



Rating Policy

Reference Number:	4.5
Type:	Council
Category:	Finance Policy
Relevant Community Vision Outcome:	<u>Responsible Governance</u> We will manage our city in a sustainable and affordable way with responsible governance
Responsible Officer(s):	Manager Financial Services
First Issued/Approved:	June 2001
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Applicable Legislation:	Local Government Act 1999 Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 2011
Related Policies:	Nil
Related Procedures:	Nil

1. Purpose

This document sets out the Policy of the City of Charles Sturt for setting and collecting rates from the community. The Policy covers the following areas:

• Methodology to value land	• Payment of rates
• Adoption of valuations	• Rate rebates
• Business impact statement	• Rate capping
• Council's revenue raising powers	• Remission of rates
• Differential general rates	• Postponement of rates
• Minimum rate	• Late payment of rates
• Regional Landscape Levy (the Council's collection role)	• Sale of land for non-payment of rates
• Pensioner concessions	• Changes to assessment record
• Self-funded retirees concession	• Disclaimer

2. Scope

Strategic Focus

In setting rates for the 2026/27 financial year, Council has considered the following:

- Community Vision 2040 – *A Place to Call Home, A Place Where We Belong*
- Long-Term Financial Plan Estimates 2026–2036
- budget development principles
- the current economic climate
- the specific issues facing our community
- the Annual Business Plan and Budget for the 2026/27 financial year
- the impact of rates on the community
- the impact of rates on businesses
- the relationship between Council objectives and rating strategy
- Council's debt strategy
- funding required for future asset replacement
- the impact of differential changes in property valuations across the City
- where relevant, issues of consistency and comparability across council areas in the imposition of rates on sectors of the community, including business
- issues of equity arising where ratepayers provide or maintain infrastructure that might otherwise be provided or maintained by Council, and whether discretionary rebates should be granted

Copies of Council's Community Vision and Annual Business Plan and Budget are available for inspection at the Charles Sturt Civic Centre, 72 Woodville Road, Woodville or on our website at www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 Communication of the Policy

Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires a Council to prepare an Annual Business Plan and Budget. As per Section 123(2)(d), the annual plan must set out the rates structure and policies for the financial year. A summary of the Annual Business Plan must be included with the first rates notice.

3.2 Method Used to Value Land

Councils may adopt one of three valuation methodologies to value the properties in their areas:

- *Capital Value* – the value of the land and all the improvements on the land
- *Site Value* – the value of the land and any improvements which permanently affect the amenity of use of the land, such as drainage works, but **excluding** the value of buildings and other improvements
- Annual Value – a valuation of the rental potential of the property.

The City of Charles Sturt uses Capital Value as the basis for valuing land within the Council area. Council considers this to be the fairest method of distributing the rate burden across ratepayers, as capital value is a reasonable indicator of a property's overall value and closely reflects market value.

3.3 Adoption of Valuations

To determine the capital value, a Council may:

- (a) Employ or engage a valuer to value the land in the area
- (b) Use the valuations provided by the Valuer-General (a statutory officer appointed by the Governor); or
- (c) Use a combination of both (subject to certain restrictions).

The City of Charles Sturt has adopted the most recent valuations made by the Valuer-General.

3.4 Objection to Valuation

If a ratepayer is dissatisfied with the valuation made by the Valuer-General, they may object to the Valuer-General in writing, within 60 days of receiving the notice of the valuation, explaining the basis for the objection, provided they have not previously:

- (a) Received a notice of this valuation under the Local Government Act, in which case the objection period is 60 days from the receipt of the first notice; or
- (b) Had an objection to the valuation considered by the Valuer-General.

Notwithstanding the 60-day period for lodging an objection, the Valuer-General may accept an objection lodged out of time if satisfied that there is good reason to do so.

A person may object to a valuation by lodging a written notice with the Valuer-General, setting out the grounds of objection. If the person then remains dissatisfied with the decision, they may apply for a review within 21 days of receiving notice of that decision, together with the prescribed fee. The Valuer-General will then refer the matter to an independent Valuer for review. If the person remains dissatisfied following the review, they may appeal to the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Section 24, 25A, 25B & 25C of the Valuation of Land Act 1971).

The address of the Office of the Valuer General is 101 Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000 (GPO Box 1354, Adelaide SA 5001) and the telephone number is 1300 653 346 (general enquiries).

Council has no role in the process of considering an objection to a valuation. The lodgement of an objection does not change the due date for the payment of rates.

3.5 Notional Values

A notional value is a value determined under the Valuation of Land Act 1971 for certain eligible land in place of its ordinary value for rating purposes. It may apply in limited circumstances, including certain principal places of residence associated with primary production land and certain heritage land.

An owner who believes their land may qualify for a notional value should apply in writing to the office of the Valuer-General.

3.6 Business Impact Statement

Council has considered the impact of rates on businesses in the Council area, including primary production. In considering the impact, Council assessed the following matters:

- Elements of the Council's strategic management plans relating to business development
- Economic outlook, including Consumer Price Index (CPI) movements
- Operating and capital projects for the coming year that will principally benefit industry and business development within the City
- Valuation changes in commercial and industrial properties across the City as compared with valuation changes in residential properties across the City.

3.7 Rates, Charges and Other Amounts

All land within the Council area is rateable unless it is exempt under the Local Government Act 1999, including land exempt under Section 147.

Under the Act, Council may impose a general rate on rateable properties, or differential general rates that apply to different classes of properties. Council may also impose separate rates for specific parts of the Council area, and service rates or service charges for prescribed services in accordance with the Act.

Council also sets fees and charges for a range of services and activities, having regard to the cost of providing the service and other relevant considerations, including equity. The current schedule of fees and charges is available at the Charles Sturt Civic Centre, 72 Woodville Road, Woodville or on our website at www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au. A Goods and Services Tax will apply to fees and charges where required by law.

3.8 Differential General Rates

At its meeting on 22 June 2026 Council endorsed the 2026/27 budget which included rate revenue of \$156,492,271 in a total operating revenue budget of \$176,445,452.

The Council has set the following differential general rates:

Rateable Land Category	Cents in the Dollar
Residential	0.170947733
Commercial – shop, office & other use	0.6447867390
Industry – light & other	0.6533230370
Primary Production	0.5503389830
Vacant Land	0.530469271
Other	0.3287773770

Land use is a factor in the application of differential general rates. If a ratepayer believes the land use attributed to their property is incorrect, they may object to the Council within 60 days of receiving notice. The objection must be in writing and set out the grounds of objection and the land use that, in the ratepayer's opinion, should apply. The Council will determine the objection and notify the ratepayer of its decision. A ratepayer may appeal the Council's decision to the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Objections to Council's land use decision must be lodged in writing with the City of Charles Sturt, 72 Woodville Road, Woodville SA 5011. Ratepayers may contact Council on 8408 1111 to discuss the process. Council will provide, on request, a copy of section 156 of the Local Government Act 1999.

Lodgement of an objection does not change the due date for the payment of rates.

3.9 Minimum Rate

A council may impose a minimum rate if it has not imposed a fixed charge. If two or more adjoining properties are owned by the same owner and occupied by the same occupier, only one minimum rate is payable. A minimum rate must not apply to more than 35% of rateable properties in the council area.

Council has imposed a minimum rate of \$1,410 to ensure that all ratepayers make a reasonable contribution to the cost of basic services provided across the Council area.

3.10 Regional Landscape Levy

The City of Charles Sturt is within the area of the Green Adelaide Board and is required under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019 to collect a separate rate to fund the Board's operations. For 2026/27, the levy is 0.00588000 cents in the dollar based on the capital value of rateable land in the Council area.

Council collects this levy on behalf of the Green Adelaide Board. The revenue is not retained by Council and Council does not determine how it is spent.

3.11 Pensioner Concessions

Eligible pensioners may be entitled to a Cost-of-Living Concession administered by the State Government. The concession is paid directly into the applicant's nominated bank account and may be used towards household expenses, including council rates.

Application information is available from the ConcessionsSA Hotline on 1800 307 758 or on the State Government concessions website.

Applications are administered by the State Government. Rates must not be withheld while an application is being assessed, as penalties may apply to overdue amounts.

3.12 Concessions for Self-Funded Retirees

The State Government has determined that self-funded retirees meeting certain conditions may also be entitled to cost of living concession. This concession is paid directly into the individual's bank account and can be used towards either electricity, gas, water bills or council rates.

Application forms are available by contacting the Concession Hotline on 1800 307 758 or at www.sa.gov.au/concessions.

Payment of rates must not be withheld pending assessment of an application by the State Government as penalties apply to unpaid rates.

3.13 Payment of Rates

As required by Section 181 (1) of the Local Government Act 1999, ratepayers may pay their rates in four approximately equal instalments, payable in the months of September, December, March and June of the financial year for which the rates are declared.

In cases where the initial account requiring payment of rates is not sent at least 30 days prior to this date, or an amended account is required to be sent, the Chief Executive Officer has the authority to fix the date by which rates must be paid for these assessments.

The Chief Executive Officer also has the authority to enter into agreements with principal ratepayers relating to the payment of rates in any case where they consider it necessary or desirable to do so.

Rates may be paid in person by cash, EFTPOS or credit card (except Diners Card and American Express), at the following Council Service Centres:

- Charles Sturt Civic Centre, 72 Woodville Road, Woodville
- Ngutungka West Lakes, 9 Charles Street West Lakes*
- Hindmarsh Library, 149 Port Road, Hindmarsh*
- Findon Library, Cnr Grange and Findon Roads*

or at

- any **Australia Post** outlet

* **Note:** For security reasons cash payments are only accepted at the Charles Sturt Civic Centre and Australia Post outlets.

By telephone using:

- BPay and Bpay view through your participating bank
- Phone NAB 1300 609 653

By mail:

- Addressed to City of Charles Sturt, PO Box 1 Woodville SA 5011

By internet:

- Through Council's website at www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au
- or Australia Post at www.postbillpay.com.au

By Direct Debit:

- Quarterly
- Fortnightly

Any ratepayer who may or is likely to experience difficulty with meeting the standard payment arrangements is invited to contact Council's Rate Enquiries on 8408 1111 to discuss alternative payment arrangements. Such enquiries are treated confidentially by the Council. Late payment fines and interest may still apply.

3.14 Late Payment of Rates / Debt Recovery

Under the Local Government Act 1999, a 2% penalty applies to any rates amount not paid by the due date. If the amount remains unpaid, interest is then charged monthly at the prescribed rate

set under the Act. Interest applies to the overdue rates and any accrued interest. These charges are intended to encourage payment by the due date and to recover the administrative and financing costs associated with overdue rates.

The prescribed interest rate for the 2026/27 financial year has not yet been declared. Once declared, Council will publish the rate on its website.

The City of Charles Sturt applies late payment penalties in accordance with the Local Government Act 1999. Council may remit penalties, in whole or in part, and each request will be considered on its merits based on the information provided.

3.15 Debt Recovery

Council applies prudent debt recovery practices for overdue rates in accordance with the Local Government Act 1999. Outstanding amounts are monitored on an ongoing basis and managed through a systematic recovery process.

If rates are not paid by the due date shown on the rates notice, Council will commence the following recovery process:

1. A 2% late payment penalty and interest under the Act will be applied
2. An overdue notice will be issued within 7 days after the late payment penalty is applied
3. If payment is not made, or a payment arrangement is not entered into, within 10 days, the debt may be referred to a debt collector. The debt collector will then issue a notice of intention to commence a claim
4. Court proceedings may be commenced if the amount remains unpaid after 21 days.

All fees and court costs are recoverable from the ratepayer.

When Council receives payment towards overdue rates, the amount is applied in the following order:

1. to satisfy any costs awarded in connection with court proceedings
2. to satisfy any interest costs
3. in payment of any fines imposed; and
4. in payment of rates, in date order of their imposition (starting with the oldest account first).

3.16 Rebate of Rates

3.16.1 Under the Act

The Local Government Act 1999 requires Council to grant rebates on certain land. These include land used for health services, community services, religious purposes, public cemeteries, the Royal Zoological Society and educational institutions. The rebate available varies from 25% to 100%, depending on the circumstances, and is applied on application or verification of eligibility.

3.16.2 Discretionary

Council may grant discretionary rebates of up to 100% under section 166 of the Act. In considering such rebates, Council recognises the need to balance support for community organisations with the impact on overall rate revenue. To support a transparent and consistent approach, Council

has adopted a separate Rate Rebate Policy. A copy of that policy is available at the Charles Sturt Civic Centre or on Council's website at www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au.

Discretionary rebates are granted on application.

3.16.3 Residential Construction

Under section 166(1)(a) of the Act, and for the purpose of securing the proper development of the area, Council will grant a general rates rebate for the 2026/27 financial year for an assessment classified as vacant land in Council's Assessment Book where the land is in a Residential Zone or Residential Historic (Conservation) Zone under the Development Plan, or any replacement zone created through a Plan Amendment Report applying to the Council area, if:

- a) if the Principal Ratepayer of the Assessment applies to the Council for the rebate prior to 30 June 2026; and
- b) a dwelling has been substantially commenced on the property by 30 June 2026; and
- c) the Council is satisfied that the intention of the Principal Ratepayer is to reside in that dwelling upon completion for at least one year.

The rebate amount is based on when the footings are poured. If the footings are poured before 31 December 2026, a full rebate applies. If they are poured after 31 December 2026, a 50% rebate applies. The rebate is the difference between the rates that would have applied if the assessment had been used for residential purposes at the date rates were declared and the actual rates paid, after deducting any other rebate granted in the rating period.

This rebate is intended to apply to one dwelling only and to the ratepayer who will live in Charles Sturt. Where multiple dwellings are proposed on the land, whether or not the land is divided, the rebate will apply to one dwelling only on a pro-rata basis. For example, if four dwellings are being constructed on the land, and the above criteria are met, the owner will be entitled to 25% of the applicable rebate, based on when the footings are poured.

If the principal ratepayer is a body corporate, the rebate will only apply if one of its directors or office holders will reside in the dwelling for at least one year following completion.

3.16.4 Rate Capping

To provide relief where a rapid change in valuation would otherwise result in a substantial increase in rates, Council will grant a general rates rebate for the 2026/27 financial year under section 166(1)(l) of the Act. The rebate may be granted by Council on its own initiative where sufficient information is available, or on application by the principal ratepayer. It applies where the increase in general rates for an assessment between the 2025/26 financial year and the 2026/27 financial year is greater than 12.5%, after considering any rebate applied in 2025/26. The rebate amount is the difference between the general rates imposed for 2026/27 and the amount payable for 2025/26, after any rebate was applied but before any concessions, plus 12.5% of that 2025/26 amount.

The rebate will not apply where:

- the increase is due, in whole or in part, to improvements to the land with a value greater than \$20,000; or
- the land use category is commercial, industrial, primary production, vacant land or other; or

- the increase is due, in whole or in part, to a change in the land use applying for rating purposes between the date Council declared its general rates for 2025/26 and the date Council declared its general rates for 2026/27; or
- ownership of the rateable property has changed since 1 July 2025.

3.16.5 Postponement of Rates for Seniors

Council may grant a postponement of rates to a person who meets the requirements of Section 182A(1) of the Act. For this purpose, a senior is a person who holds a current State Seniors Card, or who is eligible for a card and has applied for one. A postponement is available to a senior, or the spouse of a senior, in respect of rates payable on their principal place of residence where the property is owned only by the senior or by the senior and their spouse. An application must be made to Council. If the eligibility criteria are met, all rates above \$500 will be postponed. Interest applies to the postponed amount.

3.16.6 Applications

All applications for rebates, remissions or postponements must be in writing, addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, City of Charles Sturt, 72 Woodville Road, Woodville SA 5011 and include sufficient details to identify the relevant property and support the application.

Application forms are available from council's website at www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au.

Further information on rebates is available from a Customer Contact Officer at the Council Offices, 72 Woodville Road, Woodville or on telephone (08) 8408 1111.

3.17 Sale of Land for Non-Payment of Rates

Under the Local Government Act 1999, Council may sell land if rates have been in arrears for three years or more. Before doing so, Council must give the principal ratepayer and the owner, if different, written notice of the outstanding amount and its intention to sell the land if payment is not made within one month. The City of Charles Sturt may exercise this power in accordance with the Act.

Council will not proceed with the sale of land in circumstances where the Local Government Act 1999 prevents or restricts that action, including where Section 185 applies.

3.18 Changes to Assessment Records

All changes to postal address or name of a ratepayer/owner and changes of ownership of a property must be notified promptly to Council in writing, letter, or email.

3.19 Disclaimer

A rate cannot be challenged on the basis of non-compliance with this policy and must be paid in accordance with the required payment provisions.

Where a ratepayer believes that the Council has failed to properly apply this policy it should raise the matter with the Council. In the first instance contact a Customer Contact Officer at the Council Offices or on telephone 8408 1111 to discuss the matter. If, after this initial contact, a ratepayer is still dissatisfied they should write to the Chief Executive Officer, City of Charles Sturt, 72 Woodville

Road, Woodville SA 5011 (email: council@charlessturt.sa.gov.au) explaining the nature of their concern.

4. Definitions

Nil

APPENDIX A

Summary of legal position relating to the setting and collection of rates

Local Government Act 1999

A Council may impose general rates, separate rates, service rates and service charges on land in its area (Section 146). Generally, all land within a Council area is rateable unless it is specifically exempt by section 147 of the Act. Such exemptions include crown land, land used for public educational purposes and Council occupied land. A Council must adopt an annual business plan each year which amongst other things sets out the Council's objectives for the year and the broad rates structure and policy framework within which the Council rates its area. A summary of the Annual Business Plan must accompany the first rates notice.

A rate is to be based on the value of the land multiplied by a 'rate in the dollar' set each year by the Council. The basis of valuation is to be capital value, site value or annual value (Section 151). Land must be valued by either the Valuer-General or a valuer engaged or employed by the Council (Section 167). Objections may be lodged against a valuation made by a valuer engaged or employed by the Council (Section 169) or by the Valuer-General (Valuation of Land Act). Differential general rates can be declared for land according to the location or the specific use (eg residential) of the land.

As part of the general rate a fixed charge may apply which means that the same amount is payable irrespective of the value, use or location of the property. The fixed charge may only be imposed against the whole of an allotment and only one fixed charge may be imposed against two or more pieces of contiguous land owned by the same owner and occupied by the same occupier or a single farm enterprise (Sections 148 & 152).

A Council may fix a minimum amount payable by way of rates or it may alter the amount to be paid by properties within a specific range of values but may not do so if it has imposed a fixed charge. The minimum rate may only be imposed against the whole of an allotment (which can include land under a separate lease or licence) and only one minimum rate is payable by two or more pieces of contiguous land owned by the same owner and occupied by the same occupier. The minimum rate must not be applied to supported accommodation or independent living units within the same group or complex of units. The minimum rate and altered rates must not apply to more than 35% of the properties in a Council area (Section 158).

A Council may declare either a general rate or differential general rates based on the use of the land, the locality of the land, the locality and the use of the land or (where particular circumstances apply) some other basis determined by the Council (Sections 153 & 156). A Council may declare a separate rate (or differential separate rates) on rateable land where a specific project is being undertaken to benefit the land or the occupiers of the land, which can be only a portion of the land in a Council area (Section 154). A Council may impose service rates and/or charges against land for any prescribed service it provides or makes available to the land.

A service charge is also payable in relation to non-rateable land. Prescribed services are the treatment or provision of water, the collection, treatment or disposal (including by recycling) of waste and television transmission (or retransmission) services (Section 155).

Rates are a charge against the land (Section 177). The owner of the land (unless the Council is advised otherwise) is the principal ratepayer and rates may be recovered as a debt against the principal ratepayer. In certain cases the occupier of the land may be classed as the principal ratepayer.

All ratepayers may pay rates in four quarterly instalments and a Council may grant discounts or incentives to encourage early or prompt payment of rates (Section 181). A Council may also make arrangements with ratepayers for other instalment provisions to apply (Section 181). If an instalment of rates is not paid by the due date then the Act provides for a Council to impose a fine of 2% on the unpaid instalment and, if the instalment continues to be unpaid, to charge a prescribed interest rate (set each year by a formula in the Act) on the unpaid instalment (including interest previously charged), on a monthly basis. The Council may remit such penalties in whole or in part (Section 181). Where rates become unpaid for a period of more than three years a Council may sell the land to recover the unpaid rates (Section 184).

A Council may remit or postpone the payment of rates, on the application of the ratepayer, if the payment of the rates would impose hardship on the ratepayer (Section 182).

A Council must rebate the payment of rates for land used for various purposes – health services, community services, religious purposes, public cemeteries, the Royal Zoological Society, educational institutions – as provided in Sections 159 to 165 of the Act. A Council may also provide discretionary rebates on the payment of rates (up to 100% of the rate for a period of up to ten years) on land used for a range of purposes, including for the securing the proper development of the land, for the preservation of buildings or places of historic interest, for the provision of facilities or services for children or young persons and for the provision of accommodation for the aged or disabled (Section 166).

A Council must also postpone all rates over \$500, on application by a 'senior' who satisfies the various criteria set out at Section 182A of the Act.

Note: A copy of the Local Government Act 1999 is available for inspection at the Charles Sturt Civic Centre, 72 Woodville Road, Woodville or on the SA State Government website at www.legislation.sa.gov.au