yass valley council

the country the people

Extraordinary Meeting of Council

Wednesday 12 November 2025
4:00 PM
Yass High School
Grampian Street, YASS

ATTACHMENTS TO REPORTS

Extraordinary Meeting of Council

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Page No.

Morrison Low Advisory

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The proposed Special Rate Variation
Yass Valley Council

NOVEMBER 2025

Contents

Tables

Figures

Introduction

Yass Valley Council ('Council') is considering a Special Rate Variation (SRV) application to ensure its ongoing financial sustainability and its capacity to deliver essential services and infrastructure to the community.

This background paper on the proposed SRV has been prepared to inform and support community engagement activities. It provides all the key information that is relevant for the SRV proposal that Council is considering. This document aims to explain for the community of Yass Valley:

- What is an SRV?
- Why does Council need an SRV?
- What is the size of the rate increase being considered?
- How does the rate increase impact rates?
- What would the SRV be used for and what the community can expect as a result of the SRV?
- What would happen if Council was not successful in its proposed application for the SRV?
- What is the process that Council must go through to apply for an SRV?

What is a special rate variation?

New South Wales councils operate in a rate capping regime, which has been in place since the 1970's. Each year, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets a "rate peg", which is the maximum percentage increase in total general rates that councils are allowed to implement. If a council needs to increase rates by more than the rate peg, it must apply to IPART for a Special Variation (SV) to its rates[1].

An SRV allows a council to increase its general rates income above the rate peg as set by IPART. If IPART approves an SRV for a council, the approved rate increases replace the rate peg as the maximum allowable increase to general rates that the council can implement for that time frame. When the SRV implementation period ends, the council then goes back to the rate peg as the maximum allowable increase in each year after that.

There are two types of SRVs:

- **a temporary SRV** increases total rates for a fixed amount of time. When the temporary SRV timeframe ends, a council's total general rates will go back to what it would have been if it had just increased rates by the rate peg for that timeframe.
- **a permanent SRV** remains in the rate base. That is, at the end of a permanent SRV implementation period, the total rates remain as a result of the SRV, and the rate peg increases apply to this going forward.

Councils need to consider what the SRV will be for when deciding whether the SRV should be temporary or permanent. Temporary SRVs are usually approved to fund specific one-off projects, such as significant infrastructure projects.

[1] Throughout this report and all other materials, we refer to this as an SRV or Special Rates Variation.

As Yass Valley Council is looking to deliver current service levels, uplift the ongoing maintenance of assets to ensure they remain fit for purpose over time and ensure they have enough to continue to renew assets while addressing asset backlog issues, a permanent SRV is required.

Councils also have options on the timeframe they have to implement an SRV. They can apply for an SRV to be implemented over one to seven years, although most SRV applications are made for one to three year implementation periods. Selecting an implementation period depends on a combination of how much money is required over what period of time to meet the need for the SRV and how much the community can reasonably be expected to pay in each of the years of the SRV.

Why does Council need an SRV?

Yass Valley Council is facing significant challenges to its financial sustainability. In its 2023–24 financial statements, Council reported a consolidated operating deficit of $4.5 million and an unrestricted cash balance of just $55 thousand. The 2025-35 Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) adopted in June 2025 forecasted these deficits to grow over the next ten years, with an anticipated peak of $6 million operating deficit in 2027-28 and a $22 million negative unrestricted cash balance by the end of the ten year forecast period.

What is “unrestricted cash” and why is it important?

Councils often seem to have a lot of cash when you look at their financial statements, but much of this cash is either externally or internally restricted. **Externally restricted** cash is money councils are required under legislation to keep for a specific purpose (like developer contributions). **Internally restricted** cash is money councils have resolved to retain for a specific purpose. What is left is called **unrestricted cash** - this is the cash left for the council to run its day-to-day operations.

Councils need to have enough unrestricted cash to cover costs as they fall due like paying creditors and staff. As a rule of thumb, unrestricted cash balances should be at least three months of expenses or at least 25% of council’s total annual operating expenses. For Yass Valley Council in 2023-24, that would have been an unrestricted cash balance of around $10.7 million.

Council’s financial position has drawn the attention of the NSW Office of Local Government (OLG), which is the NSW Government agency responsible for the performance, integrity and accountability of local councils in NSW. In October 2024, the OLG raised concerns regarding Council’s financial sustainability based on its previous LTFP and commenced regular engagement and monitoring of Council’s financial performance.

Factors such as rebuilding from the natural disasters, economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, historic low interest rates returning low returns on investments, followed by a highly volatile inflationary environment have increased Council’s costs faster than its revenue.

To address operating deficits, Council has reduced maintenance to try to maintain a balanced budget and increased grant funding to support renewal of its assets. This can no longer be sustained without significantly impacting the condition of its assets and ultimately causing greater costs to repair and renew them in the future.

What is Council doing to control costs?

Since the September 2024 local government elections, the governing body has been working to develop a comprehensive understanding of Council's financial position and to put in place actions to address the issues. Council regularly reviews its operations and actively identifies and implements initiatives to ensure that it is containing costs and finding efficiency gains, so that it is able to provide value for money to the community.

In August 2025, Council adopted a Financial Sustainability Roadmap 2025-2029, after a period of public exhibition, which identified actions to improve Council's forecasted financial position as follows:

- targeted savings of $2.8 million over 4 years
- 5% annual increase in fees and charges revenue
- improved financial management
- improved asset management.

Council has already undertaken actions from the Financial Sustainability Roadmap including:

- Council has undertaken a review of the Crago Mill development business case leading to the decision in September 2025 not to proceed with Stage 2 of the project. This saves Council $10.2 million in capital costs and avoids a further $1.5 million in annual cash outflows over the next ten years.
- Council has reviewed its internal cost attributions, identifying $1.7 million of internal costs to be allocated from general fund to water, sewer and domestic waste funds.
- Council has reviewed its grant management process, implementing changes to improve decision-making on grant applications and accounting for grants.
- Council has sold excess plant and equipment with a one-off cash inflow of $200 thousand.
- Council has reviewed fees and charges for 2025-26.
- Council has lodged the Development Application (DA) for Discovery Drive in preparation for land sales.
- Council has commenced a review of its organisation structure.
- Council has recruited Commercial Property Management and Business Improvement Officers.
- Council has established a Financial Sustainability Committee.
- Council has commenced the investigation into an SRV (this report is part of that process).

Council's current financial situation

Council has also undertaken an independent review of its asset financial data and long term financial modelling, leading to an updated Long Term Financial Plan for 2026-36. The updated LTFP modelling has modelled two scenarios for Council:

- **Base case**: this is the scenario of Council continuing as it currently is doing, funding the same levels of service, asset renewals and maintenance that it has done for the last five or so years.
- **Sustainable asset scenario**: as the base case does not allow for adequate funding to maintain assets, a sustainable asset scenario was also developed to understand the impact of Council spending what is required on its asset.

Under the base case, Council is still recording deficits and running out of unrestricted cash as well as not being able to adequately maintain assets. While under the sustainable asset scenario, it is allocating sufficient funds to asset maintenance and renewal to bring backlogs down over time, this is making the deficits and cash shortfalls significantly worse, as figures below show.

Figure 1 Forecast General Fund operating results under base case and sustainable asset scenario

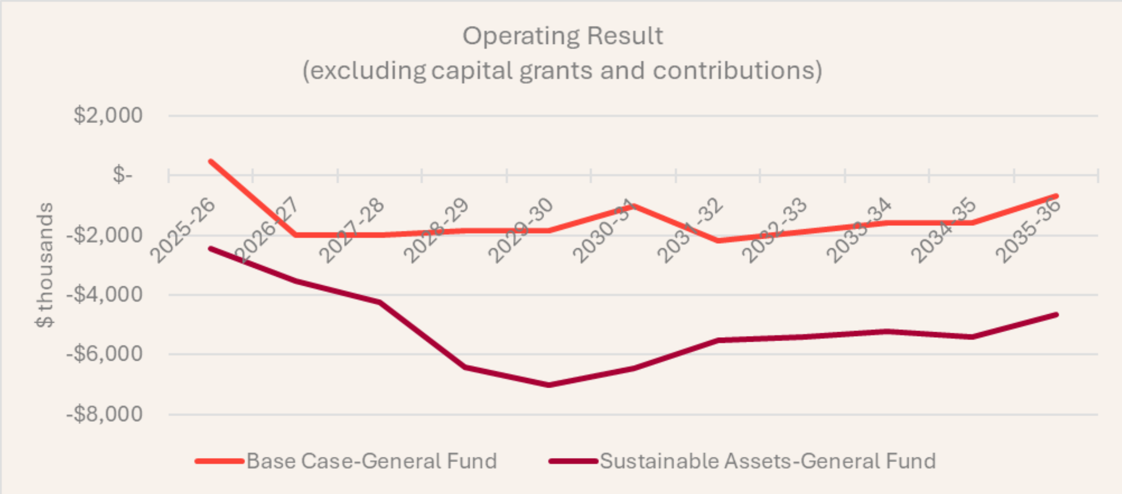
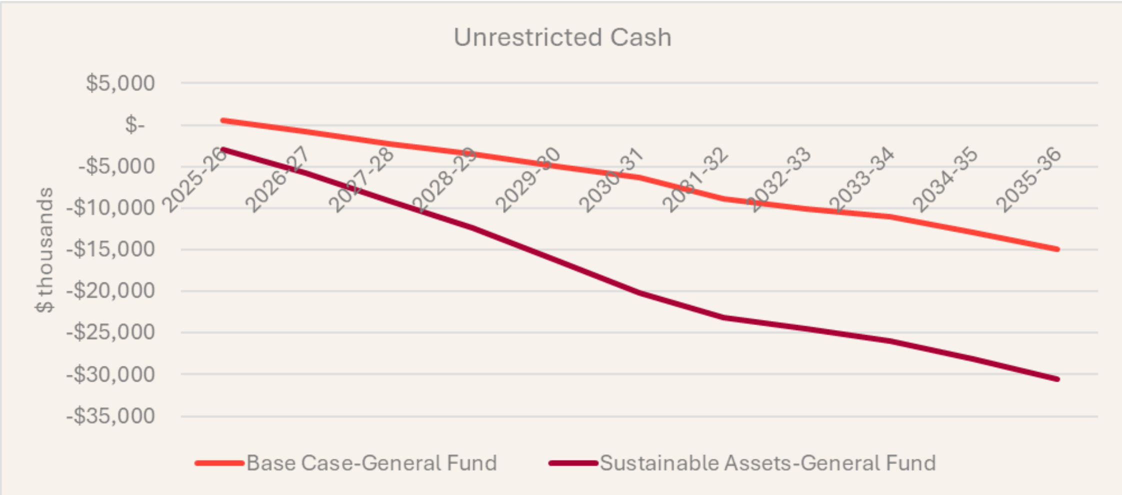


Figure 2 Forecasted General Fund unrestricted cash positions under base case and sustainable asset scenario



Asset maintenance is reported as an expense in Council's operating statement. Maintenance on assets is required to ensure the life of the asset, but it does not increase the asset's useful life. Examples of maintenance of road assets would include pothole repair or grading of unsealed roads. The **asset maintenance ratio** represents how much is planned to be spent on maintenance as a proportion of the maintenance required for the asset. **The benchmark set by the State Government for the asset maintenance ratio is 100%.**

Asset renewal is a capital expense; it does not impact Council's operating result but will have an impact on cashflow. Renewal of an asset will extend the useful life of the asset. Examples of renewal of road assets include road resurfacing or laying more gravel on an unsealed road. The **renewal ratio** represents how much renewal is planned as a proportion of depreciation. Depreciation represents how much is required to be spent on renewal to retain the asset at its current condition. While the benchmark for the renewal ratio is 100%, if there is a backlog of renewal that needs to be caught up from previous years, then a renewal ratio of greater than 100% is required to reduce the backlog over time. The asset **backlog ratio** is the cost to bring all assets to a satisfactory condition divided by the total value of the assets. **The benchmark set by the State Government for the asset backlog ratio is 2%.**

Figure 3 Forecasted General Fund maintenance ratios under base case and sustainable asset scenario

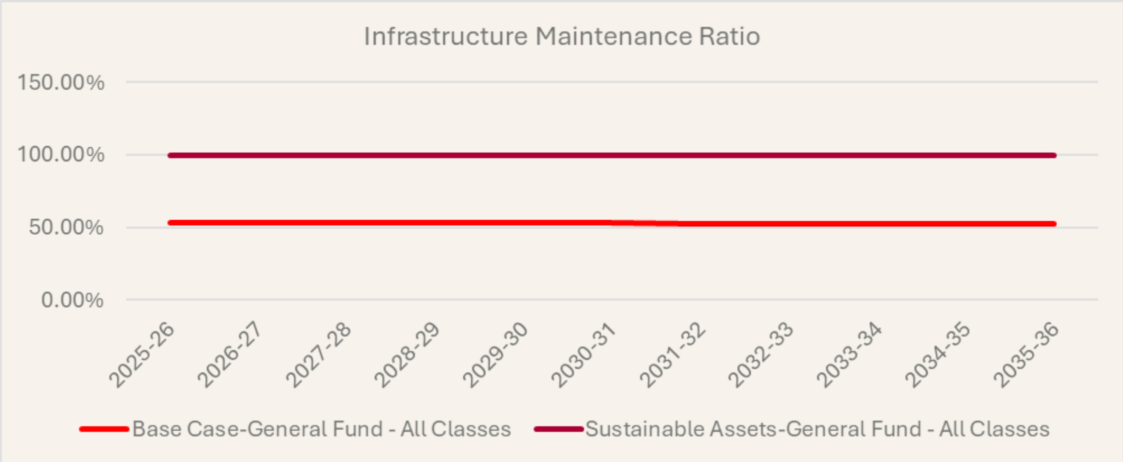


Figure 4 Forecasted General Fund renewal ratios under base case and sustainable asset scenario

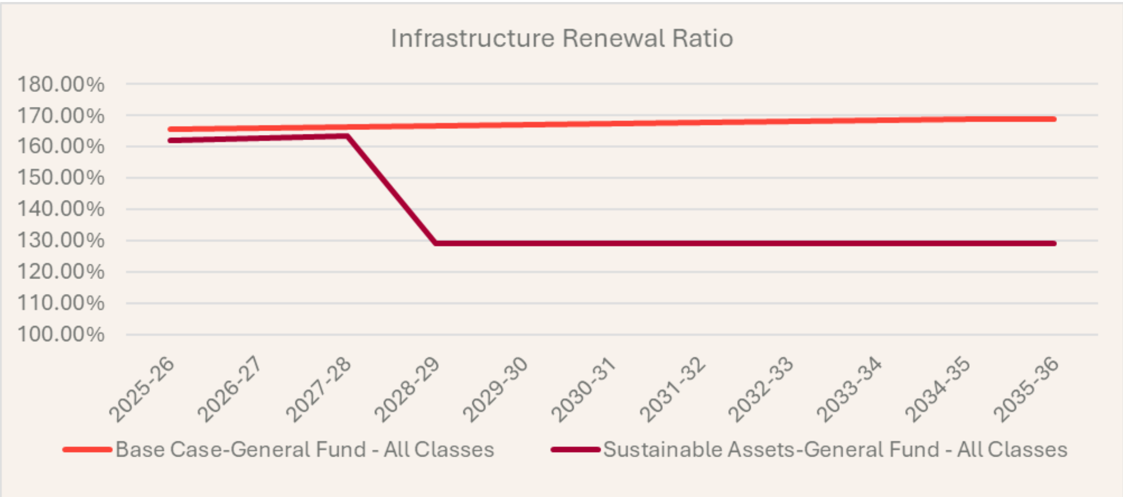
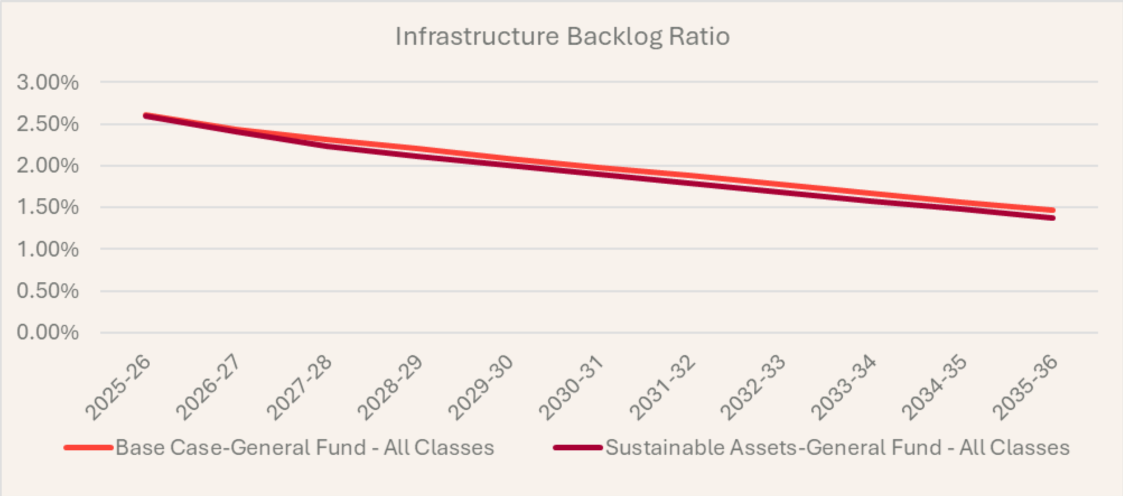


Figure 5 Forecasted General Fund backlog ratios under base case and sustainable asset scenario



What is financial sustainability and why is it a challenge in local government?

Under Section 8B of the Local Government Act, councils must apply sound financial management principles. Under these obligations, a financially sustainable council:

- Records **modest operating surpluses** (in each fund).
- Holds **adequate cash reserves**, including unrestricted cash.
- Has a **fully funded capital** program.
- Manages an asset base that is **'fit for purpose'** including adequate renewal of assets and demonstrates a reducing or low backlog.
- Has adequate resources to meet its ongoing **compliance obligations**.

These objectives form the basis for strong financial governance and ensure the council's long-term financial sustainability, enabling it to maintain the capacity to deliver essential services to the community.

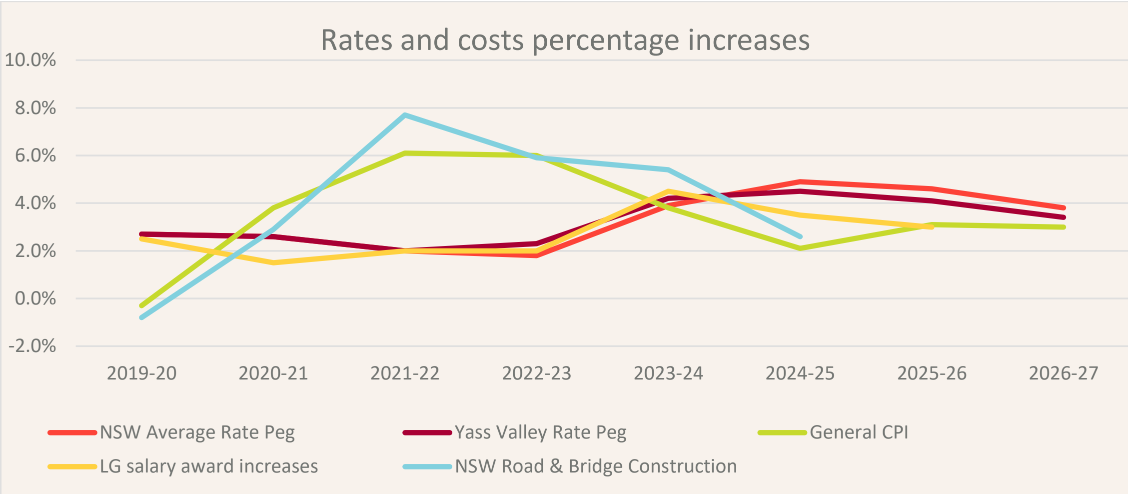
Financial sustainability is a challenge for many councils in NSW; this is because of several factors that impact all NSW councils:

- The **rate peg** restricts councils in being able to cover costs and meet the expectations of community.
- Changes to the way the rate peg was calculated in 2024 moved it from being backward looking to looking forward to the impact of future costs on councils. But as a result, the rate peg skipped over some of the highest inflation years that Australia has seen in the past 25 years, not allowing councils to cover these cost rises. This can be seen in Figure 6 below.
- Councils experience **cost shifting** from State and Federal governments. This is when State or Federal government requires councils to fund increases to their compliance obligations, particular services or fill the service gap in areas where state or federal funded services are insufficient to meet community needs. In 2025, Local Government NSW released the results of its 2023-24 Cost Shifting Survey which showed that the cost shift to councils was $1.5 billion or $497 per ratepayer. This situation was worst for large rural councils, such as Yass Valley Council, where the cost shift had increased by 18 per cent from the 2021-22 survey and was $571 per ratepayer.

- The rate peg never considers any cost increases for councils to adjust services or service levels, even if the community is expecting services to improve. As noted above, the rate peg often doesn't allow councils to maintain its revenue sufficiently to keep delivering services at the same service level or maintaining assets at their current condition. It does not consider any additional revenue required to fund new or improved services or even to allocate sufficient capital to address asset backlogs or to upgrade assets.

As a result of this, almost all NSW councils will be faced with having to apply for an SRV at some point. Since 2011, when IPART first started to review and approve these applications, 97 (76%) of the 128 councils in NSW have applied for and received an SRV, with 40% of councils having received an SRV more than once in that time

Figure 6 Rate peg and inflation over the last five years



What is the size of the rate increase being considered?

To achieve financial sustainability and maintain fit for purpose infrastructure, Council is considering three options for a permanent increase to the rates as follows:

- A one-year 40% SRV
- A two-year cumulative 56.25% SRV
- A three-year cumulative 58.70% SRV.

The details of these options are outlined in the table below.

Table 1 Proposed Special Rate Variation rate increase options

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Forecasted rate peg	3.40%	3.00%	2.50%
Cumulative impact of rate peg	3.40%	6.50%	9.16%
Option 1: One-year SRV			
Annual increase	40.00%	Rate peg	Rate peg
Cumulative impact	**40.00%**	44.20%	47.81%
Option 2: Two-year SRV			
Annual increase	25.00%	25.00%	Rate peg
Cumulative impact	25.00%	**56.25%**	60.16%
Option 3: Three-year SRV			
Annual increase	20.00%	15.00%	15.00%
Cumulative impact	20.00%	38.00%	**58.70%**

IPART requires councils to present SRV options as a cumulative amount over the implementation period of the SRV. These percentages are outlined in the boxes in the table above. However, when different implementation periods are presented, this requirement doesn't show how these options compare to each other. To show how they compare the cumulative impact over three years for each option is shown in the table above in grey for Options 1 and 2, which have proposed implementation periods of less than three years (taking the assumed rate peg increases in the years after the SRV implementation period).

What do these proposed changes mean for ratepayers?

The impact on an individual's rates will be different depending on the unimproved land value of their property. The following table provides an indication of the annual rates increase likely to be experienced by the average land value for each rating category. The increases include the forecast rate peg.

The average expected increases for each SRV option are:

- **Option 1 – One-year SRV**:
  - **Residential**: at the end of the SRV implementation period (one year), the total average rate increases by $489; the average annual increase at the end of three years is **$158** or **$3.02** per week more than would have been if the rate peg applied.
  - **Business**: at the end of the SRV implementation period (one year), the total average rate increases by $1,441; the average annual increase at the end of three years is **$464** or **$8.90** per week more than would have been if the rate peg applied.
  - **Farmland**: at the end of the SRV implementation period (one year), the total average rate increases by $1,370; the average annual increase at the end of three years is **$441** or **$8.46** per week more than would have been if the rate peg applied.
- **Option 2 – Two-year SRV**:
  - **Residential**: at the end of the SRV implementation period (two years), the total average rate increases by $688; the average annual increase at the end of three years is **$208** or **$3.99** per week more than would have been if the rate peg applied.
  - **Business**: at the end of the SRV implementation period (two years), the total average rate increases by $2,026; the average annual increase at the end of three years is **$612** or **$11.74** per week more than would have been if the rate peg applied.
  - **Farmland**: at the end of the SRV implementation period (two years), the total average rate increases by $1,926; the average annual increase at the end of three years is **$582** or **$11.16** per week more than would have been if the rate peg applied.
- **Option 3 – Three-year SRV**:
  - **Residential**: at the end of the SRV implementation period (three years), the total average rate increases by $718; the average annual increase at the end of three years is **$202** or **$3.87** per week more than would have been if the rate peg applied.
  - **Business**: at the end of the SRV implementation period (three years), the total average rate increases by $2,114; the average annual increase at the end of three years is **$595** or **$11.41** per week more than would have been if the rate peg applied.
  - **Farmland**: at the end of the SRV implementation period (three years), the total average rate increases by $2,010; the average annual increase at the end of three years is **$565** or **$10.84** per week more than would have been if the rate peg applied.

Details of the impacts on average rates for each subcategory of rates for each SRV option and the rate peg are provided in the table below.

Table 2 Average annual rates

Subcategory	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Average annual increase	Average increase per week
Rate Peg						
Non-urban	$1,576	$1,630	$1,679	$1,721	$48.16	$0.92
Yass	$922	$954	$982	$1,007	$28.18	$0.54
Binalong	$791	$818	$843	$864	$24.17	$0.46
Bowning	$795	$822	$847	$868	$24.30	$0.47
Wee Jasper	$797	$824	$849	$870	$24.35	$0.47
Bookham	$797	$824	$849	$870	$24.35	$0.47
Murrumbateman	$874	$903	$930	$954	$26.68	$0.51
Gundaroo	$1,082	$1,119	$1,153	$1,181	$33.06	$0.63
Sutton	$1,230	$1,272	$1,310	$1,343	$37.57	$0.72
Total Residential	**$1,223**	**$1,264**	**$1,302**	**$1,335**	**$37.36**	**$0.72**
Sutton & Gundaroo	$1,525	$1,577	$1,624	$1,665	$46.58	$0.89
Yass & Other Villages	$3,694	$3,819	$3,934	$4,032	$112.84	$2.16
Total Business	**$3,602**	**$3,724**	**$3,836**	**$3,932**	**$110.02**	**$2.11**
Total Farmland	**$3,425**	**$3,541**	**$3,647**	**$3,738**	**$104.62**	**$2.01**
Option 1 - One-year SRV						
Non-urban	$1,576	$2,207	$2,273	$2,330	$251.21	$4.82
Yass	$922	$1,291	$1,330	$1,363	$146.99	$2.82
Binalong	$791	$1,108	$1,141	$1,170	$126.10	$2.42
Bowning	$795	$1,113	$1,147	$1,175	$126.73	$2.43
Wee Jasper	$797	$1,116	$1,149	$1,178	$127.00	$2.44
Bookham	$797	$1,116	$1,149	$1,178	$127.00	$2.44
Murrumbateman	$874	$1,223	$1,260	$1,291	$139.19	$2.67
Gundaroo	$1,082	$1,515	$1,561	$1,600	$172.45	$3.31
Sutton	$1,230	$1,722	$1,774	$1,818	$195.99	$3.76
Total Residential	**$1,223**	**$1,712**	**$1,763**	**$1,807**	**$194.86**	**$3.74**
Sutton & Gundaroo	$1,525	$2,135	$2,199	$2,254	$242.98	$4.66
Yass & Other Villages	$3,694	$5,171	$5,326	$5,460	$588.61	$11.29
Total Business	**$3,602**	**$5,042**	**$5,194**	**$5,323**	**$573.92**	**$11.01**
Total Farmland	**$3,425**	**$4,794**	**$4,938**	**$5,062**	**$545.71**	**$10.47**

Subcategory	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Average annual increase	Average increase per week
Option 2 - Two-year SRV						
Non-urban	$1,576	$1,971	$2,463	$2,525	$316.12	$6.06
Yass	$922	$1,153	$1,441	$1,477	$184.97	$3.55
Binalong	$791	$989	$1,236	$1,267	$158.68	$3.04
Bowning	$795	$994	$1,243	$1,274	$159.47	$3.06
Wee Jasper	$797	$996	$1,245	$1,276	$159.82	$3.06
Bookham	$797	$996	$1,245	$1,276	$159.82	$3.06
Murrumbateman	$874	$1,092	$1,365	$1,399	$175.16	$3.36
Gundaroo	$1,082	$1,353	$1,691	$1,733	$217.00	$4.16
Sutton	$1,230	$1,537	$1,922	$1,970	$246.63	$4.73
Total Residential	**$1,223**	**$1,529**	**$1,911**	**$1,958**	**$245.20**	**$4.70**
Sutton & Gundaroo	$1,525	$1,906	$2,383	$2,442	$305.76	$5.86
Yass & Other Villages	$3,694	$4,617	$5,772	$5,916	$740.68	$14.20
Total Business	**$3,602**	**$4,502**	**$5,628**	**$5,768**	**$722.21**	**$13.85**
Total Farmland	**$3,425**	**$4,281**	**$5,351**	**$5,485**	**$686.71**	**$13.17**
Option 3 - Three-year SRV						
Non-urban	$1,576	$1,892	$2,176	$2,502	$308.47	$5.92
Yass	$922	$1,107	$1,273	$1,464	$180.49	$3.46
Binalong	$791	$950	$1,092	$1,256	$154.84	$2.97
Bowning	$795	$954	$1,098	$1,262	$155.61	$2.98
Wee Jasper	$797	$956	$1,100	$1,265	$155.95	$2.99
Bookham	$797	$956	$1,100	$1,265	$155.95	$2.99
Murrumbateman	$874	$1,048	$1,205	$1,386	$170.92	$3.28
Gundaroo	$1,082	$1,299	$1,493	$1,717	$211.75	$4.06
Sutton	$1,230	$1,476	$1,697	$1,952	$240.66	$4.62
Total Residential	**$1,223**	**$1,467**	**$1,687**	**$1,941**	**$239.27**	**$4.59**
Sutton & Gundaroo	$1,525	$1,830	$2,104	$2,420	$298.36	$5.72
Yass & Other Villages	$3,694	$4,433	$5,097	$5,862	$722.75	$13.86
Total Business	**$3,602**	**$4,322**	**$4,970**	**$5,716**	**$704.72**	**$13.52**
Total Farmland	**$3,425**	**$4,110**	**$4,726**	**$5,435**	**$670.08**	**$12.85**

How do Yass Valley Council rates compare to other Councils?

The Office of Local Government groups councils with other similar councils for comparison purposes. Yass Valley Council is in Group 11 with 18 other large rural councils. This group of councils represents a diverse cross section of geographies and communities across New South Wales, including Bellingen, Cabonne, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional, Cowra, Federation, Greater Hume, Gunnedah, Hilltops, Inverell, Leeton, Moree Plains, Murray River, Muswellbrook, Nambucca Valley, Narrabri, Parkes, Snowy Valleys and Upper Hunter.

Council also generally compares itself to other similar-sized inland councils. Some are in and some are not in Group 11. These comparison councils are Snowy Valleys, Snowy Monaro, Upper Lachlan and Hilltops. We have provided comparison to the average of all the councils in Group 11, and those Council compares itself to that are not in Group 11.

Table 3 Estimated 2028/29 average rates for OLG Group 11 councils - Residential

LGA	Est. average residential ($)
Yass Valley- 2 -year SRV	**1,958**
Yass Valley - 3 Year SRV	**1,941**
Bellingen	1,924
Yass Valley - 1 Year SRV	**1,807**
Gunnedah	1,612
Snowy Monaro Regional	1,386
Nambucca Valley	1,357
Inverell	1,339
Yass Valley	**1,335**
Upper Hunter	1,334
Parkes	1,286
Leeton	1,276
Federation	1,265
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	1,194
Greater Hume	1,158
Murray River	1,137
Snowy Valleys	1,091
Muswellbrook	1,083
Cabonne	867
Hilltops	827
Upper Lachlan	735
Cowra	649

Table 4 Estimated 2028/29 average rates for OLG Group 11 councils - Business

LGA	Est. average business ($)
Gunnedah	8,107
Yass Valley- 2 -year SRV	**5,768**
Yass Valley - 3 Year SRV	**5,716**
Inverell	5,564
Parkes	5,530
Yass Valley - 1 Year SRV	**5,323**
Cowra	4,066
Yass Valley	**3,932**
Muswellbrook	3,325
Nambucca Valley	2,764
Upper Lachlan	2,549
Hilltops	2,233
Snowy Valleys	2,226
Bellingen	2,087
Federation	1,814
Snowy Monaro Regional	1,589
Upper Hunter	1,339
Leeton	1,198
Murray River	1,099
Greater Hume	722
Cabonne	711
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	448

Table 5 Estimated 2028/29 average rates for OLG Group 11 councils - Farmland

LGA	Est. average Farmland ($)
Gunnedah	7,844
Federation	6,518
Upper Hunter	5,709
Yass Valley- 2 -year SRV	**5,485**
Yass Valley - 3 Year SRV	**5,435**
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional *	5,102
Yass Valley - 1 Year SRV	**5,062**
Leeton	4,609
Bellingen	4,267
Inverell	3,985
Murray River	3,951
Muswellbrook	3,901
Parkes	3,817
Yass Valley	**3,738**
Cabonne	3,664
Hilltops	3,658
Snowy Valleys	3,259
Greater Hume	3,050
Cowra	2,746
Nambucca Valley	2,729
Snowy Monaro Regional	2,708
Upper Lachlan	2,463

This comparison uses the most recent reported data from the Office of Local Government, which is from 2023-24 and forecasts rate increases in line with the forecast rate peg or an approved SRV, if one exists for that council.

It is expected that there will be some councils that, like Yass Valley Council, will be consulting with their communities on a Special Rate Variation in this and coming years. As these increases are not yet approved, they are not included in the comparison data or the group averages but are worth noting as they may affect Council's relative position in terms of average rates within the group.

Has Council considered the community's capacity to pay higher rates?

Council has undertaken a detailed capacity to pay analysis which includes analysis of the impacts on a variety of different socio-economic groups within the Yass Valley local government area (LGA). The detailed Capacity to Pay report has been included as part of the reference materials for the community in discussing this SRV proposal.

The analysis highlights that there is an overall moderate level of capacity. The Yass Valley Council LGA as a whole sits below the Regional NSW and Capital Region benchmarks for disadvantage, and above for advantage. Significant disparity across suburbs is evident, with some suburbs seeing very high levels of advantage and some seeing greatly increased levels of disadvantage. There are also a number of conflicting indicators seen across the LGA which suggests that while there is likely to generally be moderate capacity, there are a variety of factors that may alternately increase and mitigate the impacts across the community as a whole.

There is a low level of unemployment generally across the LGA, which indicates a strong local economy. The level of pensioner assessments suggests that there may be increased vulnerability in relation to older members of the community, particularly in Bowning-Bookham-Rural West. Housing tenure is predominantly owner-occupied, with 77% of homes either fully owned or mortgaged, significantly above the Regional NSW and Capital Region averages. The overall level of vulnerable households is below the Regional NSW and Capital Region averages, suggesting that there is not an increased financial sensitivity in the LGA generally. There may still be some potential for mortgage and rental stress within the LGA, particularly in the Yass and District grouping.

The modelled average rates for each grouping show that the areas of greater disadvantage will see the lowest increase in rates, and the greatest increases will be in the areas of less disadvantage.

All SRV options would move Yass Valley Council to the higher end of average rates for group 11 councils, although this does not consider the current financial performance and sustainability of those councils. The LGA's outstanding rates ratio is also above the NSW benchmark for rural councils, but this may be due to a lack of debt recovery action, or an unwillingness to pay amongst some sections of the community.

How will the proposed rates increase impact Council's financial sustainability?

The proposed Special Rate Variation will enable Council to deliver current services and maintain assets to the community, while ensuring financial sustainability in the longer-term. It will also enable Council to fund sufficient renewals to improve its infrastructure backlog over time.

As all three SRV options are modelled under the Sustainable Asset scenario, this ensures that they meet the benchmarks set by the State Government for infrastructure maintenance and renewal, while ensuring that infrastructure backlog reduces to the 2% benchmark over the ten year forecast period.

The figures below show that for each of the SRV options, Council will record modest operating surpluses and build to an adequate unrestricted cash position over time.

Figure 7 Forecasted operating results for SRV options

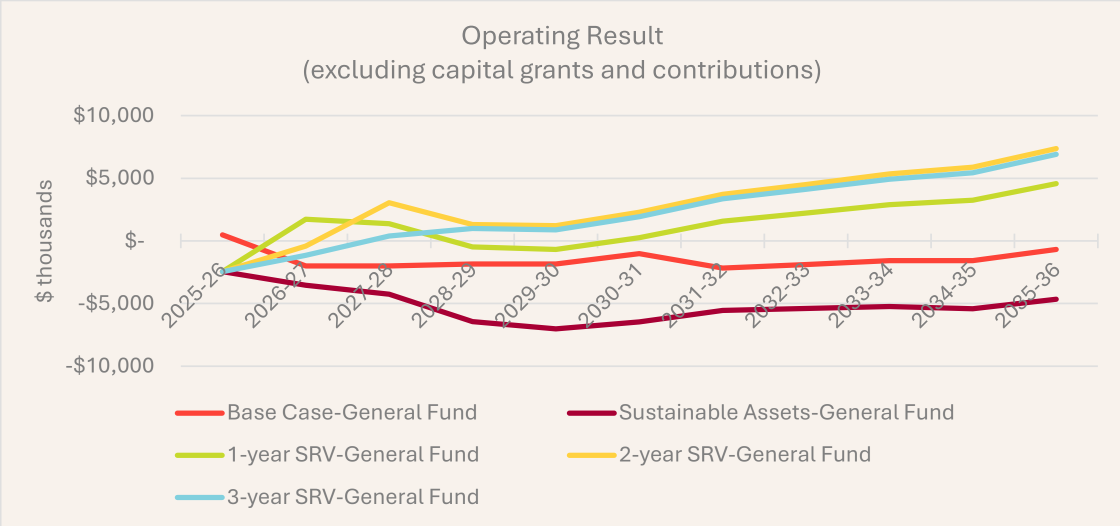
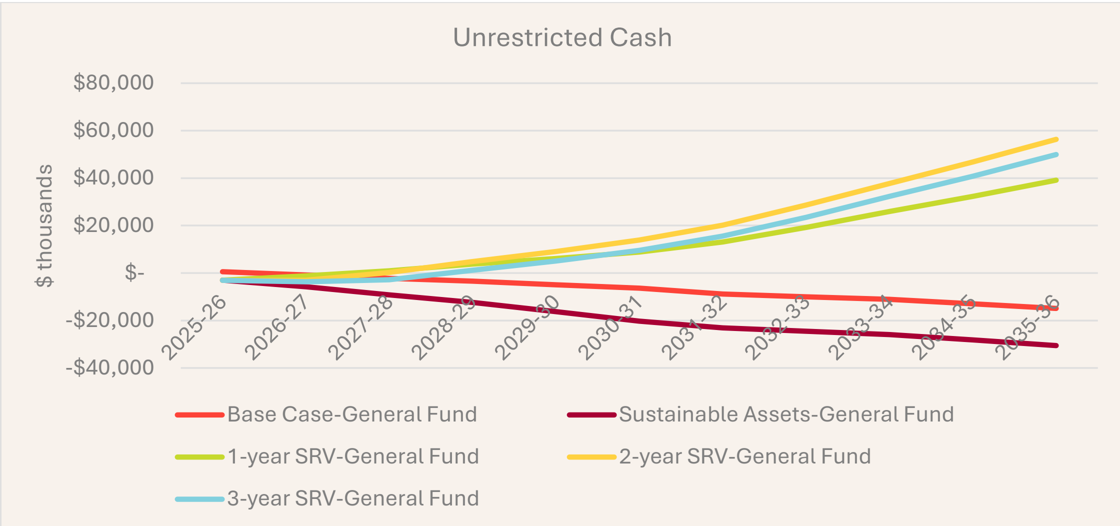


Figure 8 Forecasted unrestricted cash position for SRV options



What would happen if Council does not increase its rates by the proposed amounts?

If Council could not increase its rates revenue through an SRV, it would not be able to adequately fund the delivery of current services and maintain its infrastructure. Council would need to cut General Fund costs by around $3.5 million per annum, which would likely require significant reductions in the services currently being delivered. For reference, Council's total General Fund operating expenses in 2024-25 was $27.8 million, it would need to cut these costs by 13% to find the required level of cost reduction. Council has not considered which services would need to reduce to bridge this funding gap if it did not apply for an SRV. The following functions and activities costs, which are predominantly provided via the General Fund, were reported in its 2024-25 Financial Statements:

- *Our Community*, which included community health and wellbeing, creative culture and recreation, community relations and resilience, had a net cost of $1.3 million.

- *Our Environment*, which included protecting lands, waterways and biodiversity, have a net cost $230 thousand.
- *Our Economy*, which included promoting efficient and careful resource use, healthy economic activity, meaningful work and employment, had a net cost of $765 thousand.

In addition to this, Council would not be able to fully fund renewals in key asset areas, such as roads, which would result in further deterioration in the condition of these assets.

Where do I go for more information on the proposed SRV?

More information on the proposed SRV will be made available on Council's Your Voice Counts page. Link to come.

Council will also be including information on the proposed SRV in its regular newsletters, fact sheet, information display or kiosks, e-Newsletter, social media, public exhibition, survey, newspaper advertisements and media releases.

We will also be running public face-to-face engagement sessions and an online webinar for the community to find out more and to ask questions. Dates and locations will be available via Council's webpage.

Council must apply to IPART for approval to increase rates through an SRV. Before doing so, Council must demonstrate that it has engaged the community about the possibility of an SRV and has considered its views. IPART will also seek community feedback.

IPART will assess council applications on 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 council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (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 council.
5. The IP&R documents or council's application must explain and quantify the **productivity improvements and cost containment** strategies.
6. Any other matter that IPART considers relevant.

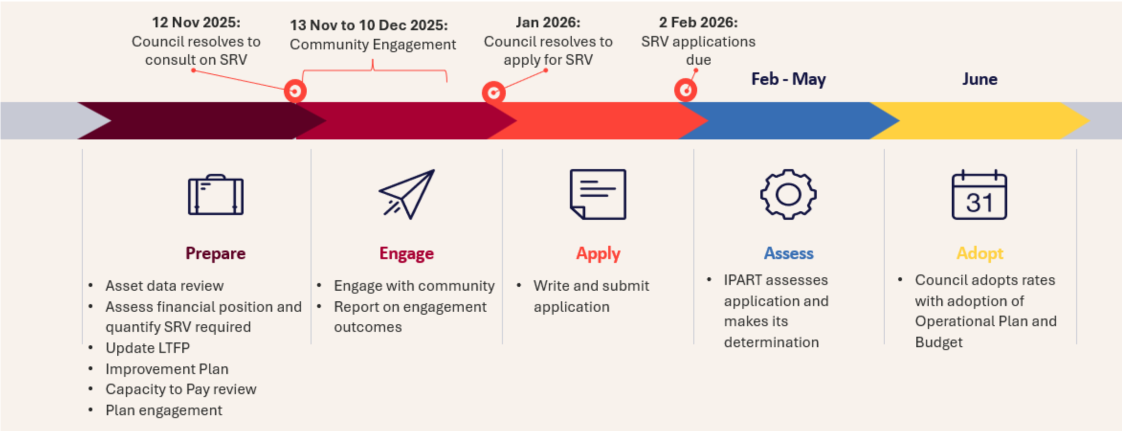
More information on SRVs can be found on IPART's website: *https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home/Industries/Local-Government/Special-Variations*.

What happens after this?

Once the community consultation period concludes on 10 December, Council will review the feedback received. A report will then go to Council for its consideration in January 2026. Council will then decide whether to proceed with the SRV application.

If Council decides to proceed with the SRV application, the application must be submitted to IPART by 2 February 2026. IPART will conduct its own consultation, with public submissions likely to be sought in March 2026, before IPART makes its determination in May 2026. If successful, the SRV will be included in rates from 1 July 2026.

Figure 9 Special Rate Variation timeline



Who is Morrison Low Advisory and why is their name on this report?

Morrison Low Advisory is a multi-disciplined management consultancy that has the ability to draw on the experience of a range of experts from different professions. Yass Valley Council has engaged Morrison Low Advisory to provide strategic advice and assistance on Council's financial position. Our prime focus is local government; we pride ourselves on our deep understanding of the industry and the matters confronting it.

We consider that our team has the depth, experience, expertise and analytical capability necessary to provide independent strategic advice to Council. We have extensive strategic advice, communication, presentation and engagement, strategic asset management, financial strategy and management, service planning, review and delivery experience. Our team members are widely recognised as experienced strategic specialists in local government, providing advice councils can act on.

Undertaking a Special Rate Variation process is not a usual occurrence for a council, nor should it be, so when a council is faced with the challenge of considering a Special Rate Variation, they often need to engage specialist assistance to supplement staff expertise. Morrison Low Advisory regularly works with councils to supplement staff's expertise and support councils through the process. Morrison Low Advisory has been engaged by Yass Valley Council to support it in this process of considering the SRV application. Our work has included reviewing the asset financial data, undertaking Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) financial modelling, supporting the development of SRV strategy and options, undertaking a capacity to pay analysis, and supporting the community engagement.

Document Status

Job #	Version	Written	Reviewed	Approved	Report Date
7887	Draft - 1	R Bull & J McKenzie	Peer Review – M Gibbs QA- NN	J McKenzie	2 November 2025

Morrison Low Advisory
Advice You Can Act On

Morrison Low Advisory

Capacity to Pay Analysis

Yass Valley Council

OCTOBER 2025

Contents

Tables

Figures

Executive summary

Background

Yass Valley Council ('Council') is currently considering an application for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to rates and Council has released three rate rise options to the community. These options are designed to help Council ensure ongoing financial sustainability and the capacity to deliver essential services and infrastructure to its community.

Yass Valley Council has three options with respect to rates. These options, which are all permanent, are:

- Option 1 (sustainable spend on assets to reach benchmarks), achieved by a one-year SRV of 40%.
- Option 2 (sustainable spend on assets to reach benchmarks), achieved by a two-year SRV of 25% each year resulting in a cumulative increase of 56.25% at the end of 2027/28.
- Option 3 (sustainable spend on assets to reach benchmarks), achieved by a three-year SRV of 20% in 2026/27 and 15% in the next two years, resulting in a cumulative increase 58.7% at the end of 2028/29.

These options are inclusive of any rate peg for the years they are being implemented. This report also compares the above to the assumed rate peg of 3.4% in 2026/27, 3.0% in 2027/28 and 2.5% in 2028/29.

This report provides an analysis of a wide range of socio-economic factors and other data and evaluates the general financial capacity of ratepayers to pay the proposed rate changes. It also considers the financial vulnerability and exposure of different community groups within the local government area (LGA), as well as current industry trends and business indicators.

It analyses both LGA-wide data along with resident-specific data from five geographic groupings within the Yass Valley Council LGA. These groupings have been selected because they have aligned geographic characteristics - utilising data from the Yass Valley Council .id community profile[1].

The groupings are ACT peri-urban area; Bookham-Bowning Rural West; Gundaroo and District; Murrumbateman and District; and Yass and District. A breakdown of the suburbs included within each grouping is detailed on page 4 of this report.

About the Yass Valley LGA

Yass Valley Council encompasses approximately 17,642 residents (estimated resident population 2024) and a total land area of about 3,995 square kilometres. The Yass Valley local government area is located in south-eastern New South Wales, and is known for its rich agricultural heritage, local food, wine and tourism spots, and historic villages.

The LGA has a high socio-economic status, with Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) scores indicating very low levels of disadvantage and high levels of advantage in some areas, probably due to the LGA's proximity to the ACT. Housing tenure is predominantly owner-occupied, with 77% of homes either fully owned or mortgaged, significantly above the Regional NSW average (66%). The area also boasts moderate-to-high household incomes, with 34% of households in the highest income quartile and only 16% in the lowest quartile.

[1] Informed Decisions (.id), August 2025. Yass Valley Council – Community Profile, Social Atlas, Economic Profile. (Sourced from: [Home | Yass Valley | Community profile](#))

Overall, the Yass Valley Council LGA is a relatively advantaged community in comparison with Regional NSW, however, there are pockets of vulnerability, such as increased lone-person and one-parent households in Yass and District and Bowning-Bookham-Rural West, which may be more sensitive to changes in council rates. The area's high levels of income, home ownership low potential for mortgage stress compared to Capital Region and Regional NSW, and low unemployment, suggest some strong capacity to absorb potential rate increases. Careful consideration should still be given to supporting vulnerable groups.

The following table provides a summary of the socio-economic analysis for each grouping.

Table 1 Summary of grouping analysis

Grouping	Key features
ACT peri-urban area IRSD: 1,117 IRSAD: 1,135	• SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) scores well above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is lowest of the five groupings but still sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Third highest proportion of working age (51%), slightly above the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second lowest proportion of dependents (23.3%). • Lowest proportion of one-parent families, well below Regional NSW average and Capital Region averages. • Equal lowest proportion of 'at risk' households (lone person and one-parent families) than other groupings, at 17% - this is much lower than Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second highest proportion of couples with children (44%), notably higher than the Capital Region average. • Second highest proportion of renters (13%) compared to other groupings, and well below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • High proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 78%, when compared to other groupings – although still notably above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages, particularly for fully owned homes. • High proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (46%), well above Regional NSW average. • Low level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (10%), well below Regional NSW average. • Lowest proportion of pensioner assessments (4%) of all groupings. • Slightly higher potential for mortgage stress within this grouping.
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West IRSD: 1,040 IRSAD: 1,018	• IRSD and IRSAD scores well above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is second lowest of the five groupings but still sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Lowest proportion of working age (48%), slightly below the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of dependents (21%). • Low proportion of one-parent families, well below Regional NSW average and Capital Region averages. • Second highest proportion of 'at risk' households (lone person and one-parent families), at 31% - slightly lower than Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of couples with children (25%), equal to the Capital Region average. • Low proportion of renters (10%) compared to other groupings, and well below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages.

Grouping	Key features
	• Second lowest proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 73%, when compared to other groupings – although still above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (20%), slightly above Regional NSW average. • Highest level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (25%), but still below Regional NSW average. • Second highest proportion of pensioner assessments (10%) of all groupings. • Some potential for mortgage and rental stress within this grouping.
Gundaroo and District IRSD: 1,107 IRSAD: 1,130	• IRSD and IRSAD scores well above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is second highest of the five groupings and sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Second highest proportion of working age (52%), slightly above the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second lowest proportion of retirees (23%). • Low proportion of one-parent families, well below Regional NSW average and Capital Region averages. • Second lowest proportion of 'at risk' households (lone person and one-parent families), at 20% - notably lower than Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • High proportion of couples with children (42%), well above the Capital Region average. • Low proportion of renters (9%) compared to other groupings, and well below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second highest proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 86%, when compared to other groupings – well above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Highest proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (52%), notably above Regional NSW average. • Lowest level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (8%), well below Regional NSW average. • Lowest proportion of pensioner assessments (4%) of all groupings. • Little potential for mortgage and rental stress within this grouping.
Murrumbateman and District IRSD: 1,104 IRSAD: 1,123	• IRSD and IRSAD scores well above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is third highest of the five groupings and sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Highest proportion of working age (55%), well above the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of retirees (19%). • Low proportion of one-parent families, well below Regional NSW average and Capital Region averages. • Lowest proportion of 'at risk' households (lone person and one-parent families), at 17% - notably lower than Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Highest proportion of couples with children (46%), well above the Capital Region average. • Lowest proportion of renters (7%) compared to other groupings, and well below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Highest proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 88%, when compared to other groupings – well above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second highest proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (50%), notably above Regional NSW average.

Grouping	Key features
	• Second lowest level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (8%), well below Regional NSW average. • Second lowest proportion of pensioner assessments (5%) of all groupings. • Little potential for mortgage and some potential for rental stress within this grouping.
Yass and District IRSA: 1,028 IRSD: 1,016	• IRSD and IRSAD scores lowest in the LGA but still above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is the lowest of the five groupings and but sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Second lowest proportion of working age (49%), on par with the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second highest proportion of retirees (27%). • Highest proportion of one-parent families (10%), in line with Regional NSW average and Capital Region average. • Highest proportion of 'at risk' households (lone person and one-parent families), at 35% in line with Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Highest proportion of lone-person households (25%), similar to the Capital Region average. • Highest proportion of renters (22%) compared to other groupings, but slightly below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 70%, when compared to other groupings - slightly above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (24%), slightly above Regional NSW average. • Second highest level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (21%), but still well below Regional NSW average. • Highest proportion of pensioner assessments (13%) of all groupings. • Potential for mortgage and rental stress within this grouping.

Ratepayer impacts

Analysis summary for residential ratepayers

Three of the five Yass Valley Council area groupings – ACT peri-urban area, Gundaroo and District, and Murrumbateman and District, see significant levels of advantage, as demonstrated by high levels of household income, high SEIFA scores and high levels of fully owned homes, when compared to Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. These groupings are all ranked within the top 3% of areas in Australia for advantage according to the SEIFA IRSAD with 14 of 28 suburbs also ranked within the top 10%. However, the majority of the population live in the suburb of Yass, which is the lowest ranked suburb and in the top 48%.

At the end of 2028/29 (i.e. over three years), residential ratepayers in the Yass and District grouping would be paying, depending on the SRV option, between $391 and $516 more than they would have under the normal rate peg increase. On average, residential ratepayers will pay between $479 and $632 over the rate cap, over three years.

At an overall level, the Yass Valley Council's estimated average residential rate is moderate when compared against other Group 11 councils, however, Yass Valley Council ranks the second lowest amongst Group 11 councils, for rates charged per dollar of land value. When considered with the significant advantage generally seen across the LGA, it is considered that there is capacity to pay the proposed rate increases.

The application of an appropriate hardship policy remains an important consideration in the implementation of any rate increase, particularly for suburbs that may have the potential for increased vulnerability, such as Bowning and Yass.

Analysis summary for business ratepayers

On average, business ratepayers across the LGA will receive an increase in rates between $1,411 and $1,862 over three years, depending on the SRV option selected. The Murrumbateman and District grouping will see the highest average increase in rates of between $2,137 and $2,820, however this grouping contains only 22 (or 7.4%) of the LGA's 296 business ratepayers. Yass and District contains 72% of the LGA's business ratepayers and this grouping will see the second highest increase in average rates (between $1,464 and $1,931 over three years, dependent on the SRV option).

Before the proposed rate increases, Yass Valley Council has average business rates well above the average of Group 11 councils. With the largest increase, Yass Valley Council will move to the second highest average rate. When reviewed in tandem with the positive industry indicators, but also high levels of outstanding business rates, it is considered that for business ratepayers there may be constrained capacity to pay across all groupings.

Analysis summary for farmland ratepayers

On average, farmland ratepayers across the LGA will receive an increase in rates between $1,344 and $1,773 over three years, depending on the SRV option selected. The Bowning-Bookham-Rural West grouping will see the highest average increase in rates of between $1,536 and $2,027, and this grouping has the largest number (428, or 29%) of the LGA's 1,465 farmland ratepayers. The ACT peri-urban area contains the second highest number of farmland ratepayers (344, or 23%) and this grouping will see the second highest increase in average rates (between $1,501 and $1,981 over three years, dependent on the SRV option).

Before the proposed rate increases, Yass Valley Council has average farmland rates well below the average of Group 11 councils. With all proposed options increases, Yass Valley Council will move to well above the average rate. Farmland ratepayers are more evenly spread across the LGA, so there will likely be some capacity to pay, although the Bowning-Bookham-Rural West grouping may be constrained.

Introduction

This report provides an analysis and evaluation of relative wealth and financial capacity; it looks at the financial vulnerability and exposure of different community groups within the Yass Valley Council LGA.

Key considerations include:

- regions of social disadvantage
- particularly vulnerable groups of individuals
- patterns of household expenditure
- industries or businesses that may be more or less vulnerable to rating changes.

These findings will then be compared to proposed changes in rates to identify whether there are any groups or individuals that are being particularly impacted and/or marginalised.

Data for this review was obtained from the following sources:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 and 2021 Census Data – Data by Regions.
- Australian Bureau Statistics Selected Living Cost Indexes for June 2025.
- Reserve Bank of Australia Statement by the Monetary Policy Board in August 2025.
- Yass Valley Council rating database.
- NSW Office of Local Government Time Series data for 2023/24.
- Profile ID – Yass Valley Council Community/Social/Economic Profiles.

We acknowledge that there is a notable gap between the date of the majority of the socio-economic data available for analysis (which is generally drawn from the 2021 Census) and the present date; however, due to the limited specific data available at an LGA and locality level, this is an accepted issue. The next Census is due to take place in 2026.

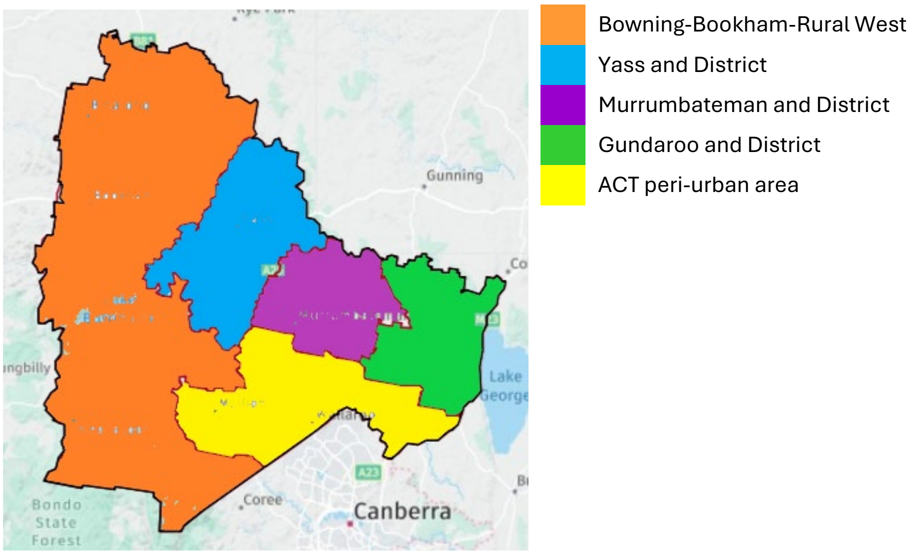
Background

For the purposes of the report, Yass Valley Council ('Council') has been divided into five groupings for this analysis. Council is looking to ensure that equity is maintained between areas, as each grouping has slightly differing economic and socio-economic profiles. A summary of the groupings and the suburbs that they encompass has been provided in the following table and figure.

Table 2 Yass Valley Council grouping breakdown

Grouping	Usual resident population (2021)	**Suburb/locality** (Source profile.id)
ACT peri-urban area	2,224	The ACT peri-urban area includes the localities of Jeir, Mulllion, Springrange and Wallaroo, and the Yass Valley Council area parts of the localities of Bywong and Sutton.
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	1,660	This small area includes the localities of Binalong, Bookham, Bowning, Burrinjuck, Cavan, Kangiara, Laverstock, Narrangullen, Wee Jasper and Woolgarlo, and the Yass Valley Council area parts of the localities of Brindabella and Uriarra.
Gundaroo and District	1,332	This small area includes the locality of Gundaroo and the Yass Valley Council area parts of the localities of Bellmount Forest, Collector, Lake George and Lerida.
Murrumbateman and District	4,316	This small area includes the localities of Murrumbateman, Nanima and Yass River.
Yass and District	7,749	Yass and District includes the localities of Bango, Boambolo, Good Hope, Manton, Marchmont and Yass.
Yass Valley Council area	**17,281**	

Figure 1 Yass Valley Council area grouping map



Methodology

Our methodology in examining the relative wealth between the different groupings focuses on the following:

- **Areas of social disadvantage**

  We will first investigate the different characteristics and make up of each area to determine whether there are any particular areas of social disadvantage. This will include an investigation into:

  - the age structure of each region
  - the typical make up of each household
  - household income, including the effect of dependants
  - SEIFA rankings.

- **Particularly vulnerable groups of individuals**

  We will then investigate whether there are any particular groups within each area that, despite the overall wealth of the area, would be particularly vulnerable and affected by a change in rates. These include:

  - persons who have or need core assistance
  - individuals who are currently unemployed
  - households currently under housing stress
  - pensioners.

- **Patterns in household expenditure**

  We will then examine trends in household expenditure and discuss what impacts they may have on an individual's ability to pay.

- **Industry**

  We will then compare employment by industry type, as well as value added by industry sector and the key productive sectors.

We will then compare these findings to the proposed rating changes, to determine whether there are any particular groups or individuals that would be significantly impacted. Our analysis will also compare with the average rates of other Group 11 and neighbouring councils, in addition to outstanding rates ratios and other factors that can help indicate whether the Yass Valley Council community has a potential capacity to pay increased rates.

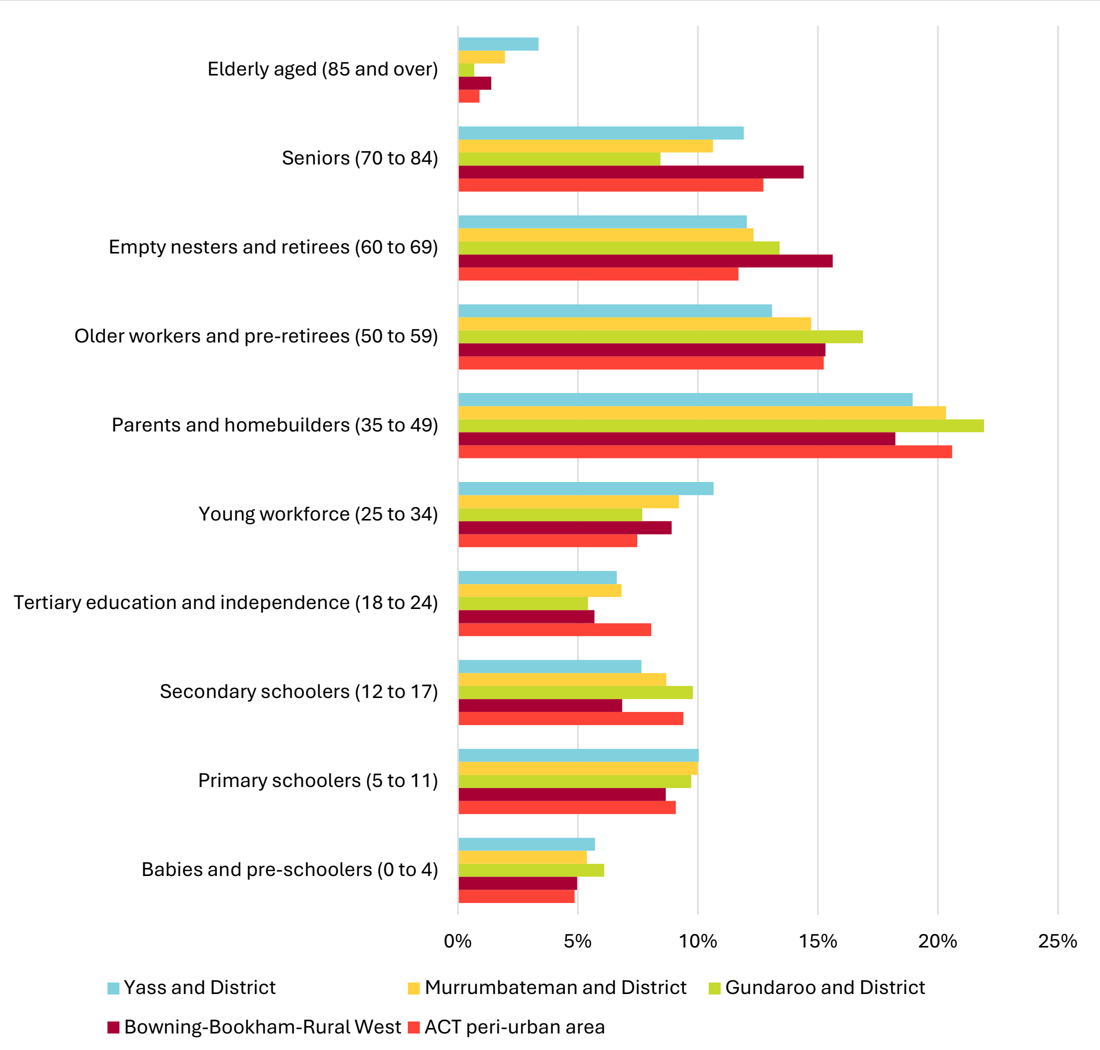
Areas of social advantage and disadvantage

Each grouping has differing demographic characteristics, and we first want to identify 'who are the people' that make up each area, 'what do they do' and 'how do they live'.

Service age groups

Age profiles are used to understand the demand for aged-based services as well as the income earning status of the population. Data has been broken into groups that are reflective of typical life stages. This provides insight into the number of dependants, size of the workforce and number of retirees in each grouping.

Figure 2 Service age groups



Combining these results in terms of the following categories (dependants, workforce, and retirees) and ranking them in terms of proportion of population (with one representing the largest proportion) generates the following results.

Table 3 Service age rankings

Rank	ACT peri-urban area	Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	Gundaroo and District	Murrumbateman and District	Yass and District
Dependents	4	5	2	1	3
Working age	3	5	2	1	4
Retirees	3	1	4	5	2
Total population	**2,224**	**1,652**	**1,328**	**4,323**	**7,741**

Council at an overall level has a slightly higher proportion of dependents (24%) and similar working age (51%) than the Capital Region (21% and 49%) and Regional NSW (21% and 59%) averages. There is a notable difference between the LGA's proportion of retirees (25%) and the Regional NSW average (29%). The proportion of individuals in all age ranges are in line with the averages for Capital Region and Regional NSW. There is a marginally higher proportion of parents and homebuilders (20%) than the Capital region (18%) and Regional NSW (17%).

Looking into specific groupings, we observe the following:

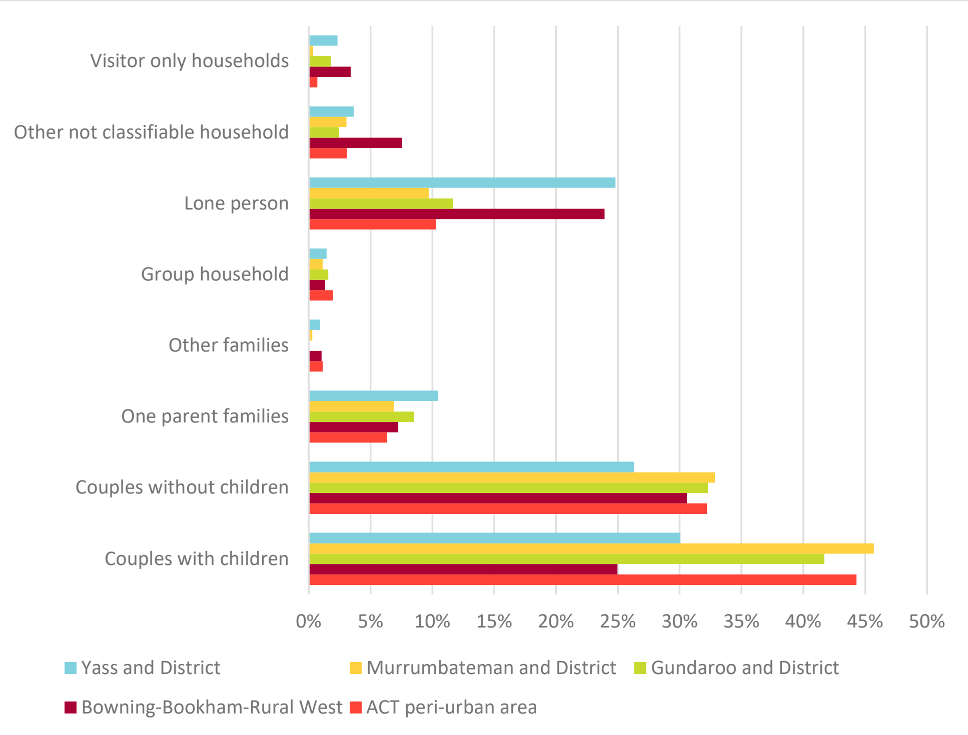
- Murrumbateman and district has notably higher proportion of working age (55%) and dependents (26%) and the lowest proportion of retirees (19%).
- Conversely, Bowning-Bookham-Rural west has the lowest proportion of working age (48%) and dependents (20%) and the highest proportion of retirees (31%).

It is considered that the higher levels of working-age population are an indicator for increased earning potential and more certainty in relation to ongoing income. However, when looking at age range only, this does not account for retirees who may be continuing to work and/or individuals under-18 who may have already commenced part- or full-time work.

Household types

Alongside the age structure of each region, it is important to determine the typical trends in the make-up of households. This provides a more complete picture of the people, families, and communities in each area. A summary of household type is provided in the following figure.

Figure 3 Household composition



The proportion of couples with children within the LGA (36%) is higher than both the averages for the Capital Region and Regional NSW (both 25%); whilst the proportion of couples without children (30%) is marginally above both the Capital Region (29%) and the Regional NSW average (28%). This can be indicative of greater capacity due to a likelihood of reduced expenses for couples without children.

The percentage of one parent families in the LGA (8%) is marginally below the average for the Capital Region (9%) and slightly below the average for Regional NSW (11%). The LGA has a notably lower proportion of lone person households (19%) when compared to both Capital Region and Regional NSW (both 26%).

The ‘lone person’ and ‘one parent family’ households are considered to be more vulnerable to the impacts of rate increases due to a reduced/singular income stream. Combining these categories together into an ‘at risk’ group shows that across the LGA as a whole, the at-risk group makes up 27% of the population, which is notably lower than the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages (35% and 37%).

When looking at the ‘at risk’ group across each grouping, Yass and District, and Bowning-Bookham-Rural West see a higher proportion (35% and 31% respectively and ACT peri-urban area, Murrumbateman and District, and Gundaroo and District considerably lower (17%, 17% and 20% respectively).

The two 'at risk" groupings have higher proportions of lone households (25% Yass and District, 24% Bowning-Bookham-Rural West), and also higher proportions of pension assessments (refer to the separate section on pensioners in this report). Yass and District also has the highest proportion and highest number of one-parent households (10%, or 319 households).

Housing tenure

Analysis of housing tenure levels within the LGA allows us to identify which areas would be most impacted by changes in council rates, i.e., the direct impact of a change in rates will be felt by homeowners, whereas renters may experience an indirect increase/decrease depending on their lease agreement/decisions of their landlord. Furthermore, individuals in social housing are unlikely to be impacted by a change in rates.

Table 4 Housing tenure

Housing tenure (2021)	ACT peri-urban area	Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	Gundaroo and District	Murrumbateman and District	Yass and District	Yass Valley Council area
Fully owned	42.1%	40.4%	33.2%	29.1%	31.5%	33.2%
Mortgage	36.3%	31.9%	52.4%	59.0%	39.1%	43.6%
Renting - Total	13.0%	10.4%	8.8%	6.6%	22.1%	15.5%
Renting - Social housing	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	2.0%
Renting - Private	13.0%	10.4%	8.8%	6.6%	17.7%	13.3%
Renting - Not stated	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
Other tenure type	4.5%	7.9%	2.4%	1.3%	2.0%	2.6%
Not stated	4.1%	9.3%	3.1%	3.9%	5.3%	5.1%
Total households	**713**	**680**	**452**	**1,414**	**3,023**	**6,277**

The Yass Valley Council LGA resident ratepayer (fully owned and mortgaged) average of 77% (when rounded to nearest 1 percent) is significantly above the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages of 69% and 66%, respectively. This is particularly driven by the high proportion of households with a mortgage (44%), compared to Regional NSW (30%). It is considered that households paying a mortgage have higher non-discretionary outgoings compared to households with fully owned homes, and therefore likely a decreased capacity to absorb rating increases.

The overall proportion of renters within the LGA is notably below the comparison averages – at 16% compared to Regional NSW's average of 26%. The proportion of renters in Yass and District (22%) is considerably higher than the other four groupings, and the Yass and District grouping comprises 69% of the renters in the Yass Valley Council LGA. It is important to note that whilst renters are not directly impacted by an increase in rates, these increases can be passed on by landlords or accommodation providers.

Home ownership levels vary across the LGA, with the ACT peri-urban area, and Bowning-Bookham-Rural West seeing a higher proportion of fully owned homes at 42% and 41% respectively, compared to 33% for the LGA as a whole. The proportion of households in these groupings with a mortgage is below the LGA average, and perhaps reflective of their slightly older population.

Murrumbateman and District has the highest proportion of mortgaged households, at 59% or 834 households. Yass and District has the highest number of mortgaged households overall (1,183) which make up 39% of all households in that grouping.

There are very low levels of social housing within the Yass Valley Council LGA, only the Yass and District grouping having any households (4%) living in social housing. For the Yass Valley Council LGA, 2% of households live in social housing, compared to the Capital Region (3%) and Regional NSW (4%). Residents in social housing do not pay rates and therefore are not impacted by the proposed SRV.

Equivalised household income

Equivalised household income can be viewed as an indicator of the economic resources available to a standardised household. It is calculated by dividing total household income by an equivalence factor. The factor is calculated in the following way:

- first adult = 1
- each additional adult + child over 15 = + 0.5
- each child under 15 = + 0.3.

Dividing by the equivalence factor, household income becomes comparable to that of a lone individual, thereby making households with dependants and multiple occupants comparable to those without. By factoring in dependants into household incomes, we are provided with a better indicator of the resources available to a household.

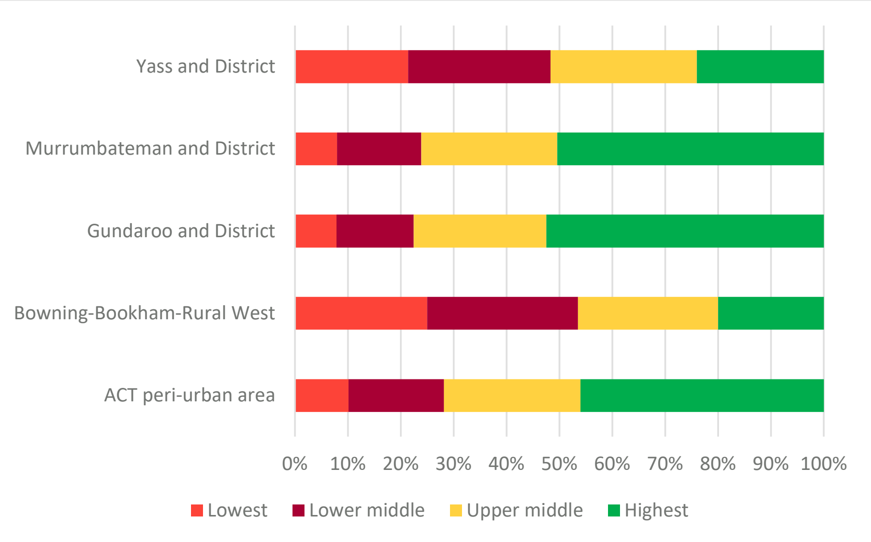
As this is a relative comparison, data has been presented in quartiles; regions of disadvantage will have a higher proportion of households in the bottom two quartiles than those of greater wealth and advantage. These quartiles were determined by reviewing the distribution of household incomes within NSW and then dividing them into four equal groups or quartiles.

The data has been presented in ranges for the following equivalised weekly income levels for 2021:

- Lowest: $0 - $603 – this range is representative of the bottom 25% of all equivalised household incomes in NSW.
- Medium lowest: $604 - $1,096 – this range is representative of the bottom 25% - 50% of all equivalised household incomes in NSW.
- Medium highest: $1,097 - $1,770 – this range is representative of the top 25% - 50% of all equivalised household incomes in NSW.
- Highest: $1,771 and over – this range is representative of the top 25% of all equivalised household incomes in NSW.

Figure 4 summarises the equivalised household income ranges for each area.

Figure 4 Equivalised household income



The LGA as a whole has high proportions in the highest income quartile, at 34% compared to 17% for Regional NSW and 21% for Capital Region. Three profile areas within the LGA also have the highest proportion of their households in the highest quartile, at either 52% (Gundaroo and District), 50% (Murrumbateman and District) and 49% (ACT peri-urban area). All groupings have lower proportions in the lowest quartile than the Regional NSW and Capital Region averages.

Table 5 Comparison of equivalised household income

Equivalised income quartiles (2021)	ACT peri-urban area	Bowning - Bookham-Rural West	Gundaroo and District	Murrum bateman and District	Yass and District	Yass Valley Council area	Capital Region	Regional NSW	New South Wales
Lowest two quartiles	28.1%	53.3%	22.3%	23.8%	48.3%	**39.0%**	54.6%	59.3%	50.0%
Middle two quartiles	43.7%	54.8%	39.5%	41.6%	54.6%	**49.2%**	51.6%	53.0%	50.0%
Highest two quartiles	71.6%	46.3%	77.1%	76.0%	51.6%	**61.0%**	45.4%	40.7%	50.0%

When the quartiles are grouped, as per the table above, it shows that the LGA has a notably high proportion of households within the highest two income quartiles, at 61% compared to the Regional NSW average of 41%. There is however a markedly higher proportion of households in the lowest two quartiles in Bowning-Bookham-Rural West (53%) and Yass and District (48%), suggesting possibly reduced capacity on those groupings.

Socio-economic index

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is an economic tool developed by the ABS to rank areas in Australia according to their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. It takes into consideration a broad range of variables such as income, education, employment, occupation, housing, etc and is standardised such that the average Australian represents a score of 1,000.

In our research we explored two of the indexes published by the ABS:

- **Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)**

  This index ranks areas from most disadvantaged to least disadvantaged, i.e., a lower score will have a greater proportion of relatively disadvantaged people in the area.

  From this score however you cannot conclude whether a high-ranking area will have a large portion of relatively advantaged people, just that it has a low proportion of disadvantage.
- **Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD)**

  This index considers variables of both advantage and disadvantage and, as such, scores and ranks areas from most disadvantaged to most advantage.

The ABS has also published the variables which have the most impact on both indices, these include:

- IRSD variables of disadvantage:
  - low equivalised household incomes
  - households with children and unemployed parents
  - percentage of occupied private dwellings paying rent less than $250 per week (excluding $0 per week)
  - percentage of people aged 15 years and over whose highest level of education is Year 11 or lower (Includes Certificate I and II)
  - percentage of employed people classified as labourers.
- IRSAD variables of advantage only (disadvantage similar to IRSD):
  - high equivalised household incomes
  - percentage of households making high mortgage repayments
  - percentage of employed people classified as professionals and/or managers
  - percentage of occupied private dwellings with four or more bedrooms.

A regional summary of SEIFA scores, including national percentiles (based on equivalent percentiles for localities and suburbs across Australia to allow effective comparison), is provided in the following table.

Table 6 Regional SEIFA scores and percentiles

Area	SEIFA IRSD	Percentile	SEIFA IRSAD	Percentile
Yass Valley Council area	**1,065**	**83**	**1,062**	**88**
Yass	1,018	52	1,006	62
Capital Region	1,011	48	1,003	60
Canberra Region	1,010	48	992	53
Australia	1,001	42	990	52
New South Wales	1,000	42	989	52
Regional NSW	982	32	962	36

Yass Valley Council's IRSD score of 1,065 is well above the benchmark for Regional NSW and NSW, and slightly above the average for the Capital Region. The ranking places the LGA in the 83rd percentile, meaning approximately 17% of Australian suburbs/localities have a SEIFA IRSD ranking higher than this area (less disadvantaged), while 82% are lower (more disadvantaged). This indicates **very low levels** of disadvantage within the LGA overall.

IRSAD includes levels of both advantage and disadvantage. Yass Valley Council's score of 1,062 places the LGA into the 88th percentile. This means that the LGA overall is in the top 12% of all Australian LGAs when considering levels of advantage in tandem with proportion of disadvantage. This is well above the Capital Region ranking of 60th and notably above the Regional NSW benchmark of 36th.

A lower IRSAD score compared to IRSD score is indicative of fewer opportunities within the LGA, e.g., lower equivalised incomes, lower education levels, fewer employment opportunities within the area or more skilled jobs. For the Yass Valley Council LGA, IRSD is roughly equal to IRSAD, but there is a noticeable divide in the groupings, as shown in the table below.

A grouping-level summary is provided in the table below.

Table 7 Grouping-level SEIFA scores and percentiles

Area	SEIFA IRSD	Percentile	SEIFA IRSAD	Percentile	IRSAD-IRSAD
ACT peri-urban area	1,117	99	1,135	99	+18
Gundaroo and District	1,107	98	1,130	98	+23
Murrumbateman and District	1,104	97	1,123	98	+19
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	1,040	66	1,018	68	-22
Yass and District	1,028	58	1,016	67	-12

Analysis at the grouping level demonstrates marked differences in inequity between different parts of the LGA, with three groupings sitting within the top 3% for IRSD rankings and the top 2% for IRSAD, but the other two in the top 34% and 42% for IRSD and 33% for IRSAD.

IRSAD is 22 points lower than IRSD for Bowning-Bookham-Rural West, suggesting limited opportunities are available in the areas in this grouping.

This picture continues when looking at individual suburbs. Yass sees more disadvantage than other suburbs, sitting in the 52nd percentile for IRSD, however this is still well above the average for Regional NSW and many neighbouring councils. There may be a number of reasons for the lower IRSD score for Yass, however from our analysis it appears it may be due to higher levels of households renting and lower levels of households in the highest equivalised income bracket. IRSAD scores range from 992 to 1,142, indicating distinct areas of relative advantage and disadvantage.

Table 8 Suburb SEIFA rankings

Suburb	SEIFA IRSD	Percentile	SEIFA IRSAD	Percentile
Jeir	1,120	100	1,117	97
Lake George	1,124	100	1,139	99
Nanima	1,142	100	1,142	99
Gundaroo	1,109	98	1,133	99
Murrumbateman	1,106	98	1,135	99
Springrange	1,109	98	1,115	97
Bywong	1,103	97	1,116	97
Bango	1,099	96	1,110	97
Collector	1,098	96	1,071	90
Boambolo	1,093	95	1,098	95
Good Hope	1,093	95	1,098	95
Marchmont	1,093	95	1,098	95
Bellmount Forest	1,082	91	1,061	87
Lerida	1,082	91	1,061	87
Kangiara	1,077	89	1,074	91
Laverstock	1,077	89	1,074	91
Brindabella	1,060	79	1,027	73
Yass River	1,060	79	1,078	92
Mullion	1,055	76	1,047	82
Narrangullen	1,055	76	1,047	82
Uriarra	1,055	76	1,047	82
Wee Jasper	1,055	76	1,047	82
Bookham	1,049	72	1,024	72
Burrinjuck	1,049	72	1,024	72
Woolgarlo	1,049	72	1,024	72
Binalong	1,044	69	1,011	64
Bowning	1,023	55	1,005	61
Yass	1,018	52	992	53

14 of 28 Suburbs are in the 91st to 100th percentile, indicating some areas of significant advantage.

Vulnerable groups or individuals

This section of the report considers whether there are any spatial patterns of individuals or groups who either need additional community services or are more sensitive to a change in rates.

Workforce status

The levels of full- or part-time employment and unemployment are indicative of the strength of the local economy and social characteristics of the population.

Table 9 Community workforce status

Workforce status (2021)	ACT peri-urban area	Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	Gundaroo and District	Murrumbateman and District	Yass and District	Yass Valley Council area
Employed	97.1%	98.2%	96.6%	97.2%	97.0%	97.2%
Employed full-time	60.1%	61.2%	58.8%	63.6%	60.5%	61.3%
Employed part-time	31.4%	29.1%	31.0%	27.8%	30.4%	29.8%
Employed, away from work	5.6%	7.9%	6.8%	5.8%	6.1%	6.1%
Unemployed (unemployment rate)	2.9%	1.8%	3.4%	2.8%	3.0%	2.8%
Looking for full-time work	1.4%	0.8%	1.1%	1.1%	1.6%	1.3%
Looking for part-time work	1.5%	1.0%	2.3%	1.7%	1.4%	1.5%
Total labour force	**1,295**	**835**	**791**	**2,515**	**3,840**	**9,266**

Note: Pensioners, overseas visitors and other non-participants are not included in the total labour force.

In 2021, unemployment within the LGA (2.8%) was below the Capital Region average (3.5%) and well below the Regional NSW average (4.6%). Figures are similar across the groupings, except for Bookham-Bowning-Rural West grouping with 1.8% unemployment.

Whilst the March 2025 unemployment rates are not available at locality level, the smoothed unemployment rate is published for Statistical Area Level 2s (SA2) and for LGAs[2]. This provides some further insight in relation to areas of potential financial vulnerability, with the Yass Valley Council LGA overall showing a 1.6% unemployment rate in March 2025. This suggests a slight decrease from the 2021 Census data. At an SA2 level, Yass (surrounds) sees the lowest unemployment rate at 1.2%, while Yass shows 2.4%, suggesting potential vulnerability in this grouping relative to the LGA, but still below the Capital Region average (2.5%) and Regional NSW average (4.6%).

[2] Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. March 2025. 'Small Area Labour Markets'. Sourced from: https://www.dewr.gov.au/employment-research/small-area-labour-markets.

Pensioners

A distinction is made between retirees, and eligible pensioners. To be classified as a pensioner for the purposes of receiving rates rebates, ratepayers must be receiving Centrelink payments such as the age pension or have partial capacity to work such as having a disability, being a carer or being a low-income parent. These individuals have reduced income streams and can be vulnerable to financial shocks and price rises. The following table shows the number of assessments receiving pensioner rebates compared to the total number of assessments for that area.

Table 10 Number of pensioner assessments – residential

Number of pensioner assessments (2025)	Total assessments	Pensioner assessments	Pensioner assessments %
ACT peri-urban area	570	28	5%
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	645	94	15%
Gundaroo and District	452	16	4%
Murrumbateman and District	1547	78	5%
Yass and District	3216	439	14%
Yass Valley Council total	**6430**	**655**	**10%**

The grouping with the largest proportion of residential pensioners is Bowning-Bookham-Rural West, with 15%. Yass and District has the second highest proportion and highest number of pensioner rebates, at 14% or 439 individuals, which is higher than the LGA average of 10%.

The Group 11 council average proportion of residential pensioners for 2023/24 is 212%[3], with a range from 12% to 28%, therefore Yass Valley Council (also 12% in 2023/24) sits above average, with the lowest proportion of pensioners when compared to other similar councils. Yass Valley Council's proportion of pensioner assessments has slightly reduced since 2020/21 from 13% to 10% in 2024/25.

Table 11 Number of pensioner assessments – farmland

Number of pensioner assessments (2025)	Total assessments	Pensioner assessments	Pensioner assessments %
ACT peri-urban area	344	7	2%
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	428	11	3%
Gundaroo and District	253	12	5%
Murrumbateman and District	249	7	3%
Yass and District	191	1	1%
Yass Valley Council total	**1465**	**38**	**3%**

There are far fewer farmland pensioner assessments than residential, with only 38 of 693 total assessments (5%). Outside the Yass and District grouping, Bowning-Bookham-Rural West has the highest proportion of pensioners at around 10%. These two groupings may be more vulnerable to a rate increase.

Eligible pensioners have access to mandatory rebates (up to a maximum of $250 per year) on their rates. This offers further assistance to a potentially more vulnerable portion of the community.

[3] Office of Local Government, 'Time Series Data 2023-2024'. Retrieved from: https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/about-councils/comparative-council-information/your-council-report/.

Core assistance

Table 12 highlights the areas within the LGA that have higher concentrations of people who need assistance in their day-to-day lives with self-care, body movements or communication – because of a disability, long-term health condition or old age. Individuals requiring assistance may have a higher financial vulnerability to rating increases and, therefore, it is important for Council to consider this as part of any potential rating restructure.

Table 12 Number of people requiring core assistance

Assistance required (2021)	Number	Percentage
ACT peri-urban area	55	2%
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	77	5%
Gundaroo and District	41	3%
Murrumbateman and District	166	4%
Yass and District	584	8%
Yass Valley Council area	**926**	**5%**
Capital Region	14,363	6%
Regional NSW	193,513	7%
New South Wales	464,712	6%
Australia	1,464,421	6%

We observe that those needing assistance are concentrated in the Yass and District grouping (8% or 584 individuals), with a lower proportion of individuals requiring assistance in the ACT peri-urban area. Overall, the LGA is sitting slightly below the average for Regional NSW (7%) and in line with the Capital Region average (6%). This suggests that there is not an increased sensitivity to changing rates within the LGA when compared to other areas, however, Council should still ensure its hardship policy assists those who may be experiencing financial vulnerability due to day-to-day assistance requirements.

Housing stress

The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) defines households experiencing 'housing stress' as those that satisfy both of the following criteria:

- equivalised household income is within the lowest 40% of the state's income distribution
- housing costs (i.e. mortgage and/or rent repayments) are greater than 30% of household income.

Households facing housing stress are highly likely to be under significant financial stress and vulnerable to sudden increases in council rates.

Mortgage stress

A comparison of households where mortgage costs exceed 30% of income is as follows.

Table 13 Households where mortgage costs exceed 30% of income

Households with mortgage costs >30% of income (2021)	Number of households with a mortgage	Number of households with mortgage costs >30% income	Percentage	Proportion of households in lowest two equivalised income quartiles
ACT peri-urban area	258	36	14%	28%
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	219	26	12%	53%
Gundaroo and District	239	17	7%	22%
Murrumbateman and District	834	84	10%	24%
Yass and District	1,180	132	11%	48%
Yass Valley Council area	**2,726**	**295**	**11%**	**39%**
Regional NSW	334,073	42,576	13%	59%
Capital Region	30,048	3,637	12%	55%
New South Wales	942,804	163,060	17%	50%

Overall, 295 (11%) households have mortgage costs exceeding 30% of their household income, which is below Regional NSW and Capital Region averages, and the lower proportion (39% compared to Regional NSW's 59%) of households in the lowest two equivalised income brackets will help to mitigate this impact.

The ACT peri-urban area has the highest proportion of all groupings at 14% (36 households) followed by Bowning-Bookham-Rural West at 12% (25 households). There may be some potential for mortgage stress within these latter groupings due to the high proportion in the lowest two income quartiles (53%).

When looking at the comparison between median house prices within the Yass Valley Council LGA, at the date of the 2021 Census (August 2021), compared to June 2025[4], there has been an increase with the median for June 2025 at $893,797, compared to $617,959 for August 2021. The price of a unit has also increased, at $551,038 as at August 2025 compared to $449,356 in 2021. This suggests that mortgage affordability has likely reduced somewhat since 2021 and whilst the Reserve Bank of Australia has reduced the cash rate in recent quarters[5], there is the potential for increased proportion of mortgage stress across the LGA.

Rental stress

Although renters are not usually immediately directly affected by an increase to council rates, there is generally considered to be a flow-on effect whereby landlords can pass on rate increases to the tenant via an increase in rental payments. It is therefore important to also consider rental stress and any areas within the LGA where this may be higher.

[4] Aussie. August 2025. 'Property - Yass Valley Council'. Sourced from: [Yass Valley, NSW - Property Market and Insights | Aussie Homes](https://).
[5] Reserve Bank of Australia. August 2025. 'Statement by the Monetary Policy Board: Monetary Policy Decision'. Sourced from: *https://www.rba.gov.au/media-releases/2025/mr-25-22.html*.

The following table compares the proportion of households with rental payments greater than 30% of household income.

Table 14 Households where rental costs exceed 30% of income

Households with rental costs >30% of income (2021)	Number of households renting	Number of households with rental costs >30% income	Percentage	Proportion of households in lowest two equivalised income quartiles
ACT peri-urban area	97	21	22%	28%
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	65	16	25%	53%
Gundaroo and District	46	3	7%	22%
Murrumbateman and District	94	25	27%	24%
Yass and District	625	183	29%	48%
Yass Valley Council area	**925**	**242**	**26%**	**39%**
Regional NSW	287,264	103,450	36%	59%
Capital Region	21,324	6,818	32%	55%
New South Wales	944,585	335,404	36%	50%

Across the LGA, 242 (26%) households have rental costs exceeding 30% of their household income, which is below the Regional NSW average (36%) and the Capital Region average (32%). Again, this is mitigated somewhat by the lower proportions of households in the lowest two income quartiles, at 39%, compared to 59% for Regional NSW and 55% for Capital Region.

Yass and District has the highest proportion, at 29% (183 households), with Murrumbateman and District also having a fractionally higher proportion of households in the lowest two equivalised income quartiles, therefore, there may be potential for some rental stress within these groupings.

The median weekly rent has seen a 6% increase[6] for houses within the Yass Valley Council LGA in the last 12 months. This suggests that rental stress is likely to have increased further. Unit data was not available at the time of writing.

Outstanding rates - residential

When looking at outstanding residential rates as a proportion of rates for the 2024/25 financial year only (as at 13 October 2025), there are over $2.8 million in rates outstanding, or 18% of rates issued in 2024/25.

A disproportionate number or amount of rates outstanding can potentially indicate that there are financial capacity issues within a grouping. It can also be due to a number of other reasons, such as:

- A reduced *willingness* to pay rates (i.e. can afford to but choose not to)
- A reduced focus on debt collection by the council (i.e. not actively pursuing debts)
- Council's hardship policy is not well-known or utilised.

[6] Domain Rental Report – September 2025 Domain rental-report - September 2025 | Domain

Bowning-Bookham-Rural West has both a notably increased proportion of rates overdue (40% notices overdue and 34% rates outstanding). Across the LGA this indicates that there may be limited capacity across the LGA outside the Yass and District grouping.

Table 15 Outstanding residential rates for 2024/25

Outstanding rates for 2024/25 – as at 30 June 2025	Total number of residential rates notices issued for 2024/25	Number of residential rate notices overdue	Total amount ($) of residential rates notices issued for 2024/25	Total amount outstanding ($)	Residential rates outstanding (as a proportion of dollar amount of rates notices issued)
ACT peri-urban area	570	207	1,450,840	284,713	20%
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	645	260	1,096,831	375,845	34%
Gundaroo and District	452	182	704,037	144,607	21%
Murrumbateman and District	1,547	558	3,505,365	659,828	19%
Yass and District	3,216	1,017	9,266,304	1,388,933	15%
Yass Valley Council area	**6,430**	**2,224**	**16,023,376**	**2,853,926**	**18%**

Trends in cost of living

The cost of living can best be described as the cost of maintaining a certain standard of living. Identifying trends in future costs, particularly with regards to discretionary and non-discretionary income. The following table presents the average changes in typical household expenditure in the Yass Valley Council LGA, between 2018/19 and 2023/24.

Table 16 Five-year comparison of cost of living in Yass Valley Council LGA[7]

Household expenditure (totals)	2023/24		2018/19		Change		
	$ per household	% of expenditure	$ per household	% of expenditure	$ per household	% change	% of expenditure
Non-Discretionary expenditure							
Food	$16,831	10%	$16,120	10%	711	4%	0%
Clothing & Footwear	$7,113	4%	$5,914	4%	1,200	20%	1%
Health	$10,664	6%	$9,175	6%	1,488	16%	1%
Transport	$22,911	14%	$22,356	14%	554	2%	0%
Communications	$3,272	2%	$2,783	2%	489	18%	0%
Housing	$25,196	15%	$23,319	14%	1,877	8%	1%
Utilities	$4,972	3%	$5,346	3%	-374	-7%	0%
Non-discretionary	$90,959	54%	$85,013	52%	$5,946	7%	1%
Discretionary expenditure							
Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco	$6,102	4%	$7,772	5%	-1,670	-21%	-1%
Furnishings & equipment	$8,044	4.7%	$7,639	4.7%	405	5%	0%
Recreation & Culture	$18,068	11%	$17,610	11%	458	3%	0%
Education	$6,675	4%	$6,222	4%	453	7%	0%
Hotels, Cafes & Restaurants	$16,844	10%	$14,365	9%	2,479	17%	1%
Miscellaneous Goods & Services	$23,240	14%	$24,451	15%	-1,211	-5%	-1%
Discretionary	$78,973	46%	$78,059	48%	$914	1%	-1%
Total expenditure	**$169,933**	**100%**	**$163,073**	**100%**	**6,860**	**4%**	**0%**
Net savings	$27,182	14%	$31,965	16%	-4,783	-15%	-3%
Total disposable income	**$197,115**	**0%**	**$195,039**	**0%**	**2,076**	**0%**	**1%**

*Non-discretionary spending includes the following categories: food, clothing and footwear, health, transport, communications, housing, and utilities.

Table 16 shows that, over the five-year period, total disposable income within the Yass Valley Council LGA has barely increased, an average of $2,076 (1%), with a total expenditure increase of $6,860 (4%). Net savings have decreased by $4,783. Discretionary spending has increased by only

[7] National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR), 2025. Compiled and presented in economy.id by. Data based on 2022/23 price base for all years. NIEIR ID data is inflation adjusted each year to allow direct comparison and annual data releases adjust previous years' figures to a new base year.

1% ($914), with non-discretionary spending increasing by 7% ($5,946). Non-discretionary housing and health expenditure increased by 8% ($1,877) and 16% ($1,488), respectively. Discretionary expenditure on clothing and footwear, and hotels cafes and restaurants, increased markedly (20% and 17%), while expenditure on alcohol and tobacco decreased by 21%.

This differs with the Australian benchmark which shows a much lower increase in housing costs ($184, or 1%, compared to $1,877 or 8% for Yass Valley Council), with the Australian benchmark also having seen a lower increase in health costs ($774) compared to Yass Valley Council ($1,488). Yass Valley Council has seen an overall increase in total expenditure over the past five years ($6,860), whereas the Australian benchmark has seen a negligible increase ($475 increase). Yass Valley Council has seen a larger decrease in net savings ($4,783 reduction) than the Australian benchmark ($3,122 reduction). This suggests that the Yass Valley Council community is experiencing cost of living pressures in a different way to the Australian benchmark and may be seeing a slightly greater impact overall.

The Reserve Bank of Australia also maintained the cash rate at 3.6% in September 2025, following three cuts within 2025 so far, with the mean rate of inflation now within the 2-3% target in the June quarter[8], and this should therefore see lower interest rates for mortgages. When taken in line with increased non-discretionary spending and the Yass Valley Council LGA's higher proportions in the upper income quartiles and combined with the 2023/24 household expenditure data, this would suggest that the current cost of living impacts able to be absorbed and that generally there is capacity within most parts of the LGA. Council should continue to ensure that financially vulnerable ratepayers, including pensioners, do not become marginalised, including through the promotion of Council's hardship policy for those that may require it.

[8] Reserve Bank of Australia. 30 September 2025. 'Statement by the Monetary Policy Board: Monetary Policy Decision'.

Industry

In 2024, the main industries in order of employment for resident workers in Yass Valley Council (as percentage FTE employed) were Construction (30.3%), Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (13.9%) and Health Care and Social Assistance (9.1%). Overall, this is slightly different to the Regional NSW averages, which show a greatest reliance on Health Care and Social Assistance, Construction and Education and Training compared to the Yass Valley Council LGA. The Yass Valley Council LGA's top three industries by employment account for 53.3% of all employment within the LGA, which compares with 36.6% for those same three industries for the Regional NSW average.

There has been one major change in industry employment proportions over ten years within the LGA, with Construction adding 1,100 jobs, an increase of 268%, while Retail Trade has seen a loss of 73 jobs. Other industries have seen relatively small changes in job numbers. Overall, there are 1,299 more jobs (as FTE) for workers living in the LGA in 2023/24 than ten years previously.

It is noted that 61.2% of Yass Valley Council's resident workers work outside of the LGA - mainly in the Australian Capital Territory (49%). Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council LGA (8.2%), and Hilltops LGA. 5.7% of resident workers have no fixed place of work.

Figure 5 Resident workers

Table 17 Value added by industry sector[9]

Yass Valley Council area	2023/24			2013/14			Change 2013/14 - 2023/24
Industry	$M	%	Regional NSW	$M	%	Regional NSW	
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	90.80	16.1	7.8	76.70	16.2	5.6	14.10
Mining	1.80	0.3	18.0	2.60	0.5	23.3	-0.70
Manufacturing	17.90	3.2	6.1	16.00	3.4	6.0	1.90
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	42.00	7.4	2.8	24.80	5.2	2.6	17.20
Construction	100.80	17.8	8.6	65.30	13.8	9.0	35.50
Wholesale Trade	11.30	2.0	3.1	15.70	3.3	3.0	-4.50
Retail Trade	31.90	5.6	6.2	29.80	6.3	5.8	2.10
Accommodation and Food Services	28.40	5.0	3.9	30.60	6.5	3.6	-2.20
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	13.30	2.4	4.0	14.20	3.0	4.0	-0.90
Information Media and Telecommunications	4.80	0.8	1.0	3.30	0.7	0.7	1.40
Financial and Insurance Services	9.80	1.7	2.9	7.30	1.5	3.0	2.60
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	20.30	3.6	2.7	20.00	4.2	2.8	0.30
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	45.30	8.0	4.4	34.10	7.2	4.0	11.10
Administrative and Support Services	17.70	3.1	3.6	17.90	3.8	3.5	-0.10
Public Administration and Safety	36.20	6.4	5.3	30.20	6.4	5.3	6.00
Education and Training	31.70	5.6	6.2	29.10	6.1	6.0	2.60
Health Care and Social Assistance	48.50	8.6	10.7	40.60	8.6	9.0	7.90
Arts and Recreation Services	1.80	0.3	0.5	2.30	0.5	0.6	-0.50
Other Services	10.90	1.9	2.2	13.90	2.9	2.4	-3.00
Total industries	**565.30**	**00.0**	**100.0**	**474.50**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**90.80**

When looking at value added by industry sectors; Construction (17.8% or $100.8 million), Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (16.1% or $90.8 million) and Health Care and Social Assistance (8.6% or $48.5 million) provide the greatest proportion within the LGA.

Construction has seen the greatest value add increase since 2013/14 ($35.5 million), followed by Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services ($17.2 million), and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing ($14.1 million). Wholesale Trade ($4.5 million decrease) and Accommodation and Food Services ($2.2 million decrease) have seen the largest reductions in value added across the same period.

The overall value added by industries for the Yass Valley Council LGA has increased by over $565 million since 2013/14, which, when combined with the increase in full-time equivalent jobs of 1,299, highlights the level of increasing opportunity and advantage for workers in the construction sector in the area, but not so much in other sectors.

[9] National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR). 2025. Compiled and presented in economy.id by.id (informed decisions).

The Gross Regional Product (GRP) for the Yass Valley Council LGA as a whole for 2024 was $831 million, an increase of $192 million (30%) since 2014. The local industry-to-residents ratio increased from 0.51 in 2015 to 0.59 in 2024. This shows that the growth in industry is also providing opportunities to workers within the LGA.

Outstanding rates - business

When looking at outstanding business rates compared against rates issued for 2024/25 (as at 13 October 2025), the Yass and District grouping does have an above-average proportion of number of rates notices overdue, at 39%, compared to 0% for ACT peri-urban area and Gundaroo and District. However, when looking at the amount outstanding, as a proportion of rates notices issued, this is far lower at 19%. In total, almost 80% of business ratepayers are in the Yass and District area.

The total amount of rates owed by business ratepayers overall is very low compared to residential ratepayers, at $268,496 (compared to slightly over $2,853,926 for residential ratepayers). This does suggest however that there is not a notable issue for Council in relation to the collection of business rates, therefore indicating that there is capacity to pay generally within the business category. The Yass and District grouping will be most impacted as this is where business ratepayers are based.

Table 18 Outstanding business rates for 2024/25

Outstanding rates for 2024/25 – as at 30 June 2025	Total amount ($) of business rates notices issued for 2024/25	Number of business rate notices overdue (as a proportion of total number of rates notices issued)	Amount of business rates outstanding (as a proportion of dollar amount of rates notices issued)
ACT peri-urban area	54,081	0%	0%
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	105,145	35%	17%
Gundaroo and District	10,541	0%	0%
Murrumbateman and District	188,543	27%	2%
Yass and District	1,318,670	39%	19%
Yass Valley Council LGA	**1,676,979**	**35%**	**16%**

Grouping summary

Our analysis shows that Yass Valley Council is a mix of three extremely advantaged groupings with high levels of household income, fully owned homes and high SEIFA rankings, and two comparatively disadvantaged areas (Bowning-Bookham-Rural West, and Yass and District), although still less disadvantaged than Regional NSW. Whilst there are a number of similarities between the groupings, there are still nuances that create some potential vulnerabilities alongside the high levels of advantage seen.

Table 19 Key features by grouping

Grouping	Key features
ACT peri-urban areal IRSD: 1,117 IRSAD: 1,135	• IRSD and IRSAD scores well above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is lowest of the five groupings but still sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Third highest proportion of working age (51%), slightly above the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second lowest proportion of dependents (23%). • Lowest proportion of one-parent families, well below Regional NSW average and Capital Region averages. • Equal lowest proportion of ‘at risk’ households (lone person and one-parent families) than other groupings, at 17% - this is much lower than Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second highest proportion of couples with children (44%), notably higher than the Capital Region average. • Second highest proportion of renters (13%) compared to other groupings, and well below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • High proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 78% – notably above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages, particularly for fully owned homes. Highest fully owned homes of all groupings (42%). • High proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (46%), well above Regional NSW average. • Low level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (10%), well below Regional NSW average. • Lowest proportion of pensioner assessments (4%) of all groupings. • Slightly higher potential for mortgage stress within this grouping.
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West IRSD: 1,040 IRSAD: 1,018	• IRSD and IRSAD scores well above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is second lowest of the five groupings but still sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Lowest proportion of working age (48%), slightly below the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of dependents (21%). • Low proportion of one-parent families, well below Regional NSW average and Capital Region averages. • Second highest proportion of ‘at risk’ households (lone person and one-parent families), at 31% - slightly lower than Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of couples with children (25%), equal to the Capital Region average. • Low proportion of renters (10%) compared to other groupings, and well below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages.

Grouping	Key features
	• Second lowest proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 73%, when compared to other groupings – although still above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (20%), slightly above Regional NSW average. • Highest level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (25%), but still below Regional NSW average. • Second highest proportion of pensioner assessments (10%) of all groupings. • Some potential for mortgage and rental stress within this grouping.
Gundaroo and District IRSD: 1,107 IRSAD: 1,130	• IRSD and IRSAD scores well above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is second highest of the five groupings and sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Second highest proportion of working age (52%), slightly above the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second lowest proportion of retirees (23%). • Low proportion of one-parent families, well below Regional NSW average and Capital Region averages. • Second lowest proportion of 'at risk' households (lone person and one-parent families), at 20% - notably lower than Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • High proportion of couples with children (42%), well above the Capital Region average. • Low proportion of renters (9%) compared to other groupings, and well below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second highest proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 86%, when compared to other groupings – well above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Highest proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (52%), notably above Regional NSW average. • Lowest level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (8%), well below Regional NSW average. • Lowest proportion of pensioner assessments (4%) of all groupings. • Little potential for mortgage and rental stress within this grouping.
Murrumbateman and District IRSD: 1,104 IRSAD: 1,123	• IRSD and IRSAD scores well above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is third highest of the five groupings and sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Highest proportion of working age (55%), well above the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of retirees (19%). • Low proportion of one-parent families, well below Regional NSW average and Capital Region averages. • Lowest proportion of 'at risk' households (lone person and one-parent families), at 17% - notably lower than Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Highest proportion of couples with children (46%), well above the Capital Region average. • Lowest proportion of renters (7%) compared to other groupings, and well below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Highest proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 88%, when compared to other groupings – well above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second highest proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (50%), notably above Regional NSW average.

Grouping	Key features
	• Second lowest level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (8%), well below Regional NSW average. • Second lowest proportion of pensioner assessments (5%) of all groupings. • Little potential for mortgage and some potential for rental stress within this grouping.
Yass and District IRSA: 1,028 IRSD: 1,016	• IRSD and IRSAD scores lowest in the LGA but still above the NSW and Regional NSW averages and above the Capital Region averages. IRSD score is the lowest of the five groupings and but sees comparatively very low levels of disadvantage. • Second lowest proportion of working age (49%), on par with the Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Second highest proportion of retirees (27%). • Highest proportion of one-parent families (10%), in line with Regional NSW average and Capital Region average. • Highest proportion of 'at risk' households (lone person and one-parent families), at 35% in line with Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Highest proportion of lone-person households (25%), similar to the Capital Region average. • Highest proportion of renters (22%) compared to other groupings, but slightly below Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of resident ratepayers (fully owned and mortgaged), at 70%, when compared to other groupings - slightly above Capital Region and Regional NSW averages. • Lowest proportion of households in the highest equivalised income bracket (24%), slightly above Regional NSW average. • Second highest level of households in the lowest equivalised income bracket (21%), but still well below Regional NSW average. • Highest proportion of pensioner assessments (13%) of all groupings. • Potential for mortgage and rental stress within this grouping.

Proposed rating changes

Yass Valley Council has three options with respect to rates. These options, which are all permanent, are:

- Option 1 (sustainable spend on assets to reach benchmarks), achieved by a one-year SRV of 40%.
- Option 2 (sustainable spend on assets to reach benchmarks), achieved by a two-year SRV of 25% each year resulting in a cumulative increase of 56.25% at the end of 2027/28.
- Option 3 (sustainable spend on assets to reach benchmarks), achieved by a three-year SRV of 20% in 2026/27 and 15% in the next two years, resulting in a cumulative increase of 58.7% at the end of 2028/29.

These options are inclusive of any rate peg for the years they are being implemented. This report also compares the above to the assumed rate peg of 3.4% in 2026/27, 3.0% in 2027/28 and 2.5% in 2028/29.

We have reviewed the average rates by grouping and rate category. We compare the average rates for each scenario against the "do nothing" scenario (rates to increase as normal, with rate peg only applied and no SRV). The table below summarises the four scenarios, and our analysis of each scenario follows.

Table 20 SRV options – Annual increase

Option	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Rate peg only	3.4%	3.0%	2.5%
Option 1 Sustainable Assets (1-year SV)	40.0%	3.0%	2.5%
Option 2 Sustainable Assets (2-year SV)	25.0%	25.0%	2.5%
Option 3 Sustainable Assets (3-year SV)	20.0%	15.0%	15.0%

The groupings are based on geography, and due to the rural nature of the LGA cannot be easily combined. When reading the rates analysis it is important to keep in mind distribution of ratepayers across the LGA as shown in the table below.

Table 21 Rates notices by grouping

Grouping	Residential	Business	Farmland
ACT peri-urban area	570	15	344
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	645	37	428
Gundaroo and District	452	7	253
Murrumbateman and District	1,547	22	249
Yass and District	3,216	214	191
Yass Valley Council area	6,430	296	1,465

Residential rates – options comparison

The first three tables compare rates for each option's SRV period only. The final table on the page shows the comparative average rate for each option for the maximum SRV period of three years. The most impacted grouping is shown in **bold**.

Table 22 Option 1 residential average rates impact analysis – SRV period

Option 1 1-year SRV (2026/27)	2026/27 average rate rate peg only ($)	2026/27 average rate - Option 1 ($)	Average annual increase to 2026/27 ($)	Average weekly increase to 2026/27 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	**2,410**	**3,263**	**853**	**16.41**
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	919	1,195	276	5.31
Gundaroo and District	1,348	1,754	405	7.80
Murrumbateman and District	1,490	1,939	448	8.62
Yass and District	1,046	1,360	314	6.05

Table 23 Option 2 residential average rates impact analysis

Option 2 2-year SRV (2026/27 to 2027/28)	2027/28 average rate rate peg only ($)	2027/28 average rate - Option 2 ($)	Average annual increase to 2027/28 ($)	Average weekly increase to 2027/28 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	**2,482**	**3,642**	**580**	**11.15**
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	947	1,389	221	4.25
Gundaroo and District	1,389	2,038	324	6.24
Murrumbateman and District	1,535	2,252	359	6.90
Yass and District	1,077	1,580	252	4.84

Table 24 Option 3 residential average rates impact analysis

Option 3 3-year SRV (2026/27 to 2028/29	2028/29 average rate rate peg only ($)	2028/29 average rate – Option 3 ($)	Average annual increase to 2028/29 ($)	Average weekly increase to 2028/29 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	**2,544**	**3,699**	**385**	**7.40**
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	970	1,410	147	2.82
Gundaroo and District	1,424	2,070	215	4.14
Murrumbateman and District	1,574	2,288	238	4.58
Yass and District	1,104	1,605	167	3.21

Table 25 Comparative rates - all options- 2028/29

Comparative rate All options (2026/27 to 2028/29)	2028/29 average rate – rate peg only ($)	Comparative average rate – Option 1 ($)	Comparative average rate – Option 2 ($)	Comparative average rate Option 3($)
ACT peri-urban area	**2,544**	**3,445**	**3,733**	**3,699**
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	970	1,314	1,423	1,410
Gundaroo and District	1,424	1,927	2,088	2,070
Murrumbateman and District	1,574	2,130	2,309	2,288
Yass and District	1,104	1,495	1,620	1,605
Yass Valley Council area	2,544	3,445	3,733	3,699

Business rates – options comparison

The first three tables compare rates for each option's SRV period only. The final table on the page shows the comparative average rate for each option for the maximum SRV period of three years. The most impacted grouping is shown in **bold**.

Table 26 Option 1 business average rates impact analysis – SRV period

Option 1 1-year SRV (2026/27)	2026/27 average rate - rate peg only ($)	2026/27 average rate - Option 1 ($)	Average annual increase to 2026/27 ($)	Average weekly increase to 2026/27 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	3,566	4,829	1,262	24.28
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	2,336	3,163	827	15.90
Gundaroo and District	1,293	1,751	458	8.80
Murrumbateman and District	**5,719**	**7,744**	**2024**	**38.93**
Yass and District	3,916	5,303	1,386	26.66

Table 27 Option 2 business average rates impact analysis

Option 2 2-year SRV (2026/27 to 2027/28)	2027/28 average rate - rate peg only ($)	2027/28 average rate - Option 2 ($)	Average annual increase to 2027/28 ($)	Average weekly increase to 2027/28 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	3,673	5,389	858	16.50
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	2,406	3,530	562	10.81
Gundaroo and District	1,332	1,954	311	5.98
Murrumbateman and District	**5,891**	**8,643**	**1,376**	**26.46**
Yass and District	4,034	5,918	942	18.12

Table 28 Option 3 business average rates impact analysis

Option 3 3-year SRV (2026/27 to 2028/29	2028/29 average rate - rate peg only ($)	2028/29 average rate – Option 3 ($)	Average annual increase to 2028/29 ($)	Average weekly increase to 2028/29 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	3,765	5,474	570	10.95
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	2,466	3,585	373	7.17
Gundaroo and District	1,366	1,985	207	3.97
Murrumbateman and District	**6,038**	**8,778**	**913**	**17.56**
Yass and District	4,135	6,011	625	12.03

Table 29 Comparative rates - all SRVs - 2028/29

Comparative rate All options (2026/27 to 2028/29)	2028/29 average rate - rate peg only ($)	Comparative average rate – Option 1 ($)	Comparative average rate – Option 2 ($)	Comparative average rate Option 3 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	3,765	5,098	5,524	5,474
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	2,466	3,339	3,618	3,585
Gundaroo and District	1,366	1,849	2,003	1,985
Murrumbateman and District	**6,038**	**8,175**	**8,859**	**8,778**
Yass and District	4,135	5,598	6,066	6,011

Farmland rates – options comparison

The first three tables compare rates for each option's SRV period only. The final table on the page shows the comparative average rate for each option for the maximum SRV period of three years. The most impacted grouping is shown in **bold**.

Table 30 Option 1 farmland average rates impact analysis – SRV period

Option 1 1-Year SRV (2026/27)	2026/27 average rate - rate peg only ($)	2026/27 average rate - Option 1 ($)	Average annual increase to 2026/27 ($)	Average weekly increase to 2026/27 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	4,017	5,438	1,422	27.34
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	**4,110**	**5,565**	**1,455**	**27.98**
Gundaroo and District	2,769	3,749	980	18.85
Murrumbateman and District	2,917	3,949	1,032	19.85
Yass and District	3,667	4,965	1,298	24.96

Table 31 Option 2 farmland average rates impact analysis

Option 3 2-Year SRV (2026/27 to 2027/28)	2027/28 average rate - rate peg only ($)	2027/28 average rate - Option 2 ($)	Average annual increase to 2027/28 ($)	Average weekly increase to 2027/28 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	4,137	6,070	966	18.58
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	**4,233**	**6,211**	**989**	**19.01**
Gundaroo and District	2,852	4,184	666	12.81
Murrumbateman and District	3,004	4,407	702	13.49
Yass and District	3,777	5,542	882	16.97

Table 32 Option 3 farmland average rates impact analysis

Option 3 3-Year SRV (2026/27 to 2028/29)	2028/29 average rate - rate peg only ($)	2028/29 average rate – Option 3 ($)	Average annual increase to 2028/29 ($)	Average weekly increase to 2028/29 ($)
ACT peri-urban area	4,241	6,165	641	12.33
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	**4,339**	**6,308**	**656**	**12.62**
Gundaroo and District	2,923	4,250	442	8.50
Murrumbateman and District	3,079	4,477	466	8.96
Yass and District	3,872	5,628	586	11.26

Table 33 Comparative rates - all options - 2028/29

Comparative rate All options (2026/27 to 2028/29)	2028/29 average rate - rate peg only ($)	Comparative average rate – Option 1 ($)	Comparative average rate – Option 2 ($)	Comparative average rate Option 3($)
ACT peri-urban area	4,241	5,742	6,221	6,165
Bowning-Bookham-Rural West	**4,339**	**5,875**	**6,366**	**6,308**
Gundaroo and District	2,923	3,958	4,289	4,250
Murrumbateman and District	3,079	4,169	4,518	4,477
Yass and District	3,872	5,242	5,680	5,628

Other rating considerations

Table 34 identifies the estimated average rate in 2028/29 for each LGA within the Office of Local Government's (OLG) Group 11 (which contains councils comparable to Yass Valley Council). This uses the OLG's time series data for 2023/24 and multiplies the average rates by the rate peg (and any approved special rate variations) to calculate the estimated rates for 2028/29.

For residential rates, Yass Valley Council sits in the middle of the Group 11 councils (average across all comparison councils is $1,219) when the rate peg only is applied and ranks 1st to 4th when all three SRV options are applied. For business rates, Yass Valley Council sits in the middle (average across all comparison councils is $2,768) when the rate peg only is applied, and moves to between 2nd and 6th, dependent on the SRV option. For farmland, Yass sits well below the average (average across all comparison councils is $4,273) and would move to above average with all three SRV options.

Table 34 Estimated 2028/29 average rates for OLG Group 11 councils - Residential

LGA	Est. average residential ($)
Yass Valley- 2 -year SRV	**1,958**
Yass Valley - 3 Year SRV	**1,941**
Bellingen	1,924
Yass Valley - 1 Year SRV	**1,807**
Gunnedah	1,612
Nambucca Valley	1,357
Inverell	1,339
Yass Valley	**1,335**
Upper Hunter	1,334
Parkes	1,286
Leeton	1,276
Federation	1,265
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	1,194
Greater Hume	1,158
Murray River	1,137
Snowy Valleys	1,091
Muswellbrook	1,083
Cabonne	867
Hilltops	827
Cowra	649

Table 35 Estimated 2028/29 average rates for OLG Group 11 councils - Business

LGA	Est. average business ($)
Gunnedah	8,107
Yass Valley- 2 -year SRV	**5,768**
Yass Valley - 3 Year SRV	**5,716**
Inverell	5,564
Parkes	5,530
Yass Valley - 1 Year SRV	**5,323**
Cowra	4,066
Yass Valley	**3,932**
Muswellbrook	3,325
Nambucca Valley	2,764
Hilltops	2,233
Snowy Valleys	2,226
Bellingen	2,087
Federation	1,814
Upper Hunter	1,339
Leeton	1,198
Murray River	1,099
Greater Hume	722
Cabonne	711
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	448

Table 36 Estimated 2028/29 average rates for OLG Group 11 councils - Farmland

LGA	Est. average Farmland ($)
Gunnedah	7,844
Federation	6,518
Upper Hunter	5,709
Yass Valley- 2 -year SRV	**5,485**
Yass Valley - 3 Year SRV	**5,435**
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional *	5,102
Yass Valley - 1 Year SRV	**5,062**
Leeton	4,609
Bellingen	4,267
Inverell	3,985
Murray River	3,951
Muswellbrook	3,901
Parkes	3,817
Yass Valley	**3,738**
Cabonne	3,664
Hilltops	3,658
Snowy Valleys	3,259
Greater Hume	3,050
Cowra	2,746
Nambucca Valley	2,729

When looking at rates charged per dollar of land value, as per the figure below, Yass Valley Council ranks the second lowest amongst OLG Group 11 councils[10]. These factors, when combined with the affluence and advantage seen within the Yass Valley Council LGA, indicate that generally residential ratepayers likely have some capacity to absorb rating increases.

[10] Office of Local Government, 'Time Series Data 2023-2024'. Retrieved from: *https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/about-councils/comparative-council-information/your-council-report/*. .

Figure 6 Proportion of rates revenue to land value for OLG Group 11 Councils

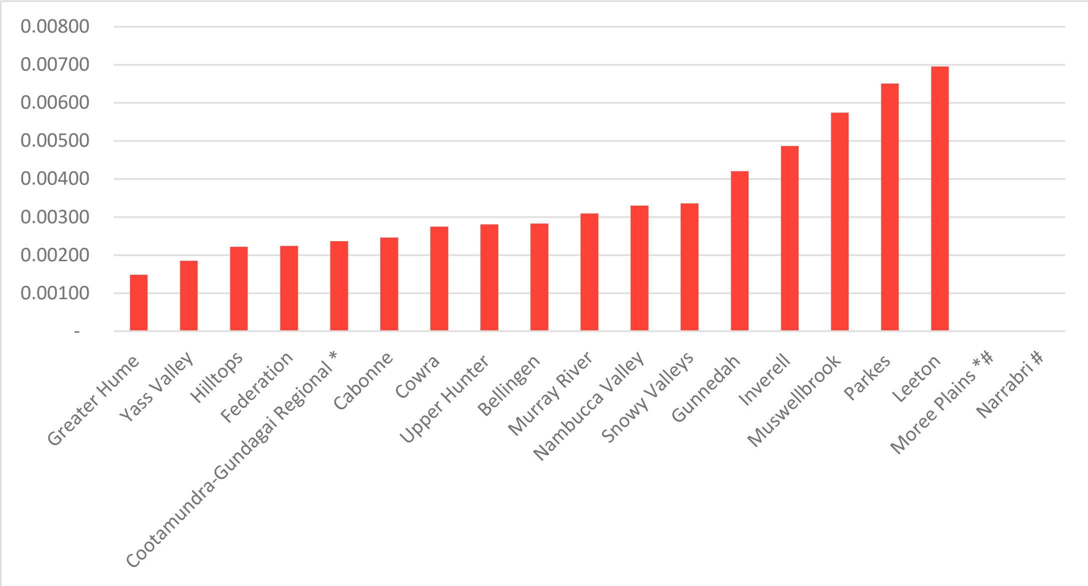


Figure 7 shows total council rates as a percentage of operating expenditure for Group 11 rural councils[11]. Yass is above the average of the comparable councils in 2024, having a well-above-median level of rates revenue as a percentage of operating expenditure. This is an indication that Council's rates may be above the level required to service the community, although this does not account for community expectation on service levels nor does it account for cost containment and efficiency measures that Council has implemented or is planning to implement. Yass Valley Council has seen a steady decrease in this ratio since 2020/21, from 33% down to 29% in 2023/24.

Figure 7 Rates as a percentage of operating expenditure - OLG Group 11 Councils

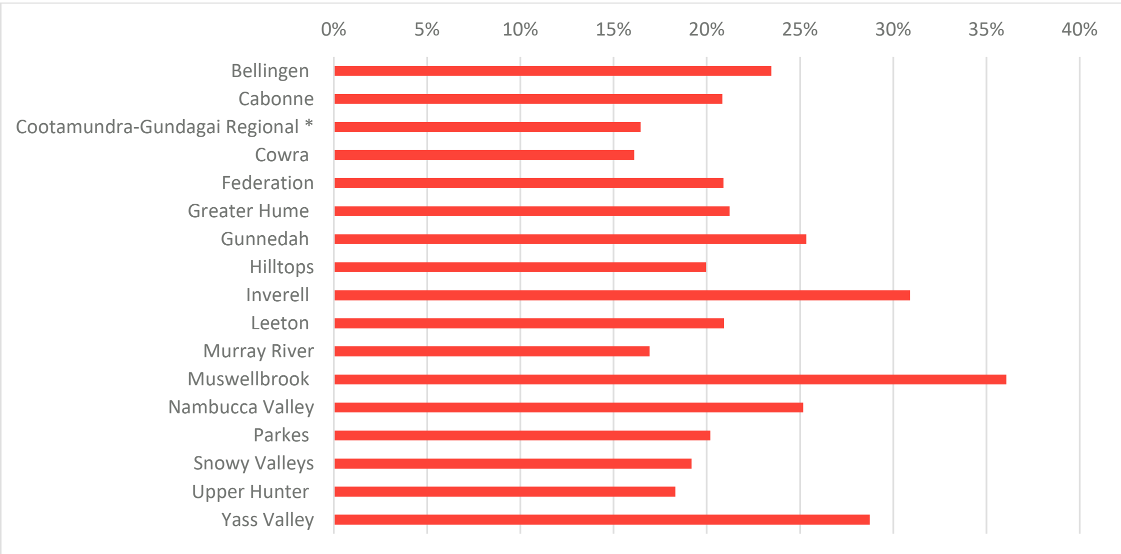


Table 37 shows outstanding rates and annual charges ratios over the past four reporting years for Group 11 large rural councils[12]. The NSW benchmark for large rural councils is <10% and 2023/24

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

was the first year that Yass Valley Council had exceeded this benchmark in the previous four years. The average of all councils is 8%, similar to 2022/23, and Yass Valley Council sits very marginally above this, suggesting that whilst there may be a reducing willingness to pay within the community, this is something that is affecting a quarter of councils within OLG Group 11. It is important to note, however, that Yass Valley Council's percentage for 2024/25 is 6.9%, which is a further increase from 5.2% in 2023/24.

Table 37 Actual outstanding rates and charges for OLG Group 11 Large rural councils

Rates and annual charges outstanding (%)	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21
Bellingen	3%	4%	3%	5%
Cabonne	7%	7%	4%	5%
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	5%	3%	6%	6%
Cowra	13%	13%	15%	14%
Federation	8%	7%	6%	6%
Greater Hume	7%	6%	6%	6%
Gunnedah	4%	4%	4%	5%
Hilltops	13%	14%	13%	14%
Inverell	5%	4%	4%	5%
Leeton	8%	8%	6%	3%
Moree Plains	Not submitted	9%	8%	7%
Murray River	12%	12%	12%	10%
Muswellbrook	7%	7%	8%	10%
Nambucca Valley	4%	3%	4%	4%
Narrabri	Not submitted	14%	Not submitted	12%
Parkes	11%	11%	11%	12%
Snowy Valleys	6%	5%	4%	6%
Upper Hunter	11%	9%	9%	10%
Yass Valley	**10%**	**9%**	**6%**	**6%**

Yass Valley Council's number of rates notices overdue has also increased over the past five years, from 6% in 2020/21 to 10% in 2023/24. This indicates that whilst the dollar amount of rates and charges that are outstanding has increased, it is due to a greater number of ratepayers rather than increasing amounts of rates for the same ratepayers. This generally is likely to indicate a reduced willingness rather than a reduced capacity to pay.

Conclusion

This report has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the Yass Valley Council LGA's capacity to pay, considering a wide range of socio-economic indicators, household and industry data, and the impacts of proposed rate increases. The findings indicate an overall moderate level of capacity but also highlight significant variation in financial capacity across the five geographic groupings – most notably between Yass and District, which sees much lower levels of advantage across its higher population, and therefore reduced capacity, and the ACT peri-urban area, which see increased levels of advantage and significantly stronger capacity.

The Yass Valley Council LGA as a whole sits below the Regional NSW and Capital Region benchmarks for disadvantage, and above for advantage. Significant disparity across suburbs is evident, with some suburbs seeing very high levels of advantage and some seeing greatly increased levels of disadvantage. There are also a number of conflicting indicators seen across the LGA which suggests that while there is likely to generally be moderate capacity, there are a variety of factors that may alternately increase and mitigate the impacts across the community as a whole.

There is a low level of unemployment generally across the LGA, which indicates a strong local economy. The level of pensioner assessments suggests that there may be increased vulnerability in relation to older members of the community, particularly in Bowning-Bookham-Rural West. Housing tenure is predominantly owner-occupied, with 77% of homes either fully owned or mortgaged, significantly above the Regional NSW and Capital Region averages. The overall level of vulnerable households is below the Regional NSW and Capital Region averages, suggesting that there is not an increased financial sensitivity in the LGA generally. There may still be some potential for mortgage and rental stress within the LGA, particularly in the Yass and District grouping.

The modelled average rates for each grouping show that the areas of greater disadvantage will see the lowest increase in rates, and the greatest increases will be in the areas of less disadvantage.

All SRV options would move Yass Valley Council to the higher end of average rates for group 11 councils, although this does not consider the current financial performance and sustainability of those Councils. The LGA's outstanding rates ratio is also above the NSW benchmark for rural councils, but this may be due to a lack of debt recovery action, or an unwillingness to pay amongst some sections of the community.

Document Status

Job #	Version	Written	Reviewed	Approved	Report Date
7887	1	C. Scanlon	M. Drummond	J. McKenzie	3 November 2025

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yass valley council
the country the people

Community Engagement Strategy and Plan

Yass Valley Council

NOVEMBER 2025

Contents

Tables

Figures

Introduction

This community engagement strategy and plan outlines the approach, key messages and timeline for community consultation to support Yass Valley Council's (Council) application for a Special Rate Variation (SRV).

The strategy has been developed to ensure that it meets the SRV assessment criteria set out by the NSW Office of Local Government (OLG) in its Guidelines for the Preparation of an Application for a Special Rate Variation to General Income (the Guidelines), and the requirements of Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), which is responsible for assessing and approving any SRVs.

The OLG Guidelines outline a number of criteria for SRV applications. The central criterion for community engagement is that the community is aware of the need for and extent of a rate rise.

Figure 1 Evidence that the community is aware of the need for and extent of a rate rise[1]

> The Delivery Program and Long Term Financial Plan should clearly set out the extent of the General Fund rate rise under the special variation. In particular, councils need to communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed SV in percentage terms, and the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer, by rating category. Council should include an overview of its ongoing efficiency measures and briefly discuss its progress against these measures, in its explanation of the need for the proposed SV. Council's community engagement strategy for the special variation must demonstrate an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness and input occur. The IPART fact sheet includes guidance to councils on the community awareness and engagement criterion for special variations.

Rationale for engagement

Council is considering increasing rates by more than the rate peg set by IPART. The need to consider this increase comes from a significant volume of work undertaken by Council over an extended period to address its financial challenges.

A new Council was elected in September 2024 and since then, the governing body has been working to develop a comprehensive understanding of Council's financial position and to put in place actions to address the issues.

In August 2025, Council adopted a Financial Sustainability Roadmap 2025-2029, after a period of public exhibition, and has already taken some action which has led to improvement in Council's forecasted financial position.

However, Council is unlikely to move back into a financially sustainable position with the actions in the Financial Sustainability Roadmap alone. It is now considering the need for an SRV to its rates or significant service reductions to become financially sustainable over the long term.

Before Council resolves to make an application to IPART to increase rates above the rate peg, it must first engage with the community so that the community is informed of the proposal and can provide its feedback on what is being considered.

[1] Guidelines for the Preparation of an Application for a Special Variation to General Income, NSW Office of Local Government

Engagement intent

Engagement approach

Impact and complexity of engagement

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

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

Levels of engagement

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

Figure 2 IAP2 Spectrum of public participation[2]

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

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.

[2] International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). Retrieved from: https://www.iap2.org/page/SpectrumEvolution

To meet the assessment criteria in the Office of Local Government Guidelines for an SRV application, Council must:

1. Demonstrate that the **need and purpose** of a different rate 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 the IP&R documents and/or application.
6. Address any other matter that IPART considers relevant.

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

Additionally, where the proposed SRV funds additional projects, services or service level increases, Council must consider the community's willingness to pay for these increases with increased rates, as required for criterion three. However, this willingness to pay criteria does not apply to this SRV, as the purpose of the SRV is to enable Council to continue to fund services and infrastructure at their current expected service levels.

As a result, this Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan is designed to meet both the **inform** and **consult** levels of engagement. This means that Council will be providing the public with balanced and objective information to assist in understanding the problem, alternatives, and preferred solution and to obtain the public's feedback on analysis and alternatives. Council will keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision made by Council. Council will also ensure it treats all stakeholder groups equally and consistently.

Alignment with Council's Community Engagement Strategy

This strategy conforms with Council's Community Engagement Strategy and Participation Plan 2025-2029, which has been developed in response to increasing community expectations to have a say on Council's decision-making, as well as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia Quality Assurance Standard.

Council's Community Engagement Strategy sets out its approach to engagement and features engagement principles based on the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights. The principles are outlined in the table below.

Table 1 Yass Valley Council's principles-based approach to engagement[3]

Principle	Our commitment	In practice
Tailored and inclusive	We remove barriers to participation to ensure we hear from as many people as possible, with particular efforts made to identify and hear from underrepresented community groups.	• Identifying groups impacted by a decision or project. • Choosing methods that suit their needs. • Identifying gaps and building relationships with groups we don't reach. • Being flexible in the way we collect feedback.
Clear and timely communication	We provide clear, accessible and prompt information about how you can have your say to give you time to provide informed feedback.	• Providing information early. • Using language which is easy to understand and concise. • Providing updates on progress and on the final outcome.
Meaningful and genuine	We facilitate genuine opportunities to listen to and understand your aspirations, ideas, needs and concerns so you can inform the outcomes.	• Clarifying what can and can't be influenced by the engagement. • Respecting the time and effort of those who participate in the engagement. • Listening openly and applying feedback objectively.
Work in partnership	We work in respectful partnerships, with the understanding that community and government are responsible for shaping the region.	• Developing a vision together. • Agreeing on shared goals. • Fostering openness and trust. • Ensuring engagement opportunities are regular and feedback is communicated.

This Community Engagement Strategy and Plan for the SRV application addresses each of these principles.

Council's Community Engagement Strategy also sets out how it will engage with the community about plans and strategies, so the community knows what to expect. The highest level of engagement is for key long term plans including:

- Community Strategic Plan
- Delivery Program
- Resourcing Strategy
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Local Strategic Planning Statements
- Other Plans and Strategies.

While the OLG guidelines for SRVs only requires councils to make the the community aware of the need and purpose of a proposed SRV (the **inform** and **consult** levels of engagment), this consultation strategy and plan utilises some of the tools outlined in the Council's Community Engagement Strategy under the **involve** level, as it builds from work already undertaken in the 2025-2029 Delivery program and Financial Strategy Roadmap development, as outlined in the table below.

[3] Community Engagement Strategy and Participation Plan 2025-2029, Yass Valley Council

Table 2 Engagement overview[4]

Project	Engagement level	How	What to expect	Exhibition period
Community Strategic Plan **Delivery Program** **Resourcing Strategy** **Community Engagement Strategy** **Local Strategic Planning Statements** **Other Plans and Strategies**	Involve	Involve the community to ensure priorities are reflected in the decision. Provide a range of opportunities/channels for the community to share their views. Prior to public exhibition there may be multiple rounds of engagement undertaken to develop a draft plan.	Reflect community concerns and aspirations in the finalised plan	28 days

Engagement purpose and goals

The purpose of the community engagement is to ensure that the community is adequately informed and consulted about the impact of the proposed SRV and the impact of not applying for an SRV.

The objectives of this community engagement process include:

- To present the proposed SRV options outlined in the SRV Background Paper, which brings together all of the analysis undertaken, including:
  - Long Term Financial Plan modelling
  - Capacity to pay
  - Rates benefits and strategy.
- To communicate to the community the timeline and process for any potential SRV application.
- To gather and consider the community's feedback to inform Council's final decision on whether and how to proceed with an SRV application to IPART.

Stakeholder analysis

The key impacted stakeholders are those that pay rates in the Yass Valley LGA or are renting property in the LGA, where there may be rent increases passed to cover the proposed rate increases either partly or in full.

Stakeholder groups have been identified to ensure that specific consideration of these groups can be integrated into the community engagement strategy and 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 resident ratepayers and landlord ratepayers. They may also be a member of a community stakeholder group.

[4] Ibid

Table 3 Stakeholder groupings

Stakeholder group	Who is in the group	Specific considerations
Resident ratepayers	Homeowners who are residents of the LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders, although these costs pay be passed on if the property is rented.
Business and farming ratepayers	Business and farm owners of the LGA	Similar to residential ratepayers, proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders, although these costs may be passed on if the property is rented.
Residential renters	Renters who are residents of the LGA	It will be a decision of the landlord as to whether and when any rate increases are passed on to renters.
Business renters	Businesses renting property in the LGA	Similar to resident renters, it will be the decision of the landlord to pass the increased cost of the rate increase onto these businesses. Rent can be a business expense.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) members	Residents and business operators with CALD backgrounds	Culturally and linguistically diverse members of the community will require the option to have information presented in their preferred language.
Community stakeholder groups	Members of the community groups that engage with Council	These community-led groups have a direct interest in their members/residents and some play a strong advocacy role. These groups therefore need to understand why Council is proposing an SRV.
Council staff	Employees of Yass Valley Council	Most staff live in the Yass Valley LGA and have a direct interest in the proposed SRV as resident ratepayers, residential renters or business renters. Some are also members of community stakeholder groups. They need to understand why Council is proposing an SRV and can play an important role in the engagement process.
State Government agencies	Transport for NSW; Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development; Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure; Premier's Department; Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	It will be important for State Government agencies to be aware of the SRV process, as these agencies often provide advice to Government Ministers and senior officials on key matters facing the regions. Ensuring agencies understand the rationale and need for an SRV will assist in any briefings they provide and ensure the correct information is conveyed.

Within 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 SRV but also may provide further insight to improve the engagement plan and key messages.

Engagement timing and resources

The proposed community engagement is expected to run just over four weeks commencing on 13 November 2025 and concluding on 10 December 2025. The community engagement will build from inform to consult:

1. **Inform** – to raise awareness and inform all stakeholder groups of the options being considered
2. **Consult** – to seek considered community feedback on these options to inform Council in its final deliberations on a potential SRV application.

At the conclusion of the engagement period, an outcomes report will be prepared outlining the results of the engagement and summarising the feedback received.

This engagement will be conducted with a team consisting of Council and consultant resources provided by Morrison Low Advisory. This enables best value with the combination of Council's Executive Leadership Team, staff members with a deep understanding of the Yass community, and consultant resources from Morrison Low Advisory with extensive experience in communication and engagement around SRVs.

Engagement method

The proposed mechanisms to be used for the engagement are outlined in the table below.

Table 4 Engagement methods

Method	Level of consultation	Reach
Web page (Your Voice Counts platform)	Inform	Engagement platform that can provide a range of information and house the on-line engagement survey
Newspaper advertisements	Inform	Key publications operating in the LGA, including both established publications and independent and community-based publications, including the Yass Valley Times, Sutton Chatter, Gundaroo Gazette and Murrumbateman Trades and Services Directory and About Regional – Yass
Local radio	Inform	Radio audience, talk back preferred
Fact sheet	Inform	To include translation versions to cater for CALD communities
Media releases	Inform	To be released at key stages in the consultation process
Information display or kiosks	Inform	Unmanned displays in key locations such as libraries, visitor information centres, providing information on the SRV and details of where to go for more information and how to make a submission. Also to display at Murrumbateman Village Markets (6 December, Twilight Markets and Community Carols) and Yass Railway Markets (30 November) QR codes to link to the Your Voice Counts website. Ensure staff have been fully briefed on the options and

Method	Level of consultation	Reach
		understand where to address inquiries. Ensure hard copies are available.
e-Newsletter	Inform	Subscribers
Social media	Inform and consult	Followers of Council's Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts
Face to face Community Drop in Sessions	Inform and consult	26-Nov-25 Wee Jasper, 10.00am to 11.30am 26-Nov-25 Murrumbateman, 2.30pm to 4.00pm 26-Nov-25 Yass, 6.00 pm to 7.30pm 27-Nov-25 Yass, 9.30am to 11.00am 27-Nov-25 Bowning, 12.00pm to 1.30pm 28-Nov-25 Gundaroo, 9.30am to 11.00am 28-Nov-25 Yass, 2.30pm to 4.00pm 2-Dec-25 Sutton, 5.00pm to 6.30pm 3-Dec-25 Murrumbateman, 5.00pm to 6.30pm 4-Dec-25 Binalong, 5.00pm to 6.30pm Modelled on the previous IP&R engagement process. Tailored sessions to address issues likely to be of interest to each community
Follow up emails to those who responded to the survey	Inform	To inform people who provided a response to the survey how their feedback is being addressed. While Council prefers to tailor responses to address each respondent's feedback, it would be more appropriate on this occasion to provide all respondents with an acknowledgement email outlining how their response will be considered, and providing a copy of the consultation report when completed.
On hold music	Inform	For those calling the Council and waiting on hold for their call to be answered
Video	Inform	To be included on the Your Voice Counts site
Recorded live webinar	Inform	To be included on the Your Voice Counts site on 21 November
Public exhibition	Consult	To facilitate formal public submissions
Survey	Consult	Enable broader feedback on the options being canvassed
Focus groups	Inform and consult	26-Nov-25 Wee Jasper, 9.00am to 9.45am 26-Nov-25 Murrumbateman, 1.00pm to 1.45pm 27-Nov-25 Yass, 8.30am to 9.15am 27-Nov-25 Bowning, 1.45pm to 2.30pm 28-Nov-25 Gundaroo, 8.30am to 9.15am 28-Nov-25 Sutton, 11.30am to 12.15pm 28-Nov-25 Yass, 1.15pm to 2.00pm 4-Dec-25 Binalong, 4.00pm to 4.45pm
Staff engagement	Inform and consult	Dedicated briefing for all staff, staff newsletters, individual team meetings

Method	Level of consultation	Reach
State Government agencies	Inform	Online briefing for relevant agencies, or phone calls to key contacts in relevant State Government agencies

Roles and responsibilities

The roles of councillors, Council officers and Morrison Low Advisory in the engagement process are defined in the table below.

Table 5 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Morrison Low Advisory	• Develop the Community Engagement and Plan (this document) • Draft background paper and supporting information on the SRV • Facilitate face to face sessions • Assist Council to respond to more complex inquiries • Prepare report on community engagement outcomes
Council staff	• Develop collateral for the various written materials based on the background paper and supporting information provided by Morrison Low Advisory • Publish and release materials included in this Community Engagement Strategy and Plan, including internal communications material for staff and councillors • Gather community feedback and provide to Morrison Low Advisory for analysis
Council CFO and finance team	• Update the LTFP model and document for exhibition • Support the development of background papers and other collateral with financial analysis and modelling • Manage the exhibition process and finalisation of SRV documents
Council Executive Leadership Team, including the general manager	• Brief staff of SRV process, process and community engagement activities both as a whole and in individual teams • Attend community face to face sessions • Answer questions raised in face to face engagement sessions • Answer questions raised in other engagement forums
Mayor and councillors	• Provide feedback on the Community Engagement Strategy and Plan • Attend face to face sessions (optional, but highly recommended) • Mayor to act as spokesperson and participate in radio and other media interviews • Mayor to participate in an introductory video for the Have Your Say website
General manager	• Approve any adjustments to the Community Engagement Strategy and Plan following councillor feedback • Support the Mayor in media interviews

Role	Responsibilities
Council staff	• Be sufficiently to engage with the community and answer questions if approached

Key messages

The key messages for the community should clearly communicate what is not negotiable and what aspects are open for community feedback to inform the decision making process.

Non negotiables include:

- It is a legislative requirement for Council to employ sound financial management principles.
- The current financial issues need to be addressed.
- There are steps in the SRV process that must be undertaken in order to comply with NSW Office of Local Government and IPART requirements.

Community feedback is sought to:

- Assess the level of community understanding of the proposed SRV and its impacts and why it is needed.
- Gauge the community's willingness to pay increased rates for the increased services/service levels or new projects/strategies that the SRV is proposing to fund.
- Seek submissions on the proposed SRV.

To support these key messages and the development of collateral for the community engagement activities, a background paper will be developed to articulate the need for, and the level of, SRV being sought.

In addition, Council will have the following reports:

- A capacity to pay report
- Improvement plan
- Revised Delivery Program
- Revised Resourcing Strategy.

Frequently asked questions

A set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and their responses will be developed for this engagement. While every effort is made to ensure the FAQs are complete, the FAQs will be reviewed periodically and updated where necessary throughout the engagement process.

The FAQs will include:

- How will the proposed SRV impact my rates?
- Why do we need an increase in our rates?
- What is the alternative to the proposed rate increase?
- What action has Council taken to address its financial situation?
- What is Council doing to keep rates low?
- Can't other levels of Government provide more funding to help?
- What if I can't afford to pay my increased rates?

- When would a rate increase apply?
- Who is IPART and what do they do?
- Why are we being punished for poor decision making of Crago Mill?

Document Status

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7887	1	M Gibbs	J McKenzie PD – S Bunting QA – NN	S Bunting	November 2025

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