

Draft Meeting Notes: Community Reference Panel - Rates Structure Review

Meeting 3 - Norah Starrs Community Centre, Bungendore
26 March 2026, 5.30pm

Draft meeting notes were reviewed and endorsed by the panel members. In accordance with the Panel's Terms of Reference, member identities are not disclosed in the meeting records. This approach supports open and constructive discussion by allowing participants to provide candid input without concern about potential community perceptions.

Member 1:

- The panel has been tasked to solve a problem that isn't really there except that people don't want to pay extra rates. However, we have services that Council provides, and somebody has to pay for it.
- In reality – we can only adjust the structure so much – and somebody will pay more and somebody will pay less without substantial overall impact.
- Council should focus on community needs versus wants, as the latter continually expands and drives costs.

Member 2

- Agrees with the points raised already.

Member 3

- We should maintain equity over equality in rates structures so that remote and disadvantaged communities are treated fairly not equally.
- Captains Flat is disadvantaged compared to other areas with specific issues like lead contamination affecting access to council-provided services.
- Some areas, particularly remote ones, lack basic services such as public transport, doctors, and shops, making equitable rate structures critical.

Member 4

- Fairness is the priority.
- Concerned that people in rural communities are seeing inconsistencies in base and ad valorem rates, creating confusion and frustration. There are discrepancies in categorisation with some neighbours paying residential rates, others farmland rates, despite similarities in property type.
- "I've got one neighbour paying farmland rates far more than I am, and he doesn't even have direct access to his property."
- The Council needs to provide a clear explanation on how and why these categories function as they do.

Member 5

- Representing interests of people in Braidwood, noted they were facing a 17.3% median rate increase due to valuation changes before any rates structure changes. Shared concerns that other proposed models (e.g., "Option 1") would compound this, with increases disproportionately impacting certain areas (e.g., 46% for Braidwood, 55% for another rural community).

- Prioritised fairness and equity in rates: “I believe in helping those who are not comfortable financially.” Strong preference toward options favouring lower increases for lower-property-value areas.

Member 6

- Everybody in the same category should be treated the same.
- There should only be 4 rating categories: Residential, Farmland, Mining, Business. You need a good reason to have any subcategories.
- If you work on the assumption that Council does its best to provide everyone the best service then it is very unfair to have the same valuations in the same category paying different rates.
- There should be high base rates for business and farmland categories and low base rates for residential.
- Prefers option 1.

Member 7

- Highlighted insufficient clarity and direction from the council, echoing earlier comments about lack of a defined problem.
- Ratepayers are unhappy because of the 18% increase every year for 3 years, not because there is a problem with the rate structure. The problem is related to how rates are used that the community never asked for.
- Council needs to review how it is spending money and consider what the community want vs what they need.
- Shared concerns about inequitable access to services and infrastructure for rural and outlying areas – because they live remotely.
- Access to services is not the fair and equitable, and therefore the base rate should reflect the difference. Remote areas don't get kerb and gutter, bitumen, mowing of nature strips, etc. They have to drive if they want to use sportsfields.
- Criticized rising ad valorem values that disproportionately affect rural retirees. Shared a personal anecdote about significant increases in land valuation and associated rates.
- Prefers option 5.

Member 8

- Shared a personal situation about owning land rezoned as rural residential, which caused a significant valuation increase despite the land not being suitable for such use. Appreciated receiving some rate relief based on the use of the land but found the arrangement unsatisfactory overall.
- Expressed strong support for fairness for villages as previously discussed in the first meeting.
- Indicated interest in “Option 5” and “Option 1” but admitted uncertainty around their full implications. Requested a clearer explanation of other participants’ points of view before making final judgments.

Member 9

- Suggested the current rate structure (Option 2) works best for the majority and expressed support for its continuation.
- Recognised others’ concerns about access to services but noted that urban residents don't always rely on council-provided amenities (e.g., they may have private infrastructure like backyard pools).
- Suggested council focus efforts on clarifying what it does for the community, particularly before making adjustments to the rate structure.
- Wants to look at updating maps to reflect urban growth.

- We need to ensure that we limit blocks of land allowed to be used for rates exempt purposes because that reduces the revenue base for the community and allows inequity in the rates contribution.