



BELLINGEN SHIRE COUNCIL

33-39 Hyde Street · Bellingen · NSW

All communications to be addressed to the General Manager

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Dear resident/ratepayer

SPECIAL RATE VARIATIONS – ‘HAVE YOUR SAY’

We are writing to you regarding changes to Council's Long Term Financial Plan and Delivery Program. These changes reflect Council's intention to invest in local road infrastructure by applying for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to assist with priority road resurfacing works from 2017/18.

Local roads are vital infrastructure that connect and support our communities. Local Government has been subject to rate pegging for 39 years and, as a consequence, the majority of councils in NSW have not been able to generate sufficient income to renew their infrastructure on an ongoing basis.

Bellingen Shire Council is responsible for over \$0.5 billion worth of assets of which a significant component is its aging transport infrastructure. The maintenance and renewal of these assets are particularly challenging in an environment where, in addition to rate pegging, we are constrained by the fact that over 50 % of our shire is non-rateable. The majority of non-rateable land is owned by state and federal governments, comprising primarily of State Forest and National Parks.

For the past two years, Council has been required to undertake a process of review in response to the Office of Local Government's 'Fit for the Future' program. This included making submissions to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal in June 2015 and again to the Office of Local Government in July 2016.

On 6 December 2016, Council was deemed 'Fit'. The Office of Local Government's assessment determination was dependent on a number of strategies being implemented. One of these requirements is the need to implement special rate variations over a seven year period.

The proposed single year, six per cent SRV for 2017/18 (inclusive of the 1.5% rate peg imposed by the State Government) will, in the first instance, allow Council to attend to urgent road resurfacing works that have been prioritised. This will involve the additional revenue generated by the 4.5% SRV being spent solely on transport infrastructure. This will allow a greater focus on the strategic management of community infrastructure while putting steps in place to ensure that infrastructure renewal investment is being addressed.

Council is seeking to engage with you in a number of ways including three 'drop in' sessions. These sessions will provide you with an opportunity to ask questions and have conversations regarding the proposed SRV with Council staff and Councillors. Drop in sessions will take place in each of the townships on the following dates:

- Tuesday 24 January 2017 – Dorrigo Community Hall – 9am to 12pm
- Tuesday 24 January 2017 – Urunga Literary Hall – 2pm to 5pm
- Wednesday 25 January 2017 – Bellingen Memorial Hall – 3pm to 6pm

Council encourages you to seek more information on Council's website. You can also participate in a short, online survey regarding Council services and the proposed SRV.

For more information, go to <http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/council/community-engagement/special-rate-variation-information-centre>.

Yours sincerely

Cr Dominic King
MAYOR

Liz Jeremy
GENERAL MANAGER