

RELEASE DATE: Thursday 21 November 2013
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Your ref:
Our ref: A02/0249

MEDIA RELEASE

Council to survey community views on proposed special rate increase

Armidale Dumaresq Council will next week begin extensive community consultation to seek views and ratings on council services.

Council has engaged Jetty Research to conduct a random telephone survey which will also include questions on the proposed special rate variation.

General Manager of Armidale Dumaresq Council Shane Burns says the survey will commence the week starting 25 November 2013.

“The random telephone survey will target 300 respondents, who will provide feedback to Council on the special rate variation, services level reviews and feedback received will assist with the required special rate application to the Independent Regulatory and Pricing Tribunal (IPART),” Mr Burns said.

Mayor Laurie Bishop is encouraging people contacted by Jetty Research to participate in the survey.

“This is just one strategy in a number of actions to seek community input and facilitate engagement on this critical issue, which has significant relevance to the future of the Armidale Dumaresq Council area,” Mayor Laurie Bishop said.

“Councils across NSW have and are holding similar discussions with their community’s about the need for special rate increases, to address financial and asset sustainability. It is important that this challenge be addressed now and not left as a problem for future generations to solve.”

Councillors look forward to participating in numerous engagement activities planned between now and early February 2014 to seek community views and take feedback on board in determining the final level of increase to take forward to IPART for consideration.

For further enquiries please contact Laurie Bishop 0429 321 080

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Media Contact: Laurie Bishop – ADC Mayor, T: 0429 321 080 or E: lbishop@armidale.nsw.gov.au

RELEASE DATE: Thursday 5 December, 2013
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA ALERT

Briefing to the media on special rate variation

Armidale Dumaresq Council Mayor Laurie Bishop is inviting the media to a briefing on council's proposed 20% special rate variation.

When: Monday 9 December, 2013 @ 10.30am

Where: Armidale Dumaresq Council Chambers, 135 Rusden Street, Armidale

Who: Mayor Laurie Bishop
General Manager Shane Burns
Executive Director Strategic Projects and Planning David Stellar
Chief Finance and Operations Officer Keith Lockyer

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Media Contact: Shane Burns – ADC General Manager, T: 0428 232 232 or E: sburns@armidale.nsw.gov.au

RELEASE DATE: Wednesday 22 January, 2014
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Your ref:
Our ref: A02/0249

MEDIA RELEASE

Council's Delivery Program and Long Term Financial Plan on Public Exhibition

Armidale Dumaresq Council's Community Strategic Delivery Program 2014 – 2018 update and the Long Term Financial Plan was approved by Council for Public Exhibition during Monday's (20 January, 2014) Ordinary Council Meeting.

The Delivery Program outlines the vision and strategies set out in the Community Strategic Plan 2013-2028 (CSP) and what Council will focus on during its four year term. The update to the Delivery Program is due to Council's special rate increase application to Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

The Delivery Program and Long Term Financial Plan will be on Public Exhibition from Tuesday 21 January, 2014 for a period of 28 days. Written submission will be accepted up to 5.00pm on Tuesday 18 February, 2014. An extraordinary meeting will be held at 5.30pm Thursday 20 February 2014, to consider the submissions received. Submissions should be addressed to: General Manager PO BOX 75A, Armidale NSW, 2350.

Submissions should be marked 'Submission Delivery Program and Long Term Financial Plan' – also listing the reference A13/6419.

For further information on the above documents, please contact Nathalie Heaton, Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting and Legal Officer on 02 6770 3816 or e-mail nheaton@armidale.nsw.gov.au.

For electronic copies of the above documents, please visit the Public Exhibition page of council's website www.armidale.nsw.gov.au

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Media Contact: Shane Burns – ADC General Manager, T: 0428 232 232 or E: sburns@armidale.nsw.gov.au

RELEASE DATE: Friday 31 January, 2014
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Our ref: A02/0249

MEDIA RELEASE

Public workshop on the 20% Special Rate Variation

Armidale Dumaresq Council is encouraging the community to share their views on the proposed Special Rate Variation at a public workshop to be held at the Armidale Town Hall on Saturday 8 February, 2014 from 2pm to 4pm.

This is one of the last opportunities for the Armidale community to hear from Council the reasons for a 20% Special Rate Variation and to provide feedback in a constructive workshop environment before a submission is made to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) on 24 February, 2014.

During last week's Ordinary Council meeting Council resolved to move forward with a 20% increase (not including rate pegging) ramping up and down over an eight year period. This means a 10% increase in year one, with an additional 10%, i.e. 20% in year two. This 20% will remain for years two through seven returning to 10% in year eight before finishing all together.

Council is again calling for written submissions by closing 5.00pm Friday, 14 February 2014.

— Armidale Dumaresq Mayor Cr Laurie Bishop is encouraging the community to attend the public workshop on the Special Rate Variation.

"This is a great opportunity for the community to discuss the Special Rate Variation and the level of services they expect from Council," said Laurie Bishop.

"Council made the decision to go ahead with the staged 20% increase based on feedback Council gathered from the community and a desire by all councillors to maintain assets and achieve current levels of service provided to the community."

Ratepayers will shortly receive a letter from Council calculating the specific impact of the rate variation on individual rates accounts.

For further information on the public workshop contact Council's Acting General Manager Keith Lockyer on 6770 3854 or email: klockyer@armidale.nsw.gov.au

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Media Contact: Keith Lockyer – ADC Acting General Manager, T: 6770 3854 or E: klockyer@armidale.nsw.gov.au

RELEASE DATE: Tuesday 11 February, 2014
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Your ref:
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MEDIA RELEASE

Still time to make submissions on rate rise proposal

Community members can continue to make submissions to Council on a proposed special rate variation until close of business on Friday, 14 February.

Mayor Laurie Bishop said this would give Council time to assess the feedback from the community consultation process before the February 24 deadline for the submission set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

He said a workshop at the Town Hall on Saturday, organised by Council staff, had given more than 250 members of the community another opportunity to express their views on the proposed rate rise as part of the consultation process.

“It is a contentious issue and Council needs to balance the resistance of many members of the community to a rise in rates against their equally strong requirement that Council should make headway on meeting the local infrastructure backlog.

“Because of rate pegging, the extra imposts caused through cost shifting by governments and a significant drop in federal and state grants, the majority of councils in NSW are in a similar position.

“Understandably the community wants its roads, bridges, sporting fields and facilities and other public infrastructure upgraded and well maintained. That comes at a cost and the current rate structure cannot produce the income to deliver what needs to be done.

“We need to weigh up community views and council’s obligations and reach a position which is in the best long and short term interests of the city and surrounding district.”

Cr Bishop said the views expressed at Saturday’s workshop and in other submissions and consultations would be taken into full consideration.

“Rural landholders are in a difficult position with the continuing drought,” he said. “Many others at the workshop suggested Council could meet the infrastructure backlog through greater efficiencies.

“However we are in a position where the productivity gains to which the Council is committed cannot keep pace with the long list of works which need to be undertaken to keep the city and surrounding region in a viable and sustainable position.”

A copy of the Community Engagement Plan is available on Council’s website
www.armidale.nsw.gov.au

Media Contact: Laurie Bishop – ADC Mayor, T: 0429 321 080 or E: lbishop@armidale.nsw.gov.au

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MEDIA RELEASE

Council act on community concerns over SRV application

Armidale Dumaresq Council have acted on feedback from the community unanimously moving an amended motion to submit to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) an application for a 10% special rate variation above the 2.3% rate pegging, for seven years commencing in the financial year 2014/15.

An extraordinary meeting was held on Thursday night 20 February 2014 to discuss the final direction council would take in its special rate variation application to IPART. The well attended meeting heard from a member of the newly formed Ratepayers Action Group before councillors debated the direction it would take.

The resolution unanimously agreed:

- (a) That Council submit an application to IPART for a special rate variation of 10% above rate pegging for 7 years commencing in the financial year 2014/15.
- (b) That Council undertake a review of Council operations and productivity benchmarked against relevant external industry standards prior to any further special rate variation application.
- (c) That Council commit to ongoing consultation with the community and Council staff in relation to the above reviews.
- (d) That Council urgently review its hardship policy.
- (e) That Council amend the current Asset Management Plans to reflect the actual extra income received.
- (f) That Council review the rating categories and the services delivered for each.

Armidale Dumaresq Mayor Cr Laurie Bishop said that all councillors were extremely mindful of community concerns and objections to the original proposal of a 20% special rate variation and felt that the agreed resolution addressed all of the concerns raised by the community.

"After receiving considerable feedback from the community during the last couple of weeks and the level of concern demonstrated during the public meeting at the Town Hall, it became apparent that asking the community for 20% during these challenging times was just too much for the community at this time," said Laurie Bishop.

“I am pleased that councillors worked collaboratively to amend the motion which was finally adopted unanimously.”

Council will submit its application to IPART on Monday 24 February with a decision from IPART expected in May 2014.

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Media Contact: Laurie Bishop – ADC Mayor, T: 0429 321 080 or E: lbishop@armidale.nsw.gov.au