

Frequently Asked Questions - Special Rates

	Question	Answer
1.	<p><i>What is the purpose of a special rate scheme</i></p>	<p>The <i>Local Government Act 1989</i> allows Council to apply a Special Levy (Special Rate) to raise funds from defined commercial properties within a defined boundary specifically for the following purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marketing and promotion of the shopping precinct 2. Business engagement, liaison and development of those businesses in the shopping precinct <p>How the rate is applied and to which properties, how it is expended and by whom is determined by the statutory process.</p>
2.	<p><i>What are the current Special Rate schemes in City of Whitehorse</i></p>	<p>There are two Special Rate schemes in the City of Whitehorse, they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brentford Square – marketing and infrastructure schemes (approx. 44 properties) • Burwood Heights- marketing scheme (approx. 37 properties)
3.	<p><i>How long has the Special Rate scheme been in place?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brentford Square – commenced 1994 • Burwood Heights – commenced 1994

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4.	<i>How long do Whitehorse Special Rate schemes run for?</i>	<p>Whitehorse Special Rates run for five years.</p> <p>The current Burwood Heights Special Rates run from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2029.</p> <p>The Brentford Square Special Rates run from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2025.</p>
5.	<i>Who requests that a Special Rate be raised or considered for a shopping precinct?</i>	<p>An Incorporate Business Association within a shopping precinct makes a formal request to Council to commence the Statutory process to implement a Special Rate.</p>
6.	<i>What happens with the funds once they are collected?</i>	<p>Council collects the Special Rate and remits the funds raised to the Business Associations to facilitate projects and activities to promote their precincts. Activities must be in line with a Strategic Plan and yearly action plans that are submitted to Council via regular reporting.</p> <p>The funds are provided under a strict funding agreement with the Association that outlines what the funds can be spent on and how it must be administered.</p>
7.	<i>Is it compulsory to pay special rates?</i>	<p>Yes – when a Special Rate is Declared by Council then all commercial properties, which are located within the boundary declared, must pay the special rate.</p>
	<i>How are special rates collected?</i>	<p>The Special rates charge is collected with rates instalments and indexed to the CPI increase for the year ending 31 March each year. The charge amount is shown as a separate item on the rates notice.</p>

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8.	<i>What happens if I refuse to pay the Special Rate?</i>	<p>Once Declared, Special Rates are compulsory and must be paid.</p> <p>If you choose not to pay the special rate The same procedure as general rates will apply, interest will be calculated, final notice, solicitor’s letter, magistrates court complaint and then further legal action.</p>
9.	<i>Which properties are exempt from Special Rates?</i>	<p>Special Rates are only applied to commercial properties within a designated geographic boundary that includes a Commercial precinct or shopping centre.</p> <p>Properties that are not eligible to be Special Rated are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential properties. • Automatic teller machines, roof signs, Carparks, mobile telephone towers and car wash facilities. • Properties that do not have general rates applied (those deemed as non-rateable).
10.	<i>I want to find out how the Special Rate is being spent. Who can I contact?</i>	<p>Council cannot provide the details of how Special Rate monies are administered and spent.</p> <p>Contact your Business Association for this information. You may be required to become a member of the Association to access the required information.</p>
11.	<i>How are the Special Rates calculated on my property?</i>	<p>Council’s Rates department will be able to provide detail as to how your rate is calculated please contact 9262 6292.</p> <p>More information can be found on:</p> <p>https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/living-working/rates/your-rates</p>

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12.	<i>How do I pay the special rate?</i>	The special rate is included on your annual general rates notice and all payment methods available to general rates are available in order to pay Special Rates.
13.	<i>How is a Special Rate implemented?</i>	<p>Special Rates are implemented by a strict statutory process outlined in the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i>. Those properties liable to pay the special rate are notified of a new or renewing Special Rate and provided with opportunity to provide a submission to Council regarding the rates introduction or renewal.</p> <p>Council reviews the submissions and makes a determination on whether the Special Rate can be implemented or renewed (is declared).</p>
14.	<i>Once a Special Rate is Declared by Council can I appeal against the special rate?</i>	<p>Once a Special Rate is declared by Council, a person may appeal against the special rate declaration by lodging an appeal with VCAT</p> <p>Property Owners and occupiers will be notified of the declaration in writing. From the date of the notification a person has thirty (30) days to lodge an appeal with VCAT.</p> <p>No further appeals can be lodged for the remainder of the scheme.</p>
15.	<i>My business doesn't rely on passing traffic or I do my own marketing why should I pay the special rate</i>	Special Rates are applied to the property not to the business occupying the property. Special benefit must be delivered to the property. Businesses choose a location because of the prosperity, amenity and the convenience of that location. The special rates are applied to major shopping precincts that are considered valued destinations for both property owners and shoppers.

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16. ***I pay a Special Rate, am I automatically a member of the Business Association?***

No, as a Special Rate payer you are entitled to join your local Business Association as a member, to give you the opportunity to participate in the spending of the funds but membership is not automatic.

Joining the Association as a member is not compulsory and as such you must get in touch with your respective association representative.

To make contact with your local Business Association regarding membership visit:

Brentford Square Traders Association:

Sarah Maguire: sarah@marmaladesky.com.au

Website: <https://www.brentfordsquare.com.au/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/brentfordsquare/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/brentfordsquare/?hl=en>

Burwood Heights Business Association:

Karen Stephenson: karen@marketingstyle.com.au

Sharon Leeson: sharon@eastburwoodtravel.com.au

Website: <https://www.burwoodheightsshoppingcentre.com.au/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/burwoodheightsshoppingcentre>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/burwoodheightsshoppingcentre/>

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17.	<i>My property is now residential or vacant land but I have received a Special Rate levy on my property</i>	Questions relating to whether a property has been correctly levied should be directed to Council's Rates Department on 9262 6292 or email customer.service@whitehorse.vic.gov.au to review the property.
18.	<i>Any other queries regarding Special Rates</i>	Contact Whitehorse City Council on 92626292 or email customer.service@whitehorse.vic.gov.au