

Submission on Rockdale City Council's SRV Application 2014

There are several major issues regarding the SRV application prepared by Rockdale City Council. It is very disappointing to see and read a below average standard application from a grass root public service.

The major issues include:

1. 2014 SRV application and related documents are not on Council's website. Community, residents and ratepayer have to get the information from IPART website. This demonstrates Council is lacking in accountability and transparency. The IPART Application Part B, pg 3 clearly states that Council's should also post the application on their website.
2. The impact of rate increase and community capacity to pay – Council has failed to justice in their application the impact on rate increase on the ratepayers and their capacity to pay. Most of the newspapers articles included in this application indicate that community is not willing to pay because they don't have the capacity to pay the additional rate increase. The application includes lots of assumptions and no factual or evidence base documentations.
3. The application and related documents includes a lots of information from 2013 SRV application – why?
4. Why the 2014 application states that it has received positive feedback from the community? Why Council is misleading the community and IPART? - The 2014 SRV Community Engagement report clearly states that Council has received a clear message from the community – NO SUPPORT to rate increase.
5. The application states that Council is going to review the Delivery Program 2015/2016 (pg 12), this contradicts the IPR requirements. The Delivery Program is a 4 year adopted document and was developed with the community and partners. It is Council and Councilors' commitment to meet the delivery program through operational plan. Will IPART report the assertion made by the Council in this 2014 SRV application to the Department of Local Government?
6. The Community Engagement activities for 2014 SRV application focused on "Informing the community" rather than "Involving the community", this does not seems correct especially when Council is proposing of increasing the rates. Also it is worth noting that 2013 SRV application included much more community engagement activities specially focusing on identifying community needs and support for the one year rate increase.

With some of the facts and issues outlined above, there is no doubt that that IPART should refuse Rockdale City Council's 2014 SRV application. Also recommendations could be to the Department of Local Government to have a closer review on Rockdale City Council's IPR requirements, associated progress reports on actual delivering of the services to the community, and reporting back to the community that demonstrates accountability, transparency and leadership.