Local Government Expert Advisory Panel

Meeting Communique 30 September 2026

The Local Government Expert Advisory Panel (EAP) met on 30 September 2026. Panel members joined the meeting online to discuss the presented papers on proposed Special Variation Guidelines, Comprehensive Spending Review models, and continued discussions about ratings reforms.

Further consultation across the local government sector, including councils, joint organisations and peak bodies, will be conducted as the financial sustainability reform work progresses.

Special Variation Guidelines

The EAP were provided an overview of the proposed changes and draft Special Variation (SV) Guidelines that seek to limit SV applications to a temporary increase in rates for a specific purpose. The EAP discussed the impacts of limiting SV applications to a one off limited time purpose and additional application requirements for any extensions, or ongoing expenses potentially duplicating work. OLG will conduct further consultation on the guidelines in conjunction with the proposed comprehensive spending review model.

Comprehensive Spending Review model

The EAP were provided an overview of the proposed introduction of a comprehensive spending review model that councils will follow prior to submitting an application for an increase to rates. The EAP discussed the importance of looking at all options and alternatives before seeking increase in rates income. Consultation and communication with the community is a key feature throughout the proposed model. The roles of the Council, Councillors and IPART are to be further clarified as further development of the model occurs. OLG will conduct further consultation on the model in conjunction with the Special Variations guidelines.

Rating reforms

The EAP continued to discuss potential reforms for the current rating options available to councils. This discussion is not designed to increase the income from rates, rather to provide a more equitable distribution of rating treatments. The EAP discussed the impact of alternative housing options on infrastructure requirements and demand. Discussion highlighted the importance for council to have flexibility, and make adjustments in consultation with their community. OLG will continue exploring the issues being faced by councils and continue our discussions with the EAP.

Long-term Financial Planning and Integrated Planning and Reporting

OLG presented the panel with a series of questions from the Hon. Minister Hoenig relating to these reports and the Panel requested OLG seek additional feedback from a selection of

councils prior to drafting a response to the Minister. OLG presented the draft response taking into consideration the feedback provided, which was generally positive and supportive of the current reporting structure. The response will be finalised and provided to the Minister.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the EAP is scheduled to be held 23 October 2026.