

Muswellbrook Shire Council
Special Variation Proposal 2018/19:
Community Consultation
and Engagement Report



**muswellbrook
shire council**

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Introduction

In early 2016, in the lead-up to the preparation of Council's suite of Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documents, Muswellbrook Shire Council commenced its most comprehensive program of community engagement to date. The program of engagement has been undertaken on a continuous basis and will be maintained as such into the future. The range of activities has been reflected in high levels of participation and engagement within the community.

As part of the community consultation required to assess awareness of, and support for Muswellbrook Shire Council's Special Variation (SV) application for 2018/19, Council utilised its existing community engagement program in addition to specific activities. This report provides information relating to those engagement activities and the results of the feedback provided by the community.

Community and stakeholder engagement

Council commenced the process initially by reviewing its Community Engagement Strategy in 2016, which aims to ensure all residents and ratepayers are provided every opportunity to be asked for, and provide feedback to Council on, the wide range of services and infrastructure it provides. The elected Council has also appointed a Councillor Spokesperson for Community Engagement, who oversees Council's community consultation activities and provides a direct connection between those initiatives and the elected Council. Council also has elected spokespersons for each of its principal activities with the responsibility to consult and engage directly with stakeholders on specific proposals and policy areas.

The Strategy allows for innovation and in 2017, Council established for the first time a Community Panel to directly inform Council's direction and to test a range of policy responses to community wishes captured in the Community Strategic Plan. Among those issues considered by the Panel were the projects and programs subject to this Application.

Further, it is noted that notwithstanding the broad community support for the projects included in the Delivery Program 2017-21 and Council's unsuccessful SV application to IPART for 2017/18, Council also undertook further consultation with the community to confirm that the Delivery Program priorities identified for funding in this application remained broadly supported and understood.

A number of specific direct communication and engagement methodologies were employed to ensure that the Shire's communities were both well aware of, and well informed about, the proposed SV application and associated projects. The community was provided a range of opportunities to express their opinions about the proposed rate increase and the projects it is proposed to fund. These community engagement activities included:

- Community Panel
- Letters to ratepayers, community and sporting groups
- Telephone Surveys
- Online Survey
- Listening Posts
- Traditional Media
- Social Media (Facebook posts and videos)
- Stakeholder meetings (including with mining ratepayers, business, sporting and community organisations)
- Newsletter for residents
- FAQ Document
- Public exhibition period of project plans and business cases

The community has made it clear they are proud to live in Muswellbrook but are concerned about future job opportunities. They believe that Muswellbrook should be the Regional Centre for the Upper Hunter with infrastructure that matches – such as a Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre, enhanced sporting facilities, improvements to the Shire’s storm water draining infrastructure, and a children’s water park and a new exhibition and show facility.

Council has captured these community priorities within its Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and Delivery Program for the current term of the elected council and continues to work on funding and implementation strategies to ensure that the community’s desires are met as fully as possible.

From these activities and financial analysis of the projects together with consideration of the capacity of Council and an assessment of the community’s ability and willingness to pay, consideration of grant funding opportunities and success in obtaining external funding for community priorities, Council has refined its priorities for the purpose of its application for a Special Variation in 2018/19.

Following the determination of those prioritised projects and programs, Council endorsed a process by which they would be subjected to further consultation whilst the initial preparations were put in place for Council to make application to IPART for the SV.



Feedback on the proposed rate rise

Council developed a program of specific activities (some associated with existing community engagement activities) to gauge the support and awareness of the community for an increase in residential, business and farming rates of 12.3% (including the rate peg of 2.3%) and 18.3% for mining ratepayers (including the rate peg of 2.3%) to fund initiatives to support those priorities identified through earlier rounds of community consultation.

The response captured in a Shire wide telephone survey conducted towards the end of the engagement period, indicated a high level of awareness (at 79%) and broad support among the community (of 41%) for the projects and programs the proposed rate increase will support.

This document provides the specific details of the consultation undertaken including the means by which community engagement activities were promoted, the data collected as part of the consultations and an analysis thereof.

Community Panel

Council’s Operational Plan 2017/18 set an action to establish a Community Panel as an ongoing means to engage with the community. Council’s Community Engagement Strategy (attached as [Appendix 1](#)) which was endorsed in 2016, included a commitment to use a variety of community engagement methodologies, including a deliberative democracy approach in the form of a Community Panel. Members of the Panel were randomly selected from a list of 150 people who had indicated during the course of the 2017 Customer Satisfaction Survey undertaken by independent research firm Jetty, of their willingness to participate. From that number 27 community members,

reflecting the Shire's demographic and geographic profile, participated in the deliberations of the Panel.

Sessions were held over three days – 4 and 18 November, and 2 December 2017, and the Panel was provided with a detailed insight into the extensive range of facilities and services managed by Council. Participants were asked for their comments on current levels of service, Council's plans to implement the community priorities captured in the Community Strategic Plan and the direction of Council more generally. Panellists were also provided with comprehensive briefings on the proposal to increase rates by way of a Special Variation and the projects and programs proposed for funding. The agenda for each of the Panel's sessions is attached as [Appendix 2](#).



A deliberative democracy process provided the opportunity for considered discussion by a representative community group that was informed by detailed and accurate information. Discussion and contrary views were encouraged. The participants were willing to talk and listen with civility and respect. The Panel was reminded that all views were to be considered sincerely on their merits, not by how they were made or who was making them. Many points of view held by significant portions of the population received attention.

During its final session, the Community Panel resolved on the following recommendations:

- We support Council's vision for the future of the Shire.
- We agree (yes) to the SRV as proposed as long as the entertainment centre is multifunctional.
- Consider adjusting the Olympic Park development to provide even more car parking (consider moving tennis courts).
- Community stakeholders need to have ongoing involvement in both projects.
- We thank Council for the opportunity to be involved.

Feedback from Panel members was constructive and has informed the decision making concerning the details of the proposal. Council will continue to use the format as part of its ongoing program of community consultation and engagement into the future.

It is noted that armed with all the information available to Council on the proposed SV and those projects and programs included within Council's application, members of the Community Panel not only supported the proposal but became advocates within the wider community for the proposal and associated projects.



Letters to ratepayers

Council wrote to all ratepayers in the Shire on 20 November 2017 prior to the commencement of the telephone and online survey, undertaken by Jetty Research to gauge the level of community support for the proposed SRV and associated projects. The letter provided ratepayers with notification of the forthcoming survey and outlined available options to support the proposed rate increase or to not support the proposed rate increase.

A copy of the letter is attached as [Appendix 3](#).

Telephone Surveys

Council commissioned Jetty Research to undertake two telephone surveys on Council's behalf in 2017, following a series in 2016 to establish benchmarks against which to measure Council's future performance and to gauge support for Council's strategic direction and proposed SRV for 2017/18 (which was ultimately not supported by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal). In August and September 2017 Jetty undertook a survey ("the Community Satisfaction Telephone Survey") of Muswellbrook Shire residents to measure satisfaction and priorities with regard to Council-managed facilities and services. The second telephone survey, conducted in October 2017, was a poll of Muswellbrook Shire residents to measure awareness and support for a proposed Special Rate Variation ("the Special Rate Variation Proposal Survey"). Reports on the findings of both surveys are included as [Appendices 4 and 5](#) respectively. Following is a summary of the methodology and the findings of those surveys.

Community Satisfaction Telephone Survey

In August 2017, Council commissioned Jetty Research to conduct a representative and statistically valid telephone survey of over 400 adult residents living within the Muswellbrook Local Government Area (LGA) to assess satisfaction with, and priorities towards different Council-managed facilities and services and Council customer service. The survey was also designed to understand community priorities on a range of potential new Council infrastructure projects.

The questionnaire was designed as a baseline measurement tool, from which future repeats of the study can understand movements in satisfaction, and identify the impact of changes in Council service levels, strategies and focus.

Polling was conducted from August 28th to September 4th 2017, as a random telephone survey of 403 adult residents living throughout the LGA. No formal quotas were applied, although attempts were made to ensure a robust mix of ages, genders and sub-regions.

Based on the number of households within the Muswellbrook Shire, a random sample of 403 adult residents implies a margin for error of +/- 4.8% at the 95% confidence level. This essentially means that if a similar poll was conducted 20 times, results should reflect the views and behaviour of the overall survey population – in this case “all Muswellbrook Shire adult residents excluding council employees and councillors” - to within a +/- 4.8% margin in 19 of those 20 surveys.

Further details relating to the survey methodology, sampling error sample characteristics, and demographic breakdown of survey respondents refer to [Appendix 4](#).

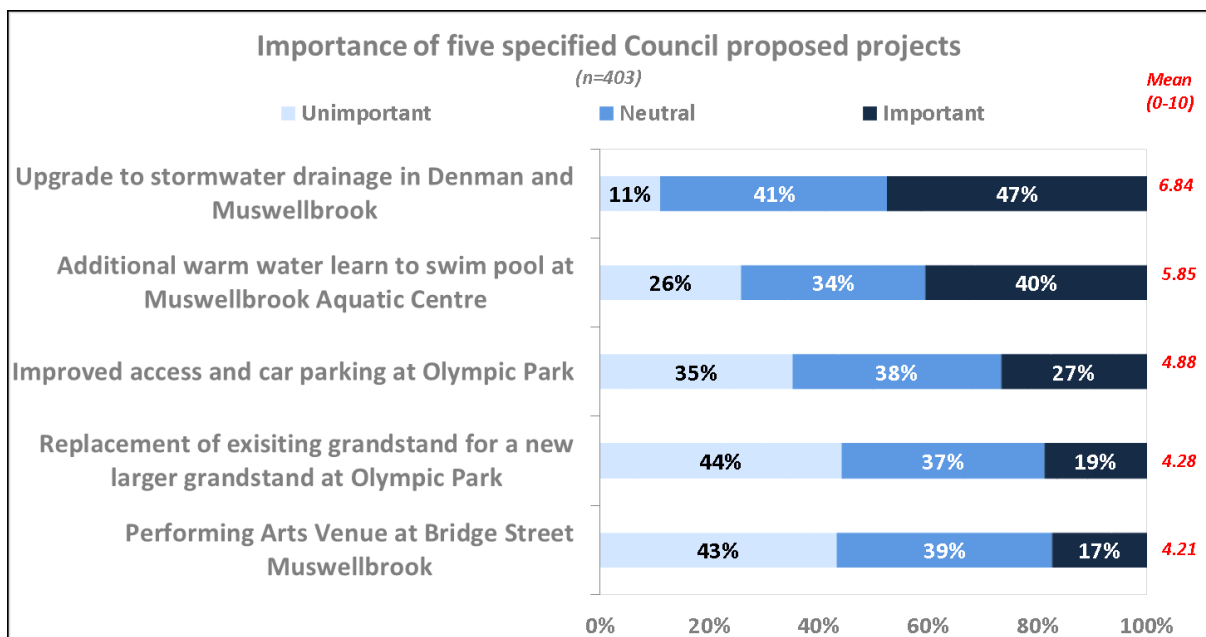
Among the major conclusions of the survey were:

1. Overall satisfaction with Council was strong. In all, 44% of residents were satisfied with Council’s overall performance, against 21% who were dissatisfied (the balance being neutral). Net satisfaction rating (NSR) was hence +23% (i.e. 23% more residents felt satisfied than dissatisfied) and the mean overall satisfaction score was 3.28 out of five. This is an impressive result and an important measure to track over time.
2. The average level of satisfaction across the 22 key services and facilities was 3.22 out of 5. Twelve of the 22 services and facilities scored above the average “neutral” rating of satisfaction. Satisfaction was highest with *libraries* (4.33 out of 5), *sewage collection and treatment* (3.70), *water supply* (3.61), *sporting facilities* (3.55), *Council pools* (3.54), *waste and recycling* (3.53), *cleanliness of streets* (3.52) and *parks, reserves and playgrounds* (3.51). *Bridges* (3.38), *Council website* (3.28), *services for the elderly* (3.24) and *stormwater drainage* (3.23) also received above-average ratings of satisfaction.
3. Services and facilities receiving below average ratings of satisfaction were *public toilets* (2.48), *unsealed roads* (2.61), *community halls* (2.71), *economic development and attracting new investment* (2.85), *footpaths and cycleways* (2.93), *sealed roads* (2.93), *development applications* (2.94), *dog control* (2.97), *youth facilities and activities* (2.97) and *weed control* (2.97).
4. The services and facilities considered of highest importance to Muswellbrook residents included *water supply* (4.24), *sealed roads* (4.20), *waste and recycling* (4.10), *sewage collection and treatment* (3.90), *cleanliness of streets* (3.89), *footpaths and cycleways* (3.84), and *parks, reserves and playgrounds* (3.75). *Stormwater drainage* (3.71), *economic development and attracting new investment* (3.58) and *bridges* (3.55) were also considered of high importance (all rating above the average 3.47 rating of importance).
5. When placed into a matrix of importance vs. satisfaction, the following picture emerged:

Higher Importance, Lower Satisfaction	Higher Importance, Higher Satisfaction
Public toilets Dog control Economic development and attracting new investment Footpaths and cycleways Sealed roads	Services for the elderly Libraries Stormwater drainage Bridges Parks, reserves and playgrounds Cleanliness of streets Waste and recycling Sporting facilities Water supply Sewage collection and treatment
Lower Importance, Lower Satisfaction	Lower Importance, Higher Satisfaction
Development applications Unsealed roads Community halls Weed control Youth facilities and activities	Council website Council pools

6. The services and facilities that fall into the “higher importance, lower satisfaction” quadrant should take priority at Council in terms of resource allocation. Residents place a high level of importance on public toilets, dog control, economic development and attracting new investment, footpaths and cycleways and sealed roads. However, their expectations regarding these services are currently not being met.

7. The driver analysis indicates that the strongest drivers of overall satisfaction with Muswellbrook Shire Council were: economic development and attracting new investment, parks, reserves and playgrounds, cleanliness of streets, weed control, sealed roads, public toilets, services for the elderly and sporting facilities. Focus on these service elements should have a strong impact on overall satisfaction ratings.
8. Around half of residents (48%) indicated that they had contacted Muswellbrook Shire Council in the past twelve months for reasons other than paying rates. Of those who had contacted Council, 74% had done so more than once. The most frequently mentioned reason for contacting Muswellbrook Shire Council was a ranger matter (19%), followed by a garbage / waste management / recycling / tips issue (12%), development application (11%) or road a footpath improvements issue (9%).
9. Over four in five (83%) indicated that they first contacted Council via telephone, with only 10% coming face-to-face via the Council customer centre. Some 5% contacted Council via email and just 2% by letter or fax. This suggests that even in an era of online communication and social media, phone and face-to-face remain critical forms of contact.
10. Almost half (48%) indicated that their most recent enquiry was handled well (rating of 4 or 5) and 35% poorly (rating of 1 or 2). This suggests that more residents are satisfied with their interaction with Council than those who feel disappointed by their contact experience.
11. Online remains the preference for transactional dealings with Council (such as making a payment) while the traditional methods of face-to-face and phone are preferred for the more typical interactions.
12. Of the proposed projects, upgrades to stormwater drainage were considered the most important project. The additional swimming pool ranked second in importance. Both of these projects had positive net importance score with more considering it important than unimportant. The remaining three projects would be likely to have higher opposition than support: see graph, below:



13. "Other" proposed Council projects and initiatives included (among others) rebuilding the Denman Town Hall, facilities/activities for youth, an aged care facility, a variety of recreational facilities, a City by-pass, better roads, upgrading the show grounds, better footpaths, more parking in town, better street lighting, improved public toilets, improved swimming pool facilities, better public transport, economic revitalisation, improved safety in town and a new or improved hospital.

Special Variation Proposal Survey

Council commissioned Jetty Research in October 2017 to conduct a random and representative telephone survey of residents, to understand community sentiment towards a proposed program of works and associated 10% SRV. The random telephone survey was accompanied by an identical opt-in online survey (further details below), allowing all those interested in the SRV an opportunity to have their say.

The random telephone survey, of adult residents living in the 2328 and 2333 postcodes¹, was conducted from November 27th to 30th 2017 using a questionnaire devised by Jetty Research in conjunction with MSC. Residents were not initially informed of the survey's subject matter, to avoid response/non-response bias. The parallel online survey ran from 23 November to 11 December 2017 inclusive.

Total sample size for the telephone survey was 467, with a random sampling error of +/- 4.4% at the 95% confidence level. Total sample size for the online survey was 192. (As this was a self-selecting rather than random sample, random sampling error cannot be applied to the results.)

Further details relating to the survey methodology, sampling error sample characteristics, and demographic breakdown of survey respondents are included in Jetty's report of the conduct of the survey ([Appendix 5](#)).

Among the major findings of the survey were:

1. 79% of respondents claimed to be familiar with the proposed program of works and associated special rate variation. Of these, the majority (60%) recalled receiving a letter from Council while 21% has seen it on social media and 20% claimed to have read about it in the local newspaper.
2. Of ratepayers, 77% remembered having received a letter from Council regarding the SRV. Of these, 90% claimed to have read some or all of the letter.
3. 38% of respondents supported Council's application for a 10% SRV, while 53% did not support the variation and 9% were unsure. Excluding unswers, 41% were supportive and 59% were not. Those in the 2333 postcode and urban residents were most likely to be supportive (at 45% and 47% respectively, excluding unswers).
4. Of those opposed to the SRV, the major reason was a perception that rates are already too high (noted by 13% of all respondents). However, a further 11% supported the SRV on the basis that it would benefit the community and the region's future.
5. Of those opposed to the SRV, 42% felt the amount being proposed was too high, while 7% felt Muswellbrook did not require the facilities being proposed. A further 35% of SRV opponents felt it was both factors equally.
6. Among all respondents: 38% supported the SRV, 5% opposed it solely or largely on the basis of facilities not being needed, 22% felt the amount was too high, and 18% opposed for both reasons equally.

It is noted that among online respondents, 25% supported the SRV while 72% were opposed (with 3% unsure).

Comments and direct feedback provided by those who participated in the telephone survey is attached as [Appendix 6](#).

Online survey

Council commissioned Jetty Research to host a self-selecting online survey to provide an additional avenue for community members to have their say on the proposed SRV. The survey ran in parallel with the telephone survey and was live between 23 November 2017 and 11 December 2017, and was promoted on Council's website and social media. Survey questions were based on the questions asked during the conduct of the telephone survey.

There were **192** valid responses to the online survey by 11 December 2017 when the survey was taken offline. It is noted that identical responses from the same IP address were removed from the data by Jetty Research. Of the valid responses received, **25.0%** were in support and **71.9%** against. The attached report of the survey results provides details of the questions asked, independent analysis, details relating to the survey methodology of the survey and an explanation of the results ([Appendix 5](#)).

Comments and direct feedback provided by those who participated in the online survey is attached as [Appendix 7](#).

“Listening Posts”

Council undertook a program of “Listening Posts” in prominent, well-trafficked locations across the Shire. The “Listening Posts” provided the opportunity for residents to indicate their level of awareness of the proposed SRV and related projects, and asked how they had been made aware in a series of face-to-face surveys undertaken by Council staff. Participants were not asked for an indication of their support in order to maintain the integrity of the survey. The survey form is attached as [Appendix 8](#).

Responses to the Listening Post surveys are attached as [Confidential Appendix 1](#).

Traditional media

News articles and stories relating to the proposed SRV were published in the *Muswellbrook Chronicle* and *Newcastle Herald*, together with stories broadcast on ABC Upper Hunter and Radio 2NM. Media coverage outlined the proposal, the rate variation amount, provided answers to a number of frequently asked questions, included concept drawings of the prioritised projects, and explained how to provide feedback. Copies of the print news articles and other media outputs are attached as [Appendix 9](#).

Date	Media	Story
20/11/17	Muswellbrook Chronicle	News article: Community to have its say on new infrastructure funding program for Muswellbrook Shire (online, social media and print editions)
20/11/17	Newcastle Herald	News article: Muswellbrook ratepayers given a say on rates future (online, social media and print editions)
20/11/17	ABC Upper Hunter	Radio interview: Mayor speaks with Mike Pritchard on proposed Special Rate Variation
20/11/17	Radio 2NM	News item: Mayor on proposed Special Rate Variation
22/11/17	Radio 2NM	Radio interview: General Manager speaks with Stephen Cenatiempo on proposed Special Rate Variation
19/1/18	Muswellbrook Chronicle	News article: Time’s running out to make a submission on Muswellbrook Council’s proposed Special Rate Variation (online and social media editions)

Social Media

Council embarked upon a social media campaign to raise awareness of the proposal through its Facebook page, which was shared among the Muswellbrook and Denman community pages, which are followed by a significant portion of the community. Council’s posts were predominantly short videos on the proposals which were shared on the community pages. The video footage can be viewed at the following page:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/muswellbrookshirecouncil/videos/?ref=page_internal

Details of Council’s posts are included as [Appendix 10](#). A summary of comments posted by community members on the social media pages are included in [Appendix 11](#) with a detailed spreadsheet included as [Confidential Appendix 2](#).

Stakeholder meetings

Council hosted a range of meetings with key stakeholders, including mining ratepayers, business, community and sports groups to discuss specific aspects of the proposal and to provide an opportunity for direct feedback.

A full consultation process was undertaken with all mine operators regarding the proposed variation to the mining rate of 18.3% (including 2.3% rate peg) in 2018/19. Each of the mining operations, with the exception of BHP’s Mt Arthur, support the proposed variation.

Following are dates of other stakeholder engagement activities associated with the SV proposal:

- Tuesday 25 July 2017 – Olympic Park Master Plan - Information gathering sessions with multiple users groups facilitated by The Design Partnership (consultant) – Council Administration Centre
- Wednesday 16 August 2017 – Senior and Junior League, Muswellbrook Touch Football – Council Administration Centre
- Monday 21 August 2017 – Senior and Junior League, Muswellbrook Touch Football – Council Administration Centre
- Wednesday 15 November 2017 – Olympic Park User Groups Meetings – Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre (Briefing on draft Stage 1 Olympic Park Master Plan)
- Thursday 16 November 2017 – Wilder St, Residents – Wilder St, Muswellbrook
- Friday 17 November 2017 – Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre – Stakeholders meeting - Muswellbrook Amateur Theatrical Society and Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music



Other promotional activities

In addition to the use of social and traditional media and direct contact with ratepayers, Council also circulated information concerning the proposed rate increase and associated projects:

- Public exhibition of project plans and business cases
- Distribution of community newsletter
- Production and dissemination of Frequently Asked Questions information

Copies of materials distributed are attached as [Appendix 12](#).

Direct feedback

Council also received feedback from ratepayers and other community stakeholders in the form of direct contact and submissions. Details of that feedback are included in [Confidential Appendices 3 and 4](#).

Appendices

Appendix	Document Name
1	Muswellbrook Community Engagement Strategy
2	Community Panel Agenda
3	Letter to ratepayers
4	Jetty Research: A survey of Muswellbrook Shire residents to measure satisfaction and priorities with regard to Council-managed facilities and services
5	Jetty Research: A poll of Muswellbrook Shire residents to measure support for a proposed Special Rate Variation
6	Telephone survey comments and feedback
7	Online survey comments and feedback
8	Listening Post Survey Questionnaire
9	Media outputs
10	Social media outputs
11	Summary of social media feedback
12	Other information and promotional materials

Confidential Appendices

Confidential Appendix	Document Name
1	Spreadsheet of Listening Post feedback
2	Spreadsheet of social media feedback
3	Spreadsheet of direct feedback
4	Olympic Park Precinct Upgrade feedback

Confidential appendices are included under separate cover.

APPENDIX 1 - Muswellbrook Community Engagement Strategy

Muswellbrook Shire Council Community Engagement Strategy

2016-2017

Muswellbrook Shire Council's Community Strategic Plan 2027 Community Engagement Strategy 2016-2017

Under NSW Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) legislation, a newly elected Council is required to endorse its new 10-year Community Strategic Plan within six months of the local government election. The Muswellbrook Community Strategic Plan 2027 needs to be endorsed by the elected Council no later than March 2017. The Community Strategic Plan 2026 will be actioned through the Delivery Program and Operational Plan, these strategic planning documents are required to be implemented from 1 July 2017.

Council's strategic planning documents sit within the Integrated Planning Framework and include:

- The Community Strategic Plan 2027 (a 10 year horizon)
- Resourcing Strategy which is made up of the long term financial plan, workforce management plan and asset management plan
- Delivery program 2017-2020
- Operational Plan 2017-2018

Purpose of the Community Engagement Strategy

The community engagement strategy articulates how Council will engage with the community to ensure that the Community Strategic Plan is developed in line with the community's needs and reflects the community's vision for the future of the Muswellbrook Shire.

Objectives

- To identify the community's priorities and vision for the Muswellbrook Shire, its towns and villages over the next 10 years
- Develop a Delivery Program and Operational Plans to realise the community's vision and priorities
- Test the relevance of the pillars and themes of the draft 2027 Community Strategic Plan

Guiding principles

- Comply with 'The council charter' as per the NSW Local Government Act 1993 section 8
- Apply a deliberative democracy approach (see definition below) to community engagement
- Address social, environmental, economic and civic leadership issues in an

Muswellbrook Shire Council Community Engagement Strategy

2016-2017

integrated manner applying the 4 pillars of sustainability in the planning and reporting process.



Four pillars of the Community Strategic Plan 2027

2016-2017 Community Engagement Activities

- **Media releases**
Local radio and newspapers will be kept informed about the range of opportunities to provide feedback and "have your say"
- **Council newsletter**
Council's community newsletter will inform the community about the engagement process and how to get involved
- **Website feedback forum**
Council's website will include information about listening post sites; post it walls and a portal to lodge submissions and ideas
- **Listening Posts**
Council staff will collect community feedback at listening posts that will be set up at shopping centres
- **Post it walls and boxes**
Post it walls and feedback boxes will be provided at the libraries and swimming pools

Muswellbrook Shire Council Community Engagement Strategy

2016-2017

- **Submissions**

Local individuals and groups from across the Shire will be invited to make submissions for the consideration of the Community Panel

- **Community Panel**

Residents will be invited to join a group of 30 to 35 individuals that will meet regularly over a 2 to 3 month period to prepare a set of recommendations for Council on what the vision and priorities for Muswellbrook Shire should be. Individuals will be randomly invited to form a demographically representative Panel of residents drawn from across the Shire. The Panel use a 'deliberative democracy' approach. Once the Community Panel process is complete the Panel will present their views to the Council. The findings of the community panel and feedback collected from all the Community Engagement activities will inform the Community Strategic Plan 2027.

What is a deliberative democracy approach?

A deliberative democracy process provides the opportunity for considered discussion by a representative community group that is informed by detailed and accurate information. Discussion and contrary views are encouraged. The participants (community panel members) should be willing to talk and listen, with civility and respect. All views are to be considered sincerely on their merits, not by how they are made or who is making them. All points of view held by significant portions of the population should receive attention.

Following are the five characteristics of deliberative democracy that will be used in Council's Community Panel:

- *Information:* Accurate and relevant data is made available to all participants
- *Substantive balance:* Different positions are compared based on their supporting evidence
- *Diversity:* All major positions relevant to the matter are considered
- *Conscientiousness:* Participants sincerely weigh all arguments
- *Equal consideration:* Views are weighed based on evidence, not on who is advocating a particular view

Muswellbrook Shire Council Community Engagement Strategy
2016-2017

Time frame

When	What
September 2016	Local Government Election
October 2016	Begin preparation of detailed documentation on councils plans and services for the Community Panel process
October 2016	Council endorse a Community Engagement Strategy
October 2016	Launch consultation activities; Listening posts, Media releases etc
November 2016	Invitations sent to community members to participate in Community Panel
November 2016	Community engagement activities
December 2016	Community Panel Meets
20 December to January 14	Christmas Break
January and February 2017	Community Panel Meets
March 2017	Exhibit draft Community Strategic Plan 2027
March 2017	Community Strategic Plan 2026 is endorsed by Council

APPENDIX 2 - Community Panel Agenda



Community Panel

Background

In line with the 2016 /2017 Community Engagement Strategy council will use a 'citizen jury' method of community engagement called a community panel from November 4 to December 2 2017. The purpose of the Panel is to provide community feedback on the proposed SRV application. The community panel will apply the logic of the criminal jury where citizens are asked to "weigh up the evidence, discuss it as a group and return with a recommendation". It is not a perfect process but increasing numbers of local governments are using this 'deliberative democracy' approach to provide a voice for the 'common' resident and improve the level of information and understanding about Council in the community.

The following factors are important to a successful community panel:

- Random selection
- Demographic representation
- Providing appropriately detailed information
- Posing a clearly understood question for the panel to consider

Panel Selection

The Customer Satisfaction Survey of 400 residents completed by Jetty consulting in August 2017 asked each resident if they would like to be part of a community panel; 150 of the 400 indicated that they would. 45 individuals from that list have been invited to participate in the community panel – those invited were selected to reflect a range of age groups, locations and gender balance, the aim is to create a panel of 30 to 35 people. 12 people have confirmed attendance (as of 19th October). The community panel will meet three times this year; the panel will be invited to re-convene in 2018.

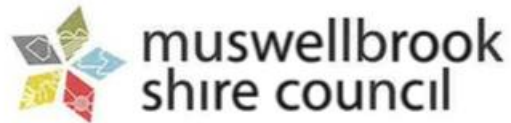
Panel Meetings

3 meetings are planned, each are on a Saturday 9.30 to 4.30. All meetings are fully catered.

The Question: Should Council apply for a special rating variation?

Saturday 4 th November Denman RSL	Saturday 18 th November Muswellbrook – Conservatorium	Saturday 2 nd December Muswellbrook – Conservatorium
<p>Focus: Learning about Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel purpose and operation, guidelines and rules • Overview of council services, financial management and governance 	<p>Focus: Why apply for an SRV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the councillors (which ever councillors can make it) • Review proposed major projects • What further information do you need? 	<p>Presenters: speakers at Panel's request.</p> <p>Focus: Prepare recommendations or feedback for Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review council information (Q & A) • Hear additional information as requested • Prepare recommendation for Council • Present feedback to Mayor and GM

APPENDIX 3 - Letter to ratepayers



20 November 2017



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Dear Ratepayer

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE COUNCIL - PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

Muswellbrook Shire Council recently commissioned a telephone survey to gauge customer satisfaction with Council services and community facilities.

To deliver on the priorities identified within this survey and the Community Strategic Plan, Council proposes to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for an increase to rates across the Shire from the 2018-2019 financial year.

We are applying in line with the timetable set by the NSW Office of Local Government Guidelines. These Guidelines advise councils on how to seek a rate variation. We anticipate that updated guidelines will be released in December 2017 requiring applications to be submitted to IPART by early February 2018.

Council is seeking your feedback now on this proposed increase. To better understand your thoughts on this matter, Council has commissioned Jetty Research to conduct a telephone survey of at least 450 residents to gauge the level of community support. **Calls will commence during the week beginning Monday 20 November 2017.**

You will be asked to indicate a preference between:

Option 1: A Special Rate Variation (SRV) of a one-off 14.9% (including 2.5% rate peg) from 2018/19 continuing permanently in the rate base, made up as follows:

- a Residential, Business and Farmland rating revenue increase by 12.5% (including 2.5% rate peg) in 2018/19 which amounts to \$956,055; and
- b Mining rating revenue increase by 18.5% (including 2.5% rate peg) in 2018/19 which amounts to \$962,211.

In return you will get:

- An additional allocation of \$300,000 per year for stormwater drainage and \$100,000 per year for roads and parks asset maintenance program.

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- Development of an Olympic Park Precinct Master Plan and an Entertainment and Conference Centre with a combined value of \$26,010,000 made up of:
 - an SRV contribution of \$11,800,000;
 - grants of \$10,500,000;
 - voluntary planning agreements amounting to \$3,710,000 and
 - an annual operational maintenance and net yearly operational contributions of \$700,000 for Olympic Park and the Entertainment and Conference Centre.
 - *Please note:* if the above grants and voluntary planning agreements are not received or if the amounts received are less than the figures above, one or both projects may be suspended, reduced in size or cancelled and the special rate variation will be revisited and the ratepayers will be informed of any material changes.
- An additional \$250,000 towards the Job Creation program and \$62,000 to offset a shortfall in rating revenues arising from a change in NSW Government policy with respect to biodiversity offsets.

Council estimates that the annual impact on the average ratepayer will be as below.

Rating Category	Weighted average general rate increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer
General Residential - Muswellbrook & Denman	\$87.22
General Residential	\$121.54
General Farmland	\$354.60
General Business	\$295.02
General Business - Interim Development	\$1,234.44
General Mining	\$56,600.74

Option 2: No Special Rate Variation

Apart from applying a rate peg increase of 2.5% in 2018/2019 the budgeted spend will be:

- A stormwater drainage program of \$158,000; roads program of \$390,700; and parks asset maintenance program of \$347,600.
- Olympic Park Precinct upgrade to the value of \$3,500,000.
- No Entertainment and Conference Centre.
- A Job Creation program to remain only at \$250,000 and a reduction in Council's rates revenue of approximately \$62,000.

For more information about Council's proposed Special Rate Variation and associated projects, please visit Council's website at www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au

Council will review and include community feedback in the Special Rate Variation application when it is submitted in February 2018.

Yours sincerely



Steve McDonald
General Manager

APPENDIX 4 - Jetty Research report: A survey of Muswellbrook Shire residents to measure satisfaction and priorities with regard to Council-managed facilities and services.

Attached under separate cover.

APPENDIX 5 - Jetty Research report: A poll of Muswellbrook Shire residents to measure support for a proposed Special Rate Variation.

Attached under separate cover.

APPENDIX 6 - Telephone survey comments and feedback

Respondents to the telephone SRV survey who indicated their support for the variation left the following comments:

- If we want things we have to pay for them, Muswellbrooks needs an entertainment centre
- thinks it is essential the works proceed in the area
- Upgraded facilities is needed...esp the roads
- Gives the town better facilities.
- The parks need to be upgraded and the local roads need attention
- For years there have been very little activity by previous shire - the current mayor is very progressive and active in delivering what the town needs.
- Not sure.
- To ensure Muswellbrook's future
- I think council has done a good job so far. I think the facilities that are proposed are needed in the community
- Not too sure, I have not yet read through the letter properly
- I think what council needs to sell the idea of it better to the community. Maybe a community meeting night with a FREE give away. Muswellbrook would be a great regional hub and the council are trying their best to make this happen with their proposals
- I think it's important to ensure we have relevant structure to improve as a community
- There is not much for people to do in Muswellbrook and an entertainment centre would be very welcome
- It is good idea for the rates to go up but I am concerned about Olympic park project and the water run off, because of the Muswell Creek goes through to the subway and I am concerned that we would be flooded out
- I just want to see the town go ahead and I think it's worthwhile
- I'm happy for the proposed facilities. If it's to make the town better that's OK, I would not be happy if the money was used to upgrade council offices or buildings
- I don't think it's that much of an increase and the new facilities are all worth it
- I think Muswellbrook is a typical mining town and it's on its way up again, the only way to make it go back up is to meet the needs of the community and the only way to do that is from funding through the community
- I don't mind paying the extra, I think we need the new facilities
- I really would like to see Olympic park fixed up, we have spent a lot of years with our kids playing sports there. It would be ideal to have some sort of Entertainment facility that would benefit the whole community
- Storm water drainage is a major plus. I have seen multiple floodings around the town. Entertainment area sounds pretty good and will bring in out of towners is great makes my house very variable
- Muswellbrook needs improvement
- Only if it is 2018/19, we definitely need a centre for them to put on shows and things like that
- Because it's not a huge amount over 12 months, and we need the new facilities
- It is good for the shires advancement
- I find it will still happen anyway no matter what I say
- Allows it to happen in one financial year and not over a number of years, one off payment
- Because my business is affiliated with construction...and I might get some work out of it
- Well it's all the things that are needed here but it's very hard on the pensioners. I also have grandkids that live here and would love them to bring up and live here with their families
- I support it as long as the work is done. Don't agree with the Entertainment & Conference Centre, I can't see why they need it, what is Muswellbrook trying to be??
- Supportive of the upgrades
- It's going to benefit the community
- Provided that things go ahead as proposed
- Need the drainage upgrade desperately

- I can afford it and some of the roads need a lot of work
- The town needs it, the Entertainment & Conference is it really necessary and what are they going to do with the Olympic Park. The council needs to explain it more
- We need all those things in Muswellbrook
- It would be good for the town
- These upgrades have to be done, rates haven't been too bad and it's not a whole lot more if these things get done
- I think the streets need upgrading and I think another venue for adolescents/children is needed
- If it creates jobs that would be a good thing but would be interested in how many jobs it would create
- Anything that is going to better the lifestyle of the entire community
- I think that it is a good idea
- The facilities are needed and doesn't think the rate increase is too excessive
- For the growth of the shire it is great
- We have limited things already and welcome any new improvements and a new shopping centre should be in the plans.
- We have to get ahead, the sooner it is done the cheaper it will be in the long run
- To do such projects the council needs the extra funds to carry out the works. But I would like to see something done about the Denman Hall as it is a community hall and important for your community
- I think we need those things.... Including the entertainment centre
- They need to do something with Muswellbrook, needs to be brought into the future, not too sure about the convention centre though don't think it will be used by public
- It is an excellent value for money, and I like the concept of future development and employment, maintaining infrastructure as well as the cultural opportunities. However what is not specified about how long that the 10 per cent is ongoing. Council needs to be clear and transparent about how long the extra rates to continue on for, e.g., 30 or 40 years
- Help promote the shire, to attract more people to the area
- What you buy today is dearer tomorrow - it might cost a bit today but the shire has to look great. Always room for improvement - I must admit going Bylong way nasty roads need improvements badly. Make the town lovely with more shops for future generation but the roads really need doing
- The council needs to attend to the stormwater and other projects, but I am not that interested in the Entertainment Conference Centre, as it is not as essential - will it be used
- needs to be done
- need money to upgrade things
- Entertainment Centre would be good. Roads are terrible and drainage needs to be improved
- need upgrades, and to clean up everything and clean up around parks
- Would like to see the town go ahead
- The town needs help to continue to thrive
- I would support it but can't really afford it
- They've done a good on the roads in the shire in the last few years
- Doing the wrong roads Forbs Street hasn't been done forever holes in the road they need to fix the roads
- I do support it, but depends on how much money is going in to Denman community
- Any infrastructure is good and hope they continue to improve
- I think they are worthwhile projects
- I think Muswellbrook needs everything upgraded to make it a better town
- If they do what they say I would like to see the town go ahead. I work here as well as have another house elsewhere they have to get the town going and interested again. I think our rates are high enough to cover costs
- I support most of the proposals but not keen on the plans for the street that's parallel to Wilson Street and across the creek with a bridge
- Comment - I've lived [REDACTED] and still have no guttering in front of my house. It's only one block that needs doing, everywhere else is done. The things put forward are things that need to be done and should be paid for by the community. That's what rates are for and being an aged pensioner it doesn't do a great deal for my pocket but I understand why it is being asked

- Our town wants all the proposed facilities and services. Especially for our young people
- Council has done quite a lot of improvements over the years and having facilities like the Entertainment centre and the Olympic upgrade will benefit the local residents
- Drainage needs to be done - it's the biggest thing
- They need to get something into the town to get people back, more jobs for people, mines
- Because it's going to improve our town. Any improvement is good and we need a conference centre in town
- They sound like very good projects and we need them in town
- Not sure, didn't elaborate
- Must get the funds from somewhere.
- The council has done a lot for our town
- I do not support the Entertainment & Convention Centre. I don't think we need it
- The facilities being proposed would be very useful
- I wonder what the aim of all the real estate purchases of late when it could have gone to funding these new proposals and initiatives
- The shire needs to get ahead. And investment in the area is good for the area in the long-term
- We need to make some improvements to our town. I want to see our town go ahead, and jobs created, and bring money into our town
- I am in support because it will go ahead any way but will be tough on pensioners, don't understand how council can spend all this money buying most places in town but when it comes to upgrades they reach into the pockets of rate payer who are already paying a high amount
- I would like to see Muswellbrook go ahead
- There are things that need to and should be done, as pensioners we don't like the hike in prices but we understand why it's happening. On the whole I agree that we do have to have a rate rise, but I don't agree with convention centre
- Like to have the projects completed, so people can enjoy them
- I think that things need improving
- An 87 dollars is not too much per annum as a one off given the benefits it will have for the town
- Council has been upfront and open about the options and can only improve our area and raise property value
- I just hope that eventually something will be done with the Denman hall - it burnt down 4 years ago and nothing has happened, I think it should be included with the entertainment and convention centre. The slowness of the council to produce anything rezoned - 5 year seems a long time to me. I think they're doing a good job and if there's more money it might make them do better things
- It's good for the community
- I used to be homeowner in Muswellbrook, sold 3 years ago. It will upgrade the town and have more facilities here and make people want to settle in the town
- Need job creations and the other projects
- Muswellbrook needs those things for the young ones and their families down the track
- We do need substantial works to go on with, but want to make sure that the money actually goes to where they have advertised it will go
- We need more infrastructure around the shire
- We need things done for the town
- I am involved with Olympic park in terms of sports facilities, \$87 is an affordable amount. The town and region would benefit. We have a family with children and we would benefit from the proposal.
- People are always complaining that there is nothing to do in town, can only benefit from the upgrades in the town
- I'd like to see the stormwater upgraded and the convention centre built
- More needs to be done for the community. The Entertainment Centre is good for families. The Council does not promote enough for families
- I think they do need to fix all those things up like drainage around here
- The bulk of people who own their own homes. The increase is reasonable
- It's helping the community

- It will be good to get things up and running, especially the roads
- Like to see more improvements for Muswellbrook. More jobs for people especially over 50's
- I don't agree with paying for things like the marketplace, I don't agree with rate payers paying more than expected, I do agree with upgrades if they are for the community/ roads etc..
- I think it will be good for the town
- Because I'm interested in the entertainment venue
- Because \$90 extra year isn't that much compared to the benefits for the community
- They need more things for kids in the town
- Muswellbrook need more facilities, bring more tourists into the area. Better roads and general upgrade of Muswellbrook is a good thing
- Council has been improved in the area and think upgrades should go ahead, only thing worried about is the extent of the use of the entertainment centre, would like it to be utilised in best way possible
- The benefits from it and I'm happy to pay for it.
- Job creation is important in the area. The conference and entertainment centre might help keep people in the area longer rather than FIFO
- Good for the town and community get more jobs to promote the area
- Been lacking in facilities for so long, don't have a venue that's big enough to hold events, or entertainment venue with a kitchen or air conditioning
- Improving the shire is good. Don't understand where the job things expansion of jobs
- It is always good to progress a town, through beautification and by increasing facilities for the next generation
- Job program would be good for the town as it needs more job opportunities, Olympic park does need an upgrade also
- Help the town and make the town a lot better
- But I want the money to go into roads, job creation and stormwater but not the Olympic Park or the Entertainment & Convention Centre
- Denman needs footpaths and roads to be upgraded as there are a lot of elderly people on scooters, upgrades would be good for the town
- I'll support if drainage is fixed. Palace street flooding occurs when it rains it's a swamp in our driveway
- Will be good for the community
- I think it would be beneficial to the community
- Progress is great. It's for the grandkids living in Denman that will benefit. Better traffic. When I walk around I like to see lovely scenery, clean buildings, and shops. The ones at Denman are absolutely awful. Council needs to beautify everything - greens, more shops and business. There seems to be a lot of vacant land sitting around more kids areas and barbeque areas
- Muswellbrook needs these facilities
- I think the town needs to go ahead and think it will be good for the town
- Council needs support
- Muswellbrook desperately needs some upgrades and improvements to the shire
- I think council is doing a great job
- These are things that would benefit the community
- Muswellbrook needs some more infrastructure
- All facilities are needed
- Good for town
- I think they're doing a good job and seem to be moving in the right direction for Muswellbrook, Denman and surrounds
- I have lived in Muswellbrook all my life and we need these things to support jobs and economic development. It is good for the town
- It's a really good project because they are projects which need upgrading. Council have a proven track record for delivering quality assets for the community
- Make the town a better place more successful create jobs for the town and keep people in town
- Stormwater upgrades is an ongoing project. Job creation is critical, entertainment & conference not sure about that one

- I've see a lot a progress around town, and I think council is doing a good job
- I think it is important for those facilities and to have the job program up and going
- I'd like to see the facilities within Muswellbrook be brought up to the 21st century. It will be great for the community, will provide further employment for the future. The region deserves to look to the future and I don't mind paying for that
- Great for the town opportunities need the town to go ahead
- It'll be good to have the drainage fixed in Denman
- Any improvement on infrastructure in the community is good. Rate money going to the stormwater drainage from housing built 8 yr ago, why wasn't that sorted before these houses were in the process of being built, and then have to pay for it again
- It would be good for the area
- There is nothing here for kids. So it would be an asset for our future. As long as it keeps a reasonable amount for people to pay
- The storm waters a major issue in Denman and we need it fixed asap
- Because I want the town to be the best it can for my family
- These proposals would be good for community and the local people
- Because the stormwater upgrades and the Olympic Park development would be of immediate benefit to me
- If the money is put back into the community. Council should source workers from local areas and work with Centrelink to provide those workers
- Need the facilities in the town to keep it going and we also need more jobs in the town
- Because they're all things that will be improvements on the area, we live here and intend on staying a while and any improvement is good
- I do think town will benefit from the upgrades but I think they are much for the rates to go up
- The area needs new roads and drainage and need more jobs and entertainment centre for the young.
- But I'm opposed to the olympic park
- I'd like to see growth in our town
- If it is going to increase work and attraction to the shire ratepayers need to pay this bill
- If the money goes to the places they've designated, I don't have an issue
- Good for it to go ahead
- I have got children that will use the entertainment and convention centre and olympic park, and I do think the shire will benefit from proposed upgrades
- We need the facilities to maintain and attract our population base
- The stormwater drains really need to be addressed. Our surrounding houses have been severely affected due to inadequate drainage. My saying yes is conditional upon the idea that it is a short term rise in rates
- I think we need to do it to move forward. We need to expand on what we have in the town. I believe it will create more interest in the area which will filter down to creating more tourism and job opportunities for the younger generation, I think it is a great idea
- I like all the things about Olympic park upgrade and the convention centre
- They are doing a good job of roads and footpaths. Muswellbrook is going downhill and I think the Olympic park renovation would allow more sporting activities and would bring more money in
- I think the items that are listed are very important and need to be done
- It all sounds good but will it actually go ahead?
- Have to get the money from somewhere, if you live in the area you should support the projects around town
- Long term resident would improve the quality of life in Muswellbrook which would be a benefit

People who were neutral or were unsure as to whether the projects would be delivered, or had questions about the design concepts of the projects:

- I'm not rate payer but I just want to see things get fixed properly
- Because doesn't affect you personally
- You're not a home owner
- I don't really know if the Entertainment and convention centre is needed. The council is doing very good with

the community beautification

- I think they're currently putting the money into the wrong...the underfunded areas should be addressed first
- The increase is too high, but we do need some stuff around here as we are a developing community
- I'm unsure, theres a number of things I'd like to know; improving the stormwater drains in Denman - people's house insurance is skyrocketing because Denman is classed as a "flood zone" if the water drainage is fixed will Denman still be classed as a flood zone? The fact that Muswellbrook council is not excellent with roadworks around Denman - its all bandaid work and needs fixing repeatedly
- I would support most of the planned initiatives but not the convention centre. I would therefore support some rate increase above 2.5% but not 10%
- I don't pay rates and don't really understand about the rates as my english is not very good
- Extra money. We have to put out they should be getting monies from the mine. We are surrounded by 5 mines, the v doubles go through a very narrow street - we really need a bypass as it's a wonder people haven't been killed. I'm more for a bypass. The mines are going to be going for another 30 years. I know what they have done is pretty good
- Some of it I think is good and some of you think could be spent elsewhere
- Up until this, I was under the understanding the drainage issues were already in the budget - and the things that need doing need doing I'm not doubting that at all. It came out of the blue, one moment everything was going so well and the next they were saying we need more money
- The council should look at the purchases they have made in Sydney and Muswellbrook Market place and think about how much that money could have gone towards this plan and we would not have to have the SRV. They dont publicise what they already spend rate payers money on and I think this should for the whole community when they do purchase
- It is not clear as to how many years the proposal is ongoing for the increases to apply. However, if it is only for the 2018-19 financial rate year, then I am in favour of a one of rate variation increase
- I'm unsure that there are so many other things for council to attend to. eg.our roundabouts need attention. I don't think rate payers should be hit with the extra rates increase
- It is not clear that this is only a one of for one year only rate variation. I support the variation if it is only for one year and not ongoing for years after that
- I dont pay rates and dont know much about it
- I don't know enough about it. They need to expand a bit about what benefit people in the area are getting from it
- We are pensioners so this makes things really hard. With the Olympic Park master will this include the pool area, the croquet, tennis courts
- The increasing price is the only concern
- Haven't received the letter from council as yet and it's the first I've heard about it
- I want to know if we keep paying this 10% for the rest of our lives or is it a certain amount of time/timeframe for these things to be done and then it goes back to our normal price. These things need to be done, and this is what council is for, but we cant just let our rates be raised forever in this economy
- I like the projects but I'm not sure that these things need to be funded through an increase in rates of this size. The \$35m property purchase makes me think this may not in fact be necessary
- Being fair to ratepayers that have already had an increase last year, they should manage things so that the rate payers are not paying extra all the time. Spent the money on things that are really necessary
- We live out of town and we pay our rates and recieve nothing in return so why should we pay more. We are pensioners and still working very hard on the farm, we should be getting at least a waste collection and some other services would be good or why should we pay more than everyone else who gets to use these services
- I'm a pensioner. I do not want a rate rise really but if its going to help the town ok
- I am concerned about the affordability of the rate variation, as there are many low income earners, the farmland prices are a particular concern as we have just come out of drought and having had to buy water all the time, so affordability is a big concern
- I rent my property
- People just can't afford this type of rise in rates, we do need these facilities but with the costs of living and power bills and lack of jobs its just not viable

- I do support this the increase for the 2 years ONLY but I dont understand why they havent preplanned for these increases that we need. The council sit on their hands, they're not proactive and are not out in the community everyday
- Too drastic a step for the council to make. I have a huge block and I think it's too high. I'm in favour of what they are proposing the drains and job creation. I love entertainment centre no we need activities in the town but we really need more business houses for shopping not much for young adult children to do
- I don't know enough about it and how the proposal is going to benefit Denman
- Unsure. I think our bills are enough. I don't really have a problem with it as long as the ventures are followed through
- We need to be working towards job creation and economic development as a priority to add employment diversity for when the minning sector. Education is another sector that needs to be encouraged. These areas are also in need of funding
- Hyde park - in hyde street - is never kept clean. Everytime a wind a comes up it blows into ours and all of our neighbourhood yards. It needs to be mowed. It's alright to go and do all these things but they need to keep clean what they've got already.
- I support the variation only if the funds that are collected are actually set aside and used only for these proposed projects
- In some ways I'm selling the house I've got in the area, and becoming a renter, and I don't want the guilt of dumping an extra 10% on someone else
- Thinks that the rates are high enough. And the tip charges are way too high.
- 50-50 friends pay rates that are struggling whereas Council is trying to improve Muswellbrook and Council waste their money on little projects that Muswellbrook does not need, ie the Dog Statue in the main street
- 50-50 some projects I agree with some won't benefit me, some will. Projects needed more detail didnt quite understand no rates rise
- Olympic park - I'm not convinced the proposal is the best suggestion, convention centre - pretty big building, which I question "champagne taste on a beer budget"
- Not sure if the community can afford it
- I would need to see specifics as it is a lot of money

Community members who were opposed the proposal left the following comments:

- I Believe that council shouldn't be spending the money on real estate. i.e. Campbell's Corner
- It is the wrong time to go ahead with it and find it is too expensive
- Not spending money on Denman. Our hall burnt down 2 years and they havent done a thing
- Because no one uses the pool now, so I'm not supportive of that, I would be supportive of the community function centre. I'm not supportive of helping unemployed people- they should help themselves. Maybe if it were just for a few years and then reverted back, but the rates will go up and stay up and I'm not supportive of that
- We pay high enough rates already
- In town gets off easier then farmland. I don't think that farmers should have to payer a higher amount
- As a pensioner, I could not afford the rate increase
- I compared Muswellbrook to other places I've been to in Australia. Rates go up every year which is ridiculous. I live in a crappy house in a crappy suburb and I'm paying the same amount of money that the rate payers in Brisbane on the water pay. The rates that I'm paying constantly increase. It is enough. No more. Yes it would be great to have these other projects but they should get the monies elsewhere. I actually had a wheelybin stolen and they wouldn't even replace it
- It's money out of our pocket. I don't think we need a convention centre and there's plenty of places in town that they could use for the same thing
- Means our rates would go up by \$700 per annum. I think we all pay enough rates.
- With all the mines in the area, it's supposed to receive 60 million a year from the mining companies to the shire. But it doesn't seem to be getting used by the council and ends up being used outside of the shire.
- What do we get now for what we pay for? I'm a farmer and recieve nothing really
- I think the money should come from elsewhere, not increased rates
- That's a hike for residential I won't or don't use any of these new facilities. I have no children and wouldn't

use an entertainment centre or the other things

- The council have not done the works in the past, the roads which were meant to have curb and guttering years ago still have not been done, roads that only need minor repairs are done but those that need work have been left to deteriorate
- If you live in town you get a lot of these services which don't apply to us in the rural area. Councils work in Denman has been good for the community
- Because council already receive funds from mining
- Because they only help the people in town and not rural, I pay my rates just like everyone else and receive nothing for it
- A lot of work around town (Possum Gully) needs doing like roads, and paths which is more important than big upgrades
- The convention centre will be a huge white elephant. Job creation plan is a joke. It's all a huge waste of money. They need to stop borrowing money to buy land, e.g. Campbell's Corner
- We don't need to grab more money, we need to work how to spend the money we already supply and put it out evenly through the shire
- I just think we're paying enough, everyone's got their hand out and we don't have the money for that
- Too high in price. I am 63 yrs old and single and have to pay. I don't think we need the big upgrades. I think the mayor is trying to get into higher government. The council is very rich, let them do it on their own back
- I really can't afford it
- I pay enough now, I am on a double block. It will be way out of my league
- I feel we have great facilities already
- I live in Denman. I feel left out and feel that what I want doesn't matter and is ignored
- I don't think we need Olympic park precinct, or the convention centre. Olympic park could be placed at the showgrounds
- We live a long way from Muswellbrook and in this area we receive no services - we do not have any line marking although it has a lot of traffic from Sydney going to vineyards and mine traffic
- Can't spend money on the roads now as it is
- Nothing affects me, don't drive, don't go out (only a pensioner)
- Rates are high enough now. If anything, they should be lower
- Because we live on a dirt road, and when it was sealed, they finished short of our property. Our property is within the town boundaries
- Normal general maintenance should be covered by the general rates - we pay enough to include any projects. Council has bought many buildings - there seems to be funds for those, why is there then not enough funds for the upgrades and projects? The funds from mining should be used for new upgrades and projects
- Already paying enough rates, we don't even have septic
- Because Muswellbrook is surrounded by coal mines and the money should come from them and not ratepayers
- I am a pensioner and this is just way too much
- We've got so many mines in the area, surely out of all the money the mines contribute to council they could fund these things. The things that are being proposed aren't suitable for all community members, e.g. my family wouldn't use the convention centre or memorial park upgrades. Council targets a particular group of people for upgrades and not the community as a whole. The industry is slightly picking up, there is employment out there if they want it
- I think the council is spending beyond its means
- I can't afford the extra per annum
- Farmland, live out of town, asking to pay way too much
- No one's wages have gone up to accommodate the rate variation
- Because the money is going to be wasted, the council needs to live within its needs. We don't need a convention centre, we had a perfectly good town hall that was for these things which is now an art gallery. They've already applied for a rate variation last year for almost the exact same things. On Facebook there was a community poll - 70% of people said no and the people at federal state also said no
- I would be more than happy to support the variation if I had clarification that the Mayor was giving full support to all local industry and business. In Muswellbrook we have so many vacant shops, yet we can not even buy shoes for us and our kids because we don't have a shoe shop.

My husband and I are looking at investing in a business in Newcastle just because I don't have enough confidence to invest in Muswellbrook as there is no support for small business

- We don't need a conference centre
- I don't use anything in town and I have to pay more living out of town. I don't think that's fair - people living in town who utilise these things should pay more
- Everyday costs of living has risen, electricity has risen, the council need to tighten their belts like everyone else
- I think there are a lot of rate payers that are outside the town who wouldn't use the facilities so shouldn't really have to pay for them. The money should be spent elsewhere - we don't need a huge conference centre
- Because I'm on the aged pension
- The rates have gone up this year and they were already too high as we are pensioners
- We pay enough rates as is. Sell the market place and use the money from that. I don't want to pay any more rates. We don't need an entertainment centre. We need more shops, industry, some specialty shops. Woolies is possibly closing, then what have we got? Nothing! The town is in trouble and an entertainment centre will not fix this
- I don't believe the money should be going to sporting facilities when the council is talking about diversifying the town
- We have many other general needs that need to be met, e.g., improving the water quality. We have far more important needs that the council needs to tackle including environmental matters such as air pollution which may affect the health of the people. Even though we rely on mining, we still need to tackle these negative effects, e.g., water quality from Aberdeen south downwards
- The rates are going up all the time. I live in Denman, and the monies they are spending are not important. Years ago, when updating our water system, our rates went up. They said the council said the rates would then go down. My brother's rates are so much cheaper on the coast north arm cove much much cheaper
- If the council would stop the purchasing of various properties in the township, then the council would have money to fund the proposed projects
- The cost of electricity has reduced my take home pay, and I don't think council should be spending all that money
- All the money is being spent in Muswellbrook and not Denman. Why should we have to pay the extra rates for the benefit of Muswellbrook people and not us?
- A lot of coal mines around town have given the council a lot of money and I would like to know what was done with all this money, where has it been spent. Mangoola coal has given money for the upgrade of the Wybong creek and that has not been done, so where is this money? With all the funds that have been given to council we shouldn't need a 10 percent rise as these funds that have been given by coal mines should have helped to do all these facilities. There are much more important facilities that need to be thought of and implemented, such as toilets for surrounding areas and rural areas. The Entertainment centre needs to be done, but they could use the money they have already been given. The council are moving from their building so instead of leaving it vacant they could use it as an entertainment venue and save costs for rate payers and then we still get to have this facility. We live rurally and pay our high rates and receive nothing in the way of facilities and good roads, waste service
- We simply can't afford it at the moment
- This council is one of the richest in district, council can and should draw on the vast investments it has made, also we don't necessarily need all the proposed projects. Some wastes have occurred, e.g. the stainless steel lizard that was placed in the play ground area, but the children cannot use it as they burn themselves on the steel when it heats up. Also, council still have not built the Denman Hall. However, I do appreciate you consulting the residence
- Benefits Muswellbrook more than Denman. I believe that there is a rise of living cost. This doesn't need to be rising to
- We have a shopping centre which is a white elephant. Campbell's corner could be used as an entertainment area
- I don't think Denman will get anything out of this. It's all going to Muswellbrook. Memorial hall burnt down last year and nothing's been done so please fix it

- Council should not raise rates for the benefit of the minority. If they would like to raise rates for our roads for us to get to town safely then that's ok
- Infrastructure needs more money spent on it. Council should be careful what they spend their money on
- I don't think they should have bought the shopping centre. We dont need an entertainment centre. I think our rates are high enough without any increase
- We as farmers already pay high rates even though we do not get general services at all -I see no real value in the proposed projects
- I live in Denman and Palace St is a disgrace....money should be spent on this before money is spent on entertainment centres
- I don't support Muswellbrook council in general, it does very little for Denman
- We live out of town and none of these things will benefit us. Our roads have recently been repaired and they have done a terrible job. This road is used by cattle/horse trucks, the school bus. 100k zone area so it is very dangerous. Why can't the money be spent in rural areas
- Rates are too high already. We are pensioners and find it tough paying rates already
- Because everytime money goes up, all the money goes to Muswellbrook, and none goes to Denman - they want to change the carparking to horizontal parking, this was tried 20 years ago and failed. Everything is for Muswellbrook, nothing mentioned is for Denman. When it comes to community meetings, the community members say no and it still goes ahead. Why should I pay for things that arent even being used by me or my community. I was born in Denman in 1965 and have only seen Denman go downhill with the amalgamation with Muswellbrook. Our rest area was taken away - we are on the Golden Highway and have people stopping all the time which hasnt been replaced. Community meetings with council members won't drink Denman water - they drink bottled water- the water quality here is disgusting
- I'm opposed to the increase because I'm a rural rate payer and the \$364.60 over a year is way out of proportion to what general households pay. We dont get any services such as kerb and guttering, and garbage collection, and stormwater drainage
- I think council is wasting our money on shops and I understand the council has goings on elsewhere
- 0
- For roads and sewerage they are subsidised through the Government, so why should we have to pay more? As a rate payer I'm not going to be using any of these planned facilities. I think the job creation program is beneficial to our community but apart from that its not beneficial for us retirees. There is nothing in these plans for retirees and the majority of rate payers are retirees, so why can't they think of something for us?
- Can't see why farmland has to pay \$295. I get nothing from the new improvements only Muswellbrook residents. We get nothing like good roads, garbage service, etc. Much more important things than an Entertainment Centre, like better roads to avoid anyone getting killed. Side of roads have eroded and it is very dangerous
- They wasted a lot of money in the past, no shops in the main street would be better to build community up
- Too expensive. It doesnt say how much will be spent in the Denman area - my property was devalued by \$1,000 and rates have gone up, it's hard for a pensioner - we dont get an increase on our pension. The properties (Woolworths, Campbells) that the council has brought around Muswellbrook could have been saved and used for these proposed plans instead of taking it in rates. Treelopping down in Denman isn't done properly
- The rates are too expensive as it is. For pensioners this is very hard and we are not going to use most of these facilities so why should I have to pay for a minority who would use these services
- I'm a pensioner and these new initiatives won't benefit me. And will make life tougher.
- I think council has spent too much on other projects, and their priorities in their spending are in the wrong place
- They tried last year and got knocked back, there was a meeting last year there was money that was supposed to be put aside for Denman memorial hall - I have called council left a message regarding this and I still havent had a call back. The hall was burnt down, the council recieved money from insurance and it's still boarded up/not fixed. Muswellbrook is always getting the upgrades and Denman or the outlying areas
- I think they could spend our money more wisely
- I dont believe they ought to ask for more money from ratepayers. Council should be able to use their own budget to fund these projects
- I don't believe I get value for my rate money as it is

- They get enough money, for people who are on pensions this is unviable. The council waste money on things they dont need
- Council does nothing, we have the worst roads in the Hunter Valley
- If council would encourage or mandate that the people who work in the mining sector would also live in the Muswellbrook LGA - then that would increase the number of ratepayers. Also if the council were to reduce the subdivision of rural land to 10 acres, that would also increase the number of ratepayers. At this stage I think that there will not be enough ratepayers to support the town and its projects
- I would like council to attend to the basics first...like potholes in the road
- I believe that council has spent too much money on statues, which dont serve a purpose. They need to spend money on projects to benefit the general community
- The things that council wants to do are not as important as many other general needs which are not being done, e.g., footpaths and drainage in Hill street which is not being cleaned which is causing problems to rate payers. Young people are leaving the town and the entertainment centre may not be used
- The rates we already pay should cover the roads and parks maintenance, and there is no need for an entertainment centre when there are other facilities that can be used for this. I train and play at the Olympic park and it works well and meets all my needs as it is
- Because husband said no
- More information about it. I thinkIreceived the letter but kids got to it andI didnt read it properly. I really need a lot of information -Ireally dont understand what they are doing
- Muswellbrook does not need an Entertainment & Conference Centre
- They want all this other work done expecting us to pay for it and they are wasting all the money
- I don't like that it's a 10% rise, think it will be ongoing and get out of control
- I don't think it is relevant. I live out of town on a rural property where I don't have stormwater drainage, street lights, sealed roads or proper garbage collection
- I think we pay too much in rates as it is. I think most of the money goes to Muswellbrook, as a Denman resident I don't think we will benefit from it, I'd like to see upgrades here - I also think there is a lot of money already being collected from the big mining companies; where has all of that money gone to?
- Council has just spent 30 million on a shopping centre, shops are closed because they can not afford the rent. What was the point of this? They could have used that money and not try and put rates up again. We are pensioners and there is no way we could afford this plus the normal rates. We need a Kmart and more similiar options. We already have to travel out of town for these services
- Projects are not necessary
- It's hard enough to pay rate as it is, most of the upgrades don't affect the general community. They dont listen - they still go ahead and do what they want to do. Would not be happy as well as a lot people, would not be happy if the upgrades went ahead, better things to spend money on
- Because most of those things would be of no use to me
- I agree with the stormwater, and roads, but we dont need an entertainment centre
- Have tried to get fixed the roadway in front of my driveway for years. I would rather see money spent on road repairs
- We do not need a convention centre it's ridiculous. Port Stevens' rates are 200% cheaper than in Musslebrook. In the economic climate we are in at the moment, the convention centre shouldn't happen - we are a farming community and mining and not arty if people want entertainment facilies they go to Newcastle
- We pay too much in rates now, while we not seeing it in the services or maintenance of items such as curb and guttering
- Because it will take too much out of our weekly spendings
- I don't believe Muswellbrook cater for out of town people and tourists because there is not a caravan park. Money should be spent on attracting tourists
- Have been waiting for curve guttering and drainage for the last decade
- Land rates will be going up and then the rentals will also be going up andIcould not possibly manage a rent increase on the pension
- Because my rent would go up
- There are enough rates being paid. We are high compared to Cessnok. People are losing jobs, food has gone up, electricity has gone up. We have to shop out of town -there aren't any shops here. I believe the shops are closing - you cannot rent anything in town. People in the mines

are not living here, but way out of town. There is no accommodation. 80 percent of workers are living in Cessnock, Maitland, Singleton or Newcastle. The council needs to look at what is going on in the town. I do charity work and we fund raise for money for things. Why doesn't the council do some fund raising? The town is going under further and further. Do not put the rates up again please

- It doesn't really concern the general public, and more so pensioners, with all the upgrades
- A lot of the things are things that council should be already doing. So council should find the money without asking ratepayers for extra
- As a Denman person I don't understand why residents of Denman need to pay for all the residents of Muswellbrook shire and it doesn't benefit Denman at all
- The area is going through a very hard time with downturn in mining and industry which has put the town on its knees. I can understand the money could be spent better than what they are proposing to spend it on - we don't need an entertainment centre. Roads need work - the roads are pathetic and dangerous. The town needs more industry. Shops are closing, the town folk are having to drive out of town to shop
- Current council funds are not being utilised well with regards to the service provision, infrastructure, maintenance. Also Muswellbrook Council is not very good at attracting funding or services into the area, therefore a rate increase is much too much to ask of the ratepayers
- Council had already agreed to convention centre a while ago, but then didn't go ahead. I refuse to have rates higher, trust within the council is very limited, things won't change until there are new councillors, they're only in it for themselves
- It would make too much of a hole in my budget
- We pay enough rates already. Lived in my street for 62 years and it has only been repaired twice. I think the money should be better spent on other things. The main street is a disgrace, no shops or small businesses exist anymore. Entertainment and Conference Centre is not necessary.
- At the end of the day the local mines give money to council to do some of that work and I feel that this money should be going towards these things instead of buildings that are not beneficial to this area such as the hubb and Loxton House
- We don't get the normal council services
- The council have purchased buildings and assets which require a lot of work to bring them up to standard. The funds spent on those purchases could have been used for the necessary projects. Pensioners cannot afford a rate increase. All the proposals are for the improvement of Muswellbrook, there are no improvements for Denman - we still do not have a Town Hall in Denman. It is unfair distribution of funds
- I don't believe that it's a one off rate increase and as I'm on a fixed income it's a real issue for me. And being a pensioner, it's a significant loss.
- They should sell the Market place that they spent so much money on building, and put the money from that into these planned facilities and services and do not try and put our rates up again. I am a pensioner and there is no way I will be able to pay that
- Being a landowner with the amount of land that we own our rates are going up more than is written on that paper. The way that they have worked it out is only for small acreage. My rates will go up nearly 1000 dollars a year
- To waste money like this on things like the entertainment centre and money that has been wasted on the main and for what reason when the shops are vacant due to high rent, so to me I see so much wasted money, I have a very elderly person who is a pensioner and definitely can't afford these types of rate variations. Locals have to travel out of town just to buy a pair of shoes so council need to prioritise
- I couldn't afford to live in my house with an increase in rates, I'm an 88 year old pensioner and I can barely live as it is with out an extra \$100 per year
- The wages have not increased and the rates will be too high, the program delivery e.g., Job creation program is not clear as to how it would be achieved. These rate variations have been declined before - nothing has changed in the township to warrant increases in developments. The population has decreased, there have not been any increases in job availability
- Parks need upgrading
- Farmland price for increasing the rates is too high and unbalanced compared to the general housing rate in town
- Because I think there are other things that are more important

- In the letter it says it has a one off 14.9% continuing permanently in the rate base - but it's only 12.5%. It's only going to Olympic Park and there are plenty of other sporting facilities that need it, they're not the only sporting group in town
- The jobs creation is not working. The mines bring people from out of our area to work, and should be using local people before employing outsiders
- Affordability. Our rates are too high as it is
- As a pensioner the rate increase is too high, however, I would like to see the proposal go ahead, and the town would need it but low income earners cannot afford it
- They tried this before and hopefully it will get knocked back again
- I think they are spending money on unnecessary things
- I'm a pensioner and I have enough difficulty with money already. And there's nothing for Denman in the proposal
- Will increase anyway but when is enough enough? I do agree with the upgrades as they do need to be done, but why is rate rise so high? They'll go ahead with these upgrades and in near future something else will come up. People are retired and pensioners will be affected most as well as the general public rate payers
- Council spends too much money on unnecessary things
- The development of an Olympic Park master plan is not a good idea. The council has more important priorities and me as a general farmer I am paying 350 dollars extra for this precinct which is just ridiculous. I do support job creation and maintenance to roads and infrastructure but not the development of an Olympic Park precinct master plan just does not make any sense at all. I think that 26 million dollars to spend on something that will not even get off the ground is ridiculous
- I'm a pensioner I cannot afford any more rates all these facilities I'll never use. The drainage is ok but should be included in the current rates
- The council is buying so much of the town. The town is dead and I'm upset by that
- People with acreage that pay very high rates already will be penalised as very little of what's being proposed will affect us directly
- The rate increase is too high on farmland owners, however I think that the proposals would be good for the town
- We do not need the Entertainment Centre as other facilities such as clubs and school halls would not be used and will lose revenue. Also, there are other adequate facilities being under utilised already. Furthermore, Newcastle has had difficulty attracting big acts and attractions, and therefore Muswellbrook, with a small population, will not be able to attract these acts, thus the Entertainment centre will be under utilised
- As a pensioner I can't afford the extra money
- I think it is too much. We need to start thinking about keeping jobs in Muswellbrook and keeping the local economy going, such as shops and things rather than worrying precincts being changed
- Because I believe we're already paying too much for what we get for it - we can't even get a road fixed. Whenever there is heavy rain, I have to go clear the storm water drain myself, even after several calls to council no one would come out and do it. I am happy they're happy - they spent some money in Saint Heller street
- Performance Centre would be a white elephant & vacant 95% of the year. Olympic centre would only be used by a few of the sports people. Funds have already been allocated to jobs
- There's not a lot in there Denman community, I shouldn't have to pay more to support Muswellbrook. There are roads and stuff that need fixing out here
- Wasting ratepayers money. They own most of the town now and they can't fill. No job creation happening
- Mismanagement of funds
- I'm not a ratepayer but I don't believe it should go ahead
- I live in Denman and the three things that they wouldn't be able to do don't affect me and my family. They are the sort of things that I wouldn't be using anyway. I think they can do more important things that are going to benefit Denman
- Been having stormwater issues for ages and 4 houses affected and hasn't done anything about it, hasn't used the rates as it is to rectify these problems. Could be spending money more wisely

- I think the increase is way too high and I think council should plan ahead for this sort of thing to occur, not just pass the cost directly to ratepayers
- The rate increase will impact all the rental homes with rental increases which may not be affordable. Furthermore, I do not think that the Entertainment Centre is needed at all, as there are a lot of other venues available that could be used. I also think that the creek will be damaged by the proposed bridge at Wilder street as it will cause further loss of biodiversity fauna and flora
- The council is useless
- I wouldn't use any of the facilities
- They need to not waste money on crappy things. We need roads. The mines are just starting to pick up now. We are a little fortunate, but many aren't happy that they spent money on the library which was great. Do roadworks properly and don't just fill holes. Half a million dollars on Highbrook park - they should use this money on something else. Lets get realistic. The shopping here is terrible. If I want to buy school shoes I have to go to Maitland services. Our doctor is in maitland. Fix the town
- The rates are fairly high and people are doing it tough if you are not in the mining industry with a miners income
- I don't like the idea, it's a plan towards job creation but there are no details about it. The upgrades to the Olympic park which the supposed plan is to go through Wilder street which I don't want to happen and the storm water drainage is only in Denman that they are talking about and it should be in the general budget anyway
- The mayor has already spent too much, especially on artworks, etc and not roads that should be repaired. South Muswellbrook has been neglected
- I think we are paying too much rates out here in Denman. We don't get anything
- I have been asking for about 12 years to get the roads done, so why would upgrades be supported. Upgrades to the town most people would not use, they want to spend money pointless things in the community
- The council found 26 million to purchase a shopping centre without community consultation. So I don't see why the community should now pay for these other facilities via a rate hike
- Things have been promised before but never materialised
- I don't want to pay for things we don't use or frequent at all. I'm all for the sewerage and roads
- We need more shops, encourage more business and industry to our town
- Firstly the upgrades are mostly for Muswellbrook, and secondly it is unclear if the rate variation would continue or reduce again after the 2018-19 year. If it was just for the once off for one year then I would vote differently
- I'm looking at buying a house soon and after going through this survey it made me think that the costs should not come from rate payers pockets, why can't council go and apply to State, Federal Government for money or grants, incentives and don't take off local people? I use the Olympic park and it's really good and I don't see any need to take more money of the rate payers when most of these facilities are either good as they are or only half of the town will use the other facilities
- The facilities in Tamworth and Newcastle are great. The entertainment centre isn't a great idea. I would support other projects - maybe concentrate more on the horse industry. Some of the best breeding goes on in the area. It's all about the mining - without that, the town would go under. They are trying to do things with the town but at the end of the day there is really nothing for the children to do they need more barbeque areas and areas for families to go. The miners have nowhere in town to live so a lot are living in Singleton and Newcastle and the shops are fewer. We need more industry in the town - food shops, clothing and shoes etc
- They never spend the money on what they promise they will
- We pay huge amounts of rates and we don't receive any services to our property, other than the gravel road. I find it hard to support it because we don't get the value from a rates increase
- Pay enough as it is, will be spending a lot on roads and not sure why as they are not that bad, need to spend money wisely in the community other things that need attention to things like bike tracks
- For the amount of work that Council does, I think rates are already too high
- The entertainment centre and Olympic park would not be used by us, there are currently facilities that are not being used. Also, council seems to have sufficient funds to purchase properties such as the Woolwoths

complex - Market place and another property in bridge street, these are high ticket items. So the funds need to come out of already available funds

- We already think we pay way too much for what we get from council which is near nothing - we don't even have storm water drainage on our property or town water
- I am not going to be able to afford any increases. (My income has gone from a two income household to one income)
- Am on a farmland rating and we receive nothing from the council
- Muswellbrook shire council should be sacked...they buy into businesses rather than fix the basic things that urgently need doing....especially the water mains
- A lot of the proposed projects we do not use, all these seem to fall solely on ratepayer funding, the rate variation is ongoing and not a once of variation, no limits have been placed on how long this variation will apply for
- I don't believe that the money they are spending is in the right place, there are a lot of other things within the council boundaries that need fixing than a few small things that a minority of people will use. Council needs to beautify the main street in order to make people want to live here, the town is really dying, the money needs to be spent in different areas to build industry. The money the council has spent on a phone survey could have been better spent by doing a postal vote and had more people contacted
- Because we live in a rural area and we get no benefit from any of the things proposed
- I think the rates are really high enough anyway
- I feel that everything has been ongoing for so long, I don't think it is appropriate
- guttering update my street is terrible my yard floods through my garage. Koonbahla street doesn't want to pay extra rates really we are pensioners and really wouldn't use the facilities they plan on doing anyway. We are too old
- I'm paying \$4000 a year in rates now, what are they doing with that money, last year was the same thing, they wanted extra money - they mustn't be able to manage money well with the amount they are receiving. None of the things listed I would use anyhow as I'm living rurally
- The rates are expensive enough. I'm not interested in the Olympic park or a convention centre. Stormwater drainage is important to me though
- Because Denman is largely being left out of these initiatives and programs
- We pay over \$1000 per year and that's too much. If council can waste their money on silly things around town then it means they have enough money to be able to fund these other facilities that they want to put our rates up for. I am a pensioner what more do we have to pay
- Nothing's been done for Denman all done for Muswellbrook. It happens all the time. Happy with the rates the way they are. We get charged for sitting on a piece of land we are farmers but pensioners
- I think there's too much money being spent on other things already
- I will not use any of the facilities only the roads. Would like extra money spent on road improvement
- Don't believe we need to spend \$26 million on a convention centre
- Rates bill is the highest input, has been the highest its been, input costs are better than artificial spending. Should be making the rates lower to attract businesses in the area and to allow them to hire more people
- A lot of those programs apply only to Muswellbrook and not Denman
- Good for Muswellbrook but not Denman as Denman is not getting anything for the extra rates we have to pay
- I am a longterm resident and I am very upset that Denman is a secondary concern for the council within this rate rise, we do not even have curb and guttering yet
- Where I live we do not get any general services for the rates we already pay, therefore I do not want to pay any higher or additional rates for which we receive no benefits
- Because my business is struggling and the price we get for our product has not gone up in 30 years....so this would be an unacceptable burden on my business
- They went and brought a big supermarket for millions of dollars, doesn't look good now asking for more money for rates as they knocked back the last SRV. Rates bill keep rising
- After being here for 30 yrs council got a lot of money off the mines what they did with that money I'm not sure but should use it (I hate their guts) I've been around along time know what monies were put in and should be used now people
- The rates are high enough. Worried about the ongoing 10%

- I don't approve of the increase of rates, they need to be rescheduled for the community, would like to know the costs of all the upgrades going on, there is no decent bus or service if you don't own your own car which is needed in the outer community more than once a day. Service that is needed a taxi on call or a bus service around street after street. Other proposals that would be supported which would be more benefit to the older people
- I don't think its necessary, we pay enough and where I live I don't get enough for what I pay. The road that goes past our place is barely even maintained, it literally has grass growing out of the tar
- Council cant fix anything which needs doing, so shouldn't be asking rate payers for more money
- Rates are already higher enough as it is, Denman will not benefit from the upgrades as much as Muswellbrook, only really the stormwater drainage
- We live on a rural property. We will not have any benefits from the increase and we do not even recieve general services, the Denman Hall is still in barracades, the council has asked for a rate increase several months ago for the Denman township redevelopment, but nothing is really happening, the concil is spending a lot of money on sculptures in Muswelbrook which people did not want. The money is not being spent wisely in the areas needed, yet the council is constantly wanting to increase the rates
- They should manage their money better or wait until they can afford it, not ask us for the money. We are pensioners and we have to survive on our pension and when it runs out no one gives us anymore
- I don't think its neccasary for the area and the fact it will be an on going rate fee it's not fair
- Why should we pay for it? Totally against it at this house, its a rip off. We dont need it
- I think the proposed increase would be a massive increase for a lot of people in the town
- Too much is wasted on other things, Olympic park is good idea, stormwater drainage is needed but entertainment centre is not
- I would rather a reduction in rates and save money
- Local people should not have to pay for the extra rate increases
- The money they spend is not spent properly...so much is wasted
- I don't think Muswellbrook is big enough to support a convention centre
- We pay enough rates and it will not provide enough benefits in terms of jobs and economic advancements and the rates are so high people will not be able to afford living in the area. Furthermore population is decreasing and shops are empty
- My reason council sold parkland to a private company for aged care facility, and what are they doing with the proceeds. What about the funds donated by the local mines?
- I feel we pay enough is rates, I don't feel we get enough for what we pay as is. I don't see why we need to pay for things that will not be used by the community
- Only ratepayers are homeowners, not fair on homeowners saving money to buy a house then have to pay rates on top for people who everyone in the community to benefit from, should be more involved in getting the community together to work something out so that rate payers aren't always getting hit with big bills of things that everyone in the community will benefit from
- They receive huge amounts of rental for buildings they own, council should look at what they are spending their money on and not depend on ratepayers to pay
- We already pay too much and get nothing for it. I've been flooded twice in two years and the reason is inadequate infrastructure
- Because they've supported things in the past and it doesn't spread evenly over the entire shire. Muswellbrook town centre is the only centere that gets attention
- We dont need an entertainment centre. Stormwater drainage is OK, council should look at funding swimming lessons for kids as a priority. Denman had a very good hall which burnt down, funds should be allocated to repair that facility
- We live in a rural area and nothing will benefit from and council have spent millions of dollars in the main st and other things completely unfair roads need fixing drainage nursery has been there for years and all of a sudden they have closed council should have helped them that entertainment centre no one will use
- I think the town has had enough. Enough money spent on it eg - statues. I'm unhappy with all of the options that the council has proposed. I would rather a pound for all the homeless dogs
- Basically live out of town, I would rather see roads upgraded and more important things than an entertainment centre that we would never use but have to pay the extra rates for

- These things do need to be done but I don't think it should be put up as much as it is, I have some things to do with the council and I know that they have more than enough to do these projects
- I would like to know what the council has been doing with the rate money they already pay. The rates are high enough and we rarely get value for our rate dollars.
- It is a very large increase and we already pay very high rates in the state, low income earners cannot afford the current rates as it is, the increases would be too much of a burden on everybody
- 2017 special rate variation for the swimming pool and how much more do the local Council need us to pay. Enough is enough
- I think if council can afford to buy a market place and waste the money on upgrades in the main street, they could have better spent their money on these things instead.
- Council has already wasted money on Campbell Corner and property where Market Place
- They're not going to change the town over night, have had opportunity to do upgrades in the past, they can spend the money a lot better, think that the rate should be put up over time not just hit all at once, should be thinking of things for the children in town to do also
- I am a farmer and I don't believe I should pay any extra amounts for rates, over and above what I now pay
- Because some of the proposals are unnecessary. They should put more money into encouraging business to our town
- I think the rates are high enough as they are. And living in a rural area we're not seeing the benefit
- I think I pay enough in rates already. Being a self-funded retiree it would make life difficult
- We feel we pay enough rates now. We are pensioners and it's very difficult. The roads need doing. Council should be spending money on that and more shops to attract families in the centre and more business
- Rates are already too high
- Too much to pay for ratepayers, especially farmers is just too much. Council gets a lot of money from the mining companies
- Most of the stuff is happening in Muswellbrook and only 1 project in Denman
- We don't work in the mining industry, and we can't afford the extra rates charges

APPENDIX 7 - Online survey comments and feedback

Respondents to the online survey who indicated their support for the variation left the following comments:

- Because numbers are not set in stone you said average amounts I cannot say yes if it is not a definite number
- Maybe in person
- Current economic outlook is on the up with less unemployment and everyone should share the cost of improvements
- It is important to develop the town for the future
- Need a performance centre
- Benefits outweigh the cost
- For too long under the previous administrations we have seen 'masterly inactivity' where very little was achieved in terms of infrastructure improvements and the like. A total lack of focus on redefining our town post mining
- I believe Muswellbrook should have a theatre
- The completed projects in Muswellbrook have truly enhanced the town and if it takes \$87 dollars to keep this going then I will happily pay this
- They are all things the town need
- It is what the town needs
- We should plan for a future without mines. The town needs to become a regional hub. This will help that occur
- We need to progress
- It will help to diversify the shire and increase the attraction and retention of residents
- The avg increase over a year is less than \$90. This is a small amount of money for the proposed upgrades that would be awesome
- It will benefit all the community
- Will be great for the town. Great to see council thinking about the future
- This would provide great resources needed in the Shire
- Great ideas
- To engage the community
- Minimal impact on my rates, for such a large impact on the shire
- I believe in investing in the future
- The area will benefit in many ways from both proposals
- In order to provide improved public facilities for the shire the rate variation is a necessity
- Council has made a start with renewing ageing infrastructure and this will allow them to expedite the process.
- I am supportive of improved facilities in our Shire.
- We need to keep doing improvements as the town and shire are starting to look good
- Muswellbrook Shire Council has been doing a wonderful job trying to make Muswellbrook attractive to performers. The Entertainment Centre will make it more possible and big name acts may even consider coming to Muswellbrook
- Creative arts center, needs a bigger venue as the town has so much talent
- Improvement to the town is always beneficial. It will bring growth and more opportunity to the town

- There would be a condition of me agreeing to the increase. If council wishes to upgrade sites for entertainment they really need to look into the issue with public transport and ALSO the taxi service in the town
- More jobs, better facilities
- To build essential infrastructure in a smaller community the ratepayer sometimes is required to add to ensure these services can be delivered. The council has a proven track record on delivering assets and infrastructure that are of a high quality
- The improvements are needed, although I think the entertainment precinct would better better located on the Muswellbrook showground site
- All the planned changes are either needed for the Shire or would significantly benefit the people and community in the Shire
- I think it will be good for the community. If it goes ahead, you MUST hire Muswellbrook landscapers, builders, designers and labourers
- Muswellbrook is in need of a performing centre for all the talent it has so it can have the capability to fully showcase it. This is a small price to pay for what will be a large amount of profit that will be made by delivering such talent
- Improvement in infrastructure
- N/a
- As these facilities are definitely needed in Muswellbrook and surrounding areas creating more jobs and bringing more culture and others to our community
- Preparing our shire for the future is essential. Making our shire more liveable keeps people here and protects jobs. There can be life after coal. These projects go a long way towards making our shire more liveable, and will have the opportunity to attract new people to the area
- Because the town really needs them
- Planning for the future can only be a good thing
- Good idea, this will benefit the community
- All of the proposals would be good for the community
- The rate variation will help to fund projects which will improve and diversify the offering available in the Muswellbrook Shire. Current industries found within the shire won't last forever, so the council needs to invest in other options to keep the town
- The council is doing a great job with the Main Street and Campbell's Corner. The plans look great and will bring great benefit to the community with cultural events, sporting facilities and job creation
- Improving Muswellbrook facilities is a great thing
- Convention space much needed for the cultural growth of our town. Waterpark fabulous. Jobs definitely. Stormwater a necessity. Spending money to grow our community is ok with me
- I think it will be a good investment for the community

People who were neutral or were unsure as to whether the projects would be delivered, or had questions about the design concepts of the projects:

- Not really
- Some of the proposed infrastructure is vital, some at this point in time superfluous. With the local economy still in recovery and with daily living costs increasing at an alarming rate the proposed 10% rate increase plus 2.5% may well place undue financial stress
- I don't pay rates so I think it's unfair for my opinion to determine the outcome for those who do pay rates

Community members who were opposed the proposal left the following comments:

- The 14.9% increase spoken of here amounts to a rate increase far in excess of any increase I have received to my fortnightly pension payments and can only result in a decrease in living standards for all pensioners

affected and trying to survive on a pension

- Briefly, no, my answer would take a long time
- Do we need another convention centre, entertainment centre, I think not, lets get the basics right first
- Because our rates go up yearly and when these things are done they are not affordable for the average families anyway.
- People are struggling to live as it is, how dare council expect people to pay more money to make the town look better. We pay enough for rates and should not have to pay anymore
- I feel our rates are quite high as they are, and will create financial difficulties for some rate payers
- I object on the grounds of Council buying property willy nilly & not having any money to do the proposals for all these properties & infractstructure. The rate payers bank accounts are not a bottomless bucket. We have to live within our means
- Council is doing some good things but I feel some of the proposal is unnecessary at this stage
- Council is doing some good things but I feel some of the proposals are unnecessary at this stage
- Purchase of the market place and bronze statues around Muswellbrook with no rate payer participation and council has the hide to ask for a rate increase!!!!
- Don't need the facilities. The rate increase is permanent
- I see no benefit in the conference centre and the Olympic park plan. The rate rise by 10% is permanent
- Rate payer's had no input into the purchase of the market place and the bronze statue's erected around the CBD! Will the council be asking in the future for another 10% increase for their upkeep?
- All in town. Users of Olympic Park should pay more. I am a pensioner and cannot afford these extravagant extras
- Council have become too expectant of ratepayers
- I am against the changes to the Olympic Park precinct, in particular the bridge over Muscle Creek into Wilder Street
- Too expensive. Council already takes too much
- There are more sporting ovals other than olympic park in Muswellbrook that could use an upgrade
- Can't afford it
- No
- This is a big increase when we have great facilities already
- We do not receive garbage collection, storm water drainage. We feel it is too expensive. A one off amount may be better
- I think rates are already too high and services are poor
- We don't see the need for this at this time when many more urgent things need to be done
- The wording says 'special rate variation be applied in 2018/19 and ongoing', to me this says not just a one off as I am being lead to believe. At this moment in time I am finding it hard to pay my electricity bill let alone an increase in rates 'and ongoing'
- Rates are already high and land value is decreasing. This was overturned before, so why try again? People are already stretched in their budgets. It's about time the council spend a bit of their own money instead of relying on rate payers to do it
- Council needs to function within budget and not rapidly increase rates to cover these facilities, as we hvaje to do at home operate withjin a budget
- Sporting field suggestion benefits a minority share of the community
- I don't support such a large Entertainment & Conference Centre, the impact on our household is more than double your estimation
- Rates are already high in the town and Denman area.....Those with lots of rates get slugged even more, and carry the extra burden of costs
- Rates are expensive enough as it is. Do not need a conference Centre. Should have used the money used to purchase Market Place
- COUNCIL CAN WASTE MONEY ON SHOPPING CENTRES ETC THEY CAN FUND THIS WITH OUT MORE CHARGES TO RATES
- My concerns are that the current Council fees are already quite high, particularly on a land value ratio. Unless the increased value of the projects results in a higher rental yield, landlords will be further out of pocket with no benefit from the increase

- Rates are already high enough
- Because we pay enough
- We are currently one of the highest paying rates areas and while the ideas they have as a whole seem good for the shire they need to look at others options of funding. Especially as a lot of other funds is spent in shire which may not have been warranted
- I can not afford to pay the extra money for rates
- Excessive Expenditure, time to consolidate; please note objection to NSW Govt spending \$2 billion of unnecessary structures - the MbK Cncl should take notice & not waste money on assets that are used by a few & as such should be user pay.
- Proposed projects will not directly benefit myself or my family, I feel the council needs to better look after the facilities and infrastructure they have
- Many of the projects require loan borrowings, these borrowings may cause the council to be re-rated as unsustainable
- I live in Wilder Street (the only street impacted by this development). We had a meeting in the street regarding the bridge from Olympic Park to Wilder Street and there was no mention that we would have to pay a premium in rates to ruin our own street
- I can't afford another rise I'm not a council worker
- All these improvements are not to benefit our family as someone living in this area and as the rising living costs increase and with no significant rise in wages for this area increased rates is just another added hardship
- Council needs to stop spending money on things that less than 10% of the people living in the shire use and start spending money on the basics. Stop buying the shops in the main street, stop building statues and stop buying shopping centres
- Who polices what events get held at convention centre, what if it's only what the organisers want to see. Also Olympic park doesn't need to be done not every plays footy. Make a water park so families can go there for a picnic like the olden days
- We already pay enough in rates, the council needs to focus on roads hospital and the empty main street first and lower the garbage tip fees
- The shire has wasted too much money on other shit all ready
- I believe that the majority of the money is being spent to benefit the minority of the community
- No. I am unable to see why Council has moved into the commercial arena purchasing shopping centres and other enterprises. This money could have been used for the community and infrastructure to better purpose
- This is a large increase, particularly for a rural landholder who will receive little benefit from the proposed works. There are far more beneficial ways of spending funds, and not to this extent, which would benefit a much wider section of the community
- Council has enough money to buy up local property, they should fund this, we already pay premium prices for everything here because we are a mining town, (tipping costs are bullshit) I think we pay enough for what are pretty basic services
- NOT REQUIRED WE HAVE GOOD FACILITIES ALREADY
- Too expensive for the common people. Food , electricity and fuel cost are going up which means I'll be definitely be unable to afford a property within the area because of the rates being too expensive
- I don't believe that amount of money should be spent on Olympic Park. What about the state of the Junior Soccer Fields, Cricket ovals, Netball courts. There are more sports then Rugby League in this town
- Rates are high enough. I'm sure if the funds weren't wasted elsewhere there would be plenty for these upgrades
- Fix things in the town that need doing asap like marketplace carpark and the town pool they should be the priority items not a sporting field and Denman stormwater drainage that should be the budget anyway wtf It is outrageous absolutely and utterly stupid
- We do not need any further conference centres, John Hunter Motel, and several other venues already have them, as for entertainment when big name acts are difficult to attract to Newcastle there is no hope of them coming here
- I believe council would use the increase to benefit the majority other than the minority, sell off the latest acquisitions to raise the funds, our rates are already too high for the poor decisions currently being made on behalf of the rate payers

- Council should be providing essential services to rate payers. Not spending money on unnecessary things then expecting rate payers to pay higher rates fund essential services
- It SRV is too expensive, and we get poor service now and paying more rates won't make the service any better
- Rate rise also more important things need doing
- Can't afford it. Money is already extremely tight
- There is a fair number of residents in Muswellbrook who would not be able to absorb this hike in rates
- It is too expensive and not required
- I don't see why I should have to pay extra rates to Muswellbrook Shire Council when they already have enough money to buy numerous buildings in Muswellbrook and Sydney. I pay enough already
- Finding it hard to cover rates now
- I believe the issues of job creation and roads are important but not so much the others. I am concerned as to why we foot the bill for this when we pay council rates, state & federal taxes anyway. I don't believe this will have a significant positive impact
- Because wages have not gone up that much so its hard to find the extra money to pay the increase
- In the First Option it says a 'permanent, one off increase of 12.5%'. What is a 'permanent, one off increase of 12.5%' and what does this mean?????????
- Council need to work within their budget, not increase it. Drainage and roads should be standard items to come out of rates, not an added 'luxury'. Also I am 100% opposed to building a bridge from olympic park to Wilder st
- We pay enough now. People will no use the proposed projects to warrent the rate increase!!
- We pay enough in rates now. People will not use the proposed projects, a waste of the rate payers money
- They are not something I will use. My estate has drainage issues that have never been addressed and we pay a substantial amount in rates as it is
- I will not use the facilities and don't think I should have to pay extra for things that I won't use. If you increase rates to cover costs, they should be free to use
- I don't think the extra works are needed urgently, and think that a SRV to be an unnecessary extra burden on rate payers as our rates already go up each year
- We already have very high rates in Muswellbrook. The mines give the council thousands of dollars and in my opinion it's not spent very well. Roads in this town are a disgrace and tip fees are a joke. The council is double dipping
- We already have good facilities
- It doesnt do anything for me and my family, if the town pool is costing so much each year why not fix the bloody thing and make it more attractive for people to go there so the town can make some money
- I don't think the extra works are needed urgently, and think that a SRV to be an unnecessary extra burden on rate payers as our rates already go up each year
- The rates in mbk are high enough! And upgrades to storm water drains etc should already be in the master plan and already in the budget.. for the park upgrades not that many people play tennis more people would go to the pool if you did that up, honest opinion
- Sell the market place and use that money
- I already pay enough rates
- It is too expensive, we pay enough for rates now without increasing them further. We don't get value for money now so it would be worse if the rates were increased under a SRV
- It does not benefit me. I do not think that council spends funds in a wise manner
- With the amount of coal royalties that come out of this area, get the money from the government instead of it going to Sydney and stinging local rate payers
- No
- It all seems like a bit of scamming to get more money. You can't go to the tip for less then \$50 the pool prices have sky rocketed. It appears council got knocked back last time for a special rate rise and now they have reworked the paper work to try again
- Because we dont want a rate rise and also feel this is not for the majority of the shire it's for the minorityPlus there are a lot of things around the shire that need to be sorted first as in water quality /roads, Thompson St for one...

- Battlers like myself already really struggle. I am a low income earner and can barely make ends meet as it is
- Unnecessary
- I think it is a significant increase at once and the entertainment centre is not guaranteed to attract out of area people
- Council should better manage the existing rates collected each year under the rate pegging scheme rather than slug all rate payers more and more as we are all feeling the pain of higher power prices and the cost of living pressures without being slugged
- Small government is preferred. Essential services is the priority, embellishments are an ongoing burden
- Council should concentrate on basic services needed by residents and not expose residents to potential blowouts of budget in future by embarking on expensive ventures like an entertainment centre which not all residents would frequent
- Can't afford it. Put it in a plan for the future or stop buying land and property and invest in what we already have
- Bad management. We already pay for this. Time taken and quality of work has a lot to be desired
- I don't believe I get value for the current rates I pay. Should be funded by other means and although I am for improvements I don't see the need for them to be done all at once
- You guys have enough investments already. Sell one
- THERE SHOULD BE ANOTHER WAY TO DO IT
- I do not support the idea about the music convention centre, as it is not financially viable for the local area
- Council needs to be accountable for the money the waste in the shire on things we don't need or want. They are not a law upon themselves. Cost cutting internally would help immensely. Stop building things like the learning centre on hill street
- No other sport gets supported except league. Muswellbrook are losing soccer players to Singleton because the Muswellbrook club has nothing. No grandstand, bad drainage not even toilet paper which is embarrassing when travelling teams come
- Rates are too high now
- I support the ideas and proposals, however since we get limited road maintenance of dry creek road, we have to pay to dump our household waste. I feel it unfair to make those of us that live on the land pay more for facilities that will not benefit us
- Increase in rates will not be used to benefit Denmans
- The entertainment and football complex caters only to certain sections of the community at huge cost. I think parts of the proposal, such as job expansion and drainage are okay, but funds could be sought elsewhere
- The council already has sufficient funds to complete works within our shire
- I was lied to regarding the last rate variation. I do not support the performing arts centre - this will be a white elephant and cost the rate payers into the future. We are a sporting shire and this is an excessive amount to spend on a small arts commu
- I believe that the council already gets enough money from our rates that they waste on purchasing stupid things. The artworks in the subway, the fact that they sent in excess of \$30 million to purchase the Muswellbrook market place.
- Rates are expensive as it is, tip fees make the coal mines pay for it
- Pay for it with the wealth you have created
- Muswellbrook is not big enough for an entertainment center
- It will increase my rates drastically making it unreasonable and for many people affordable
- I can't afford the increase. It will result in me being able to register my car or not
- Not everyone in the shire is on high wages like the coal miners and some will find it hard to pay the extra rates
- Not convinced that we need a large performance venue and that this capital and operating money is money well spent
- Many families are already struggling, interest rates are bound to rise in the same period and inflation occurs with no significant income growth for families. There are other ways to fund programs such as this, e.g. federal government assistance and cost
- We don't need another rate increase. Council should pay for these things rather than buy shopping centres. And we don't need a Convention Centre

- Because a lot of rate payers will not be able to afford this increase. Council could do one project at a time and apply for grants from the Government and Mines. Also the letter to ratepayers was unclear. It did not explain what a rate peg meant, among other things
- Council need to live within its means and stinging rate payers an extra 10% is an intolerable burden
- Council has to live within its means to increase rates by more than 10% puts an intolerable burden on rate payers
- Council has to live within its means to increase rates by more than 10% puts an intolerable burden on rate payers
- Expensive and not necessary
- Money gets thrown every where. It's time this Council is filling the hole in their hand and stop spending unnecessary money and start doing upkeep and maintenance to the buildings they have bought. There has been a lot of improvement in the town due to grants
- Council needs to live within their means just like the rest of us. Council has still not made clear to residents the cumulative impact of the proposal >21% increase in rates in a 4 year period. Even the rate peg of 2.5% is greater than inflation
- We already pay enough in rates
- Too Expensive
- The way I see it is they waste money. They drop our land value but want us to pay more rates
- Rates are very high and there was no consultation with the rate payers earlier regarding our opinions that I know of. Often Council thinks they are letting the community know but we don't all look at the website
- I don't think we need a convention centre - if council wants one they should pay for it themselves. Money can be spent on improvements to things that are already here e.g. roads
- Do not need some of the proposed development so do not need the rates increase
- Council is spending beyond its means. As a property owner in town this variation will be a direct increase in my rates of approx \$1000. Council has also not publicised its intent to spend 2 to 3 million dollars of this money on a one way bridge into Wilder st
- My family will not personally benefit from any of the projects, being a single mother and struggling homeowner I cannot afford a rate rise, especially when it will change my lifestyle as a Wilder St resident
- Why do they deserve it when they cannot fix roads in Muswellbrook that really need fixing. They fix roads that don't need doing at all. They have the money to buy up buildings in general so no they don't need they should have heaps of money to do what they have proposed
- You apparently expect to increase rates over and above the level approved , older persons in the community cannot afford this when on pensions and unemployed, you survey persons who dont even pay rates, how is that fair to all members of our community
- Council is spending an inappropriate amount on Future Fund property purchases which is also using up Council borrowing capacity
- I believe there are more important things council could be spending money on. With more thought put into spending and less corruption
- Unfair to expect common people to pay extra for non-essential infrastructure and services. Plus you've already purchased the Marketplace!
- The Shire supports a range of sporting activities that are carried out outside the Olympic Park precinct. To allocate this amount of funding to just this precinct will be to the detriment of those sports.
- I think the farmland figure is way to high - there are no services provided by council to farmland no sewer no bins etc etc and they have the biggest increase way to high

APPENDIX 8 - Listening Post Survey Questionnaire



We're listening

Hello I'm from the Muswellbrook Shire Council. Can you please take 5 minutes to talk to me about Council's proposed priority infrastructure projects and associated Special Rate Variation?

1. Have you read, heard or seen anything about Council's proposal to deliver a number of programs and initiatives including an upgrade to stormwater drainage, improvements to the Olympic Park Precinct and build an Entertainment and Convention Centre and an expanded Job Creation program, and Council's plan to fund them through a special rate variation?

Yes No

2. (If yes to 1) Can you recall where you saw or heard this? (circle)

Local paper

Local radio

Council website

Social media (Facebook)

Letter from Council

Friends, family, neighbours, colleagues etc.

Other _____

Name:

Age range:

18-39

40-59

60+

Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

YES

NO

How long have you lived in the Muswellbrook Shire?

Where do you live? (Town)

Do you have any children under the age of 18 living in your home?

Yes

No

Are you prepared to be available for further discussions about the future of the shire? If so what is the best way to contact you?

Mobile:

Email:

APPENDIX 9 - Media outputs

Media release



muswellbrook shire council

MEDIA RELEASE

COMMUNITY TO HAVE ITS SAY ON NEW INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING PROGRAM FOR MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE

Rate payers are asked to provide their views on priority projects that will improve services to residents, stimulate the local economy, provide new entertainment opportunities for the community and attract visitors to the region.

Council has continued to pursue the ambitious set of priorities captured after extensive community consultation and reflected in the Muswellbrook Community Strategic Plan.

To fund the implementation of these projects, Councillors unanimously resolved to place two options before the community for feedback.

The first option includes a permanent, one-off increase of 12.5% (18.5% for mining rates, both including the 2.5% rate peg) from 2018/19 which will fund:

- improvements in stormwater management, particularly in Denman
- upgrades to Muswellbrook's Olympic Park precinct
- a new Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre; and, significantly,
- additional support for job creation across the Shire
- a 'catch-up' of \$62,000 in rating caused by mining related environmental offsets.

The second option will increase rates by the anticipated 2.5% rate peg. Council's present works program will continue within existing resources.

Martin Rush, Mayor of Muswellbrook, said: "Council has carefully considered community priorities and now asks local residents to let us know their views on these options. Council has no predetermined view on the options. We will continue to deliver balanced budgets and the high standard of services and infrastructure our community expects of its Council."

Cr Steven Reynolds, Councillor Spokesperson for Community Engagement said: "The options Council is asking the community to consider will deliver significantly improved facilities to all the families that use Olympic Park. It will increase car parking and enhance road safety. Council has worked closely with Olympic Park user groups and they solidly support the proposal."

Cr Jason Foy, Councillor Spokesperson for the Arts said: "Council has listened to the community over the last twelve months and refined the original concept for a regional performance space. We are eager to get feedback on the new Entertainment and Conference Centre proposal. It will add a

new level of entertainment, performance and recreational opportunities for our Shire's local families. As well as this, it will bring visitors from the wider region and new economic activity."

The community can have its say on this proposal by:

- participating in the telephone survey to be conducted by Jetty Research from 27 November
- completing an online survey from 27 November until 11 December
- providing feedback at 'Listening Posts' being held in various locations across the Shire
- providing feedback, during the public exhibition period, on the plans for the Olympic Park precinct and the Entertainment and Conference Centre

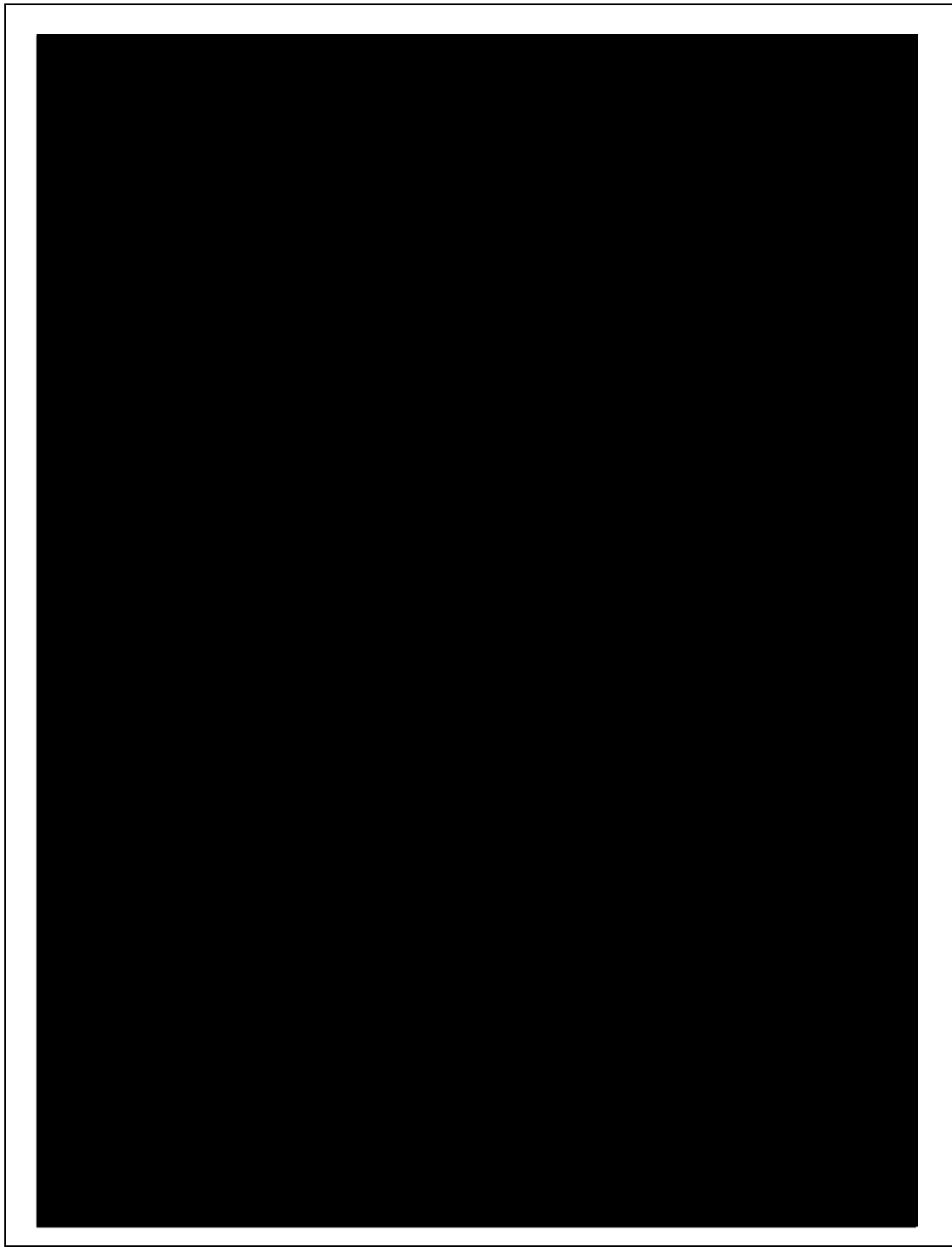
The consultation has confirmed ongoing community support to cement Muswellbrook as the Regional Centre for the Upper Hunter – with the infrastructure to match – such as an Entertainment and Conference Centre and quality regional sporting facilities.

Whatever the outcome, Muswellbrook rate payers will continue to pay amongst the lowest rates in the Hunter region.

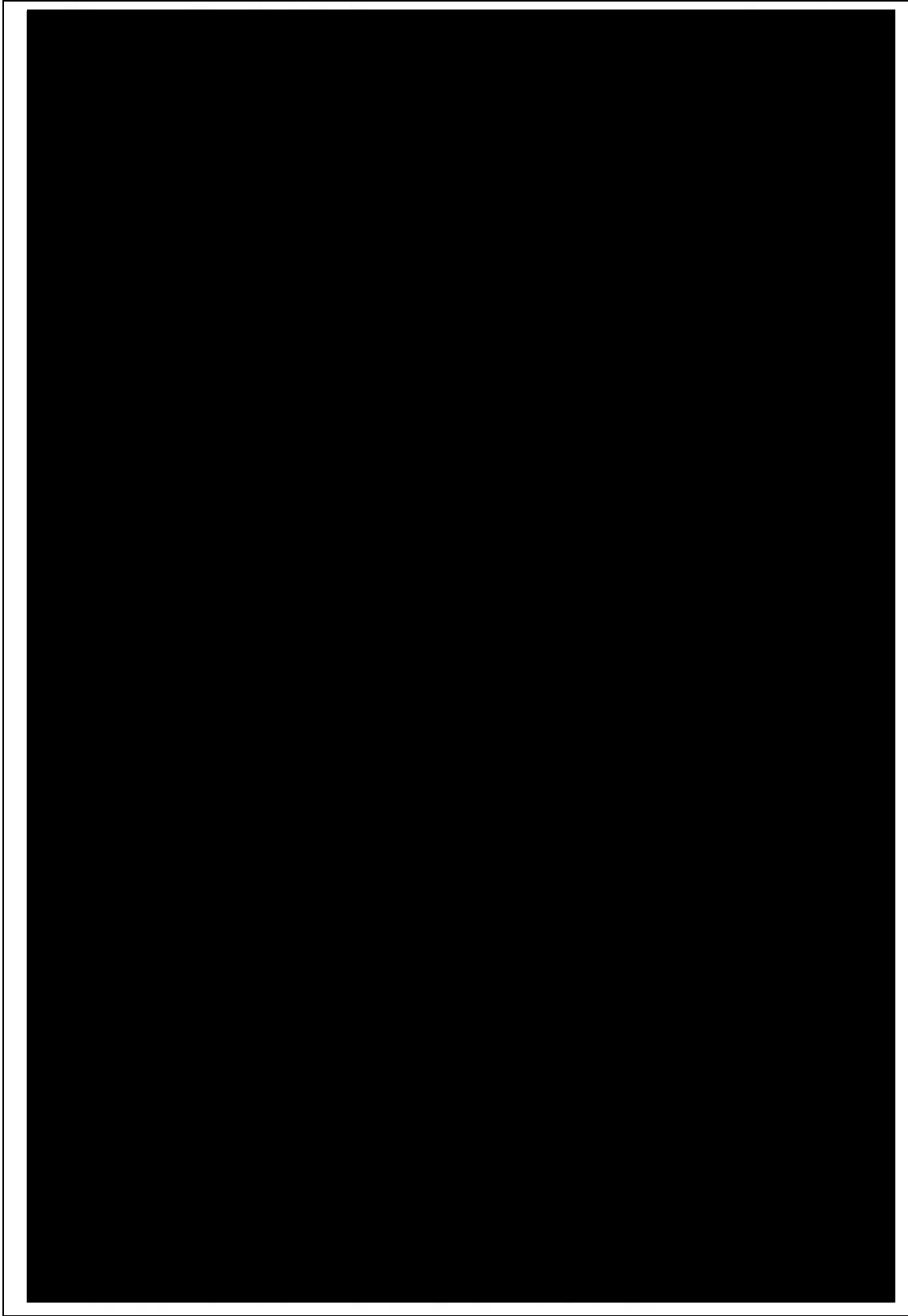
Information relating to the proposed Special Rate Variation and proposed projects can be found at www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au

Date: 20 November 2017

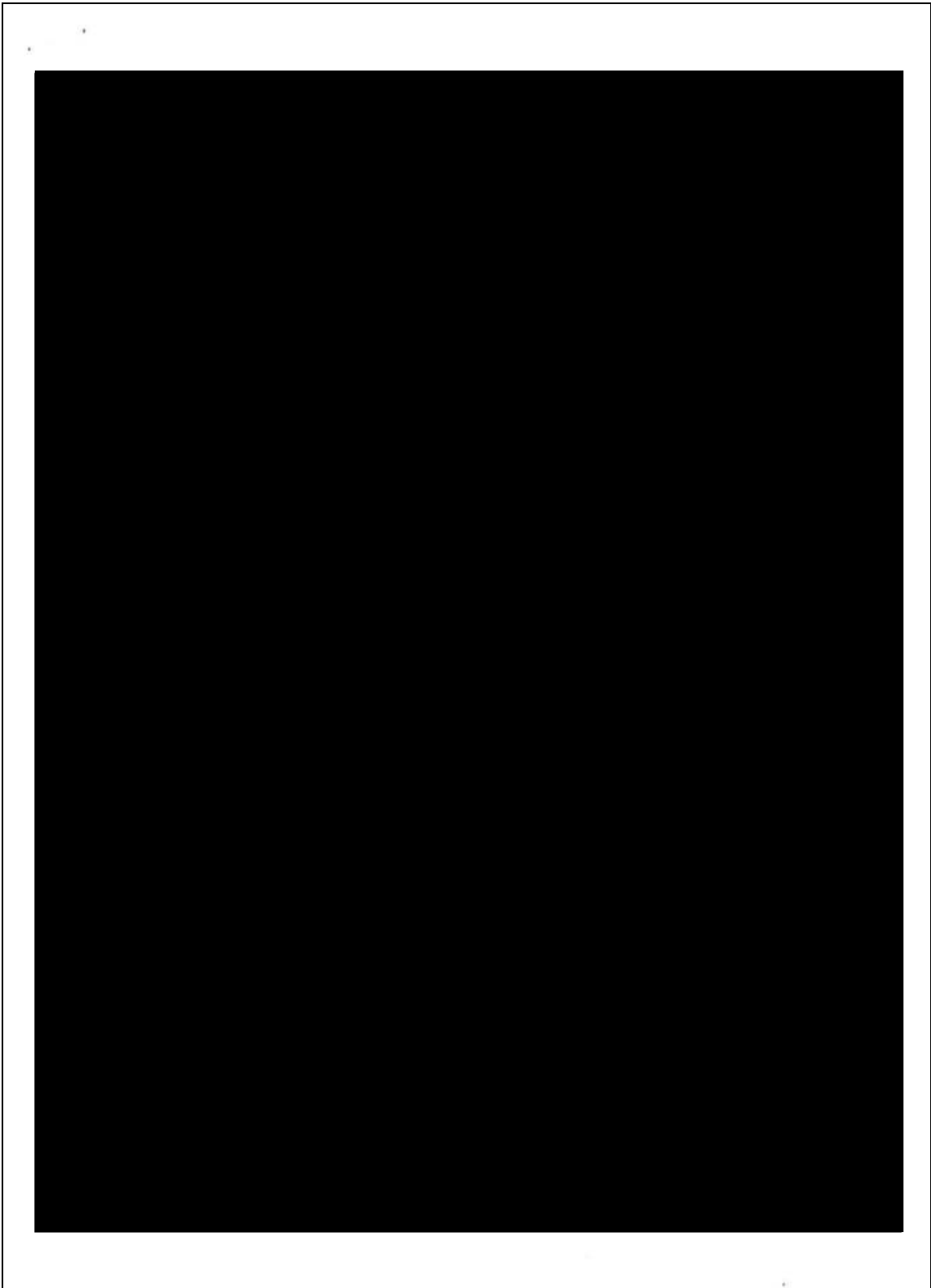
Press articles:



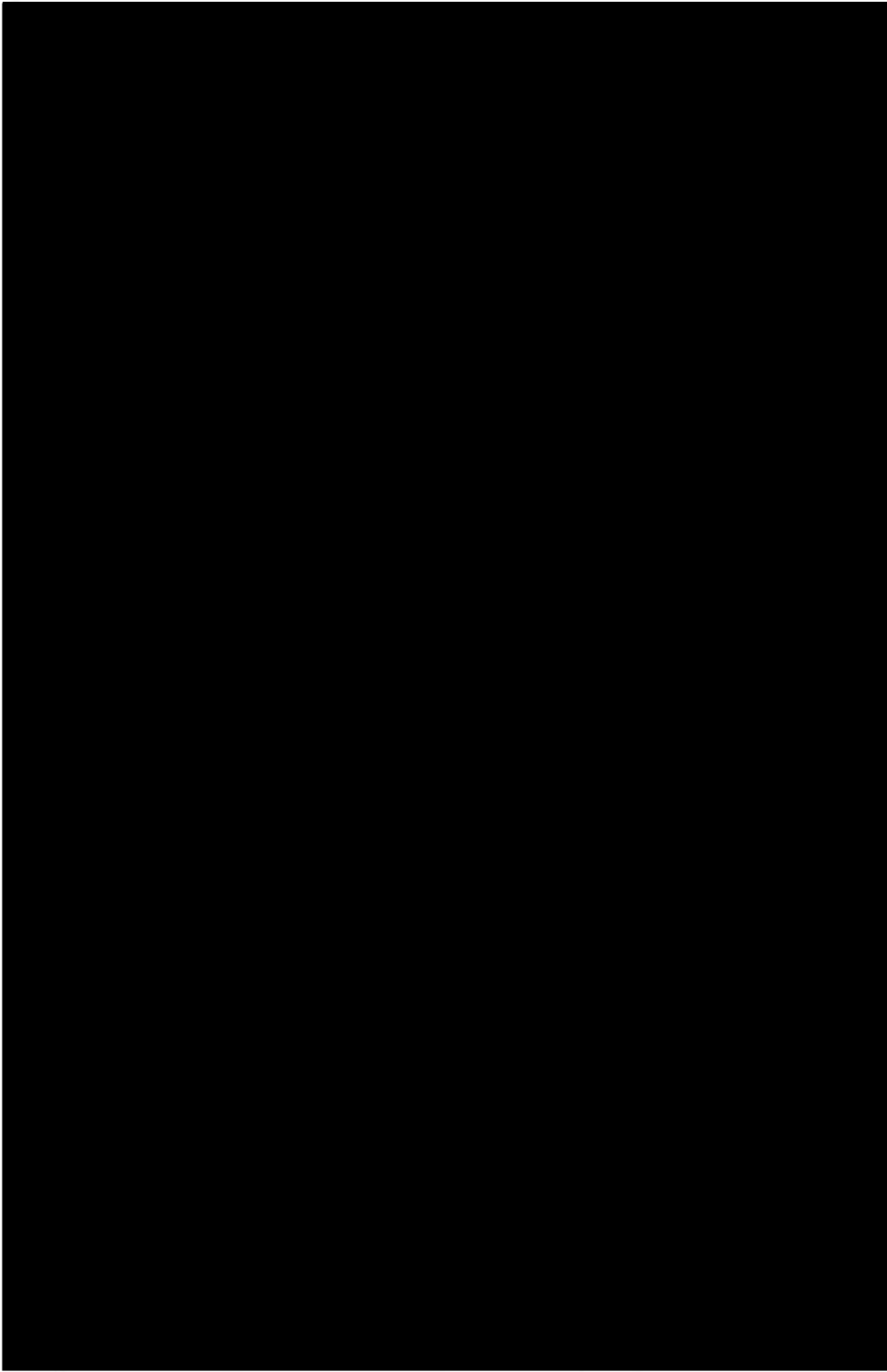
Source: *Muswellbrook Chronicle*



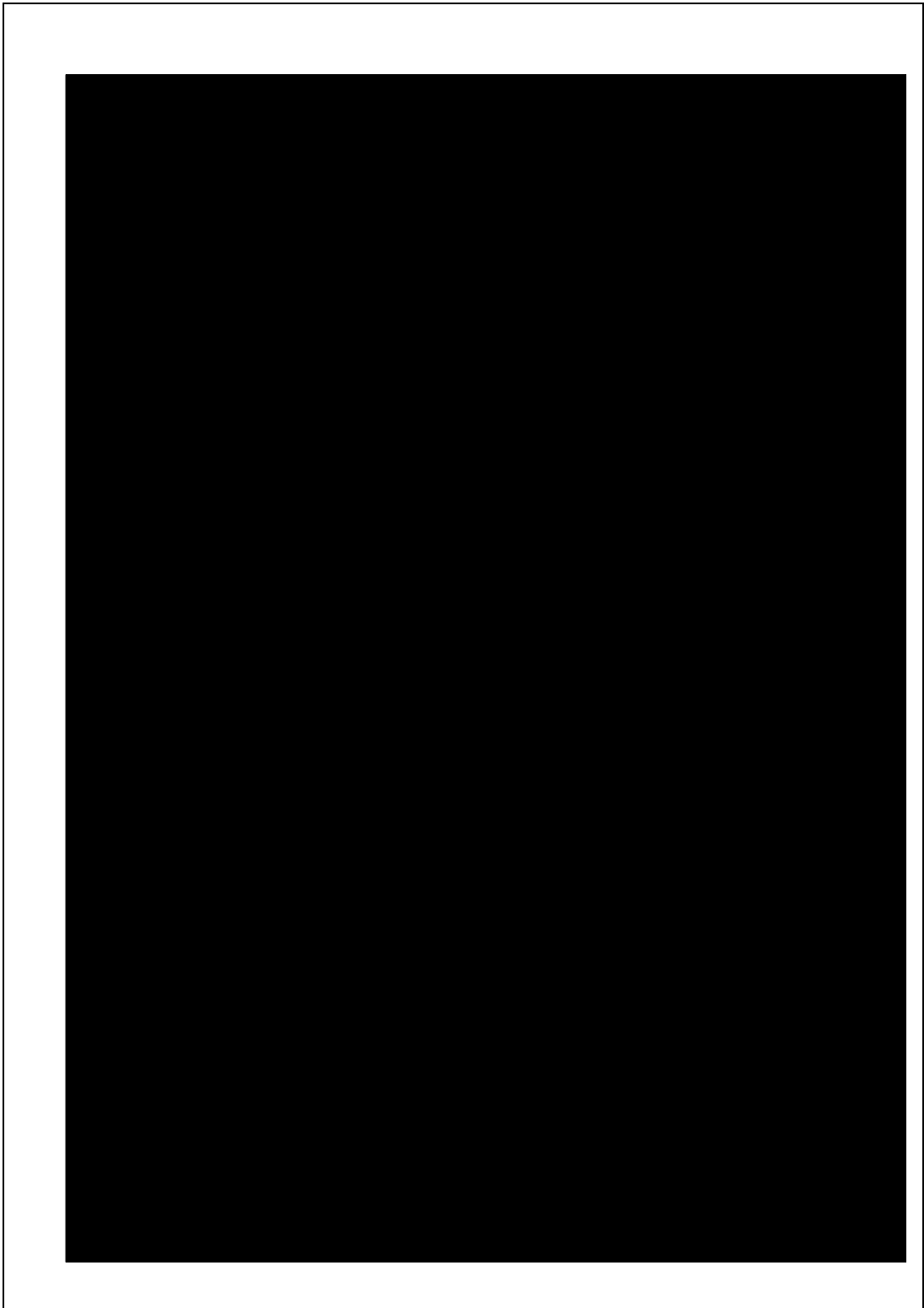
Source: *Muswellbrook Chronicle*



Source: *Newcastle Herald*



Source: *Muswellbrook Chronicle*



Source: *Muswellbrook Chronicle*

Radio pieces

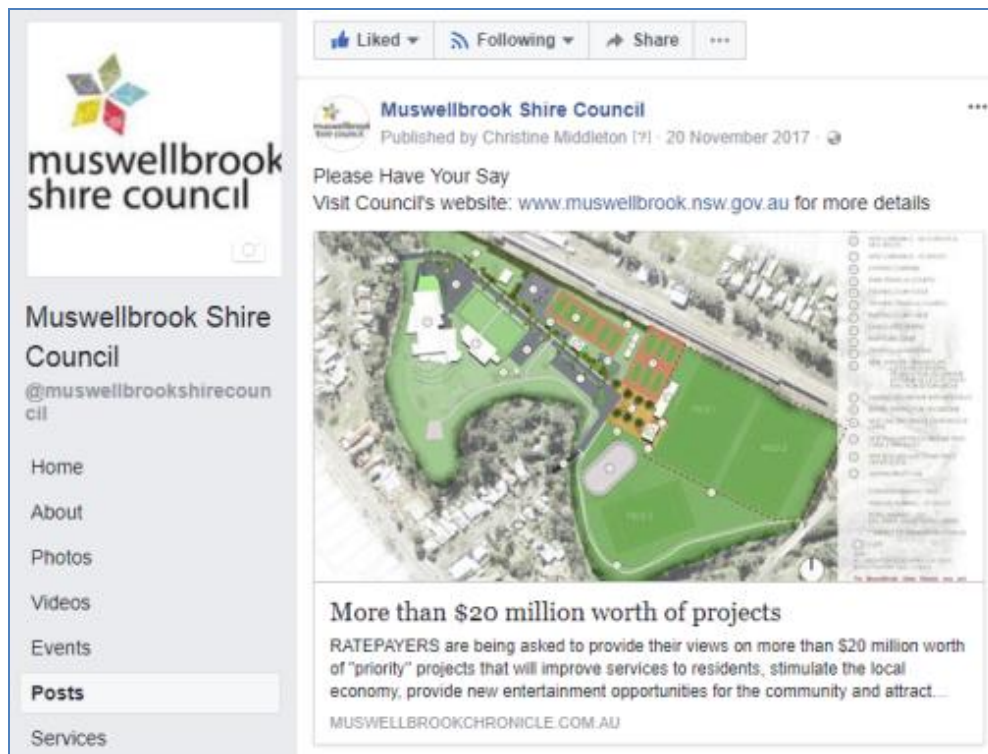
It is noted that audio and transcripts of radio interviews is not available.

APPENDIX 10 - Social media outputs

Posts: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/muswellbrookshirecouncil/posts/>

Video footage: https://www.facebook.com/pg/muswellbrookshirecouncil/videos/?ref=page_internal

20 November 2017



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Published by Christine Middleton [?] · 20 November 2017 ·

Please Have Your Say
Visit Council's website: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au for more details

More than \$20 million worth of projects
RATEPAYERS are being asked to provide their views on more than \$20 million worth of "priority" projects that will improve services to residents, stimulate the local economy, provide new entertainment opportunities for the community and attract...

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21 November 2017



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Published by Christine Middleton [?] · 21 November 2017 ·

Councillor Green talks about Council's \$4.8 million vision for Olympic Park as part of Council's special rate variation and further investment proposal. Please Have Your Say. Visit Council's website: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au for more details.

22 November 2017



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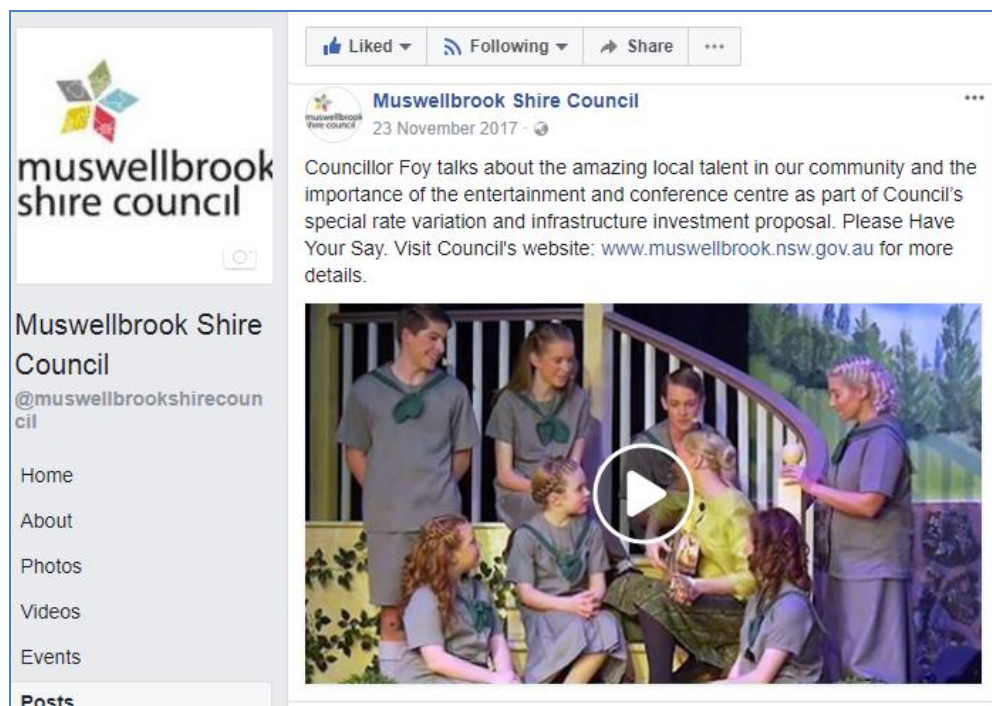
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Published by Christine Middleton [?] · 22 November 2017 ·

Council director Fiona Plesman talks about how your feedback resulted in Council's special rate variation and infrastructure investment proposal. Please Have Your Say. Visit Council's web site at www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au for more details.

Upper Hunter Tertiary Education Centre

23 November 2017



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Councillor Foy talks about the amazing local talent in our community and the importance of the entertainment and conference centre as part of Council's special rate variation and infrastructure investment proposal. Please Have Your Say. Visit Council's website: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au for more details.

27 November 2017

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Muswellbrook Shire Council
Published by Fiona McBurney [?] · 27 November 2017 ·

Councillor Woodruff talks about the proposed \$300,000 per year added investment in flood mitigation and stormwater drainage infrastructure. Please Have Your Say. Visit Council's website: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au for more details.

Muswellbrook Shire Council is proposing a rate increase of 12.5% to fund further investment in infrastructure.

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Muswellbrook Shire Council
Published by Christine Middleton [?] · 29 November 2017 ·

Councillor Green talks about Council's \$4.8 million vision for Olympic Park as part of Council's special rate variation and further investment proposal. Please Have Your Say. Visit Council's website: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au for more details.

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Muswellbrook Shire Council
Published by Muswellbrook McBurney [?] · 30 November 2017 · 🌐

Martin Rush talks about Council's special rate variation and further infrastructure investment proposal. Please Have Your Say. Visit Council's website: www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au for more details.

Martin Rush
Mayor of Muswellbrook

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Muswellbrook Shire Council
Published by Muswellbrook McBurney (?) · 5 December 2017 ·

Members of Muswellbrook Shire Council's Community Panel have expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to be involved in discussions surrounding the proposed application for a Special Rate Increase (SRV).

At the final meeting last Saturday the Community Panel took the floor after breaking into discussion groups to deliberate on the priority projects that would be funded by an SRV, including upgrades to the Olympic Park precinct and a new regional entertainment and conference centre, and formulate recommendations to Council.

While the groups all agreed on their support of Council's vision for the Shire and endorsed their support of an SRV and the proposed projects, their endorsements came with suggestions for Council.

After presenting their recommendations panel members were interviewed and the questions: "what did you like about being on the community panel?" and "what did you learn about Council that you didn't know previously?"

Residents can "have their say" on the SRV by leaving a comment here on Council's Facebook page, completing the online survey on Council's website or by writing to the General Manager at PO Box 122, Muswellbrook, NSW 2333 until 12:00pm 11 December 2017.

APPENDIX 11 – Summary of social media comments and feedback

Following are comments provided to Council's Facebook page in relation to the SV proposal.

Total comments (excluding multiples) = 52; Total Likes = 161; Total Shares = 44; Total Views = 8,599

How did Council decide on panel members? Appears majority of members are of a similar age...
Get the money off the 3 main mines on our doorstep sure it's only pocket change to them . Ohh I forgot about the horse studs hit them up as well sure they've got plenty to throw around since that's all they are doing with horses , throwing good money around to endorse gambling habits .
Some people are not eligible to fill in the survey due to their age , too old !
Already filled in the survey regarding the SRV
Peter Nolan, this will interest you.
You can shove the rate increase , you have surplus funds without an increase !
They don't talk for whole shire an lot don't want the rate rise
So your going to consult with 1/8th of a % of the shire and make decisions based on there feedback? Lol
The things a Government will do to hold onto their budget simply astounds me. I think Council need to remember they work for us the constituents and that's why they are called public servants. That does not give them the right to extort funds indiscriminately from innocent rate payers just to preserve a livelihood within Council. We voted you in we can also vote you out !
I'm against any unnecessary Special rates increase. I think that we need to continue planning for the future and acting in the best interests of the community but within the current rates budget that already increases each year as do our other bills.
A 10% increase over the 2.5% that council is allowed is a burden that many can't afford, while the grand plans mite be all well and good look elsewhere for your funding (try the multinationals that are ripping the guts out of the shire)
Its not 10%. Works out closer to 15%. Plus you have to factor in indexing for the std 2.5% we cop every year.
Its about time rate payers fort back some people don't cope with rising rates
Visionary and progressive ... a liveable town with diverse community infra structure that brings us up to other robust country centres. Muswellbrook and Denman folk have worked hard to contribute to the State's prosperity ... so few times the citizens are consulted in the planning and spending of the rates ... I am happy to be a contributor to these useful public spaces ... thank you Martin
The people have had there say. So has the department that rejected the rate increase the last time. Give up Mr Rush. Or will we have to have you removed from council before you understand?
I'm all for investing in our communities but spending money on some of the suggested investments doesn't seem right when out here in denman we don't even have footpaths to walk on
How does a rate increase help the people who come to town once a month from the outskirts of the shire? Power bills are already forcing people out of town, this IS NOT a good idea.

Over the years people have complained that we don't have much in this town, now we have a council that wants to do something about the lack of sporting and cultural facilities in town, but it will come at a cost of \$1.67 per week for most rate payers. Do we want improvements to the town or not. I certainly do.
Personally im trying to save for a deposit for my own home.. how am i ever going to be able to afford my own home as a single working parent, with all the extra increasing costs!!!!
I think that investing in the town and the community's future is always necessary but without a special rate rise please.
Here's an idea. Muswellbrook Shire Council. Your so sure you have the majority of community support for your rate increase. How about taking it to a local rate payer vote. Don't use cost as a reason not to do it. If you have the numbers your looking at a massive cash boost anyway. So come on. Lets see you properly ask the rate payers. No smoke and mirrors straight up yes or no. You won't do it because you know you don't have the support to get it over the line. You'd rather listen to the same voices over and over again at your " listening posts". PUT IT OUT FOR US TO VOTE ON!!!!
What a great idea to improve and future proof our town Well worth the \$87 a year
Not to a lot of people
This should only be a question to rate payers , not those in the community that are not burdened by rates , you only ask those not affected because you know you will get the answer you want
People upset about survey an rates hope people stand against it
Get your money elsewhere
We pay more than enough
Council has way too many projects on the go, lets focus on one at a time, like getting RV dump points & a bit of free camping up & running in the shire, we are missing out on the tourist trade who bring money to the towns
Live within your means please, stop the spending budget properly there is to much financial pressure on rate payers with the constant increases in insurances, electricity etc to run a household this is one increase that can and should be avoided, not every one is on big wages in this shire, and the extra cost on business rates is to much when you consider the extra costs imposed by council like the ridiculous fire audits and so on
Not at a rate rise. You are only hurting families already stressed and struggling with the costs of living
Glad I'm not buying in Muswellbrook with a rate rise like that
No rate rise people are hurting enough use some common sense especially pensioners
With power bills going crazy a rate rise will hurt the town.
No rate increase please. Council should budget better.
Stephen is this where we Are going to catch up with Michael?
Can't even connect to the council link maybe fix that too
12.5% like are you all on drugs?
We need rain first...

No thanks
████████████████████
Councillor Foy is extremely talented.
██████████
Here we go again. Bring people to town. Lol No taxi service Very few shops No nice after hours coffee shops food outlets. Lack of overnight accommodation. You need those things to enhance the experience. And in these times just who the hell can afford to pay more rates ?
Council is offering you a say. If you have a suggestion, now's your opportunity to participate.
██████████ exactly. And how many people are going to submit a documented objection?
"Listening Post". I find that very condescending to the ratepayers and all who reside in the area of Muswellbrook Council. We are not in Kindergarten! Maybe the members of the Council who by the way in case you have forgotten were elected by the people of Muswellbrook council area to actually work and advocate for all. Now lets take a constructive look at the area. 1. There has been a downturn in the value of homes. 2.Many employed in the Mining industry although they may work "Full time " rosters sre employed on a Casual basis. 3.Infrastructure and road upgrades havent grown in line with population growth. 4. Taxi Service is poor to one may say almost none existant and if your lucky enough to procure one the odds would be almost as good as winning the lottery. 5. If you were to come here for "an entertainment event" here are the obstacles a) Limited Accommodation. b)No taxi service. . So absolutely no alcohol before or after. c)Post event coffee or snack ? Sorry theres no where. d) Want to take a walk ? Probably not adviseable. Many areas no foot paths ,poor lighting. (personally I'd feel safer walking in the inner city of Sydney) e) Window shop ? Oh now lets see ..sorry you wont see ! So let me get this right ! We are going to be enticing people to come here ? The other issue I find concerning is just how do the elected council members think that the average person on the average wage or Aged pension are able to afford an increase in rates over and above the indexed rate? People are struggling with the cost of living and rising Electricity bills and yet .. You "elected"people want to impose more. And ██████████ just what "shows"do you invisage bringing to Muswellbrook? And could the council please publish expected Expenditures and Profits for this proposal. Therefore people could make an informed decision Am I angry no Im not. Im concerned for the people of our Council area.
I appreciate the feedback, however its the terminology (name) that I find offensive. To me it says "you just listen to what we as the council are going to do" One would hope that it is a consultative process.
Like any budget let's sort out the must do's before the like to do's. Roads. Kerb and guttering. Storm and sewer. Child safety to and from school. Public transport for the elderly/ disabled. The list goes on. There is so many more important priorities to repair and extend before a convention centre. Don't put the cart before the horse
████████████████████ Of course we do <input type="checkbox"/>
He's right yu know.... think of the revenue generated by a venue like this...

It's a very good plan that may not suit some individuals, but definitely suits a community.
You say "part" of councils special rate variation, what is the other part. I am very much aware of the previous application by council for a variation on residential rates, how is this different?
I looked at Muswellbrook Shire Council web site and there are a number of council proposal for the future, can you clarify the difference between the proposed special rate variation and the most recent variation?
thank you for your guidance on my question, but the question remains the same. Can you, Muswellbrook Shire Council state clearly the reasons for a special rate variation 2017 compared to the reasons for councils special rate variation in 16/17. I am very much aware that IPART did not support the previous application, my question is, what has changed?
Great NEWS!
I'm sorry but I don't think such a large increase in rates are a good idea, people have to live within our means and so does council. While grandiose ideas are to be commended its the people that have to pay for them and not everyone is able pay extra.
██████████
i am supporting the rate increase due to the fact having lived here 47 years and seeing the council of the past not have the funds or initiative to develop and provide infrastructures for the town.We often hear people of the town complain how there's nothing to do and the place hasn't changed. Well here is our chance to continue on with the development of the town, yes we will carry some of the load financially but how many of you appreciate what has already been done.i have inspected the drafts for projects and in my opinion the entertainment/conference building is desperately need as Muswellbrook does not have a town hall or meeting place as such let alone a venue for public forums and entertainment. i urge residents to consider the projects Lets make the town better for all
No no no no. How many times is This current council going to ask the same question. Every rate payer in the shire has to live within there means. About time our council did the same. If there that desperate for money they can sell the investment properties they purchased in Sydney and use that money. Think it was \$20mil worth ironically. Yeh thats right our rate money is being used to pay rates to a Sydney council.
In the last 12 months there has not been any indication that an Entertainment & Conference Centre is warranted in this town.
Muswellbrook has been needing a town hall/ community centre/ theatre ever since to old town hall was turned into an art gallery. There are plenty of examples where a theatre could have been used and it is long over due and very much warranted
That would be because there is no facility as a drawcard to bring entertainment into town, and local musical and theatre productions have been making do with substandard facilities for years. The dedication and ingenuity of people involved to make the existing high school halls and club function rooms are the only reason the these places have been made usable. As the saying goes 'build it and they will come'.
I'm against any extra (special) rate rises. They already go up every year. I'm all for the bettering of services in the Muswellbrook Shire but would like to see it done within councils current budget that already increases each year.

Completely against this! Its bloody expensive enough living in this town with the Rates and tip fees and all the other expensive. Our rates are more expensive than some of my good mates in sydney. Its just stupid to expect anyone else in here to fun more projects. If you want to fund other projects why dont you do it another way?

A multi purpose centre of a small nature,400 seats is all that a population of Muswellbrook and surrounds can support. Anything bigger will be a financial drain on the communiity. The multipurpose centre should be built to accommodate being used as a lecture hall, a conference centre, a live theatre. We should not make it so large it will never be cost neutral. The same logic needs to be applied to Olympic Park. Yes we need good facilities but we do not need facilities to rival Newcastle or Sydney. We are and always will be a regional town and should build our infrastructure to suit our needs. We do not need infrastructure that will be a continuous financial drain on the communiity for ongoing upkeep. I seem to recall Council engaged a consultant to report on our sporting facilities and the report showed Muswellbrook to be over supplied per capita.

400 seats would be too small to accommodate either high schools' presentation nights
The difference between 400 and 500 is minimal 500 seats provides some measure of future proofing

<https://www.medianet.com.au/releases/132342/>
Already tried to get away with it on the sly. The only reason we're even being told about it now is because the rate rise was already denied by IPART due to "the community not being made aware". Now it'll go ahead regardless of how we feel because you are "making the community aware". Just let us struggle to pay the rates as they are.

This is a great idea for our town. It's good to see council being proactive and developing our assets to improve the livability and attractiveness of our town. The rise of av \$87 a year is less than \$2 a week, you can't even get a coffee or a beer for that. They will be terrific facilities to benefit us, our kids and grandkids for years to come

I just received a detailed copy of the plans today in the post. As a Wilder St resident I have to again say that I do not like the plans to build a bridge and use Wilder St as an exit for all of the traffic from Olympic Park. I could easily give you about 20 reasons why I believe this is a bad idea but I believe we already made it extremely clear when council had the meeting with Wilder st.
I also do not like the plan that the Sustainability hub will be moved, all of our time has been wasted working and making plans, we also currently have toilet facilities and a shelter which I cannot see Council moving for us. The current position is great as it is visible to alot of people making it more inviting, also its easy for the girlguides to help out when its right next door, the new position will be hidden away which wont benefit anyone.
My suggestion is that the tennis club be moved to Bowman Park. I believe that this will be a cheaper alternative to building a bridge and having a one way street, which will only transfer the current congestion from Wilkinson St to Wilder St and not actually solve any issues. Bowman Park is still a great central location and seems like a big waste of space at present. The tennis club area would create a ton of space for parking and even a turning circle and parking for buses. There is alot of wasted space around the tennis club so that would also make use of it. If congestion continues to be a problem in the future a bridge could be built across the rail corridor to meet at Carl St, which would be a much easier and safer place for the north side of Muswellbrook to access the grounds. I believe this plan would solve alot of the current issues, will not affect the wildlife living in muscle creek or any of the surrounding residents, cost less and could be achieved alot sooner than the current plan.

No rate rise

This plan will ultimately make the community more attractive to both existing and potential residents and employers. This is a good strategy to build a sustainable local economy, rather than just hoping for another mining boom. This plan will make Muswellbrook more attractive to home buyers and investors by creating the right mix of opportunities and attractions and stop people saying there's nothing to do in the town. This will enable business retention and expansion by providing a stable pool of human resources, rather than the transient one that arrives for the job and then leaves when the job is done. Building the community and local infrastructure is exactly what a responsible council should do and needs to be encouraged. Mining will still continue into the future, but it shouldn't be the only thing the town has going for it.

Maybe the entertainment precinct would be better located at the site of the showground. The Brook Street Plaza site is too small to accommodate a venue that could be truly multi-purpose and potentially host arena-style events as well as theatre and concerts, with poor parking and accessibility. Make the most of what we've got, not build new infrastructure that will not grow to meet the needs or service our town of the future. The showground has a central location and ease of access that is too valuable to lose and makes it a viable proposition.

No rate rise but only option 2 if necessary. Just as a point of interest if this is a submission page why can anyone other than councilors respond to posts

Option 2

APPENDIX 12 - Other information and promotional materials

Public exhibition of project plans and business cases

Council website

<https://www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/index.php/srv-2018>

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Have your say on new the infrastructure funding program for Muswellbrook Shire

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Fire permits suspended in Hunter Valley District

MUSWELLBROOK AQUATIC & FITNESS CENTRE

muswellbrook regional arts centre

Upper Hunter Library Network



Proposed Special Rate Variation

Muswellbrook Shire Council recently commissioned a telephone survey to gauge customer satisfaction with Council services and community facilities.

To deliver on the priorities identified within this survey and the Community Strategic Plan, Council proposes to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for an increase to rates across the Shire from the 2018-2019 financial year.

Council is applying in line with the timetable set by the NSW Office of Local Government Guidelines. These Guidelines advise councils on how to seek a rate variation. We anticipate that updated guidelines will be released in December 2017 requiring applications to be submitted to IPART by early February 2018.

Council is seeking your feedback now on this proposed increase. To better understand your thoughts on this matter, Council has commissioned Jetty Research to conduct a telephone survey of at least 450 residents to gauge the level of community support. **Calls will commence during the week beginning Monday 20 November 2017.**



Concept of Muswellbrook's Olympic Park Precinct Master plan

continued overleaf...



Proposed Special Rate Variation *continued from page 1...*

You will be asked to indicate a preference between these two options:

Option 1:

A Special Rate Variation (SRV) of a one-off 14.9% (including 2.5% rate peg) from 2018/19 continuing permanently in the rate base, made up as follows:

- Residential, Business and Farmland rating revenue increase by 12.5% (including 2.5% rate peg) in 2018/19 which amounts to \$956,055; and
- Mining rating revenue increase by 18.5% (including 2.5% rate peg) in 2018/19 which amounts to \$962,211

In return you will get:

- An additional allocation of \$300,000 per year for stormwater drainage and \$100,000 per year for roads and parks asset maintenance program.
 - Development of an Olympic Park Precinct Master Plan and an Entertainment and Conference Centre with a combined value of \$26,010,000 made up of:
 - an SRV contribution of \$11,800,000;
 - grants of \$10,500,000;
 - voluntary planning agreements amounting to \$3,710,000 and
 - an annual operational maintenance and net yearly operational contributions of \$700,000 for Olympic Park and the Entertainment and Conference Centre.
- Please note: if the above grants and voluntary planning agreements are not received or if the amounts received are less than the figures above, one or both projects may be suspended, reduced in size or cancelled and the special rate variation will be revisited and the ratepayers will be informed of any material changes.
- An additional \$250,000 towards the Job Creation program and \$62,000 to offset a shortfall in rating revenues arising from a change in NSW Government policy with respect to biodiversity offsets.

Option 2:

No Special Rate Variation

Apart from applying a rate peg increase of 2.5% in 2018/2019 the budgeted spend will be:

- A stormwater drainage program of \$158,000; roads program of \$390,700; and parks asset maintenance program of \$347,600.
- Olympic Park Precinct upgrade to the value of \$3,500,000.
- No Entertainment and Conference Centre.
- A Job Creation program to remain only at \$250,000 and a reduction in Council's rates revenue of approximately \$62,000

For more information about Council's proposed Special Rate Variation and associated projects, please visit Council's website at www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD NOMINATIONS

Nominations close Sunday 03 December 2017

Nominate online at muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/australiaday or call 6549 3700 for more information.



Holiday kerbside waste collections

Merry Christmas from the Waste Wranglers!



If your kerbside waste was scheduled to be collected on this day:

Monday 25 December
Tuesday 26 December
Wednesday 27 December
Thursday 28 December
Friday 29 December
Monday 01 January
Tuesday 02 January
Wednesday 03 January
Thursday 04 January
Friday 05 January

Put your bins out for collection on this day:

Tuesday 26 December
Wednesday 27 December
Thursday 28 December
Friday 29 December
Saturday 30 December
Tuesday 02 January
Wednesday 03 January
Thursday 04 January
Friday 05 January
Saturday 06 January

Muswellbrook Shire Council Community News, Issue 33, December 2017



Artist's impression of Olympic Park Precinct, Wilkinson Avenue Muswellbrook

Muswellbrook Shire Council's Proposed Special Rate Variation FAQs

What is a Special Rate Variation (SRV)?

A council can apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW (IPART) for a Special Variation to their rates. It will be considered against the guidelines set by the NSW Office of Local Government, including the level of community awareness and how efficiently the council has been managing its finances.

Council requests for Special Variations are often sought in order to develop or maintain essential community services or regional projects.

IPART can grant a one-off but permanent rating variation for a single year or a fixed term variation of up to seven years.

What is the SRV process?

The Office of Local Government establishes the guidelines for application. They published the 'Guidelines for the Preparation of an Application for a Special Variation to General Income' in November 2017.

For more information go to www.olg.nsw.gov.au

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) assess and determine each council application under powers delegated by the Minister for Local Government.

As part of the prescribed process Council has/will:

2017	November	Information letter mailed to all ratepayers explaining the SRV and what it will be used for Conduct a random, statistically significant telephone survey of over 450 residents Community online survey (from 27 November) Conduct 'Listening Posts' at various locations across the Shire Community Panel
	December	Public exhibition period of project plans and business cases ends Community online survey (until 11 December) Community Panel
2018	February	Submit application for Special Rate Variation to IPART
	April	IPART determines Special Rate Variation application
	May	Council adopts its budget, with or without the Special Rate Variation component



What am I giving feedback on?

After extensive community consultation the priorities of you, and your neighbours, were captured in the Muswellbrook Shire Community Strategic Plan 2017-27.

You identified a number of projects as a priority, including:

- Improvements in stormwater management, particularly in Denman
- Upgrades to Muswellbrook's Olympic Park precinct
- A new Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre; and, significantly
- Additional support for job creation across the Shire.

While Council believes that these projects are worth funding, and agrees with you that it will help cement our place as a Regional Centre within the Upper Hunter, it cannot, however, fund these additional projects within currently available funds.

What are the projects being offered and why do we need them?

Improved Stormwater Infrastructure



Denman floods 1955

Council began the stormwater drainage network in 1950, however, it is not fully developed and is relatively old. This has resulted in a decline in the overall condition, capacity, ability to manage pollutants and control of erosion and sedimentation. The pipe network consists of concrete pipes and box culverts.

Council has undertaken a comprehensive audit of the system to identify areas of need. The results are outlined in:

- Denman Drainage Strategy
- Merton Street Drainage Design
- Denman Drainage Strategy Review and Upgrade Options
- Industrial Estate Drainage Design
- Possum Gully Drainage Study
- Bell Street Catchment Study
- Mill Street Catchment Study
- St Heliers Street Drainage Study
- Safety Review of Detention Basins

With your support, Council will prioritise a strengthened program of works to address these stormwater management issues.

Regional Entertainment And Conference Centre

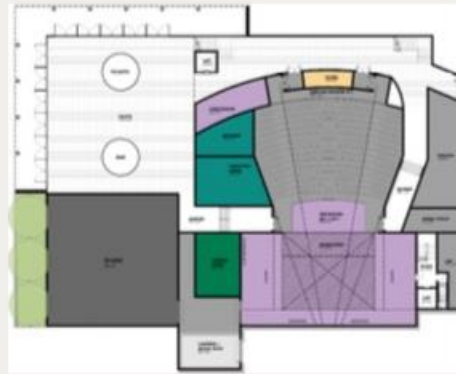
After speaking with the community about the original concept, Council has incorporated your feedback into an updated plan.

The new concept for this project includes a 500 seat theatre, stage, orchestra pit, back of house and associated car parking. The Regional Centre will be capable of hosting traveling performances, local productions and regional conventions.

It is proposed to be constructed at the site of the Brook Street Plaza. Council will work with existing tenants to facilitate their relocation to suitable new premises before any work is commenced.

Last year Council endorsed the Muswellbrook Town Centre Strategy after lengthy consultation and public exhibition. It included a purpose-built Civic Services Precinct. The construction of this Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre is considered a critical path project for the delivery of this job creating precinct.

A conceptual image of the ground floor and first floor is depicted below:



Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre concept - ground floor



Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre concept - first floor

Muswellbrook Olympic Park Precinct Upgrade

A Master Plan was developed for this popular and well utilised precinct. It was developed in close consultation with key user groups. The proposed upgrades include:

- Field improvements
- Additional amenities
- Improved, safe access
- New car parking
- Additional storage
- Additional vehicle and bus connections
- Better cycleway and pedestrian connections, and
- Design work for a regional standard grandstand to attract larger sporting fixtures.



Muswellbrook Olympic Park Concept Masterplan - Stage 1

How Were The Projects Identified?

Council is determined to improve the way we listen to you and ensure that we reflect your priorities. Over the last eighteen months Council has undertaken a comprehensive consultation program to seek community involvement in shaping the future of our Shire.

You and your neighbours have been invited to attend community forums, participate in telephone surveys and make submissions in response to strategic documents such as the Local Environment Plan (LEP).

Most recently, a series of 'Listening Posts' held at key locations across the Shire asked about your priorities for the future of economic prosperity, social equity, environmental sustainability, cultural vitality, community infrastructure and community leadership over the next ten years and beyond.

The consultation confirmed your ongoing support for Muswellbrook as the Regional Centre of the Upper Hunter. You told us that this required the infrastructure to match the title.

The Options – How much and what will I get?

Option 1

Special Rate Variation involves a permanent, one-off land value increase (including 2.3% rate peg)

How Much?

- 12.3% for Residential, Business and Farmland rate categories, will raise \$940,758
- 18.3% for the Mining rate category, will raise \$951,809
- The weighted average across all categories is 14.7%

What Will I Get?

- Additional \$300,000 per year for stormwater drainage and flood mitigation devices
- Additional \$100,000 per year for roads and parks asset maintenance program
- Implementation of the Olympic Park Precinct Master Plan upgrades and an Entertainment and Conference Centre with a combined value of \$26,010,000 made up of:

- an SRV contribution of \$11,800,000
- grants of \$10,500,000
- voluntary planning agreements (VPA) amounting to \$3,710,000, and
- an annual operational maintenance and net yearly operational contributions of \$700,000 for Olympic Park and the Entertainment and Conference Centre.

Please note: if the above grants and VPA are not received, or if the amounts received are less than the figures above, one or both projects may be suspended, reduced in size or cancelled. The SRV will be revisited and ratepayers will be informed of any material changes.

- Additional \$250,000 towards Job Creation programs
- \$62,000 to offset a shortfall in rating revenues arising from a change in NSW Government policy with respect to biodiversity offsets.

This application will provide new, sustainable infrastructure for our growing community into the future.

Option 2

No Special Rate Variation

How Much?

- 2.3% - this is the 2018/19 annual rate peg (yet to be set by IPART)

What Will I Get?

- Existing stormwater drainage program of \$158,000
- Existing roads program of \$390,700
- Existing parks asset maintenance program of \$347,600
- Partial upgrade of the Olympic Park Precinct of approximately \$600,000
- No Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre
- A shortfall in Council's rates revenue of approximately \$62,000

What is the average cost increase for my rating category?

Council estimates that the annual impact on the average ratepayer will be as below.

Rating Category	Weighted average general rate increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer
General Residential – Muswellbrook & Denman	\$85.82
General Residential	\$119.60
General Farmland	\$348.93
General Business	\$290.30
General Business – Interim Development	\$1,214.69
General Mining	\$55,988.84



What about projects in the existing Delivery Program?

Council will ensure that the priorities set out in the 2017-21 Delivery Program continue to be funded as the current budget allows. This includes road and footpath maintenance, parks, recreation and buildings, water and waste water services, domestic waste, companion animal management, and human health regulation and other community services.

What happened to the plans for the Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre?

The redevelopment of the Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre is overwhelmingly popular and remains a priority. Council's Long Term Financial Plan aims to progress the redevelopment of the Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre.

In the meantime, Council has sought funding through the Resources for Regions Fund to replace the aged 50 metre pool, and also made an application to the Stronger Country

Communities Fund for the water park and indoor play area.

The Muswellbrook Urban Riparian area and Muswellbrook Aquatic Centre have separate design master plans that are scheduled for public exhibition in 2018.

Councillors decided that the development of the Olympic Park Precinct was a key priority for their term and that the proposed 2018/2019 SRV application was the most effective means of delivering this.

How can I have my say?

Council is seeking your feedback on this proposal in a number of ways.

1. By participating in the **random telephone survey** if you are called by Jetty Research. They will ask you questions to see what your awareness of the projects is and your opinion.
2. Complete the online survey between 27 Nov - 11 Dec by going to muswellbrook17.questionpro.com
3. You can write to Council at PO Box 122, Muswellbrook NSW 2333
4. Email Council at council@muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au
5. Leave a comment on Council's Facebook page www.facebook.com/muswellbrookshirecouncil
6. **Participate in a 'Listening Post' feedback session** at any of these locations:
 - 12:00pm - 2:00pm, 21 November 2017
Muswellbrook Fair
 - 12:00pm - 2:00pm, 24 November 2017
Muswellbrook Marketplace
 - 12:00pm - 2:00pm, 27 November 2017
Denman (Ogilvie Street)

Did Council consider alternatives to the special rate variation?

Yes. However, Council's forward budget is already committed to the basic services and works programs such as critical road, water, recreation, waste, job creation and education programs.

The infrastructure projects, upgrades and economic boost provided by these new community priority projects will need additional revenue to bring them to life.

What about State and Federal grants?

Although Council seeks grants for a range of projects, funding from the State and Federal Governments is very competitive and is typically an unreliable funding source. Council could continue to attempt to progress these projects through grant applications if this SRV application doesn't succeed; however, without ongoing sources of revenue, for the operational and maintenance costs, savings would need to be identified through reductions to other core levels of service. This is not an option you are likely to support and Council would not want to introduce.

For more information go to www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au