

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

DRAFT SPECIAL RATES AND CHARGES CORPORATE POLICY

ENGAGEMENT REPORT

7 OCTOBER 2025 – 5 NOVEMBER 2025

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Executive Summary:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City's Special Rates and Charges (SRC) Policy is scheduled for review by the end of 2025.

This Policy outlines the purpose, guiding principles, and prioritisation framework for Special Rate and Charge schemes.

A supporting procedure provides detailed guidance on how schemes are developed to align with community expectations, organisational priorities, and legislative requirements.

SRCs are used to fund infrastructure or services that benefit specific properties and are not covered by the City's capital works program, developer contribution plans, or external grants.

Following two productive meetings with individual Community Reference Groups to review the supporting procedures, the City invited broader community feedback on the draft SRC Policy from 7 October to 5 November 2025. The aim being to ensure the Policy was clear, practical and easy to understand.

All feedback received was carefully considered. Where clarification was needed, residents were contacted directly by phone to address questions or misunderstandings. All suggestions were reviewed and incorporated where appropriate.

Introduction

PROJECT BACKGROUND

When communities request localised upgrades such as roads, drainage, kerb and channel, footpaths, or lighting that are not prioritised in Council's annual capital works budget, but where a 'special benefit' exists, we may consider using a Special Rate and Charge Scheme to fund these projects. This approach enables delivery of infrastructure that might otherwise not be constructed.

The City's Special Rates and Charges Policy and a supporting procedure document is scheduled for review in late 2025.

To help create a fair and reasonable cost apportionment process, we invited community members to participate in a community engagement process ahead of the scheduled review.

Two sessions were held:

Thursday 17 August 2025, 10.00am – 12.30pm

Tuesday 29 August 2025, 5.30pm – 8.00pm

In addition to these sessions, we sought feedback on the draft Special Rate and Charge Scheme Policy, which had undergone extensive internal review. The engagement aimed to:

- Gauge community support for the draft policy
- Assess whether the policy's purpose was clear
- Ensure the policy was practical and easy to understand

This feedback informed the finalisation of the policy and procedure, helping to ensure transparency, equity, and community confidence in the Special Rate and Charge Scheme process.

ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE

Community input was actively sought to ensure the Policy was clearly understood and to promote transparency in our approach. This engagement aimed to support the community in accessing

infrastructure upgrades and enhanced service levels that fall outside the City's standard budget and service provisions.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the outcomes of the consultation process, which ran from 7 October to 5 November 2025. It summarises the engagement methods used, the feedback received, and how these insights will inform the final Special Rates and Charges Policy.

The intended audience includes the City of Greater Geelong, Councillors, the Project Working Group and the wider community. For residents and stakeholders, it offers transparency, shows how feedback has been considered, and demonstrates Council's commitment to working in partnership with the community to deliver a fair and equitable approach to funding projects that might not otherwise be built through general rates alone.

How We Engaged

ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

The engagement was open to all residents living in the City of Greater Geelong municipality.

METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT USED

A Have Your Say webpage was created inviting residents to ask questions, complete a quick poll or to complete a survey.

We advertised via:

- our Have Your Say webpage
- a media release published in the Geelong Independent
- City News
- Instagram
- Facebook
- LinkedIn.

Who We Engaged

WHO WE PLANNED TO ENGAGE

We aimed to engage with the entire municipality to assess whether the draft Special Rate and Charge Scheme Policy was clear, practical and easy to understand. Our objective was to ensure the Policy is accessible and meaningful.

We sought community feedback on several proposed changes, including:

Proposed Additions:

- Consideration of health impacts, in line with the Local Government Act 1989, within our prioritisation framework.
- A stronger threshold for community support: 60% evidence of support from property owners at each stage of engagement (an increase from the previous 51%).

Proposed Removals:

- The requirement to apply the four criteria principles to all potential SRC schemes. While originally intended to ensure consistency, these principles have proven too rigid in practice, making it harder for new proposals to progress, and limiting flexibility.

We outlined what could be influenced through the engagement:

- The type of infrastructure offered through an upgrade program, such as:
 - sealed roads
 - kerb and channel
 - footpaths
 - underground drainage
 - street lighting
 - other capital infrastructure.
- The timeframe for reconsidering an unsupported scheme (currently set at 10 years).
- The percentage of property owner support required for an SRC to proceed (currently 51% of respondents but we prefer 60% to reflect a clear majority).

- The type of service offered under an SRC.

And what couldn't be changed in the Policy:

- The types of benefit:
 - Special benefit (benefit received by the property owner directly).
 - Community benefit (benefit received by the wider community).
- Compliance with relevant legislation.
- Matters dealt with under the Special Rate and Charge scheme procedure.

To ensure broad community participation, we offered multiple ways to provide feedback — including a detailed survey, a quick poll, and an open Q&A platform where questions could be asked and answered publicly for everyone to see.

PARTICIPATION

The engagement was open to all residents living in the City of Greater Geelong municipality.

A Have Your Say webpage was created inviting residents to ask questions, complete a quick poll or to complete a survey.

We advertised via our Have Your Say page, a media release published in the Geelong Independent, City News, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.

During the engagement period:

- We received 3 questions which were answered by Officers.
- 6 residents completed the quick poll
- 34 residents completed the survey.

What We Asked

WHAT WE ASKED

In the **quick poll** we asked:

I looked at the Policy and I'm happy with it	3
I didn't have time to leave feedback	0
I didn't have anything new to add	3
I don't feel strongly about the topic	0

In the **survey** we asked:

To enable us to get a feel of where people lived, we asked which suburb they resided.

Please refer to Appendix C.

Have you previously been involved in a Special Rate and Charges scheme?

Yes	8
No	26

Is the Policy's purpose clear:

Very clear	13
Somewhat clear	12
Neutral/Unsure	8

Somewhat unclear

1

Very unclear

0

Do you think the draft policy clearly defines when a special charge is applied?

Yes

24

No

10

How strongly do you support or oppose the City using Special Rate and Charge schemes to help fund infrastructure upgrades?

Strongly support

4

Somewhat support

11

Neutral/Unsure

2

Somewhat oppose

6

Strongly oppose

11

Do you agree that a scheme should only proceed if at least 60% of responding property owners express support?

Yes

19

No

15

Please indicate what percentage you feel is fair?

40%	1
51%	3
70%	1
75%	2
80%	1
90%	1
99%	1
100%	3

Not familiar at all

8

Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve this policy to ensure fairness and equity?

Please refer to Appendix A.

General comments received:

Please refer to Appendix B.

Did you know we offer a number of payment options over five years and have a hardship provision?

Yes	22
No	12

Before this engagement, how familiar were you with Special Rate and Charges schemes?

Very familiar	3
Somewhat familiar	17
Heard of them but unsure	6

What We Heard

KEY FINDINGS OVERVIEW

Clear Communication is Crucial

It's essential that our messaging around SRCs is transparent and educational. Residents need to understand the benefits these schemes can deliver when supported, especially in terms of infrastructure improvements that would not otherwise be funded.

enabling communities to upgrade infrastructure that was not in place – or paid for – when properties were originally purchased.

Community Concerns and Support

We acknowledge that residents may be apprehensive about potential charges. It's important to reinforce that SRCs will only proceed with community support. Payment options are available over a five-year period, and those experiencing genuine hardship are encouraged to contact our Finance team for assistance.

Exploring Flexible Repayment Options

A 10-year repayment plan was proposed and discussed with our Finance team. While not currently available, it may be considered in the future, reflecting our commitment to equitable financial solutions.

Increasing the Support Threshold

Raising the required majority from 51% to 60% was broadly supported by submitters, offering a clearer representation of community backing. While alternative percentages were suggested, these may be considered in future policy reviews.

Familiarity with SRCs

Most respondents had not previously participated in an SRC but were familiar with the concept. They acknowledged that the SRC Policy is clear in its intent and application.

Mixed Sentiment, Strong Potential

Feedback showed an equal mix of support and opposition to SRCs. Nonetheless, we are confident that SRCs remain a valuable tool for

What We Have Done and Next Steps

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Resident Engagement

All residents with questions have been contacted directly.

Questions have been addressed and clarifications provided.

Policy Development

Discussions have commenced with the Finance team to explore the feasibility of a 10-year repayment plan.

Procedure Review

A supporting procedure document detailing the process and cost apportionment methods has been reviewed both internally and externally.

Two community focus groups participated in the external review to ensure transparency and inclusivity.

Public Accessibility

If the revised Policy is adopted, the procedure and cost apportionment details will be made available:

- On the official webpage.
- In hard copy format for those who require physical copies.

Community Initiation

Information has been added to clarify how a Special Rate and Charge (SRC) scheme can be initiated via a community petition.

NEXT STEPS

Submit the revised SRC Policy to Council for adoption with the following supporting documents:

- This engagement outcome report
- SRC Procedures
- SRC focus group meeting outcome report.

Appendix A – Suggestions for Improving the Policy to Ensure Fairness and Equity

I think you need to look at developments that are increasing density, especially around the infill suburbs such a Clifton Springs. The community is experiencing growth, and this infrastructure is often associated with increased development and should be factored in at that point, not applied to existing residents who, in this town, will probably not live long enough to see ROI.	Council are responsible for flooding properties after removing drains & replacing with an ineffective spoon drain, these properties have previously been unaffected. I have lived at my address for 17 1/2 years, the first 14 unaffected, since councils removal of drains this has affected & devalued by flooding. It should NOT be property owners responsibility financially. I understand that spoon drains remove the onus on Council to maintain cleaning drains which were only cleaned when notified. According to this proposal just what do we get for our expensive rates. My (& other property owners) have homes that are severely devalued due to flooding that never occurred prior to a spoon drain.	difficulty paying when this charge is at will and over and above the general rates of a property! If a charge was placed on a property of say \$30 to \$50 per year or even quarter (or a nominated amount) in the 10 years leading up to an acknowledgement that a major infrastructure was to be implemented, then that money could be written back against the initial charge and thus reduce the debt to be paid. To be faced with a charge of magnitude always causes pain to ratepayers!	unlike other council areas
		Residents shouldn't have to pay for upgrades to City infrastructure, it should come out of your existing budget.	Unless the work directly benefits property owners and no one else then charging an agreed fee is ok . However where , for instance you want to install footpaths or sealed road that benefit all then not fair .
The hardship policy is not what is stated and does not reflect those who cannot or have	Just be careful as we already pay so much and receive so little	Should be even higher than 60%. It's already difficult enough pay bills. Special rates and charges are something many of us cannot afford. I know you have payment plans but that	there shouldn't be extra fees for things that need attention with the money that the government gets already.

doesn't make it any easier, just spreads the suffering over a longer period of time. I'd rather food than asphalt. Thanks		public transport, reduce reliance on private cars and support families in lower socio economic areas. <u>Environmental considerations</u>	
To strengthen fairness and equity, the policy should recognise that well designed infrastructure improves community safety, mobility and liveability for all residents, not only property owners. <u>Active transport and footpaths</u> The policy should prioritise projects that support safe walking and cycling, particularly near schools, public transport stops, playgrounds and community facilities. Footpaths and shared paths are essential for children, older residents and people with disability, and they promote inclusion and better health outcomes. <u>Public transport connectivity</u> Infrastructure funded under special rates and charges should connect safely to existing or planned bus and train routes. This will make it easier for residents to access	I believe that Councils should bear the entire cost any improvements and upgrades that are covered by this 'scheme'. That is their responsibility. Ratepayers yearly rates should be enough to cover these additional costs. If they are not, then Council should look at how it spends our money and stop wasting it on overseas trips etc.	Project design should include trees and environmentally sustainable elements such as drainage that supports vegetation and shaded pedestrian corridors. These improve amenity, reduce heat and support local biodiversity. <u>Equity for lower socio economic areas</u> The City should consider adjusting contribution ratios or providing hardship assistance in areas where residents have limited ability to pay. This would help address historic under investment in older or disadvantaged neighbourhoods. <u>Community safety and CPTED principles</u> The policy should also encourage safer public spaces through good lighting, open sightlines and well maintained paths, consistent with Crime Prevention Through Environmental	

Design principles. This is particularly important for children and women travelling at night. <u>Whole of community benefit</u> Fairness should be measured not only by the benefit to individual property owners but also by how much a project improves community wellbeing, safety, accessibility and environmental sustainability.			Then after many complaints from people the Council said they could seal the roads for an estimated \$10,000 which ended up blowing out to more than double under the special rates and schemes, that most people said nope. It did not go ahead, so now we pay the same rates as properties in surrounding streets with sealed roads while having to put up with a farm road quality in a suburban street. In my opinion your Special Rates and schemes are a cop out to slug the rate payer.
You have not provided a reason for moving to 60%. 60% creates a bias in favour of non-acceptance. 51% is democratic. People are already biased against spending their own money in a cost of living crisis. COGG needs to seek additional revenue by other means. Eg State or Federal Government or a Bellarine visitor fee for paid parking etc.	Further explain if there happy to be lots of redevelopment i.e knock-down rebuild with multi dwellings etc. As the area ages, this will happen, so what is the plan with all these new buildings, does it ever not need this special rate to be eligible for updated or upgraded services etc.		
Residence from old suburbs would seem to be disadvantage especially where infrastructure has worn out and the policy does not discuss renewal considerations.	After having a perfectly functioning gravel road removed a few years back by the Council and replaced with some clay sand junk that gets caked all over the car and shoes when its wet and dragged through the house and garage.	Both the State of Victoria and the Commonwealth of Australia are awash with cash. Comrade Albanese is the gift that keeps on giving away borrowed money. Just ask and the vault will be opened. Comrade Allen has an over \$40 billion war chest for the forthcoming State Election. COGG should demand at least \$6 billion from Madam Allen.	Proceed with scheme only if everyone in agreement

Extend the payment options window to 10 years. Most properties are unlikely to encounter more than one proposal per ownership period. A 10 year payment window would enable owners to budget for payment, such that they could support proposals.	Making sure that the percentage of owners are the ones actually affected, not others living in other areas who won't be paying the levy. As an example, estates that run off the said areas or retirement villages that won't be affected as the one in Central road	council pay out of rates already paid.
In my experience the calculation to apportion costs was too heavily weighted to the property's value. In our case, it created a rate which was disproportionate to the benefit, compared with other properties with the same or greater metreage of sealed road. In our case our property's special levy was calculated at 50% more than the adjoining properties which have 50% more metreage. This is an example of a calculation which is not fair and equitable and needs to be closely re-examined to ensure a fairer system in the future.	Balance the benefit to the community as a whole compared to the benefit to those asked to make a contribution.	
As long as the residents have enough time to pay. Consider pensioners on fixed income in these older areas.	If 100% of the rate payers don't agree then there should be no special levy. We pay enough over priced rates, let the	

Appendix B – General Comments

It could be made clearer why some projects fall under this scheme and others do not. There is some explanation in the policy about when developers cover costs for new developments, but there are still instances where footpaths are upgraded in existing neighbourhoods without a special charge scheme. Perhaps links to specific examples or case studies would help with the perception of fairness to owners.	This should be councils existing budget.	contribute payment to any of these proposals.	
		Before doing this make green waste free as you benefit from it already anyways no need to charge so much for it	Why does the council reseal roads in ocean grove that clearly do not require work. For instance Bramwell st was recently completed where it was not required. Yet other roads in OG remain untouched for years for instance Thacker street .?
Council are sidestepping their responsibility with older areas & are issuing planning permits for this area where there is already a lack of infrastructure & permeable surfaces. Council mention newer areas, these are developer's responsibility. Does this mean Council are not responsible for any of their above conditions over all of the City of Geelong. I am 100% not in favour of these conditions & financially cannot afford to	When council passes a motion to implement these processes and agrees on a schedule but the actual timelines and project blow out why does the payment schedule alter unconditionally and doe snot allow residents / ratepayers any options especially re payment within 30 days??	council need to look properly at where the money we pay already is going	There have been at least 2 proposals for a SRC to seal our road. We have never been directly informed of the outcome despite returning the survey. The road remains unsealed so we can only assume it wasn't supported. Initiating a proposal should also be seen as an opportunity for affected residents to get to know one another. Part of the consultation process should involve working with at least a few of the initiators in the community to plan and start the engagement process. Engagement should not just rely on mail and online surveys. There needs to be a personal element.

Focus and concentrate on Roads, Rates and Rubbish!!!!	Is there a time frame from start to finish for each proposal which is considered under this scheme ? Or is each proposal considered on a case- by -case basis? Knowing how this could potentially drag on - I wonder if there should be a sub-clause/sentence along the lines of - if this option has been considered & been unable to get the 60% owners support - it will not be reconsidered for another (for example) five years. Or is that impractical/ too restrictive? Just a suggestion.
If the Council makes my street worse that I have to battle 24/ 7, that drags mud through my property, Then tries to offer a sealed road through special rates and schemes that has a massive cost that most people can not afford. I should not be paying the same rates as properties on sealed roads.	The COGG has allowed developers to get away with not building footpaths,curbs and gutters , closed drains ,when developing housing builds. Vicroads who has responsibiliyy for roads like Murradoc Road , Drysdale just ignores the pleas for repair ,upgrade, etc. Port Arlington Road should be renamed " Pothole Paradise Road". Drivers should be allowed to travel in the

	lane with the least potholes.
I don't feel that as a property owner I would benefit from a foot path out the front of my property, so why should I have to pay for it when it is not actually my land anyway.	What happens if someone is paying a special rate and they sell their property. Who continues to pay the charge??
My concern would be that projects get moved from what the Council should fund to a Special Rate and Charges scheme. Our rates are quite high now due to the re-zoning of our area since 2010. However Highton is a unique area in Geelong and things that could improve and make this area better are welcome. But we have many units in our road, a number which are rented out so that could possibly make the 60% requirement difficult, its unlikely landlords will want the extra charge.	I live in a Court in Bell Park, and the storm water drain on the nature strip side, which is council land, it is broken! As neighbours visitors have parked on the nature strip infront of my house and the weight of the cars broke the pipe near the gutter blocking it. My back yard got flooded after heavy rain because the water couldn't go anywhere. I put in a complaint someone came and had a quick look and said it was my responsibility to fix. Well no it's not! When you look at my neighbours storm water pipe exits into the gutter, they're not exposed like mine. We just put some cement over the pipe as we don't have the money and again it's on the nature strip, council land! So why should I have to make

	a special payment when you're not doing your job. Again the pipe is exposed, the rest of the neighbours kirbs and gutters are the way they should be. Not giving or paying any kind of payment.
Whats the point in have a consultation about anything when you ignore the replies? Look at the recent Ocean Grove sale of land. You just disregard the submissions.	

Appendix C – Suburbs of Respondents

Anakie		Indented Head	2
Armstrong Creek	1	Lara	1
Avalon		Leopold	
Balliang		Little River	1
Bareena		Lovely Banks	
Barwon Heads		Manifold Heights	
Batesford		Mannerim	
Bell Park	1	Marcus Hill	
Bell Post Hill	2	Marshall	
Bellarine		Moolap	
Belmont	3	Moorabool	
Breakwater		Mt Duneed	
Breamlea	1	Newcomb	
Ceres		Newtown	
Charlemont	1	Norlane	
Clifton Springs	5	North Geelong	
Connewarre		North Shore	
Corio		Ocean Grove	5
Curlewis		Point Lonsdale	
Drumcondra	1	Point Wilson	
Drysdale	2	Portarlington	1
East Geelong	1	Rippleside	
Fyansford		South Geelong	
Geelong		St Albans park	
Geelong West		St Leonards	1
Grovedale	1	Staughton Vale	
Grovedale East		Thomson	
Hamlyn Heights		Wallington	
Herne Hill	1	Wandana Heights	
Highton	2	Waurm Ponds	

Whittington