

Kia ora koutou

You've probably heard that councils around New Zealand have been hit hard with cost increases in recent years. As a result, we were initially looking at having to increase rates by an average of 17 percent. We responded to this scenario by developing a plan to cut costs and reduce the rates rise for our community. This involved many hours of meetings and discussions, with some tough decisions and emotive conversations. Without that work, this year's rates rise would have been higher.

Rates this year

In the end, we managed to get Whanganui's overall average rates rise down to 11.2 percent for 2024/25 while setting aside a hefty amount of funding through our Long-Term Plan for the basics – so about 80 percent of our capital spending will go on pipes, roads and footpaths over the next decade.

Many councils have announced average rates rises higher than Whanganui's such as 16.9 percent in Wellington, 17.5 percent in Porirua, 19 percent in Hastings and 27 percent on the West Coast. In saying that, I know the rates increase will be difficult for some people even if it is generally lower than other councils.

For Whanganui residential properties, the average increase is 13.5 percent. Kerbside recycling accounts for 3.2 percent of this, introduced last month to provide most of our residents with a convenient way to play their part in looking after the environment.

Councils talk in averages but rates are different from one property to the next depending on property type, size, valuation and services provided. Generally speaking, higher-priced properties pay more in rates than lower-priced properties. The enclosed rates assessment tells you your property's rates for the year.

Investing for our community

I believe Whanganui is the best place in the world and I know my fellow councillors are passionate about our district as well. Everyone has a different point of view on what we should fund and where to draw the line with different services and facilities. When making Long-Term Plan decisions, we carefully considered various community perspectives and looked at whether there were other factors to take into account – contrary to what some people think, it's not just a numbers game. In many cases we adjusted our positions or found new options to suit the community's needs.

After hearing from the community, we decided to seek a developer for a hotel instead of doing it ourselves, and opted not to fund the community proposal for a Pākaitore crossing. We voted to close the aviary as a council-run facility but are open to it continuing as a community-run facility, subject to a business case. Whanganui East Pool will open for the coming summer season while we investigate options for outdoor swimming in Whanganui – \$2M of capital funding has been set aside pending the outcome of the report. Hanging flower baskets will continue to add colour to our city centre every summer, funded primarily from rates from businesses in the area.

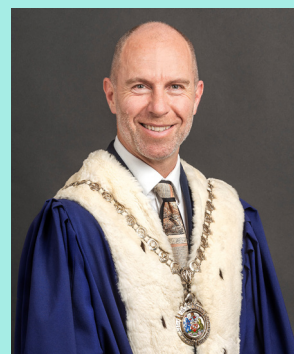
We're also contributing funding towards the Wanganui Surf Lifeguard Service's new operations centre and tower facility as well as the North Mole rejuvenation, improving Cooks Gardens, replacing playgrounds across the district, boosting community contract funding for services focused on health and wellbeing, and reinstating an annual budget for youth initiatives.

Paying your rates

I know some people will be worried about the rates increase. It can be useful to set up a weekly or fortnightly direct debit, or even monthly or quarterly – you can do this on the 'Pay your rates' page on the Whanganui District Council website.

Property owners who were adversely affected by the October 2022 revaluation may be eligible for a level of rates remission again – see 'Apply for rates remission' on the Whanganui District Council website.

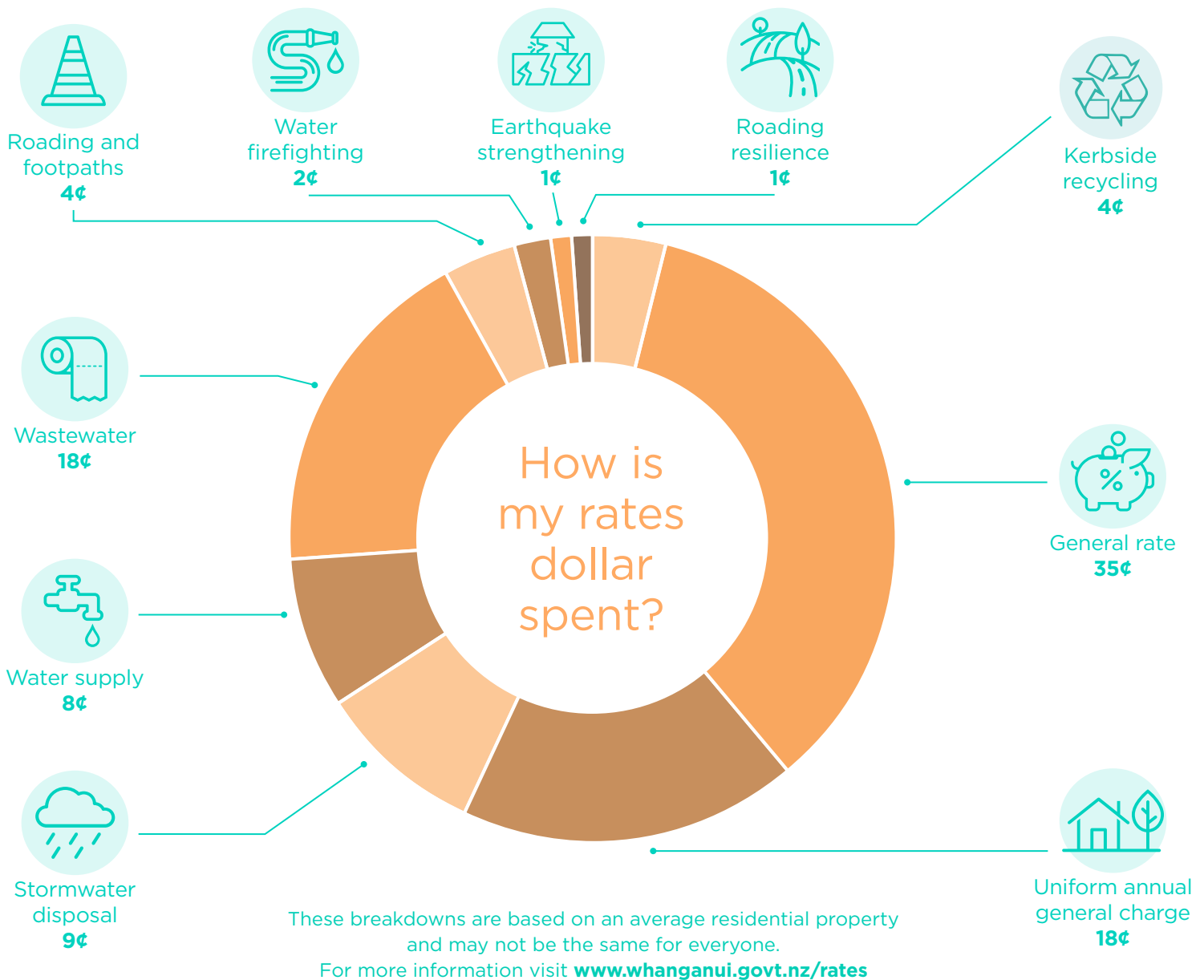
Through our Long-Term Plan process we've worked hard to deliver a rates rise that is as affordable as we can make it while ensuring that Whanganui keeps its momentum going for the future. In my view, our rating system is flawed and through Local Government New Zealand I'll keep advocating for a new funding model for councils that is easier on local people.



Ngā mihi



Andrew Tripe
Mayor of Whanganui



Rates Rebate Scheme 2024/2025

The Rates Rebate Scheme provides a rebate of up to \$790 for ratepayers* on a low-income who were paying rates for the home in which they were living on 1 July 2024.

How is my rebate worked out?

Your rebate will be calculated based on your income, rates and the number of dependants living with you.

The maximum income eligible for a rebate is \$31,510. However, if your income exceeds this amount you could still be entitled to a rebate depending on the total costs of your rates and the number of dependants.

Check your eligibility



Visit www.whanganui.govt.nz/rates-rebate-scheme for a handy calculator to see if you are eligible.

How do I apply?

The easiest way to apply is by booking an appointment with us online:

www.whanganui.govt.nz/rates-rebate-scheme

You can also download an application form while you're there.

What information do I need to provide?

1. Accurate information about your income (and that of any spouse/partner and/or joint home owner who lives with you) for the tax year ended 31 March 2024.
2. Your Horizons Regional Council rates bill.

Applications close on Monday, 30 June 2025.

*ratepayer means any person whose name is recorded in Whanganui District Council's rating information database (RID)