

Rating Strategy Review

Engagement Summary Report

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Executive Summary

Overview

Community consultation on the Rating Strategy was conducted from 19 November 2025 to 11 January 2026, following Council's endorsement of three alternative rating options at the November 2025 Council meeting.

Why This Review Was Needed

Council's Rating Strategy, including its differential rate settings, has not been comprehensively reviewed since 2016. A planned review in 2020 was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several significant factors have changed since 2016 that necessitated this review:

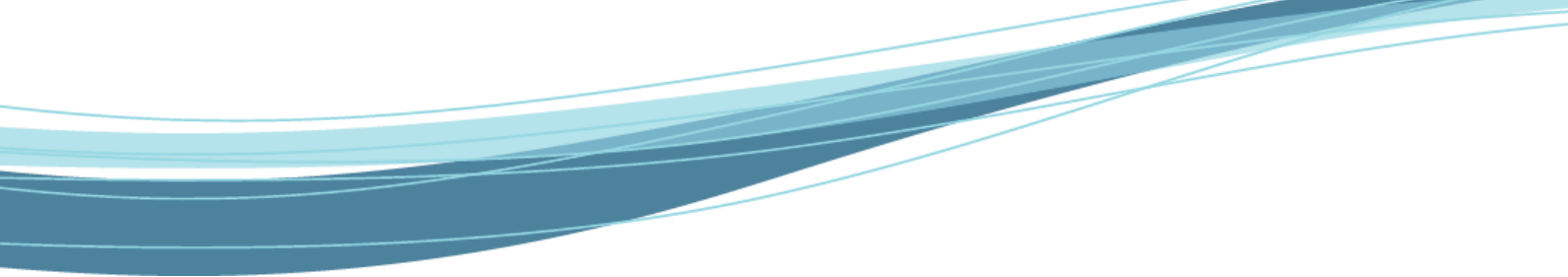
Changed Circumstances

- **Financial sustainability:** The need to ensure the rating strategy supports Council's long term financial sustainability which has been impacted by rate capping constraints and the need to maintain essential services and infrastructure.
- **Slower growth:** Population growth has declined from 2% per annum to 0.7% per annum, impacting Council's revenue base and economic development.
- **Industry Practice:** Bass Coast remains the only Victorian council providing a direct per-hectare land management rebate to farmers, raising questions about equity and whether this remains the most effective approach.
- **Expanded Environmental Programs:** Since 2016, alternative environmental mechanisms for farmers have expanded significantly, including Landcare programs, Council's enhanced Biolinks program, and Catchment Management Authority initiatives.
- **Best practice land management:** Many activities originally covered by the rebate are now statutory requirements under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* or have become standard best practice
- **Community equity concerns:** Questions raised by community members and Councillors about fairness across different ratepayer groups

Review Objectives

The Rating Strategy Review was designed to:

- Ensure equitable distribution of the rates burden across property types (developed, vacant land and farmland)
- Align the rating strategy with current Council Plan priorities

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- Recognise the agricultural sectors contribution to managing rural landholding
 - Support the broader economy effectively and transparently
 - Encourage development and housing supply to address slowed growth
 - Provide fairness to vulnerable ratepayers
 - Ensure compliance with legislative requirements and best practice
 - Improve financial sustainability and strategic resource allocation

The review is also one of Council's key actions in the Annual Action Plan 2025-2026.

Objectives of the Community Consultation

Table 1: objectives of the engagement and measures/actions for success

Objectives	Measures and actions for success
Comply with Local Gov Act 2020 requirements	Ensure all correct processes are followed, Engagement Plan and delivery is thorough and detailed, and engagement approach is inclusive and fair. IAP2 spectrum framework is applied. Approach aligns with Bass Coast Engagement Policy and principles.
Open and transparent community engagement.	Provide community with specific and clear information on what they can and can't influence. Publish a summary report of engagement findings, outlining what Council heard from community and how the feedback was used in the final decision-making.

Engagement Activities and Promotion

Council utilised the Engage Bass Coast online platform to capture community feedback via a community survey and Q&A tool. Feedback was also captured through drop-in sessions, written submissions and a stakeholder meeting.

There was a total of:

- **89** submissions to the online survey
- **3** online Q&A questions
- **903** visitors to the Engage Bass Coast project page
- **9** written submissions

Engagement methods included:

- **6** drop-in sessions with a total of **41** community attendees
- Coastell November 2025 Newsletter sent to **1,147** email addresses
- Coastell December 2025 Newsletter sent to **1,145** email addresses
- Engage email sent to **998** email addresses
- **6** targeted social media posts, each with a reach of between **175** and **22,335** accounts
- Media Release on Council website and **5** articles in local newspapers, including one front page

High-level themes across all engagement

Community Feedback Themes	
Theme	Details
Lower farm differential	Recognition that permanent rate reduction provides certainty. Acknowledgment that the current rebate distribution is inequitable. Support for a simplified, transparent system over an application-based rebate.
Pensioner waste rebate	High level of support across all ratepayer categories. Recognition of cost-of-living pressures on those who have fixed incomes. Viewed as appropriate, targeted assistance.
Increasing vacant land differential	Support for increasing the vacant land differential to increase housing supply. Desire to see more housing development and economic activity. Vacant land differential is viewed as an appropriate policy lever.
Transparency	Recognition that consultation options were clearly presented. Appreciation of the opportunity to see examples and discuss options in person.
Removal of the Rural Land Management Rebate	Strong desire for the retention of the RLMR or an alternative that assists farmers in undertaking environmental projects. Concern the removal may limit the ability of farmers to carry out important environmental works with flow-on impacts to other farms and the broader community.
Impact on large farms	Larger farms that utilise and receive significant funding from the rebate will be worse off under all options proposed. Concerns about financial viability during challenging agricultural conditions.
Environmental commitment	Concern that removing rebate signals reduced environmental priority for Council. Requests for clarity on alternative environmental support methods. Desire for farmers to be consulted about any new initiatives. Acknowledgement that farms contribute positively to the broader community and are an important part of the Bass Coast landscape and economy.

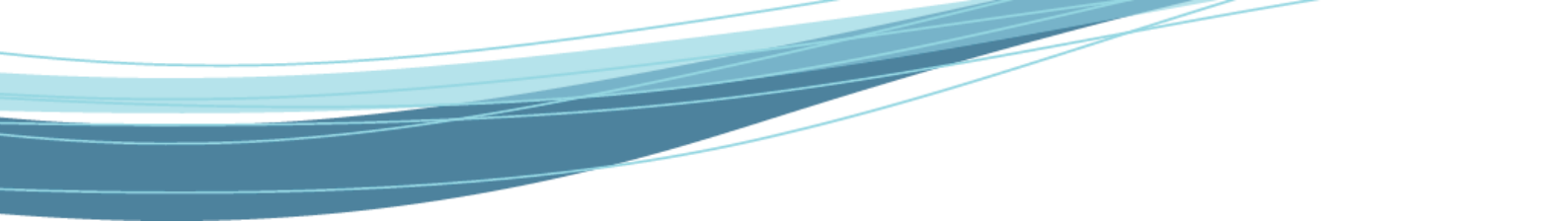
Community Feedback Themes	
Theme	Details
Engagement process and timing	Concern about the timing and duration of the engagement, as well as the survey design. A desire for more examples and details about possible outcomes for individual properties. Suggestion Rural Engagement Group should have been consulted earlier.
Equity perspectives	Varying views about the capacity to pay and who should pay more. Debate about the definition of 'fairness' in the rating context.
Phased implementation	Staged increase in farm differential discount. Transition period for large farms to adjust.
Means tested or targeted rebate	Link the rebate to farm income rather than land size. Target support to farms demonstrating financial hardship. Require evidence of conservation value for rebate eligibility.
Trust for Nature Covenant approach	Retain rebate only for properties with verified conservation covenants. Follow the approach used by 5 other Victorian councils. Link support directly to measurable environmental outcomes.
Differential farm rates by size	Lower differential for small farms. Higher differential for larger farm operations. A graduated approach recognising different farm types.
Maintain the status quo	Keep the current rebate program unchanged. Make no changes to rating differentials. Focus budget savings elsewhere.

Community Sentiment

There was a high level of exposure in the local newspapers, including a front-page article in the Sentinel Times. Social media posts, both Council and community-led, also generated interest and commentary. Like the feedback we received, this was predominantly the voice of farmers, with comparable commentary shared.

How feedback has been used

All verbatim feedback from surveys and written submissions was shared with Councillors for consideration, with Councillors also attending many of the drop-in sessions, providing an opportunity to hear feedback firsthand.



With a high proportion of feedback coming from farmers, consideration has also been given to groups who were not well represented, together guiding the recommendations which aim to be fair, transparent and equitable.

This feedback helped inform an officer recommendation for reduced farmland differential, increased vacant land differential, and reforming of the RLMR.

Next steps

Recommendations for the revised Rating Strategy will be presented to Council for consideration at the 18 February Council Meeting. Any changes will be incorporated into the 2026-2027 budget process.

Feedback

Between 19 November 2025 and 11 January 2026, Council engaged community members from across the Shire to explore changing the current rating differential.

This feedback is to give Council confidence in potentially lowering the differential for farmland and maintaining or increasing the differential for vacant land.

Early community feedback suggested the timing (over Christmas) and length (4 weeks) of the engagement was insufficient. To address this, the engagement was extended for a further 3.5 weeks with 3 additional drop-in sessions scheduled, including after hours and online.

Feedback was collected via online survey, written submissions and through discussion at drop-in sessions. Each method received a high representation from the farming community, making up around 30% of surveys, all written submissions and the majority of drop-in session attendees.

Conversely, vacant landowners were underrepresented, with only one survey respondent reporting being a vacant landowner.



65% of survey respondents support a waste charge rebate for pensioners



57% of survey respondents selected 'Option 1' as their preferred option



76% of survey respondents were very or somewhat familiar with how Council rates are distributed



40% Western Port Ward
31% Bunurong Ward
29% Island Ward



76% of survey respondents were aged 55+



65% of survey respondents own Developed Residential Land, 30% own Farmland

Written Submissions – Summary

Written submissions were received from key farming stakeholder groups as well as residents wishing to share feedback in more detail or seeking further information. Nine written submissions were received in total.

Key points have been drawn from the submissions.

Submission 1
<i>Key points</i> Strong support for the land management rebate, which has helped with weed control and other proactive land improvement measures. Highlighted the cost of sprays and other management techniques for weed and pest control. Noted grants through Landcare and Melbourne Water aren't guaranteed, and not all farms are eligible. Highlighted that drop-in sessions are not scheduled at a time that they can attend, as they would like to better understand their financial options and the relative impacts of the rebates or differential percentages.
Submission 2
<i>Key points</i> Seeking a better understanding of the impact of each rating option on different-sized farms. Do not support any option that taxes farmers more, noting farm businesses are critical to Bass Coast, and Council should be supporting them more. Concerns about the structure of the survey and a need for a further option that retains the RLMR.
Submission 3
<i>Key points</i> Support the use of the CIV system to calculate rates as this links rates to the property's value, which is indicative of the ratepayer's ability to pay. Agree that rates are not a fee for service, but a tax that funds Council's operations and activities. Do not agree with the discounted rates differential for farmers (suggesting farmers are in business and can deduct rates for tax purposes). Suggest applying a flat rate for all properties. Do support the land management rebate scheme as it helps protect the environment – suggest funding by removing the rates differential discount.
Submission 4
<i>Key points</i> Council should base its rates on the level of services and expenditure provided to each property type. While Council cannot change the property value, they do have control over the rate in the dollar.

Farmers cannot claim a tax deduction of their rates payments, while commercial and industrial properties, as well as investment property owners, can deduct their rates from their taxable income.

Farmers pay an unfair proportion of rates levied, and it is not fair that they continue subsidising residential, commercial, and industrial ratepayers. While all Council services are available to all residents, farmers use very few of these services, and we should be moving towards a user-pay principle.

Vacant land should be rated at the general rate, and there is no evidence that high rates on vacant land incentivise development.

Financial stress is affecting many farmers.

Do not support any of the proposed options. Suggest just having a general rate and a differential farm rate of 50%.

Submission 5

Key points

Support a modernised and fair rating system that continues to recognise the vital role farmers play as land stewards and climate change leaders while ensuring ratepayer funds are used efficiently and transparently for community-wide benefit.

Redirect funding from the current Land Management Rebate program for an annual grant program for environmental programs at scale that are associated with high-value environmental and climate resilience programs undertaken by farmers on private land across the Shire.

Support the proposed farm rate differential under Option 1, 65% (or better), which provides simple, fair, and automatic support to farmers even though it is comparatively higher than most rural Shires.

Decouple Council rates from the termination of the Rural Land Management Rebate.

Ensure that farming for climate and environmental stewardship remains a top priority and ensure that this is made clear in our messaging about the change to the rural Land Management Rebate.

Redirect the rebate funds into stronger community-wide programs.

Encourage responsible land use and the timely development of vacant land.

Submission 6

Key points

Welcome the proposal to reduce the farm rate differential from 80% to 65% (Option 1).

Noting an increase of 23% in rural land rates over the last 10 years compared to developed residential, commercial, and industrial properties.

Concern about the proposed changes to the land management rebate, stating the rebate provides funding support to farmers for pest and weed reduction, salinity control, and revegetation, highlighting benefits to both tourism and the environment.

Concern withdrawal of this rebate could result in an increase in pests and weeds.

Suggest retention of this rebate in parallel with a reduction in the farm rate differential will demonstrate Council's commitment to the environment and its farming stakeholders.

Submission 7

Key points

Raised concerns around fairness for larger farms.

Highlighted the importance of farming to the Shire, large farms in particular.
Raised concerns around transparency, including timing, survey design and independent auditing of survey responses.
Questioned the difference between the ESVF and this review in terms of fairness.
Questioned Council's commitment to encouraging responsible land use when removing the RLMR.
Questioned what support Council provides to the farming community.

Submission 8

Key points

REG group was not consulted prior to the options being released for consultation.
Appreciate the special meeting during the consultation period and additional drop-in sessions.
Engagement period was not long enough.
Land values continue to increase, which directly affects the rates for farmers and the share of the total rate burden.
Land is a farmer's working capital and is taxed disproportionately to working capital owned by other businesses.
Farms provide an important green wedge for environmental and tourism purposes.
Farmers depend on weather and good seasons to be profitable and sustainable.
RLMR is an essential tool for environmental sustainability and agricultural productivity.
Preference for differential rate of 75% or 80%, decoupling of the RLMR, but continue to support and incentivise farmers to continue the valuable environmental work to farms.

Submission 9

Concerned that options were developed without any input from key stakeholders.
The removal of the RLMR and redesign of rating differentials are two completely separate policy matters. Should be considered individually.
Council Report 'one-sided' – recognises the contribution of commercial and industrial businesses to local jobs, opportunities for young people and economic growth, but not the contribution of the agriculture sector.
RLMR supports best practice – not just legal minimums.

Drop-In Sessions – Summary

A total of 6 drop-in sessions were held, varying in attendance between 1 and 21 people.

In response to a large turnout at the third session, the format was changed from individual discussions between staff and community members to more of a round-table style discussion.

While this allowed for a greater depth of discussion, it also highlighted the varying views and experiences of attendees and notes taken represent all of the points raised rather than a shared consensus from those who were there.

Despite the range of views, each of the sessions raised similar concerns with those representing farms the strong majority of participants.

Session 1: Wonthaggi Attendees: 2 community members, 1 Councillor
• Support the farming community and opportunities to assist them.
Session 2: Newhaven Attendees: 4 community members, 2 Councillors
• Supportive of the shift in Rates Differential to better support farmers. • Discussion around the problematic nature of introducing a house and curtilage approach.
Session 3: Corinella Attendees: 21 community members, 3 Councillors
• Leave the differentials as is. • Poor performance this year in terms of production. • Strong harvest (lots of grass) this year. • Discussion around the proposed removal of the Rural Land Management Rebate with strong suggestion that land management improves productivity and farming returns. • Noting the work done also benefits the broader community and visitors who appreciate the green hills and rural views • Suggestion that the RLMR is a source of funding that farmers can rely on. • Noted that many larger farmers would be worse off under each of the proposed options. • Discussion around the need to for the RLMR program (or any future program) to be better promoted to farmers, noting it is no longer promoted directly to farmers, and they are required to seek out the information. • Acknowledgement that only around half of farmers apply for the rebate, and if more applied, each farmer would receive less. • Discussion around how the RLMR program had been implemented previously over a long period, and opportunities for improvements in process and auditing. • Suggestion that the rating differentials and the RLMR should be considered separately.

- Discussion around the significant jump in rates for farming properties in Bass Coast over the past 10 years as a result of increases in land value, as compared to other property types with a suggestion that more needs to be done to balance that out. Noting that property value doesn't always equate to income.
- Concerns raised around the communication and engagement process and timelines with some calls for the review to be put on hold or extended for a further 6 to 9 months. *The closing date was extended, and additional drop-in sessions were scheduled. Information from previous review processes was removed from the Council website.*
- Specific issues with the survey format - such as having to answer the options question - were raised. *The survey was amended to address these concerns.*
- Question regarding the services which Farmers receive from Council.
- Suggestion that farmers are being taxed 'on their tools'.
- Question regarding the difference between this proposal and the ESVF in relation to fairness to farmers?
- Highlighted that practices undertaken by farmers were aimed at improving production, not just land management obligations.

Session 4: Online

Attendees: 4 community members

- Suggestion that CIV isn't the fairest/best way to calculate rates.
 - Land is working capital – farms are the only class to have their 'tools' taxed.
- Farms play a key role in tourism and in attracting visitors.
- Rural Land Management Rebate
 - Concern around how it is currently monitored/audited
 - Needs to be better advertised so everyone eligible can access it
 - Applications should not only be online
 - The program has strong benefits and has contributed to the beautification of the area
- Survey – limit to number of words for one question – would like to see this increased. *The survey was amended to allow longer responses.*
- ESVF – clarification sought about how it is linked and whether it needs to be paid. *Confirmation provided that the State Government has kept the ESVF levy rate for Primary Producers at the same rate as the FSPL (which it has replaced) for the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years. The original proposal was to increase the ESVF for Primary Producers from 28.7 cents per \$1,000 to 83.0 cents per \$1,000 (a 190% increase).*

Session 5: Inverloch

Attendees: 1 community member

- Support the notion of a discount for farmers.
- Happy overall with how rates are spent and the customer service provided by Council.
- Raised some concerns about roads. *Concerns were referred to the relevant department for follow-up.*

Session 6: Wonthaggi

Attendees: 9 community members, 1 Councillor

- Concerns raised about communication and lack of awareness in the farming community about the consultation and engagement for the rating strategy.
 - Suggested using the Rural Land Management database to let farmers know about the review.
 - Officers confirmed that earlier feedback resulted in an extension of the deadline as well as the three follow-up drop-in sessions and a separate meeting with the Rural Engagement Group.
- Discussion around why the Rural Land Management Rebate is being considered at the same time and not separately.
 - Concerns about timing with the ESVF being implemented in the coming years.
- RLMR was seen as money that could be relied on. Other grants are competitive or not available to all, such as Melbourne Water.
- Discussion around who/how many claim the rebate.
- Concerns raised about the financial impact that the removal of RLMR will have on Farmers (as opposed to hobby farmers or rural lifestyle properties).
- Suggestion that it's not just about the money – it's about recognition for the work that farmers do for the environment.
- Noted the work done also benefits farmers, for animals, birds and greater biodiversity.
- Discussed Council's analysis that more than half of the Farms will be better off under the options tabled.
- Officers highlighted that higher value Farm assessments on the Island would benefit more from the rate differential reduction than mainland farms, and this property valuation relativity makes them more sensitive to the rate reduction and effectively offsets the removal of the rebate.
- Would like to keep the RLMR, but if it is decoupled, would like a clearer understanding of what it would be spent on and how it would be managed.
- Concerns that the money currently spent on the Rebate will be redirected into something that is ineffective.
 - Need to have clear goals about what will be done with the funds if the rebate is removed.
 - Would like to see it go to the landowners (not lost on administration) and best benefit the economy/land.
 - Needs to be audited.
- Concerns raised about the effectiveness of Land Care's tree planting program and the survival rate of trees that are planted/whether this is an appropriate auditing measure.
- Discussed the importance of everyone doing their bit – and the impact (weed seed spreading) that some not maintaining their land can have on other properties, noting farmers often also spray the roadside, which isn't their property.
- Concern that those not currently claiming the Rebate (and therefore possibly not doing the work) are benefiting from the proposed changes.
- Happy to secure a lower differential now – don't know what Council will decide in the future.
- Positive feedback about the session and the opportunity provided for everyone to have their say.

Meetings with Key Stakeholder Groups

The opportunity to meet with Council staff was available to stakeholder groups. Council's Rural Engagement Group took up the opportunity with an additional meeting of the group scheduled to align with the consultation period.

Bass Coast Rural Engagement Group Special Meeting – 19 December 2025

Rural Land Management Rebate (RLMR)

Discussion focused on the current Rural Land Management Rebate (RLMR), including concerns and opportunities for reform.

Key points raised included:

- The RLMR is no longer actively advertised, meaning some eligible landholders may be unaware of it.
- If a higher number of eligible properties accessed the rebate, the value of the rebate would be reduced.
- There was discussion about the preference for the rebate to be applied directly through rates, rather than requiring an application process.
- It was noted that not all farmers use online portals. Council advised that Bass Coast Shire Council does not exclude people from applying through non-digital means, and if this is occurring, it should be reviewed.
- Council does not wish to discourage environmental works undertaken by landholders.
- Consideration was given to whether decoupling the rebate from rates and offering funding through an application-based program would be acceptable.
- The importance of incentivising environmental works and supporting farmers to respond to climate challenges while improving productivity was highlighted.
- There was general consensus that some level of auditing would be appropriate to ensure environmental works are being undertaken as intended.

It was noted that removing the RLMR entirely would require a rate differential of approximately 50% to ensure no farmer was worse off.

Options

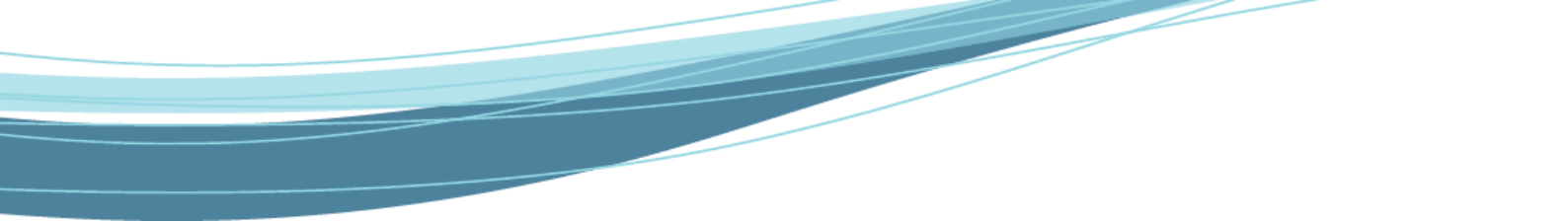
It was noted that while other options could be considered, the number of options presented was intentionally limited to avoid overwhelming the community.

Discussion highlighted that:

- Retaining the status quo was raised; however, due to increases in capital value, the current differential for farmers requires review.
- Maintaining the status quo was not considered appropriate in light of these changes.
- Removing the RLMR could threaten the environmental outcomes Council has previously achieved.

Recommendations

The REG group agreed:

- 
- Decouple the RLMR from the rates. The issues of rate differential on rural properties and the future of the land management rebate should be decoupled.
 - Express general support for option I (65% differential) or better with respect to rate differential.
 - Recommend retaining and reforming the RLMR (environmental incentive to landowners).

Survey Feedback - Summary

A number of survey questions called for a written response or allowed further detail. The key points from each submitter have been summarised and combined into similar themes. The numbers showing in brackets denote how many submissions referenced that theme.

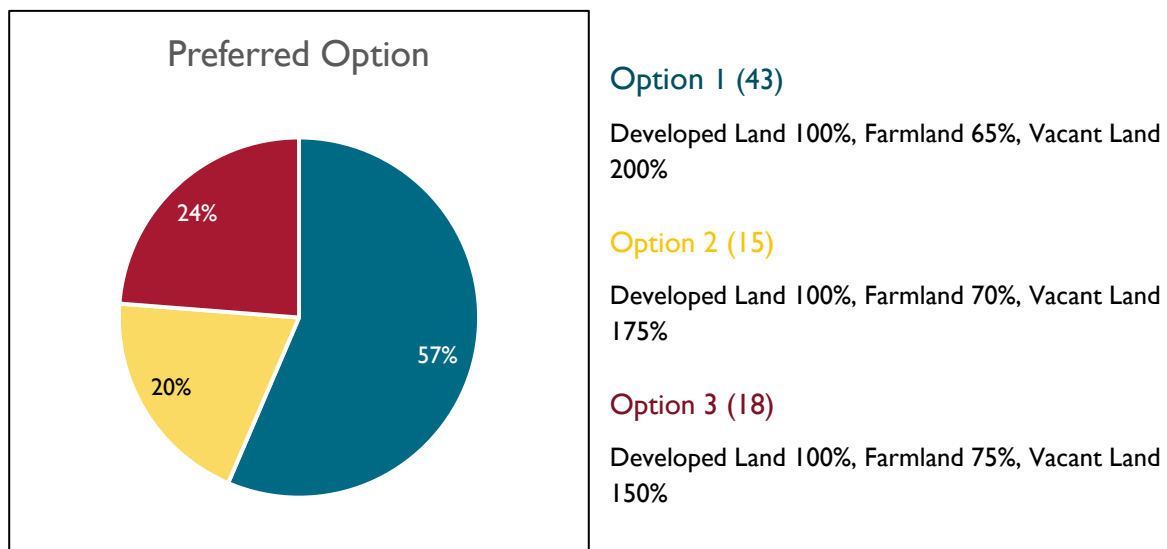
Some comments were not relevant to this consultation and have been passed on to the relevant teams for consideration at the appropriate time.

Preferred Option

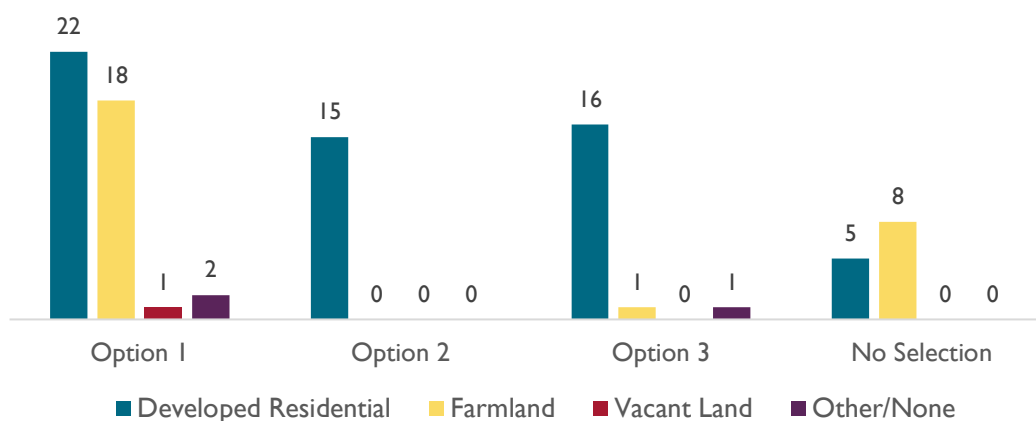
The survey asked respondents to rank their preferred option out of three provided. This initially was a required question. After feedback from the community this was changed to be optional. 76 respondents answered this question, 16 skipped it.

43 (57%) selected Option 1 as their preferred option, 15 (20%) selected Option 2 as their preferred option and 18 (24%) selected Option 3 as their preferred option. 13 skipped the question.

It should be noted that some respondents selected Option 1 as the best option of those presented; however, it was not necessarily an option that they fully support, with some calling for the RLMR to be retained and others seeking an even lower differential for farmers.



The majority of respondents who own Farmland either selected Option 1 or elected not to choose an option. Developed Residential respondents had a spread across the three options presented with the highest number also selecting Option 1.



Other rating options/suggestions

A range of other rating options and considerations were suggested, including leaving the Rating Strategy as is. While each was considered, there were some limitations, such as extending the period of uncertainty, delaying achievement of equity objectives and adding administrative complexity.

Other rating options/suggestions
Leave it as is
Suggestions around how properties are valued and the need for flexibility to be responsive to major increases in property values of certain classes.
Some suggestion that household size and land size should be considered in the calculation of rates
Can you differentiate between hobby farmers/rich people playing on property versus livelihood farmers who contribute to farm needs?
Need to take into consideration that the ESVF will also be introduced next year

Equity for farmers

There was a high level of community support for farmers with recognition of the broader benefit farms provide to the Shire.

It is proposed that Council adopt a lower farm differential, providing a further discount to the farming sector.

Contribution to environment/community (19)
There was recognition from many about the environmental benefits farmers provide through their commitment to land management practices as custodians of the land, and the need to encourage and acknowledge farmers who proactively undertake environmental initiatives on the land. Some noted the value placed on farms by the community as a key part of the Bass Coast landscape and the importance of retaining farmland for our future.
It's tough for farmers (9)
A number of responses highlighted a need and willingness to support farmers, suggesting that they need all of the financial assistance they can get, particularly during tough (drought) times. Suggestion that rate pressure could undermine the sustainability of local farms and the impact this would have on the broader community.
Extra expenses (4)
Some respondents noted the additional expenses required to look after the land, suggesting the land is a tool of the trade and other businesses don't have to pay rates on their equipment, also noting the rising land value and therefore rates. There was also a suggestion that farms don't rely on Council services such as rubbish removal, drainage, etc.

Other themes about farmers

Farming obligations (2)
Whichever option is chosen, it makes no significant difference to our environmental obligations and ensuing costs.
Services (1)
What services do farmers receive in the rates they pay? How does it benefit them?

Rural Land Management Rebate (RLMR)

Much of the discussion in the drop-in sessions, as well as the survey feedback, related to the proposed removal of the RLMR. 20 submissions referenced a desire to maintain the rebate.

While there was a high level of support for keeping the rebate, there was also a suggestion that the funds could be used differently.

It is proposed that Council explore a reformed (not eliminated) environmental program. Maintaining Council's environmental commitment while improving equity and measurability.

Support the retention of the Rural Land Management Rebate

Incentive (14)
The RLMR is seen as a great incentive to encourage expenditure on environmental issues. It's seen as an opt-in reward for farmers doing the right thing for the environment and their neighbours and should be retained.
Broader community benefit (3)
Respondents noted that the program was established to assist farmers with environmental works such as weed control, revegetation, establishing shelter belts and Biolinks, highlighting the large environmental impact the program has had and the broader benefits it has had to the community.
Makes rates manageable (3)
There was some suggestion that the RLMR makes rates for farmers manageable and that the removal of the RLMR isn't offset by the reduction in farm rate differential unless you are a hobby farmer.

Support the removal of the Rural Land Management Rebate

Other opportunities (4)
Some respondents noted the opportunities created by the proposed withdrawal of the RLMR with some seeking to redirect the funds into environmental programs and others looking to see more spending in local communities.

Vacant Land

There was an under-representation of vacant landowners in both survey submissions (1) and attendance at drop-in sessions (0). The majority of feedback received regarding vacant land was supportive of increasing the differential.

Growth has slowed from 2% to 0.7%. An increase in the vacant land rate should provide further encouragement for the development of vacant land. It is hoped this will promote economic growth and activity, and an increase in housing supply may improve housing affordability.

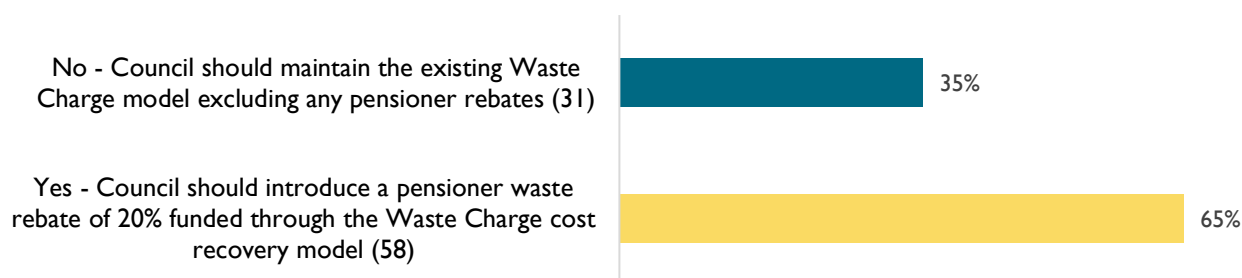
It is proposed that Council adopt a higher vacant land differential, providing an incentive to create developed property within areas that have access to existing infrastructure.

Support an increase in the differential for Vacant Land

Encourage development and discourage land banking (17)
Support was shown for increasing vacant land rates in an effort to discourage Vacant Land and protect Farmland, with a feeling that Vacant Land should be developed/utilised where possible. There was some commentary suggesting that farms add value, but vacant land doesn't, that development assists with housing supply, generating local spending and jobs. There was also some suggestion that vacant land owners have a greater capacity to pay.
Vacant Land rates should be lower (5)
There were some suggestions in favour of lowering the differential for vacant land, including: vacant land is already penalised by the State Government, it receives no benefits, so shouldn't be expected to pay more and other property types have the ability to generate income, but vacant land doesn't.
Other comments about Vacant Land (1)
Ill-considered development of vacant blocks is worse for everyone and the environment than not developing blocks at all.

Pensioner waste rebate

Survey respondents were asked whether they supported the introduction of a 20% rebate on the waste charge for pensioners. 65% of respondents were in favour of the proposed rebate.



While there was a large proportion of residents aged 55+ who completed the survey (66%), around two thirds (68%) were in favour of the rebate and one third (32%) were not – which was similar to the percentages across the whole respondent group.

The Pensioner Waste Rebate is proposed to provide direct, equitable support to households most in need. There was some misconception about who would be eligible for the rebate with some comments assuming it was only for Aged Pensioners and wanting the rebate to be available for all Pensions.

However, the Rebate will be available to any holders of a Centrelink or Veteran Affairs Pension Concession card or a Veteran Affairs Gold card which stipulates TPI or War Widow.

A Pensioner Concession Card is available to those receiving Age Pension, Carer Payment, Disability Support Pension and Parenting Payment single. Others may also be eligible.

Support for a rebate for pensioners

Pension is hard to live off (20)

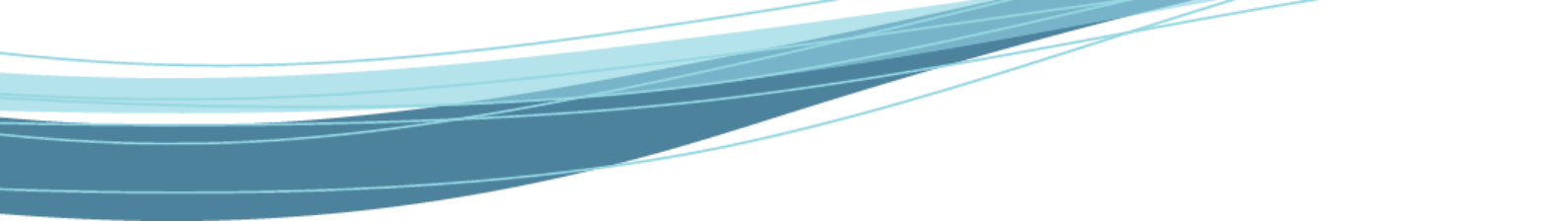
Comments in support of the rebate highlighted the low income, fixed nature of a pension and the associated challenges for many living off it. Others suggested that the pension hasn't increased to match the cost of living in recent years, putting further strain in pensioners.

There was some misconception about who would be eligible for the rebate with comments about extending the rebate to all pensions (eg. disability, parenting) and those on low income (health care card) with some suggestion it should be assessed based on income and ability to pay.

Not supportive of rebate for pensioners

Not supportive of a rebate for pensioners (14)

There were a range of reasons suggested why respondents don't support the proposed rebate including: everyone should pay the same for rubbish – being a pensioner has no relationship to the amount of waste produced, suggestion that pensioners already receive



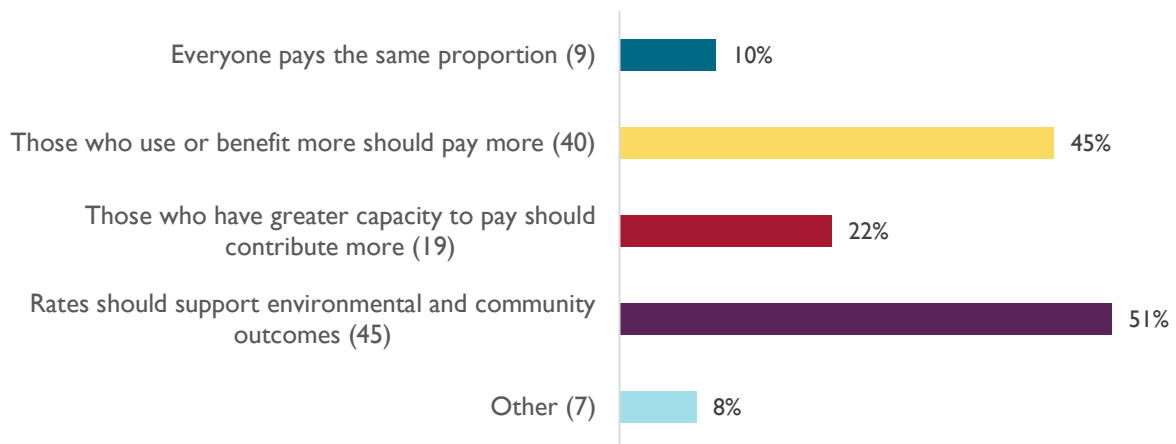
enough benefits and some concern that with an increasing number of (aged) pensioners in the Shire the rebate could become costly.

Waste service usage (6)

There was some suggestion that pensioners produce less waste, could manage with smaller bins or reduced service to balance out the rebate.
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Fairness

Survey respondents were presented with four options and asked to select up to two to describe what fairness means to them. There was a high level of support for environmental and community outcomes (51%) and those who benefit more should pay more (45%). There was some support for those who have greater capacity to pay more (22%) and very limited support for the notion that everyone should pay the same proportion (10%).



Ability to pay

There was mixed feedback related to perceived ability to pay. Some responses indicated that farm owners are in the business of making money and have access to tax offsets meaning they have a higher capacity to pay. Others suggested that high land value (of farms) does not necessarily mean high income.

Consultation (3)

Feedback provided around the consultation included a desire for a longer engagement period and more individualised information about the possible impacts for each property. There was also a suggestion that the examples provided aren't representative.

Online Q&A

Question	Posted response
Potential discrepancy or just difficulty understanding the options Option 3 is less than current for farmland yet in the examples it costs more for option 3 for farmland than the current. Am I missing something?	All the examples that illustrate the impact of the three different rating options on actual properties in our Shire assume that eligible ratepayers (Farms) are currently claiming the Rural Land Management Rebate. All three rating options have been modelled without a Rural Land Management Rebate. The Option 1 reduction in the differential offsets this for small and medium farms and the Option 2 differential reduction offsets this for small farms. Under Option 3 the differential reduction is not enough to fully offset this for small farms. Analysis of our rates database indicates that the Rural Land Management Rebate is only being claimed by approximately half of the Farm ratepayers. Therefore, all the Farm ratepayers who do not currently claim the Rural Land Management Rebate will be better off under each of the three rating options that have been tabled for community consultation and feedback. This confirms Council's analysis that all three rating options will benefit more than 50 per cent of the Farm ratepayers.
Can farmers even afford it? I feel uncomfortable having a say on farming without knowing how much of an impact it would have. Is there any understanding this?	The general objectives of each of the differential rates are to ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council. This review is guided by principles of fairness, equity, simplicity, sustainability, and transparency, to ensure rates reflect capacity to pay, encourage responsible land use, and support community wellbeing. For estimated impacts, please refer to the example properties section presenting the varying impacts under the 3 options developed for consultation. The examples have aimed to capture the impacts across a typical small, medium and large farm in the Shire. Noting individual circumstances will vary depending on the Capital Improved Value of the individual property and if the Rural Land Management Rebate is being accessed. For further information, or to find out how the options affect you, you're encouraged to attend our Community Drop-in sessions

	detailed on this page. Or contact Council to speak to the team on 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or (03) 5671 2211.
Typical rate of \$1200 for residential Our rates are close to \$4,000 for our residential property in Cape Paterson. The government max increase is in percentage only. When you value the property you can increase the value by more than this	Every year, the total amount Council can collect in rates is capped by the State Government. Revaluations do not increase or decrease Council's overall total rates revenue. A revaluation re-distributes the amount each property contributes to Council's overall rate income.