In total, these improvements have resulted in \$7.9 million per year in financial benefits to Council.
- Council is committed to continuing to identify and realise efficiencies and cost savings. Prior to engaging with the community on a proposed SV, Council's senior management team identified, costed and prioritised a further 55 improvements, which include further cost savings, efficiency gains and revenue increases. These improvements will be scheduled for implementation over the next three to four financial years and are expected to generate approximately \$2.2 million in one-off financial savings (in year of implementation) and around \$1.6 million in ongoing yearly net benefits.
- Council is embarking on a technology strategy and roadmap which will see a significant upgrade in its technology architecture and capabilities, along with significant cost and efficiency gains. Once completed, this upgrade will achieve cost savings through sunsetting existing platforms that are no longer in use, improve revenue generation through new payment methods, and improve efficiency via automation of manual, administrative and non-value adding activities.
- Council continually seeks to improve the way its services are designed and delivered. The organisation has established an embedded service review program to ensure that services are regularly reviewed so that opportunities to achieve savings, improve efficiency and effectiveness and improve service delivery quality are identified and actioned.

4.1.6 Social and economic impact

Approximately 3.9 per cent of respondents expressed concern around the potential social and economic impact of the proposed SV, specifically how it may affect local ratepayers, families and businesses. Some suggested that businesses may suffer as a result of the SV, or that families may need to relocate from Tamworth.

Response:

- Average rates in the Tamworth region are significantly lower than those of comparably sized councils. As noted above, Council prepared a Capacity to Pay assessment prior to engaging with the community on the proposed SV. This assessment revealed that if the proposed SV is implemented, Council's average residential rates will move towards the upper end of comparable councils (estimated to rank 6th), while average farmland rates will be slightly below the average (estimated 10th), and business will sit just above the average (at 9th).

4.1.7 Communication and transparency

Some respondents believe that Council has not clearly communicated the need for the SV or been transparent in its approach to community engagement. Approximately 3.2 per cent of respondents nominated communication, consultation and transparency as a reason for opposing the proposed SV. Some suggested that further consultation and engagement is required prior to an SV being implemented.

Response:

- Council's Community Strategic Plan, *Blueprint 100*, was developed via community and stakeholder consultation and outlines our shared vision to grow the Tamworth region to 100,000 residents by 2041. Achieving this vision to attract and retain more residents to our community requires significant investment in our services, programs and infrastructure. Council's LTFP outlines the challenges facing Council in delivering on this vision, including the need for an SV to generate the revenue required to provide the services, programs and infrastructure necessary to support our region's growth.
- As detailed in this report, Council undertook an extensive communications and engagement program to raise awareness of the need for an SV and facilitate feedback from the community on the proposed SV.
- Should Council proceed in applying for an SV, further consultation will be undertaken by IPART before it makes a final decision in relation to Council's application (if any). IPART will undertake engagement over three (3) weeks from February 2024 to March 2024, during which time members of the community will be able to make submissions to IPART on the application. Further information on IPART's assessment process, including the engagement period, is available from IPART's website.

4.1.8 Benefit of proposed SV to rural communities

Some respondents believe that the proposed SV, if implemented, will only benefit Tamworth city rather than other localities within the greater Tamworth region, such as Barraba, Manilla and Nundle. Approximately 2.6 per cent of respondents indicated that existing service levels within these localities are already poor, and do not believe that the proposed SV would result in any improvement to those services and accompanying levels of service.

Response:

- Council invests significantly in maintaining services and infrastructure in the region's rural communities, including those of Barraba, Manilla and Nundle. In the five-year period between 2018 and 2023, capital expenditure in the Nundle district and Barraba/Manilla district totalled \$6.8 million and \$3.1 million, respectively. Expenditure on road infrastructure in Nundle and Barraba/Manilla over the same five-year period totalled \$48.4 million and \$19.8 million, respectively.
- As noted above, the Tamworth region is projected to grow significantly over the coming 20 years, with the local population estimated to increase at an average annual change of 1.2 per cent. All localities across the Tamworth region are projected to benefit from this growth, including rural communities. Council will continue to invest in services and infrastructure in rural communities to provide quality outcomes for both current and future residents.

5 Conclusion

We appreciate the high degree of public interest in Council's proposed SV application and thank all members of the community who took the opportunity to learn more about the proposed SV, attend one of the community information sessions, and provide feedback.

At the commencement of the engagement period, Council published a page on its online consultation platform, *MyTRC Online Community*, at www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au. As noted previously, various information resources and materials – including background documents and responses to Frequently Asked Questions – were made available to ratepayers and other members of the community via *MyTRC Online Community*. Council will continue to maintain this consultation page and ensure that up-to-date information on the progress and status of the proposed SV application is provided to the community.

It is expected that Council will further consider the proposed SV at its Ordinary Meeting scheduled to be held Tuesday, 28 November 2023. The business paper for that meeting, as well as the subsequent minutes, will be made available from Council's website at www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au.

Should Council proceed in applying to IPART for an SV, it will need to prepare and submit an application to IPART by 05 February 2024. After this deadline, IPART will publish the application (if any) and accompanying materials to its website and invite public submissions from members of the community via a three-week consultation period, commencing in February 2024 and concluding March 2024. IPART will review and consider all submissions it receives, prior to releasing its final decision in May 2024.

Further information on the SV process, including how IPART assesses SV applications, is available from IPART's website at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.



Appendices

Appendix A: Communications Plan

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Proposed Special Rate Variation

Date: 12 September 2023



1 Background

In May 2023 when Tamworth Regional Councillors were about to consider a report about Our Annual Plan and Budget 2023-24, Mayor Russell Webb drew the community's attention to a "serious financial challenge" looking in the future. He explained that while the report showed that in 2023-24 the Council had a budgeted cash surplus of \$429,325, there was an expected further depletion of savings and loans would be taken out to deliver some projects for the community. And, he said "over the next few years our cash reserves will be in decline".

He said the Council had limited options to increase revenue to address the widening gap between its income level and the growing costs of delivering essential services and infrastructure. He informed the community the Council would be looking to work together with the community to explore all options available including the feasibility of seeking a special rate variation to increase rate income above the rate peg amount.

Every year the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets a rate peg for all councils in NSW. The rate peg is the maximum amount councils can increase the general income they collect from ratepayers (rates income). IPART set the base rate peg for 2023-24 at 3.7%. There is also an allowance for the level of population growth, meaning some councils have rate pegs up to 6.8%

NSW councils can apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a Special Variation to the rate peg which will be considered against the guidelines set by the NSW Office of Local Government, including the level of community awareness and how efficiently the council has been managing its finances.

Councillors will decide at the 12 September 2023 Ordinary Meeting whether to start a conversation with our community about the need to seek a Special Rate Variation. At a November Ordinary Meeting Councillors will decide whether to proceed with a special variation application for 2024-25 with the application to be lodged in or before February 2024.

2 Engagement purpose and goals

The purpose of this community engagement is to ensure that the community is adequately informed and consulted about the impact of the proposed special rate variation and the impact of not applying for a special rate variation.

The objectives of this community engagement process include:

- To present the case for proposed Special Rate Variation.
- To identify the impact of the Special Rate Variation on the average rates across each rating category.
- To exhibit an updated Long Term Financial Plan demonstrating the impact of the proposed Special Rate Variation on Council's operating results from 2023-24 for feedback and final endorsement by Council.
- To communicate to the community the timeline and process for any potential Special Rate Variation application.
- To gather and consider community's feedback to inform Council's final decision on whether and how to move forward with any Special Rate Variation application.

3 Spokesperson/s

The Communication Plan presupposes that Tamworth Region Mayor [REDACTED] General Manager and Executive Manager Strategy and Performance, [REDACTED] are the only authorised spokespersons.

It is recommended that public statements of substance (i.e. Monthly Newsletters, Press Releases and Media Statements) be approved by the Project Sponsor [REDACTED].

Project role	Name	Communication role
Sponsor	[REDACTED] General Manager	Key announcements, planned media opportunities
Owner	[REDACTED] – Chief Financial Officer	Issues management and ad hoc media inquiries
Project Manager	[REDACTED] – Coordinator Governance & Executive Services	Organisation of the Mayor, Councillors and Executive Managers diaries
Media spokesperson	Tamworth Region Mayor, [REDACTED]	Planned media opportunities

4 Stakeholder analysis

The key impacted stakeholders are those who pay rates for property in the Tamworth Local Government Area (LGA) or are renting property in the Tamworth LGA, where there may be rent increases passed to cover the proposed rate increase fully or partly.

Stakeholder groups have been identified below to ensure that the specific considerations of these groups can be integrated into the communications plan. These groupings are not mutually exclusive, that is individuals may fall into a number of different stakeholder groups. For example, individuals who own multiple properties in the LGA may be both residents, ratepayers and landlord ratepayers.

Stakeholder group	Who is in the group	Specific considerations
Residential Ratepayers	Homeowners who are residents of the Tamworth LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders.
Residential Renters		

	Renters who are residents of the Tamworth LGA	It will be a decision of the landlord on whether and when any rate increases are passed on to renters.
Business, Farming and Mining ratepayers	Business, farming and mining property owners within Tamworth LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) members	Ratepayers, renters, landlords and business operators with CALD backgrounds	Work through cultural community groups to ensure that these groups have the resources they need to understand the proposal.
Community stakeholders	Residents' groups, sports and recreation groups, environmental groups, cultural groups and local business/industry.	These groups have a direct interest in their members/residents and therefore, they need to understand why Council is proposing an SV.
Council's committees and workgroups	Community members who volunteer to be involved in a group with a specific role delegation	These committees need to be informed and consulted.

With each stakeholder group, there will be a range of socio-economic factors that will be considered through a capacity to pay analysis and report; this will further inform not only the affordability of any Special Rate Variation.

5 Engagement approach

The defined approach to engagement has been created in line with Council's engagement principles:

Relevant & Timely	I have communicated the right information to the right audience at the right time
	I have included innovative, applicable, and appropriate methods for communication
Open & Transparent	This message has been communicated with integrity
	This message being communicated is authentic and honest
Responsive	This communication is agile and perceptive and will help build trust with our community
	I have closed the loop on communications that warrant two-way dialogue

Inclusive & Accessible	I have considered and included communication methods to reach all areas of our community
	I have considered accessibility of this message to reach all community members
Respectful	I have communicated respectfully


5.1 Impact and complexity of the engagement

This engagement is defined as 'high impact', which means that the issues will have a real or perceived impact across the whole LGA. The issue has the potential to create controversy and has a high level of potential community interest.

It is also considered to have 'high complexity', as the information presented to the community will be based on relatively complex analysis and needs to be expressed in terms that are easily understood.

5.2 Levels of engagement

The level of engagement is defined from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation in the figure below. This spectrum outlines the levels of engagement required depending on the purpose and desired outcome of the project.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

To meet the assessment criteria for a Special Rate Variation, Council must:

1. Demonstrate that the **need and purpose** of a different rate peg path for Council's General Fund is clearly articulated and identified in Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documents.
2. Show evidence that the **community is aware** of the need for and the extent of a rate rise.

3. Show that the **impact on affected ratepayers** is reasonable.
4. Exhibit, approve and adopt the relevant **IP&R documents**.
5. Explain and quantify the **productivity improvements and cost containment** strategies in its IP&R documents and/or application.

To meet criteria on item two, Council would only need to undertake engagement at the “inform” level, but a “consult” level would ensure it more fully meets criteria on items one and four.

To meet these criteria more fully, an adopted Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP), which includes the proposed Special Rate Variation, will be exhibited, approved and adopted by Council in parallel to this community engagement process.

6 Key Messages

The key messages outgoing communication will reinforce are:

- There is a widening gap between Tamworth Regional Council's income level and the growing costs of providing current services and infrastructure.
- For Council to meet those financial challenges while continuing to deliver on our community's expectations, it is now time to work together to re-evaluate what we do and how we do it.
- We have made appropriate use of savings to sustain us in recent years through our worst drought on record, extreme bushfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, repeated major storm events and subsequent flooding.
- This current financial year we have forecast a modest cash surplus but over the next few years it is projected our cash reserves will be in decline due to continued forecast operating deficits.
- We want the community to work with us to explore the feasibility of applying for a Special Rate Variation to increase our rate income above the fixed cap amount.
- We have been able to hold off on this move until now through our track record of strong financial management.
- We have already implemented a range of efficiency and productivity improvements to create operational savings, however an increase to our rate income is an option we must look at if we want to continue to deliver the services and projects our community has told us they want and need.
- Council has made every effort to avoid asking our ratepayers to sustain an increase in rates but we are at a point where we must seriously consider it or reassess our current priorities.
- Over the next six weeks we will be providing our community with a range of information to raise their awareness and understanding of the choices needing to be made.
- Get informed by reading information, going to a community meeting, visiting a pop-up stand or joining a webinar to ensure you have the understanding you need to make your decision.
- To find out more visit us at one of our community information sessions or online at haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/src

7 Communication Tasks

To achieve the overarching objectives, as per above, the following (non-exhaustive) list of communication tasks will be addressed:

- **Media**
 - **Media Release:** a media release will be issued the Friday before the Council Meeting at which the Councillors vote on consultation for the Special Rate Variation. The release will advise the dates for the consultation period and the dates for the community information sessions.
 - **Media Alert:** a media alert will be held the Wednesday after the Council meeting with the Mayor and General Manager as the spokespeople.
 - **Media Alert:** a media alert will be held the Wednesday following the closure of the consultation period explaining the next steps in the process. The spokesperson for this alert will be the Mayor. The purpose will be to provide an overview of the intentions of the Council and how it will service the community.
- **Print**
 - **The Northern Daily Leader:** 4 x T44 (half page) ad will be designed and run in four issues during the 6-week campaign and a media release sent for inclusion.
 - **Manilla Express:** 2 x 26.4cm wide x 38cm deep (full page) ads will be run in the Manilla Express during the 6-week campaign and a media release sent for inclusion.
 - **Barraba Community News:** 2 x 12cm x 18cm ads will be run in the Barraba Community News during the 6-week campaign and a media release sent for inclusion.
- **Radio**
 - **88.9FM:** a four-week campaign will run on the local community radio station 88.9FM.
 - **2TM:** a four-week campaign will run on the commercial 2TM radio station. This station has a listening audience of older residents and rate payers who are known for being critical and outspoken.
 - **92.9FM:** a four-week campaign will run on the commercial 92.9FM radio station. The 92.9FM audience is a younger crowd dominated by young families.
 - Council has free radio chats on 88.9FM, 92.9FM and 2TM. ABC has radio chats as requested that we can utilise during the campaign.
- **Digital**
 - **Social Media:** an extensive social media campaign will be run throughout the 6-week campaign. Posts will focus on educating the community and the benefits of a special variation, including reels, videos of the Mayor and Councillors. Ads promoting the community meetings will run across the Tamworth Regional Council Facebook and Instagram accounts.
 - **Website:** a page dedicated to the Special Variation will be established on the MyTRC Online Community portal. The page will provide a simple overview, a FAQ section, a rates calculator, a Q&A section, and a formal submission section.


- Property owner newsletter: a newsletter will be sent with the rates notices posted the first week of October. Property owners who paid their rates in full in July will be sent separately.
- Property owners email addresses can be utilised for an EDM or PDF newsletter.
- Videos: A video of the Mayor and/or General Manager explaining the need for the special variation which can be used on the Have your Say page and social media. Stored on YouTube.
- **Posters/flyers**
 - Posters: These posters can be displayed in shops, town and village notice boards with a QR code linking to the MyTRC Online Community to find out more.
 - Postcards: These flyers can be left on counter at businesses and handed out at community meetings. They will include a QR code for more information on the Have your Say page.
- **Face-to-Face Engagement Activities**
 - Community meetings: community meetings will be hosted across the region. These meetings will be a time for the Executive team and Councillors to engage with residents about the SRV. These events will be advertised on social media, print publications and radio.



Appendix B: Community information session PowerPoint presentation


Special Rates Variation – Public Forum

October 2023



We would like to acknowledge the Gamilaroi/Kamilaroi people, who are the traditional custodians of this land.

We would also like to pay respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present here tonight.



Objectives of today's forum:

Today's forum will:

- ✓ Provide you with information on:
 - The financial challenges facing the Council.
 - Special Rate Variations (SRV), what they are and the process councils must undertake to consider them.
- ✓ Outline the potential Special Rate Variation (SRV) being considered and the reasons for it.
- ✓ Provide you with an opportunity to ask questions to understand the challenges facing Council and the reasons for the proposal to apply for an SRV.

By the end of this session, you should be better informed and understand how to express your views on the SRV.

Agenda

This presentation will cover:

- Council's current financial position
- What is an SRV
- The proposed SRV and why it is needed
- Impact on average rates
- The SRV process and the next steps.

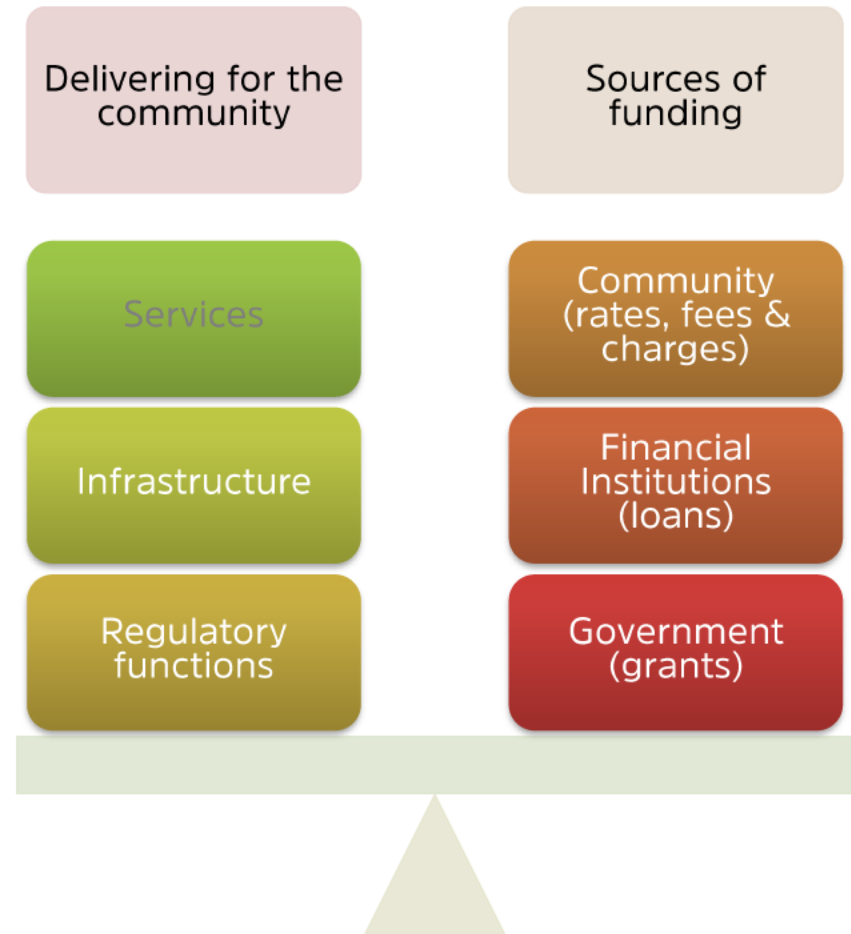
There will be opportunities to ask questions at the end of the presentation.

This forum is not intended to:

- Review Council's Delivery Program or Community Strategic Plan
- Make any decisions on whether to apply for the SRV

Councils Finance is a Balancing Act

- Councils must often make decisions to maintain the right balance between the services and infrastructure the Council delivers and the funding it receives from various sources.
- Councils must also consider **intergenerational equity** in making financial decisions – do we fund service/asset with current ratepayer funds or spread the cost burden across both current and future ratepayers?



Council must be financially responsible

Section 8(b) of the Local Government Act requires councils to apply sound financial management principles - Council spending should be responsible and sustainable, aligning general revenue and expenses.

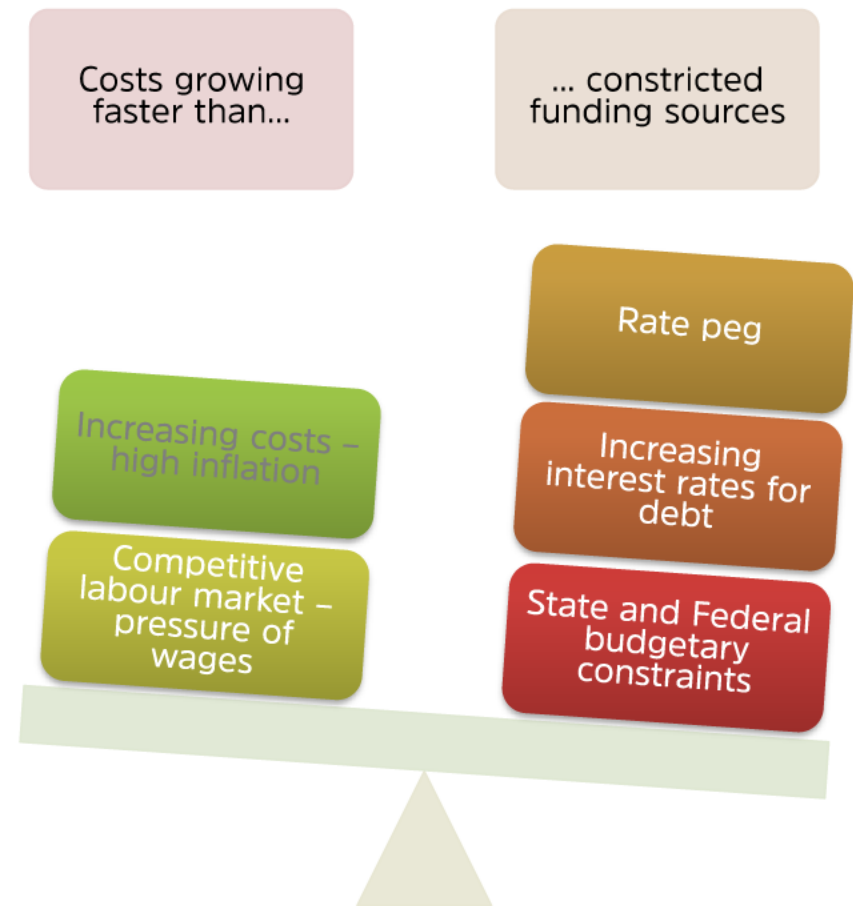
This includes:

- achieving a **fully funded operating position**
- **Maintaining a sufficient cash position**
- having an appropriately **funded capital program**
- **maintaining its asset base** 'fit for purpose'
- having adequate resources to meet ongoing **compliance obligations**.

Not negotiable - failure to meet these obligations can lead to NSW Office of Local Government intervention.

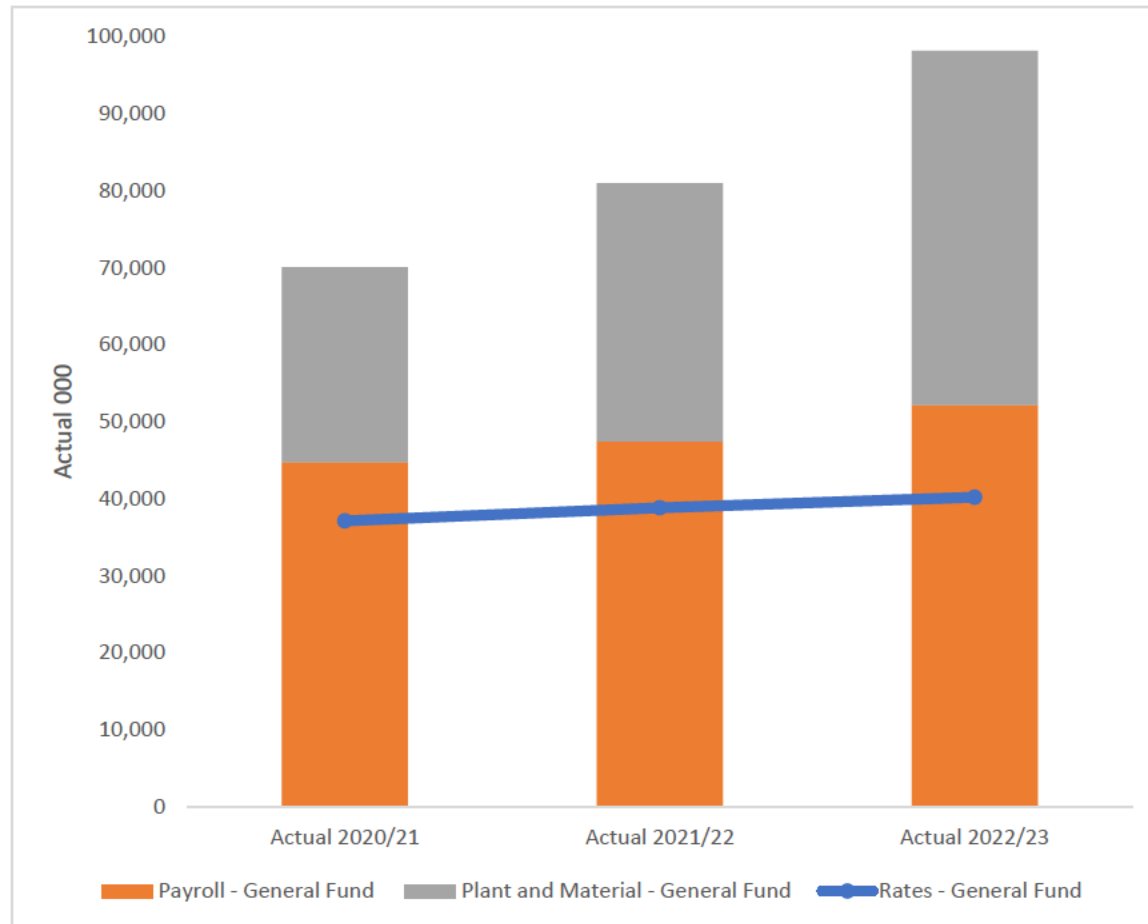
The Sustainability Challenge for Council

- Costs have been outstripping revenue for some time.
- Utilised cash reserves and reduced infrastructure spending to address shortfall.
- Impact of COVID, weather events and economic environment have further exacerbated the issues.
- Grants have supported to a degree – but can't rely on this into the future.



The Challenge in numbers

- In 3 years, rates increased by 8% whereas payroll and material increased by 17% and 81% respectively
- Roads maintenance witnessed major increases, for example: Bitumen resealing contract rates have increased by 50%.
- The cost of bridge replacement contracts have increased from \$6,000/m² in 2019 to \$18,000/m² for recent contracts



What has Council done to manage this?



189

Initiatives implemented



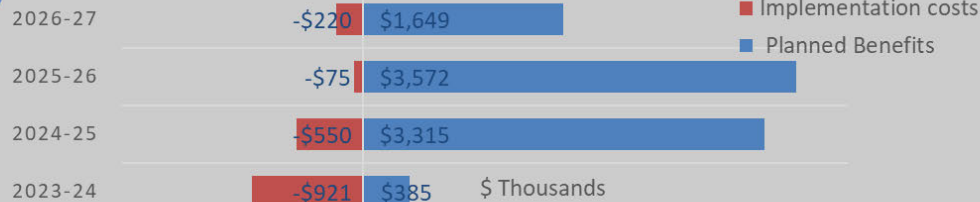
Savings realised
\$7.9 million p.a.
\$3.2 million one-off



Planned savings
\$1.6 million annually
\$2.2 million one-off



Summary of planned savings



Planned and future initiatives

24

Costed initiatives built into the LTFP

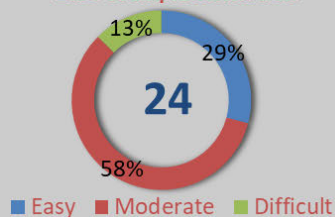
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Initiatives not yet in the LTFP



Initiatives in LTFP

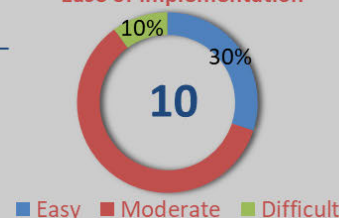
Ease of implementation



Resource needs

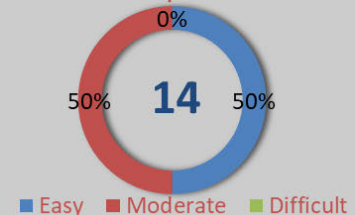
Ease of implementation

\$740 thousand – one off costs
\$1.1 million – annual costs



Future initiatives

Ease of implementation



Other avenues Tamworth has considered

Council has also investigated several other avenues to keep costs in line with revenue, including:



Land sales: land sales from the Tamworth Global Gateway Park is used to repay loans and build new assets.



Innovative service solutions: looking to deliver more with less by using volunteers, reviewing facilities' opening hours, etc.



Seeking support from State and Federal Government: optimising grant funding for new assets, not progress on new infrastructure without grant commitments (e.g. Ray Walsh House, Performing Arts Centre)

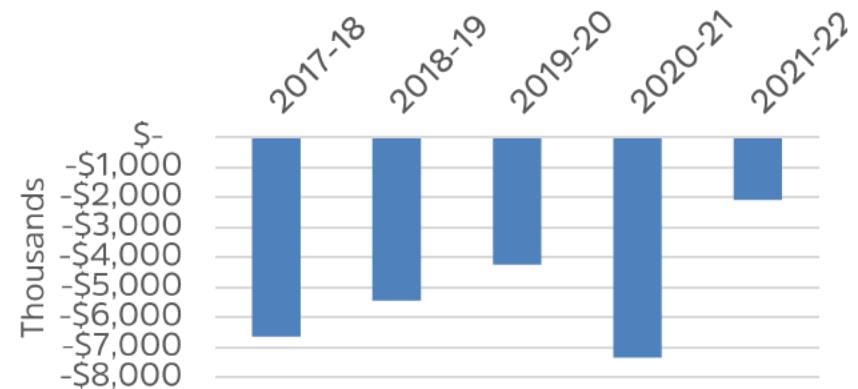


Investing in technology to improve staff productivity and customer experience.

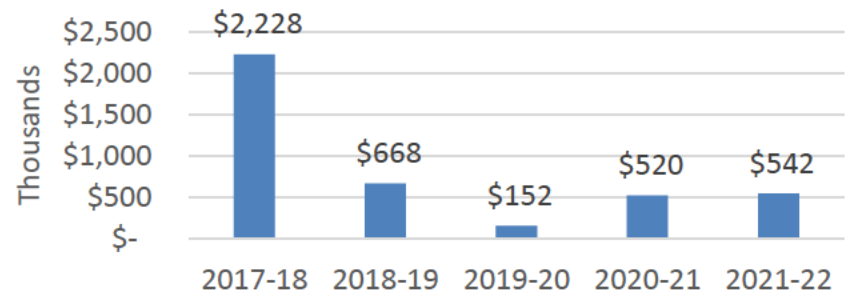
Historical trends in Council's financial position

This has not been and will not be sufficient alone for Council to continue to be financially sustainable. Council has been recording deficits in its general fund operating result for some time. Most of its cash reserves are restricted, unrestricted cash to fund the day-to-day operations of which Council has reduced over time.

Operating Result – General Fund



Unrestricted cash



Alternatives considered

Council looked at several different courses of action, including:

Do nothing: this the **base case**, where rates are subject to the rate peg and Council continues to deliver services and assets as planned.

Sustainability Scenario: this scenario includes all asset expenditure and projects Council needs to ensure ongoing sustainability. This can't be achieved without increasing rates by more than the set rate peg. A few alternatives were investigated within this scenario on potential rate increases:

One-year rate increase – not recommended due to impact on ratepayers.

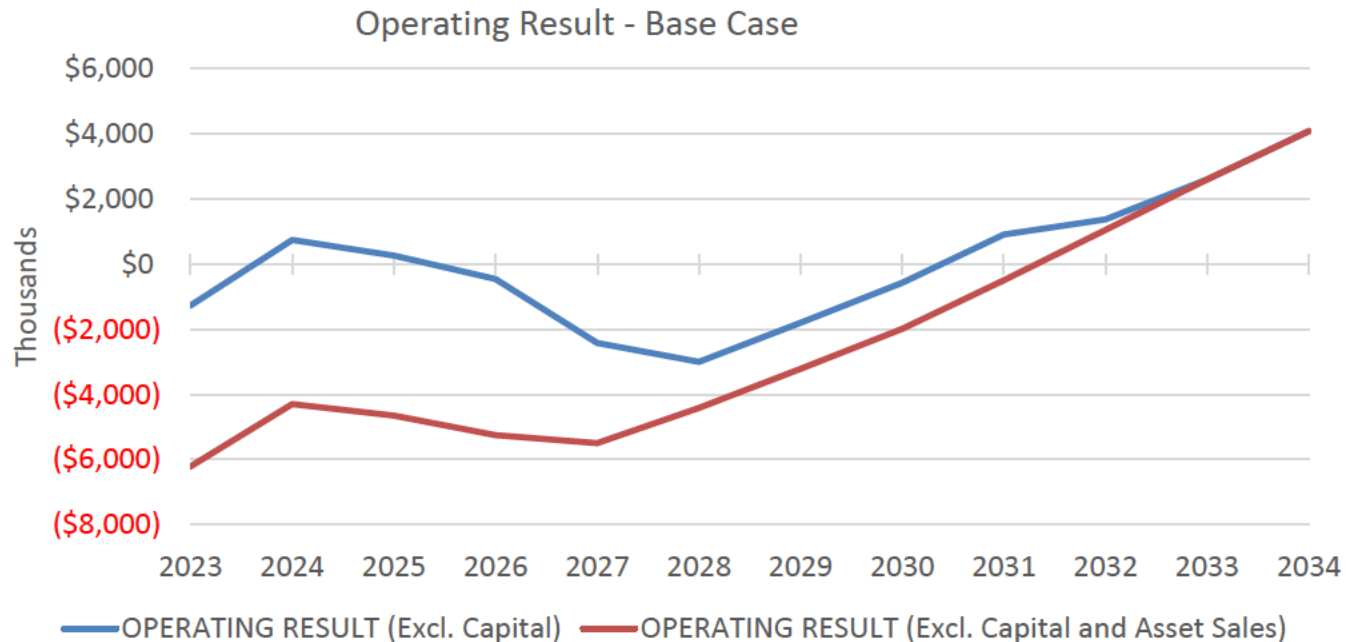
Two-year rate increase – recommended

More than two-year rate increase – not recommended due to rate peg unpredictability, particularly with recent IPART rate peg methodology review.

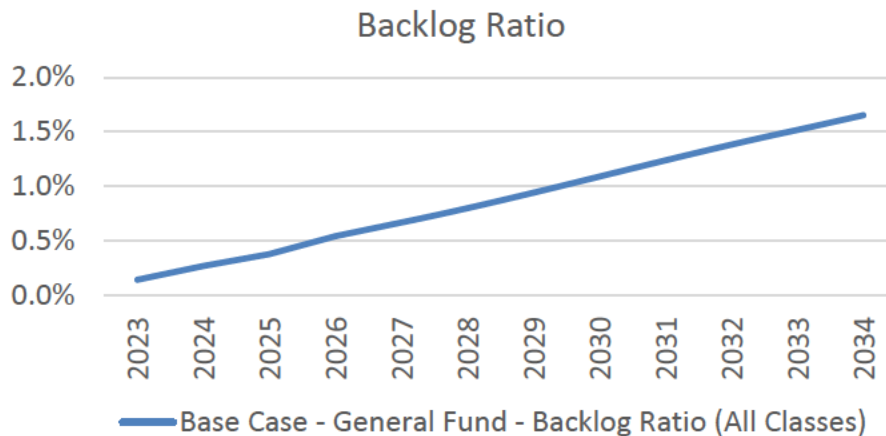
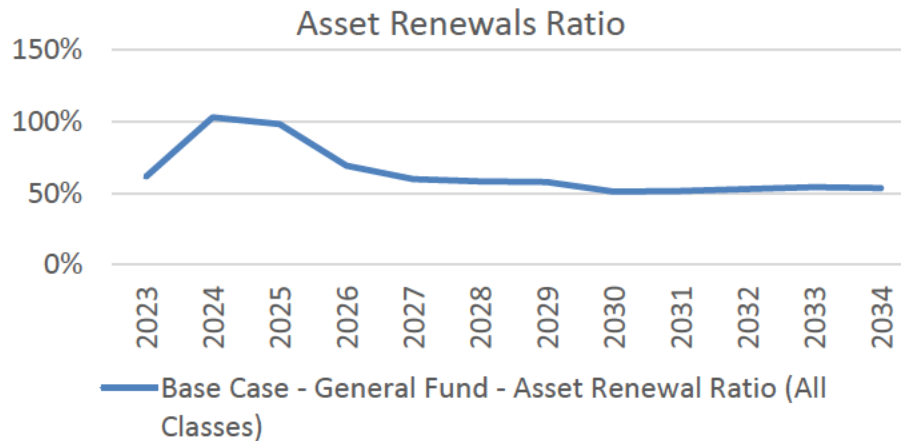
Growth scenario: this scenario included some growth projects, such as the Performing Art Centre and Ray Walsh House. This was not recommended as designs for these projects are not yet completed, funding commitment from State and Federal governments are not yet secured and the impact on ratepayers (without committed grants) was significant.

Base Case – Operations

Council is forecasting small surpluses and some deficits for the first six years of the forecast period, but land sales projections is having a positive impact on the operating result.



Base Case – Assets



- Land sales help, but further expenditure is required to maintain assets.
- Asset renewal averages 60.6% over the forecast period, 100% would keep assets at their current condition.
- As a result, the backlog ratio grows from 0.3% to 1.7% by 2033-34, although still within the 2% benchmark.

Sustainability Scenario

Same macro assumptions as base case. Removes asset funding gaps for all asset classes – assumes required renewal and maintenance, not planned.

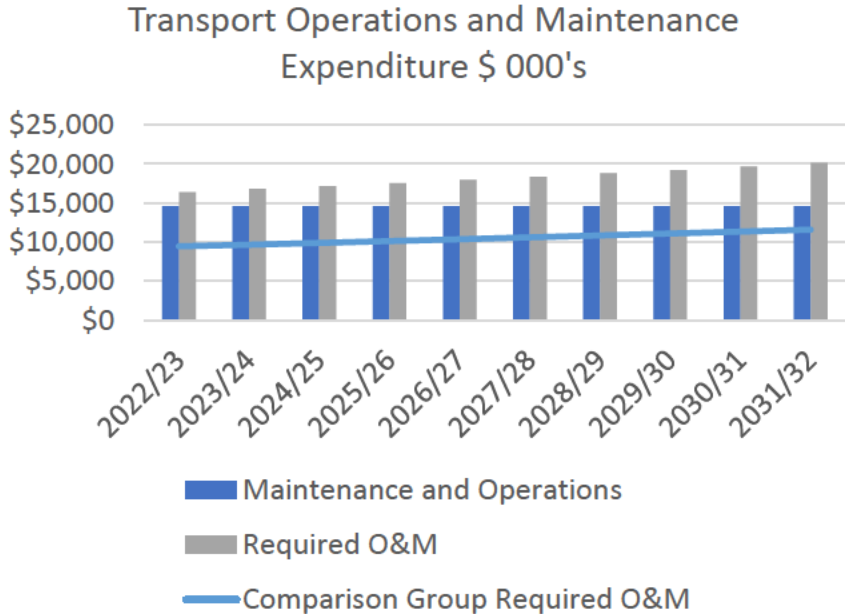
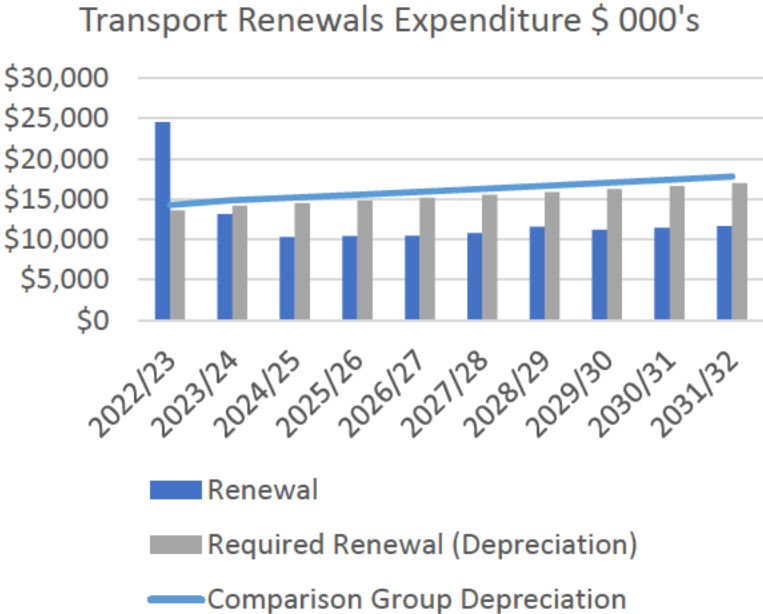
In addition to base case projects, this scenario includes:

- Tamworth Regional Aquatic Centre and Northern Inland Centre of Sporting Excellence
- Tamworth Adventure Pool
- Delivery of sport and recreation strategies and masterplans (e.g. Victoria Park, Bicentennial Park and Chaffey Park)
- Backlog renewal works for Townhall, Community Centre, Peel House, TRECC and other buildings
- New rehoming pound
- Identified transport infrastructure upgrades (Jewry Street, Moore Creek Road, CBD Traffic)
- Backlog renewal works for Stormwater infrastructure.

Includes the Improvement Plan initiatives and expected savings.

Sustainability Case, Asset Gaps

Most significant asset management gap is in roads.
 The capital renewal gap averages \$4.7 million pa over the ten-year forecast period.
 The operating expenditure gap for maintenances and operations averages \$4.0 million pa over the forecast period.

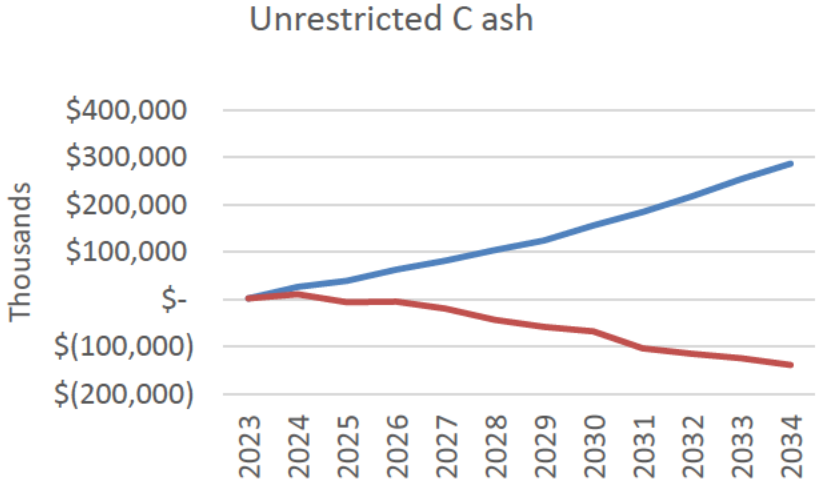
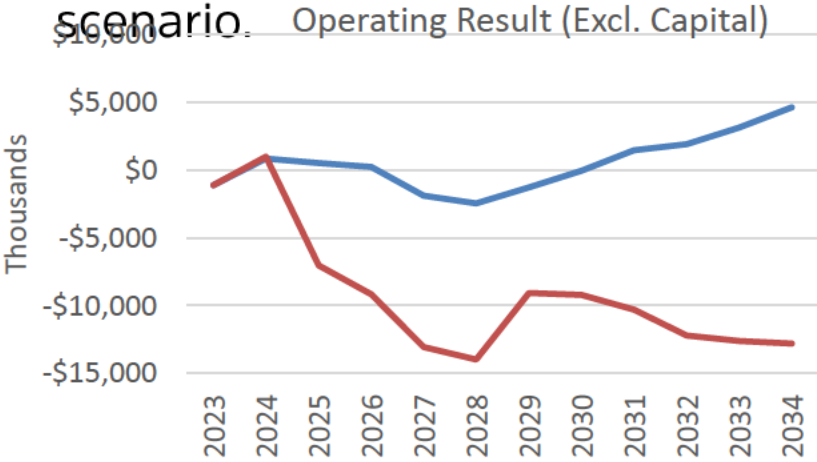


Sustainability Scenario is not viable without an SRV

The Sustainability Case without an SRV shows Council with significant Operating Deficits in the General Fund averaging \$10.9 million over the forecast period.

It also shows Council running out of unrestricted cash by 2024-25.

If Council doesn't apply for an SRV, it could not deliver the sustainable scenario.



- Base Case - General Fund - OPERATING RESULT (Excl. Capital)
- Sustainability Scenario - No SV - General Fund - OPERATING RESULT (Excl. Capital)

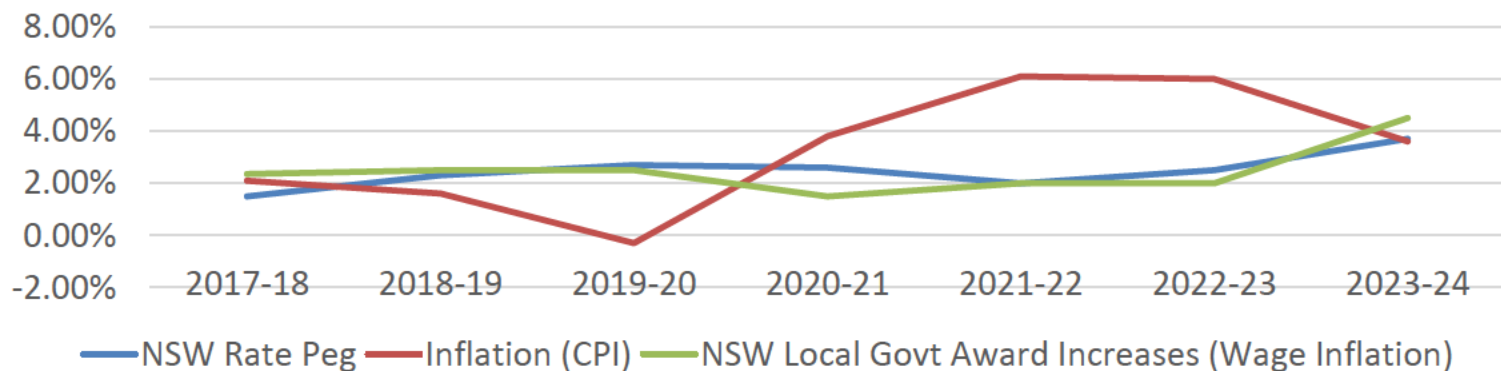
- Base Case - General Fund - Unrestricted Cash
- Sustainability Scenario - No SV - General Fund - Unrestricted Cash

What is a Special Rate Variation?

NSW council general rate increases are restricted to the set **rate peg**, determined each year by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

If councils need to increase their total general rates revenue by more than the rate peg, they must apply to IPART for a Special Variation (SV) to their rates.

As the rate peg doesn't keep pace with cost increases, an SRV is required at some point for nearly all councils.



Scenario Modelling

We have modelled a permanent SRV - implemented over two years.

The SRV is designed to ensure that Council:

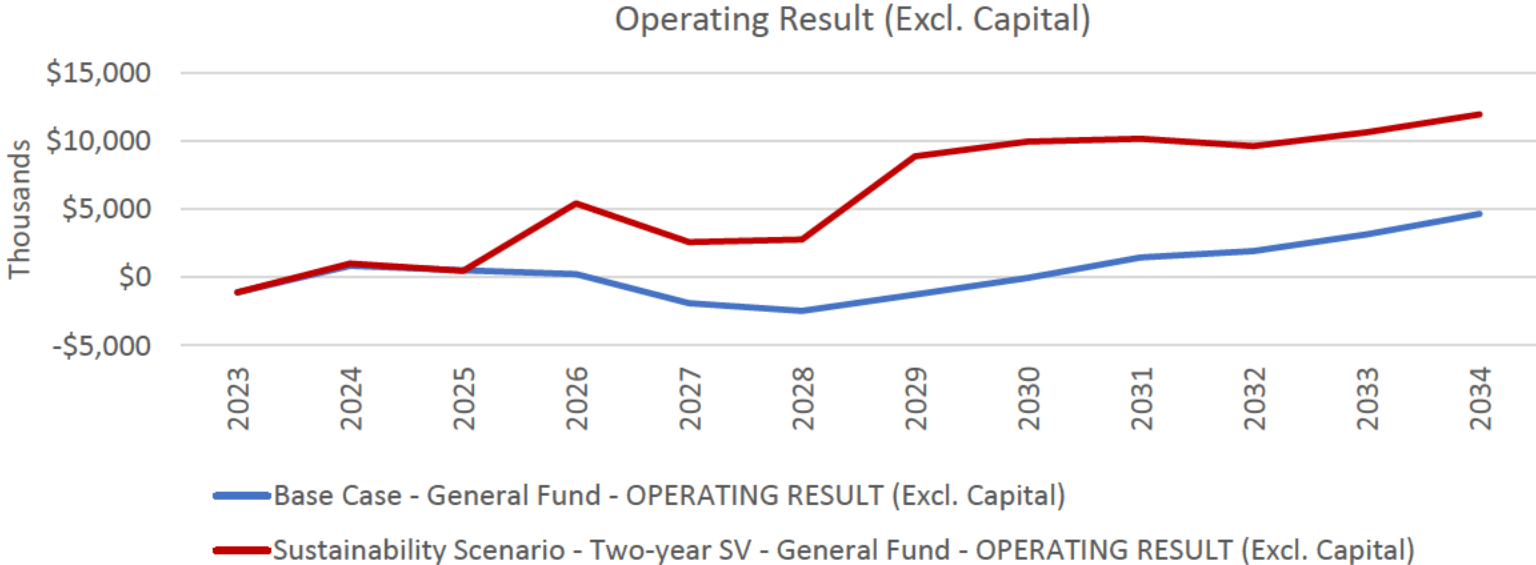
- generates an operating surplus, before capital income.
- fully funds its required renewal and maintenance.
- maintains a positive unrestricted cash position.

SRV rates quoted below are inclusive of the rate peg.

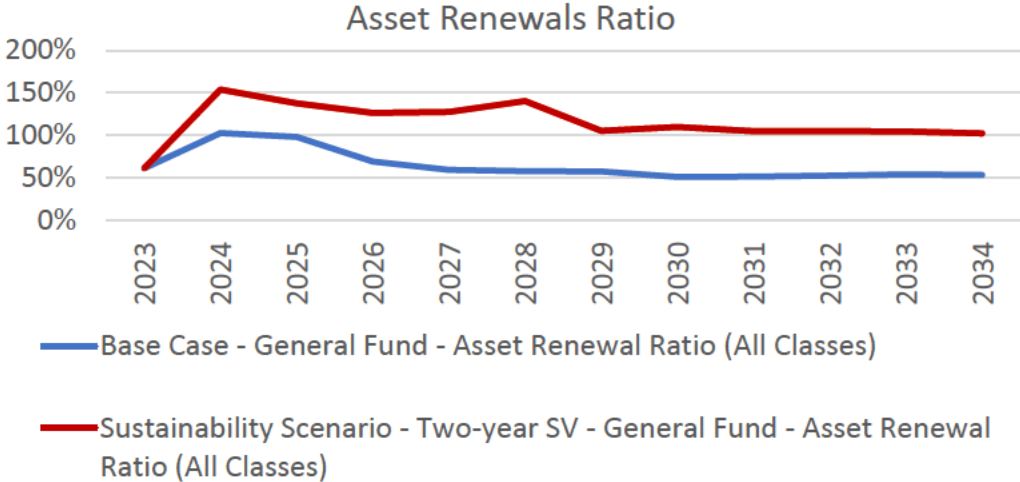
SV Options	2024-25	2025-26	Cumulative Rate over SV
Base Case – Rate Peg	3.5%	2.5%	n/a
Sustainability Scenario – Two-year SV	18.5%	15.0%	36.3%

SRV Option – Forecasting and Operating Result

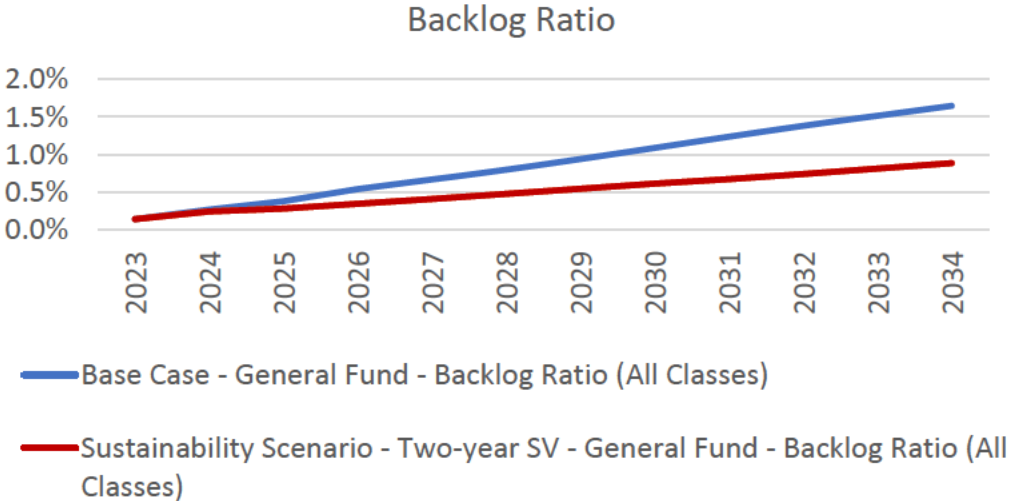
- Operating result (before capital items) produces a surplus for the two-year SRV.
- Over the ten-year forecast, the average operating result for the sustainability scenario is \$7.2 million.
- Average operating performance ratio is 3.3%.



SRV option – asset renewal and backlog forecast



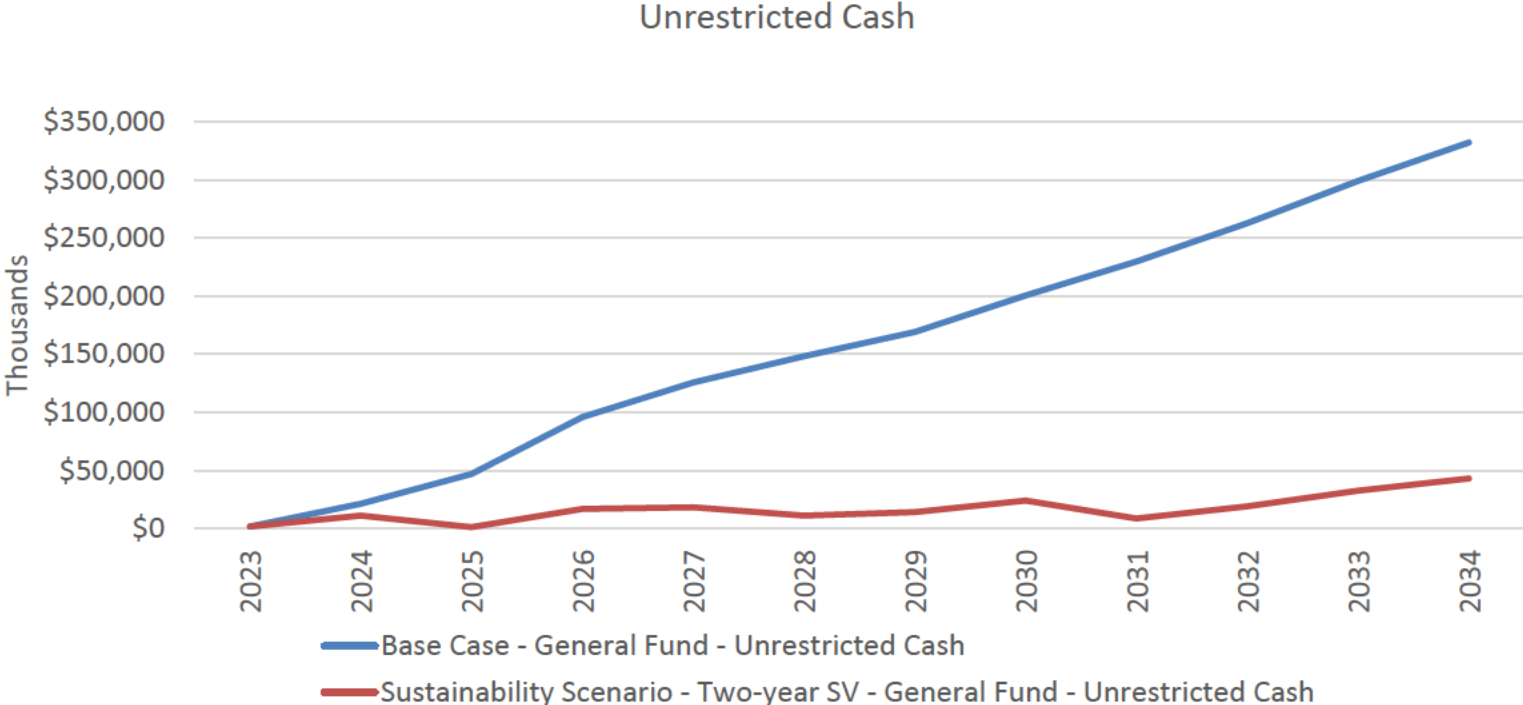
- The SRV addresses Council’s asset renewal gap, producing a renewal ratio of above the 100% benchmark.



- As a result, the backlog ratio remains more stable under the SRV option averaging 0.6%.

SRV option - unrestricted cash

- The SRV option makes good use of Council cash reserves through investing in renewed, upgraded and new infrastructure, while ensuring sufficient unrestricted cash balances for ongoing operational needs.



WHAT WILL BE IMPACTED ON YOUR RATES NOTICE?

The 36.3% SRV will only impact the two items highlighted in red on your rates notice. This is made up of the base rate for your property and the land value

Tamworth Regional Council
PO Box 555
Tamworth NSW 2340

RATES & CHARGES NOTICE

Tamworth REGIONAL COUNCIL

Mr J Citizen &
Mrs J Citizen
PO Box 123456
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Tamworth Regional Council
ABN: 52 631 074 450
PO Box 555
TAMWORTH NSW 2340
General Enquiries (02) 6767 5555
Toll Free 1300 733 625
trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au
www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au

018

PARTICULARS OF RATES & CHARGES - 2023/2024

Property Details
Tamworth Street, TAMWORTH NSW 2340
1234 DP 123456789

DATE OF ISSUE: 26/07/2023
PROPERTY NO: 123456
DEDUCT PAYMENT SINCE: 19/07/2023
VALUATION BASE DATE: 01/07/2022

PARTICULARS OF RATES AND CHARGES	CENTS IN \$	RATEABLE VALUE	AMOUNT
Ordinary Residential - Tamworth	@ 0.627600 c in \$	181000	\$1,136.32
Ordinary Residential Base Amount - Tamworth	Base Amount	0	\$160.00
Sewer Availability - Residential Charge	Availability Charge	1	\$885.00
Stormwater Management Service - Residential	Charge @ \$25.00	1	\$25.00
Water Availability - 20mm or not Connected	Availability Charge	1	\$319.00
Domestic Waste Base Charge - Urban	\$244.00 per Service	1	\$244.00
Domestic Waste Collection Serv - Urban	\$188.00 per Service	1	\$188.00

Daily Interest Rate on Overdue Accounts is 9.0% per annum

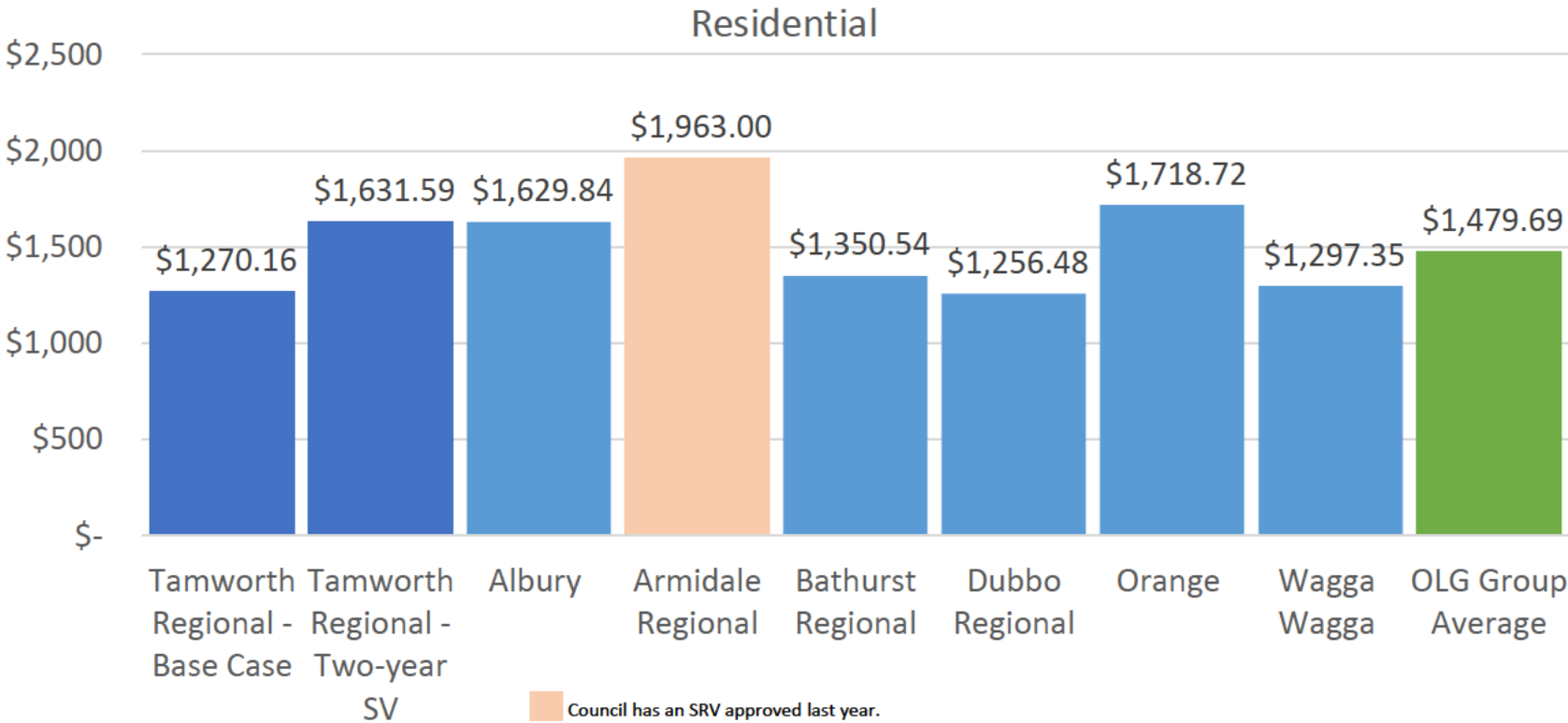
Payment in Full Amount Due \$2,957.32

Instalment 1 Due 31/08/2023	\$740.32
Instalment 2 Due 30/11/2023	\$739.00
Instalment 3 Due 28/02/2024	\$739.00
Instalment 4 Due 31/05/2024	\$739.00

Average Proposed Increase

Residential	Total Increase	Total Weekly increase
Barraba	227.50	2.19
Manilla	223.98	2.15
Kootingal/Moonbi	187.09	1.80
Village (Attunga, Bendemeer & Nundle)	218.79	2.10
Tamworth (Urban Only)	485.21	4.67
Business	Total Increase	Total Weekly increase
Barraba	403.11	3.88
Manilla	582.17	5.60
Kootingal/Moonbi	334.20	3.21
Village (Attunga, Bendemeer & Nundle)	227.38	2.19
Tamworth (Urban Only)	1,720.01	16.54

Comparison Rates - Residential



Capacity to Pay Considerations

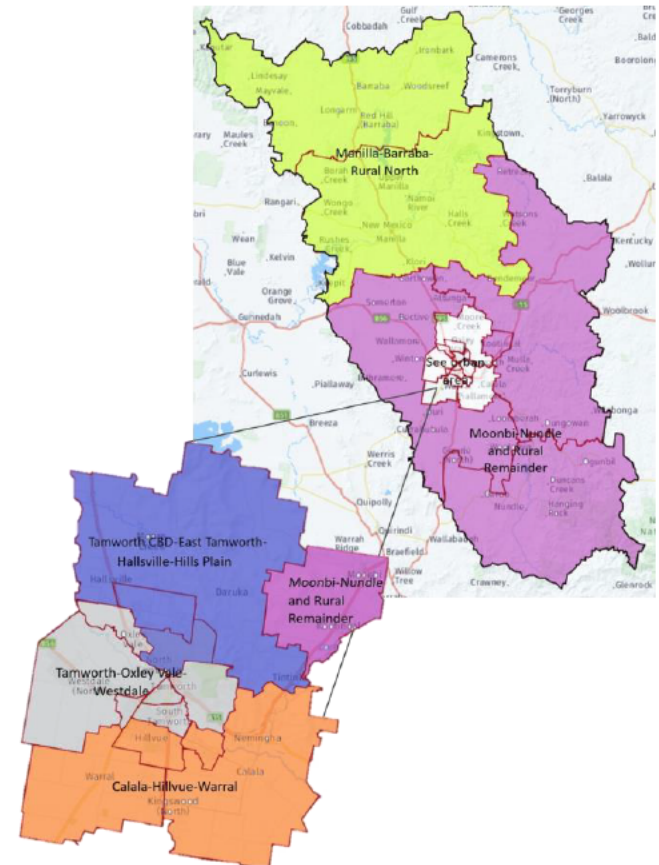
Capacity to pay group the LGA into five areas of relative consistent SEIFA rankings.

Lowest equalised household income and SEIFA index areas were Tamworth(part)-Oxley-Westdale and Manilla-Barraba-Rural North.

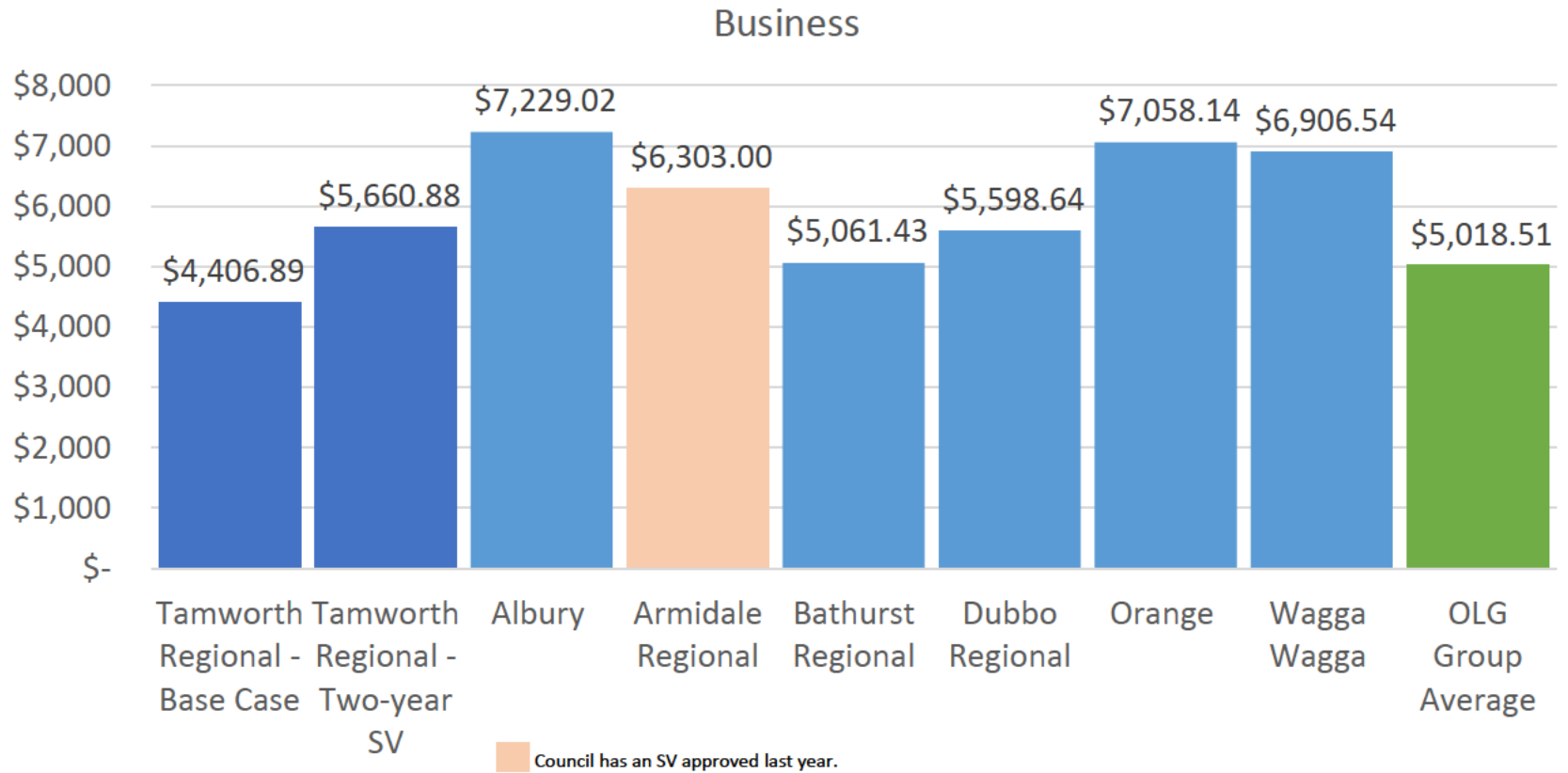
Localities with lowest SEIFA were South Tamworth and West Tamworth (Coledale).

These are also areas with lower land values.

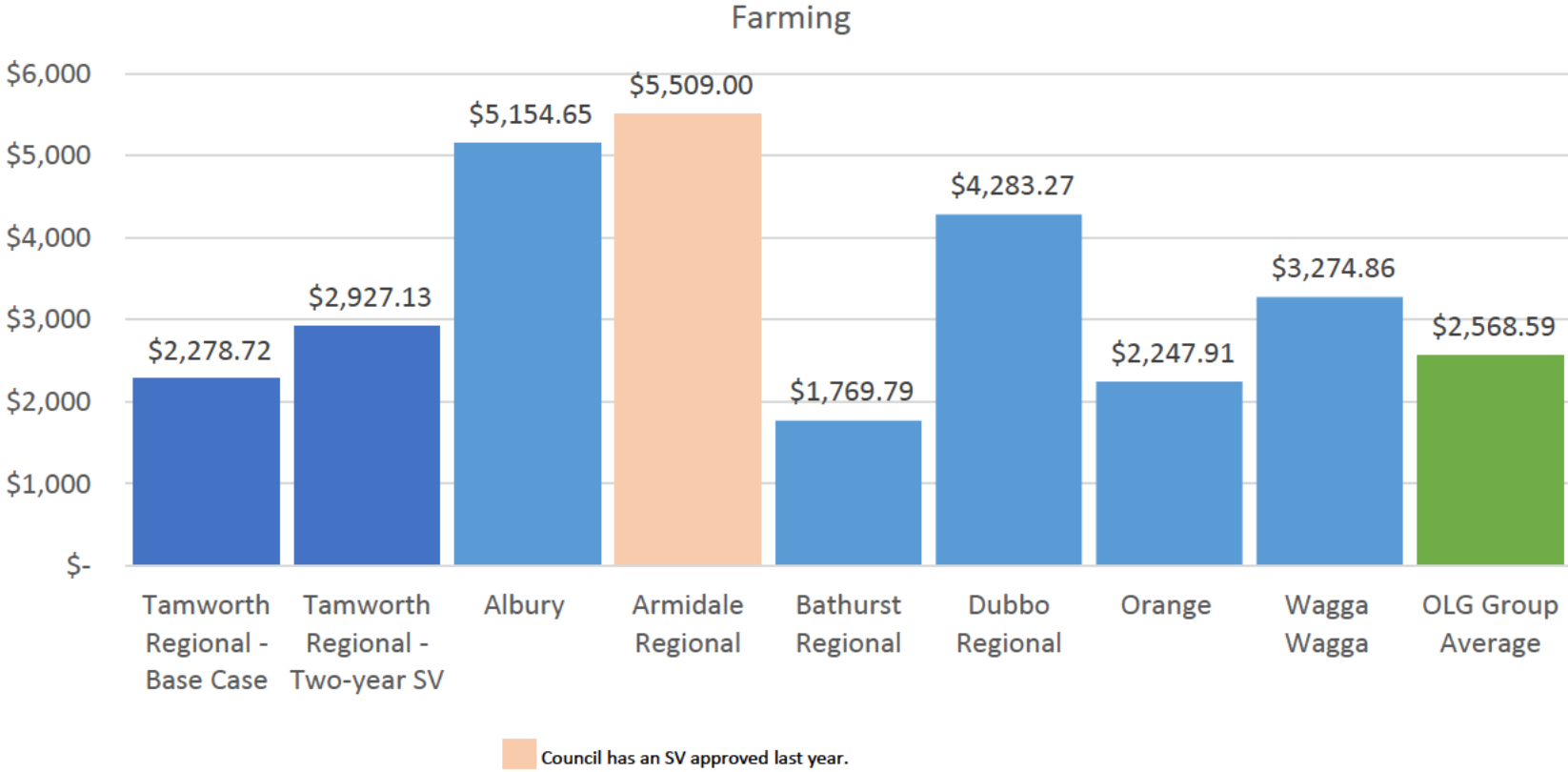
Tamworth(part)-Oxley-Westdale contained the lowest proportion of residential rate payers and the highest proportion of private renters.



Comparison Rates – Business



Comparison Rates – Farming



How to have your say

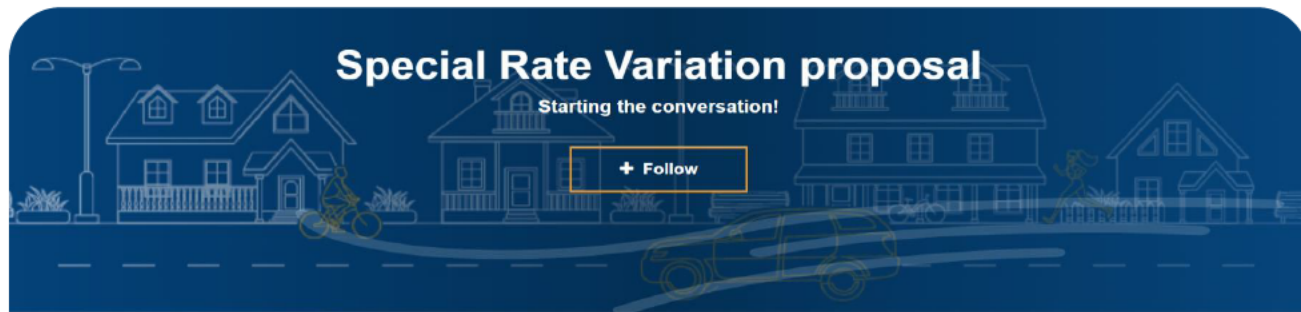
Visit Council's Have Your Say page

<https://haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/srv>:

read the supporting documentation and FAQs

take the short survey

provide a submission on the SRV and/or the updated Long Term Financial Plan



[Home](#) / [Special Rate Variation proposal](#)

Background

Tamworth Regional Councillors decided at the 12 September 2023 Ordinary Meeting to start a conversation with you about a potential Special Rate Variation (SRV).

Council identified in its 2023-24 Our Annual Plan and Budget, the need to investigate the viability of seeking a Special Rate Variation to ensure we remain financially resilient and are able to continue to deliver the services and facilities our community have told us they want and need.



What happens next

18 September to 31 October 2023: Community consultation on the SRV.

November 2023: Council will consider all submissions and decide on whether to proceed to apply for the SRV.

February 2024: Council lodges the SRV application (subject to above decision and IPART confirmation of dates).

Between March and April 2024: IPART invites submissions and evaluates the application.

May 2024: IPART makes its determination.

June 2024: Council determines if it will apply all or part of the approved SRV.

How the SRV will be assessed

IPART assesses the SRV applications using the following criteria:

1. The **need and purpose** of a different rate path for the council's General Fund is clearly articulated and identified in the council's IP&R documents.
2. Evidence that the **community is aware** of the need for and the extent of a rate rise.
3. The **impact on affected ratepayers** must be reasonable.
4. The relevant **IP&R documents** must be exhibited, approved and adopted by the council.
5. The IP&R documents or the council's application must explain and quantify the **productivity improvements and cost containment strategies**.
6. Any other matter that IPART considers relevant.

Questions

Appendix C: Survey

Proposed Special Variation Feedback

Feedback can be made until 4.30pm 31 October 2023 and can be made in the following ways.

- By submitting your comments online below
- By attending an information session or webinar ([Register here](#))
- By email to trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au (referencing SRV in the subject line)
- By mail to PO Box 555, Tamworth NSW 2340
- Delivered in person to the Customer Service at 474 Peel Street, Tamworth NSW 2340

First Name

Last Name

Please select those that best describe your situation Required

- Business Owner/Operator/Tenant
- Renter
- Landlord
- Community group member
- Resident Ratepayer
- Sporting Association group member
- Non-Resident Ratepayer
- Other (please specify)

Do you understand why Council is seeking a Special Rate Variation? Required

- Yes
- No

Do you support Council in seeking Special Rate Variation? Required

- Yes
- No

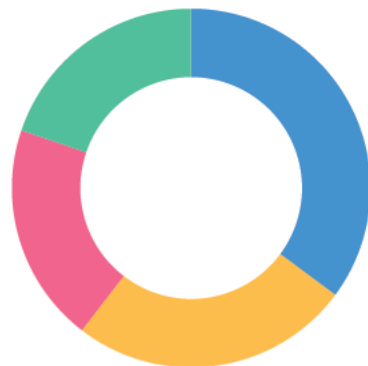
Do you have any other comments you wish to make in regard to Council's proposal to seek a special variation?

Submit

Appendix D: Communications campaign insights report

Mentions by News Media Type

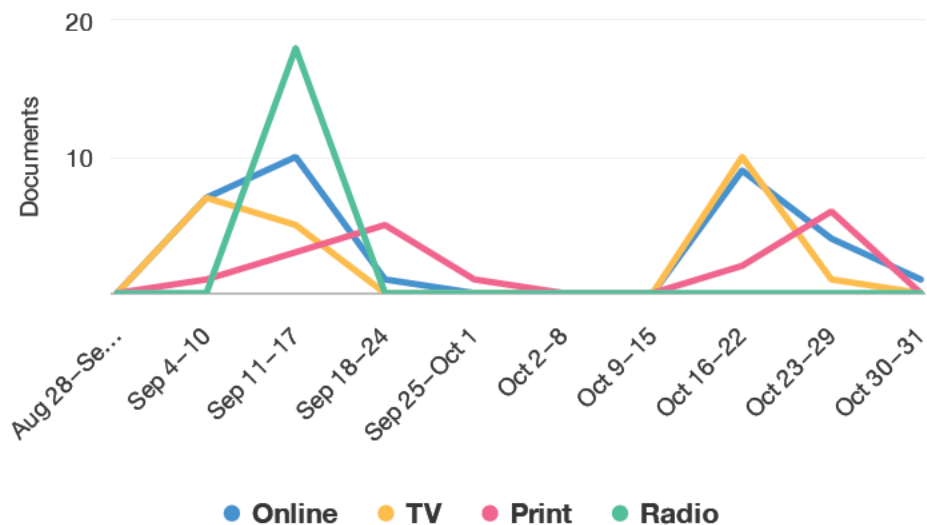
Sep 1 - Oct 31



- Online 35.2%
- TV 25.3%
- Print 19.8%
- Radio 19.8%

Mentions Trend by News Media Type

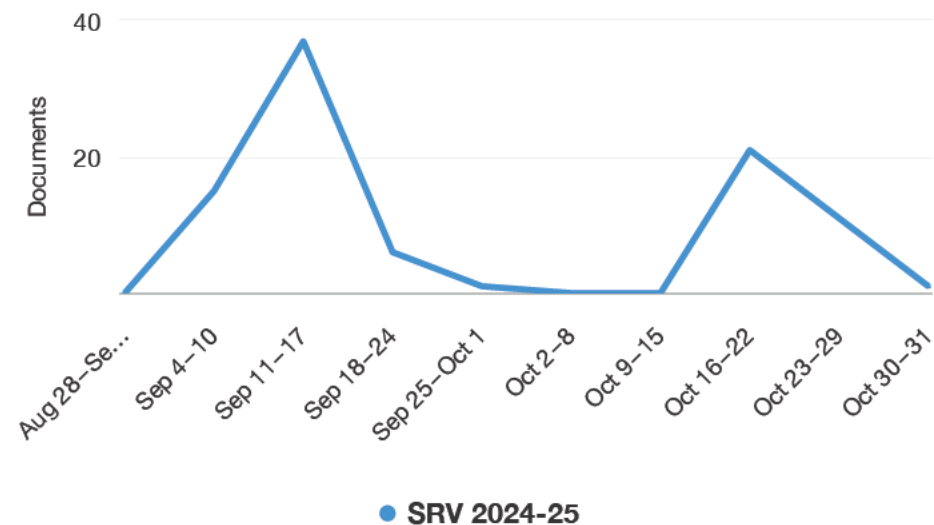
Sep 1 - Oct 31



- Online
- TV
- Print
- Radio

Mentions Trend

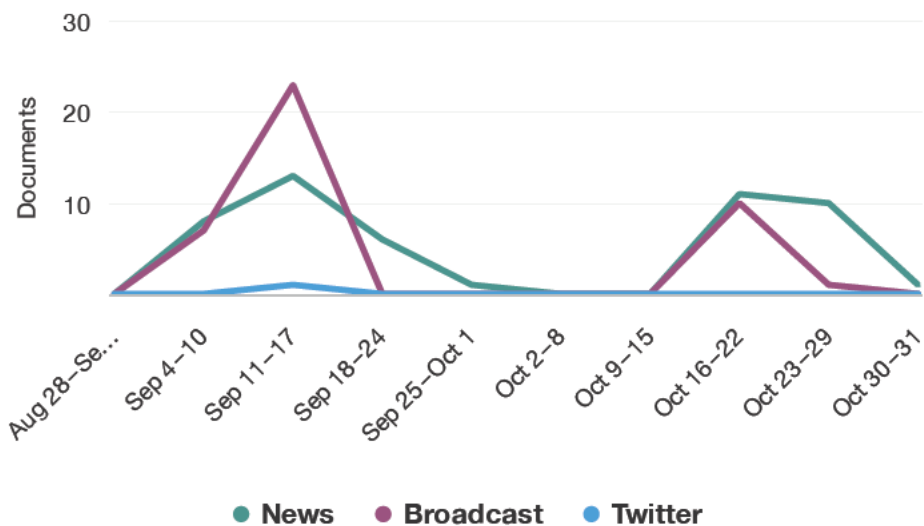
Sep 1 - Oct 31



- SRV 2024-25

Mentions Trend by Source Type

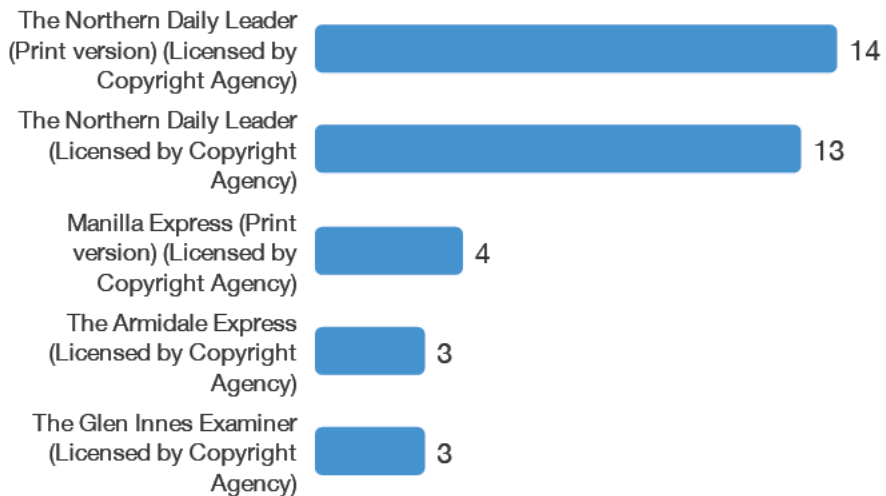
Sep 1 - Oct 31



- News
- Broadcast
- Twitter

Top Publications by Volume

Sep 1 - Oct 31



Top Keywords

Sep 1 - Oct 31



Total Potential Editorial Reach

Sep 1 - Oct 31

1.58M ↑ 2897%
Previous Value **52.9k**

Top Source Types

Sep 1 - Oct 31



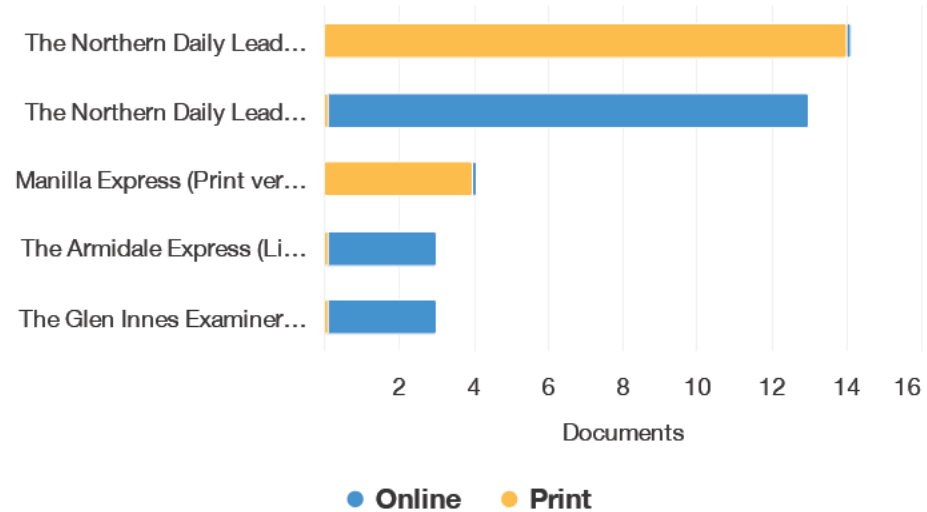
Total Mentions

Sep 1 - Oct 31

92 ↑ 4500%
Previous Value **2**

Top Publications by News Media Type

Sep 1 - Oct 31



Average Sentiment

Sep 1 - Oct 31

4 ↑ 108%
Previous Value **-50**

Most Social Shares

Sep 1 - Oct 31



The Northern Daily Leader (Licensed by Copyright Agency) • J
Editorial | AU | Sep 13 · 5:45 AM

Tamworth residents share thoughts on a 36 per cent rates increase

Tamworth council is embarking on a series of community consultations in a bid to get the public on board with a ...

Social Echo 18 0 0

47.3k Reach

Neutral

Highest Syndication

Sep 1 - Oct 31



The Northern Daily Leader (Licensed by Copyright Agency) • T
Editorial | AU | Sep 8 · 7:00 AM

Tamworth Regional Council considers special rate variation from IPART

Tamworth Regional Council mayor Russell Webb said without a rate rise the council could lose \$10 million a year. ...

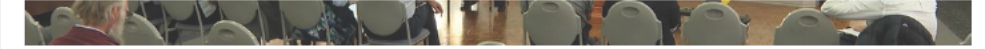
Social Echo 1 0 0

47.3k Reach

Neutral

Highest Potential Editorial Reach

Sep 1 - Oct 31



NBN News • Rob Douglas
Editorial | AU | Oct 17 · 6:01 AM

Residents express concerns as Tamworth Council launches rate rise community sessions

Tensions were running high, as community consultation began today for Tamworth Council's proposed rate rise. Concerned locals attended the ...

Social Echo 0 0 0

58.7k Reach

Negative

Top Posters by Social Reach

Sep 1 - Oct 31

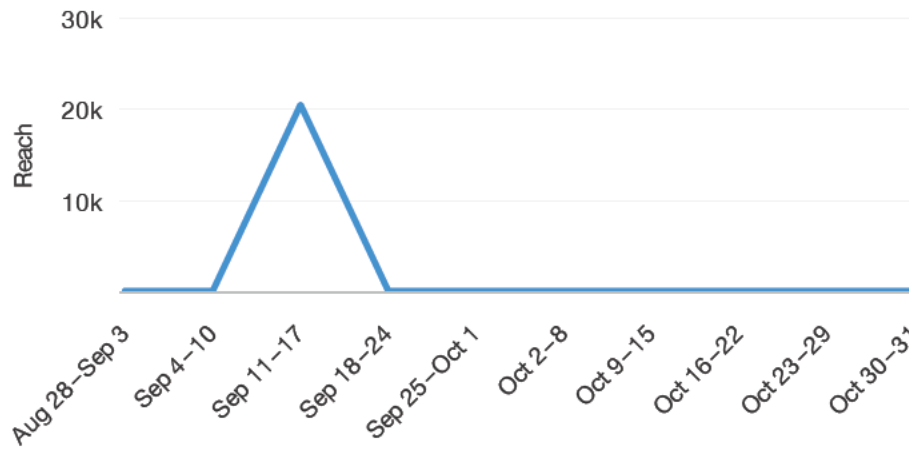
@nbnnews (NBN News)



20.5k

Social Reach Trend

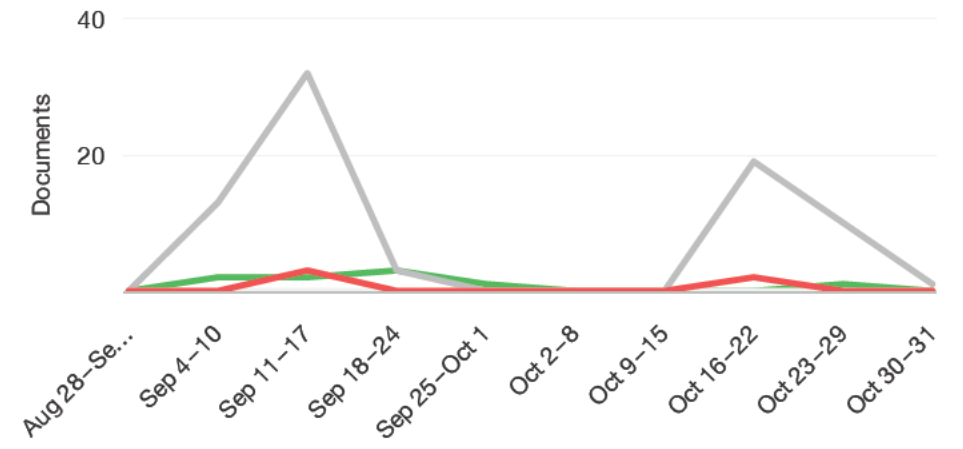
Sep 1 - Oct 31



● SRV 2024-25

Sentiment Trend

Sep 1 - Oct 31



● Positive ● Neutral ● Not rated ● Negative

Appendix E: Print advertisements (samples)

Let's talk...

SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL

We need to address rising costs if we want to be resilient in the years ahead and not have deteriorating roads and facilities.

We are starting a conversation with you about whether to apply for a Special Rate Variation to increase our rates income above the rate peg.

To learn more or provide feedback scan the QR code or go www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au

Let's talk...

SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL

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We are starting a conversation with you about whether to apply for a Special Rate Variation.

To learn more or provide feedback scan the QR code or go www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au

Public Consultation closes 31 October 2023

WHAT WILL BE IMPACTED ON YOUR RATES NOTICE?

The 36.3% SRV will only impact the two items highlighted in red on your rates notice. This is made up of the base rate for your property and the land value

PARTICULARS OF RATES AND CHARGES	CENTS IN \$	RATEABLE VALUE	AMOUNT
Ordinary Residential - Tamworth	@ 0.627900 c in \$	181000	\$1,136.32
Ordinary Residential Base Amount - Tamworth		0	\$180.00
Sewer Availability - Residential Charge		1	\$885.00
Stormwater Management Service - Residential	Availability Charge @ \$25.00	1	\$25.00
Water Availability - 20mm or not Connected	Availability Charge	1	\$319.00
Domestic Waste Base Charge - Urban	\$244.00 per Service	1	\$244.00
Domestic Waste Collection Serv - Urban	\$188.00 per Service	1	\$188.00

Instalment	Due	Amount
Instalment 1	31/08/2023	\$740.32
Instalment 2	30/11/2023	\$739.00
Instalment 3	28/02/2024	\$739.00
Instalment 4	31/05/2024	\$739.00

Payment in Full Amount Due: \$2,957.32

Appendix F: Community fact sheet

SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL

Fact Sheet



SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL – FACT SHEET

What was the decision Council made on 12 September 2023?

At the Council meeting on Tuesday 12 September, Council voted to start a conversation with the community about a potential Special Rate Variation (SRV).

What is a Special Rate Variation?

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets the amount Councils in NSW can increase rates by each year, which is called the rate peg. A Special Rate Variation is a request by Council to IPART to increase rates by more than the rate peg amount.

NSW councils can apply to IPART for a Special Rate Variation to the rate peg which will be considered against the guidelines set by the NSW Office of Local Government.

Why is a Special Rate Variation needed?

There is a widening gap between Tamworth Regional Council's income level and the growing costs of providing current services and infrastructure.

Up to now, Council has supported a steadily growing population and maintained its infrastructure and services within the scope of its revenue growth in line with the rate peg increases set by the State Government. However, in recent years this has become increasingly difficult.

Rate revenue represents around one-third of council's total revenue. In recent years the rate peg increase has not been sufficient for Council to deal with high inflationary pressures and cost shifting from State and Federal Government eg. Emergency Services Levy.

We have made appropriate use of savings to sustain us in recent years through our worst drought on record, extreme bushfires, the COVID pandemic, repeated major storm events and subsequent flooding.

This current financial year we have forecast a modest cash surplus, but over the next few years it is projected our cash reserves will be in decline. This is why we are starting a conversation with our community about whether to apply for a Special Rate Variation.

What is the proposed increase?

A permanent Special Rate Variation of 36.3 per cent over two years. The proposal comprises a variation of 18.5 per cent from July 1, 2024-25 (including the forecasted rate peg of 3.5 per cent) and 15 per cent in 2025-26 (including the forecasted rate peg of 2.5 per cent).

	2024-25	2025-26	Cumulative
Permanent increase above the rate peg	15.0%	12.5%	
Forecasted rate peg	3.5%	2.5%	
Total increase	18.5%	15.0%	36.3%

The impact on an individual's rates will be different depending on the unimproved land value of their property.

To find out what the increase will be for you, use our online rate calculator www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au.



The SRV applies to the general rate charge. This is the base rate and rateable value (or ad valorem) on your rates notice. It does not apply to garbage or general waste, sewerage, stormwater, or water charges.

WHAT WILL BE IMPACTED ON YOUR RATES NOTICE?

The 36.3% SRV will only impact the two items highlighted in red on your rates notice. This is made up of the base rate for your property and the rateable value.

Tamworth Regional Council
PO Box 555
Tamworth NSW 2340

RATES & CHARGES NOTICE

Tamworth Regional Council
ABN: 52 631 074 450
PO Box 555
TAMWORTH NSW 2340
General Enquiries (02) 6767 5555
Toll Free 1300 733 625
trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au
www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au

Mr J Citizen &
Mrs J Citizen
PO Box 123456
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Date of Issue: 26/07/2023
Property No: 123456
Deduct Payment Since: 19/07/2023
Valuation Base Date: 01/07/2022

PARTICULARS OF RATES AND CHARGES	CENTS IN \$	RATEABLE VALUE	AMOUNT
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Instalment 3	28/02/2024	\$739.00
Instalment 4	31/05/2024	\$739.00

How do our rates compare with similar Councils?

The Office of Local Government considers Tamworth Regional Council as a Group 4 council alongside Albury, Dubbo, Broken Hill, Armidale, Byron, Ballina and Eurobodalla. When Tamworth Regional Council rates are compared with others in Group 4, the amount paid by our residential ratepayers is currently 'significantly below' the group average. To learn more go to www.yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au

What will the SRV be spent on?

Council is guided by what the community wants when setting its priorities. The proposed Special Rate Variation will enable Council to:

- Invest more on its transport and road networks across the region to meet community expectation, and address the adverse impact of climate change on their quality. **Two thirds of the proposed SRV will be allocated to our roads and transport networks.**
- Invest adequately in its infrastructure to maintain assets at fit for purpose conditions.
- Deliver the actions in adopted sports and recreation strategies and masterplans for key sites such as Victoria Park, Bicentennial Park and Chaffey Park.
- Invest in Council's aquatic facilities
- Undertake key transport upgrades such as Jewry Street, Moore Creek Road and in the CBD.
- Return key assets back to a satisfactory condition, particularly in stormwater and buildings (such as Town Hall, Community Centre and TRECC).
- Deliver key approved projects such as the Skywalk and remediation of Ray Walsh House.
- Build a new animal rehoming pound.

Why doesn't Council manage its finances better?

Tamworth Regional Council has been able to hold off on seeking a Special Rate Variation until now through our track record of strong financial management. Many nearby local government areas have already been granted a sizeable Special Rate Variation this current financial year.

We have already implemented a range of efficiency and productivity improvements to create operational savings, however an increase to our rate income is an option we must look at if we want to continue to deliver the services and projects our community has told us they want and need.

Council has made every effort to avoid asking our ratepayers to sustain an increase in rates but we are at a point where we must seriously consider it or reassess our current priorities.

Council regularly reviews its operations and actively identifies and takes actions to ensure that it is containing costs and finds efficiency gains, so that it is able to provide value for money to the community. We have already identified \$7.9 million in annual savings or additional revenue and \$3.2 million in one-off savings through implementing 189 initiatives over the last few years.

Council has a plan to implement a further 24 actions in the coming years providing further annual net savings and benefits of \$1.6 million and one-off net savings and benefits of \$2.2 million. These improvements have been included in its updated Long Term Financial Plan.

Has Council considered the community is doing it tough as well?

Yes, Council knows the community is doing it tough and did not jump to request an increase last year when 17 other NSW Councils were faced with the same financial challenges and decided to act immediately. Compared to other council requests for a Special Rate Variation ours is modest.

Unfortunately, the money is required to keep infrastructure adequately maintained so we can continue to deliver the same level of service that the Community expects.

For those that are struggling, Council has a "Hardship Policy" and is in the process of revising it to ensure that the most vulnerable in our community has the means and the support they need in times that are challenging.

What happens if the community say no to the proposal?

Under the Local Government Act, Council is required to apply sound financial management principles which include ensuring balancing expenditure with revenue. Council is seeking feedback and submissions on the potential for an SRV. But the Council will need to weight the feedback received against its obligations under the Local Government Act.

What will happen if IPART does not approve the SRV?

If Council could not increase its rates revenue through an SRV, it would not be able to adequately fund its asset renewal and maintenance, particularly in roads. It would also not be able to deliver the projects identified to address key areas of asset backlog, particularly in sports and recreation (including pools), stormwater, roads and buildings.

As this investment in infrastructure is critical to supporting a growing population, Council's Blueprint 100 strategy and commitments to the community under the Community Strategic Plan are jeopardised if a Special Rate Variation is not approved.

What happens now?

Until the end of October this year we will be actively providing you with a range of information to raise your awareness and understanding about the need for a Special Rate Variation.

This information will be provided through Council's website and social media channels, traditional media advertising (print, radio and television), community information sessions and online webinars. There will also be a printed newsletter sent to all ratepayers and available for download from Council's website for all local residents.

What will happen next?

Once the community consultation period concludes, Council will review the feedback received.

At a November Ordinary Meeting Councillors will decide whether to proceed with a Special Rate Variation application for 2024-25 with the application to be lodged in or before February 2024.

IPART will announce the outcome of the application in May or June next year with any approved increase to apply to rates from July 2024.

How can I provide feedback or find out more?

Council encourages residents and ratepayers who wish to provide feedback to do so through any of the following:

- Website – www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au
- Letter – **General Manager, PO Box 555 Tamworth NSW 2340**
- Email – trc@tamworth.nsw.gov.au
- Phone – **Customer Service 02 6767 5555**



Information Sessions:

Tamworth

Heritage Room, Tamworth Community Centre
Tue 17 Oct, 11.30am - 12.30pm

Passchendaele Room, Tamworth Town Hall
Tue 17 Oct, 6.00pm - 7.00pm

Barraba

Conference Room, Barraba Playhouse
Wed 18 Oct, 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Manilla

Manilla Small Town Hall
Wed 18 Oct, 5.30pm - 6.30pm

Nundle

Nundle Bowling Club
Thur 19 Oct, 11.30am - 12.30pm

Kootingal - Moonbi - Bendemeer

Moonbi Hall, Gill Street
Thur 19 Oct, 5.30pm - 6.30pm


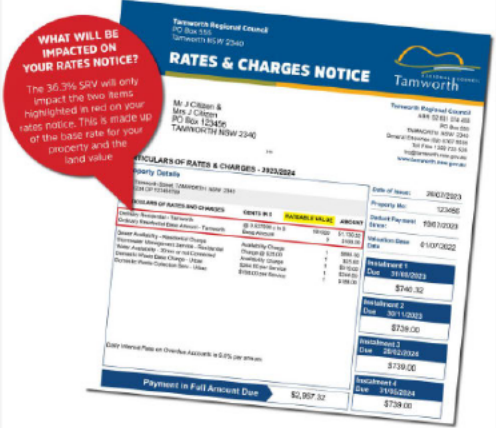
Webinars


Registration required
Wed 11 Oct, 12.00pm - 1.00pm
Wed 11 Oct, 6.00pm - 7.00pm

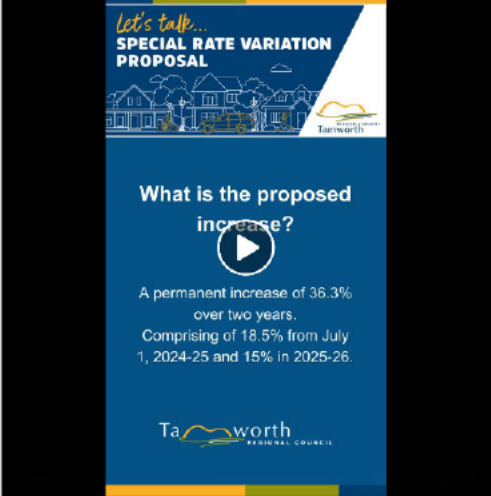

To register for an information session or find out more scan the QR code or go to www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au






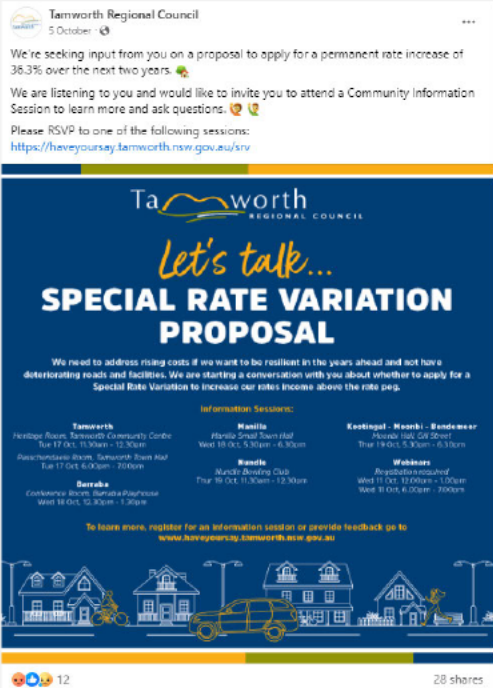
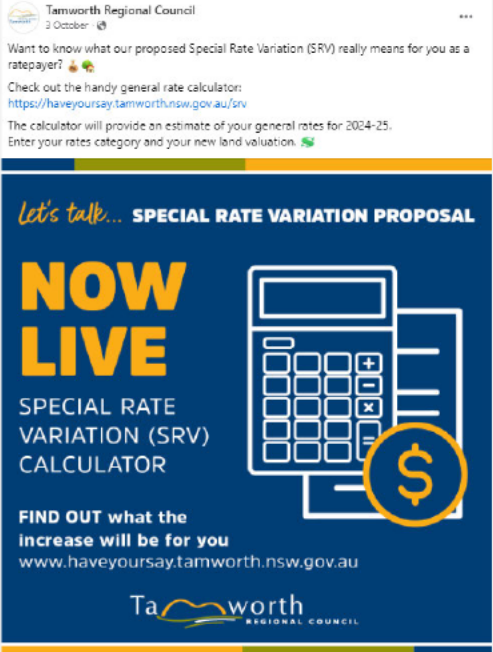
Appendix G: Facebook posts

Date	Post	Engagement
31 October 2023	<p>Tamworth Regional Council 31 October at 14:00</p> <p>Let's Talk Special Rate Variation proposal 🗨️</p> <p>Today is your last chance to provide feedback on the SRV proposal before the November Council meeting where the Councilors will discuss whether to apply to IPART for the rates increase in 2024/25.</p> <p>To learn more, provide feedback or register for an information session head to https://haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/srv</p>  <p>5 likes 1 comment</p>	<p>Engagement: 32</p> <p>Reach: 778</p>
27 October 2023	<p>Tamworth Regional Council 27 October at 15:09</p> <p>What would change on my rates? 🗨️</p> <p>The proposed Special Rate Variation applies to the general rate charge. This is a base rate and land value (or ad valorem) charge on your rates notice. It does not apply to garbage or general waste, sewerage, stormwater, or water charges.</p> <p>To see what impact the proposed SRV options have on your rates, you can use the rates calculator on https://haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/srv</p> <p>Paper copies regarding information on the proposed SRV are available at Council's Customer Service. 🗨️</p> <p>No decision has been made on whether to apply for an SRV, we are still seeking feedback at https://haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/srv before 31 October, 2023.</p>  <p>6 likes 1 comment 7 shares</p>	<p>Engagement: 654</p> <p>Reach: 3,600</p>

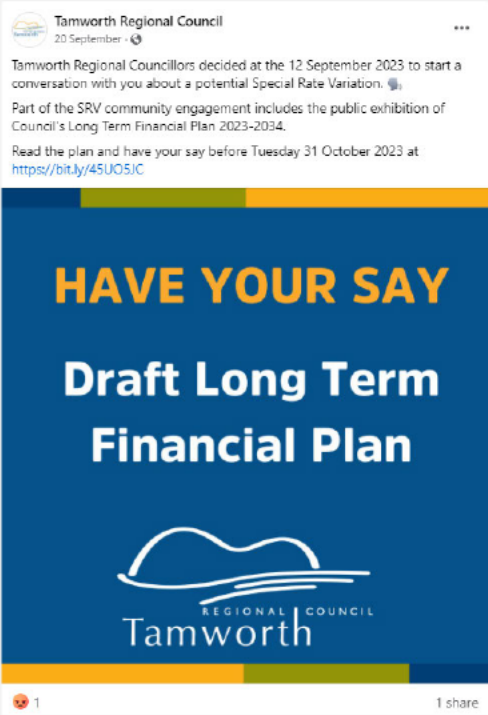
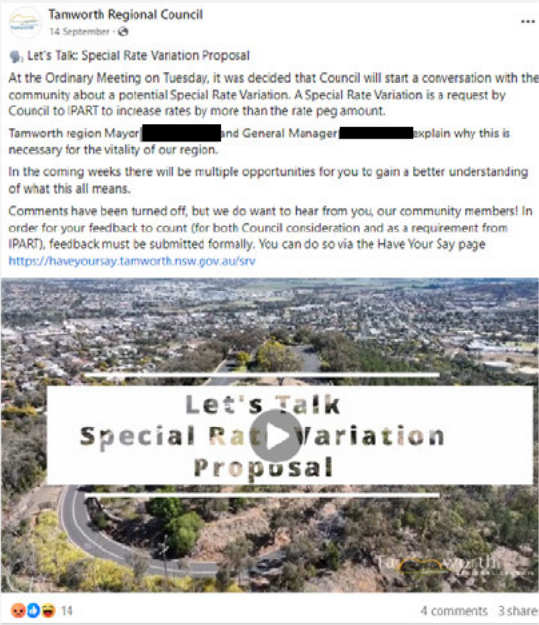
Date	Post	Engagement
25 October 2023	<p>Tamworth Regional Council 25 October at 14:03</p> <p>Let's Talk: Special Rate Variation Proposal</p> <p>If you were unable to attend one of the Community Information Sessions or would like to see the presentation again, it has been recorded for you to view on the project page https://haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/srv</p> <p>Consultation closes 31 October 2023.</p> <hr/> <p>What has Council done to manage this?</p> <div data-bbox="411 611 863 842"> <p>189 Initiatives implemented</p> <p>180 Savings realised: \$7.9 million p.a., \$9.2 million one-off</p> <p>250 Planned savings: \$1.6 million annually, \$2.2 million one-off</p> <p>Summary of planned savings</p> <p>Planned and future initiatives</p> <p>24 Initiatives in LTFP, 14 Future initiatives</p> <p>Resource needs: 10</p> <p>Future initiatives: 14</p> </div> <hr/> <p>7 reactions, 1 comment</p>	<p>Engagement: 219</p> <p>Reach: 1,600</p>
24 October 2023	<p>Tamworth Regional Council 24 October at 17:12</p> <p>Thank you for all the feedback coming through regarding the Special Rate Variation Proposal.</p> <p>We have received a lot of questions about roads around the region. Two thirds of the proposed SRV will be allocated to our roads and transport network. Council's Manager of Operations explains the growing costs of our transport network and the current challenges across the region.</p> <p>Learn more or provide feedback at https://haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/srv</p> <div data-bbox="389 1162 880 1659">  <p>But the problem with that is that our rates have only increased by around about 2%.</p> </div> <hr/> <p>9 reactions, 1 comment, 4 shares</p>	<p>Engagement: 194</p> <p>Reach: 1,100</p>

Date	Post	Engagement
20 October 2023	<p>Tamworth Regional Council 20 October at 12:12 · 🌐</p> <p>We want you to know the facts about the Special Rate Variation proposal. These are just some of the questions that have been popping up. You can find out more information here, www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/srv</p>  <p>👍❤️👍 12 5 shares</p>	<p>Engagement: 1,200</p> <p>Reach: 39</p>
19 October 2023	<p>Tamworth Regional Council 19 October at 15:55 · 🌐</p> <p>Come along and talk to the Mayor and General Manager about the proposed Special Rate Variation.</p> <p>🕒 When: Tonight at 5:30pm 📍 Where: Moonbi Community Hall</p> <p>You can learn more or leave feedback at https://www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/srv before 31 October, 2023.</p>  <p>👍❤️👍 3 2 shares</p>	<p>Engagement: 58</p> <p>Reach: 1,500</p>

Date	Post	Engagement
17 October 2023		<p>Engagement: 66</p> <p>Reach: 1,300</p>
09 October 2023		<p>Engagement: 136</p> <p>Reach: 2,100</p>
06 October 2023		<p>Engagement: 2,500</p> <p>Reach: 89,500</p>

Date	Post	Engagement
05 October 2023	 <p>12 reactions, 28 shares</p>	<p>Engagement: 1,300</p> <p>Reach: 7,300</p>
03 October 2023	 <p>15 reactions, 2 shares</p>	<p>Engagement: 296</p> <p>Reach: 3,900</p>

Date	Post	Engagement
<p>27 September 2023</p>		<p>Engagement: 99 Reach: 1,300</p>
<p>21 September 2023</p>		<p>Engagement: 1,100 Reach: 3,300</p>

Date	Post	Engagement
<p>20 September 2023</p>		<p>Engagement: 40 Reach: 1,200</p>
<p>14 September 2023</p>		<p>Engagement: 111 Reach: 1,300</p>


Date	Post	Engagement
<p>13 September 2023</p>		<p>Engagement: 199 Reach: 1,100</p>
<p>08 September 2023</p>		<p>Engagement: 1,700 Reach: 5,800</p>

Appendix H: Flyer (Letterbox drop)



Let's talk...

SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL





We need to address rising costs if we want to be resilient in the years ahead and not have deteriorating roads and facilities.

We are starting a conversation with you about whether to apply for a Special Rate Variation to increase our rates income above the rate peg.

Information Sessions:

<p>Tamworth Heritage Room, Tamworth Community Centre Tue 17 Oct, 11.30am - 12.30pm</p> <p>Passchendaele Room, Tamworth Town Hall Tue 17 Oct, 6.00pm - 7.00pm</p> <p>Barraba Conference Room, Barraba Playhouse Wed 18 Oct, 12.30pm - 1.30pm</p>	<p>Manilla Manilla Small Town Hall Wed 18 Oct, 5.30pm - 6.30pm</p> <p>Nundle Nundle Bowling Club Thur 19 Oct, 11.30am - 12.30pm</p> <p>Kootingal - Moonbi - Bendemeer Moonbi Hall, Gill Street Thur 19 Oct, 5.30pm - 6.30pm</p>	<p>Webinars Registration required Wed 11 Oct, 12.00pm - 1.00pm Wed 11 Oct, 6.00pm - 7.00pm</p>
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To learn more, register for an information session or provide feedback scan the QR code or go to www.haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au

Appendix I: Media coverage and reach

Date	Headline	URL	Reach
31-Oct-2023	Tamworth council special rate variation, what happens now?	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8406080/whats-next-for-councils-363-per-cent-special-rate-variation-proposal/?src=rss	38,617
29-Oct-2023	NBN TV - Tamworth News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/u7ThRbY7yxtsUITDRdHCDESEFTc?keywords=special%20rate%20variation,rate%20rise,Tamworth&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	113,464
29-Oct-2023	'Your council news' keeping Tamworth community connected with council	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8402483/council-launches-monthly-newsletter-to-better-stay-in-touch-from-the-mayors-desk/	38,617
28-Oct-2023	Letter: 'Offer a rate subsidy for residential properties'	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/459842177?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
28-Oct-2023	Letter: 'Offer a rate subsidy for residential properties'	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/459841401?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
28-Oct-2023	Budget secrets revealed	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/459840172?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
28-Oct-2023	What is Tamworth council doing to save money in wake of calls for rate rise?	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8402836/what-is-tamworth-council-doing-to-save-money-in-wake-of-calls-for-rate-rise/	38,617
28-Oct-2023	Have you calculated how much extra rates you'll pay? Letters to the editor	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8396646/crunch-the-numbers-on-what-a-rate-rise-will-cost-you-letters-to-the-editor/	38,617
25-Oct-2023	Barraba out in force about proposed special rate rise	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/459358912?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	0
25-Oct-2023	There's more to consider with the rate variation	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/459314610?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381

25-Oct-2023	Small towns ask 'what's in it for us?'	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/459311392?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
24-Oct-2023	How would a rate increase impact the Tamworth region's smaller communities?	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8397260/small-towns-ask-whats-in-it-for-us-as-council-pursues-rate-increase/?src=rss	38,617
20-Oct-2023	Lacking in transparency	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/458685390?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
19-Oct-2023	Prime7 Local News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/1JzfNTiwMkFzPsoRh2YunUUikuq?keywords=Tamworth,special%20rate%20variation&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
19-Oct-2023	Prime7 Local News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/luRvdpusByV47z3BocajUuZwNzA?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
19-Oct-2023	Ratepayers say Tamworth council lacks transparency in rates push	https://www.morechampion.com.au/story/8392284/accusations-of-tick-a-box-consultation-as-council-pushes-rate-increase/	3,494
19-Oct-2023	Ratepayers say Tamworth council lacks transparency in rates push	https://www.tenterfieldstar.com.au/story/8392284/accusations-of-tick-a-box-consultation-as-council-pushes-rate-increase/	1,218
19-Oct-2023	Ratepayers say Tamworth council lacks transparency in rates push	https://www.aleninessexaminer.com.au/story/8392284/accusations-of-tick-a-box-consultation-as-council-pushes-rate-increase/	6,042
19-Oct-2023	Ratepayers say Tamworth council lacks transparency in rates push	https://www.inverelltimes.com.au/story/8392284/accusations-of-tick-a-box-consultation-as-council-pushes-rate-increase/	1,482
19-Oct-2023	Ratepayers say Tamworth council lacks transparency in rates push	https://www.armidaleexpress.com.au/story/8392284/accusations-of-tick-a-box-consultation-as-council-pushes-rate-increase/	21,137
19-Oct-2023	Ratepayers say Tamworth council lacks transparency in rates push	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8392284/accusations-of-tick-a-box-consultation-as-council-pushes-rate-increase/	38,617
19-Oct-2023	Ratepayers say Tamworth council lacks	https://www.nvi.com.au/story/8392284/accusations-of-tick-a-box-consultation-as-	1,619

	transparency in rates push	council-pushes-rate-increase/	
18-Oct-2023	Residents voice concerns	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/458323173?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
17-Oct-2023	NBN TV - Gosford News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/0nuHBKXf3Cr-i9_rjfqAT7n6Csw?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
17-Oct-2023	NBN TV - Tamworth News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/aV0LiQvD4MXwihSpDajL6K48cT0?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	101,903
17-Oct-2023	NBN TV - Lismore News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/hAfMv87AilL0v6w0R7wNfkQ-YU?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
17-Oct-2023	NBN TV - Newcastle News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/F5WnH-CT9tZPuGMCD5XCrcp17pM?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	68,187
17-Oct-2023	NBN TV - Coffs Harbour News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/ZWjdCOAykufaT0F5x6a48VhPS8o?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
17-Oct-2023	NBN TV - Port Macquarie News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/tlE0WQwDXoy_QHEsjdYvwxKxFUC?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
17-Oct-2023	NBN TV - Tamworth News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/NXHLDLlivaWR07xx2B6SfhwPUXE?keywords=Tamworth%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	89,037
17-Oct-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at October 17th 2023 6:00 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/6o--MeyffwJ-6KlfxA2XcSMDMjl?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20increase&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	

17-Oct-2023	Residents express concerns as Tamworth Council launches rate rise community sessions	https://www.nbnnews.com.au/2023/10/17/residents-express-concerns-as-tamworth-council-launches-rate-rise-community-sessions/	58,681
17-Oct-2023	Tamworth council receives feedback on proposed rate increase	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8389885/council-hears-ratepayers-thoughts-on-a-proposed-363-per-cent-rate-increase/	38,617
28-Sep-2023	Be informed about rates increases	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/455828838?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
20-Sep-2023	Council seeks to raise rates for two years	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/454832753?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	0
20-Sep-2023	ROUND -ABOUT	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/454830983?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	0
20-Sep-2023	The Manilla View	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/454831597?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	0
19-Sep-2023	'Our greatest issue is water security'	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/454521261?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
19-Sep-2023	Plan to grow arts scene enters hiatus	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/454521174?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
18-Sep-2023	Tamworth council halts plans to upscale Capitol Theatre	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8354258/exit-stage-left-plan-to-grow-tamworths-arts-scene-enters-indefinite-hiatus/	47,326
17-Sep-2023	Tamworth Regional Council seeks 36.3 per cent rate rise: Mayor Russell Webb	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8350684/proposed-rate-rise-not-insignificant-tamworth-regional-mayor-russell-webb/?src=rss	47,326
16-Sep-2023	Discussion is the intention, says mayor	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/454256816?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
14-Sep-2023	How do locals feel about a big rate rise?	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/453961846?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
14-Sep-2023	Council votes to push ahead with	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/453961645?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381

	consultation on rates	=on&pdf=new	
13-Sep-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at September 13th 2023 9:15 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/14q0xXDDCKykC7vRck66SlrBmro?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at September 13th 2023 7:26 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/Q8AUD4bMyh - yWkzAtWNFWVv5iw?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	Prime7 Local News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/OXph2H8ftzbpfMtkzq0tZc3s3eE?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise,Tamworth%20Regional%20Council&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at September 13th 2023 5:55 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/uq93qyk6l0ql4Cbq- loZsNlss84?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	Tamworth residents share thoughts on a 36 per cent rates increase	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8348010/how-do-locals-feel-about-a-363-per-cent-rates-increase/	47,326
13-Sep-2023		http://twitter.com/nbnnews/statuses/1701761290254102841	20,514
13-Sep-2023	Breakfast	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/R4M2awwMKOwRmxX_vdBq6c0EeHQ?keywords=Tamworth,special%20rate%20variation&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	ABC New England North West AM at September 13th 2023 8:00 AM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/nBtVU_VQWjkWRhT_jA26ePlIloc?keywords=Tamworth%20regional%20Council,Tamworth,special%20rate%20variation&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	15,200
13-Sep-2023	Breakfast	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/XtaEJ2BhQkt1tT6No1HEu8qwUvk?keywords=Tamworth,special%20rate%20variation&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	ABC New England North West AM at September 13th 2023 7:43 AM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/UFzEjIU-YbkknF2PYddl6mq3B_s?keywords=Tamworth,special%20rate%20variation&cid=0a04b777	15,200

		7-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	Breakfast	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/mVSKU9aqZVSGXlbbBNci_UAv9u0?keywords=rate%20rise,Tamworth&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	Breakfast	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/k58YQ9cuTdy1TL_KMB-gByVr1Nk?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	ABC New England North West AM at September 13th 2023 7:35 AM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/htiuB0FJz2x4xM5QHcA4pnd9qiA?keywords=Tamworth%20regional%20Council,rate%20rise,Tamworth&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	15,200
13-Sep-2023	ABC New England North West AM at September 13th 2023 7:11 AM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/RRJvZ6j_EGH6MRL_sqBGNArZ248?keywords=Tamworth%20regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	15,200
13-Sep-2023	Breakfast	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/KCOU6_rtfb8mZ8QbbeD7bnPMbfo?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	Breakfast	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/o9m9cC7D0dAsCFEFR4pX4j2_34c?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise,Tamworth&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
13-Sep-2023	ABC New England North West AM at September 13th 2023 6:35 AM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/zsxcqWiT46eP3GaHlkeqCqyupo8?keywords=Tamworth%20regional%20Council,rate%20rise,Tamworth&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	15,200
13-Sep-2023	Tamworth council takes plan to increase rates out for public consultation	https://www.inverelltimes.com.au/story/8346576/council-votes-to-push-ahead-with-consultation-on-rate-increase/	4,330
13-Sep-2023	Tamworth council takes plan to increase rates out for public consultation	https://www.tenterfieldstar.com.au/story/8346576/council-votes-to-push-ahead-with-consultation-on-rate-increase/	1,623

13-Sep-2023	Tamworth council takes plan to increase rates out for public consultation	https://www.nvi.com.au/story/8346576/council-votes-to-push-ahead-with-consultation-on-rate-increase/	2,782
13-Sep-2023	Tamworth council takes plan to increase rates out for public consultation	https://www.morechampion.com.au/story/8346576/council-votes-to-push-ahead-with-consultation-on-rate-increase/	4,567
13-Sep-2023	Tamworth council takes plan to increase rates out for public consultation	https://www.gleninnesexaminer.com.au/story/8346576/council-votes-to-push-ahead-with-consultation-on-rate-increase/	10,841
13-Sep-2023	Tamworth council takes plan to increase rates out for public consultation	https://www.armidaleexpress.com.au/story/8346576/council-votes-to-push-ahead-with-consultation-on-rate-increase/	18,537
13-Sep-2023	Tamworth council takes plan to increase rates out for public consultation	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8346576/council-votes-to-push-ahead-with-consultation-on-rate-increase/	47,326
12-Sep-2023	Prime7 Local News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/3xxDyis5altwAjvSSP0QVuyYKya?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
11-Sep-2023	Breakfast	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/KFPa2-8aZP14N3kkDbc5QBFsRX8?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
11-Sep-2023	ABC New England North West AM at September 11th 2023 8:30 AM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/36zleMBK_83K_3dISYcS6vj-tQ4?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	15,200
11-Sep-2023	Breakfast	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/AJWuLADWBkjlDw4ypSdj0Le1Jpl?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	



11-Sep-2023	ABC New England North West AM at September 11th 2023 7:30 AM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/FI5SrEdCI51MZVmRN29jTL4dq2Y?keywords=Tamworth%20regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	15,200
11-Sep-2023	ABC New England North West AM at September 11th 2023 7:20 AM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/wLdkaqAuRyCLABPSIsdJlkDValc?keywords=special%20rate%20variation,Tamworth&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	15,200
11-Sep-2023	Breakfast	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/rEyPLY3hM_u-lb_W2zt3q7TYFY?keywords=special%20rate%20variation,Tamworth&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
11-Sep-2023	ABC New England North West AM at September 11th 2023 6:30 AM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/P4QST690vxP5i5qW-en3GOcRmoA?keywords=Tamworth%20regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	15,200
11-Sep-2023	Tamworth ratepayers association hits back at council plan to up rates	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8343639/ratepayers-association-outraqed-by-extreme-plan-to-raise-rates-36-per-cent/	47,326
09-Sep-2023	'We can't wait': Council could up rates by 36 per cent	https://ausprint.meltwater.com/print_clip_previewer/453359069?text=on&keyword=on&pdf=new	24,381
08-Sep-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at September 8th 2023 9:50 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/Z6AF_eHHPj9CNv1iZ1QxdFUzIhc?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
08-Sep-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at September 8th 2023 9:00 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/ebehl-3Kzfpz0OLX_mt3u4RrOP4?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
08-Sep-2023	Prime7 Local News	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/afuoKdNkrPwFlaGZRlXKPKO1i1c?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
08-Sep-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at September 8th 2023 5:20 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/ruNXtWN1wShrOcPcA9ikvpT8Hlw?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	



		6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
08-Sep-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at September 8th 2023 5:00 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/UovT7kQe4rScYWYr9l2qyhZfehW?keywords=Tamworth%20Regional%20Council,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
08-Sep-2023	Tamworth Regional Council considers special rate variation from IPART	https://www.morechampion.com.au/story/8341850/we-cant-wait-any-longer-council-could-up-rates-by-more-than-30-per-cent-across-two-years/	4,567
08-Sep-2023	Tamworth Regional Council considers special rate variation from IPART	https://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/8341850/we-cant-wait-any-longer-council-could-up-rates-by-more-than-30-per-cent-across-two-years/	47,326
08-Sep-2023	Tamworth Regional Council considers special rate variation from IPART	https://www.tenterfieldstar.com.au/story/8341850/we-cant-wait-any-longer-council-could-up-rates-by-more-than-30-per-cent-across-two-years/	1,623
08-Sep-2023	Tamworth Regional Council considers special rate variation from IPART	https://www.gleninnesexaminer.com.au/story/8341850/we-cant-wait-any-longer-council-could-up-rates-by-more-than-30-per-cent-across-two-years/	10,841
08-Sep-2023	Tamworth Regional Council considers special rate variation from IPART	https://www.armidaleexpress.com.au/story/8341850/we-cant-wait-any-longer-council-could-up-rates-by-more-than-30-per-cent-across-two-years/	18,537
08-Sep-2023	Tamworth Regional Council considers special rate variation from IPART	https://www.nvi.com.au/story/8341850/we-cant-wait-any-longer-council-could-up-rates-by-more-than-30-per-cent-across-two-years/	2,782
08-Sep-2023	Tamworth Regional Council considers special rate variation from IPART	https://www.inverelltimes.com.au/story/8341850/we-cant-wait-any-longer-council-could-up-rates-by-more-than-30-per-cent-across-two-years/	4,330
08-Sep-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at September 8th 2023 4:41 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/cVJ5HaiOJopRmRup6pbVbewG3p0?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
08-Sep-2023	Prime7 Tamworth at September 8th 2023 2:05 PM	https://transition.meltwater.com/paywall/redirect/k7qTdcYlyD5w_f1XZzc1jNet-EY?keywords=Tamworth,rate%20rise&cid=0a04b777-7b8b-43d8-b84b-6f9c5114d990&productType=excel	
Total			1,604,547

Appendix J: Communications and marketing collateral



The poster features a dark blue background with a yellow and green horizontal bar at the top and bottom. The Taamworth Regional Council logo is at the top, followed by the text 'Let's talk...' in a yellow script font. The main title 'SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL' is in large white bold letters. Below this, three paragraphs of white text explain the need for the proposal and provide information on how to learn more. A yellow banner at the bottom contains information about an information session. The bottom of the poster features a white line-art illustration of a residential street with houses, trees, a cyclist, a car, and a jogger. A QR code is located in the bottom left corner of the illustration area.

Taamworth
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Let's talk...

SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL

We need to address rising costs if we want to be resilient in the years ahead and not have deteriorating roads and facilities.

We are starting a conversation with you about whether to apply for a Special Rate Variation to increase our rates income above the rate peg.

To find out more or join the conversation visit us at one of our community information sessions or online at haveyoursay.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/srv

Want to learn more or have questions? Come along to the information session at the **Nundle Bowling Club on Thursday 19 October 11.30am**



Appendix K: Open-ended survey response coding guide

Coded theme	Example comments
Affordability and hardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This rise is unaffordable for most people. - Many pensioners, people on disability pensions and unemployed won't be able to afford this. - Even the rate peg is more than what the pension increase is.
Cost of living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The cost of living is so difficult already. - Interest rates, fuel and grocery costs have all risen drastically. - People are struggling as the cost of living is going up, everyone is tightening their belts.
Timing and extent of SV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although I understand with increasing inflation a reasonable increase in rates is required, this is excessive. - I understand the need to raise rates, but it is ridiculous to do it by this much. - Right now is not the time for a rate rise, everything is going up. - A minor increase above the rate peg could possibly be understood, but the substantial amount above that that you're seeking is just greediness.
Service level reduction and major project review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rather than this SV, Council needs to provide a number of service reductions. - Council needs to stop looking at the grandiose projects some are proposing. - Pressuring existing residents to pay for non-essential projects is not sensible.
Communication and consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many people weren't notified about the meetings on the rate rises. Very poor communication from Council. - Our community needs clear communication on how and where the rate increase will be applied within it. Not major over-reaching projects, but local specific applications. - I think there needs to be more community consultation before a decision is made.
Council management and operational efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look for efficiencies, pull in spending. - Make significant reductions in Council spending before asking for a rate rise. - If TRC Managed our money better they wouldn't be in a financial crisis. - No to an increase, manage your money better.
Social and economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If this rate rise goes ahead, we will be forced to consider selling and

Coded theme	Example comments
impact	<p>potentially moving from our home town to somewhere more affordable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excessive rates such as what has been proposed will make the area less desirable for people to be able to buy in. - Tamworth used to be a family town and good community but putting prices up will drive people away.
Benefit of proposed SV to rural communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manilla pays as much as, if not more, than Tamworth rates and have nothing. Only gets little things done when we complain. - We reside in Nundle and the lack of services do not warrant an increase. - The people and businesses of Manilla, as well as those of other non-Tamworth towns, will see no benefit from the proposed rate increase.