

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

SPECIAL RATES AND CHARGES COUNCIL POLICY

VERSION: 2

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Responsible Officer: Coordinator Design and Services

Authorising Officer: Director City Services

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Introduction

PURPOSE

This policy provides guidance for implementing and delivering services paid for through contributions as part of a Special Rates and Charge Scheme pursuant to Section 163 of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

A Special Rates and Charge Scheme is a funding model by which the City can recover the costs, or part thereof, from property owners where works or services provide a special benefit to those property owners.

CONTEXT

The *Local Government Act 1989* enables Councils to levy a special rate and charge to help pay for any council service or activity that may be of benefit to a particular group of property owners. Special Rate and Charge Schemes enable the City to provide services to the community that would otherwise be impeded by budgets and timing. With the enactment of a Scheme, the City can implement services at a quicker rate that would be of benefit not only to individual properties but also to the greater community.

These schemes are not limited to infrastructure and can be applied to other services within the City such as marketing, promotion or economic development

For new land developments, the cost of constructing sealed roads, kerb and channel, footpaths, drainage, street lighting and other capital infrastructure is apportioned across the lots by the developer. In this way the purchasers of the lots and subsequent owners have paid for the infrastructure benefits derived by their property.. If a property is sold without specific infrastructure or services present, it's equitable the property owner contributes to the cost of providing a special benefit for their property.

SCOPE

This policy outlines the decision-making process and criteria for Special Rates and Charge Schemes where the provision of these services or infrastructure items are deemed to provide a special benefit to property owners or certain members of the community. Services include but are not limited to:

- Design and construction of infrastructure works:
 - New sealed roads
 - Sealing unsealed roads or laneways
 - Traffic management
 - Kerb and channel
 - Footpaths
 - Drainage works – easements, drains
 - Street lighting
- Marketing and promotion

Definitions

This section defines the key terms used in this policy.

CITY - The City of Greater Geelong organisation led by the CEO.

COUNCIL - The City of Greater Geelong Council is comprised of elected councillors led by the Mayor.

ELT - The Executive Leadership Team of the City.

SUBMISSION REVIEW PANEL (SRP) - A panel of Councillors to allow property owners the opportunity to support or oppose the scheme.

TYPES OF BENEFIT

SPECIAL BENEFIT - Benefit received by those property owners included in the scheme. Benefitting property owners pay the special benefit.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT - The wider community that are not receiving a Special Benefit in the proposed scheme. The community benefit is paid by the City.

TOTAL BENEFIT – Special Benefit plus Community Benefit.

TYPES OF PROJECTS

WORKS SCHEMES - involves construction of an item, or items of infrastructure;

SERVICE SCHEMES - provides a specific service or bundle of related services; and

SPECIAL PURPOSE FUND SCHEMES - where monies raised by the Special Rate or Charge go into a fund for a specified purpose and may be included in a mixture of works and/or services.

VCAT - Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

POLICY STATEMENTS MEETING THE COMMUNITY PLAN STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Delivering modernised standards of infrastructure and services to support healthy, caring & inclusive community (strategic direction 1) and strong local economy (strategic direction 3)

The City aims to deliver a standard of infrastructure and services that ensures the connection, safety, wellbeing and prosperity of all members of the community. This in turn creates a healthier community by reducing isolation, encouraging physical activity and socialisation and strengthens the local economy.

The City welcomes nomination and support from the community of infrastructure and services needing improvement that may suit a Special Rate and Charge Scheme funding model.

Where possible, works and services delivered under a Special Rate and Charge Scheme will comply with relevant standards and guidelines and the *Local Government Act 1989*.

Supporting the City's sustainable growth & environment (strategic direction 2) and high-performing Council and organisation (strategic direction 4)

Due to the increasing population growth of Greater Geelong, there is expectation that infrastructure and services are provided to support the growing community and their needs.

A Special Rate and Charge Scheme may be initiated by the City or may be requested by property/business owners or residents. A Special Rate and Charge Scheme may be delivered to raise the standard of a specific service or infrastructure to provide better amenity for residents or to better respond to growth. Without Special Rate and Charge Schemes, the upgrading or construction of new infrastructure or provision of services would be significantly delayed or never delivered.

Apportioning costs enables the City to balance its financial sustainability with benefiting communities/properties. Any cost adjustments will be confirmed in accordance with the requirements of the Act at the finalisation of the Scheme.

Apportionment of costs from a Special Rate and Charge Scheme is calculated in recognition of the benefit to the property owners and the local community. The classification of the road defines the ratio of Special Benefit and Community Benefit for the different asset classes.

Costs will be apportioned using information available to derive the proportion of Special Benefit gained by each individual party to the Scheme and Community Benefit.

Open and transparent engagement with the community

When engaging in a Scheme, the City aims to provide an open and transparent process, on a fair, reasonable and equitable basis and encourage property owner input.

To ensure the preparation of Special Rates and Charge Schemes follows the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council policy; and internal procedure, for all Schemes carried out.

As each Special Rates and Charge Scheme is unique, a consultation program shall be tailored to suit specific needs, meeting the requirements of Council's Community Engagement Policy.

The City, in considering a Scheme, may elect to adopt, abandon or modify a project. If a Scheme is abandoned, it generally won't be revisited for a minimum of 10 years from this decision or unless it is clearly demonstrated that community support has changed. To meet criteria 4 of the prioritisation framework, the majority of respondents is more than 50 per cent.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles underpin the City's Special Rates and Charge Scheme decision making.

As a principle the City will:	What will this look like in practice?
Consult and engage with the community and stakeholders	<p>The City aims to connect with the community and stakeholders in planning for new, upgraded or improved infrastructure or services for the community.</p> <p>The City commits to engage with the community to ensure the community has a voice.</p>
Be driven by evidence of need and the benefit to the community	<p>The City aims to take a purposeful and strategic approach to funding infrastructure or services that deliver meaningful community benefit and social impact.</p> <p>The City aims to ensure that decisions are aligned to the agreed provision standards, robust evidence and the requirements of the community.</p> <p>As a priority, the City aims to consider solutions that meet safety and mobility outcomes, the place-based needs of the community and focus on addressing social challenges, economic impacts and opportunities.</p>
Provide access to services where it is needed, in a timely way	<p>The City aims to ensure that service and infrastructure design, location, and support arrangements aims to address the needs and obstacles faced by the community.</p> <p>The City aims to ensure that the community has access to infrastructure, support and services where it is needed and as soon as practicable.</p>
Align decisions with Council's role, strategic priorities, and needs of the community	<p>The City aims to ensure that community spend is focussed on delivering on strategic objectives and priorities, while ensuring there are appropriate mechanisms to consider community led ideas and initiatives.</p> <p>The City aims to play a stronger role as an advocate, leader, facilitator, planner, monitor and part funder of new and upgraded services. The City aims to continue to fulfil a variety of roles as appropriate, including the support and delivery of new and upgraded infrastructure and services.</p> <p>If the City identifies the need for new or upgraded infrastructure but the contributing parties do not support the scheme, it may be referred to Council's budget process and/or investigation of external funding sources.</p> <p>The City aims to be fair and transparent in its funding priorities, processes and decision making, ensuring funding achieves best value.</p>
Demonstrate fairness and transparency in decision making	<p>The City aims to provide the community with a clear understanding of Council's role and how decisions are made to ensure that the community understands what is planned for the place that they live.</p>

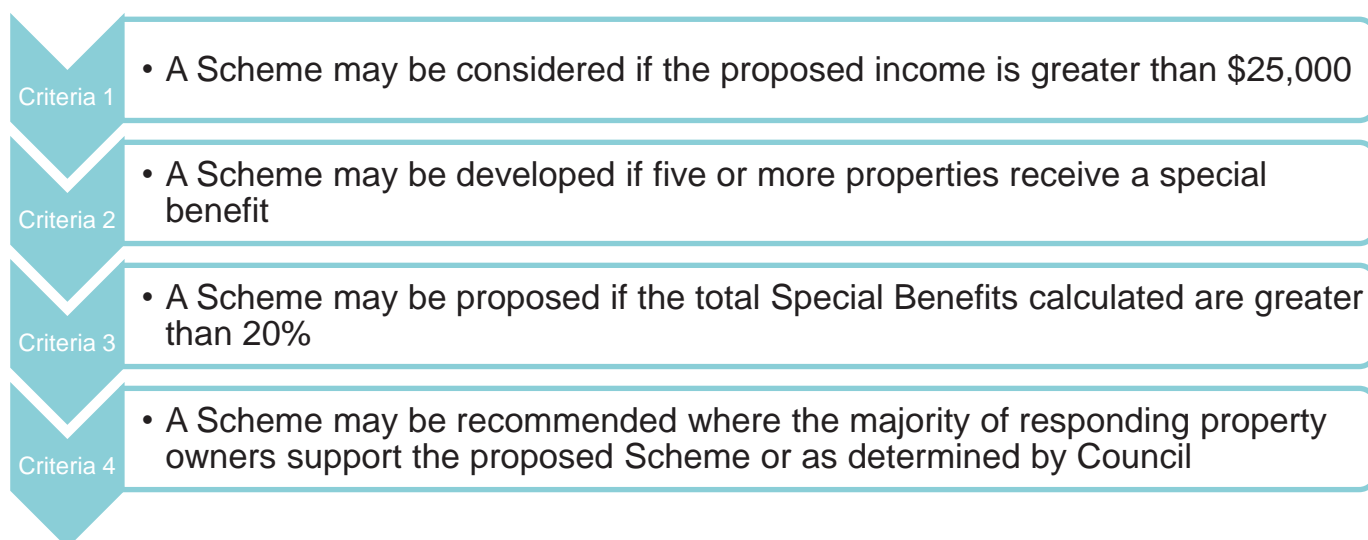
PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

The City aims to ensure that residents have the infrastructure they need. The intent is to work in partnership with property owners in responding to the needs of the community whilst maximising community benefit..

The following factors are to be considered when assessing the need for a proposed Special Rate and Charge Scheme:

- The proportion of property owners who support the proposal;
- Community and Special Benefits;
- Previously proposed Schemes;
- Existing conditions, the need for the project, matters of health, safety and amenity;
- Infrastructure provision priorities based on adopted strategic and asset management plans;
- The available options for staging and funding the project;
- A preliminary estimate and method of distributing costs;
- Social, environmental, cultural or economic implications;
- Cost benefit to the greater community in assessing apportionment of public funds to the Scheme.

To determine if a Scheme proceeds, all relevant circumstances must be considered before the Scheme is put to the Council for approval. This includes determining the costs that may be levied on the property owners. This is guided by the following principles:



Should a proposed Scheme meet the criteria outlined above, further prioritisation for its delivery may be based on the City's strategic plans, master plans, 10 year asset plans and service plans. Should a scheme proceed the City will fund the community benefit component.

Policy implementation

RESPONSIBILITIES

Party/Parties	Roles and Responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commit to the principles for Special Rates and Charge Schemes through leadership and decision-making.Endorse the Special Rates and Charge Scheme Policy and support its implementation.
Executive Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Implement and ensure compliance with this policy
Officers involved in Special Rate and Charge Scheme planning, administration and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Design and deliver best-practice and best value service and infrastructure that aligns with this policy, in consultation with Managers.
Coordinator Infrastructure Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitor the implementation of this policy and conduct periodic reviews to drive continuous improvement.Support Council to plan and deliver best practice when enhancing infrastructure to better our communities living standards.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

The City's commitment to the implementation of this Policy includes::

- Providing a rolling four-year Special Rates and Charges infrastructure plan in alignment with Council's Community Plan and the long-term financial plan; and
- Periodically review the economic development derived from commercial businesses for services provided through a Special Rates and Charges Scheme; and
- Conduct an annual review of Special Rates and Charges Scheme priorities.

ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

The Responsible Officer: Coordinator Infrastructure Planning is responsible for advising the organisation about this policy, monitoring its implementation and assisting community members with questions about the policy.

A person who is uncertain how to apply and comply with this policy should seek advice from the Coordinator Infrastructure Planning or from their Manager.

RECORDS

The City must retain records associated with this policy and its implementation for at least the period shown below.

Record	Retention / Disposal Authority	Retention Period	Location
This policy	Governance Officer	Permanent	Rex (Approved and archived documents folders)
Feedback archives	Coordinator Infrastructure Planning	Permanent	ReX (document binder)

REVIEW

Council should review and, if necessary, amend this policy before 1 July 2025. A periodic review of this policy will also be undertaken to ensure necessary changes or updates are made in a timely manner.

References

- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- Infrastructure Design Manual (IDM)
- Community Plan 2021-2025
- Special Rates and Charges Procedure 2021