



NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL

# Special Rate Variation Survey Results

---

Consultation Report

February 2014

# Contents

Contents .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Methodology .....	3
Data Collection .....	3
Survey Findings .....	3
Support.....	3
Location of study participants .....	4
Property ownership.....	5
Employment status .....	6
Additional Comments – opposed to rate increase.....	7
Additional comments do not support.....	9
Additional comments – supportive of rate increase.....	10
Verbatims not in support of rate increase .....	12
Verbatims in support of rate increase .....	16

## Introduction

The Newcastle Voice underwent consultation for the Council's application to IPART. Consultation was undertaken from 28 January to 12 February 2014. The basis of this survey was to identify community opinion regarding a one off increase to council rates. The Council proposed a 1.1% increase above the 2.3% rate cap (total rate increase of 3.4%). This 3.4% increase would serve to merely align the rise in rates with pre-existing expectations upon which long term budgets had been predicated.

## Methodology

### Data Collection

There were 2106 Newcastle Voice members invited to participate in the Special Rate Variation survey. Gaining hard copy members data is extremely time consuming and, as a result, the hardcopy members were unable to partake in the survey due to short deadlines. This was further complicated by the fact that there were not any *MyVoice* newsletters published during the period of the survey, and as a result the survey could not be advertised utilising that medium.

There were a total of 689 participants:

- Newcastle Voice members participants: 672
- Anonymous participants: 17

The survey was open to the wider community on the Council's website as a featured item, current consultations, Newcastle Voice Facebook page and was emailed to all Newcastle Voice members.

## Survey Findings

### Support

Respondents were asked if they support the 1.1% rate increase. The results were relatively close with 54% not in support and 46% in support. The following report presents results in a format showing the level of support as well as a ranking of importance.

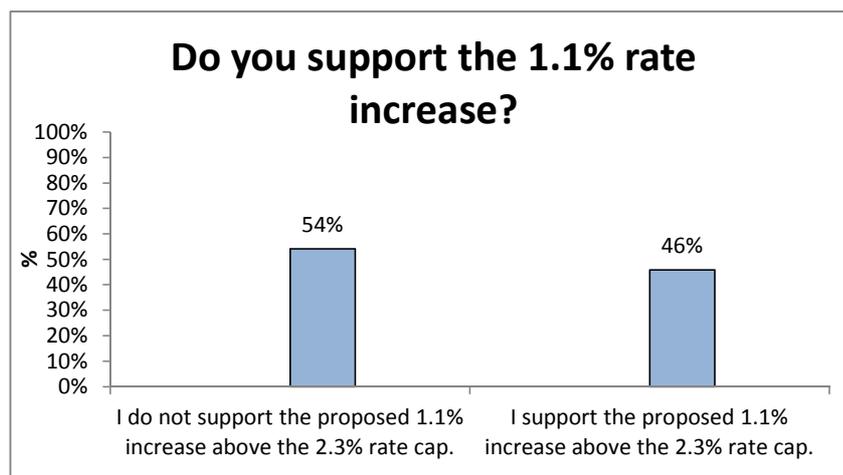


Figure 1 Support for rate increase

## Location of study participants

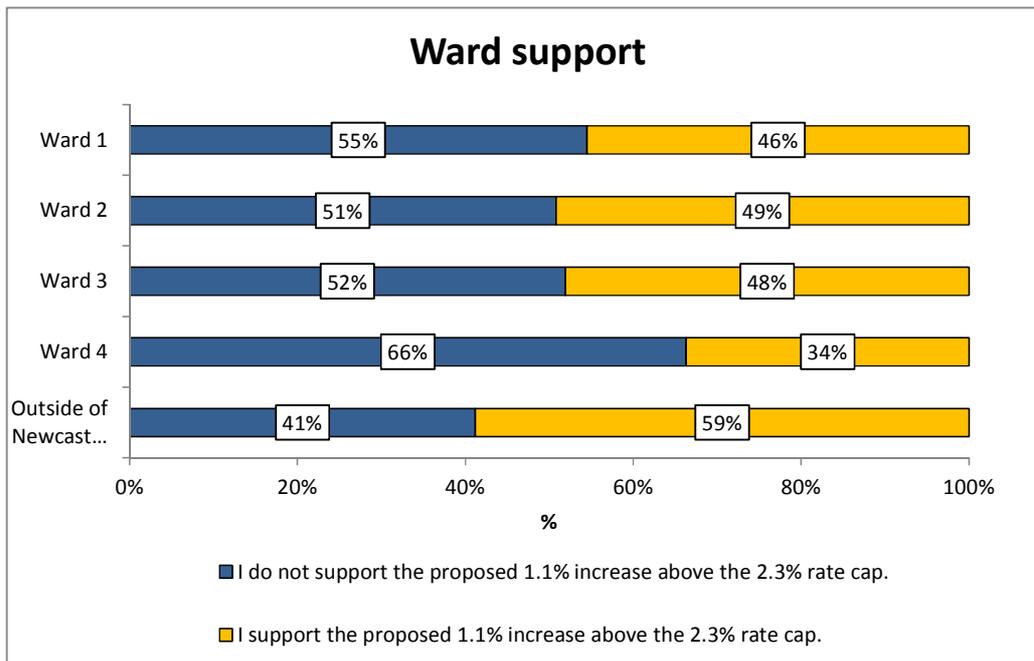
Participants were asked where they lived in order to gain an understanding of the location of study participants and to thereby determine which Council wards oppose the rate increase. This is particularly valuable information as rates are dependent on property values.

The majority of respondents reside in ward 1 (37%). As the wards move further away from the CBD the participation decreases. Ward 2 was the next highest level of participation at 28%, only 2% of respondent's live outside of Newcastle and own property in Newcastle.

**Table 1 Location of study participants**

Area	Suburbs	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Ward 1	Carrington, Cooks Hill, Islington, Kooragang, Maryville, Mayfield, Mayfield East, Mayfield West, Newcastle (CBD), Newcastle East, Newcastle West, Stockton, The Hill, Tighes Hill, Warabrook, Wickham	257	37%
Ward 2	Adamstown, Adamstown Heights, Bar Beach, Broadmeadow, Hamilton, Hamilton East, Hamilton North, Hamilton South, Merewether, Merewether Heights, The Junction	193	28%
Ward 3	Georgetown, Jesmond, Kotara, Lambton, New Lambton, New Lambton Heights, North Lambton, Waratah, Waratah West	133	19%
Ward 4	Beresfield, Birmingham Gardens, Blackhill / Lenaghan, Callaghan, Elernmore Vale, Fletcher, Hexham, Maryland, Minmi, Rankin Park, Sandgate, Shortland, Tarro, Wallsend	89	13%
Outside	Outside of Newcastle, but own property in Newcastle	17	2%
<b>Total</b>		<b>689</b>	<b>100%</b>

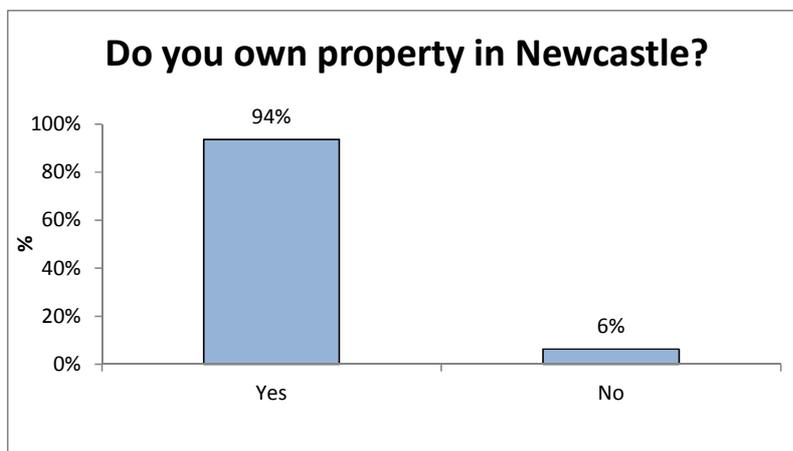
The figure below identifies the support of the rate increase by ward. Ward 4 is the least supportive of a rate increase (66%). This may be due to Ward 4 feeling that they are less connected to the higher profile CBD-centric projects. The most supportive area is ward 2 with 49%. Those that identified as 'outside of Newcastle, but own property' were the most supportive area overall (59%).



**Figure 2 Support by ward**

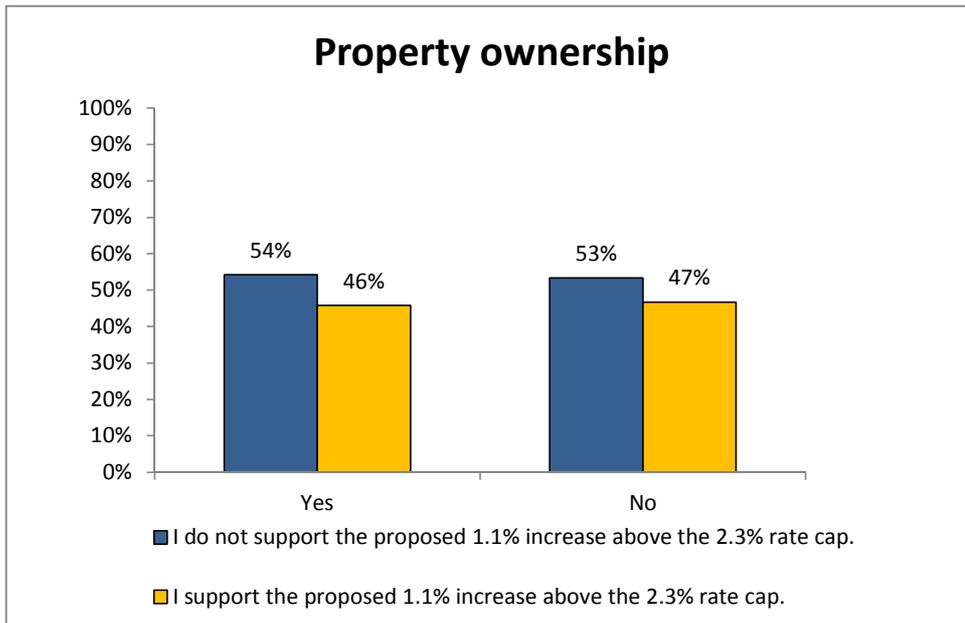
## Property ownership

It is important to identify property ownership to gauge whether the opposition and support rates differ. Results show that 94% of participants own property in Newcastle and 6% do not.



**Caption: 1 Property ownership**

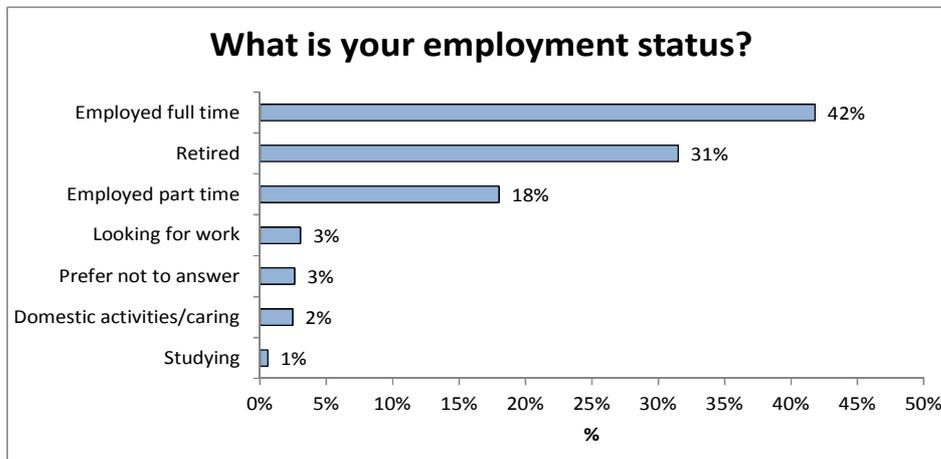
Levels of opposition and support were extremely similar despite property ownership status (1%). Rates payers that have purchased more expensive properties have put forth concerns in the open ended section of the survey, expressing a concern regarding the higher rates they are charged based on the value of their land. Some participants raised affordability issues in this respect. Participants renting in Newcastle were also concerned about the impact a rate increase may have on rent.



**Caption: 2 Support by property ownership**

## Employment status

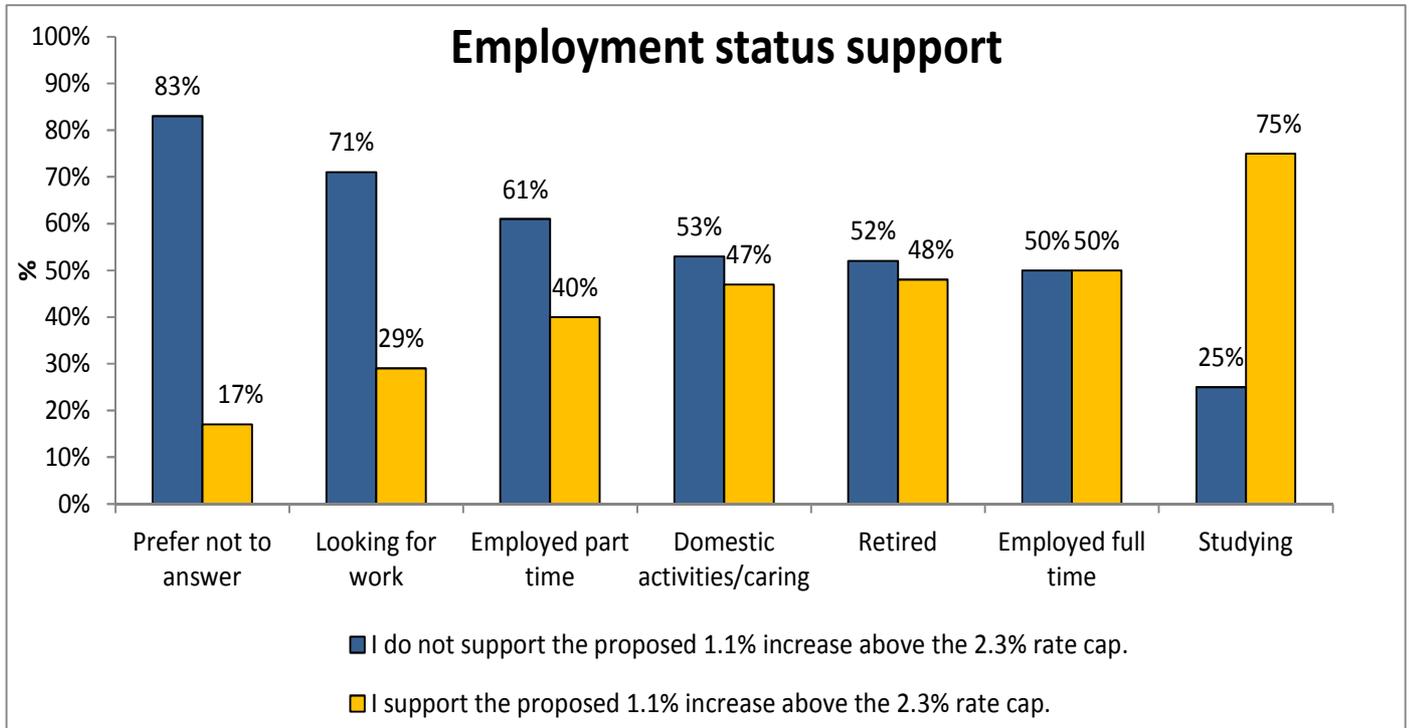
The majority of respondents are employed full time (42%), retired (31%) and employed part time (18%).



**Figure 3 Employment status**

The results for support by employment status shows that the most opposed to the rate rise was the respondents looking for work (71%), employed part time (61%) and domestic activities/ caring (53%).

The most supportive of the rate increase are those that elected employment status as studying (75%), employed full time split half supportive and half opposing (50%), retired (48%).



**Figure 4 Support by employment status**

### Additional Comments – opposed to rate increase

Of those opposing the rate increase, the most common issues raised were:

- Council needs to be more financially conscious and continue cost saving initiatives
- Council needs to focus on core business
- Current rates are high enough and there is no value for money
- Cut more costs internally

The most prevalent issue for those respondents opposing the rate increase was in regards to Council needing to be more financially conscious and to continue cost saving initiatives (39%). Many respondents believe that the Council is financially mismanaged.

*“I feel Council has wasted money on unnecessary things recently, and should not be encouraged to continue to do so. Work smarter.”*

*“I don't support the increase as it identifies the council have not managed their income to expenditure ratio.”*

*“Any increase in rates will be badly spent and would not lead to the tackling of the real problem of mismanagement.”*

Respondents perceive that Council needs to focus on core business (20%). Respondents are concerned that Council spends money on projects that are non essential. Respondents identified core business as day to day activities such as ensuring the bins are collected and maintaining

roads and parks. Participants believe that the other projects that are not essential activities can wait until Council is more financially stable.

*“All I see is unrest in council, wasting of funds on arguments and disputes, lack of additional modification and improvement to infrastructure, short sightedness when it comes to the economic value of tourism and hospitality.”*

*“As a business owner when I am in the red, I cannot just put up rates as I would like, I have to operate within my financial means, whether I like the outcome or not.”*

*“If the Council did not waste money on things like fighting over the fig tree issue then this increase may not be necessary.”*

*“It should only focus on the core business of local government, i.e., roads, waste management, public safety, etc.”*

Some participants have stated that the current rates are high enough and that there is no value for money (18%). These respondents are not satisfied with the current level of services and as a result do not feel like they should pay an increased rate. The feedback also depicts that respondents believe that the Newcastle rates higher than those in surrounding areas.

*“Our rates are already significant.”*

*“I don't believe I am getting value for the rates I already pay.”*

*“I don't understand why Newcastle residents need to pay significantly more in rates than any of the surrounding LGAs for land of the same value.”*

Respondents would like to see more costs cut internally (17%). There were a few issues mentioned with this topic such as; Council needs to reduce staff, particularly upper management, eradicate or reduce the cost of the staff Christmas party, introduce pay cuts and outline budget restraints particularly where staff have been made redundant. The community want transparency.

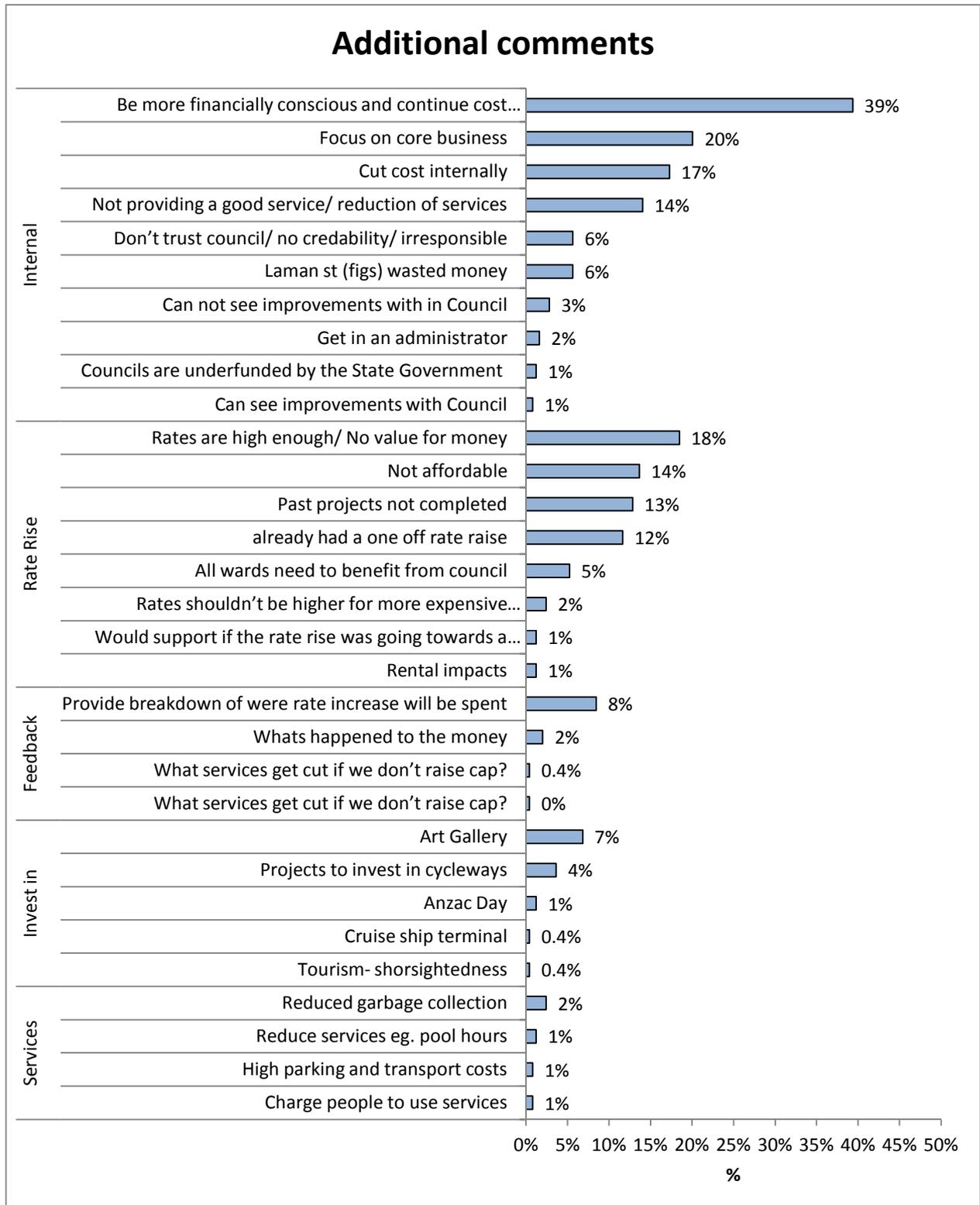
*“Council needs to address its financial problems from within, rather than seeking extra income from ratepayers who are already disadvantaged due to fewer council services than in past years.”*

*“I do not support rise as council has not informed us where this extra revenue is to be spent. Also stating they have reduced staff numbers is too vague. From where were these staff reduced?”*

*“When members of council take a pay cut then you can up my rates. I also know that no matter what I say you will do as you like as this consultation process is only to say you have consulted the public.”*

*“Council needs to find efficiencies internally like other Councils. A \$50,000 staff Christmas party would be a good start.”*

## Additional comments do not support



**Figure 5 Additional comments against rate increase**

*Note: Multiple responses were allowed.*

## Additional comments – supportive of rate increase

Recurring themes from those supporting the rate increase were:

- Supportive of the rate rise to pay for benefits and service Council provides
- Council needs to be more financially conscious and continue cost saving initiatives
- Supportive of a one off rate rise
- Council needs to focus on core business

The majority of the participants that are in support of the rate increase stated that they support rate rise to pay for benefits & services (32%). Participants identified Newcastle LGA having great services and are willing to pay to continue to enjoy these services.

*“We live in a great city and enjoy the benefits and we should all pay towards those benefits.”*

*“As a community we can’t expect to have facilities without helping pay for them. The days of councils and governments handing out \$m’s from a seemingly bottomless pit are over.”*

*“As a member of the community I am happy to contribute to ensuring that the city stays able to provide services and facilities to residents.”*

Participants feedback identified the need for Council to be more financially conscious and continue cost saving initiatives (31%). This issue was also raised as a concern from those opposing the rate increase. The participants in support of the rate increase believe Council requires better financial management and need to continue to focus on gaining financial sustainability.

*“Council is just beginning to act responsibly, after years of neglect, partisanship and terrible Labor maladministration. This should be a once off to get the house in order, then work should be done to lower rates and live within council’s (and the community’s) means.”*

*“Spend the money wisely so that the general public can see and experience the expenditure”*

*“Would like to see NCC concentrate on core responsibilities and functions and not waste time or funds on promotion of events i.e. fireworks, markets etc.”*

Participants that commented that they were in support of a one off rate rise (16%), also stated that support may be withdrawn if there is a further increase to rates in the future.

*“Council is (at last) showing leadership in setting its priorities and cutting back on non-core programs. Ratepayers should get behind their efforts and support the one-off increase.”*

*“Hope this isn’t going to repeat in 2015....”*

*“I agree to this increase only, consultation will be required by the public prior to another increase is sought by NCC.”*

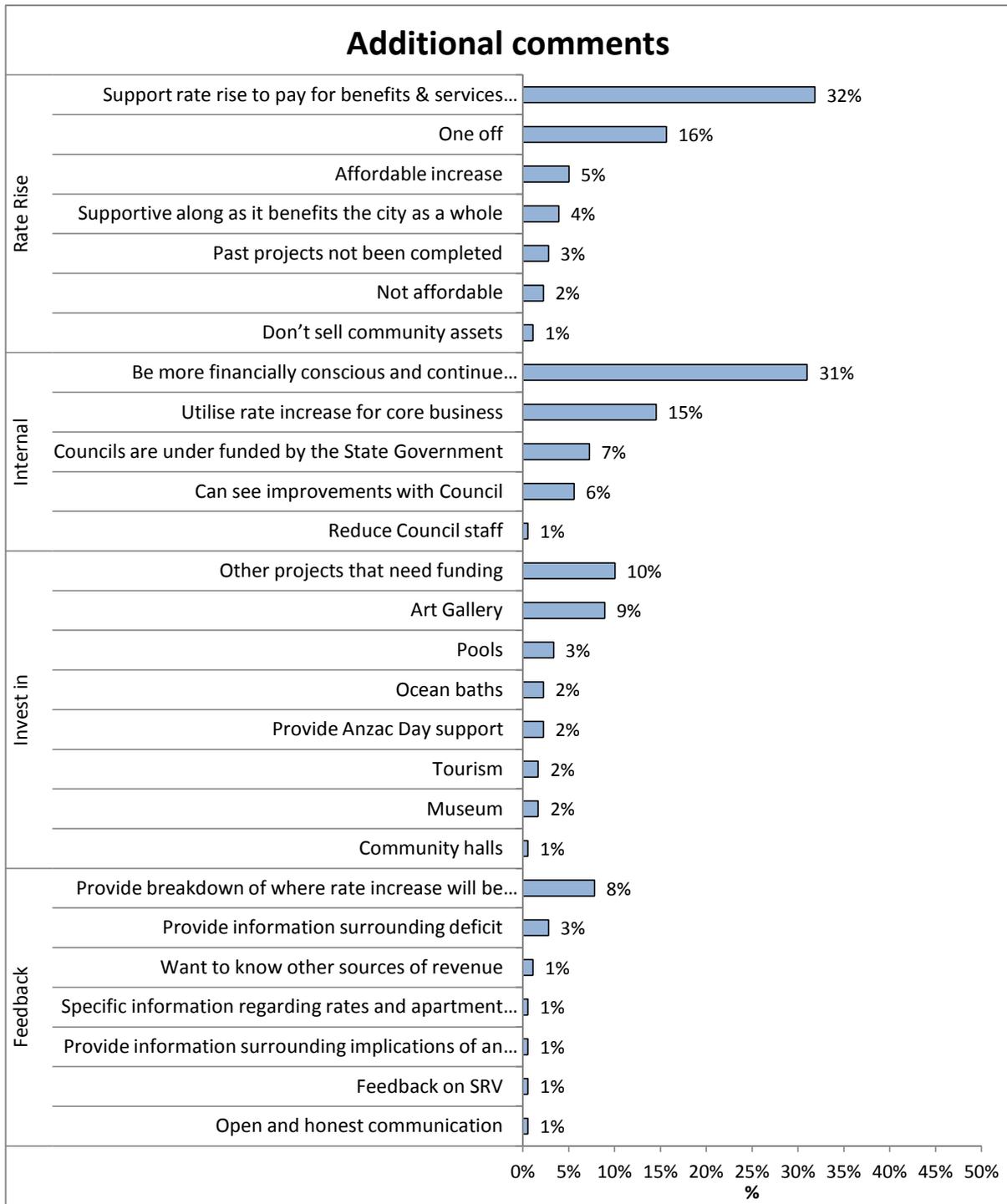
This issue was also raised in the feedback from those opposed to the rate increase. Council needs to focus on core business (15%). Those that commented on this issue do not wish to see Council pending the extra funds on projects that are not absolutely required.

*“Council needs to deliver core activities, reduce other funding, control costs and wages.*

*Grand projects are nice but NCC cannot afford them until budget is in surplus.”*

*“I support the rate increase to assist council to get back on the black, not to waste it on frivolous or extravagance.”*

*“Councils must be lean, efficient and stick to core business, but cover expenses in doing so.”*



**Figure 6 Additional comments in support of rate increase**

*Note: Multiple responses were permitted.*

## Verbatims from respondents not supportive of rate rise

The verbatims that follow are the exact comments from those that completed the additional comments section of the special rate variation survey.

<p>Believe that greater efficiencies need to be implemented prior to any rate increases. Our rates are already significant.</p>
<p>how much more can you put the rates up when wages are not going up. great. this makes it even harder to keep my head above water and pay the bills. and this makes it even harder when I have children with disabilities and my money should be going to their health and not to increased bills.</p>
<p>I also have a Sydney property of similar value to my home in Ward 2, Newcastle. The rates of the Sydney property are only 2/3 of the rates that I pay in Newcastle. By comparison this seems like the Newcastle rates are already over priced.</p>
<p>I don't believe I am getting value for the rates I already pay. I was very disappointed with the end result of the Laman St fiasco, and disgusted with the Art gallery decision.</p> <p>I think that the treatment of the Art Gallery Director and the Future City Director has reflected very poorly on council.</p> <p>I think the Mayor and Gen. Manager need to rethink their ideas and consider the ratepayers before themselves.</p>
<p>I don't think the council offers value for money with rates as it is so do not think a increase above by 1.1 per cent is warranted.</p> <p>I also feel it will be another reason for landlords to increase rent on rental properties and it is getting harder to find reasonable priced rentals in Newcastle as it is</p>
<p>I dont understand why newcastle residents need to pay significantly more in rates than any of the surrounding LGAs for land of the same value. Isn't newcastle providing the same service level (if not less) than say lake macquarie. So why the higher rates?</p>
<p>I have lived in Newcastle for 28 years and been a home owner for 27 of these years. My rates have increased annually for as long as I can remember. We as a community continue to lose services such as Kerbside pickup of whitegoods, decrease in swimming pool operating hours and when they are open it is ridiculously expensive, along with numerous other services being cut or once free services now attracting charges. I wouldn't mind payng more if I could see value for money.</p>
<p>I live in merewether and I am already slugged way above the average rates for newcastle.</p> <p>The council should view themselves as service providers and rate everybody the same. What do I get in return for the more than double the average rates that I pay ?</p> <p>Rates shouldn't be based on land values as this allows for perceived ability to pay more. I'm not rich but make other sacrifices to allow my lifestyle to live where I wish to live.</p> <p>The whole rating system needs to be fairer and based on user pays principles</p>
<p>I OWN MY OWN BUISNESS AND THE RATES JUMPED TO ALMOST DOUBLE WHAT I WAS PAYING FOR THE PREVIOUS RATES ALL IN ONE GO.WHAT A RAUGHT.</p>
<p>I own property in other council areas and Newcastle Council is by far the most expensive. It was Council misadministration that allowed the deficit to increase - ratepayers, who already pay considerable rates, should not have to pay extra to alleviate the deficit. And this additional increase will then become the base for all further increases.</p>

I struggle now with cost of living, putting food on table, raising my son on my own. I cannot afford luxuries, let alone a swim at the local pool with my son, oh I have the ocean. My son is 12 and has juvenile arthritis, I have osteo and rheumatoid arthrtis and should swim more in pools and do water exercises to strengthen our joints.

If this rate rise happens I will not be able to pay it and I can see many other families in the same boat. Stick with what you are paying with minimal increase otherwise you will have many people unable to pay this. Therefore you will not financially grow. Hello now pick on people that fought for this country by making us pay to celebrate and congratulate them for making our country what it is today... What is wrong with you !!!!!

I think asking to raise rates above the agreed percentage is just greedy

I think we already pay enough for the services that the council provides. Personally I own 2 properties and I pay a combined amount of over \$4000 per annum which I think is extortionate. The council is forever increasing parking costs and installing meters in more and more areas and are collecting record amounts for parking fines. In addition to this you expect rate payer to pay more I think is robbery. The council needs to find more savings from within to cover it's costs. Once this rate rise is approved we're never going to get that back and any further percentage increases to rates will be calculated on top of this increase. It seems that the council can never live within it's means and will forever be asking for more.

I think we should pay the amount of rate that's specified, not above this amount. If I could see what we would be getting for our extra money, that might be different, but as it stands, NO.

If a Rugby League exceeds the 'Cap', the NRL 'comes down' heavy!.....Newcastle Gity Council wants to exceed the 'Cap', bring in the Administrator!

Increases above the CPI have been approved before which was supposed to a one off.  
When you are on fixed income all these increses add up.

It is very difficult for low/middle income families already with high gas and electricity prices. Our rates are high enough.

It's called a cap for a reason. There should be no way the council can go above the recommended cap.

Just don't raise the rates, pretty simple

Last year NCC sought and was approved a higher than ususal rate increae from IPART on the basis of funding 8 specific projects, including the upgrade of the Art Gallery. The majoriy of those projects were not done yet we did not receive any refund on our rates. Notwithstanding the current finanical situation I do not beleive that NCC should be entitled to keep asking rate payers for more money at a time when it is currting services. maybe if we did nto have to pay the GM to travel interstate "home" all the time we couldl afford more projects?!

Living on a set income means that increases in expenses make life difficult.

Make better use of existing rate income

Manage your costs within the budget you have, just like all the ratepayers have to.

Many residents in my street are very old and have lived here since houses were built. . Our rates are already high.

money grabbers

My commercial property attracts a city cte Ben. Rate of \$639.49 in addition to Council rates so I do not think it fair to pay an extra rate above the normal.

My suggestion is to reduce the benefit rate by the amount council wants to increase rates above the maximum allowed.

I would actually like to see the city benefit rate abolished as I do not see any tangible benefit in the west end of hunter street

My home is a 50 year old weatherboard house on a large block of land.

My last rate notice valued my land as \$317,000 and my Rates were \$1,373.49

Your example shows an average land value of \$234,850 in today's market this is an unrealistic figure. It is written down I believe to show your rate increase as only \$36.12

On my property that figure would be considerably more. The business valuation you quote is also unrealistic and misleading.

My February Rate instalment in February 2011 was \$265

In 2012 for the same period was \$273

In 2013 it was \$306

and this year it is \$343.

An increase of 3.4% would make my rates annually \$1420.18 against 2013 rates of \$1373.49 and I would be paying almost \$50 extra.

Most properties would be paying more than \$50 increase when they get their rate notice.

My rates are exorbitant.

NCC needs to develop better financial management strategies rather than relying on rate increases to cover poorly managed budgets. Current rates are already excessive in comparison with other NSW councils and rate increases are seen as the easy fix.

No more than the lawful amount due should be due. I am Against the additional 1.1 additional fee.

Our rates are higher than some expensive suburbs in Sydney e.g Mosman. I think the council needs to control it's spending prior to asking for more money from rate payers.

Rate payers should not be asked to keep funding the place until the LGA is 100% user pays.

It you live in the place you should pay and that includes tenants.

If you visit then you should pay.

Rates are already high in return for services especially in inner suburbs and for business. Council should look to cuts in areas that no longer have public support. The library, while once a valuable resource is quickly becoming redundant and the art gallery may be of greater value if it was used purely for traveling exhibitions.

Residents and rate payers are fed up with council continually increasing instead of actually running an efficient and effective business called the council. Under no circumstances should rate increases even be considered. Look at your inefficiencies, your wastage, your Christmas parties that ratepayers are paying for, we are sick and tired of your pathetic mismanagement.

Similarly to a family budget, Council needs not to increase its cap, but identify other areas where savings can be made. I happen to know, for example, your IT infrastructure is not well managed or utilised, and your legal costs are at times unnecessary - an audit of these types of things should be something Council employees should be identifying as part of their daily activities within whatever area they work in. The rate-payers of Newcastle should not be penalised for poor decisions made by Council where money has been spent without a due diligence process being undertaken. I don't ask my employer to pay me more because I can't manage my household budget, so no, a rate increase should not be enacted for these reasons. If Council were to propose something useful, such as pulling up the train line from the middle of town, that might just be something exciting to fund.

The amount of council money spent on the Laman Street Figs debaracle would have bern very handy now. Why should I have to pay extra rates when this money was wasted. I am a single woman with no children working full time and paying a mortgage, things are tough enough without higher rates

The council would be well advised to have spent money more wisely in the past eg the tree fiasco in Laman St. I don't see why we should have to be punished for its financial mismanagement; our rates are already higher than those in Sydney. Also council needs to lobby to get more money from the sale of the coal loader--the majority of the money is going to Sydney!!! Completely mind boggling. We are the ones suffering from the coal dust.

The Rates we pay are too expensive for the limited services that we receive now. We should not have to pay any more fees to council . You have employees on overtime doing work at night and weekends standing on the side of the road doing absolutely nothing ! I think your managers could MANAGE their employees and budget far more efficiently rather than the rate payers putting our hands in our pockets yet again .

We all have to work and live within our budget if i was to ask centerlink for a 1.1% increase over the agreed increase i am sure they would decline my request and 1.1% this year and then how much next year maybe better value for money is the answer.

We already pay a ridiculous amount in rates compared to the rest of Newcastle. We get no benefit. I do not want to pay more money and receive no benefit.

We are retired & live in Merewether & will cop the biggest slug. We already pay too much rates. We do not wish to prop up an incompetent council.

We consider the 2.3% cap added to the rates is enough.

The council should be able to budget with the inclusion of the capped increase and not require additional funding from ratepayers.

We do NOT need a rate increase, full of younger families, trying to pay home loans, raise children, and childcare, food, house payments & everyday living is such a strain on MOST FAMILIES,NOT AT THIS STAGE, please

We live in Merewether. We will be the worst slugged with any increase.

Weren't the rates increased above the proposed amount just a couple of years ago as part of a five (or maybe it was 10) year improvement plan???

This is ridiculous. I pay my land rates, in full and on time, and always have. Is it MY fault that the council then didn't manage these finances well enough to budget appropriately and now find themselves really struggling financially??

No, it isn't. A 2.3% increase is bad enough, considering everything else increases too... electricity prices, water prices etc etc. I'm tired of having to pay more for your mistakes.

I'm sure all your council employees will also be getting pay increases this financial period... how about you cut those,

rather than increase ours?

You get enough money off us now and we don't see any improvements

## Verbatims from respondents supportive of a rate rise

The verbatims that follow are the exact comments from those that completed the additional comments section of the special rate variation survey.

A report on the success (or otherwise) of this initiative would be appreciated.

Warm regards

Add an extra 0.1% and fix the Art Gallery

Additional and ongoing funding to improve beach, harbour, creek, general cycle way and footpaths along with suitable shrub or small tree planting throughout our city would be greatly appreciated by a majority of residents and visitors.

Agree with increase as long as council takes measures to decrease their internal expenses.

Although I do not agree with many of the actions of the present Council under the leadership of the Mayor, I do believe that Councils generally are under-funded.

Apartments and units should be contributing their fair share and not the minimal amount now being paid.

How can it be justified that a pensioner living in a home worth \$500,000 pays more than those living in an apartment/unit worth the same or more???

We live in a great city and enjoy the benefits and we should all pay towards those benefits.

Users of art gallery, baths, beaches, parks etc and car parks associated with these facilities should pay the costs involved in maintaining these facilities as they must do for other entertainment in their lives.

As a community we cant expect to have facilities without helping pay for them. The days of councils and governments handing out \$m's from a seemingly bottomless pit are over.

As a member of the community i am happy to contribute to ensuring that the city stays able to provide services and facilities to residents. I would like to see more emphasis on improving the tourist facilities, cultural facilities and other long term sustainable assets. I believe the decision of council not to fund the improvements in Newcastle art gallery were short sighted and in error.

As long as it doesn't become a regular thing. While it won't send us into debt, a tiny rise would be a huge problem for many low income property owners in Newcastle. And while I understand that this is part of helping council get out of a hole, to be honest, I think subconsciously I would want to see things being done if I know I am paying more. E.g. mowing of the long grass, collecting the rubbish dumped by bins in the parks in Mayfield, filling potholes, cleaning public toilets more frequently, NOT closing or cutting the hours of local swimming pools etc.

And can I just say that the decision to combine the top jobs for the art gallery and the museum is cultural craziness. It's like saying that the head of paediatrics is now also the head of the aged care dementia unit. Different disciplines! And we're making an effort to ensure Newcastle is becoming a visitor destination, so cutting back on the quality and professionalism of things that draw visitors to the area is crazy.

Also, please consult with the relevant authorities/organisations to ensure there are more cabs at night on weekends in Newcastle. We recently had visitors from Sydney, and after a night out at a restaurant and then some drinks in town, we sought a cab at about midnight. Our guests were absolutely gobsmacked that there was a line of 35 people for a cab outside Newcastle train station. They couldn't believe the absurdity of the situation and the difficulty we had just getting home to Mayfield. And authorities wonder why there is alcohol-fuelled violence! Try waiting in a cab queue with pissed people who are desperate to get home (but being responsible and not driving) who become aggressive largely due to the situation, then they will understand part of the problem.

Thanks for listening! Please forward my feedback to those who can make decisions.

As long as the additional amount from my aged pension is wisely spent I am prepared to pay the extra amount.

Assisting in the reduction of council's debt through means such as distributed and minimal increases seems a prudent measure.

Better financial actions need to be taken.

The Community needs support.

Community Venues need more support.

Consider innovative ways to raise money - perhaps \$20 per family fee to use the library?

Council has many priority issues to fulfill and rate caps have restricted capacity. In particular I would like to see the art gallery extension undertaken and a director of the gallery reinstated.

Council is (at last) showing leadership in setting its priorities and cutting back on non-core programs. Ratepayers should get behind their efforts and support the one-off increase.

Council is just beginning to act responsibly, after years of neglect, partisanship and terrible Labor maladministration. This should be a once off to get the house in order, then work should be done to lower rates and live within council's (and the community's) means.

I mean, why does council need to have a person responsible for organising egg and spoon races in Lambton Park?

Also, if it doesn't pass the yellow pages test, it should be outsourced. Anything where there is a viable business providing the service, council has no place in the market.

Finally, I fully support amalgamation with Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland and Cessnock.

Council provides much needed services to the community and I believe that they need the income to provide those services.

Council's Key projects in Newcastle must progress or the support for increased rates will disappear.

Funds dedicated to any city buildings that can help transform city into something akin towards Adelaide city I'm all in favourable of. Newcastle has so much potential and needs to cast off its industrial blue Collar past to move on . Spend the money wisely so that the general public can see and experience the expenditure RJS

Hope this isn't going to repeat in 2015....

hopefully this will save some jobs and services

How about raising more from parking fines. I note that most parking fine revenue is raised in the city center. A quick trip around the streets near Beaumont Street would yield a thousand dollars fines any day. Probably applies to Mayfield, Wallsend as well.

How did we get to this financial impasse? Useless previous council decisions? Good to see something happening but still money being spent when other issues are more demanding .

How is it that a council can get themselves into this position?

If i am to support this increase, I want to see a detailed breakdown on where expenditure is. We pay for these services so the details should be made transparent to those paying.

I agree to the increase providing that senior management work to minimize waste within their own departments including their own activities.

Use more common sense regarding parking on or across footpaths and plantings on verges.

I agree to this increase only, consultation will be required by the public prior to another increase is sought by NCC.

I agree with rate increase providing the amount raised by the increase is specifically allocated to reduction of deficit and not swallowed by increased salaries with no increase in services. Would like to see NCC concentrate on core responsibilities and functions and not waste time or funds on promotion of events ie fireworks, markets etc.

I am concerned that council sought a very high permanent increase that was approved last year of 8.6% with a view to delivering some projects and I would have expected after a "one off" increase well above CPI, council would resist the urge to seek another rate variation so quickly. It seems no matter what increases or special circumstances arise, council is incapable of living within its means. If there isn't enough money, perhaps council should have used some of the 8.6% to restore balance to the budget rather than special projects we evidently can't afford, and then immediately put their hand out for more. Although I support this increase because 2.3% seems low, I won't support further increases.

I am in favour of a rate increase, on a promise that funds will be allocated and used according to the best interests of the ratepayer and the overall community.

I am pleased with council services especially the way they look after parks, in particular Lambton Park

I am prepared to consider a further increase above the 1.1% cap, if this results in the continued operation (without restrictions) of all council's services and amenities. I live in Beresfield and the pool here is of particular concern to me.

I am willing to support the proposal which I expect will lead to an increase in Council services.

I am not willing to support a rate increase which is used to pay for bad financial management and/or support the people responsible.

I am working and can afford to pay slightly higher rates in order to retain council services. I understand that local government have had to absorb costs shifted from other levels of government in recent years. I agree with Council creating a leaner administrative structure but would like to see support improved substantially for the city's art gallery (an essential element if our city is to attract and retain high-skill workers. I would also like to see support for charities and non-profit organisations through subsidised hire of council facilities and sponsorship.

I applaud the efforts of the Council to become financially responsible. If a small increase in rates will help then I am all for it.

I appreciate that councils across NSW are being expected to maintain current services, where costs are increasing. This can only be achieved with increased income - from somewhere.

I'd much prefer to pay a little more in my rates than have professional specialised positions lost - or any positions lost, for that matter. And, too, I would like current services to be maintained

I appreciate the need for Local Government institutions to service their constituencies with diminishing assistance from State and Federal Governments. I feel however that NCC's current approach to dumbing down the Regional Gallery is completely misguided and ignores to revenue stream that is available for local and tourist patronage in attending exhibitions and special events put on by the Gallery. Indeed NCC seems somewhat clueless about attracting tourists of any sort.

I approve it is a one off increase to ensure Council maintains its fiscal control. I do not agree with a continuing increase or an expansion of the Budget. I only agree on basis that tight financial control continues until NCC operates within its income.

Council needs to deliver core activities, reduce other funding, control costs and wages.

Grand projects are nice but NCC cannot afford them until budget is in surplus. This is the result of past mismanagement.

I am also concerned that expenditure is not concentrated in the CBD. Council should spend to help majority of ratepayers not just interest groups.

I believe that local government should receive a greater share of total taxation revenue - state and federal should contribute more.

Council has betrayed commitments from the last SRV application - the special projects have disappeared!

Council is not implementing efficiencies - they are just cutting services and capacity creating less efficiency and stagnation.

I believe that the Council has done a great job recently towards revitalising Newcastle. Our Art Gallery and Museum are just two examples. Additionally, our parks are a credit to the staff who manage them. Yes, the CBD is still a concern. However, we in Newcastle and surrounds have SO MUCH to be thankful for. I just wish that everyone would appreciate the beautiful area that we live in and support the Council who have trimmed the 'fat' and who seem to me to be working more cohesively as a team to improve the area. I just love the place. I actually said to someone just recently that it is like living in paradise.

I believe the long term answer to solving this problem is through rationalising what services and levels of service Council deliver to the community and through better decision making over where the budget is spent.

I consider myself very fortunate to live in a city such as Newcastle. Its relatively low population density allows a great lifestyle.

However this means there are fewer of us to pay for the infrastructure we enjoy.

Well, there is no free lunch.

The rate increase seems it will cost me the price of a reasonable bottle of Hunter Merlot.

So, if I am short of funds on my next night out I will ask for a carafe of water and save the cash for my rate rise.

I am pleased that some economies have been introduced. Particularly reigning in the Art gallery expenditure.

Rather than further reduce our services, such as libraries and beach patrols.

I am happy to pay more.

I continue to be disgusted by the treatment of the director of the art gallery and the deliberate policy of lack of support for one of Newcastle's finest institutions.

I do not believe the rate cap is a good idea. The state gov has not capped their expenditure like they have forced the councils to do.

The city needs more work done to stay in front and needs the extra money.

I do not mind paying for one off, or short term increases provided they are not swallowed up by ongoing maintenance or staff costs. They must be for specific purposes which will allow the council to dig itself out of the debt (that it should never have descended into) as soon as possible.

I don't live in Newcastle, but support council rate rise as long as it is reasonable and spent well. Be open to the ratepayers.

I feel this one off increase is necessary to reduce the overhead. Geoff McCloy is taking all the necessary steps to further reduce the previous budget blowouts but a slight increase in our rates will help.

Further cuts are needed such as reduced hours at the pools and looking at contracting out the pools. I agree with the closure of the Mayfield pool as surrounding residents can easily access the Lambton regional centre.

I fully support the proposed increase, as long as sustainable Council run community facilities remain supported.

I generally support the additional 1.1%, however, it's disingenuous to claim this is the only increase. What about the last 'special variation' council was granted? If they're being honest, council would show what this cumulative increase is, especially as they've not spent all they raised for the last increase - and that was based on several untruths.

My greater concern is, what is the next year increase going to be?

This council, particularly the bureaucrats, remains one of the least communicative (genuinely consultative) councils in NSW - very untrusted. When is it going to make a genuine attempt to address this disease?

I have always paid my way, and this appears to be another unavoidable cost of owning property and living in a desirable city.

I have just answered that I support the one of rate increase. We are a single income family and any increase has an effect on the family budget taking into consideration other cost of living pressures and other organisations increasing their fees and charges,

If this is a one off increase and if it helps council get back on track with its budget then well and good but I don't want to see the additional money squandered and then see council asking for another and another increase above the cap. I appreciate your efforts to get back in the black but have to wonder how things have been so badly mismanaged in order to get to this point!

I have no problem with rate increases provided Council is spending money efficiently in accordance with a plan, and ensuring best return on money

I support the efficiency drives in place and encourage competitive tendering for all Council works and the outsourcing wherever possible.

The City should divest itself of non core activities where private enterprise can take over

I am delighted how the City is looking - congratulations to all involved

I have no problem with the proposed increase, as long as it goes towards public infrastructure, not the employment of management or staff in the council, or towards advisor reports etc.

I hope it will genuinely be a one-off

I hope the council will continue to provide quality service.

I hope you spend it wisely. I'm very disappointed with your dealing with the Art Gallery

I only support the extra increase provided that the gains made so far are improved upon.

I only support the increase if a continued tight control on council budget !!!

I only support this increase on the proviso that NCC continues the cost reduction regime they have put in place and that there is no increase to staff levels or staff salary increases.

I only support this rate increase as long as it is a one off and further increases are not sought thereafter.

I only support this rate increase if the council commits itself to not allowing Terminal 4 Coal Loader to go ahead now or in the future.

I own seven properties in the Newcastle area that I pay rates for.

The extra cost is minimal.

It is more important that we have a council that is not going further into debt each year, and has sufficient funds for infrastructure projects.

I own several properties in Newcastle in addition to our home. I don't mind paying higher council rates as long as we also get decent services.

I realise that rate capping limits council's ability to meet the needs of the community, especially as the State government is shifting costs to local councils.

I fully support the abolishment of rate capping. I do not however, support council's plans to sell of assets, in particular small reserves and parks in order to save money. This is a very short sighted option!

I recognise and understand the need for the council to be financially viable. I support paying staff an equitable wage to enable council to attract good performers.

I support an increase as long as current cost-cutting measures continue as well. I see too much wastage. There are too many things being done that aren't necessary whilst urgent tasks are delayed or avoided.

I support an increase in rates but only if the income is held in trust. NCC has already applied for special rates variations citing particular projects. To the best of my knowledge, the rate variations were struck, monies were received but not spent on the identified projects.

Therefore another variation should only be given after auditing to see if previous variations were actually spent on the identified works. If that is not the case, another variation should only be granted if the previous variations work is carried out first.

Consideration should be given to rate variations for specific works being held in trust for those works only.

Special variations should not be placed in a general expense fund.

I support it if we start to see improvements and projects in the city. Please advise how the additional revenue plans to be spent?

I support the cap on the condition the extra monies it will generate will not be spent on planting any more trees

I support the council's debt-management actions to date. It would be great to see councillors such as Nelmes and Crakanthorp STOP COMPLAINING TO THE MEDIA ABOUT EVERYTHING, knuckle down, support the Lord Mayor and be proactive and realistic about improving this city in tangible terms. We can't make it better for free.

I support the increase as long as funding is spent well on infrastructure

I support the increase as long as services and facilities continue to be improved. And that all council staff (from office to the field) take accountability for the actions and deliver on their responsibilities

I support the increase if the money is spent on improving quality of life in Newcastle - maintenance of our wonderful assets, gardens etc.

I support the increase over the cap only if Council agrees to remove it in 2015. Once there Council would find a way to make it permanent. I am not in favor of that.

I support the increase provided that council then doesn't seek another extraordinary increase again in a few years. This is a one of extra increase!!!!

I support the increase providing the extra funds are used wisely

I support the one off rate variation if it can be verified that the increased amount will be used to efficiently improve infrastructure and the backlog of capital maintenance projects, including the curb extension on the corner of St. James Rd and Royal St. which has been planned since 2003 and before someone is killed there.

I support the rare increase only if the council gets it act together and doesn't have any more fiascos like the Laman St Fig debacle.

I also think that the council should support the groups of ex service people with the various commemorative services. Without these people we would not be living in the country as we know it. The council seems to be top heavy with managers and it needs more 'workers'

I support the rate cap only for the reason that Council would cut other services even further to seek the funds if they didn't find the additional funds from rates. A short term- medium term rate rise is acceptable by the community if council can dig itself out of the financial mess it has got itself in. If Council does not however improve with it's financial forecasting & expenditure after these rate increases then Newcastle and its people really are in a pickle.

I support the rate increase if it is truly a one off. It would be unacceptable for this to then become the norm after it is promised to be a one off rise. What guarantees will the council give that this will not occur again in a years time>

I support the rate increase to assist council to get back on the black, not to waste it on frivolous or extravagance.

I support the rate raise in the hope that it will enable investment in the Newcastle Gallery and continued improvement to our beach facilities.

I support the rate rise it should go towards cleaning up Newcastle city hunter st is a disgrace

I support the rate rise providing the money is spent on projects that benefit the community as a whole and are a recommendation of council staff and NOT something only benefiting a vocal minority community group.

I support the rate rises, provided that important community services are maintained and disadvantaged members of the community are not discriminated against. For instance, all council pools should remain open at affordable prices for the less well off in our communities. Anzac Day memorial services should receive reduced rates for hire of spaces or chairs. Support for cycling facilities should be maintained as this has widespread community benefit. Funding over the long term should be maintained for the gallery and the museum.

I support the rates rise, but am not convinced that all of the expenditure by Newcastle Council is necessary. E.g. the cosmetic upgrade on buildings in the city. I'm very disappointed that the Youth Loft venue in the city was not funded, and also the new art gallery. Why on earth did the new signs "Newcastle - See Change" signs have to go up? That was a complete waste of money, and was just a PR stunt. I'm happy to support all of the good things that council does (upgrade of footpaths, roads and playgrounds, support for libraries, etc) but as stated am not happy about some of frivolous spending since the new mayor and some of the councillors were elected. Plus, why ARE Merewether baths being upgraded before Newcastle baths are finished? And why weren't more new car parks mandated before the new Merewether Surf House was built????? The new car park at Merewether looks great, but more car parking in this area is sorely needed.

I support the special rate increase above the cap on the understanding that the extra money is used responsibly on basic services, including repair of civic buildings. I do not support money being spent on Art Gallery extensions.

I support the suggested increases as long as the additional funds raised are spent wisely in areas that benefit all residents such as pools, art galleries, building maintenance etc.

I support this increase on the basis that the funds are used wisely. I do not support political based activities and seek changes for the common good - not for a political reason or personal gain / preference of a councillor or the mayor.

I support this proposal on the proviso that council continues a sensible balance between maintaining assets and community, and debt reduction.

I support this proposed rate rise very reluctantly.

The current council has reneged on commitments it made to IPART in its previous application - it did not spend the money from that rate rise in the way it promised it would. I no longer trust the council's claims about what it will do with this (or any other) public money.

I am also concerned about the social equity impact of this rise, if any part of it will be absorbed by the 50% base rate component, since this component of the council's rating structure hits those with less capacity to pay.

I am very sceptical about the council's propaganda regarding its so-called dire financial circumstances, which I believe is being manipulated to serve an ideological agenda of service-cutting and asset-stripping.

However, I do think that the cumulative impact of rate capping, cost shifting and rising costs has placed the council in an untenable long term financial situation, and that - on balance - the rate rise is

justified for this reason.

I think all the modifications that are happening in Newcastle are great. People in Newcastle should stop whinging and expecting nice things to be free.

I think council are trying

I think council has very big maintenance, enhancement, and community development tasks and if we want good community facilities, we haven't got much choice but to pay for them.

I think it is a reasonable and sensible approach to the problem. We enjoy the services and need to ensure they are managed properly. I do NOT wish for pools, libraries or art galleries to face cuts or fees.

I think it ridiculous that the Lord Mayor be so focused on attracting tourists to the region and then stop employing life guards for beaches on weekends - the use of flags over summer reflects the lack of expertise of the volunteers (who can only be admired for their committment). Also - A line in the sand is an overused cliché. please suggest to your manager that he stop using it.

I think the current council penny-pinching has had appalling consequences on the city and a bit extra in rates is fine to get things moving correctly.

I think cancelling the New Year midnight fire-works was the last straw in cheap penny pinching.

I understand that NCC is in financial trouble and support this ONE OFF increase to ensure standards are maintained

I would be happy to pay a one off 10% increase however I would expect council to continue to support it's commemorative service obligations, especially ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day and continue to improve the cycleway and foreshore paths and continue to improve facilities at Blackbutt Reserve.

I would like public statements from Council as to where the additional rate funds are to be directed.

Will the 1.1% increase be a ONE OFF?

Will the following year rates be reduced by 1.1%

Is the Lord Mayor, City Manager and Councillors will to participate in fund raising by taking a 1.1% reduction in salary, remunerations and allowances?

How successful has Council been in recovering investment funds lost in the failed schemes of the investments banks of 2008-2009? Little has been said of the amount of the losses and the people responsible for the investments.

What is/are the specific intended outcome(s) from the extra 1.1%.

How will we know if the are achieved or not achieved.

Who will carry the responsibility and accountability for the carriage of the management of the additional funds.

Will there be exemptions to any entity in relation to the 1.1% increase.

Please make public all relevant information attached to this proposed increase.

I would like some specific information about proposed changes to rates attached to apartment buildings please.

I would like the council to be transparent and state the total of additional funds raised and how these will be spent.

I would like the Council to continue to reign in waste and excess expenditure in the future. I think they've done a good job until now and I can see no problem in supporting the additional increase as long as the above criteria are met.

I would like to know what are the ways Council has devised to generate other sources of revenue?

I would like to modify my comments that I approve of the 1% increase above the cap, in that this must be a ONCE-ONLY levy. The extra amount doesn't sound very much when you draw it down to a lump sum on top of the regular rates, but it must not be taken as an easy "out" for future rate rises above the cap.

I would like to see the Council state this in future announcements.

I would like to see Council garnering more funding from Federal and State sources. I believe there have been many squandered opportunities in this area.

I would like to see more council emphasis on core tasks, ie roads and rubbish, and less on non essentials. The excess money spent on the cycleway barrier on Scenic Highway is one example.

I would only support this rate rise if Newcastle continues its positive work in revitalising the CBD, and making us proud of Newcastle. And also focussing on how to expand renewable and more sustainable living in the area.

I would rather pay a increase than loss services and the city deteriorate. I want to live in a City that I am proud of. I am happy to pay the increase.

I would support the rate increase if visibility into how the increased funding was to be allocated was provided

I would support the rise as a one off on the basis that the council get it's act together and start managing it's finances better. I'm sick of hearing stories of council wastage, in-house fighting and egos out of control. Council members need to remember they are there to serve the people not their own egos and power trips.

I would support this 1.1% increase only if it is a one off as stated.

I'd like to see more cycleways and open space. I'd like to see designs for including fun runs/triathlon functionality in Newcastle to facilitate running events easily without closing too many roads. I'd like to see a 5km grassed area along the foreshore area to enable office workers to run at lunch. Bold vision to see Newcastle become a healthier place to live. I appreciate all the work that is done as well.

If Council is fair dinkum about rectifying its ongoing recurrent expenditure shortfall it should apply for an increase above the rate cap for a period of at least 5 years similar to Lake Macquarie and Maitland Councils.

If it is a one off increase and council uses the money "wisely" .....paying debts and improving the city .....then I am okay with this.

if it is used responsibly in my ward I dont mind, but if I am paying for another area am not interested, their is plenty of money to be spent at bar beach around the shower area for paving and even, detachable hoses for the elderly and small children, which can be used to wash off the sand by the childrens mothers with ease.

If it's a one-off and it shores up the savings already made and makes NCC an economically viable and sustainable entity, then I support it. If NCC are going to want this every few years then I do not support it.

Cut the indecision and the bickering that has plagued previous councils and get on with regenerating our city. Ignore self-serving, grand-standing noisy minorities, make a decision and stick with it. We're sick of hearing about the rail line and more studies. Decide one way or the other and get on with it. However if you keep the heavy rail find a way to stop holding up traffic at all hours - overpasses, underpasses, whatever. Traffic flowing in or out quickly and efficiently is paramount to a positive, energised populace and thriving, viable tourism industry.

If NCC hadn't mishandled the Laman St situation I imagine we wouldn't be in this situation.... but I support the rise because I support Newcastle.

If proposed "surcharge" on rates will help balance council's books, should be accepted. Important that council try to live "within its means" in future so finances can always be kept in "black".

if the money is spent judiciously I would not object to the rise. we need to get the budget under control.

If we want a good service from the council, we need to support it by paying a little bit more

If we want non essential services such as swimming pools to continue we must ensure Council has the cas.h flow to supply these without impacting on their viability

I'm comfortable with the request for an additional increase as I feel the council is taking the actions required to fix problems and working towards a positive result. I'm happy that the council appears to be running as a business rather than a 'government' department stumbling along day to day as opposed to making serious decisions and planning for the future.

I'm happy to pay more but I expect our community facilities to be looked after and available and accessible to everyone - such as Community halls, Ocean Baths, Newcastle Art Gallery and

Newcastle Museum.

I'm happy to support a rate increase for this year if the additional funds will be used in an effective and appropriate manner.

I'm not entirely sure how Council Rates are determined except that I know there is a land value component. I did read in the paper about a month or so ago about the suggestion that apartment dwellers should pay more. I understand that as a land owner of a house that I should pay more but I think the architects suggestion is worth investigating, especially those in big city apartments.

I am happy to pay a bit more in rates as not only do I want Council to remain viable, I also treasure our city and hope that it can only improve.

I'm prepared to pay a little more if it means our parks can be maintained to their current standards

In general in our community we are relatively wealthy. We appreciate the good environment, facilities and services arranged by the council. I and many others can afford extra rates to ensure these are maintained.

It troubles me that some in the community really live on the breadline. Every cent counts. It would be good if these people could be protected from a rate increase but I can't see how that can happen. But the additional increase is so little that perhaps they will be ok.

In principle support, absolutely. Not for the current mayor and council priorities however.

Is Newcastle council ensuring that the region does not miss opportunities for State/Federal funding for capital projects? I work in a public utility where I have seen investment within the Sydney regions for "Aquatic Centres". Why doesn't Newcastle have at least one of these centres rather than experiencing early closures for local swimming centres?

It is essential for the well being of the community that council maintains

It is not clear why the council is under financial stress with major industrial activity including the port, rail, power generation and hunter valley all generating significant amounts of income for some level(s) of government. where is this going? why are we not clear on how much cash is exported and how much newcastle receives? what is newcastle's fair share?

It is sad to see that because of poor management, maintenance and futures forecast in the direction of our city that the arts, parks and recreation services are being cut as these bring people, tourism and monies to our city. perhaps council should spell out more openly how monies are being spent and is their workforce capable of being a more effective and efficient service. It has become very obvious to me that the general ratepayer has little understanding of costs and maintenance for the city and that these costs are accelerating. political involvement should not be apart of local community What is best for future progression and change through new innovation will move us forward.

it would be interesting to see the cost implications for the amalgamation of Lake Macq & Newcastle Councils including any capital expenditure/sales of real estate etc, and time line that such an amalgamation is over. I am leaning towards an amalgamation, but the arguments are yet to be presented

It would be useful to have further information on exactly what the rate rise will be used for. I think people don't mind paying extra as long as you can show what they get for their money - I.e. show that there is value for money in this initiative

Its obviously not an option one wants but it isn't a huge amount as a 'one off' so if, all up, it helps the Council's financial situation then its worth it - we all benefit from a healthier council.

just dont waste it!

Keep being wise with spending so you are not taking the piss however, I think most home owners could afford this increase.

More money for Art Gallery!!

Extra cleaning of Newcastle Baths.

Improved change rooms at Merewether Baths.

Continuation of gardens at Junction.

NCC has pleaded its own poverty as an excuse to return \$7m to Canberra rather than take the opportunity to enhance the civic precinct and add to the city's prestige. It continues to pay senior managers under unexplained and apparently unending suspension, as well as meeting the cost of a long-running and probably fruitless investigation into nobody knows what. The least that ratepayers can do is provide the means to fund the NCC's folly.

Need to build some reserves and address the decline

Newcastle has crumbling infrastructure that needs regular maintenance.

It also needs to provide services to the needy/

Newcastle needs spending on our unique infrastructure, such as the ocean baths. These are the tourism and service industry future of this city. Council needs to get rid of the self interested and just incompetent people who own most of the Hunter St and inner city properties that are under used and promote residential, business, accomodation (B&Bs, small pensione type hotels) entertainment and tourist traffic into the city.

Missing out on external funding for things like the art gallerie because the council is penny pinching must not happen.

Encourage backpackers to make Newcastle an extended stop between Sydney and Byron. Encourage grey nomads to stop and stay. This will only happen if Council stops supporting Charlestown Square and Kotara(which does nothing to fill Newcastle coffers) at the expense of making this a truly great holiday city. Since you asked.

Newcastle needs to try to stay financially positive. This one off increase may hurt some people but it will be better in the long run

No additional comments

Nobody likes to pay increased rates. But I am very proud of my city and want it to move forward. I am happy with the progress since the new lord mayor has come to office. For too long we were stagnant and the waste from the previous leaders was ridiculous. Hopefully you will have the support you need.

not a lot of money..and if the council are cutting back unnecessary staff and managing the city revival well.. I don't mind..!!

Our rates are some of the lowest in the state - it's time we raised them to meet the high costs of the infrastructure and services supported by council.

Please, please place as much influence and pressure as possible on those in the corridors of power to keep the train line running all the way through to Newcastle, as it currently does.

Proud of NCC and their tough decisions in reducing debt.

Sadly, Newcastle Council over the past decade seems to have been in never-ending turmoil. How many General Managers\_ - 6 or is it more. How much spent on payouts and recruitment costs? How many re-organisations and downsizings? Loss of world class and highly qualified senior personnel, hollowing out and losing both continuity and local expertise. And it seems to be continuing.

However, NSW is unique in having rate pegging. It demeans Local Govt. in this state and undermines local democracy and accountability of elected councillors. It feeds a cargo cult mentality in which ratepayers expect more but are not expected to pay for more.

And don't get me started on the ways state (and federal governments) transfer responsibilities but not enough resources to councils.

Even so, I would like to think the extra rate income will help contribute towards infrastructure backlogs, Art Gallery development and maintenance of Newcastle services - plus chairs for our ageing WWII Diggers at Anzac Day Memorial Services!

Seeing that the council has already reduced staffing and has attended to cost cutting I see it that the council is looking after the best interests of the city and seems to be managing well. If we need this extra cash at this time for debt reduction and infrastructure spending then I support the increase as long as it does not go towards a new art gallery that we cannot afford and do not need.

Support is conditional on the money being effectively and productively spent. The waste, inefficiencies and excesses must be stopped

The Budget needs to be in a healthier state for future improvements to Newcastle to be implemented.

The city has to have the finances to support itself. I and thousands of other citizens believe this money is not wasted, much thought has, and will in the future, go into how our monies will be used.

The Council MUST continue to improve the efficiency/reduce costs within its own organisation, and then report on gains against goals.

Maybe the whole rates structure should be overhauled or at the very least examined in fine detail. I believe the Council should not be a taxation authority & should rather charge people (to some extent) on their impact on Council costs.

This (modern) idea was implemented by Hunter Water in 1992 with the move to "charge by use" instead of a rating system based on land valuation.

The council needs to be able to do its job and get out of debt! I don't mind helping our current Mayor do his job! I hope that once he has it all sorted, and our debt cleared, our rates may be brought back into line.

The council should have been better managed in the first place then the rate payers wouldn't be being asked to bail them out. I agree the council needs the help but not with the reasons why they need the help.

The fact that councils are unable to set rates that reflect the true cost of managing and maintaining its infrastructure and providing community services is ridiculous. Cost shifting and rate pegging are severely limiting the potential for Newcastle to be a vibrant, functional city.

The increase is needed because council has little opportunity to receive any other source of income. council has a burden placed upon it to carry out such aspects of state government requirements & regulations. The state administration is focused on Sydney only and does not share fairly the spread of income raised or grants from the federal system taxation revenue etc. we as locals must therefore subsidise local government to maintain a certain standard.

The LGA needs to be fixed and a rate rise is the method of doing that

The politically imposed constraint of rate capping has placed enormous financial burdens on NSW councils.

Councils must be lean, efficient and stick to core business, but cover expenses in doing so.

The things i like that the council provides for my rates payment are: garbage collection, recycling, green waste disposal; cleaning Newcastle baths and Merewether baths (I am a swimmer); street cleaning and maintenance of parks/gardens; keeping public areas eg beaches clean; keeping kerbs and pathways disabled friendly.

I understand that costs are going up and that there are people with interests that I do not participate in eg cycleways and that they are entitled to have their fun too. Therefore i support an extra charge so that we can all be happy in the wonderful community of Newcastle ( all wards).

the way the Council spends money is of concern. Two instances come to mind: a) the ridiculous costs of the removal of the Laman Street trees - didn't support the removal by the way don't care how many engineers say it's needed - but the Council's response was shambolic and no doubt incurred more costs than it should. b) the situation over the Director of the Art Gallery - an obvious witch-hunt and one which is not only unfair and unwarranted but expensive in terms of ratepayers contributions and staff morale - who can do their best work in such an environment!

The workforce needs to be productive and the responsibility for that comes down through managers and supervisors who need to ensure a motivated workforce. Still too much waste.

There needs to either be an improvement in services with a rate increase, or a change in services; not just a "help us out of the debt we've got ourselves into" excuse. For instance, with more apartments and townhouses being built, Council needs to start thinking smarter about amalgamating services like waste pickup. 3 bins per house is ridiculous. Also, instead of 16 individual bins in 1 block of 16 apartments, have 2 or 3 larger containers (similar to commercial premises)for waste. Create drive-thru communal recycling areas at Shopping Centre carparks or sports area carparks, where items may be left/taken(paper/bottles/clothing/garden waste/chemicals or batteries/other) and collected there instead of driving around to each house. This reduces costs of pick up and will hold rates at a reasonable cost instead of going up each year. Sell it as "holding rates down for xx years" because there is bound to be someone who whinges that services are being removed.

Try to keep it to only the one year.

Use of additional income to meet community service levels that will impact on community well being ( environmental, educational, maintenance levels on facilities and infrastructure, open days, open space improvements and cultural pursuits etc ) are supported.

Use the additional money wisely!

We all recognise that costs of living are increasing annually by more than 2.3%. Ratepayers have to supply the funds for Council to provide the services we desire and need.

Since rates are linked - partially - with the value of land, those ratepayers in the wealthier suburbs will pay more than those in the less wealthy suburbs - which is appropriate.

Actually, I am in favour of a total ad valorem system for assessing rates - even though it would mean higher rates for our family.

We did have a previous increase to pay for the Art Gallery extension, however, this was not used for that purpose. Not appreciated.

We elected our council to administer the cities affairs and need little interference from ratepayers.

I only ask that we receive quarterly updates on what has been achieved against the targets.

In these it would be great to have disclosure of the fund source(s) for projects. (eg rate payer/ feds or state)

We need the services council provides and have to pay for them.

e.g. Dog noise abatement

We need to get this town back to scratch and repair the infrastructure that has been neglected.

We want / expect more, we need to pay more - it's that simple.

While I've opposed the increase in the past due to the Council wasting so much money, I feel there is real change on the financial management front plus delivery of key projects, so support it this time.

While, I support the proposed increase in the rate level I believe that the Special Benefit Levee on business in the CBD should be removed.

Funds raised by this levee have been accumulating for several years and is not being utilized for the benefit of those who are paying the fee.

The organisation responsible for managing these funds is exclusive and does not openly engage with the people it is meant to represent.

A large proportion of the funds collected are spent on administration and the initiative undertaken are design to satisfy a small unrepresentative self interested clique.

why do conservatives always have problems and the need to raise revenue whilst letting assets go private? one would think since conservatives bleat on about how brilliant they are that the reverse would be true

Why is the council hell bent in cutting down nice trees which are greening our city?

Would like to see money for gallery extension and manager position. Also stop paying general managers expensive excessive rent and trips back to quennsland.

My comment in the survey about rate increases accidentally submitted (via iPhone) before completion & I was unable to go back to redo it or complete it. What I wanted to say was that " It is essential for community well being that council maintains at least current service levels, including municipal pools and others that appear to be under threat. If a modest increase in rates will enable this, then I would support such a rate increase."