

**CORPORATE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**ATTACHMENT A**

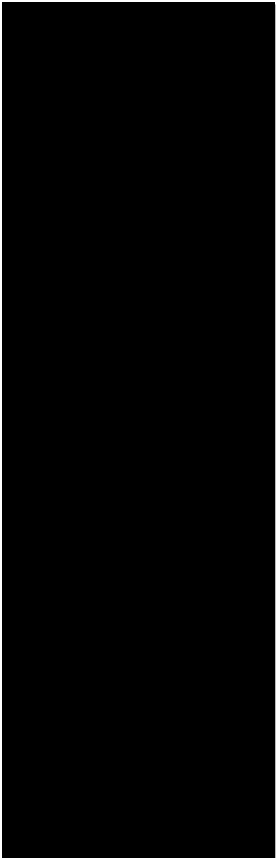
**CCD - SPECIAL RATE VARIATION  
TO IPART**

**ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING**


**8 DECEMBER 2015**

*Note: Blank pages have been removed*

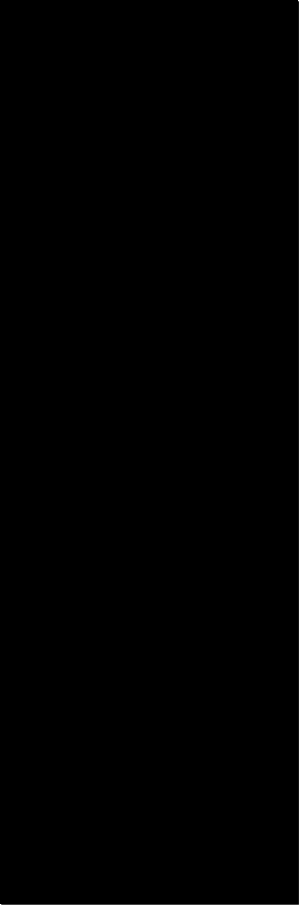
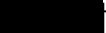
## SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED ON SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL FOR 2016/2017

Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	✓	The SRV is very acceptable, and in fact should be implemented to ensure that the services which Council proposes can proceed. I urge Council to proceed with the very modest SRV levies.
	✓	Supporting the SRV - customer called call centre to advise support for the rate rise. Customer was elderly and did not have an email address.  Good afternoon, we are rate payers in the area. Have you published specifically what cost savings and efficiency improvements you have achieved in the last year? How much extra money are you asking for and how do the savings compare? How much extra money has been budgeted for increases in wages and salaries ? We would like to be assured that genuine and substantial savings are being made and that this type of increase does not become the norm. Thank you,
	×	I would just like to register my objection to the above proposal. As a business owner who pays some \$8500 annually in business rates and another \$1500+ in residential rates, I feel that adding the impost of a further \$2000 per annum in four years time is getting beyond the pale. If Council needs to raise some real money, it's time to consider developing Cape Hawke and surrounds further and allowing some more development out there, especially up near the lookout which has become an eyesore swamped in overgrown vegetation. There are vast areas south of Forster leading to Pacific Palms that could be cleared and sold as residential blocks, raising millions for Council.  I would like to know of any fee relief for owners of non urban land at Norm Arm Cove. We have been trying to sell two blocks of land in North Arm Cove for 3 years and without success and the cost of the ongoing rates are almost more than the cost of the land. Now the council are suggesting an increase? A full investigation on the fairness and feasibility of your rates at North Arm Cove needs to take place. Please contact me to discuss.
	×	Our rates are already in line with those we pay to other councils. I think other options need to be explored. I am not in favour of paying more rates. Perhaps efficiencies can be found by enlarging the council area through amalgamation / review non essential services / alternate road funding from state government / seal the Seal Rocks road to decrease ongoing maintenance.
	×	My concern is that I live in Green Point and fail to see that any work has been done in this area, I have no objection to rate increase if some of my contribution is spent in my area and not always in the inner Forster area. The avenue I live in has no street curbing or proper drainage, but I am asked to pay the same rates as the people who do have those facilities. Of note is the Lakes Way between Forster Keys and Green Point turn off there are many holes in the road which are not being repaired properly which is a complete waste of money and bad management of a ongoing and expensive problem,
		I suggest that the Proposed SRV increases by 1.25 per year for four years INCLUDING THE FIRST YEAR.

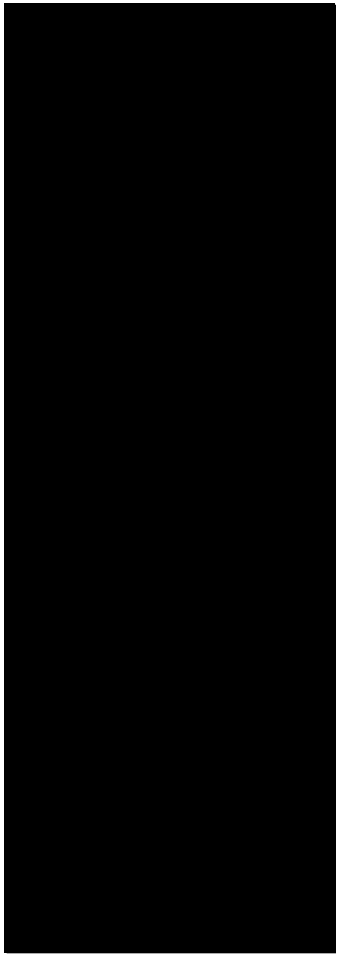
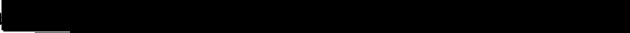

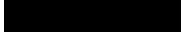
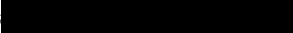

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	X	Congratulations of gaining a fit for the future accreditation, comparing councils I believe Great Lakes to be up there with the best. However I am not sure I agree with the process of setting rates on the basis of "you told us what you want". I know only a small percentage of rate payers respond to surveys so the concept is not really accurate. I am not sure why roads tends to always be number one priority on constituents agenda. The engineering in modern cars and the trend to SUV/4WD vehicles should reverse the need for better roads, especially unsealed rural roads. Roads are really not that important compared to health and education. I cannot support the SRV purely on financial grounds, I am a superannuant income increase based solely on CPI. Cash rate in Australia is 2%, inflation 1.5%, CPI (all groups) 1.5%. Even if rates are set at the assumed pegged limit of 3% it is above all the indicators so the SRV is way over the top. My view is to abandon the SRV until rates improve so as not to disadvantage the many constituents on fixed income. Keep up the good work at least Great Lakes hasn't followed Taree with their Open Space Improvement Plan, selling parks!
	X	I hereby object to the SRV Proposal to increase the Council Rate beyond the Rate peg increase set by IPART. The reason for objection is, as I do not see any visible development action undertaken by the Council in my area over the years..
	✓	Hi, I agree with the additional SRV levy outlined in the November newsletter. Keep up the good work especially around rural roads. Though I'm wondering though why separate postage was necessary when it could have been sent with a rates notice? Many thanks
	✓	I would like to say that I support the proposed rate variation proposal.
	X	Hi there, Can someone in your office explain to me, why if I purchased a block of land 33 years ago which to this day remains zoned farmland why my rates have increased to the ridiculous amount they are now? I don't receive any services because I'm not allowed to build, so all I'm doing is making it cheaper for others or just filling the council coffers, as new playgrounds or roads, waste management or anything else the council supplies doesn't apply to me! I look forward with anticipation in receiving an answer. Regards
	X	Totally against any Special Rate Variation as rates are now very costly and any additional amount would cause difficulty to us as retirees.
	X	Attn. Mr Handford This is a dishonest document as you have not disclosed the fact that you are already getting a rate increment above the standard rate. I trust there will be major opposition to another sneaky rate rise.
	X	I am against this Proposal for the following reasons. 1. Once again Council has taken a simplistic and lazy way to justify rate increase until 2019/20. 2. A Rate Peg increase of 3% is currently far above CPI. 3. What has Council done to increase Productivity and Efficient Work Practices within Council? 4. Rate Payers are currently subsidising the Tourist Industry with upgrading work to Facilities in the Council Area. Once again Council has decided to shift the burden onto Ratepayers, which could be rectified by better and efficient management by Council of its already substantial resources.

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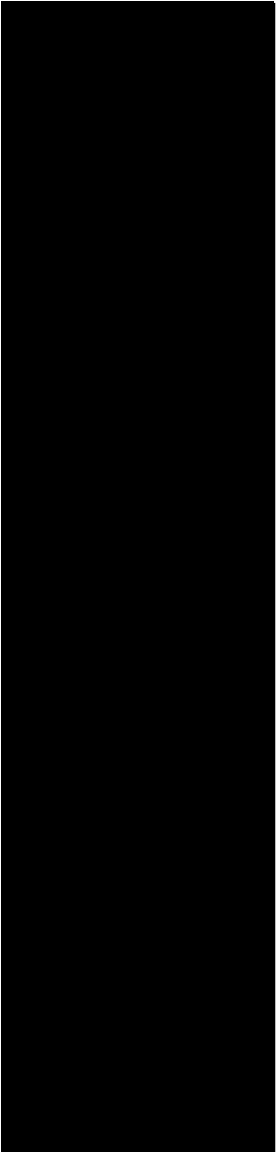


Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	X	This proposal by council is nothing short of a shambolic disgrace. We have had a \$270 increase in our rates this year and our roadway in  Tuncurry which was finally resurfaced after 25 years was covered in 10mm blue metal which most of is now in the gutter or filling the stormwater pits as it just breaks away when cars turn their wheels on it. Having worked in construction my entire life, I can tell you that it is with out a doubt the worst bit of public works I have ever had the misfortune to witness, & considering the amount of traffic this street gets its no wonder all the local people are shaking their heads in amazement as the council completely rebuilt Parkes st & resurfaced it with ashfelt & now council is asking for 21% extra of our hard earned savings. One can only wonder how much extra we will have to pay when Great Lakes shire takes over Gloucester shire, yours
	X	We have owned land in your council area for over 30 years and STILL cannot use it. Why would we want to pay extra rates??
	X	I am totally against any increase in my rates.What does the council do in The Tea Gardens area that benefits the that community?
	X	The recent debacle when council damaged and then recommended that the Coral trees be replaced is a perfect example of your incompetence and dismal mismanagement of the rates we already pay.The minute amount of money you spend in the TeaGardens area shades to nothing when we look at the expensive upgrades happening in other areas such as Forster/Tuncurry.If most of us in the Tea Gardens area had our way we would sack the present Council and re elect competent and altruistic representatives who have the welfare and development of the whole Great Lakes council area at heart rather than the usual favoured areas.
	X	Rates are already very high. Rate peg of 3% will more than take care of the increase of your costs due to inflation. If you really become more efficient you shouldn't need more money to do more. "Variation" is not specific enough, SRV should be called SRI - Increase not Variation.
	X	I think council rates are already very expensive compared to other councils. Also we have to pay water as an extra account. I think council needs to look at how it operates and see where savings can be made before increasing rates or reducing services.
	X	Not an even playing field [our rates are around \$2500 after the pension discount] "we are feeling the pinch" my wife & I ARE HOPING THE PROPOSED HIKE WILL BE "KNOCKED BACK" a possible increase in the GST is looming, when it happens, will be the straw that breaks the camels back, for most of us old folk...
	X	I agree that rate increases are needed to keep abreast of the repairs & maintenance of council infrastructure, particularly rural roads, and support the proposed increases. However, this support is conditional on concerted efforts made to reduce waste, overpayment and overstaffing on council projects. The age old comments about the number of people needed to fill a pot hole (or lean on a shovel) unfortunately still apply. A commercial for profit business (which is what the council essentially is - profit is for ratepayers) would not put up with the perceived waste, inefficiencies, unproductive time and over quoting for council projects.

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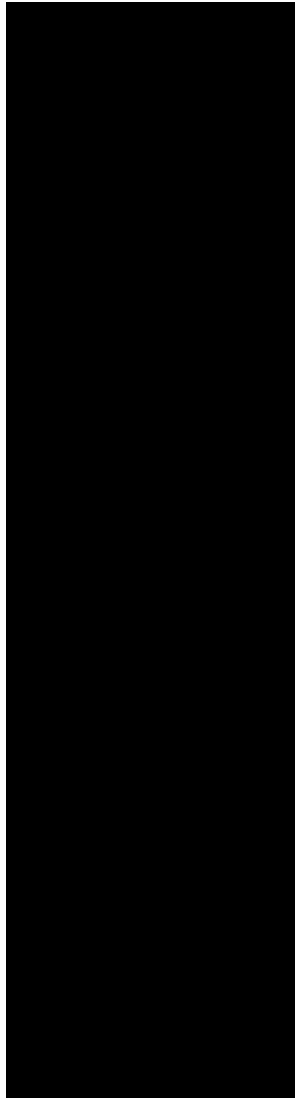
Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	X	you've got to be kidding , a rate increase! I live in  Wootton has no council facilities of any kind!! You DO NOT maintain  you DO NOT open the toilets in our local park at coolongolook, you do not clean up the park, you DO NOT provide a decent rubbish service down our road, You DO charge us for on site sewerage management...even though we do not have a toilet, How about the rates of our area go toward the services in our area instead of to facilities 50 Kms away that we do not use! The people of these areas should pay, Jack up the rates of all the tourist parks and accommodation, Instead of hitting up the battlers on a single low income! This is appalling!
	X	Sir Madam I have noticed the improvements to the Pebbly Beach playground and in a past time the improvement to the Tuncurry playground. There are no children's playgrounds that I know of south of Stocklands. Would the council consider a playground at the keys launch ramp area or even along my street of  The reserves are well used by both adults and children alike and I will admit that my grandchildren would be very happy if the decision was reversed I Understand that the residents were asked about playgrounds in the past and the locals decided against. I'm sure the children, who do not get to have a say, would appreciate if this area was reconsidered . Regards 
	X	Council rates in Forster are higher than similar councils in Australia. The number of employees appears too high as we see them around the town doing next to nothing. Council needs to relocate most of its employees to the industrial estate not in buildings opposite Stocklands. How disappointing that again council has to ask for additional money instead of matching expenditure with income.
	X	The rates increased this year by approx \$300. Stop charging extra. Totally disagree with the proposed rate variation.
	X	I do not support the councils proposed special rate variation (SRV). My property has been devalued this financial year which has seen a drop in my annual council rates, this is welcome relief following years of repeated increases and I will not voluntarily increase my payments to pay for assets that do not concern me. The council does next to nothing for the residents of Nerong, we have 60+ year old residents maintaining the parks as the council doesn't and I can't even remember the last time the street guttering was cleared. If the council cannot adequately manage their budget to maintain their assets then perhaps more competent council members should be elected.
	X	I've read your proposal and given it some thought. Firstly, I appreciate your proactive approach in dealing with the situation of raising more funds for our community. There is no doubt this is an important matter to address if we are to build a sustainable community for future generations. On this note, my interpretation of the communities request for a more efficient council is certainly not about increasing rates to fund these initiatives, but rather look for ways to drive cost efficiency in what you do today and re-distribute the necessary funds to areas in need of attention. My background is I own a parcel of land in the North Arm Cove region. My husband bought this land over 30 years ago now with the promise of future development opportunities. Unfortunately, he passed away  never realising this ambition. I share this to make a recommendation. If only you can re-zone the North Arm Cove region as residential, this is the quickest way to raise funds.



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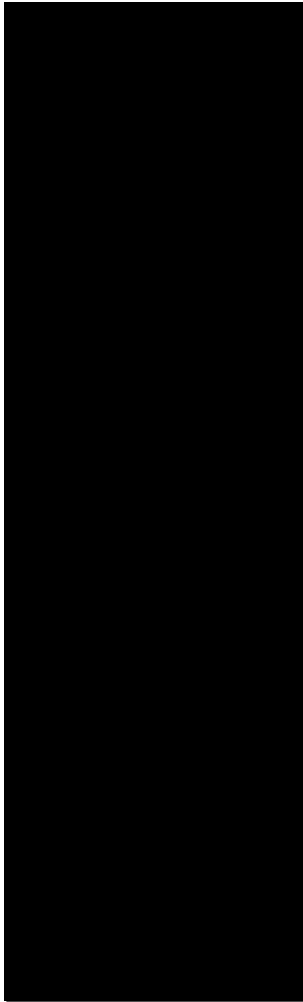


Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	X	Glenn Handford, I appreciate the time and effort you made in coming to Stroud and speaking about the many issues facing Great Lakes Council including the need for Special Rate Variation. While I understand that the SRV would be small dollars to those working full time or perhaps the more well off self funded retirees, I am unsure if the low income earner, general pensioner or unemployed would not be placed in an even more financially stressed situation. While the SRV appears to be at an affordable level to Council, when you add in the extortionist (compared with Hunter Water) rates applied by Mid Coast Water or the ever increasing costs of electricity, gas, petrol, medical, property and vehicle maintenance/insurances there comes a point in time when a great number of your constituents are going without necessities in order to live within their means. For Example, if a rate payer living on either a fortnightly pension, low income wage or unemployment benefit were to be living in an area serviced by Mid Coast Water, they would have to set aside on average \$93 of each fortnightly payment. Now add in those other costs and the disposable income becomes completely disposed of very rapidly! What do you go without? I recommend that Council concentrate on resident safety as a priority, and, anything outside that criteria such as playgrounds, swimming pools and recreational facilities etc. be dealt with as funds become available. Either that or give low income earners greater discounts to soften the financial blow.
	X	Dear Sir/Madam My land is  I cannot possibly pay a rate increase. My land has been rezoned as farming only. I cannot build on it, I cannot sell it and after paying rates for some 45years (originally intended for retirement) my investment has gone bust You honestly cannot expect me to pay an increase in rates. Please advise what benefit you propose for a landowner such as myself Kind Regards
	X	I must live within my means and therefore must manage my expenditure efficiently to suit my needs within my budget. I am unable to increase my income by asking for more and do not accept that council should be able to increase its income by an increase in rates with a SRV. Council gets increased income as a result of increases in property values and should be required to live within the 3% rate peg increase. Many residents do not get any increase and many are facing income decreases.
	X	Dear Sir, Quite simple really, just like our Business, if you don't have the money, you can't spend it!!! Councils have a responsibility to provide essential services first and after this allocate funds to non-essential services. Productivity and commercial working hours have not been addressed to the point that Council is competitive with Private Enterprise. As a result, there is no room for a spend increase. The case has not been proven by Council or it's Employees. Thank you.
	X	Good evening, I am writing to you in response to your invitation to provide feedback regarding the proposed SRV rate increase. I strongly oppose the proposed increase as the land my sister and I own at North Arm Cove has not had any (or little) benefit, from Council, commensurate with the rates we paid over the previous year. Wages will not increase by 6.5% in the coming year and yet you want to increase the rates by that amount. As a retiree my superannuation pension will not increase by anywhere near 6.5% next year. Even the 4.25% increases in the ensuing years will not be covered by any increase in my pension. The land at North Arm Cove being situated at the southern boundary seems to be at the forgotten end of the LGA. Perhaps if the land was rezoned from 'Farmland' to normal building blocks then I would be inclined to favourably consider the proposed rate increase. Regards,
	X	Written Submission - North Arm Cove owner 

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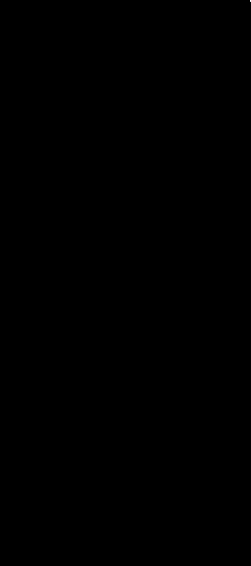
Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	X	Hi, After reading the Special Edition Newsletter regarding the SRV increase. I note that the annual increase is 3%. Does the 3% annual increase apply to the annual payment of each rate holder (eg : average payment \$1850 x 3% = \$55.50) or is it pegged at \$30.00 per rate holder. ????? I also note that the SRV increase for 2016/2017 is 6.5%. Does the 6.5% for the first year apply to the annual payment of each rate holder (eg: average payment \$1850 x 6.5% = \$120.25) or is it pegged at \$65.00 per rate holder.???? As you can see the increase almost doubles to \$64.75 which is based on the average payment of \$1850. (this figure is more inline with the normal rate payable by residents rather than the base rate of \$1000.) Council has used the lowest Rate Peg as possible to win over the public..(we are not stupid). Please clarify that " the annual increase due to the SRV proposal " is a pegged amount for each ratepayer, and NOT a percentage of each rate payment. I agree to pay the stated increase of \$35.00, \$14.36, \$15.35, \$16.41, over the four years, provided that all rate payers pay the same amount. I have been a resident in Great Lakes for over 35years and i know a large number of residents in the outer parts of the shire that pay well over \$1650pa rates (my rates are \$1850 and i live at Nabiac in the outer areas. The average annual rate would well exceed \$1650pa. Therefore to use a base rate of \$1000 to apply the formula is absurd and misleading the public. The annual increases shown in the example needs to be pegged at a fixed rate for all residents, not based on a percentage of the rate paid by each ratepayer. To pay on a percentage of the rate payable by each property holder would be not acceptable. Please clarify that the SRV increase would be pegged at \$35.00, \$14.36, \$15.35, \$16.41 over the four years and NOT based on a percentage of each rate paid. A concerned & unhappy ratepayer.
	X	We strongly object to this proposal and only accept the Rate peg increase. Not only that the rates at Forster are far higher than other council areas. Our main residence is in Ku-Ring-gai council. For a similar house we paid \$2097 in rates this year. In Forster we paid \$3691 and you are saying this will increase to \$4430. This is outrageous and will discourage people from investing the area. In addition to revising the SRV proposal we request you also consider the distribution of costs to ratepayers.
	X	I do not support the special rate increase. It is a substantial increase and I think council should use the current rates more effectively. Once this increase is added to rates it will not be taken off after the 5 year period and we will be paying this large increase forever. I vote no to the SRV
	X	I don't believe we need to increase the rate payment above the IPART rate increase. I believe we could keep increasing rates beyond 4 years as there will always be things people want improved. I actually think things are progressing under current funding.
	X	Council rates are already quite high as they are particularly for retirees. Is there a way to save more money in order to decrease the proposed rate increases. For example we keep receiving your glossy full colour newsletter, a format which not only does not add much value vs. a simple black and white copy but also seems somewhat anachronistic in this virtual world. Same goes for rate notices, there may be substantial savings using paperless communications for rate payers who have access to email, internet, Facebook etc.
	X	I do NOT support the SRV proposal, council should live within its means, and not seek special rate rises every year or so. For example, I think Council should stop wasting money repeatedly replanting median strips, with the same plants over and over, what a waste of money.




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	X	I do not feel the rate payers want or need the added rate increase, as many are in the same position as myself living in outlying areas we do not benefit from the proposed council cosmetic works, and the council would benefit from more stringent housekeeping to rein in the budget rather than milking the ratepayer. If works such as road works were attended to properly and not in haphazard way then return maintenance would not be needed, and longterm savings made.
	X	We DO NOT agree with the proposed SRV increase.
	X	If it is insisted to increase rates for infrastructure improvements, I would insist on replacing and re building our infrastructure using modern technology, products and techniques. For example Coral Ave, Tuncurry was recently re surfaced. Are you serious? Is that what you think a road should look like in these modern times? Looks like you have just thrown down tar and pebbles. Having our streets looking like that will send the area backwards a few decades, even back then I'm sure roads were built better. Also, is Black Head road in your area? With all the up coming development there I would suggest the entire length be re done, its pretty run down.
	✓	I approve the 4 year SRV proposal council has put forward.
	X	To Councilor Glenn Hanford General Manager I appreciate that councils are required to listen to community needs and expectations. However I find it difficult to accept that property holders in the bush block area of North Arm Cove are expected to incur the rate increases proposed, as set out in the SRV over the next 5years. Land holders in this area have been advised by both Council and the NSW Government, land in this area will not be developed in the foreseeable future. Land in this area was sold, on the assurance of the then developer, it would be rezoned for residential development in the near future. This rezoning is never apparently likely to happen. I therefor feel, it is not justified that property owners in the North Arm Cove bush block area be expected to subsidise the SRV development of the Great Lakes Area.
	X	I don't think you have justified a special rate rise. You quote the study performed by Prof. Allan, who acknowledged a major flaw in his presentation. There is no mention of gains in efficiency by Council, yet I am sure your number of employees has increased. Wastage is a key point with poor quality road maintenance and project overspending (eg stormwater drain between   Bad supervision of Council workers is obvious when observing idle employees. The facile solution of levying ratepayers is unacceptable.
	X	Re 6% rate increase. Doesn't matter what anyone votes. The State Government will only allow a 3% rate increase. In any case we vote against it.
	X	I do not agree with the increase to our rates particularly before the amalgamation of councils. Our rates are pegged for a particular reason by our government to prevent councils gauging ratepayers. We currently pay high rates and feel the council needs to use these monies more wisely.
	✓	I don't have any objection to the proposed rate increases over 4 years. I would like to see an improvement to public toilets in Forster.




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	×	If a ratepayer wants to live above his means he borrows money and pays the loan back with interest. Council's should do the same. Your proposal is a propaganda campaign designed to take money in advance from rate payers, many of whom are struggling. Ratepayers may have indicated that they want better roads and services but how many indicated that it all has to be done in a rush? "Rome wasn't built in a day." I would also like to add that, in my opinion, the sealed pathway along Pebbly Beach was an unnecessary waste of funds.
	✓	Please accept this email in support of the Council's SRV proposal for a moderate SRV over four years.
	×	I do not wish the rate variation to go ahead. Please cut library services before this comes in Or have volunteers run the library like is done at pacific palms
	×	We have owned a property zoned rural in North Arm Cove for many years now. After being duped by the scammers who sold the land to us many years ago, paying rates over the years to a council that has allowed the area to sink into complete disrepair continues to rub salt into the wound annually. I cannot even identify my land without a surveyor anymore nor can it be accessed with a 4WD. What do the residents of North Arm Cove say to the SRV?? A big fat NO to the SRV. A big fat NO for NAC residents' rates being solely used to benefit and subsidise development of other areas in the SHIRE. A big fat YES to the council acknowledging their neglect of the NAC area and providing residents of NAC an exemption from the SRV and even a discounted rate. Thankyou
	✓	Good Morning, I agree with your proposal to spread the cost of the increases, but please make every effort to stop ALL waste of money by Council. It gets more expensive for all of us to live on this planet every day. I would like to point who ever designed and proof read your coloured SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER, needs to heed to waste message as on page 2 the playground pictures do not agree with the caption. Forster was built on the tourist dollar, and even though many residents detest the tourist crowds at Christmas the money brought to the area is needed. Travel costs to local overseas countries is always reducing, yet Forster real estate companies continue to raise the costs of the accommodation, which turns people of a holiday at Forster and to cheaper flying holidays to local overseas destination. Keep up your good work in the area.

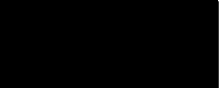

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	X	Thank you for the Special Edition Newsletter outlining the case for an SRV. My comments and views are outlined below; 1. The point of a rate cap is to prevent councils from making excessive demands on ratepayers who have to pay annual rates. The rate cap is a maximum amount and not a target for councils to work towards. Smaller increases should be the aim. 2. Whilst the ratepayers have aspirations and expectations from its council this should not be seen as an opportunity for the council to work beyond its means and annual revenue. We all have wish lists and must manage our own finances accordingly. There is nobody to bankroll or bail out individuals if they overspend their budget. If goods in the supermarkets increase in price the buyers have a choice to leave the item on the shelf. Ratepayers do not have a choice. 3. Whilst your news letter states that small rates increases over a four year period will have less impact on households with fixed incomes the fact remains that fixed income households do not have the capacity to keep finding additional payments. Proposed rate increases are amortised annually such that the SRV increase will be 20.66% as opposed to the rate pegged value of 12.55% over the four year period. The news letter states that the effect of the SRV is an additional 8.11% spread over four years, however, as the SRV is amortised the increase is payable in perpetuity. Then of course beyond 2020 there will be further annual rate increases. 4. Finally, I am sceptical about the whole process as it seems flawed. Whilst there appears to be a good consultation with ratepayers there does not appear to be a mechanism for ratepayers to veto or vote against the SRV. Without the mechanism for ratepayers to enforce the rate cap and veto the SRV then I can only assume that the SRV is already a done deal and will go ahead regardless. Having outlined the above, in my view Forster has one of the better councils in the region. My wife and I regularly walk around the town and see the improvements that the council is making and it is to be congratulated, however, it must operate within good financial governance. Thank you and best regards,
	✓	I favour increasing the Council revenue as per the SRV increase proposal. The present position is unworkable with rates being held at impracticably low levels by reason of the need to secure State approval for significant increases. This is quite undemocratic ,removing the final say from the ratepayers as electors and is, I believe, unique to NSW. Plainly further revenue is needed to allow Council to fulfill community expectations and to discharge additional burdens placed on it by State legislation.
	✓	We are in support of the Council's SRV increase. Regards
	X	Now is not the time to be using rate payers as bottomless pits of money. The amount of increase proposed is quite outrageous. Any increase at the moment should be pegged to NO MORE than the official inflation rate which is currently much less than the IPART amount of 3%. Instead of keep blaming the rate payers for wanting those amenities that the council is supposed to provide within its very large monies collected from ratepayers. Now is the time to be applying dividend returns to each of councils departments, thus helping to make council an efficient organisation rather than an organisation that thinks it should make ratepayers pay for the councils inefficiencies.
	X	Hi, I sympathise with Council's need for greater funds, however I don't believe the current budget distribution is equitable. It seems that the villages (Smiths Lake) receive minimal funding whilst Forster may receive more than a fair share. Eg unpaved roads and gutters, blocked drains from leaves (4th Ridge Rd), unpoliced 4wd beach access etc. I'm therefore against paying higher rates when the funds raised may not benefit the location where they are raised. Incidentally, the current rates are well above Sydney rates.


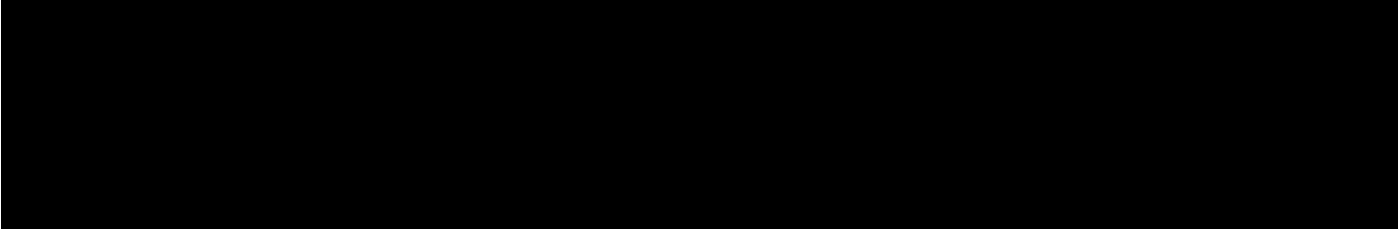

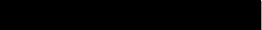

## SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED ON SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL FOR 2016/2017

Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	X	I have lived in the Great Lake area for 12 years, in that time I have seen the council tar the main road, then dig it up and retar it, and rearrange it several times, it has had traffic lights installed and removed them put in roundabouts and removed them. This was on going for years. I live on Willina Rd, it had 4k of dirt road the day I bought it and still has that 4k of dirt road, the council has retarred the already tarred bits of Willina Road but the 4k of goat track dirt road, is lucky if it gets graded. As far as I can see Great lakes council can only tar and retar tarred roads. I have seen nothing to account for the money we already pay in rates. I certainly am not interested seeing Forster's roads retarred with more of my rate money.
	✓	I understand that Great Lakes Council requires additional funds via a SRV , in order to maintain our existing community assets. The SRV will also allow for new community assets and infrastructure to be built. Council are doing all they can to ensure our financial future. I support the SRV and ask Council to continue consulting and listening to the Community .
	X	As a struggling ratepayereading, the proposal to hike rates once again totally floors me. Here we have an economy that is struggling,unemployment is high,investment is low and the Federal Government is seeking ways to extract more money from us to rectify the debt this country is in. Now we have GLC,who have received enormous increases over the last 2 decades,putting their hand out for more.The table on page 4 of the Newsletter,indicates how the increase will affect ratepayers, based on \$1000. Who pays only \$1000. My rates are over \$2000.The rate peg shown 3% is well above the CPI, running at around 2%. That figure in itself indicates a rip-off. I am a self-funded retiree and my income is fixed and when adjusted,it is based on the CPI.GLC must realise that we have not a bottomless pit of money. GLC should practice what the Federal Govt. has been spruiking and live within your means. I am absolutely fed up with GLC out for a cash grab,each time the last grab expires.
	X	Written submission - North Arm Cove owner 
	X	Regarding the rate increase option that is being proposed. Our property :  As We already have a special levy on our rates for our property at Winda Woppa, I totally reject this idea of having an above government recommended rate increase. We pay proportionately higher rates than most other areas in the Great Lakes Shire, and thus, we would pay a proportionately higher increase under this SRV proposed idea. I SAY NO TO ANY INCREASE OTHER THAN THE MINIMUM STATE GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDED INCREASE.
	X	I think the rates we pay here at Coomba are already too high for what is provided here. I believe the community does more for the area. Perhaps council needs to find other ways to save money and not waste it on glossy brochures that end up in the bin!

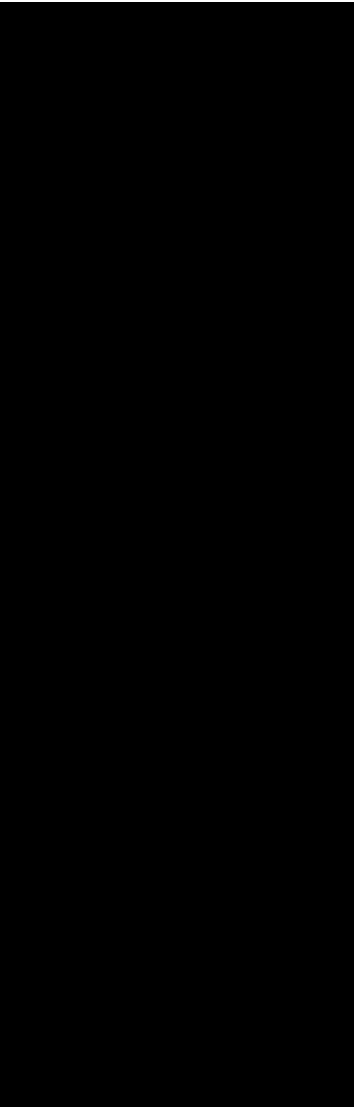
## SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED ON SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL FOR 2016/2017

Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	X	<p>In relation to a proposed Special Rate Variation 1. 7 months ago I submitted a communication regarding the SRV. To date, the reply has been, that Council will consider it. At a meeting at Tea Gardens recently that was advertised in an expensively produced newsletter, (the meeting was not focused on the SRV despite the newsletter). It was focused on local community issues. I asked any councillors present to raise their hands if they supported the special rate variation. All raised their hands. 5 in total. I have had no response since 7 months ago to the issues that I raised. They are key to not go ahead based on the reasons given by Council for a SRV. No councillor has replied to me. No councillor appears to be concerned about the matters raised. They appear to have been hypnotised to support a SRV. 2. As some people at the meeting pointed out, it would appear that Council is not interested in community feedback. That if it is ignored it will go away. It would appear that council will do what it wants, and the issue of community consultation is one of saying what council will do, then denigrating or ignoring anyone who expresses a dissenting opinion. Disappointing. 3. This same scenario, in relation to taking on board community concerns regarding the SRV, (at Forster the next day), that projects that Council take on being wasteful and what some in the council call "aspirational" projects, was dismissed. Councillors, please do not apply to Ipart for a special rate variation. Please consider ways and means to achieve the outcomes, or change the outcomes for Council to deliver in accordance with the capacity of the ratepayers to pay. This appears to be another trick by council to ensure any correspondence relating to objections about the SRV are not recorded. Nowhere in the newsletter that I can see does it say there are "conditions" on "have your say".</p> <p>My address is </p> <p>I will be advising the Great Lakes advocate to communicate this latest trick to people living in the council area.</p> <p>Please advise what other tricks council are using</p>

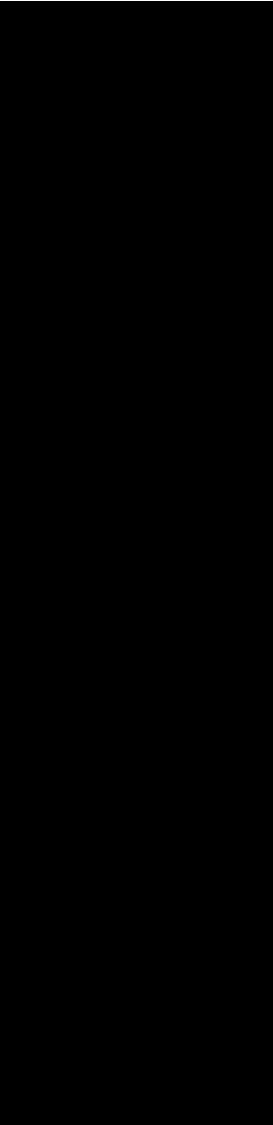

# SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED ON SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL FOR 2016/2017

Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	X	<p>First of all it is a rate increase proposal, lets be straight to the point and clear about this. Its like you are treating us like children calling it a special rate variation proposal. Anyway I have read your expensive colourful brochure on your srv and I find it disgusting.</p>  <p>This is just one example of many like this I have seen of GLC council working in the public. I could go on with more examples but you will either get it and advise someone with sway and intelligence in council or not so that is my single example. Elaborating on this, of all the extremely inefficiently completed jobs I have consistently seen GLC carry out I have never seen a private sector company operate like this. WHY? Because they can if they want to survive - they must be competitive and efficient in the market place. Based on my example above the reality is you could have had 2 people to the job not 8. So maybe cull 75% percent of your workers, and contract the private sector to carry out more works. You will save money and you will get a more efficient and professional job. Whats more, there will be more money left circulating in the local economy by the increased private sector contracts so we will all win. As it is despite your external consultants and flashy brochures your efficiency doesnt even come close to the standards of efficiency of good private sector operations which have to be professional and lean to survive. Because you lack competition and just milk more from your constituents rather than genuinely improve yourselves. Even in many cases convincing your selves this isnt the case. Lastly please consider the flow on of all that money being directed away from the private sector and our local economy to go to your Special Rate Increase. All that money then cant be spent in private business that you want to take more and more from. The truth is despite your best intentions, through your righteous ignorance you would be crippling the local economy and putting breaks on by your rate rise and bringing about a big missallocation of resources in the Great Lakes. I remind you here of your GLC road side team in my example above. The truth is it is a disgusting proposal. Tighten your own belts, its hard enough to keep up with inflation etc as it is for working people in the private sector and you want to direct all this money away from them directly through a rate rise and indirectly by misallocating it to your grossly inefficient teams. Just Disgusting.  Rate Payer</p>
	X	Written Submission 
	X	Written Submission 

## SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED ON SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL FOR 2016/2017

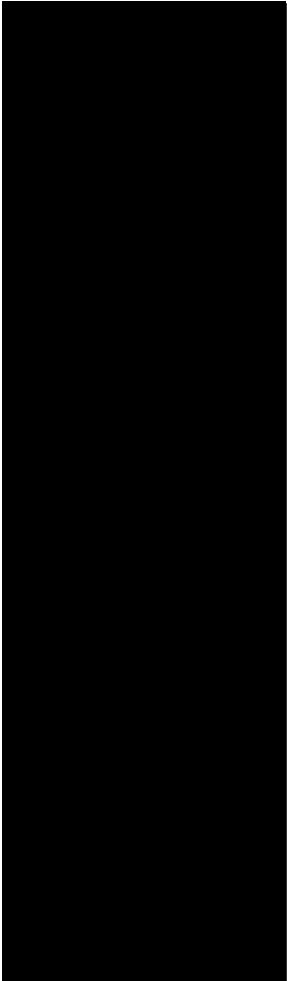
Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	X	We strongly object to yet another rate variation increase . We feel the council should look at utilising the revenue received and not continually applying for rate increases to cover waste and inefficiencies and speculating with council funds in things they have no expertise in or in some cases firm proposals . The level of rates we currently pay are way in excess of most council areas , since owning property in the area it seems to have become the norm to continue to apply increase after increase . Our land and property value have decreased substantially mainly due to council policy with questionable climate change agenda and yet our rates continue to increase . Many of the roads council do major work on , require continual attention , we suggest the work be carried out to a more professional standard . Summing up we believe it's time for council to take a good look at its expenditure before again asking for approval to collect and waste more ratepayers money . A good look at a possible merger to absorb some fixed cost is also thought worthwhile as well
	X	The General Manager, & all Council members I am responding to your recent newsletter regarding the above proposed SRV. I <b>hope that you will seriously take the time to hear my concerns and not dismiss them as irrelevant.</b> I would like to <b>strongly object</b> to this proposal, as I think it very <b>unjust</b> and <b>unnecessary</b> . As a resident here for the past years, I have been tracking the costs incurred for services annually, and each year they are increasing at such a rate it will soon be so expensive that a lot of people will not be able to afford to live here anymore. Where will it end (if ever)?!, as at this rate it won't be too long before Council rates are so exorbitantly high it will be crippling our wonderful community financially. For people (such as yourselves) who are employed and earn a regular income, at least you might be able to cover the ongoing increases without too much sacrifice; however, for older seniors, pensioners and retirees who do not have fixed incomes it is becoming increasingly difficult to cover these increases. I, personally, am finding it very hard to live a simple, reasonable quality of life in Forster and, like many others, am becoming more and more anxious and stressed about how we are going to manage to cover the continual extra rises in the cost of living. Heaven help us if the GST is increased as well!!! I believe that the State Government approved rate is adequate, and for Council to, again, suggest a SRV on top, especially the amount that is proposed, is just way too much for ratepayers to have to endure. Given what council has stated: 'that assets have improved and our projected financial modelling shows balanced budgets for the next 10 years', then surely it is not necessary to impose such a <b>harsh</b> SRV. Maybe Council needs to look at themselves as being capable and qualified to responsibly look after/manage financial matters of the Great Lakes, because if they did then, perhaps, without some of the extravagances and extras that Council members enjoy, we might be able to cover the ongoing funding/maintenance/etc of facilities without the extreme increases that are suggested. Please do not lose sight of the fact that <b>people and their lives</b> should come before big business and profits, as we the ratepayers have entrusted Council to look after our best interests, and not be compromised by egos and power. Please, also, remember that Council is not a private business, but it's sole purpose is to manage and provide services to and for it's ratepayers and the environment in which we live. Thank you for the opportunity of being able to express my opinion, and as I feel very passionate about this issue I request that Council consider the matter carefully and take on board my concerns, and those of others who I know feel the same way as I do.
	X	We strongly object to the special rate variation as we are pensioners and already find our council rates quite high - higher than we paid in Newcastle for a larger block and house. I know we are in a semi commercial zone, but we live in a modest cottage. The pensioner rebate doesn't make a big impact on the size of the payments.

## SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED ON SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL FOR 2016/2017

Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	✓	I would like to show my support for the proposed SRV. Although Great Lakes rates are significantly higher than other MNC Council's, I feel we do have good facilities and infrastructure to justify this. In regards to the proposed spend of the additional revenue raised from the increase, I would be particularly happy to see increased expenditure on playgrounds, recreational facilities and amenities, rural road maintenance and pools. I would however like to note an objection to a rate rise being put towards a new roof for the Council Administration building. It is understood that repairs to the existing roof is costly, however current rate revenue should be sufficient to cover this. Great Lakes Council recently purchased a property for \$3 million. If this work is so essential, then I would have thought an investment in existing infrastructure would take priority over purchasing new property.
	X	I refer to the Special Edition Newsletter for November 2015 and the SRV Proposal, I attempted to log on to the online feedback but it is not available? For the last twenty five years of my working life I was a senior executive with a large manufacturing company reporting to a publicly listed company board of directors, for the final thirteen years I was the managing director and my appointment to that position was shortly before the worst recession in sixty years, circa 1990. During the recession our profits before tax remained above industry average according to Dunn & Bradstreet, but was down one-third on average. I conducted a suggestion survey of company employees with a view to eliminating expenses that were not essential, but applying common sense to the elimination list. Savings included purchasing initiatives for factory and office consumables, raw materials, etc. It even involved company motor vehicles being kept for one extra year and/or reaching the higher kilometres of use, 140,000. The vehicles were wholly owned. And we commenced converting new vehicles to LPG fuel, a significant saving after paying for conversion. My point is that regardless of what is being managed, private enterprise or government, there are savings to be made in most operations. If management is being honest to shareholders or ratepayers they will admit this fact and do their very best to address areas of waste. Seeking a way above inflation increase in rates is not acceptable unless there can be a guarantee that ratepayer's monies are being used to drive the best possible outcome or value for money. Without getting into a nit picking exercise, my observations driving regularly around the Great Lakes Council District tell me that there are many areas of savings to be made. Some could be engineering errors of judgement such as the dredging at Tea Gardens a few years ago that was a failure. Roadworks that are in disrepair with a year or two after completion which I suspect is because of cost cutting, quantity instead of top quality works, and I do understand budgeting issues but do not claim to be an expert in road construction. I do have a background in mining and construction machinery in a past working career. At this time I am opposed to "special rate variation" that seems to now be a standard practise by all or most local government areas. As it is with health insurers and many others who seem to forget that their clients are the same who are being asked for more from many sources. And that many or most clients are on wages that have low increase rates or are on fixed incomes as self funded retirees coupled to the rise and fall of the share market and other areas of investment. I understand that the present rate of inflation is two per cent per annum. I also know from personal banking experience that the term deposit rate is not much above the rate of inflation. And rental properties in Forster and Tuncurry are not delivering windfalls either. I urge Council to consider more private enterprise contracting of work and to conducting an annual audit of expenses and costs with a view to becoming as lean as sensibly possible. And then review the need for more revenue.
	X	Written Submission 



# SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED ON SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL FOR 2016/2017

Name	For / Against	Comments / Feedback
	✓	Improvements due to previous rate increases are tangible. Council appears to be responding to the preferences of the community. Council also appears to be improving efficiency. I support the SRV proposal.
	X	I oppose any special rate variation requested by Great Lakes Council for the following reasons. 1. If IPART has assessed council as fit for the future, clearly no special rate rise can be justified to maintain council projects and its fit for the future status. ( if this is not the case clearly council is not fit for future) 2. Lack provision of basic services, council provides no services such as parks, footpaths, swimming pools, halls or other community facilities within 10 km of my home. 3. Council gravel roads are in a poor state and present a significant health hazard to the community from PM 10 and PM 2.5 particle pollution (Refer to Hunter New England Population Health advice on health risks from particle pollution). Nothing is being done or proposed to address this. I ask that the full text of submission be provided to IPART in any application. Thank you
	X	Thank you for allowing me to submit comments in relation to the above proposal. I Am against this proposal for the following reasons. When I first purchased this modest 2br home [REDACTED] I was paying \$600 pa. Through the following years you have asked for and have been granted rise upon rise upon rise upon special rise to a point now that I am now paying \$1,680 pa. You are now crying poor once again and asking the rate payers to pay more so you can employ more people and empire build. How much did it cost to purchase land and build a building for Woolworths in Tuncurry? Never disclosed to rate payers and built may I add after a hefty rate rise was granted to fix roads and maintain assets. I live on a modest DFRDB Navy Pension which is adjusted with the CPI annually and have seen rises as high as 1.5% with the norm being between .3% to .5%. I have to budget accordingly. The council however enjoys rises every year of 3% so you should also budget accordingly but you don't. This SRV Proposal will increase my Rates by \$350 pa to over \$2,000 pa by 2020. You have the hide to call this rise moderate! I call it outrageous and unacceptable. You receive massive grants from both State and Federal Governments but I receive no such favour. You have clearly lost touch with reality and lost the confidence of most of the rate payers in this shire that I have Discussed this matter with. In Short, you simply have to get your act together. Thank You
	X	Written Submission [REDACTED]
	X	Written Submission [REDACTED]
	X	I strongly oppose any increase in our rates which I think are far too high already.
	✓	Written Submission [REDACTED]
	X	Written Submission [REDACTED]

**CORPORATE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**ATTACHMENT B**

**CCD - SPECIAL RATE VARIATION  
TO IPART**

**ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING**

**8 DECEMBER 2015**

The General Manager  
Forster Tuncurry Memorial Services Club Ltd  
PO Box 254  
FORSTER NSW 2428

*Our Reference:*  
*Your Reference:*

*Contact:*  
*Telephone:*

Mr Phil Brennan

20 July 2015

Dear Sir

**Re: Delivery Program / Operational Plan Submission**

I refer to your letter of 15 June 2015 in relation to Council's 2013/2017 Delivery Program / 2015/2016 Operational Plan which was recently on public exhibition. It is noted that your submission related to Council's proposal to make an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a special variation to its general income from 2016/2017.

After considering submissions received within the advertised period Council has adopted the draft Delivery Program / Operational Plan which includes continuing to proceed with the development and refinement of a Special Variation Application to the IPART. That process includes further community engagement and consultation on the proposal prior to a final Council decision on whether to lodge the application.

The matters raised within your submission will be considered in conjunction with the feedback received from the community later this year.

Yours faithfully

**PHIL BRENNAN**  
Manager Corporate Finance & Planning

15 June 2015

Mr G Handford  
General Manager  
Great Lakes Council  
P O Box 450  
**FORSTER NSW 2428**

**Email: [glenn.handford@greatlakes.nsw.gov.au](mailto:glenn.handford@greatlakes.nsw.gov.au)**

Dear Glenn,

Re: Great Lakes Council (GLC) Proposed 8% Rate Increase

I have been directed following the Board's Ordinary Monthly Meeting held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015 to express on their behalf our disappointment and opposition to Great Lakes Council's intention to make application for a further Special Rate Variation of 8% over 4 years.

It was our understanding that when Great Lakes Council applied in 2011 to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) and was successfully granted a rate variation of 8% each year for three years (from 2011/12 to 2013/14) that this was a Special Rate Variation only. It now appears to the Club that these Special Rate Variations are not special at all but are the norm.

It is the Board's view that these continuing rate increases over and above the standard rate pegging are unsustainable and unacceptable to local residents and businesses and need to be seriously reviewed.

It is quite disturbing to read on one hand in recent editions of Great Lakes Council "Communicator" bulletins where Council representatives promote the fact that GLC's financial performance and position is sound and sustainable into the future. This is further highlighted by the NSW Independent Local Government Review Panel who stated in their report "...found the Great Lakes Council was one of 28 larger rural or regional councils that was sustainable into the future". That's terrific news but why then if GLC is considered "Fit for the Future" are local residents and businesses faced with the prospect of another Special Rate Variation of 8% over three years.

In a recent article in the Great Lakes Advocate titled "Forster to get a new library as part of civic precinct" it stated that "Great Lakes Council has voted to begin works on Stage one of Forster's new civic precinct – a \$6 million library

that could be opened in 18 months...." You are telling the rate payers that this Special Rate Variation is required to pay for a back log of infrastructure and on the other hand you are intending to build new infrastructure (re: library) at a cost of \$6 million when the community already has a library. Accepting the fact that you report flooding issues with the existing library facilities, why not fix the flooding problem with an improved roof design and drainage? Continuing on the subject of the library, it is the Club's view that it is time that Council reviewed its library budget and introduced a minimum \$1 Gold Coin donation on all library users to meet such repairs and ongoing operating costs.

It is not economically and morally justifiable to continue to heavily subsidise one segment of community facilities and charge the many others. We live in a world of the "user pays" and heaven forbid it's only a \$1 which would probably generate additional revenue in excess of \$300k based on library traffic.

I am also aware that Council's funding levels under the State Government's Financial Assistance Grants have been reduced in recent years which is acknowledged but are insufficient grounds for the aforementioned reasons to expect ongoing rate increases.

The Club strongly oppose these ongoing rate increases and suggest closer scrutiny and review by Council and its senior staff of all GLC operating and employment costs.

This financial model is considered "not sustainable" into the future!

Yours faithfully



**P. V. CLARKE FCPA  
GENERAL MANAGER**

## Becoming an age-friendly community

Great Lakes Council is now a member of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. Great Lakes is the second council in NSW to obtain membership and the ninth in Australia, with only 210 members worldwide.

The Network was established to foster the exchange of experience and mutual learning on age-friendly community development worldwide.

Cities and communities in the Network are of different sizes and are located in different parts of the world. Their efforts to become more age-friendly take place within very diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts.

What all members of the Network do have in common is the desire and commitment to promote healthy and active ageing and a good quality of life for their older residents.

"Council recognised some time ago that we need to plan for an ageing population and in 2012 resolved to become a Centre of Excellence for Ageing" said Mayor Cr Jan McWilliams.

"We made the decision based on our demographics - the Great Lakes local government area has the oldest population in NSW and the third-oldest in Australia, so it's important to plan for older people" said the Mayor.



Member for Myall Lakes, Mr Stephen Bromhead congratulates Mayor Cr Jan McWilliams, Council's Community Services Coordinator Ms Lyndie Hepple and General Manager Mr Glenn Handford on the achievement of becoming a member of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

"In October this year, Council adopted the Great Lakes Active Ageing Strategy and membership of the Global Network was a logical next step in achieving our goal" said General Manager, Mr Glenn Handford.

"Our Active Ageing Strategy outlines a three-year action plan. Being part of this global network enables us to learn from the experiences of other communities around the world" said Mr Handford.

## Mayor's Message

We begin 2015 in a relatively sound position thanks to years of disciplined work, strong leadership and effective strategic planning.

This is not to say we don't face challenges this year. Like all NSW councils we will need to demonstrate to the NSW Government that we are

"fit for the future". This will include a major study on the feasibility of a possible merger with Gloucester Shire Council, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel.

You can read more about how we plan to meet this challenge in the 'Fit for the Future' article in this issue.

We are also pleased to report the results of the independent community survey held late last year which showed that community satisfaction with our performance is increasing.

**CR JAN MCWILLIAMS**  
MAYOR

# Fit for the future

There's been lots of talk recently in the media about NSW local government becoming "fit for the future". Great Lakes Council is working towards meeting NSW guidelines and our own community's expectations for local government service provision in the Great Lakes.

Three years ago, local councils from throughout NSW gathered for the Destination 2036 summit to plan how local government could meet the challenges of the future.

All Councils agreed that change was needed, but there were various views on how this could be best achieved.

Following Destination 2036, the NSW Government appointed an Independent Local Government Review Panel to develop options to improve the strength and effectiveness of local government in NSW.

The Panel's final report to the NSW Government contained 65 recommendations which addressed options in relation to governance models, structural arrangements and boundary changes.

The report found that Great Lakes Council was one of 28 larger rural or regional Councils that was sustainable into the future. However, the report also recommended that Gloucester Shire Council should merge with either Great Lakes or Greater Taree City Councils.

The NSW Government has recently released its response to those recommendations by way of its \$1 billion Fit for the Future package.

Initially each council is being asked to look at its current situation and consider the future needs of its community and the recommendations of the Independent Panel.

Councils will need to demonstrate they have the "scale, resources and strategic capacity to govern effectively and to provide a strong voice for their communities." Following the scale and capacity assessment there are a number of financial measures that need to be considered.

Councils are also required to submit a proposal to the NSW Government by 30 June 2015 on how they intend to become or remain a 'Fit for the Future' council.

These proposals will then be assessed by an expert panel who will provide feedback to councils and recommendations to the Minister for Local Government.

"Our initial assessment of the criteria is that Council can meet the scale and capacity requirements; and either meets, or is trending towards meeting, the financial measures" said Council's General Manager, Mr Glenn Handford.

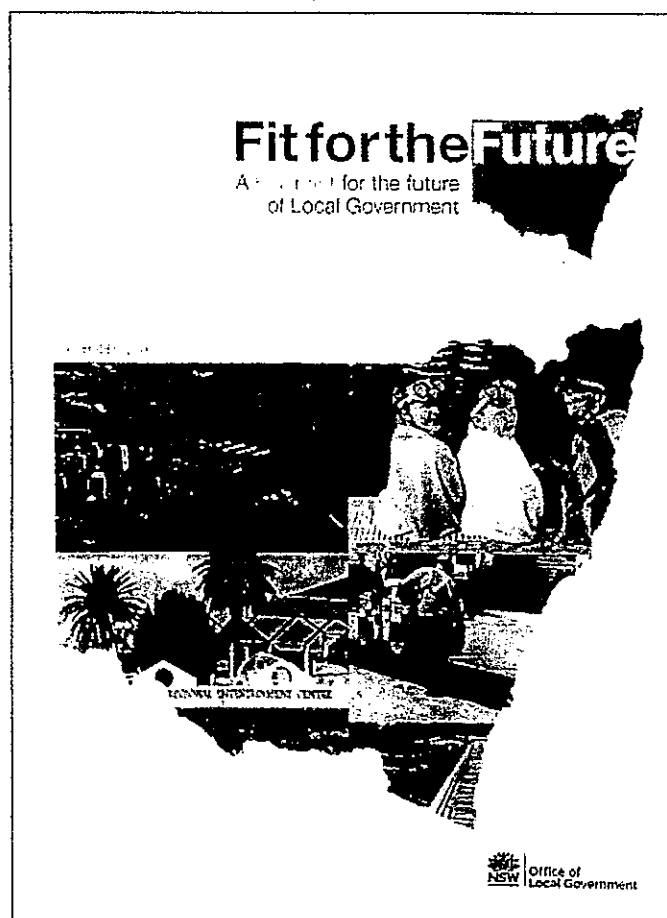
While Council can prepare a proposal based on standing alone, this ignores the Independent Panel's recommendation for a possible merger with Gloucester Shire Council.

As such a meeting was recently held between the Mayors and General Managers of both councils.

It was agreed that the best way forward is to engage with the Office of Local Government and to take advantage of the assistance package provided by the Government to explore the merger option.

This will allow for a very systematic and detailed analysis of the opportunities, costs and benefits of a merger. It will also allow both Councils to discuss the options with their communities before any final decision is made.

Once this process has been completed both councils will be in a position to independently determine whether they wish to proceed with a proposal to merge or to remain as individual councils.



You can access the Fit for Future blueprint online at: [www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au/)

Mr David Poole

*Our Reference:*  
*Your Reference:*

*Contact:*  
*Telephone:*

Mr Phil Brennan

20 July 2015

Dear Sir

**Re: Delivery Program / Operational Plan Submission**

I refer to your letter of 27 May 2015 in relation to Council's 2013/2017 Delivery Program / 2015/2016 Operational Plan which was recently on public exhibition. It is noted that your submission related to Council's proposal to make an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a special variation to its general income from 2016/2017.

After considering submissions received within the advertised period Council has adopted the draft Delivery Program / Operational Plan which includes continuing to proceed with the development and refinement of a Special Variation Application to the IPART. That process includes further community engagement and consultation on the proposal prior to a final Council decision on whether to lodge the application.

The matters raised within your submission will be considered in conjunction with the feedback received from the community later this year.

Yours faithfully

**PHIL BRENNAN**  
Manager Corporate Finance & Planning



The General Manager - Great Lakes Council

PO Box 450 Forster

NSW 2428

Wednesday, 27 May 2015

GREAT LAKES COUNCIL

Received Over Counter

01 JUN 2015

GREAT LAKES COUNCIL

- 2 JUN 2015

RECORDS

Sign.....

Page | 1

## Re: submission - Draft Delivery Program 2013-2017 / Operational Plan 2015-2016

This **submission** relates specifically to Great Lakes Council, Special rate variation proposal, described in Section 5, pages 69 onwards, of the document.

experience and qualifications provide evidence of competency and capability to make this submission, **opposing Council's proposal to seek a special rate variation.**

### The tone and style of public consultation to date

#### Newspaper

There have **not been any publication of letters to the editor** in the local newspaper the great Lakes advocate, on either 20 May or 27 May; hence it is not known whether the public have any objections that they wish the community to know about in relation to council's plans. And, just in case someone says there have been no letters forwarded, then I can say that there have been letters forwarded, within the time limits, and in the format required, for publication.

On Wednesday, 20 May and Wednesday, 27 May, the newspaper contained **articles** about a special rate variation, **reporting on council comments.**

For example, on Wednesday, 20 May, on page 9, under a heading 'council consults the community on a range of issues', the following is stated, 'Council is seeking an 8% cumulative rate rise over four years as part of its **push to remain an independent body**', and later the general manager is reported as saying 'in **addressing a backlog of works**, we have applied for the rate rise, and at the moment I think that people understand it and are supportive of it'.

On 27 May, on page 2, under the heading, 'rates rise to fix rural roads', the following statement is made '**rural roads would be fixed with funds raised through a rate rise in the 2016/2017 financial year**', the article then goes on to say 'it will ask the Independent pricing and regulatory Tribunal to approve a 3.5% rise over the rate pegged mark in 2016/17 and 1.25% increases over the set limit every year until 2020'. This is confusing, as readers may think that all rural roads are fixed in the 2016/2007 financial year. It would help to be more clear and state that the rate rises for the 2016

/2017 financial year would be ongoing. To then state that this additional rate revenue will ensure that all rural roads will be maintained at a good level all of the time. Then to point out why.

It is confusing to see the council reported on one week as saying that they are seeking a rate rise over four years, in a push to remain an independent body, and then later in the same article, saying that it is to cover a backlog of works. **It would be illuminating for council to be reported as seeking a rate rise of over 20% over a four-year period.**

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The articles do not mention that monies raised by a special rate variation, are to cover **repayment of loans**. This is especially concerning when the amounts stated as to repay loans are in the vicinity of **\$0.5million**. **Even more concerning is that this will be part of the council's ongoing budget, and not for a set time.**

## Introduction

The main point of the opposition is that the **proposal appears to be unsupported by the reasons given**. Councils comment at start of the plan that it is **business as usual**, is unfortunate. If "business as usual", includes proposals for **special rate variations that are not supported by any reasonable logic then this is unfortunate, to say the least.**

Other reasons include

- That the **increase in rates is onerous**, where ratepayers already pay very high rates, especially compared to income. (From the office of local government document, "Comparative information on NSW local government – Measuring local government performance – 2012/2013". Average ordinary residential rates for GLC was \$1015.66, while the group average was \$878.05. This is 15% higher than the group average. The average taxable income in GLC was \$34,435, while the group average was \$40,087. This is only 85% of the group average.)
- That there is **no evidence that council has attempted to seek alternatives** to a rate increase to achieve financial goals. Alternatives may include, but not be limited to, planning expenditure that is with the existing capacity to meet that expenditure without a rate increase (a simple example, may include deferring or cancelling developer activities such as design and construction of a new library and residential accommodation on a site that Council has named the Civic precinct, and instead spending funds available on other necessary items, such as rehabilitation existing assets such as failed road pavements. This achieves two goals immediately. It restricts the creation of new assets that increase the ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation requirements. It frees up funding within the existing income stream to better maintain existing assets). Other examples may include reviewing the processes, systems, procedures and leadership within the council organization to achieve better efficiencies.
- That Council included the **proposal in a document that most ratepayers would not be expected to realise** included a section on Councils **proposal for a special rate variation**. The wording of the proposal, and graphics could easily be misunderstood. The public sessions across council area were mentioned in "Council's Communicator" however the issue of a proposed special rate variation was not mentioned.

# The need and purpose for the Special Rate Variation

## Point 1

On page 69 of the document referred to, there is a section headed the need and purpose for the Special Rate Variation which purports to explain the need and purpose. The first is to provide additional funding "to provide a sustainable level of service in terms of its infrastructure and operations." The following paragraphs go on to cover outcomes of audits and investigations into asset management practices.

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- There is a paragraph "The result of this work was a series of revised Asset Management Plans that identified the funding requirements to bring the various classes of infrastructure up to a particular standard (or service level) and to maintain them at that standard." I refer to my presentation to Council on [REDACTED] where I stated I had requested in an email to the appropriate council officer, that any more detail on asset management plans that was available, or had been produced other than the consolidated asset management plan, version 2 December 2014, could be made available to me. I have not received a reply. My assumption is that there is no more detail. On this basis I am assuming that the consolidated asset management plan purports to include the ".....series of revised Asset Management Plans ...." Referred to in the great lakes 2030 exhibition copy delivery program 2013-operational plan 2015-2016 4 May 2015. **If so, the point is made that the consolidated asset management plan is top down level document based on software used by many Councils to give a broad understanding of asset management. It does not consider detail. It is a guiding document.**
- The great lakes 2030 exhibition copy delivery program 2013-operational plan 2015-2016 4 May 2015, also states that "Council engaged Morrison Low, who conducted the on-site audit, to facilitate a formal Asset Management Improvement program with Council so as to improve its asset management capabilities. This would provide more detailed and reliable data and information on Council's infrastructure assets. "Having read parts of this report it is strongly recommended that Council produce asset life cost plans. I am unaware that any have been produced, and indeed on asking council regarding the proposed waterside renewal project, whether any had been produced or considered for the new assets proposed to be created, I did not receive an answer. My assumption then is that Council did not prepare any. If council did not prepare any, then why are council ignoring the recommendation provided in a report that Council commissioned and paid for? **On the basis of the above, Council need to demonstrate the competence and capability of Council to effectively, and efficiently manage expenditure of any additional funds, raised by a special rate levy.**

The following points may be made to counter my assertion, and I comment as follows:

- **Council has a good financial position due to sound financial management.** (From the office of local government, comparative information on NSW local government – Measuring local government performance – 2012/2013. **Cash expense cover ratio was very low, with a score of 1.1, where group average was 4.3, and Tcorp benchmark was > 3 months** Cash Expense Cover Ratio (%), **Governance and Administration expenditure per Capita was \$377.46, while the group average was \$266.44. This is 41% more than the group average,** and even with this much greater cost for governance and administration, the time to deal with **Development Applications** at great lakes council was 103 mean gross days. Group average was 61 days. Meaning that with a greater administration and governance cost, it took **Almost 70% longer for council to deal with DAs**). If there are continual rate rises, then this is one way that Council can say that it has a sound financial position due to sound

financial management, because any additional funding required for projects / ventures etc. that may not be soundly investigated, is eventually covered from special rate variations.

- Compared to other Councils Great lakes council is in far better shape than others. At the council presentation on 21 May, a number of generalized statements of this nature were made, including comparisons with Port Macquarie council. No benchmarking information was provided in relation to maintenance of roads other than Great Lakes council had better roads, and spent money on them. No detail of how the money spent resulted in better outcomes was provided, and indeed the assertion could be based on the fact that great lakes council spend far more, however the dollar spent per metre for the outcomes was not mentioned. It is easy to throw money at an issue, however if the costs and benefits are not considered, then it is difficult to make an assertion that "Compared to other Councils Great lakes council is in far better shape than others", as this does not tell the story of effectiveness in terms of costs and benefits. See comments above about comparisons with similar councils
- It could be stated that the issues raised and made in this submission "are offensive", which term has been used by council at public information sessions when reasonable questions are asked, in a reasonable way. I make the point that if offense is taken, when points are made backed up by evidence, logic, and put in a reasonable way, then offense is not given. To make a statement that it is offensive is nonsense, and possibly designed to deflect the question, or the point made, in an emotional way.

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## Point 2

On page 69 of the document referred to, there is a section headed the need and purpose for the Special Rate Variation which purports to explain the need and purpose. The first is to provide additional funding "to provide a sustainable level of service in terms of its infrastructure and operations." Paragraphs immediately following refer to audits and investigations, resulting in a series of revised asset management plans. Then the section goes on to describe the results of a series of sessions with Council and the Community, including surveys, which council summarized as **"Council proposed, and the community agreed, that all roads within this class (Rural sealed road Network) should be in a 'fair' condition, at a minimum. With 14% of these roads in either a 'poor' or 'failed' condition an injection of approximately \$900,000 per annum was required to eliminate this backlog and then maintain the asset class in a 'fair' condition"**.

- There is a statement, **"During 2014 Council commissioned an informed community survey to obtain information on the service levels that were considered to be acceptable to the community. ...."** A flier headed "Community survey Information" is available on Councils website. This flier gives information on Councils assets, budgets, and results of a survey of condition of the assets, along with council's suggested increase in budgets. There is a corporate publication on Councils website from 2014, (micromex), and it states that it contains the result of sampling 400 people. A statement is made in the report "A sample size of 400 residents" ( out of a population of almost 36,000, or 1.1% of the population ) "provides a maximum sampling error of approximately +/- 4.9% at 95% confidence" This is not explained. Does this mean that 400 residents sampled are representative of the total Council population with a 95% confidence? Or does it mean something else? The **quadrant analysis from the micromex survey does NOT indicate that residents wanted to spend more money on rural sealed roads.** In actual fact the words in the report do not appear to agree with the graphics. In the graphic for the quadrant analysis for the rural sealed roads, this item fell into the quadrant **"lower importance"**, however in the part of the report, "specific asset ratings", the statement is made that the "community opinion of the asset class .....", "...Rural sealed roads have been rated as very important by the community, with a moderate satisfaction level."
- It is also interesting to note that **43% said more should be spent on rural unsealed roads, and 31% on urban roads than council recommended, and 26% stated that more should be**

**spent on rural sealed roads.** A conclusion could be drawn that a significant number of people believed that Councils position should be to **spend more on rural unsealed roads, and urban roads** than proposed.

- The survey **did not** ask whether people would be happy that the additional funding should come from special rate variations. (They could easily have assumed that budgets for other things, like the GMs salary and other staff salaries would be cut to pay for it. Refer to document previously mentioned about comparison of Councils, where governance and Administration expenditure per Capita was \$377.46 for GLC, while the group average was \$266.44. This is 41% more spent by GLC than the group average)
- One of the two very brief recommendations in the report states that Council should **make an application to IPART for a special rate variation**. It is unclear whether this is an opinion of micromex, or data collected from the survey. If it as an **opinion of micromex, and not based on data from the survey questions**, then perhaps the whole survey and report should be questioned.

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The results of a "series of sessions with Council and the Community, including surveys....." do **not** provide evidence that the community would be happy to spend more on rural sealed road maintenance through a special rate levy.

### Point 3

The amounts stated as required to maintain and rehabilitate rural sealed roads do not appear to be justified. Bald statements have been made that **\$900,000 in addition to the existing \$2.03 million are needed. The logic behind this is not known.**

- Council's budget for maintenance of **rural sealed roads**, without special rate levies was stated as \$2.03m for 261 km, or \$7,777per km pa. With a special rate levy of \$1m pa, then the budget is \$3.03 m pa, or **\$11,609 per km pa**. It is noted that Council continue to seal unsealed rural road pavement, thus creating more rural sealed road pavement. The budget for **rural unsealed roads** is \$695,000 for 432 km. Or, **\$1,608 per km pa** and, only 1% are failed. (Compared with 3% failed for rural sealed roads.) **Why is council continuing to seal unsealed rural road pavements, when they say that the costs to maintain rural sealed roads are 7.21 times more than to maintain unsealed roads.**
- **Information from a recent Tasmanian investigation into road maintenance costs**
  - Maintenance for rural sealed roads is \$2,399 per kilometre, or say \$0.6m pa, for 261 kilometres, in the great lakes council area when a comparison is made
  - Removal and replacement costs are \$406,500 per kilometre
  - Scarify and overlay cots are \$260,000 per kilometre
  - Resurfacing costs are for 1 coat spray seal, \$34,800 per kilometre
- **Deductions**
  - In the worst case, GLC would be completely replacing 2.4 k of rural sealed road every year with the additional funds, of \$1m pa
  - Assuming that "maintenance" is the ongoing maintenance, then council is spending an additional \$1.4 m pa than indicated in the Tasmanian study,( \$2.03m – \$0.6 m) and assuming that this put to scarifying and overlay, then an **additional 5.5 k of road is being upgraded each year, from the existing expenditure.**

- So, taking the assumption that 3% is failed, i.e., less than 8 k, then in one year this could be fixed by totally replacing 2.4 k, and scarifying and overlaying another 5.5 km.

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- Information from Inverell Shire council website, <http://www.inverell.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/ISC/Services/Roads%20and%20Traffic/Local%20Roads%20Rehabilitation%20ProgramaV3.pdf> and <http://www.inverell.nsw.gov.au/services/roads-and-traffic.html>
- Inverell Shire Council has a standardized procedure for the assessment and prioritisation of sealed road rehabilitation. This procedure analyses each road segment against seven criteria including roughness, general traffic volume, heavy vehicle volume, seal width, school bus usage, accident history and potential for improved design. The entire sealed network has been assessed and ranked according to these criteria. Indicative annual costs of this program are given in the following table.

Sealed Local Roads - Whole of Life Capital Replacement Costs				
Length (km)	Annual Reseal Length Required 15 yr cycle (km)	Annual Pavement Rehab Required - 45 yr cycle (km)	Reseal annual cost	Rehabilitation annual cost
323	21.5	7.2	\$473,733	\$1,492,978

- Based on a similar situation in GLC, for 261 km of sealed rural roads, annual costs would be 261/323 times \$1.5 m, or \$1.2m per annum for whole of life capital replacement costs. Assume that costs are 20% higher rather than lower, to see what the implication is, then the costs would be \$1.45m per annum.
- **Deductions**
  - The previous annual budget for maintenance of rural sealed roads in GLC was \$2.03 m pa. This was already 40% higher than an inflated figure that Inverell Council allow. There does not appear to be a case for an increase in expenditure via a special rate levy, to \$3.03m pa, where council would then be spending over 100% more.
- Inverell shire council allowed \$17,000 per kilometre for resealing typical rural roads. On page 58 of the GLC operational plan document, it states in a table, that the program "Roads and drainage services", that the summary of budget position – general fund net result after all non-cash, for 2016/2017 is -\$17.5m. If this means that from the general fund, \$17.5m is to be spent on Roads and drainage services, then based on \$17,000 per kilometre to reseal, as a rough guide, Council could reseal in total every road in GLC every year with the money available, if it did nothing else with the money.
- There is no sound case for a special rate variation based on these assumptions

No evidence is provided to justify a special rate variation of \$1m per annum ongoing for maintenance of rural sealed roads.

#### Point 4

On page 71 "Council is seeking a 4 year variation with the additional revenue to be retained permanently within Council's general income." A question was asked at the information session on 21 May, "what does this mean?". The answer was that the **additional rates would continue to be collected every year, and not just over four years.** However In table A1-7 of the GLC asset management strategy, Council states, "The current financial projection indicates that an **additional \$900,000 of renewals (Scenario 1) is required annually over the 10 year period.....**" **This is NOT ongoing. No justification has been made for an additional \$1m pa ongoing in relation to maintaining rural sealed roads**

Council may claim that updated figures support the proposal.

If this is the case, no reference to any "revised" asset management plan/ strategy is provided. The figures for maintenance of rural sealed roads indicate that it would be less expensive for ratepayers to rip up much of the sealed road network and replace it with unsealed.

**The justification for an ongoing rate increase, with an extra \$1m per annum to cover rural sealed roads is not supported by council's asset management strategy**

#### Point 5

On page 70 of the draft, the following statement appears "From an operational perspective there has been a need for Council to provide **additional professional resources** within its Engineering Division to focus on routine floodplain management, coastal and estuary catchment issues and drainage matters thereby freeing up highly qualified and experienced staff to concentrate on the comprehensive integrated strategic considerations that are involved in this field. It is proposed that a Graduate Engineering position be incorporated within Council's Organisation Structure with the funds sourced through the special rate variation. The amount being sought is \$80,000 per annum." this does not appear to be a reasoned, well thought out argument, or an argument expressed in plain English. It appears to be an opinion, with phrases such as "comprehensive integrated strategic considerations", being used that could perhaps be interpreted as "non routine", as that is the reason for proposing to engage an additional engineer. It would be far more enlightening to understand the **extent of planned "non routine" work required**, what it entails, and how long it will need to go for. Then what happens to the additional staff taken on, when the crisis is resolved. What is the need? Has the work required for "routine floodplain management, coastal and estuary catchment issues and drainage matters" increased? If so, how and why? **Have we got new floodplains, coast lines and estuaries?**

**The justification has not been made to raise a special rate variation to pay for an additional engineer.**

#### Point 6

On page 70 of the draft, the following statement appears, "Council has recently adopted an **ICT Strategy** which addresses and plans for the needs of the organisation and increases the effectiveness and efficiencies of the systems and technological infrastructure required to operate a multipurpose local government authority. An amount of **\$100,000 per annum** is to be allocated from the special rate variation to implement various aspects of the ICT Strategy. **If Council has already adopted this ICT strategy, surely it considered the ramifications of cost, and did not just assume that an approval would be given for a rate increase to cover it, or part of it.**

**There is no justification for a special rate levy to cover implementation of various aspects of the ICT strategy. The costs would have been considered, within the available budgets, at the time Council adopted the strategy.**

#### Point 7

On page 70 of the draft, the following statement appears, "There are a **number of other smaller items** that Council is also seeking to fund through the special rate variation that are asset related or

designed to improve organisational efficiencies." There does not appear to be any real consideration of costs that have been mentioned. For example, a round figures of \$100,000 for playground equipment. Should this be \$50,000 or maybe \$1 million, or zero because ongoing replacement and maintenance would have been budgeted for when the playground asset was created? What is the total cost to replace playground equipment? Where is the life cost plan? These other smaller items that council claim need to be covered by a special ongoing rate increase are not justified, and no evidence has been provided to show how they are justified

#### Point 8

The table on page 72 shows loan repayments for HQ roof replacement at \$260,000 per year. Having regard to the statement that the rate increase will be for an ongoing period, "additional revenue to be retained permanently within Council's general income.", there is no justification for this to be part of a special rate levy that becomes part of councils "additional revenue to be retained permanently within Council's general income." as it is assumed that any loan to replace the roof will be paid off, at a rate of \$260,000 per year pretty quickly. No figures are given for the costs to replace the roof. No figures are given for a loan amount. No justification for needing a loan are provided. No life cost plan as suggested by the consultants report has been referred to. An amount for repayment of a loan which continues to be collected in rates forever, is not logical. This item should not be included in an application for a special rates levy

#### Point 9

The table on page 72 shows \$32,000 per year for new library operating expenses. One would expect that library operating expenses would be reduced for a new library. No reasons appear to be given as to why the operating expenses for any possible new library need to come from a special rate levy.

This item should not form a basis for raising rates through a special rate variation.

#### Point 10

The table on page 72 shows Loan Repayments - Road Allocation 2014/2015 \$125,000, and Loan Repayments - Road Allocation 2015/2016 \$125,000. Having regard to the statement that the rate increase will be for an ongoing period, "additional revenue to be retained permanently within Council's general income.", there is no justification for this to be part of a special rate levy that becomes part of councils "additional revenue to be retained permanently within Council's general income." as it is assumed that any loans would be paid off at some stage.

At a meeting with council staff earlier in 2015, where the Waterside renewal project was discussed, it was stated that some of the funding for works to Memorial drive was coming from LIRS. This is a loan from the State government. It was stated that this loan was being used to "bring works forward". A reasonable assumption from this statement is that council had already planned repayment of this loan from sources that were not from a special rate variation. It is also a reasonable assumption that the amounts indicated on page 72, included repayment of loan monies provided from LIRs. In that case, council is asking via a special rate variation to repay loans, where only in the months prior, and at the time of taking the loan, had already planned to repay from other sources. That is, council does not need a special rate variation to repay these loans.

This item should not form a basis for raising rates through a special rate variation.

#### Point 11

On page 71, there is the statement "There is a small unallocated amount contained within each year of this special rate variation which will be utilised to maintain the current predicted budgetary result ..... reduction in service levels ..... Those amounts contained within this special rate variation proposal will assist in maintaining the upwardly trending budget result that was forecast." An amount of \$439,000 plus \$61,500 and \$4,500 added together, as an ongoing rate increase is NOT a



small amount, (in total \$505,000 pa ongoing). No real explanation, other than a possible threat that "service levels" will decrease justifies this amount being requested in a special rate variation. **Unless it can be shown that council is incapable of maintaining budgetary results through prudent allocation of funds, good planning and management, this item is not justified.**

## In summary, and conclusion.

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- Council has not demonstrated justification for requesting a special rate variation.
- Reduction in costs, for example, in governance and administration should be investigated, better management, etc if indeed council believes that it cannot operate within existing parameters.
- The present amount paid in rates is significant, and higher than average, with a lower than average ratepayer taxable income. To impose even more rates would be onerous. Council should investigate ways "to live within its means".
- The reasoning given for raising an additional \$1m per year with a special rate variation, for maintenance of rural sealed roads, is not convincing. This is so on several grounds.
  - Council have outlined in various documents that for council it is almost eight times less expensive to maintain unsealed rural roads. On this basis sealed roads should be ripped up, and returned to being unsealed.
  - Council have not demonstrated that \$1m per year ongoing is justified, or indeed supported by any meaningful community consultation, or council's own asset management strategy.
  - Comparable costs with other local governments indicate that the amounts available from a special rate levy that would continue on, are not usual, if the work carried out to seal the road had been completed to an appropriate standard. This would mean that maintenance costs for sealed roads would be expected to be less than for unsealed roads. One of the main reasons usually given by engineers for sealing roads is to reduce maintenance costs.
  - The justification from the results of the micromex survey is as a result of a survey where the respondents do not appear to have been advised that their responses would be used as justification for a special rate variation request.
- There are other items listed in the graphic on page 72 that do not make sense, including new library operating expenses, loan repayments for HQ roof replacement, graduate engineer, ICT strategy implementation, (where costs would already have been considered with the existing rate structure when council adopted this strategy), Loan repayments for road allocations, that as advised keep on going ad infinitum, of \$250,000 per year.
- An amount of over half a million dollars ongoing, being referred to as a "small unallocated amount", for restoration of service levels has not been justified.

**This proposal has no justification.**

**Council should not request a special rate variation**

Yours faithfully



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 27 May 2015 1:30 PM  
**To:** Great Lakes Council Mailbox  
**Subject:** Email Council - Library

New Library proposal

I support a new Library building near the Forster Police station. The library is a valued and well-used facility and its newly proposed location will provide for a much increased space for parking amongst many other positive attributes.

However I would like the civic center and library to be in the front (on the lake, with views) and the residential buildings to the rear.

If rates have to go up to fix roads then I support this too.

YES – to NEW library on the lake and

YES – to a rate increase to fix roads.

Regards [REDACTED] of the local area.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 4 June 2015 3:10 PM  
**To:** Great Lakes Council Mailbox  
**Subject:** Rate increase

I strongly oppose any increase in our rates which I think are far too high already.

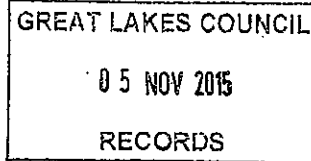
Thanking you

[REDACTED]

1/11/2015

GENERAL MANAGER

GREAT LAKES COUNCIL  
NSW



RET. SRV PROPOSAL

I AM NOT IN FAVOR OF THE PROPOSAL  
TO INCREASE RATES.

I'VE BEEN PAYING RATES FOR THE LAST 30 YEARS  
TO GREAT LAKES COUNCIL. TO BENEFIT SOMEONE  
ELSE. WHAT DID I GET FROM THE COUNCIL  
ALL THESE YEARS?

THE OWNERS OF NON URBAN LAND IN NORTH ARM  
COVE ARE PAYING THE MOST UNFAIR RATES FOR  
USELESS LAND, THAT WE CAN'T GIVEAWAY.  
SO WE ARE STUCK!..

THE PEOPLE THAT GAVE PERMISSION TO  
SUBDIVIDE THE LAND SHOULD BE LOCKED UP.  
WE ARE THE VICTIMS AND SHOULD NOT BE  
PUNISHED MORE - -

MELBOURNE CUP DAY 2015

TO MR GENERAL MANAGER

GREAT LAKE COUNCIL

DEAR SIR,

GREAT LAKE COUNCIL

17 NOV 2015

RECEIVED

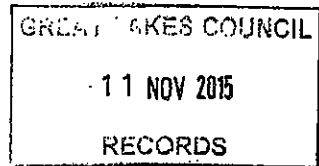
YOU SENT ME A NOTICE OF RATE INCREASE  
JUST WOT US 80YO PART PENSIONERS NEED - SAY WATE  
MONEY IS SO CHEAP TO BORROW, WHY DONT YOU LEAVE  
RATES ON HOLD - LIVE WITH IN YOUR MEANS LIKE  
I HAVE TO DO. AND BORROW WOT YOU NEED?

OH YES, I WONT COMPLAIN ABOUT THE  
ROAD I LIVE ON, YOU SIR, GET IN YOUR COMPANY  
CAR AND TAKE A DRIVE TO [REDACTED]  
AND DRIVE ALONG IT, IF IT MEET YOUR EST-  
TIMATION OF A GOOD SERVICEABLE ROAD, ILL  
SHUT UP, I JUST HOPE IT DONT RAIN LIKE IT  
DID LAST WEEK 48mm 13mm IN TWO DAYS I  
WAS FLOODED IN.

BUT HEY IM A WINGIN OLD PART PENSIONER  
MALE 80K YEAR, I SHOULD BE NOT HERE SHOULD  
I? AND DONT SQUIB OUT BY SENDING ONE OF  
YOUR SLAVES, YOU COME --- I DOUBT IT.

WER GOT PEOPLE WHO WONT VISIT ME COS  
"YOUR ROAD IS ARTROCIOUS" [REDACTED] "ILL MEET YOU  
IN BULANDIAN" I BET YOU DONT HAVE THAT PRO-  
BLEM, NO BODY IN [REDACTED] OWNS A CAR ITS THAT  
BAD IN OUR ESTIMATIONS BUT HEY YOU TELL ME?  
WE ALL DRIVE AND BINE SHAKERS.

A RATE PAYER OLD MALE



Phone:-

Fax:-

"SRV Proposal"  
The General Manager,  
Great Lakes Council.  
P.O Box 450.  
FORSTER NSW 2428

5<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Dear Sir/Madam.

I have lived in the Great Lake area for 12 years, in that time I have seen the council tar the main road, then dig it up and retar it, and rearrange it several times, it has had traffic lights installed and removed them put in roundabouts and removed them. This was on going for years.

I live on [REDACTED] it had 4k of dirt road the day I bought it and still has that 4k of dirt road, the council has retarred the already tarred bits of Willina Road but the 4k of goat track dirt road, is lucky if it gets graded. As far as I can see Great lakes council can only tar and retar tarred roads. I have seen nothing to account for the money we already pay in rates. I certainly am not interested seeing Forster's roads retarred with more of my rate money.

Yours sincerely

13 NOV 2015

RECORDS

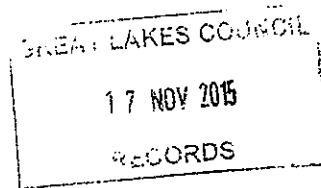
Dear Sir

We live in Sydney  
so we can't come to meetings.  
we got land at North arm Cove lot  
[REDACTED] it's classified as  
farm land at the moment we  
can't build on it we're paying Rates  
for nothing so we object for a  
kick in Rates why should we pay  
more for other Home owners, it  
is not fair do something about our  
land and we be happy to pay  
more Hope you answer my letter

Thank you

[REDACTED]

10<sup>th</sup> November 2015  
[REDACTED]



Great Lakes Council  
To Whom it may concern,

I am a ratepayer in the area run by the Great Lakes Council.

In 2011, Great Lakes Council was granted permission over 4 years for an 'extra rate rise'. Now it is 2015 and we have not seen much for our money. We have seen our council buying large blocks of land for commercial projects, and others which have been questionable as to 'why', not to mention the outlandish cost.

Council has just recently acquired a large parcel of land at an exceptionally high price to build a multi story community building, of which the funds to build will it seems, come from our previous rates that council has acquired over the years. This shows that Great Lakes Council today must be holding an outstanding amount of rate moneys which were delegated to roads and street maintenance in previous years and not carried out, and now in 2015 we have been asked to fill out a SRV survey for a 6.5% SRV rate rise to cover the costs of this multi story building they wish to build, and the upkeep of the reserves and pools in the area. This requirement seems to be a ongoing 4 year thing to cover some basic council works.

Council rates are high now, in a largely pensioner/ retiree area, and the survey that you asked us to do should have been worked out on the true rates which are over \$2000+ and not \$1000 as stipulated in your survey. This works out at a rate rise of over \$453, over 4 years, bringing suburban rates in 2019 to \$2642.00, an amount ill afforded by many residents for the overall usage of the items (pools, playground equipment, many of which are not used by a large amount of the local ratepayers due to age. The upkeep of these items should be on a user paid system. Tourists flocking to our area delight in using all that we have to offer but give little or no money for the upkeep. Time has come for an user pay system which would give council money for upkeep and would probably stop a lot of property destruction as is found after holiday crowds have left.

The cleanup/ maintenance of reserves parks etc, is, as you are well aware of done weekly by a large group of aged volunteers, and although machines and equipment are supplied saves the council millions in wages each year. The other volunteer organisations in the area are serviced by raffle tickets, money tins in shops, and cake stalls and are too numerous to mention but all save the council money. I have not seen a council employee working in my area for a long time and if it wasn't for volunteers maintaining the many parks and waterways we would have very untidy areas for the holiday people to visit and use.

To a lot of the ratepayers I have spoken to, either the council is poor, and needs this rate rise or council has a large amount of money in the kitty of which it is not using wisely for the ratepayers of the area. It seems the later is the case, and if so this council should be audited and required to show how they have recently required large parcels of land in the area, while not able to carry out the minimum requirement upkeep of pools and playground equipment without asking for more money.

I have no complaint over money used on the repair of the council roof as asked, the building is aging, but probably a good regular maintenance (cutting back of overhanging trees, of which, while looking good are a permanent destruction of gutters and roof linings), will stop the need for further money needed to be spent later.

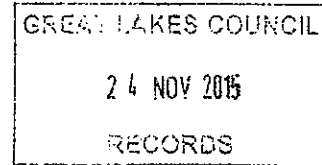
I hope you reconsider your SRV rise and look to other ways of covering costs that will not cause hardships in the community run by you.

Thank you  
[REDACTED]



15 November 2015

SRV Proposal,  
The General Manager,  
Great Lakes Council  
P.O. Box 450,  
Forster  
NSW. 2424



Dear Sir,                      Re: SRV Proposal.

I am totally opposed to any attempt by Great Lakes Shire Council to increase rates beyond the 3% p.a. increase allowed by the State Government. Already the rates on my house at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] are slightly higher than those of my Beecroft residence — Hornsby Shire Council. Then, too, as a pensioner without any deductions owing to my wife's income and no inflation proofing barriers I, like many in this rapidly ageing part of the world, are facing a serious decline in our standard of living especially as the transfer of wealth from the middle to the top 5% accelerates.

2

Any increase in the GST will, of course, accelerate this process. Then, too, I resent, as someone who knows something about constitutional history, that the General Manager of the Shire has either taken it about himself, or, has been instructed, to involve himself as an advocate of policy decision which should be the sole province of our elected representatives. Where are Roberts and McCashie on this debate? Surely the "Managerial Revolution" has gone too far. So I disagree.

1. The expensive shambles of Jimmy's Beach will grow. Some of us are tired of subsidizing the propertied elite of Windu Wappa in the face of a proper scientific study.
2. Many residents are ageing and on pensions. Where are the necessary democratic studies, rather than the expensive propaganda brochures I receive?
3. There are wider implications here which should be debated by our elected representatives rather than various interest groups determined to make HN/Tea Gardens just another Ashfield-type suburb of Sydney.

3

4. It is clear that the present-day  
Shire Council is a field of conservative  
(i.e. liberal) and Naim (i.e. Counter Party  
Mining and anti-environmental 1920's type  
ideologues) fronts.

A reply, written of course, to the above  
address would be welcome. In addition I  
am at Hawks Nest quite frequently.

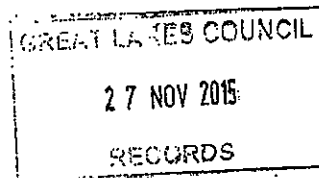
I remain,

Yours truly,

[Redacted signature]

19/11/15.

"SVR PROPOSAL",  
THE GENERAL MANAGER,  
GREAT LAKES COUNCIL,  
P.O. Box 450,  
FORSTER, N.S.W. 2428



DEAR SIR,

RE: "SVR PROPOSAL" - GREAT LAKES COUNCIL

I HAVE GIVEN SOME INDEPTH CONSIDERATION TO YOUR LITERATURE CONCERNING THE PROPOSAL TO APPLY FOR A "SPECIAL RATE VARIATION INCREASE" COVERING THE PERIOD 2016-2020 AND AS SUCH -

"I AM OPPOSED TO THIS PROPOSAL".

RATEPAYERS ARE ENTITLED TO BE PROVIDED WITH A DETAILED LISTING OF ALL PROPOSED WORK AND THE COSTINGS INVOLVED - IT SIMPLY IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO CITE THIS INFORMATION, IN GENERAL TERMS, AS PER YOUR GLOSSY "SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER" DATED <sup>NOV</sup> 2015 AS UNDER:-

- |   |                         |   |   |
|---|-------------------------|---|---|
| ① RURAL SEALED ROADS                              | - \$1 MILLION PER ANNUM |   |   |
| ② PLAYGROUNDS                                     | - \$100,000             | " | " |
| ③ SWIMMING POOLS                                  | - \$100,000             | " | " |
| ④ RECREATIONAL FACILITIES<br>AND PUBLIC AMENITIES | - \$100,000             | " | " |

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

##### ① ROADWORK

IT IS IMPERATIVE AND UNDERSTANDABLE, GIVEN PUBLIC SAFETY AND ANY ASSOCIATED MITIGATION DUE TO ACCIDENTS AND ANY UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES, THAT ROADS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AND KEPT IN "TOP" CONDITION.

##### ② PLAYGROUNDS

- HOW MANY EXISTING PLAYGROUNDS ARE THERE?
- WHERE ARE THEY LOCATED?
- HOW OFTEN ARE THEY MAINTAINED?
- DOES COUNCIL PLAN TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PLAYGROUNDS IN THE FUTURE?

3. SWIMMING POOLS

(SEASONAL USEAGE - UNLESS AN INDOOR FACILITY -  
USED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC,  
SCHOOLS ETC.)

- HOW MANY EXISTING SWIMMING POOLS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED?
- WHERE ARE THEY LOCATED?
- HOW OFTEN ARE THEY MAINTAINED?
- DOES AN ADMISSION CHARGE APPLY?
- DOES THE COUNCIL PLAN TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SWIMMING POOLS IN THE FUTURE?

4. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND PUBLIC AMENITIES

- HOW MANY OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED ARE THERE?
- WHERE ARE THEY LOCATED?
- WHAT, IF ANY, CHARGES ARE INVOLVED FOR THEIR USE BY SPORTING ORGANISATIONS ETC.?
- DOES COUNCIL INTEND TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FACILITIES AND AMENITIES IN THE FUTURE?

5. COUNCIL'S ADMIN. BUILDING.

GIVEN THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND SAFETY ISSUES PERTINENT TO YOUR STAFF AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT COUNCIL'S ADMIN. BUILDING BE PROVIDED WITH A NEW ROOF.

- WHY HAS THIS PROBLEM NOT BEEN FURTHER ADDRESSED AND RESOLVED UNTIL NOW AS AN ACCUMULATION OF MINOR REPAIRS EVENTUALLY CREATES A MAJOR AND COSTLY UPGRADE?
- WHAT IS THE ESTIMATED COST TO REPLACE THE ROOF?

THERE IS EVERY POSSIBILITY THAT THERE ARE OTHER PROJECTS WHICH REQUIRE ATTENTION AND HAVE BEEN OMITTED FROM COUNCIL'S SPARE LISTING WHICH WILL, NO DOUBT, REQUIRE CONSIDERATION WHICH OBVIOUSLY WILL ATTRACT FURTHER INCREASES INTO THE FUTURE.

I SHOULDN'T NEED TO POINT OUT THE "BUZZ WORD" OF TODAY IS "AMALGAMATION" - AND IF COUNCIL CANNOT ORGANISE THEIR BUDGETRY REQUIREMENTS TO MEET THEIR FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS WITHOUT APPLYING FOR ADDITIONAL MAJOR RATE INCREASES, (WHICH HAVE ALSO OCCURRED IN THE PAST) THIS PROPOSAL COULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON COUNCIL'S FUTURE STATUS.

IN ADDITION, IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATES TO INCREASE THE G.S.T. BY 5% (INCLUDING FOOD) THIS WILL FURTHER IMPACT, NOT ONLY ON COUNCIL RATES, BUT ON ALL GOODS AND SERVICES, WHICH WILL SEVERELY DIMINISH THE MONETARY VALUE OF COUNCIL'S EXORBITANT RATE VARIATION, IF GRANTED.

"THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF THE PROPOSED SRV INCREASE PER CENT OVER A PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO BUDGETRY MISMANAGEMENT."

THERE MAY BE A SMATTERING OF "WELL-TO-DO'S" RESIDING IN THE GREAT LAKES AREA WHO CAN AFFORD THE INCREASES COUNCIL IS PROPOSING, PARTICULARLY 2016/2017, HOWEVER, THERE WOULD BE MANY RATEPAYERS WHO WOULD BE SEVERELY DISADVANTAGED AND WOULD MOST LIKELY BE STRUGGLING TO PAY THEIR BILLS AND TO PUT FOOD ON THEIR TABLES.

FINALLY, IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO ATTEND YOUR SEVERAL COMMUNITY MEETINGS.

IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT I NEITHER OWN NOR HAVE ACCESS TO A COMPUTER, THEREFORE, I AM UNABLE TO SOURCE INFORMATION FROM YOUR WEBSITE RELATIVE TO COUNCIL'S PROPOSAL - MY RELIANCE IS PLACED SOLELY ON AUSTRALIA POST'S MAILING SYSTEM.

YOURS FAITHFULLY,

[REDACTED]

**Subject:** CCD - Special Rate Variation Application to IPART  
**Index:** Financial Management - Special Rate Variation 2016/2017  
**Author:** Manager Corporate Finance & Planning - Phil Brennan  
**Ordinary Meeting:** 8 December 2015

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#### **SUMMARY OF REPORT:**

This report provides information on the feedback received during the recent public consultation process conducted in relation to the proposal to seek a special rate variation from the Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). It seeks a decision from Council as to whether it wishes to notify the IPART of its intention to apply for special rate variation.

#### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council notify the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of its intention to apply for a section 508A special variation to its general income in terms of that set out in the report.

#### **FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

Nil.

#### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

Nil.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Council is required to formally notify the IPART of its intention to apply for a special rate variation prior to proceeding with the preparation and lodgement of an application.

#### **LIST OF ANNEXURES:**

Nil.

#### **LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:**

- A: Summary of Submissions Received on Special Rate Variation Proposal for 2016/2017
- B: Written Submissions from Various Individuals

Due to its large size, Attachments A and B have been circulated in hard copy to Councillors and Senior Staff only as a paper conservation measure. However, these Attachments are publicly available on Council's Website, copies are available at Council offices and copies are available on request.

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#### **REPORT:**

Great Lakes Council has previously raised the issue of applying for a special rate variation with the community. Community update sessions and Council publications over the last 2 years have informed the community of the need for additional permanent funding to allow infrastructure asset renewal and maintenance works to continue.

The proposal to seek a special rate variation follows from the work undertaken to update Council's Asset Management Plans and from consultation with the community on asset service levels. Council subsequently adopted these plans and service levels which also highlighted the need for additional funding to be directed to the Rural Sealed Road network.

A statistically relevant informed random sample survey found that only 9% of the survey population disagreed with the proposal to increase funding for this class of assets. Council responded to this feedback by allocating an additional \$1 million per year to the renewal of this asset class, to be funded from loan borrowings. Unfortunately the use of loan funding as a long-term source is not sustainable and Council agreed that a special rate variation was necessary to make this allocation a permanent part of Council's budget structure.

A number of other asset classes were also identified as requiring funding including Playground Equipment and Public Buildings / Amenities / Structures. Council determined that a section 508A special rate variation was an appropriate method by which to seek the additional funding with increases spread over 4 years. The proposal that was discussed and subsequently incorporated into Council's 2015/2016 Delivery Program and modelled within the Long Term Financial Plan was for the following:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Percentage increase (incl. rate peg*)</b>
2016/2017	6.50%
2017/2018	4.25%
2018/2019	4.25%
2019/2020	4.25%

\*Assumes rate peg of 3%

That proposal was placed on public exhibition during April / May 2015 as part of the required Delivery Program consultation process. The proposal attracted 4 submissions at the time which were held over for consideration with submissions received during the second round of consultation which was scheduled to occur during November 2015.

That consultation has now been completed and saw 4 well attended public information sessions held at Bulahdelah, Forster, Tea Gardens and Stroud. A special newsletter was sent to all ratepayers (approximately 25,000) informing them of the proposal and providing information on how they could provide feedback on the proposal. Interested members of the public were directed to Council's new website where an on-line feedback facility was available.

At the completion of this consultation period approximately 150 people had attended the 4 public meetings, 85 submissions had been received and all ratepayers had been informed of the proposal.

Support for the proposal is mixed. Feedback from the public meetings indicated that there was general understanding and acceptance of the need for the special rate variation from the majority of attendees. Public submissions were generally not supportive of the proposal with 14 in favour of the proposal, 4 submissions that did not indicate a preference but posed questions or alternate scenarios while the balance (67) were not in favour of Council continuing with the proposal. All submissions have been included in the Annexures for Council's consideration.

At the present time the Office of Local Government and the IPART have not released the Guidelines that are required for the completion of an application or advised of the actual dates for submission of notifications and applications. However the IPART has advised that Council's should work on a submission date of 11 December 2015 for the notification letters, this being similar to the 2015/2016 timeframe. As such it is necessary for Council to make a decision as to whether it wishes to take the next step in seeking a special rate variation approval that being to notify the IPART of its intention to apply.



Should Council choose to proceed with the application a further report will be presented to a Council meeting prior to the application lodgement date seeking Council's final approval to apply. This resolution is required by the IPART so that they can proceed with assessment of the application.

To summarise the proposal, it is intended to seek approval for a section 508A special rate variation being a multi-year permanent increase to Council's General Income as set out below.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Percentage Increase (including Rate Peg)</b>
2016/2017	6.50%
2017/2018	4.25%
2018/2019	4.25%
2019/2020	4.25%

The purpose of the increase is to facilitate infrastructure maintenance and renewal programs, meet existing and proposed loan borrowing commitments and to maintain existing service levels and provide ongoing financial sustainability.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council notify the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of its intention to apply for a section 508A permanent multi-year special variation to its general income (details as set out in the report) to facilitate infrastructure maintenance and renewal programs, meet existing and proposed loan borrowing commitments and to maintain existing service levels and provide ongoing financial sustainability.

## [Agenda Report](#)

### **User Instructions**

If necessary to view the original Report, double-click on the 'Agenda Report' blue hyperlink above.

### **Resolved Items Action Statement**

Action is required for the following item as per the Council Decision or Resolution Under Delegated Authority.

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**Subject:** CCD - Special Rate Variation Application to IPART  
**Index:** Financial Management - Special Rate Variation 2016/2017  
**Author:** Manager Corporate Finance & Planning - Phil Brennan  
**Ordinary Meeting:** 8 December 2015

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council notify the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of its intention to apply for a section 508A permanent multi-year special variation to its general income (details as set out in the report) to facilitate infrastructure maintenance and renewal programs, meet existing and proposed loan borrowing commitments and to maintain existing service levels and provide ongoing financial sustainability.

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### **RESOLUTION**

(Moved L Roberts/Seconded K Hutchinson)

That the above recommendation be adopted.

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