

Frequently asked questions

What are council rates?

Council rates are a form of taxation. As the main source of funding for local government, they're essential in enabling councils to deliver the hundreds of the services and facilities that your community relies upon.

Taxes collected by councils are only a fraction of the total taxes paid by Australians – around 4% in fact. The Federal Government receives approximately 80% of the taxes Australians pay, while state governments receive about 16%.

Why do I pay rates to my council?

Councils are more than roads and rubbish collection. They're responsible for delivering hundreds of services and facilities that contribute to building strong and vibrant communities - everything from dog parks, footy ovals and libraries through to men's sheds, footpaths and playgrounds. In fact, councils in South Australia maintain about \$23 billion of public assets.

Most of these services and facilities are funded through rates collected from landowners within a council's boundaries.

A snapshot of the services and facilities provided by South Australian councils includes: arts and culture programs, bushfire prevention, caravan parks, cemeteries, coastal care initiatives, community buses and centres, wetlands, development & planning services, dog and cat management, disability services, economic development initiatives, environmental programs, events, footpath maintenance, heritage activities, immunization clinics, libraries, museums, roads, men's sheds, footy and soccer ovals, netball and tennis courts, aged care services, playgrounds, public pools, recycling facilities, skate parks, street lighting, and stormwater drains.

But I don't use any of these services and facilities, so why do I have to pay rates?

Your rates pay for more than you realise, and you would be surprised by just how many services and facilities you benefit from every day. From rubbish collection and street lighting to tidy streets and well-kept footpaths, every day you would come into contact with services provided by South Australian councils. And while you may not use all of the services and facilities, the likelihood is that you, a member of your family, or someone you know benefit greatly from the provision of such a broad range of services and facilities. Councils are there for your community, and add amenity and value to your neighbourhood.

How can I have a say in what my rates are spent on?

Each council in consultation with its community is required to develop publicly available plans, including long-term financial and infrastructure plans. These plans set the long-term objectives and priorities for the community. Councils also prepare Annual Business Plans, which includes income sources, infrastructure needs, service needs and what the council believes the community can afford in rates. Unlike other levels of government, councils release their Annual Business Plan and budget for community consultation prior to being adopted.

This consultation influences the annual budget that is presented to council for consideration and adoption. The budget can only be set at council meetings, which are open to the public.

Constituents are encouraged to not only participate during the Annual Business Plan consultation, which typically occurs around April/May, but throughout the year. Consultation helps councils to understand the services their communities need.