

Online Q&A Forum: questions asked via online forum http://yoursaywagga.com.au/srv?tool=qanda#tool_tab

Q If Council is Fit for the Future on the basis of a proposed rate rise, it seems to show Council has a level of presumption about implementing an SRV and it doesn't seem right to say you are Fit. What will happen to Council's Fit for the Future standing if Council does not go ahead with the SRV? What were the results of the community consultation on the Fit for the Future submission created by Council that included the presumption of a successful SRV? When does this consultation period close?

asked, 6 days ago

Wagga Wagga City Council has been independently assessed by IPART as being Fit for the Future. The Improvement Proposal submitted to IPART makes it clear that a SRV is proposed for 2016/17 along with a number of cost savings and revenue increases.

The IPART assessment on Wagga Wagga makes specific reference to this in their published document. The approach taken in including the SRV in the Improvement Proposal is consistent with the advice provided by the Office of Local Government in various forums leading up to Council making its submission.

The question "What will happen to Council's Fit for the Future standing if Council does not go ahead with the SRV" is academic because the process required Councils to make a number of assumptions in developing their improvement proposals. Council will continue to review its financial performance and report on the seven ratios through the preparation of the audited financial statements.

The IPART Guidelines did not require Councils that were not recommended for merger to undertake community consultation. Despite this, Council did place its Improvement Proposal on public exhibition including detailed coverage in Council News which received very little community comment.

Q Hi, I have comments more than questions. I find it disappointing that we are asked to have a conversation about funding the levee upgrade through a one off rate rise for a project that was always on the Long Term Financial Plan rather than talking about a rise for provision of Council services in general. Given the interim General Manager's comments on ABC Riverina news yesterday morning (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-10/srv-wagga/6926146>) advising that a review is underway to determine what exactly the previous SRV was spent on and of all Council's major projects it warrants concern from the community that Council is looking to apply for a special rate rise before being able to identify what the previous SRV was spent on or showing evidence of finding efficiencies elsewhere. The lack of detail on what service cuts may actually occur for the alternative to an SRV makes it impossible for participants to evaluate the options fairly and provide informed opinions. It has been identified in previous answers below that the elected body make that decision (hopefully on advice of expert staff) and perhaps it is worthwhile to ask Councillors to indicate what might be cut. This concern is further compounded by the fact that the current elected body had documented serious concerns about the financial management by the previous General Manager. I note in answer to a question below about Council's financial management that WWCC was recently deemed 'Fit For The Future' but do not see this determination or label as any endorsement that Council does anything more than adequate financial management. I run my own Company and the fact that our accountant says we are solvent and are likely to continue to be for the foreseeable future doesn't give me a free pass to put my feet up on the desk and raise my hourly fees. I would think Council's 'pass' as Fit For The Future has more to do with Wagga being a regional centre with a large rate payer base rather than Council's financial or asset management. Another concern I have is that the 2006/7 SRV included funding towards a major community facility (MCF) which was then shifted to a Multi Purpose Stadium (MPS) in 2012, both of which are now mothballed causes further concern and creates a perception that funds aren't always used for what the community are told they are being asked to pay for. As the levee project has been underway and on the long term financial plan for many years and the community are only now being asked to consider a Levee Levy, I do wonder if it is just an easier sell for Council to get a much needed rate rise. My concerns identified above are more about the overall management of Council's finances, it's changing priorities and information to the community. I support the upgrading of both levees, I understand the rate capping imposed by the state government often doesn't even keep up with CPI forcing Councils to constantly apply for "Special" Rate Variations but I hope the Council is more forthcoming to the community in its reasons for needing the rise and that all best efforts really have been undertaken to seek out alternatives. The information presented to date doesn't give that impression and makes me wonder if the Council are in tune with the community at all or see this as the closest it can get to a 'quick fix' to increase revenue to an acceptable level. I look forward to seeing what the previous SRV was spent on and the outcomes of the major projects review identified by the interim General Manager. Thanks

asked, 14 days ago

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for your comments on this important proposal. All of your comments and feedback will be taken on board as Council proceeds with this process.

If you have any questions or further comments please don't hesitate to let us know.

Q I have two questions: 1) Who, exactly and legally, is currently committed to financing the levee upgrade? 2) what does "potentially" mean in terms of the WWCC plan? From the wording, it reads that Council is implementing the SRV without any guarantee at all that this will attract the other essential contributions (from either or both Federal and State Governments) for the project. If either - or neither - of these parties commit to the project then ratepayers are sinking money into a well from which no-one will draw. The money will - presumably - just sit there. Is that correct? That sounds faintly ludicrous to me. Since the money can only be used for one purpose, it just sits there if the purpose is not realised - the interest going to whom? Wouldn't it be common sense to have a commitment in writing (from all other parties) before using the SRV to raise the funds for our end of a deal that might not exist? How committed are the other essential governmental parties? Is that commitment in writing? As a second point, I'd ask about the northern levee. It's described here as "potentially upgrading" and merely a "potential upgrade". I'd thus assume that it has nothing to do with any funds from the SRV being mooted - for instance, building a levee on the moon is also just "potential". If the North Wagga Levee is not part of the plan then it is not part of the plan - the word "potential" seems to have all the qualities of a weasel-word here; anything labelled "potential" is actually not just "potential" but is, in all probability, the main beneficiary of the plan. Is that correct? My suspicion is that the SRV for the CBD levee, when it is ignored by both State and Federal funds, will go solely to a North Wagga levee upgrade. Surprisingly, I have nothing against that per se: but I despise double-talkers who assume that I'm a fool. The best example of double-talk for anyone to see is to call a set of five year increases "one off" - what's "one off" about five times? If we said to our employees - the WWCC - that we were going to make a "one off" cancellation of their councillor fees (for the next five years) how quickly do you think they'd twig to the salient point about what "one-off" means? My guess is less than one second. Good grief, what simpletons they take us for.

[REDACTED] asked, 27 days ago

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for your questions. Please find answers to your questions below.

1) Who, exactly and legally, is currently committed to financing the levee upgrade?

Wagga Wagga City Council is committed to funding one-third of the Levee Upgrade Project on the condition the State and Federal Governments fund the remaining two-thirds share. Council has made an application for grant funding in April this year and is waiting to hear if that application was successful. While Council has applied for the full amount of the two-thirds share, the grant funding is likely to be distributed in stages. It is likely the outcome of the grant application will be announced before the Special Rate Variation is implemented.

2) what does "potentially" mean in terms of the WWCC plan? From the wording, it reads that Council is implementing the SRV without any guarantee at all that this will attract the other essential contributions (from either or both Federal and State Governments) for the project. If either - or neither - of these parties commit to the project then ratepayers are sinking money into a well from which no-one will draw. The money will - presumably - just sit there. Is that correct? That sounds faintly ludicrous to me. Since the money can only be used for one purpose, it just sits there if the purpose is not realised - the interest going to whom? Wouldn't it be common sense to have a commitment in writing (from all other parties) before using the SRV to raise the funds for our end of a deal that might not exist? How committed are the other essential governmental parties? Is that commitment in writing?

Council recently resolved to proceed with a 1 in 100 year upgrade of the Main City Levee, however no decision has been made on the future of flood mitigation in North Wagga. In the event that an upgrade of the North Wagga levee to a 1 in 20 hundred year level of protection does not proceed to this extent, the SRV amount would be adjusted downwards to include only the increase required to upgrade the Main City Levee. If the North Wagga Levee is upgraded to a higher level of protection, Council will find the additional amount within the budget.

So while Council is committed to the upgrade of the Main City Levee, the North Wagga Levee is still considered to be a potential project. It is likely the outcome of the grant application will be announced before the Special Rate Variation is implemented.

By committing to one-third of the upgrade Council believes it presents a strong case for the State and Federal Government to fund the remaining two-thirds, however if this grant funding is denied the project will not go ahead.

While Council is driving the project the State and Federal Governments are stakeholders and have a social and economic responsibility in seeing large scale flood mitigation projects go ahead. The sharing of costs on a proportional basis between the three levels of government has been historically and still is the funding formula for projects such as this. For this reason it is reasonable for the State and Federal Governments to pay for a share of the upgrade and Council urges these levels of Government to grant this funding.

Government to grant this funding.

3) As a second point, I'd ask about the northern levee. It's described here as "potentially upgrading" and merely a "potential upgrade". I'd thus assume that it has nothing to do with any funds from the SRV being mooted - for instance, building a levee on the moon is also just "potential". If the North Wagga Levee is not part of the plan then it is not part of the plan - the word "potential" seems to have all the qualities of a weasel-word here; anything labelled "potential" is actually not just "potential" but is, in all probability, the main beneficiary of the plan. Is that correct?

The current Floodplain Risk Management Study recommends an upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 20 year level of protection, however as a result of a recent community consultation and a cost benefit analysis report prepared by NSW Public Works, Council is committed to investigating the full impact of an upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection as a part of the review of the study.

As mentioned in the previous answer no decision has been made on the future of flood mitigation in North Wagga. In the event that an upgrade of the North Wagga levee to a 1 in 20 hundred year level of protection does not proceed to this extent, the SRV amount would be adjusted downwards to include only the increase required to upgrade the Main City Levee. If the North Wagga Levee is upgraded to a higher level of protection, Council will find the additional amount within the budget.

\$) The best example of double-talk for anyone to see is to call a set of five year increases "one off" - what's "one off" about five times?

If approved, the proposed Special Rate Variation will be an increase above the rate peg in 2016/17 only. This will increase the overall rating base in the first year and Council will only apply the rate pegging increase to the next four years. The rating base will then be lowered in the sixth year to the same level that would have been if only a rate pegging increase had been applied across the five year period. The table below illustrates this:

Year	Increase (Decrease)
2016/17	7.1%
2017/18	3%
2018/19	3%
2019/20	3%
2020/21	3%
2021/22	(0.9%) decrease

This is different to previous Special Rate Variations that has been imposed by Wagga Wagga City Council and some other Councils, where the increase compounds each year and does not drop off at the end of the Special Rate Variation period.

We hope these responses answer your questions, if you have any further questions please don't hesitate to submit them.

Q My questions relate to the upgrade of the North Wagga levee. 1. Why should residents that who not impacted by flooding (for example residents in Tatton, Boorooma, Estella, Springvale, Bourkelands etc) pay for a levee upgrade in North Wagga? 2. Are there any public infrastructure in North Wagga which is essential to the community as a whole? Is the upgrade proposed to benefit individuals or the Wagga Wagga community as a whole? 3. Will the upgrade proposed be sufficient to address flood risks? Is there any rush to do it now? Are we expecting a flood in the near future? Why can't it not be done in future when funds are available through other means than rate increases? 4. People in North Wagga always knew their properties are at risk during a flood event. They bought their properties at a lower market price due to the flood risk. An upgrade of the levee would increase their property value. The increase of the levee will not increase people's standard of living in North Wagga, it will essentially increase their property values. Is this reasonable that residents in North Wagga will financially benefit from a levee upgrade given that there are other parts in our community where the money is possibly needed much more improve their standard of living? Would it be safe to assume that a number of private landowners and residents will benefit from the upgrade (mostly financially) to the detriment of other communities? Why can the money not be raised to improve public facilities (for example Lake Albert) which will benefit all communities, not just residents and landowners of North Wagga? 5. Would it not be cheaper to ensure that new buildings in North Wagga are built to be flood resilient?

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi,

Thank you for taking the time to send through your questions.

Please find responses to each question below.

1. Why should residents that who not impacted by flooding (for example residents in Tatton, Boorooma, Estella, Springvale, Bourkelands etc) pay for a levee upgrade in North Wagga?

While Council is yet to make a decision on the future of flood mitigation in North Wagga the current Wagga Wagga Floodplain Risk Management Plan recommends an upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 20 year level of protection.

Council funds a multitude of projects and services each year that benefit different community members to varying degrees.

Council funds a multitude of projects and services each year that benefit different community members to varying degrees.

This particular project will benefit approximately 400 homes and business within the levee system.

When a City and surrounding areas flood the entire community is directly or indirectly impacted with evacuations, road closures, clean-up costs and the ongoing cost of infrastructure repairs such as roads and the sewer network.

2. Are there any public infrastructure in North Wagga which is essential to the community as a whole? Is the upgrade proposed to benefit individuals or the Wagga Wagga community as a whole?

The North Wagga levee protects around 400 homes and businesses that contribute to the local economy. It also features a road network that is frequented by locals and visitors alike with its close proximity to the Olympic Highway, CBD and Bomen Industrial area.

If Council can reduce the frequency of flood events in North Wagga this would reduce the clean-up bill of floods in the long term. In turn this means more money would be available for other projects across the Wagga Wagga Local Government Area.

3. Will the upgrade proposed be sufficient to address flood risks? Is there any rush to do it now? Are we expecting a flood in the near future? Why can't it not be done in future when funds are available through other means than rate increases?

The upgrade will mitigate risks up to the design flood level. Further mitigation measures may be identified in the review of the Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan. The risk of flood today is as high (or low) as any other day (statistically). The longer we delay the upgrade, the greater the exposure to the risk.

4. People in North Wagga always knew their properties are at risk during a flood event. They bought their properties at a lower market price due to the flood risk. An upgrade of the levee would increase their property value. The increase of the levee will not increase people's standard of living in North Wagga, it will essentially increase their property values. Is this reasonable that residents in North Wagga will financially benefit from a levee upgrade given that there are other parts in our community where the money is possibly needed much more improve their standard of living? Would it be safe to assume that a number of private landowners and residents will benefit from the upgrade (mostly financially) to the detriment of other communities? Why can the money not be raised to improve public facilities (for example Lake Albert) which will benefit all communities, not just residents and landowners of North Wagga?

Council is not in a position to predict what raising the levee banks would mean for property values in North Wagga. This is not in Council's control and is not a valid reason for not upgrading the levee at North Wagga.

Council is currently reviewing the Lake Albert Management Plan and is currently having a robust conversation with the community about ways to enhance the Lake Albert precinct. For more information please go to the website wagga.nsw.gov.au/lakealbert

5. Would it not be cheaper to ensure that new buildings in North Wagga are built to be flood resilient?

Under the existing Development Control Plan any new dwellings in North Wagga are required to be constructed above the 1 in 100 year flood level.

Q Thanks for your feedback, but it raises more questions. My concern, and that of many others, is not about the importance of building the levee, but how Council appears to be using it as a palatable way to get an SRV through the community and State Govt, without placing enough scrutiny on its expenditure decisions in the past and in the future to work within its current budget. 1. Did the elected body decide the levee should be funded by an SRV without knowing the specific impact on community services and projects that would occur if an SRV did not go ahead? 2. Did the elected body explore funding the levee within current revenue by specifically excluding or postponing other high cost projects and looking at specific service cuts to balance the budget? Is this information available? 3. If this Council can predetermine before the next election that an SRV is necessary, why can't this Council predetermine what services and programs will be cut until if an SRV is not successful and have that discussion? 4. The election is well into the 2016/17 financial year and well past when the budget documents would have to have been adopted. If unsuccessful, is the approach for Council just to adopt a generic deficit non-SRV budget and have the next Council figure it out later? I know funding decisions are made by the elected body, and I would hope this process is about providing them with more information to consider, even though they already have decided they have a "strong" preference to go ahead with an SRV.

asked, 29 days ago

Hi


In stating that Council has a strong preference to fund the raising of the levee through an SRV, Council has indicated that the debt serving cost of additional borrowings will require further reductions to a number of service areas in the event that the application to IPART is not successful. Council has not yet identified the specific areas that will need to be reduced and this will require more detailed analysis and discussion with the elected body once a decision is made by IPART. The timing of the decision from IPART (June 2016) will enable the existing Council to consider a report on the areas of budget reduction and given this current timing of the election is September 2016, the existing Council may need to refer the final decision to the newly elected Council prior to implementation given the normal caretaker directives issued by the NSW Office of Local Government related to making major decisions just prior to an election.

The Council faces a number of pressures in relation to its budget and needs to balance the requirements of residents and

The Council faces a number of pressures in relation to its budget and needs to balance the requirements of maintaining and renewing existing infrastructure with the demands of providing additional infrastructure to meet the requirements of a growing and thriving regional city. The funding of the levee bank upgrade through a SRV was a key component of Council's Fit for the Future - Improvement Plan submission to IPART and this was favourably assessed by IPART.

Wagga Wagga City Council has considered a range of options for funding the levee upgrade during budget workshops. These options include excluding other capital projects and amending the timing for delivery. Council remains committed to delivering the major projects contained in the LTFP.

Thank you again for your questions and please let us know if you have any more.

Q In response to the reply to Timmy If council has already made the decision to up grade the levee what is the point in consultation    

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

The current consultation process is to have a conversation with the community about how Council should fund an upgrade of the flood levee system. Processes such as this forum provide a valuable opportunity for Council to inform the community by providing more detailed and specific responses to questions as well receiving further feedback.

Feedback from the community was considered when Council made a decision to upgrade the Main Wagga Levee at the July Council Meeting.

In the most recent round of Flood Futures consultations 93% of respondents to a survey said that they support the upgrade of the Main City Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection.

Nearly 90% of respondents to the survey on flood risk management in North Wagga support an upgrade of its levee system to a 1 in 20 year level of protection or higher. More than 70% of the survey respondents reside in North Wagga.

These results were considered in the report that recommended to proceed with an upgrade of the Main City Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection, and to incorporate an investigation into providing a 1 in 100 year level of protection for North Wagga into the upcoming review of the Wagga Wagga Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan.





The full resolution as adopted by Council is as follows:

That Council:

a)proceed with construction of the Main City levee to provide a 1 in 100 year level of protection, making allowance for the possibility that the North Wagga levees may also be constructed to provide a 1 in 100 year level of protection

b)incorporate an investigation into providing a 1 in 100 year level of protection for North Wagga into the upcoming review of the Wagga Wagga Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan

You can read the report in full [here](#).The current Wagga Wagga Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan recommends an upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 20 year level of protection, however no decision has been made at this stage.

Q no iam not in favour of any more rate increases as at times it can be hard enough trying to find the money for rates without been stung more money , as i did not choose to live on the north side i wagga it has nothing to do with us south west of the city we are more likely to have a bush fire problem not floods.    

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Thank you for your feedback. Your contribution is valuable and will be considered in any future decisions regarding the Levee Upgrade Project.

The proposed Special Rate Variation is intended to cover Council's one-third share of the cost of upgrading the Main City Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection, and the potential upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 20 year level of protection. Recent consultations demonstrate overwhelming community support for both of these upgrades, with many pointing out the potential safety, economic and social benefits for the wider City.

If you have difficulty meeting your rate payment arrangements can be made with Council to help make your payments more manageable. Methods currently available are: Direct Debit, B-Pay and Centrelink Deductions and some employers offer payroll deductions (check with your employer).

Please phone Council to discuss your individual circumstances. Provisions are also made available under Section 601 of the Local Government Act 1993 in relation to hardship caused by a General Revaluation. Application forms are available on request from Council. Pensioners are also able to apply for a concession on some charges.

To find out what your contribution to the levee upgrade would be you can enter your property details into the [online rates calculator](#) or. or call 1300 292 422.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Q The original price tag on the levee bank was \$15M - where did the extra \$8M come from? This increase of 50+% has been over a 24 month period. What is the break-up of the increase between businesses and residents?

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Thank you for your questions.

When the Levee Upgrade Project was first included in Council's Long Term Financial Plan for 2012-2022 the estimated cost of upgrading the Main City Levee only was \$19.7M.

As a result of community consultation and a review of the Wagga Wagga Floodplain Risk Management Plan, Council is now also investigating an upgrade to the North Wagga Levee.

The latest cost estimate of \$23.3M for both upgrades is based on design estimates prepared by NSW Public Works.

Council is required to take many steps in the process for this major infrastructure project, and cost estimates become more accurate as these steps are completed.

To answer your question about the break-down of how much different ratepayers will contribute to the levee upgrade component of the Special Rate Variation, the following table shows how many properties are in each rate category, what percentage each category currently pays compared to what they would pay under the proposed increase:

Rate category	Number of properties	% of total rate income in 2015/16	% of total rate income under proposed SRV
Business Village	185	0.25%	0.27%
Business Wagga	1,617	26.44%	28.74%
Farmland	1,916	12.02%	6.08%
Residential Other	1,112	4.03%	4.39%
Residential Village	1,131	1.13%	1.11%
Residential Wagga	21,370	56.13%	59.42%

We hope this answers your questions, if not please let us know and we will do our best to clarify.

Q Why doesn't the council pay for all the levee?

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Thank you for your question.

It would be prohibitive for Council to pay for the full \$23.3M cost of the flood levee upgrade project and would impose a much heavier burden on ratepayers.

While Council is driving the project the State and Federal Governments are stakeholders and have a social and economic responsibility in seeing large scale flood mitigation projects go ahead. The sharing of costs on a proportional basis between the three levels of government has been historically and still is the funding formula for projects such as this.

For this reason it is reasonable for the State and Federal Governments to pay for a share of the upgrade.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Q Last SRV, approx. \$8M, for the River Area was diverted to the Bolton Park Redevelopment, Why? forget Bolton Park, Levee upgrade much more important, use the \$8M you have.

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Thank you for your question.

There was \$8.5M incorporated into the previous SRV for a major community facility, but it was not specified where this facility would be located. At one stage there were discussions that this facility would be built near what has since become the Riverside Precinct, however after extensive community consultation and development of a business case this scenario was deemed to be not feasible.

In order to maximise outcomes for the community, Council is currently planning to construct this facility over two sites, Bolton Park and the Exhibition Centre, now known as the Multi-Purpose Stadium (MPS). The MPS will be a major community facility featuring conference centres, sporting venues and other community assets.

The previous SRV was to improve and maintain service level and could be used for a variety of purposes as identified in the application, the proposed SRV to fund the levee upgrade is a for single purpose SRV and would only be able to be used to fund an upgrade of the levee system.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Q Thanks for the previous answer confirming Council will be funding the stadium project at Bolton Park and Equex using borrowings that equate to around the same amount as the levee upgrade will cost. With that answer, I cannot agree with Council's belief/opinion that "the fairest and most cost effective result for the community is to fund the (levee) project with a SRV" when Council is standing by its decision to tie up millions of dollars of borrowings, to be repaid using general rates, for the MPS - a project that is currently by your recent answer "on hold". To me, it is like using my spending money to buy new shoes and getting a loan to buy the family's groceries, the priorities are off - if you have to borrow for the essentials, you shouldn't be spending on the non-essentials. **SERVICE CUT QUESTIONS** Currently the information about what happens if the SRV is unsuccessful is vague, somewhat random and unqualified - "Services that could be impacted include Council's road and footpath maintenance program, facilities such as the Oasis Aquatic Centre, cultural programs such as community festivals and further staff cuts." 1. So to make an informed decision can we get more information about the funding solutions Council has planned for if the SRV is not successful? 2. As this is the other side to the SRV argument, can the specific cuts, service impacts and budget result for the scenario of Council funding the levee without an SRV be documented? 3. Will this be available prior to the closure of this discussion period? Thanks

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Funding options for various projects are decisions made by the elected body. Council has indicated it has a strong preference for funding the Levee bank from an SRV and will need to further consider which specific programs and facilities will receive less funding if IPART does not approve the SRV.

The next Council election is due to take place in September 2016 so Council is unable to predetermine what specific programs and services could be cut if the SRV does not go ahead.

Your feedback on this issue will be recorded as a part of the consultation process and relayed back to the elected body.

Q Has council looked into purchasing its own machines and building the levy higher itself. I'd imagine contractors doing the job would have up to a 30% margin built into the project. \$23 million is a lot of man hours and diesel. At the end of the project council could either sell off the machines or use them for other projects such as digging out the Lake or building that proposed water ski strip next to the River.

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Thank you for your question.

The NSW Floodplain Management Program generally does not encourage the delivery of projects using Council resources and it is likely that an external contractor will be engaged. However, in certain instances an exemption from the requirement to call tenders may be provided and the option of delivering this project using Council resources has not been completely ruled out.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Q The levee is a priority project. Yet it appears that the council has demonstrated financial mismanagement by supporting Douglas Area Space at the expense of the levee. Why should rate payers be expected to support a financially inept council. How much has the council saved for this project since the 2012 floods?

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Thank you for your question.

We agree that the levee upgrade is a priority project and Council is committed to funding one-third of the cost pending the outcome of State and Federal grant applications for the remaining two-thirds of the estimated \$23.3M project.

Council has been working towards an upgrade of the levee system since 2007, as there are many steps to take before grant applications can be made and construction can go ahead.

Since the 2012 floods Council has spent approximately \$338,220 on necessary studies and reports as a part of the Main City and North Wagga Levee Upgrade Project, with approximately \$218,847 in assistance from State and Federal grants.

In regards to your question about Council's finances, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) this week deemed Wagga Wagga City Council to be 'Fit for the Future' and in a position to remain as a stand-alone Council.

You can read IPART's report in full [here](#).

Q I am a 20 year Wagga Wagga city ratepayer and live in a flood free area of the city. It seems like every couple of years with ever increasing frequency, we the ratepayers are being asked to support a special Rate Variation for some cause or other. This is never removed from our rates at the end of the proposed SRV time period, so it then becomes a permanent rate rise. The administration of Wagga City Council is very poor and is not run in anything resembling a Business like manner. All that seems to matter is more and more office staff and managers on ever increasing salaries. The last flood was years ago and not one shovel of dirt has been put onto the either of Wagga levees but huge amounts of money has been wasted. North Wagga residents are not 2nd class and should have the same protection as the rest of the the residents in the central business area. The next flood is getting closer by the day. Run the Management of Council administration functions within your budgets and stop these endless rate rises called SRV. If this was private enterprise you would be broke or have to made serious decisions to stay afloat.

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi,

Thank you for taking the time to contact Wagga Wagga City Council. The last SRV was approved by the Minister for Local Government in 2008/07.

Your feedback is important to us and will be considered when the elected Council makes a decision in January about how to fund the flood levee upgrade.

Information and updates will continue to be posted on this website wagga.nsw.gov.au/srv.

If you have any questions please let us know and we'll do our best to answer them.

Q If this is a "special Variation" will it be removed once the \$7.75 mill is raised or are we stuck with it forever.

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Yes, the Special Rate Variation will be removed at the end of the five year period. This will be a condition of any approval from IPART and this requirement is independently audited.

The levee upgrade component of the rate increase will be a one off increase maintained for five years.

Rates will continue to be indexed to the rate peg set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) each year. Council has assumed this rate peg will be 3% each year, however it is likely to be less than this.

Assuming the rate peg is set at 3% each year, ratepayers will see a drop in rates at the end of the five year Special Rate Variation period.

The following table shows what the reduction in rates will be for the average land value in each rate category.

Rate category	Average land value	Reduction in rates 2021/22 compared to 2020/21*
Residential Wagga	\$121,000	\$53.85
Residential Villages	\$63,000	\$18.97
Residential Other	\$219,000	\$76.34
Business Wagga	\$445,000	\$341.45
Business Villages	\$74,000	\$28.05
Farmland	\$637,000	\$71.66

*Assumes a rate peg of 3% each year.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Q Really disappointed to see the language around the North Wagga levee, describing it only as a 'potential' upgrade. Just three months ago Council supported moving ahead with at least a 1 in 20 upgrade for North Wagga, and wanted an investigation into building it higher (see http://yoursaywagga.com.au/floodfutures/news_feed/certainty-for-main-city-levee-upgrade). Yet the language in this consultation doesn't seem to acknowledge that North Wagga will be upgraded to at least 1 in 20 (and that the SRV funding must therefore be made available for it). Why is this? Please make sure you incorporate this into the language used in upcoming consultations.

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Thank you for taking the time to submit your question.

Council has made a decision to proceed with an upgrade of the Main City Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection, however a decision on an upgrade of the North Wagga Levee is yet to be made.

As mentioned in the article you referenced, Council is committed to investigating the full impact of an upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection as a part of the review of the Floodplain Risk Management Study.

The current study recommends an upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 20 year level of protection.

Council cannot predict what decisions the elected body will make on the North Wagga Levee in the future. However, if the upgrade of the North Wagga Levee does proceed to a 1 in 100 year level of protection, the additional funding required on top of the proposed Special Rate Variation will be found within Council's budget. If a decision is made not to proceed with the upgrade, rates will be adjusted downward accordingly towards the end of the five-year Special Rate Variation Period.

I appreciate that you would like to see the language used in the consultation reflecting a firmer commitment for North Wagga but this is not possible until the investigation on the 1 in 100 year level of protection is completed.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Q Council's share of the Indoor Multi Purpose Stadium is to be funded in 2015/16 by borrowings of \$7,163,550 (according to Council's Delivery Plan document), which is just short of the amount required for the Levee, and I assume does not take into account future maintenance and operational costs. My questions are around why an SRV is necessary for the levee project which protects the CBD and is vitally important to the City-wide social, economic and environmental wellbeing, when a project like the Indoor Stadium is being paid for by borrowings and general ratepayer revenue. 1. What is the current status of this project? 2. What is the status of expenditure on the project and borrowings drawn down for it? 3. Given it is the same amount of borrowings as the levee project, and has been allocated funding during the same period when the levee project funding and requirement was known, why was this project not considered for the SRV to go ahead? 4. Instead of an SRV or reducing unknown services if an SRV was not approved, has Council considered re-directing the borrowings currently sitting on the Council books for the Indoor Stadium to the levee project, particularly if the project has not yet commenced and PCYC have withdrawn from the project? Thank you.

asked, about 1 month ago

Hi

Thank you for your questions.

Please find answers to each of your questions below.

Q1. What is the current status of this project? - MPS

A. The Multi-purpose Stadium project is positioned over two locations – the Exhibition Centre and Bolton Park. The Exhibition Centre project is currently on hold pending an announcement from the National Stronger Regions Fund Grant application, with an expected timeframe for the announcement by December 2015, with a Council report to follow in early 2016.

The Bolton Park location project is on hold with Council waiting on PCYC development of their business case and proposal for their youth hub facility.

Q2. What is the status of expenditure on the project and borrowings drawn down for it?

A. The expenditure on the project to date is \$1,022,651.89, which has occurred over the previous 4 financial years, with the original business case for the project commencing in the 2012/13 financial year.

The borrowings drawn down for the MPS project over the past 4 years, has been \$161,000

Q3. Given it is the same amount of borrowings as the levee project, and has been allocated funding during the same period when the levee project funding and requirement was known, why was this project not considered for the SRV to go ahead?

A. Council's elected body determined the funding source for the MPS project, and it was decided at the time that an SRV for the MPS project was not Council's preferred funding source option.

Q4. Instead of an SRV or reducing unknown services if an SRV was not approved, has Council considered re-directing the borrowings currently sitting on the Council books for the Indoor Stadium to the levee project, particularly if the project has not yet commenced and PCYC have withdrawn from the project?

yet commenced and PCYC have withdrawn from the project?

A. Council's 2015/16 Long Term Financial Plan has the MPS project as a major capital project. At this stage, the project is still going ahead.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Funding the levee upgrade: Community Forum

Wednesday 18 November 2015, Council Meeting Room

In attendance:

Councillors: Cr Paul Funnell (Chair), Cr Greg Conkey, Cr Julian McLaren

Council staff: General Manager Alan Eldridge, Director Corporate Services Craig Richardson, Manager Communications, Director Planning and Regulatory Services Andrew Crakanthorp, Manager Finance Carolyn Rodney, Manager Corporate Strategy and Governance Christine Priest, Senior Revenue Accountant Craig Katsoolis, Senior Engineer Peter Ross, Strategic Partner Strategy and Communications Brett Koschel, Communications and Engagement Officer Lauren Pezet.

Other: 33 community members including [REDACTED]

Discussion relating to funding of the levee upgrade project

Q. When will we know if the state and federal governments want to chip in and will we have enough money if it is going to take multiple years, because costs will increase.

RESPONSE: If funding is approved construction may start next year. If we were to build all of it would take five years. We can raise our funds but there is only a pool of funds of \$7M for similar projects around the state and we are likely to only get \$1M per year for construction. If we borrow all \$23M the proposed special rate variation won't fund the project. This is the difficulty we face as a community, not just a council, and we will continue to apply for grants.

Q. What is plan B?

RESPONSE: If the special rate variation is not approved we would borrow our third and find savings elsewhere, but that doesn't solve the problem of getting the other two-thirds from grant funding.

COMMENT: Supports the upgrade and thinks state government will fund the project so we shouldn't be worrying about that. The Floodplain Resident Protection Association has some issues about the upgrade; while we should all be in this together, it is only fair and equitable if we are all getting the same outcome. One group of business and property get a direct benefit and others, like us outside protection area will see a direct adverse impact (increase heights, decreased property value), we are concerned Council has not addressed inequity in this proposed funding model where there is a blanket percentage increase. However we agree the upgrade of the main city levee should go ahead as soon as possible.

RESPONSE: We don't have resources to fund the levee upgrade at this point. If we had to fund the project differently other services would erode in some way. It's ultimately a decision for Councillors. We can't proceed without a commitment of where the funds are going to come from. A lot of research and committed funds to this point, well modelled, but we don't have funds to proceed.

Q. The project was estimated to cost \$18M three years ago, it's now \$23M, is that over estimate of what it will cost, or to allow for further costs as time goes by? Council noted for underestimating for their projects. Where did extra \$6M for gasworks come from? Price will exceed if it takes 5 or more years. Also, the reports that I'm reading, the wording says that the North Wagga levee upgrade is a possibility for an increase, are we in for sure or not? View is NW is left to last and all works on Wagga side and cost blowout means NW won't happen.

RESPONSE: Cost estimates come from final designs. North Wagga levee is currently 1 in 16, and Main City is 1 in 65. Main City will become a 1 in 100 year and an upgrade of the 1 in 20 for North Wagga is included in the \$23M figure that we are looking to raise money for.

RESPONSE: Council will be required to use the money raised to do the works. \$23M based on detailed designs and indexed for a 5 year construction period.

Q. Does that include wet years, adverse weather?

RESPONSE: Under normal tender conditions inflation taken into account. Council will likely call for tenders due to specialist nature of work. It will be the contractor's responsibility to finish work despite the weather; however it is likely to be timed to correspond with the dry time of the year.

COMMENT: I'm a farmer and will contribute major dollars and won't get anything in return.

RESPONSE: We all use local police, infrastructure, shops and services as a community, however the extra impost on farmers has been considered and that is why we are proposing to introduce a reduced rate increase for those properties

COMMENT: 4.1% seems a little bit tough over 5 years. Payment is due by prosperity.

Council should consider loans. 4.1% adds to rating base and drops off, but you have picked up compound on the 4.1%. There are people who will be concerned about that. With the levy on the abattoir construction years ago, everyone paid same amount. For this project a loan is the best idea.

RESPONSE: We have factored in indexation. The additional increase to cover the levee upgrade will be shown separately on rate notices and it will come off. It will be a requirement of IPART to come off and will be subject to audit each year.

Q. I have an issue in relation to timing. In relation to applications for grants and SRV's, we are waiting for outcomes of those, then what? Can we have commitment to get a tender, start date with loan or other arrangement - not just good will?

RESPONSE: The process was already in train, there has been a massive undertaking for design etc, gauging changed 12 months ago, modelling changed so the height had to be changed and we had to go back to drawing board and we have been delayed by 12 months and effected grants etc. Council is committed to do this and part of the funding proposal is that if the SRV is rejected we will borrow.

RESPONSE: We know what we are dealing with, designs are done and there is a lot of commitment from Councillors to undertake this project. There will be a reprioritising of other services with the community if we borrow.

RESPONSE: Application to IPART is due in Feb 2016 and decision in May 2016. If we can get State and Fed funding then we could start construction in late 2016. The risk here is State and Fed Govt funding. If we go ahead then we can't claim for work done. If we can get a commitment, even if the funding is drip fed, that will give us some certainty. We have current applications in and will keep pushing that line and submitting applications.

COMMENT: In the meantime, Wagga is at risk and missing out. The impact that is not visible is the large developments that are not getting to drawing board;

What isn't visible is that large developments that were slated for the CBD aren't been built because no one wants to build in a flood plain. Who is going to build a \$20 - \$40M development in a floodplain.

RESPONSE: Wagga is actually leading the charge in relation to flood mitigation. Our businesses are at risk.

COMMENT: need to go ahead with levee. Need to get a loan and look at other projects and see if they are viable. For example the duplication of equine centres, do they need to go ahead?

RESPONSE: We are looking at the viability of projects and elected members will make decision.

COMMENT: This forum about Community been on the same page and stopping water going from right hand side onto left hand side. We need to understand the economic and commercial benefits that were driven out of our CBD, and I don't agree with the arguments that we live on a farm so we shouldn't contribute. Farmers use the hospital etc. We need to urge everyone to agree that we need this step to demonstrate that we are committed to the future of the project. If we don't the levee will never be built. We need to take responsibility and make sure that the levee is a part of our future. So let's as a community give the council the go ahead and let them get on with the levee upgrade. If not they will borrow.

RESPONSE: thank you and council agrees. This is about the future of the city and the legacy that we leave for future generations.

Q. With the proposed increases do you think Wagga businesses rates are viable? You're trying to encourage growth in the city and then pushing them out with an extra increase in rates.

RESPONSE: It's a model and we have to come up with a third of funding. Under the current model we are trying to make most of bad situation.

COMMENT: I'm a pensioner; I don't have extra money and find it hard. Doing this takes money out of shops. We don't have money to spend.

RESPONSE: If anyone has difficulty paying their rates they are encouraged to Contact council, we have hardship policy. Eligible pensioners receive pensioner rebate as well, subject to state legislation.

COMMENT: Don't do river upgrade until we have the money.

COMMENT: It's Only for 5 years, it's a small conciliation.

COMMENT: If extended over longer period, it would be a smaller amount.

Q. When will you apply the variation?

RESPONSE: It will take effect from July next year.

COMMENT: Agree with necessity for increase in rates. You need to remind people that we were at risk of disaster in 2012, emphasis the need for the levee increase.

COMMENT: I've been in Wagga for five years and bought in Glenfield. I agree levee has to be increased. Why has Council not put money aside over time? This is a major thing. I don't care about making city beautiful.

RESPONSE: We thought we had a 1 in 100 in 2010. New modelling proved in wasn't as high. It wasn't until 2014 we knew it wasn't 1 in 100 and we had to go higher.

RESPONSE: Circumstances changed and this term we had to make a decision.

Other discussion relating to the project

- What the levee bank will be made of, heights etc
- Concern about Harness Racing facility being built on the floodplain
- Concern about modelling demonstrating impact of levee upgrades on floodplain
- Suggestions Council should be focusing on clearing vegetation and other flood mitigation methods such as dams, not upgrading the levee.
- Concern about impact of Riverside development on floodplain and money spent on the project.



Comments and feedback form

Community forum: Wednesday 18 November 2015

Please leave any comments or feedback below and drop into the box or hand to a Council staff member

Details (not compulsory)

Name: [REDACTED] Contact (email or phone number): [REDACTED]

- 1) No problem with levee upgrade - not sure SRV is the best way to help fund
would like to see a loan considered
- 2) Very unhappy with the harness project - land sold for \$1 to a cashed-up org.
community expected to pay when this org. is
going to contribute to increased flood levels
- 3) There seems to be a reluctance to talk about cumulative effects



Comments and feedback form

Community forum: Wednesday 18 November 2015

Please leave any comments or feedback below and drop into the box or hand to a Council staff member

Details (not compulsory)

Name: [REDACTED] Contact (email or phone number): [REDACTED]

IF WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER, THEN JUST AS WE
SHOULD ~~THE~~ EXPECT TO PAY AN EQUIVALENT AMOUNT, WE SHOULD
ALSO EXPECT AN EQUIVALENT OUTCOME. AT THIS STAGE
THERE ARE NOT EQUITABLE OUTCOMES AND THIS NEEDS TO
BE ADDRESSED. OTHERWISE, I SUPPORT ECONOMICALLY THE
PROTECTION OF THE MAIN CITY AND THIS PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL.
IN ADDITION, THERE NEEDS TO BE BETTER DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT OF THE FLOODPLAIN.



Comments and feedback form

Community forum: Wednesday 18 November 2015

Please leave any comments or feedback below and drop into the box or hand to a Council staff member

Details (not compulsory)

Name: [REDACTED] Contact (email or phone number): [REDACTED]

RATE LEVER SHOULD NOT BE PLACED
ON OUTER FLOOD AREAS



Comments and feedback form

Community forum: Wednesday 18 November 2015

Please leave any comments or feedback below and drop into the box or hand to a Council staff member

Details (not compulsory)

Name: _____ Contact (email or phone number): _____

Well presented; the chairman (Paul Funnell?) was very good
at progressing the meeting & letting everyone have their say
(even though some members of the audience just came to enquire
Council & push their own ^{old} hobby-horse).

I found the information helpful & well presented & I learnt
~~some new~~ some new information re the "levy levee".

Thank you.

(Council officers were also well prepared
and helpful).

From: [REDACTED]
To: [srv](#)
Subject: Levee upgrade
Date: Wednesday, 4 November 2015 9:37:06 AM

From: [REDACTED]
Date: 4 November 2015 at 09:34:24 AEDT
To: srv@wagga.nsw.gov.au
Subject: Levee upgrade

Good Morning

I am strongly against a special rate rise to fund this upgrade, paid by rate payers.

WWCC has known about this required upgrade for years and hasn't put funds aside. Why should the cities rate payers fund something that governments are responsible for?

Why should the cities rate payers of which the vast majority of don't even live in the effected area? We didn't get a handout during the last flood, like others did. Maybe those handouts could have helped fund the upgrade. It's not sour grapes, just could have been better managed for Wagga Wagga.

Cheers

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [srv](#)
Subject: Levee bank my thoughts
Date: Friday, 23 October 2015 2:02:28 PM

To whom it may concern,

I have no hesitation in doing this to save town city and North Wagga of flood risk but I am not sold on the words written of potentially upgrading North Wagga to 1-20. We need to feel confident that will definitely happen before we vote.

It's a no brainer to fund this and until this is written in concrete I am very hesitate.
Especially if we say yes to the city imagine North Wagga impact then if it is risen to 1-100

Let's face it, it will cost more to clean up each time on rate payers so again a no brainer personally the no brainer was the 1 - 100 option all over city and north Wagga.

Thanks

From: [REDACTED]
To: [SRV](#)
Subject: The proposed SRV
Date: Thursday, 29 October 2015 4:43:44 PM

Dear Council staff,

Provided that some allowance is made for people on low and fixed incomes (for whom increases like this can be very difficult to absorb), I **fully** support the SRV and I imagine many other property owners would too (even if they are mostly silent on it). For those of us in Central Wagga (e.g. myself, in Tarcutta Street) who were evacuated during the 2012 floods, the idea of the levee bank being breached is so horrifying. We could lose much of our homes as well as so much of the CBD which we love – and it is impossible to insure buildings in Central Wagga against flood (to the best of my knowledge – certainly our strata manager has been unable to find anyone who will, although if you know otherwise we would love to hear about it). So please, please, please upgrade the levee bank as needed, and charge us accordingly! (Personally I think that an average annual increase specifically to cover upgrades to the levee bank of \$40 per annum is cheap at the price.)

I am very encouraged to see the proposal in with my rates notice and commend you on your attention to this very important issue.

Best regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [SRV](#)
Subject: SRV
Date: Friday, 6 November 2015 2:11:06 PM

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in opposition to the proposed Special Rate Variation. I think the proposed percentage and projected increase in rates is an unfair burden for most households already struggling with ever increasing living costs. A 50/50 split between rate payers and council loans would be more equitable.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [SRV](#)
Subject: Comments on SRV
Date: Wednesday, 28 October 2015 9:18:26 AM

We fully support the Special Rate Variation.

This additional cost to all ratepayers would be insignificant in comparison to the cost of the damage that would be caused if the levy bank was breached. We ask that this project be given the priority that it duly deserves.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [SRV](#)
Subject: Rate increase
Date: Wednesday, 21 October 2015 6:09:22 PM

To whomever it may concern,

In regards to the flood levy, 7.1% is nearly 2.5 times 3%! That amount of increase is substantial and well above normal inflation rates of any kind. For families or businesses that are struggling or multiple property owners that will be a burden. It appears you have considered the struggles farmers are facing but recognise that this will be impossible for families who already find it difficult to meet rates payments. There must be a less dramatic way to help pay for the expense. Even a fundraiser or extra tax deductible payment option? I'm not sure of how but can other options be considered?

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Sent from my Windows Phone

From: [REDACTED]
To: [SRV](#)
Subject: Proposed rate increase
Date: Sunday, 18 October 2015 12:03:29 PM

I strongly object to the proposed rate increase to cover the flood levee works. When I purchased my property one of the most important aspects considered was the probability of flooding. It is totally unfair therefore that I should have to contribute towards this work. If anything, I believe any rate rise to cover these works should be 'pegged' so that those who choose to live in flood prone areas pay more than those living in areas less likely to be subject to flooding.

In addition, I think Council should more effectively budget for such works. While I think sporting facilities are an essential in a community such as Wagga Wagga, I think a lot of sporting fraternities could share facilities more, e.g. Robertson oval has had so much spent on it supposedly to attract major football events, so why does Council need to spend so much more on another oval for a different football code?

I applaud Council to rethink an across the board SRV. It just is not fair.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [SRV](#)
Subject: Special Rate Variation
Date: Tuesday, 17 November 2015 12:20:17 PM

I am emailing regarding the survey about Special Rate Variation. I am a rate payer.

I ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE with any Special Rate Variation being considered to pay for levee upgrade.

The current and previous Councillors have only supported and endorsed projects that had benefits for them and a select few high profile people in this town - "The rich get richer while the poor get poorer"

The Councillors are responsible for the massive fiasco of granting over \$2M to a single private company that went bust and rate payers are having to pick up the bill. Now they have the audacity to want rate payers to pay for work that should be covered with regular rates and could have been paid for with this money. What a joke.

Get people on the Council who want to work for the City not feather their own nests. There are a couple of them already on Council but they are far the minority - and if this wasn't the case we wouldn't be having the poor poor decisions that are currently being made by this Council.

NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! to any Special Rate Variation.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Ph [REDACTED]
Mob [REDACTED]

Objection to SRV

To GENERAL Manager

As a Rate Payer aged 46
I strongly oppose to LEXY BANK
\$20 million.
Please pay off the existing loans
be for getting Defer in DEBT
as I have too

SigHx
Rate Payer



PUBLIC STALLS

Four stalls were held with staff from Council's Communications and Finance teams available to discuss the proposal with residents, answer any questions and record feedback.

Stalls were held in the following locations:

Marketplace: Thursday 29/10/15 10am-6pm

South City Shopping Centre: Thursday 5/11/15 10am-6pm

Sprout and About market: Saturday 14/11/15 8am-1pm

Sturt Mall: Thursday 26/11/15 10am-6pm

Comments received at Marketplace Stall, Thursday 29/10/15 10am-6pm
Owns several properties: Council needs to start living within its means. Against the SRV
Against the levee and have completely lost faith in Council
Mary, Humula: We have to have the rate increase to pay for the levee. Asked a lot of questions about increases for farmland and minimum rates
What are they doing about other areas of the river which may be affected by increasing the levee height. Appreciate you have to protect the majority of people living in the Wagga CBD area.
Move levee bank in North Wagga. The caravan levee should be removed and the Trotting track is an issue.
Everyone should pay for the upgrade because everyone uses the CBD in some way. It will also bring down insurance costs and protect CBD facilities.
Ladysmith farmer: Doesn't want to pay for North Wagga levee upgrade, they should be relocated.
The rate increase and upgrade has to go ahead, as long as it works.
Community ad on TV would be good to show the damage done. Agree we have to fix the levee.
Lives in Central Wagga: Thinks the SRV needs to happen and that everyone should contribute because evacuation/flood damage in the CBD impacts everyone in one way or another.
Lives in Central Wagga: supports the upgrade but with penalty rates going down will struggle to pay increase in council rates.
Lives outside of the Wagga LGA but the levee upgrade needs to happen. The impact on the CBD is huge.
Owns a house in Estella (not flood area) but says the upgrade needs to happen and everyone should share the cost
You shouldn't be applying for an SRV, it should be a long term loan
Anthony Weule: in a wheelchair, there needs to be a fence along the levee, I recently fell off and was stuck for 4hours before anyone came to help.
Council needs to run as a business. There shouldn't be any more buildings in North Wagga. The village should be pushed out. The trotting track shouldn't be approved.
I live just inside the main city levee, support the upgrade and the SRV to fund it.
I own three houses and don't want rates to go up
man took 4x brochures

Wanted to know about water inside the levee, what is the capacity to get rid of this water quickly? Encouraged to contact Council's Infrastructure department.

Total interactions: 51

Comments noted at South City Shopping Centre Stall, Thursday 5/11/15 10am-6pm

I support the levee upgrade to prevent flooding of the CBD. I hope the rate increase doesn't affect our rent.

I'm aware of the proposed SRV. I don't have any views on it either ways

Against the proposal to increase rates. Council wasted money on gasworks funding. Council should save money in other ways to fund the upgrade.

Hadn't heard about the proposed increase until now, no views either way.

I'm a pensioner and renter, an extra \$50 a year is quite a lot of money.

I've already read enough about the proposed increase

Wasn't aware of the proposal before now, thank you for the information

It's a waste of time putting the levee up

Hadn't heard about it until now. Took a fact sheet

The upgrade needs to be done

You should be doing other things to make the river safe. Weirs etc

Council should stop wasting money and spend it on things this town needs, like the levee upgrade

Everybody should pay. "What's \$40 a year? If it floods we're f***ed"

Hadn't heard about the proposed increase but owns a number of properties in Wagga Wagga and lives on a hill but doesn't mind paying extra to increase the levee. It must be a terrible worry for people who live of the floodplain.

Disappointed that the pensioner rebate stays the same while rates go up. Will have to pay it anyway so no point complaining

Initial response was "Why should I have to pay? I live on the floodplain". After a conversation agreed that it should be a blanket increase.

"Why can't you stagger the increase for properties depending on how close you live to the levee?" After a conversation agreed that it would be to complicated to stagger rate increase by location and that the project is for the benefit for the entire community.

Great idea. About to buy a house and happy to pay extra. It was terrible when the CBD was evacuated.

Agree with it and it has to be done. You do it right once and you'll have it forever. Having said that I don't agree with paying for the North Wagga levee.

Instead of increasing rates you should save money elsewhere, sack your engineers

Agree the rate increase needs to be a blanket one, but can't see how they can build the trotting track without raising the north wagga levee first.

Let them all flood/drown!

I'm on a fixed income so I would prefer not to pay an increase in rates. I also live off the floodplain but understand it has to happen.

Great idea if it will protect North Wagga

Against the rate increase

It has to happen. Also collected a lot of info for potential acreage purchase

Lives in Collingullie, thinks it has to happen and I agree with the rate rise. Interested in how it impacts his property.

Council has known about this for years so should have saved the money by now.

Support proposed rate increase totally
It needs to happen
Why do I have to pay? I choose to live in a protected area
Interested in how much rates will increase by
Interested in the impact on renters
Total interactions: 50

Comments noted at Sprout and About market stall, Saturday 14/11/15 8am-1pm
Comments in the paper coming from the Floodplain Resident Protection Association against the proposed rate increase don't represent the wider group- we are happy to pay
Fair enough
Don't upgrade the levee at all, let both sides flood or collect \$10 a night from caravaners at Wilks Park to raise the money
Understands why everyone has to pay, just not very happy about it.
The state and federal governments should be paying for the whole lot
I'm happy to pay for the extra amount even though I own four farmland properties west of Wagga. Glad it's a reduced rate for farmers
If people want their homes and the city protected they need to be prepared to chip in
In favour of the rate rise, we all live in the community and we're all a part of it
In favour of the increase in rates particularly for businesses, it will reduce insurance premiums.
I don't understand why all of us should compensate those that chose to live on the floodplain.
Council is not original enough. Forget a levee upgrade, fix the main street. Maintain what we have. Decisions are only made to upgrade infrastructure use
The money that went to evacuated residents in the CBD should have gone to North Wagga residents that don't have insurance.
I rent. You have to do it, money doesn't go on trees.
"I am totally cheesed off that people don't want to pay for the levee upgrade. It's not like you're asking for a fortune."
Understands the rate increase and reasons for it. Council should also look at short terms solutions like a better sandbagging system.
The sooner it's done the better.
You don't get anything for nothing
Total interactions: 49

Comments noted at Sturt Mall stall, Thursday 25/11/15 10am-6pm
Council should stop wasting money on things like the airport hanger and failed lighting at Robertson Oval and save it up for important projects like the levee upgrade. But even then it doesn't really flood that much in Wagga in the scheme of things. I own four properties and the increase in rates might make me pack up and leave.
North Wagga Resident: has a disabled daughter so can't raise house. Agree with the levee upgrade and rate increase. Just get it done.
The only reason you're upgrading the levee system is because of the Harness Racing Track. Don't build the track and don't upgrade the levee. Against the rate increase, Council wastes enough money as it is.
I'll worry about the rate increase when the time comes
Council should have applied for the money that was given to all the people in town when it was evacuated. Council should stop wasting money on designs and approvals for

projects. If you buy in a floodplain you should be prepared to pay. If you don't buy in a floodplain you shouldn't have to pay.
Happy to pay, get on with it and upgrade both the main city and North Wagga levees
We're pensioners and wouldn't like to pay an increase in rates. Would prefer if Council stopped spending money on projects that need ongoing maintenance such as artwork out at the airport. Was supportive of the rate increase after a conversation about how it would work (i.e. % of land value), how much extra they are likely to pay each year, what it would pay for, why the upgrade is important for the City. Still believes that people living off the floodplain should pay less, however fully supports upgrading both the main city and North Wagga levees.
Can't you do more to recover unpaid rates instead? Was satisfied (even impressed) when Council's process for recovering rates was explained.
Supportive of the increase. Doesn't pay rates (in housing commission) but understands the need for it.
Totally support the upgrade and happy to pay more on rates. It's not much to ask. It needs to be done ASAP. More concerned about what this work wasn't done after the 1974 floods, if it was done then we wouldn't be paying for it now!
Yes I support the project and the rate increase to fund it. The money has to come from somewhere.
Build it now
It doesn't affect me financially that much because I rent but Council needs to get on with it, I don't care how it's funded.
Fantastic, get on with the rate rise, raise the money and build it!
Live in Coolamon, great to hear you are doing something to protect the City
Own property in North Wagga. 1 in 20 levee for North Wagga is a non-decision. You should either knock the levee out, sell all the property and make it a green space OR build a 1 in 100 and give the area the same rights to build as the rest of the city
I don't agree with the rate increase because Council has wasted money on too many other things. Oasis runs at a loss and the Equex should have been an equestrian facility. Start spending the money you already have more wisely.
Total interactions: 44

Phone calls and drop ins to the Civic Centre

Date	Name	Method of contact	Contact	Comment	Response
16/10/2015		Phone		Wanted to express concerns that his business will be impacted with higher flood waters through levee increase, so he is "stung twice" by paying SRV	Concerns listened to encouraged to attend community forum. Rod was happy with being listened to and is looking forward to attending
9/11/2015		Phone		Read the article in Council News. Lives in North Wagga, has had a lot of friends saying that they don't want to be subsidising a North Wagga Levee when residents shouldn't be living on a floodplain. They say this without even knowing that a decision on North Wagga still hasn't been made! residents in North Wagga would be happy to pay more for their levee. The North Wagga Levee should be more of a priority than the Main City Levee	Listened to her concerns and was able to clarify a few misconceptions. Assured her that we are doing our best to make sure people have the facts, and that we are not hiding from the fact that a decision on North Wagga has not being made. Encouraged her to come to the Community Forum next Wednesday.
9/11/2015		Phone		Read the article in Council News. Read the article in Council News. Doesn't think that the application to drop the rates at the end of the five year period is legal. Agrees with increasing rates as a way of paying for Council's share of the levee. Agrees with upgrading the levee system. But thinks that Council should be applying for a different type of special variation under section 452 of the local government act. Will be coming to the forum on Wednesday night.	Explained that he is not the first person to raise this exact issue and our finance department has checked that they are applying for the correct type of SRV.
9/11/2015		Phone		Read the article in Council News. Agrees that the money has to come from somewhere. Was evatuated in 2012. Council needs to look at vegetation on the floodplain. Will be coming to the forum on Wednesday night	Was advised that while the proposed rate increase is for the levee project only, a review of the floodplain risk management plan is currently underway and vegetation will be reviewed as a part of that.
10/11/2015		Phone		Read the article in Council News, wWanted to know more details of community meeting	Gave him the information and initiated a conversation to make sure he had details about the proposed levee upgrade
23/11/2015		In person		Lives on a Farmland property. Opposed to an increase on her rates to pay for the levee. Was flooded for the first time in 2010, received no government help and built a levee bank around their house at her own expense. People that live in Wagga and rely on the services here should have to pay, not the people who flood proof their own homes and get no benefit from the upgrade.	Noted her comments, explained the proposed increase (she thought it was 3%, I corrected her) and was able to look up her property and explain what the cumulative impact would be
24/11/2015		in person		Farmer from Currawarna. Do not increase my rates. You shouldn't be increasing the levee at all and I definitely shouldn't have to pay for it. I pay enough rates as it is and don't get anything for it. My property floods all the time and I don't get any help. I also don't rely on the services provided in town. I can go to Coolamon or Narrandera. Wagga is the most selfish city in Australia, it just takes from ratepayers and gives only to those that live in the centre. Also stop wasting money on things like water for Lake Albert and Robertson Oval	Noted comments and explained the proposed reduced rate increase for farmland properties
20/01/2015		Phone		Agrees with upgrading the levee and that the money has to come from somewhere but doesn't trust Council's ability to deliver the project on time and on budget. Confused about how we can proceed without receiving all the required external funding.	Was able to explain the external funding application process and the reasons for pursuing an SRV, calculated the impact of the SRV on his property. Whilst still not trusting that Council will deliver the project on budget was satisfied that he now understood the complexities of the funding arrangements and the need for an impact of the SRV

Detailed design and options for North Wagga Community Engagement Summary

In March 2015 Council held six community information sessions to outline the detailed designs for upgrades of the Main City and North Wagga Levees, and to deliver a report on alternative flood management options for North Wagga.

Landowners that live in close proximity to the levee were also offered the opportunity to meet with representatives from Council and NSW Public Works to discuss the detailed design. As a result about 18 individual landowners or stakeholders were consulted with.

In addition to this, members of the community were encouraged to provide specific feedback via an online survey or by contacting Council using traditional methods such as letters or telephone.

Members of the general public were also invited to have a look at what the levee upgrades will look like via software made available in the Wagga Wagga City Library, which gave people another avenue to discuss flood related issues with Council staff.

Whilst opportunities for the community to engage were advertised widely to the general public, the large majority of people that attended meetings and/or gave feedback were North Wagga residents.

The feedback received demonstrates majority support for an upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection. There is also overwhelming support for an upgrade of the Main City Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection.

Community information sessions

These sessions were held over two weeks targeting residents and businesses in Oura, Gumly Gumly, North Wagga, East Wagga, Eunony and the general Local Government Area. As well as providing an avenue to present the latest information, the sessions gave the community an opportunity ask questions, give feedback and discuss flood related issues in general.

A number of methods were used to promote the meetings including:

- the distribution of more than 4000 flyers in a variety of ways to best target different localities
- the placement of advertisements in the Daily Advertiser and The Leader
- stories in Council News

- placement of advertisements in Economic Pulse, Council's newsletter for the local business community

A head count undertaken at each meeting suggests that more than 200 people attended in total. The figures below are based on the attendance sheets. Actual attendance may have been slightly higher, particularly in North Wagga and Gumly Gumly, as not all residents that attended recorded their details.

Meeting	Attendees
Oura	10
Gumly Gumly	17
North Wagga	95
East Wagga	6
Eunony	14
General	28
Total	170

The minutes of these meetings and follow up responses are publicly available on the Flood Futures website.

The key themes of the feedback received at each meeting are summarised below.

Oura

- Scepticism about the accuracy of the modelling
- Concerns that Oura is being forgotten in the conversation about floodplain management, with Council investigating options for North Wagga
- Concerns about the impact that bottlenecks downstream have on the flow of water upstream
- Desire to be kept informed about developments on the floodplain, in particular the Harness Racing Facility

East Wagga

- Strong emphasis on concerns about the combination of riverine and overland flooding, particularly in relation to Marshalls Creek
- Desire for Council to better plan subdivision and industrial development, to minimise the impact on the floodplain and storm water catchments

General

- Questions about timeframes, construction process and funding for the levee upgrade
- Process questions about evacuations and questions for the SES about what impacts different floodplain management options would have on evacuation orders
- Desire for Council to support measures that will make it easier to develop in North Wagga

North Wagga

- An upgrade of the North Wagga Levee system to a 1 in 100 year level of protection will have the most benefit both socially and economically
- Option to relocate the village from the floodplain was widely dismissed
- Desire for a reduction of the amount of vegetation on the floodplain and to relieve bottlenecks downstream, particularly at Malebo Hill
- Concern not enough is being done to ensure that the next time floodwaters overtop the North Wagga Levee that water does not stay inside for as long as it did in the March 2012 flood event
- Concern about the impact of development on the floodplain

Gumly Gumly

- Concern about the impact that raising the Main City and North Wagga Levees will have on floodwaters in Gumly Gumly
- Desire for compensation for properties outside of the levee system if it is upgraded
- Desire to be able to access any assistance that might be available to landholders in North Wagga, such as raising houses
- Concern about the impact of development on the floodplain
- Desire for a reduction of the amount of vegetation on the floodplain and to relieve bottlenecks downstream, particularly at Malebo Hill

Eunony

- Desire for compensation for properties outside of the levee system if it is upgraded
- Concern about the impact of development on the floodplain

Additional feedback

The broader community was encouraged to take the time to think about the information that was presented at the information sessions and provide feedback formally either via an online, survey which was open for six weeks, or by contacting Council.

This opportunity was promoted at each of the six community information sessions, in Council News and in a direct email to 1400 registered Your Say Wagga users.

A total of 283 people provided such feedback either via phone, letter, email, face to face or online.

The feedback was collected under two categories:

- 1) Detailed design for the Main City and North Wagga Levee Upgrades
- 2) Alternative flood management options for North Wagga

Detailed design for the Main City and North Wagga Levee Upgrades

Respondents were encouraged to give feedback on whether or not they supported the Main City Levee Upgrade, suggestions for the detailed design and to discuss floodplain management issues in general.

A total of 45 people contributed to this discussion with 93% of respondents supporting the upgrade of the Main City Levee. The three respondents that did not show support cited concerns about inequity in relation to North Wagga, and did not believe that the Main City Levee should be raised to a 1 in 100 year level of protection unless North Wagga is as well.

The respondents reside in a range of suburbs including Central Wagga and surrounding areas such as Estella, Tatton, Lake Albert, Eunanoreenya and North Wagga. There was little feedback from outlying villages, with only one respondent from Oura.

Of those that support the upgrade, there was a strong emphasis on protecting the city and spending money now to save money later if it is flooded.

Some statements of support include:

"To support the future growth and prosperity of our city"

"We have a 3.7 billion dollar economy. I already lost my house in a flood - I can't afford to lose my job too!"

"To avoid evacuation and higher insurance costs"

"Because if the CBD of Wagga is flooded due to overtopping or outright failure, the city may never fully recover from the devastation caused"

Suggestions for the detailed design were dominated by the useability and aesthetics of the levee aside from its functionality to hold out flood waters.

These include incorporating the Riverside Project and encouraging cafes to develop along it, sealing the bike path, incorporating art and landscaping.

When given the chance to comment on floodplain management in general, the key theme was in relation to tighter measures around development on the floodplain, and a focus on stormwater management.

Alternative flood management options for North Wagga

Respondents were encouraged to identify what they would like to see happen with the North Wagga Levees, which other floodplain management options they believe are appropriate for North Wagga and to discuss floodplain management issues in general.

The majority of respondents reside in North Wagga (72%), however there is strong evidence to suggest that the majority of people that did not identify a suburb also reside in North Wagga. If adjusted to reflect this total estimate this figure demonstrates that 81% of respondents reside in North Wagga.

Five respondents were found to have given feedback on two occasions and the figures have been collated accordingly.

Of the 238 respondents 190 (79%) support and upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to more than a 1 in 20 year level of protection.

Of this 79%, 83% support an upgrade of the levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection.

This means 61% of all respondents support an upgrade of the levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection.

Of the 2.1% (5 people) of respondents that would like to see the levee removed, three of them identified as living in North Wagga but outside of the levee system. Two respondents qualified their responses by saying this should only occur after a period of voluntary purchase.

The full breakdown of responses in relation to the levee is as follows:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage
Upgrade the levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection	158	66.4%
Raise the North Wagga levee higher than a 1 in 20 year level of protection (non-specific)	25	10.5%
Upgrade the levee to a 1 in 80 year level of protection	1	0.4%
Upgrade the levee to a 1 in 60 year level of protection	1	0.4%
Upgrade the levee to a 1 in 50 year level of protection	3	1.2%
Upgrade the levee to above a 11.5m river level	2	0.8%
Upgrade the levee to a 1 in 20 year level of protection	23	9.7%
Maintain the levees at their current level	18	7.6%
Remove the existing North Wagga levees	5	2.1%
N/A	2	0.8%
Total	238	

Of those that support an upgrade on the levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection, there was a strong emphasis on protecting the community that many people have lived in for a long time and have grown to be a part of.

Some statements include:

"Have lived in North Wagga for over 30 years - we love it here. Very quiet and close to town. If levee was higher would stop the chance of flooding under most circumstances"

"I would support any measures that will prevent the North Wagga residents once again having to relocate and children having to attend makeshift schools"

and pre-schools. The emotional toll of the flood is evident when speaking with many residents.”

“Raise the levee banks and maybe the insurance companies might bring their premiums down.”

When asked about other floodplain management options 77% of respondents either did not answer or specified that no other floodplain management options were required.

Of those that did identify an option there was large support for a house raising scheme, with voluntary purchase identified as the next most popular option.

The full breakdown of responses in relation to non-levee related flood management option is as follows:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage
No other floodplain management actions are required	70	29.4%
Raise residences in all of North Wagga	22	9.2%
Not house raising	1	0.4%
Raise residences in Mill and East Street only	8	3.4%
Raise residences inside the main North Wagga levee only	6	2.5%
Relocation of the village from the floodplain	4	1.7%
Voluntary purchases for properties in North Wagga	9	3.8%
Raise residences in all of North Wagga AND Voluntary purchases for properties in North Wagga	2	0.8%
Did not answer	116	48.7%
Total	238	

Outside of the options provided, there were also a number of suggestions to clear vegetation on the floodplain, investigate relieving bottlenecks such as Malebo Hill, removing rural levees that do not form a part of the official North Wagga levee system, limit development on the floodplain and better warning systems for evacuations during flood events.

Some statements in relation to non-levee related floodplain management options include:

“Our house is on a concrete slab so is unable to be raised. We love North Wagga so relocation wouldn't work.”

“I'm 70 so can't live in a raised house”

“Limit construction on the whole of the floodplain, not just North Wagga, and clear excessive vegetation from the North Wagga flats.”

“Equitable treatment of rate payers who are on the floodplain. Compensation for impact from increased levee heights. Planning over time to remove major services and industries off the flood plain - not allow more development on it.

“Widen the gap at Malebo Hill.”

The feedback collected at the community information sessions and afterwards demonstrates strong support for an upgrade of the Main City and North Wagga Levees to a 1 in 100 year level of protection. However, North Wagga residents are disproportionately represented in the number of people that responded.

Residents that live on the flood plain outside of the North Wagga levee are primarily concerned about the impact that raising the levees will have on floodwaters.

Residents that are protected by the Main City Levee see the upgrade of the levee as vital for the City, and would like Council to also look at managing the threat of stormwater flooding.