



ATTACHMENT 5a

Community Engagement Strategy

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ENCLOSURE 1

RESOURCING OUR FUTURE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

A strategy to support community engagement on the Public Exhibition of the Council's updated 10-year Resourcing Strategy & Supplementary Delivery Program, including three options for Resourcing our Future, two of which include possible Special Rate Variations

July 2014



Blue Mountains City Council acknowledges that the City of Blue Mountains is located on the traditional lands of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples. In addition, Blue Mountains City Council recognises the unique position Aboriginal people have in the history and culture of the Blue Mountains. It is acknowledged that Aboriginal peoples in the Blue Mountains have strong and ongoing connections to their traditional lands, cultures, heritage and history. Aboriginal people are recognised as the "Traditional Owners of the land" and it is important that this unique position is incorporated into Council's community protocols, official ceremonies and events.



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PART 1:

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGY**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Executive summary

The Council's vision is to build a successful future for the Blue Mountains. Within available resources, the Council is committed to improving the wellbeing of our community and the environment.

Our Community Strategic Plan, *Sustainable Blue Mountains 2025* (SBM 2025), outlines key environmental, social, economic and civic leadership objectives for making the Blue Mountains a better place including: “*That the Council lives responsibly within its means and strengthens its financial sustainability*” (Objective 6.1, SBM 2025: 86). Key strategies for doing this, previously endorsed by the community, include:

- *Strengthening the financial sustainability of the Council through implementing the Long Term Financial Plan and its strategies – Six Point Strategy for Financial Sustainability*
- ***Engaging with the community on how best to achieve affordable and acceptable levels of service*** – including possible renewal of the existing Environment Levy and further rate variations to enable delivery of priority projects.

This *Community Engagement Strategy* has been developed to guide community engagement on how best we can achieve levels of service that are both affordable and acceptable, given the significant financial challenges our City faces.

As part of the Council's integrated long-term resource planning, three alternative funding options have been developed that community input and engagement is being sought on. These options, and their varying impacts, have been detailed in the following *Integrated Plans* that will be on Public Exhibition from 4 August to 15 September 2014:

- *Resourcing Strategy 2014-2024* (including Long Term Financial Plan, Asset Management Policy and Strategy, Workforce Management Strategy)
- *Service Dashboards: Summary of Service and Asset Plans*
- *Supplementary Delivery Program*

Part 1 of this document presents the overall approach to community engagement, including level of engagement planned, key messages, guiding principles and key target groups being consulted and engaged.

Part 2 presents the detailed Community Engagement Action Plan.

1.2 Integrated planning and reporting framework

This *Community Engagement Strategy* supports implementation of the Council’s legislatively required integrated planning and reporting. Under this framework the Council is required to engage the community on how best to achieve affordable and acceptable levels of service and a sustainable future for the Local Government Area – socially, environmentally and economically.

The diagram below provides an overview of this framework and how community engagement is an integral part of it.

This *Community Engagement Strategy* outlines how we will engage the community on three resourcing options detailed in our 10-year *Resourcing Strategy*, which has been placed on public exhibition. It also supports engagement on a Supplementary Delivery Program, which details the impact of three options on service delivery and finances at the four-year level.

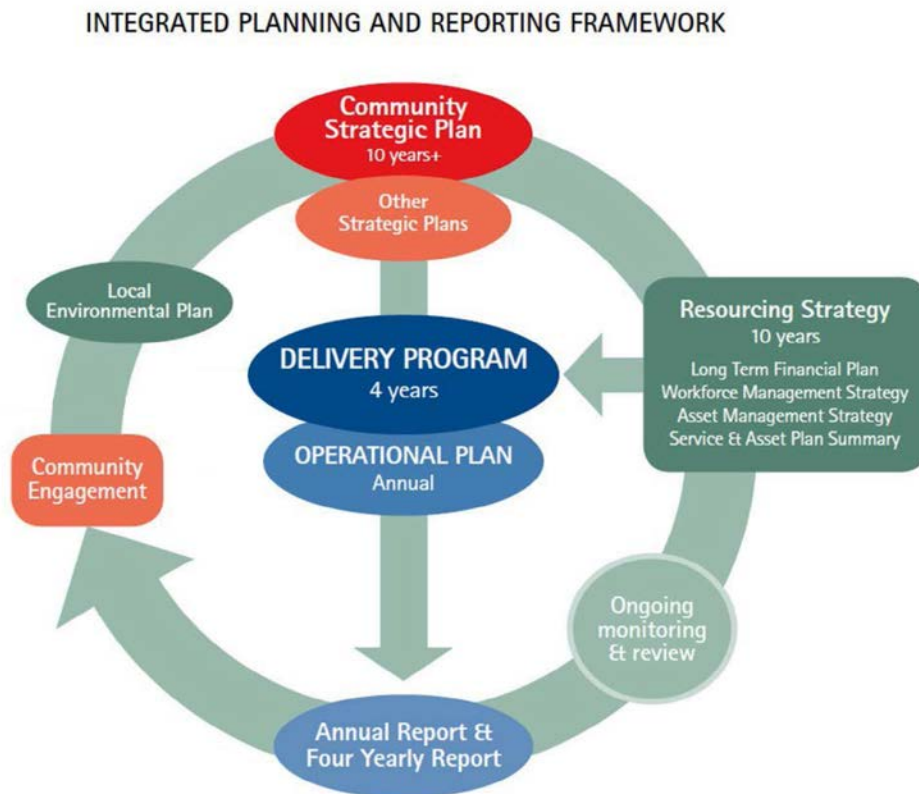


Figure 2: Community Engagement – A Component of the Integrated Planning Framework

1.3 Background

Within available funding the Council aims to provide the best possible value-for-money services to residents and visitors while remaining financially sustainable. However, the level of service we can provide is limited by the funding available. Like most councils, the Blue Mountains faces significant financial challenges as a result of rate pegging, costs rising faster than the allowable increase in rating revenue, cost shifting from other levels of government and ageing infrastructure. Our City also bears the high costs and responsibilities associated with managing our impact on the surrounding World Heritage environment and being a City that is highly prone to bushfires and storms. These challenges are further exacerbated by our dispersed settlement pattern that has necessitated a high level of service duplication across 27 towns and villages spread along 100km of mountainous terrain.

Without addressing our financial challenge, it will not be possible to continue providing existing levels of service into the future. Currently, 21% or \$210 million of the City's \$1billion worth of built assets are estimated to be in poor condition. This is estimated to increase to 37% or \$370 million by 2023. This means that well over one-third of our roads, footpaths, bridges, stormwater drainage, town centres, pools parks, libraries and other community buildings will deteriorate.

To achieve our vision and address our challenges the Council has developed a 10-year *Resourcing Strategy*, including a Six Point Strategy for achieving Financial Sustainability (see *Figure 1*). This Resourcing Strategy positions the Blue Mountains to withstand the challenges and build a successful future.



Figure 1: Six Key Strategies for Financial Sustainability

In line with this Strategy, Council is actively working to avoid shocks, balance its budget each year through finding savings and efficiencies, manage borrowings responsibly, increase income, review and adjust services to ensure best value and increase advocacy and seek partnerships to achieve positive outcomes, including a financially sustainable City of Blue Mountains.

Strategy 4 -Increase Income includes a two-stage approach to increasing revenue through phased special rate variations, implemented gradually taking into account community capacity to pay rate increases and the financial challenge facing the City.

Stage 1 of this plan has been successfully achieved in 2013 with community endorsement for continuing an existing special variation to rates. The Council is now seeking, through the implementation of this *Community Engagement Strategy*, to implement Stage 2 including engaging the community on the following three options for *Resourcing our Future*:

Option 1 Service Levels Improved

Option 2 Service Levels Maintained

Option 3 Service Levels Reduced

Options 1 and 2 include a possible further special variation to rates including continuation of an existing Environment Levy (see box below) and Option 3 includes no special variation to rates and discontinuing the Environment Levy with a consequent reduction in service levels.

Taking into consideration the outcomes of the community engagement on funding options, the Council will then be in a position to decide whether or not to proceed with a special variation application and how best to resource our future. The results of this process will then inform the update of our 10-year Resourcing Strategy and 4-year Delivery Program and help ensure we can achieve a successful future for the City of Blue Mountains.

What is a Special Rate Variation?

In 1977 the NSW Government introduced 'rate pegging' to limit the amount by which councils can increase rate revenue from one year to the next (around 3% per year). Currently, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) determines the amount that council rates can increase each year.

Councils are able to apply for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) in order to set rates higher than the rate peg for up to a seven-year period. All councils can apply to IPART for an SRV to seek additional funds.

What is the Environment Levy?

The Environment Levy is a special rate variation that has been in place since 2005 and due to expire in June 2015. It is paid as part of Council rates and costs the average ratepayer around \$43 per year (**or 82c per week**). The Levy raises around \$1.5 million annually to fund the protection and restoration of the natural environment.

In 2012-2013, the Environment Levy funded: water quality monitoring at 40+ sites; restoration of creeks and bushland across 130 sites (including weed control and stormwater pollution management); maintenance & repair of walking tracks and lookouts (including important historical / cultural sites); support for 500+ local conservation Bushcare and Landcare volunteers; and environmental education programs in local schools.

1.4 Strategy purpose

This *Community Engagement Strategy* aims to:

- Improve community understanding of services provided by the Council and the financial challenge in maintaining existing levels of service into the future.
- Ensure the community is effectively engaged on the three options for “*Resourcing our Future*” as detailed in the draft *Resourcing Strategy 2014-2024*, *Service Dashboards* and *Supplementary Delivery Program* (on public exhibition from 4 August to 15 September 2014) and in various communication documents.

Part 2 of this Strategy includes a detailed *Community Engagement Action Plan*. This plan aims to ensure within available resources, that the general community is aware of and has access to relevant information on the three proposed options for resourcing our future. To access the voice of the broader community – the silent majority – the Action Plan includes a survey of a representative sample of ratepayers and area based workshops with a randomly selected cross section of the community.

- Demonstrate the Council’s commitment to implementing its *Six Point Strategy for Financial Sustainability* (see *Figure 1* above) and not just seeking to increase rates without first doing everything possible to address our financial challenge. This commitment includes:
 1. **Avoiding Shocks** – The Council is proactively implementing sound financial planning to ensure we live responsibly within our means, manage risks and prioritise resources to achieve best outcomes.
 2. **Balancing the Budget** – Given that costs are rising in real terms by 2% more than income, the Council is taking action to balance its budget by finding efficiencies and cost savings (approximately \$12 million over past seven years).
 3. **Managing borrowings responsibly** – The Council is committed to reducing debt levels through ceasing new borrowings as much as possible (subject to review of financial capacity and sound business case).
 4. **Increasing Income** – The Council is seeking to maximise income where appropriate. For every dollar residents pay in rates, the Council matches it from other funding sources. Over the past five years the Council obtained over \$87 million in grant funding for the community. The Council seeks to engage community in 2014 on options for achieving affordable and acceptable levels of service including a possible further special variation to rates and continuation of an existing Environment Levy.
 5. **Reviewing and adjusting services** – The council is committed to ongoing review of its services to ensure we are providing quality, value for money services responsive to changing requirements of the community over time.
 6. **Increasing Advocacy and Partnerships** – This strategy involves advocating to other levels of government for a fair share of funding and reduced cost shifting onto local government and building partnerships to achieve positive outcomes.

2. APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

2.1 Guiding principles

Key principles underpinning and guiding implementation of this Community Engagement Strategy include:

Leadership

The Council will demonstrate civic leadership through facilitating a community engagement process that supports achievement of the best possible outcomes for current and future residents of the City of Blue Mountains.

The Council will foster and grow partnerships with the community, state and federal agencies and the non-government community sector and business, to support the building of a successful future for the City.

Sustainability

The engagement seeks to support achievement of a sustainable future for the City – socially, environmentally and economically – that aligns with our community strategic plan, *Sustainable Blue Mountains 2025*.

Transparency

The Council will strive to make its community engagement and decision-making processes transparent and clear, avoiding unnecessary technical jargon. The community will be provided with the information they need to be able to reflect, participate and contribute in a meaningful way. People's ideas and contributions will be noted as accurately as possible.

Accountability

The Council recognises the importance of establishing a robust, transparent and accountable framework to guide community engagement and Council decision making on how best to achieve affordable and acceptable levels of service. The Council accepts that it is accountable for effectively engaging the wider community on the proposed options for resourcing our future and accountable for taking into consideration the results of community engagement in decision making processes.

Evidence-based decision-making

The Council is committed to decision-making that is informed and guided by relevant evidence and sound analysis.

Fairness

The Community Engagement Strategy supports the principle of fairness in decision-making and in the prioritisation and allocation of resources for the benefit of current and future residents. People should be able to have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

2.2 Key target groups

- General community
- Ratepayers – residential, business and farmland
- Local community groups and organisations
- State and Federal Government
- Non-government agencies and organisations
- Council

2.3 Key messages

Headline messages

- The Council's vision is to build a successful future for the Blue Mountains. We are committed to improving the wellbeing of our community and environment.
- Council aims to provide the best possible value for money services for our community while remaining financially sustainable.
- Like many NSW councils, BMCC is experiencing significant challenges in being financially sustainable while continuing to provide current levels of service into the future. To address the financial challenges facing the City, the Council has taken initiative and leadership in developing a *Six Point Strategy for Financial Sustainability*.
- In line with this Strategy, Council is actively working to avoid shocks, balance its budget each year through finding savings and efficiencies, manage borrowings responsibly, increase income, review and adjust services to ensure best value and increase advocacy and seek partnerships to achieve to achieve positive outcomes including a financially sustainable City of Blue Mountains.
- Part of our strategy for increasing income is to engage with the community on options for achieving affordable and acceptable levels of service including possible special variations to rates. A two-staged approach to phased implementation of special variations over time has been developed taking into consideration community capacity and willingness to pay additional rates.
- The engagement on options for achieving affordable and acceptable levels of service will also consider possible continuation of the existing Environment Levy, which has been contributing additional funding for environmental restoration and protection and programs since 2005.
- Taking into consideration the outcomes of the community engagement on options for resourcing our future, the Council will decide whether or not to proceed with a Special Variation application.
- The results of community engagement will inform the final update of our 10-year *Resourcing Strategy* and four-year *Delivery Program* and help ensure we work together to build a successful future for our City.

Supporting Background Information

- Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) delivers a wide range of services to a population of approx. 78,000 residents across one of the largest Local Government Areas on Sydney's fringe
- Financial challenges facing NSW councils, and the City of Blue Mountains, are the result of real costs rising 2% faster than available revenue, rate pegging limiting the amount by which rates can rise, cost shifting from other levels of government, and councils only collecting approximately 3% of total tax revenue (through rates) but having responsibility for provision of approx. 36% of built assets and infrastructure (much of which is old and in need of renewal and upgrade)
- BMCC also has a number of additional challenges, including:
 - Service provision across 27 towns and villages over 100kms of mountainous terrain, with historical duplication of services and facilities to ensure the community has reasonable access to services
 - Additional expenses arising for emergency management responsibilities, as the area is prone to costly natural disaster, especially bushfires and storms
 - Additional expenses due to its location adjacent to World Heritage Listed National Park, involving costly measures to reduce the impacts of settlement on the natural environment
 - Additional expenses due to area being a major tourism destination (which is a major component of the local economy)
 - Limited opportunity for additional rates revenue from population growth because of the area's natural geography and the City's location adjacent to a World Heritage Listed National Park
 - Resident expectations for high levels of service as the City is located adjacent to the Sydney metropolitan area
 - Significant pockets of isolated households located on isolated ridgelines not serviced by public transport -- including a growing number of older people with disabilities
 - The recent announcement by the Federal Government that it will freeze the indexation of Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) will significantly impact councils, including Blue Mountains City Council. Under the FAG scheme, grants are used to maintain a range of infrastructure, including local roads, bridges, parks, swimming pools, libraries and community halls as well as many services to the community. As a result of the FAG proposal, BMCC will be impacted by a

funding shortfall of approx. \$2.9M over the next four years, followed by \$640,000 in 2015/16 and \$1M in 2016/17 and every year into the future.

- Despite these challenges, ratepayers receive good value for their rating dollar from the Council – for every rating dollar paid the Council at least matches it with funding from other sources primarily grants and to a lesser extent fees and charges.
- As a result of these challenges the Council's costs exceed revenue by about \$1-2M each year.
 - The Council balances its annual budget each year by reducing expenditure and over the last seven years has conservatively achieved costs savings of more than \$12M through implementing cost containment, productivity and continuous improvement initiatives
 - However, the Council cannot continue this practice of expenditure containment into the future, without impact on service levels and significant deterioration in the condition of built and natural assets
 - BMCC cannot live beyond its means and within available funding will responsibly manage risks and prioritise the allocation of available funding to achieve the best possible outcomes for the community
- The proposed special rate variation, contained within two of the three options for *resourcing our future* (options 1 and 2), is an action under *Strategy 4: Increase Income* of the council's six point strategy for financial sustainability
- The current Environment Levy has been in place since 2005 and will expire in June 2015. It is paid by ratepayers as part of Council rates and costs the average ratepayer around \$43 per year. The Levy raises around \$1.5 million annually and funds environmental protection and restoration projects across our City within a World Heritage Area, including water quality monitoring, stormwater pollution control, creek and waterway restoration, weed control, habitat restoration, maintenance and repair of walking tracks and lookouts, environmental education programs and support for over 500 local volunteers such as Bush care groups
- The community has received significant benefits from the Environment Levy since 2005, including cleaner creeks and waterways, up to 95% reduction in weeds such as gorse across the City, improvements to walking tracks and lookouts, campgrounds and picnic areas, rehabilitation of creeks and bushland across 130 sites, habitat protection for threatened species, better protection for our World Heritage National Park from urban impacts and over \$3.6 million attracted in additional funding from NSW and Australian government agencies for local projects
- A Special Variation is a legitimate and reasonable option for Council to undertake to raise additional revenue to meeting community needs and expectations. Around 20 to 25 councils annually apply for special variations – the majority are approved. This is particularly so for asset funding backlogs – the majority of applications are to address this

- The Council will continue to work hard (as it has over the past decade) to achieve significant efficiencies and productivity improvements and to continually review service provision to ensure best value quality service provision responsive to needs of the community
- The Council seeks to engage the community on the public exhibition of the updated *Resourcing Strategy*, which contains three alternative funding scenarios (see *Table 3*) for *Resourcing our future*
- Council is seeking to engage the community on levels of service that can be afforded and which are also acceptable to the community.

2.4 Three options for *resourcing our future*

The community will be engaged on three different options for *Resourcing Our Future*. In communicating these options, the Council will outline the following:

- The magnitude of the financial challenge and infrastructure funding shortfall facing the City over the next 10 years and its impact on service levels
- The potential contribution of each of the *Six Key Strategies for Financial Sustainability* and the requirement to seek further special variations to rates
- The need to consider community “capacity” to pay additional rates in determining the range of options to be presented
- The need for residents to be able to have their say on whether or not they are prepared to pay additional rates to maintain and/ or improve service levels.

The three alternative options, which have been developed for community consideration are:

- Option 1:** Service Levels Improved
- Option 2:** Service Levels maintained
- Option 3:** Service Levels reduced

Option 1 reinstates the existing Environment Levy in 2015/16 on a permanent basis and includes special rate variation annual increases of 6.6% in 2015/16, followed by three increases of 9.6% from 2016/17 to 2018/19 (including 3% rate peg and the 3.6% existing Environment Levy). This raises an additional \$98.5M by 2023/24. Under this Option, service levels are improved with the proportion of built assets in poor condition reduced from 21% to 17% by 2024. The capacity of the Council to protect and restore the natural environment is retained.

Option 2 reinstates the existing Environment Levy in 2015/16 on a permanent basis and includes special rate variation annual increases of 6.6% in 2015/16, followed by three increases of 7.4% from 2016/17 to 2018/19 (including 3% rate peg and the 3.6% existing

Environment Levy). This raises an additional \$70.3M by 2023/24. Under this Option, service levels are maintained with the proportion of built assets in poor condition targeted to be maintained at its current 21% by 2024. The capacity of the Council to protect and restore the natural environment is retained.

Option 3 discontinues the existing Environment Levy when it expires in June 2015 resulting in a reduction in rating revenue of \$17.0M by 2023/24. Rates increase by rate peg only, estimated at 3% per annum. The Environment Levy is backed out of rate revenue. Under this Option, there is a significant reduction in service levels with deterioration in the Council's built assets from the current 21% to 37% in poor condition by 2024. The capacity of the Council to protect and restore the natural environment is significantly reduced.

Additional funding that might be obtained under Option 1 (\$98.5 million by 2024) and Option 2 (70.3 million by 2024) would be targeted to:

- **Public infrastructure** –Improving or maintaining renewal and maintenance of the City's roads, bridges, footpaths, storm water drainage, town centres, walking tracks, fire trails etc
- **Emergency response** – Improving or maintaining disaster preparedness and capacity to respond to bushfires and other emergencies such as storms – better asset protection zones and improved fire trail maintenance
- **Environment** – Retaining capacity to protect and restore the 10,000 ha of natural bushlands and waterways managed by the Council
- **Community** – Improving or maintaining capacity to advocate for funding and implement programs that enhance well-being of general community and the most vulnerable, including for example frail aged and younger people. Improving/ maintaining facilities, including pools, parks, sporting ovals, community and cultural centres and halls etc. Improving or maintaining capacity to advocate and facilitate projects which contribute to social, cultural and economic vitality of the City/ community

Importantly, the allocation of funding would be subject to legislatively required annual Service and Asset Management Plan reviews and to addressing priority risk mitigation actions. Expenditure would target critical service/ asset priorities that the community places a high value on and / or those that have a high risk profile.

2.5 Levels of engagement

Council will use the framework shown in *Table 5* below to guide implementation of a range of engagement methods that inform, consult, involve and collaborate with the community – on how best to achieve affordable and acceptable levels of service into the future.

Table 5: Levels of Community Engagement Framework

LEVEL	WHAT IS ACHIEVED
Inform	One-way communication, providing balanced and objective information to assist understanding
Consult	Two-way communication designed to obtain public feedback about ideas, alternatives and proposals to inform decision-making
Involve	Participatory process designed to help identify issues to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision-making
Collaborate	Working together to develop understanding of all issues and interests to work out and consider alternatives and identify preferred solutions

2.6 Community engagement timeline

The following table provides a summary overview of the proposed community engagement timeline (detailed in Part 2).

Table 2: Community Engagement Timeline

Time	Activity
4 August – 15 September	Public Exhibition of the Council’s updated Resourcing Strategy 2014-2024, Service Dashboards, Supplementary Delivery Program (each detailing the three options for <i>Resourcing Our Future</i>).
4 Aug – 15 Sept	Information stalls in key town centres
11- 15 August	Letter from Mayor and Brochure sent to all ratepayers - including a reply paid envelope for submissions
16 - 26 August	Telephone survey of representative sample of ratepayers
30 Aug – 14 Sept	<i>Resourcing Our Future</i> area workshops with cross section of community in Blaxland, Springwood, Lawson, Katoomba and Blackheath

What will happen after community engagement?

The results of the community engagement and public exhibition will be presented to the Council in November or December 2014.

The Council will fully consider the results before deciding which resourcing option to proceed with, including whether or not to make an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a special rate variation.

The Council's Resourcing Strategy and Delivery Program will be updated to reflect the Council's preferred resourcing option.

If the preferred option is to apply for a special variation to rates, the Council will submit its application to IPART in February 2015, with results known by June 2015.

3. BRANDING

The following branding has been previously used in consulting with the community on the Council's *Integrated Plan*:



It will be used on all Integrated Planning documents being publically exhibited to reinforce that engaging on options for *resourcing our future* is part of the Council's integrated planning.

The following additional branding will also be used:

RESOURCING OUR FUTURE.....

Have Your Say on the Options for Achieving A Better Blue Mountains

The branding links to and supports the Council's Vision and Mission which is:

Vision: "To build a successful future for the Blue Mountains"

Mission: "Improving the wellbeing of our community and environment."

4. QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

In its engagement with the community, Council will likely need to respond to a number of questions raised by the community. Some of these have been anticipated and how they will be managed is set out in the table below.

Table 6: Likely questions to be raised during engagement

Question	Proposed response
<p><i>How can the Council best show that it is efficient?</i></p> <p><i>OR How do I know the Council is being efficient?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive Information Fact Sheet has been prepared documenting how the Council has contained its expenditure, achieved costs savings and efficiencies and generated additional revenue. • In addition, an Information Fact Sheet has also been prepared on the Environment Levy. This highlights that we: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use levy funds to leverage and attract significant grant funding (\$3.6 million+ over 10 years achieved) ○ Work in close partnership with our community, including 500+ local volunteers, and other land management agencies ○ Use scientific research and award-winning land management expertise to decide how to achieve best value for money.
<p><i>Why is the Council implementing community engagement on its draft Waste Strategy at the same time?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft Waste Strategy presents important proposed actions for supporting achievement of <i>Sustainable Blue Mountains 2025</i> environmental objectives to reduce, reuse and recycle and to manage waste resources. • Community engagement on the Waste Strategy and on alternative options for resourcing our future including possible special variation to rates, will cross reference each other. • Resourcing our Future – Area workshops – will include cross consultation on the Waste Strategy.
<p><i>How has the Council considered the capacity of the community to pay?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has completed a full analysis of the community's capacity to pay additional rates and this is detailed in Section 2 of the <i>Resourcing Strategy 2014-2023</i> being publicly exhibited from 4 August-15 September 2014. • Within available funding, the Council is committed through its integrated planning to building a successful future for the Blue Mountains – that supports the creation of a vibrant economy / town centres providing increased local employment opportunities and to advocating for the provision of services and facilities that meet the

Question	Proposed response
	<p>needs of all age groups and special needs groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has a Hardship Policy to accommodate the special needs of those unable to pay their rates in full on time. The Council is committed to working with such ratepayers to agree on affordable payment plans.
<p><i>Council was recently allowed the continuation of the special variation for infrastructure – why is another application possibly being sought under Options 1 and 2 for resourcing our future?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement documentation, including the Council’s updated <i>Resourcing Strategy 2014-2024 and Supplementary Delivery Program</i> will show that there is a significant infrastructure funding shortfall. If this is not addressed through additional revenue, it will result in a reduction in service levels and possible closure of any unsafe or at risk facilities. Currently, it is estimated 21% of built assets are in poor condition and this is projected to increase to 37% by 2024. Because of the potentially significant change in service levels, it is important that the community is consulted on how best to achieve acceptable and affordable levels of service. In addition, the existing Environment Levy is due to expire in June 2015. The two alternative options for resourcing our future that include special rate variations - both include continuation of the existing Environment Levy. The Environment Levy has over the past 10 years made a significant resourcing contribution to the restoration, protection and management of natural environment bushland, creeks and water ways that impact on the World Heritage area. The health of waterways is an important priority for our community. It is important that the community has its say on whether or not this Levy should be continued as part of a further special rate variation. The Blue Mountains’ global reputation as a pristine, beautiful environment is critical for our local tourism industry, which attracts 2.7 million visitors a year and supports 5000+ local jobs. Not continuing the Environment Levy will potentially impact on this adversely.

PART 2:
**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
ACTION PLAN**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY & AIMS	COMMUNICATION CHANNELS	TARGET GROUP	WHEN	LEVEL
<p>Public Exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To exhibit the updated <i>Resourcing Strategy</i>, <i>Service Dashboards</i> and <i>Supplementary Delivery Program</i>, which include the three options for <i>resourcing our future</i> - two of which propose a special variation and the continuation of the existing Environment Levy To obtain community feedback and consultation on the documents and the three resourcing options through seeking formal submissions from the community To inform community that the Council is considering whether or not to apply for a special rate variation - with this decision being informed by results of the exhibition and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display of key documents in Libraries and at Springwood and Katoomba Council offices Council website and <i>Have Your Say</i> site – including online submission form and rates calculator, links to documents including summary Brochure, Information Fact Sheets on Environment Levy, Council's cost containment and revenue generating initiatives and an FAQ document Media releases Display ads Gazette & Gazette Communicator & Mayoral column Information toolkit for Councillors and Council staff 	<p>General community</p> <p>Local organisations</p> <p>Ratepayers (residential/ farmland/ business)</p>	4 Aug – 15 Sep 2014	Inform/ involve/ consult
<p>Mail out to ratepayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote the public exhibition period of the updated Resourcing Strategy and Supplementary Delivery Program To invite feedback on the three options for <i>resourcing our future</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from Mayor with summary 4-page Brochure mailed to all ratepayers Brochure contains tear off slip for ratepayers to make submission in postage paid envelope on their preferred resourcing option URL for <i>Have Your Say</i> website with additional information, including Information Fact Sheets on Environment Levy, Council's cost savings, efficiencies and revenue achievements and Frequently Asked Questions 	Ratepayers (residential/ farmland/ business)	11-15 Aug 2014	Inform/ involve/ consult
<p>Telephone survey of a representative cross section of ratepayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To engage a representative cross-section of ratepayers to obtain their views on the three options for <i>resourcing our future</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey of views of ratepayers who have received and read Brochure and letter from Mayor mailed to every ratepayer 	Ratepayers	16 Aug – 26 Sept 2014	Consult

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY & AIMS	COMMUNICATION CHANNELS	TARGET GROUP	WHEN	LEVEL
<p>Area workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To engage with a cross-section of residents on the three resourcing options and their impacts on affordable levels of service provision To gain feedback from this sample of the community To engage community on the Council's draft Waste Strategy /domestic waste options taking into consideration potential financial impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five area based workshops to be conducted (Blackheath, Katoomba, Lawson, Springwood, Blaxland) Independent facilitation and documentation and analysis of results by IRIS Research Power point overview of alternative resourcing options as outlined in Service Dashboards <i>Service Dashboards</i> used to support workshops 	General community (cross section by location, age and gender)	30 Aug 2014 31 Aug 2014 6 Sep 2014 13 Sep 2014 14 Sep 2014	Inform/ Involve/ Consult / Collaborate
<p>Information Stalls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide Residential, Farmland & Business ratepayers with information in key town centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Stalls in key locations to address information requirements of Residential, Farmland and Business ratepayers 	Ratepayers (residential/ farmland/ business) General community	4 Aug - 15 Sep 2014	Inform/ involve/ consult
<p>Enquiry response management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage community phone-in inquiries To prepare councillors and BMCC staff to address issues relating to community engagement on the three options for <i>resourcing our future</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information toolkit including Frequently Asked Questions responses and key communication products Information telephone 'Huntline' will be implemented to manage impact on the Council's Call centre & Rating Teams and ensure all enquiries are appropriately directed and addressed 	Ratepayers (residential/ farmland/ business) General community	During period of public exhibition and community engagement	Inform/ Involve