

RATE REVIEW FINDS VICTOR HARBOR RESIDENTS PAY AMONG THE HIGHEST RESIDENTIAL RATES

Independent consultant finds Victor Harbor has the second-highest average residential rates and the highest residential rate burden among comparable South Australian councils.

Click the image to watch the video or the link: <https://youtu.be/ZucDAzVmgaE>



City of Victor Harbor Rating Review briefing, 29 July 2026.

VICTOR HARBOR - Victor Harbor residents pay the second-highest average residential rates among fifteen comparable South Australian councils and carry the highest residential rate burden when average household income is taken into account, according to an independent review commissioned by the City of Victor Harbor.

The findings were presented by AEC Group consultant Gavin O'Donovan during a public briefing to elected members on 29 July 2026. The review compared Victor Harbor with fourteen similar South Australian councils to determine whether the City's current rating structure continues to distribute Council rates fairly across residential, commercial, industrial, primary production and vacant land categories.

The review concluded that Victor Harbor's rating structure is broadly consistent with comparable councils. However, changing property values have progressively shifted a greater share of Council's rate revenue onto residential property owners.

Importantly, the consultant did not recommend increasing Council's total rate revenue. Two indicative options would redistribute the existing burden between property categories while maintaining Council's overall rates income.

“Looking at your average residential rate, it’s the second highest ... There’s only one other council that has a higher average residential rate, and you’re well above the median benchmark.”

— Gavin O'Donovan, AEC Group

WHAT THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW FOUND

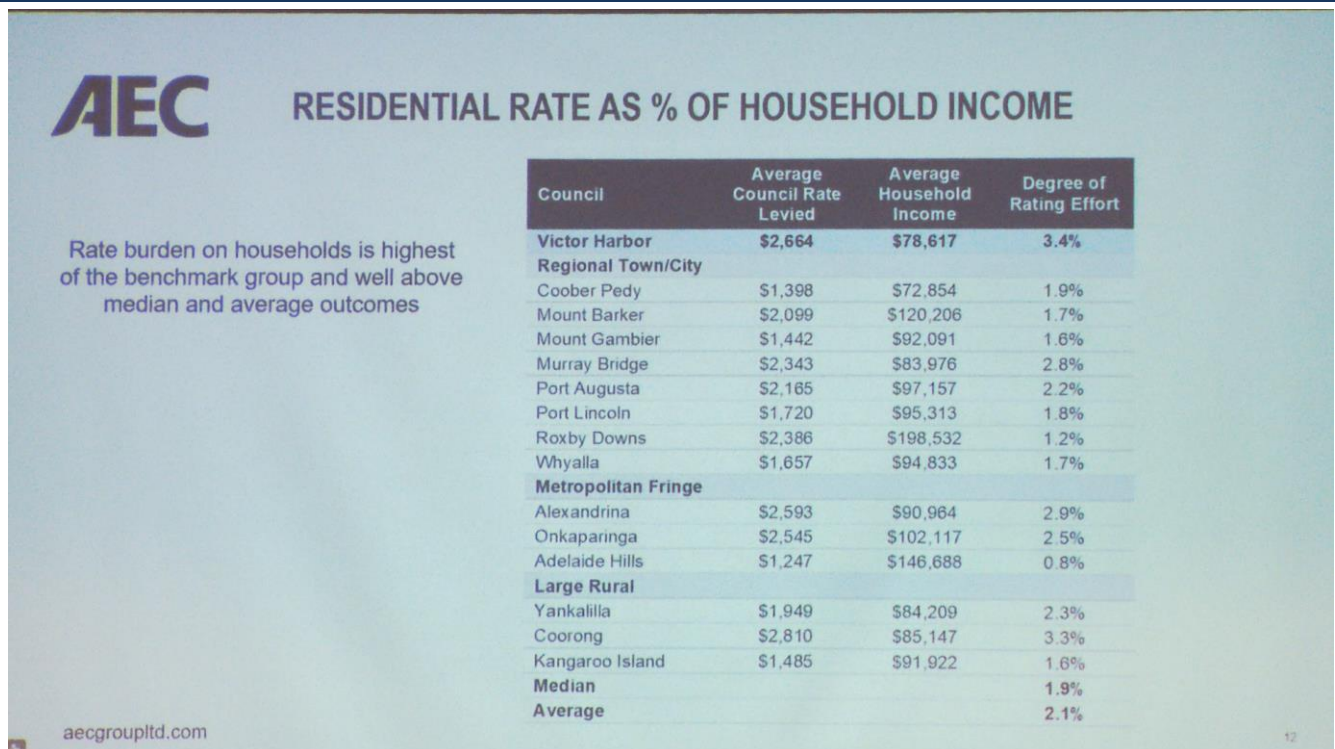


Figure 1: Residential rates as a percentage of household income. Victor Harbor records the highest rate burden among the benchmark councils.

Although Victor Harbor records the second-highest average residential rates, the consultant identified an even more significant finding: when average household income is taken into account, Victor Harbor residents carry the highest residential rate burden among all fifteen benchmark councils.

The review found Victor Harbor's average annual residential rate levy was about \$2,664, equal to approximately 3.4 per cent of average household income. The result reflects both the level of rates and the City's comparatively lower household incomes.

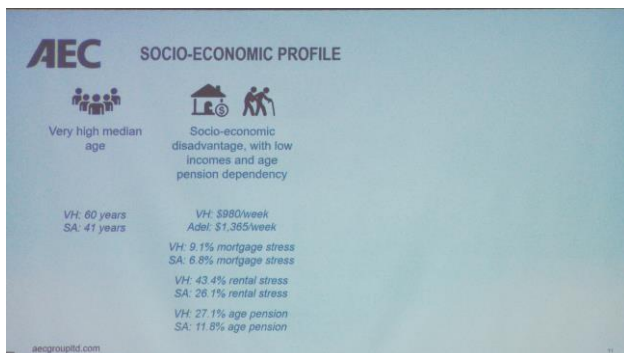


Figure 2: Socio-economic profile.

Why this matters

- Victor Harbor has an older population and lower household incomes than the South Australian average.
- Mortgage and rental stress are higher, while dependence on the Age Pension is significantly greater.
- These factors reduce household capacity to absorb continuing rate increases.

WHY HAS THE BURDEN SHIFTED?

Residential property values have increased substantially faster than commercial property values over the past decade. Although the published differentials have remained broadly unchanged, this valuation movement has increased the effective share of Council revenue paid by residential property owners.

WHAT COULD CHANGE?

AEC Group presented two indicative options. Both would reduce the residential contribution, increase commercial and industrial contributions, increase the contribution from vacant land, and leave primary production broadly unchanged.

KEY MESSAGE: THE REVIEW IS NOT ABOUT INCREASING RATES.

It is about reviewing how the existing rates burden is shared between property categories.

WHO WAS IN THE ROOM?

The significance of the consultant's findings makes attendance at the public briefing a matter of public interest. Only four elected members attended the presentation for its duration.

WHO ATTENDED THE RATING REVIEW BRIEFING?

Public Briefing - 29 July 2026

✗ Absent

✗ Cr Marilyn Henderson

✗ Cr Michael Quinton

✗ Cr Nick McKenzie

✗ Cr Carol Schofield

✗ **Mayor Dr Moira Jenkins** *(Arrived shortly before the meeting concluded)*

✓ Present

✓ Cr Stewart Burns JP

✓ Cr David Kemp

✓ Cr Brayden Mann

✓ Cr Angela Schiller

GALLERY ATTENDANCE

Members of the public: 8

Elected members present for the briefing: 4 of 10

Members of the public outnumbered elected members during most of the briefing.

COUNCIL WATCH COMMENT

Council briefing sessions provide elected members with an opportunity to hear directly from independent advisers, ask questions and test the evidence before formal decisions are made.

Council Watch welcomes the independent review and supports Council's commitment to undertake public consultation before any changes are considered.

How will councillors who did not attend the briefing ensure they have the same understanding of the consultant's findings before they are asked to vote on any future changes to Victor Harbor's rating system?

LOOKING AHEAD

The Rating Review is the beginning of a process rather than the final decision. Council will consider the consultant's findings, prepare consultation material and invite public submissions before determining whether changes should be made to the City's rating structure.

Council Watch encourages residents and business owners to examine the evidence and participate in the consultation process.

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