

# Community Engagement in practice



Proposed infrastructure SRV

Prepared January 2016

Element	Web Update	Mayor's Radio	Mayor's Column	Manning News	Media Release	Media Int'view & response	Social Media	Intranet	eDM (Subs)	Paid Advertising	Other
Tues 20 Oct.											
Wed 21 Oct.											
Thurs 22 Oct.	Holding site live										
Fri 23 Oct.											
Mon 26 Oct.	Subscribe live										
Tues 27 Oct.											
Wed 28 Oct.											
Thurs 29 Oct.											
Fri 30 Oct.											Bates notice (envelope)
Mon 2 Nov.											
Tues 3 Nov.										Manning Community News	
Wed 4 Nov.	Full site live										COMING SOON posters
Thurs 5 Nov.											On Hold message live
Fri 6 Nov.											
Mon 9 Nov.											Town Signage
Tues 10 Nov.											

Element	Web Update	Mayor's Radio	Mayor's Column	Manning News	Media Release	Media Int'view & response	Social Media	Intranet	eDM (Subs)	Paid Advertising	Other
Wed 11 Nov.										Radio	
Thurs 12 Nov.										Radio + Manning GL Extra	
Fri 13 Nov.										Radio	
Mon 16 Nov. Shopfront	Survey live									Radio	
Tues 17 Nov. Shopfront										Radio	
Wed 18 Nov. Shopfront										Radio	
Thurs 19 Nov. Shopfront										Radio	
Fri 20 Nov. Shopfront											
Mon 23 Nov.											
Tues 24 Nov.											
Wed 25 Nov.											
Thurs 26 Nov.											
Fri 27 Nov.											
Mon 30 Nov.											
Tues 1 Dec.	Survey closed										
Wed 2 Dec.											
Thurs 3 Dec.											
Fri 4 Dec.											
Mon 7 Dec.											

Element	Web Update	Mayor's Radio	Mayor's Column	Manning News	Media Release	Media Int'view & response	Social Media	Intranet	eDM (9/10/15)	Paid Advertising	Other
Tues 8 Dec.											
Wed 9 Dec.											
Thurs 10 Dec.											
Fri 11 Dec.											
Mon 14 Dec.											
Tues 15 Dec.	Survey 2 live										
Wed 16 Dec.											
Thurs 17 Dec.										Manning GL Extra	
Fri 18 Dec.											Shop Window and Libraries
Mon 21 Dec.											display
Tues 22 Dec.											
Wed 23 Dec.											
Thurs 24 Dec.											
Fri 25 Dec.											
Mon 4 Jan											
Tues 5 Jan											
Wed 6 Jan											
Thurs 7 Jan											
Fri 8 Jan											
Mon 11 Jan	Survey 2 closed										



# Media Releases

# Media Release



For immediate release 10.40am Thursday 22 October 2015

## **Conversations pave the way for safer roads**

Last night's Council meeting gave the green light to consult with the community about the state of their roads and the introduction of a special rate variation.

With over 1,700km of roads in our local government area, we're second only to Clarence Valley on the entire NSW north coast. And with a relatively low-density population base of 49,000, rates income is insufficient to maintain our network to an acceptable standard.

That's the reality that has seen the ongoing decline of our road network. Even with a significant 40% of all rates income being diverted to our ailing road network, it's simply not enough to keep up.

"The health of our road network is failing, and without intervention its deterioration will soon get to a point that is unacceptable to our community," explains Ron Posselt, General Manager. "What we're looking at is a planned maintenance and renewal works program that will focus on delivering safer roads. It won't mean totally new roads and bridges, but we can halt deterioration and maintain the network at a reasonable and safe standard".

The proposal to be tabled with community during an upcoming consultation process, is a program of works dedicated to a variety of maintenance and renewal treatments that is funded through a special rate variation (SRV). SRV of 6% over a period of 6 years would provide the required \$10M per annum addition to the infrastructure budget by year six.

The consultation process to take place during November is an integral part of determining whether or not a submission seeking a rate increase will be made to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). If so, the submission must be made by mid-February 2016, demonstrating the importance of the SRV to sustainability of our region, the impact of not introducing the SRV, and the level of community support.

Roads has been top priority for Council over many years, with \$120million invested over the past 5 years.

"But the model for distributing the Federal and State government funding component is broken", adds Ron. "Federal Assistance Grants are currently allocated on the basis of population density, which sees metropolitan councils with large high-density population and corresponding rates income, get more FAGs grants – while rural and regional councils suffer. While we are very grateful for the increased Roads to Recovery funding over the next 2 years from fuel excise indexation, we would like that money to be permanently provided for local roads as a return to regional and rural communities."

The upcoming consultation process aims to provide information about why our roads are in poor condition and what needs to be done, so that people can have an informed view, and take part in meaningful discussions. A number of initiatives, including a pop-up shop in Taree's CBD in November, will provide the community with the opportunity to have their say.

More information is available at [www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au).

# Media Release



**For immediate release 9.45am Tuesday 27 October 2015**

## **How do our roads relate to Fit for the Future?**

Last week the NSW Government released their findings on the sustainability of 139 councils across the state. With a road network that spans over 1,700km, it's no surprise that the Greater Taree City LGA was deemed unfit.

All NSW councils were required to lodge a proposal with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) by 30 June, to be reviewed against their scale and capacity benchmarks, and a range of financial criteria. As a result 60% of all councils are now deemed "not fit". For Greater Taree City Council and other regional councils with significant infrastructure assets to manage, this is in line with the review by the NSW Treasury Corp two years ago and subsequent commentary by various academics.

While Greater Taree City Council is considered to have sufficient scale and capacity, meaning plenty of geographic area and an appropriately manageable population, the burden that its deteriorating road network led to poor performance in the financial measures.

In simple terms, low population density means rating income is not sufficient to fund essential transport infrastructure, particularly poignant given the population is spread across a large area. As a result renewal of the 1,725km road network is unable to keep pace with the level of its deterioration.

Ron Posselt, General Manager for Greater Taree City Council explains, "The Fit for the Future process asks councils to cash fund depreciation, fully fund road, bridge and stormwater maintenance and operate with more than 60% of own source revenue. This approach requires ratepayers to fund their local infrastructure".

Next month's consultation with the Greater Taree community comes off the back of IPART's findings, with a special rate variation (SRV) being central to discussions for delivering safer roads for our community.

"Although we were given the option to lodge a submission that involved merging with Gloucester Shire Council, doing so would increase our area size by 44%, and our length of roads by 40%. In contrast, our population and, as a by-product our rates income, would increase by only 10%", added Mr Posselt. "Even IPART has since found no evidence of a better alternative for us than the stand-alone option".

What it means is that Council's ability to fund the region's failing road network falls directly back into the hands of its ratepayers. And the longer it is before intervention takes place, the further the road network deteriorates.

For more information about roads, SRV, and upcoming consultation dates, subscribe to Stay Updated at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).

# Media Release



**For immediate release 8.05am, Thursday 29 October 2015**

## **Greater Taree hits efficiency measures**

As one of the 60% of all NSW councils deemed not fit in the recent “Fit for the Future” review, Greater Taree City Council demonstrated strong efficiencies, according to IPART.

When it comes to efficiency, it's all about achieving value for money and in IPART's world, it's measured by real expenditure per capita over time. Greater Taree's result was a healthy decline since 2011/12 in real operating expenditure by over 35%.

The benchmark is used to indicate how well councils are utilising economies of scale and managing service levels to achieve efficiencies. “Our healthy results in this area have been driven by an active focus since 2010 on reducing our operational costs”, explains Ron Posselt, General Manager. “Through service reviews and efficiency projects, over \$3million in savings have been achieved which has allowed more expenditure in the road and bridge network and a professional approach to asset management overall. In a nutshell, Greater Taree is a lean organisation, with significantly less staff per head of population, and per km of infrastructure and hectare of open space managed”.

Greater Taree City Council also met the requirement to fund its operations independently. The measure in this case requires that 60% of funding should be derived from internal revenue sources, meaning rates income.

“We have little choice but to look to our ratepayers for funding, particularly when it comes to our failing road network,” added Mr Posselt. “With 70% of all Federal Financial Assistant Grants allocated on a per capita basis, metropolitan councils and those with high populations win the lion's share, even though their rates income is already higher. It means that regional and rural communities are at a disadvantage.”

With over 1,700km of roads, and almost 200 bridges to maintain, Greater Taree City Council currently allocates over 40% of all rates income to maintenance and renewal of its infrastructure. This compares to the state average of 16%.

Through the “Fit for the Future” process, the State Government has been unable to recommend any better alternative for Greater Taree City Council than standing alone. This means that in order to become fit, and to deliver safer roads across the community, the current level of rates income is not sufficient.

It is off the back of the Fit for the Future results published last week that Council will now commence community consultation around the state of the region's roads, and the possible introduction of a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to return the road network to a fit and sustainable standard.

“The price associated with allowing our roads to continue to deteriorate is high. Not only posing a safety hazard for road users, our tourism sector and the success of our local businesses are negatively impacted,” comments Mr Posselt.

For more information about roads, SRV, and upcoming consultation dates, subscribe to Stay Updated at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).

# Media Release

**For immediate release 8.40am Tuesday 3 November 2015**

## **Council commits to safer roads across the community through proposed SRV**

On average 4 people die and 90 people are seriously injured on Australian roads every day according to the Australian Transport Council, and a failing road network contributes directly to unsafe driving conditions.

That's the message Greater Taree City Council want their road users to take on board as they head into community consultation around the possible introduction of a special rate variation to tackle the region's deteriorating road network.

With the SRV, if it proceeds at the proposed 6% for 6 years, over \$2,000,000 per year will be invested in maintenance activities to combat the deterioration of our roads and, importantly, deliver safer driving conditions.

"There's no question that our roads are deteriorating at a faster rate than they can be renewed," comments Ron Posselt, General Manager. "The SRV will provide us with much-needed funding to address key safety issues on our roads".

Maintenance activities that will be undertaken include line-marking, drainage management, roadside vegetation management, pothole patching, gravel patching, shoulder grading and the installation of safety barriers.

According to Mr Paul Gibson, Chairman of the NSW State Government's StaySafe committee, "the simple white reflective lines dividing a road are just as important as speed cameras and random breath tests" in delivering safer roads, and have been found to reduce car accidents by up to 60%.

With a population that is ageing faster than the state average, line marking will increasingly save lives. "The proposed SRV will mean we can reduce the time between line marking from once in 10 years, to once every 5 years, and that all our sub-arterial and collector roads will be marked", added Mr Posselt.

Pothole patching on sealed roads is another area of focus for SRV, with service levels improving significantly through an annual allocation of \$200,000. Currently only major roads are routinely patched, every fortnight. Under the planned program:

- Regional roads, such as Wingham Road, will be addressed weekly
- Collector roads, for example Muldoon Street, will be reviewed fortnightly
- Local and minor roads, currently only reviewed based on a report being lodged, will be inspected on a 4-week cycle.

"The seal on a road is like a coat of paint, protecting the road pavement underneath", explains Mr Posselt. "After about 15 years, bitumen can crack and allow water into the pavement, which softens the road base. Unless potholes are patched frequently, the entire pavement under the surface can be damaged, further contributing to our infrastructure backlog".

Infrastructure backlog refers to the value of work that needs to be undertaken to bring a region's assets up to an acceptable standard. NSW councils have a combined backlog valued at over \$5billion. Regional towns like Greater Taree currently have 76% more backlog than the state average, despite spending 34% more per capita on their roads, bridges and footpaths.

Greater Taree City Council will open a shopfront in Manning Street Taree from Monday 16 November, where community will be invited to drop in, discuss the challenges that our road network poses, and provide feedback about the proposed SRV. For more information, please visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) and subscribe to stay updated.

# Media Release

**For immediate release 9.55am Tuesday 10 November 2015**

What price do you put on safer roads?

Greater Taree City Council encourages rate-payers to review the real impact of its proposed special rate variation, in the lead-up to next week's community consultation.

Along with our stunning coastline, rainforests and waterways, the Manning Valley boasts over 1,700km of roads and almost 200 bridges. But unlike its natural assets, the road network and its associated infrastructure is failing.

In a bid to halt the deterioration and deliver safer roads across the community, Council staff will next week open up discussions with rate-payers to find out what they think about both the state of the roads, and the proposed SRV.

"It's important that rate-payers assess the impact of the SRV, not only on their hip-pocket, but the results it will deliver across our region", explains Ron Posselt, General Manager. "The 6% per year over 6 years proposal has been carefully calculated to optimise the cost to delivery ratio, and we're confident of achieving every one of the intended outcomes", he adds.

The annual cost to rate-payers is 6% on top of their base rate, each year for 6 years, which is calculated over and above the annual rate-peg increase (in recent years around 2.4%). In simplest terms, a base rate in 2014/15 of \$1,000 will mean the SRV adds an average of \$78.26 per year, or \$1.50 per week, over the proposed 6 year period.

The compound nature of applying the SRV over 6 years, means the increase continues to grow year-on-year. Based on the current \$1,000 base rate, the SRV adds \$60 in year one, up to \$98.70 in year six.

According to Mr Posselt "spreading the SRV over 6 years means smaller annual increases and ultimately less impact on households with fixed incomes. At \$1.50 per week on average, it may be considered a small price to pay for a road network that can be sustained at far safer levels than we can currently achieve".

Should the SRV proceed, Greater Taree City Council intend to deliver safer roads through a range of maintenance and renewal treatments, in many cases doubling what can be currently achieved, and in some cases dramatically increasing current standards by up to 12 times.

Over \$2million will be invested in maintenance activities that include linemarking, roadside vegetation management, pothole repair, drainage management, gravel patching and shoulder grading, and the installation of safety barriers.

10% of this maintenance work, or \$200,000, will "put paid to potholes, with a weekly repair cycle introduced on our busiest roads, and a monthly program for our local and minor roads which are currently only addressed when a report is logged", adds Mr Posselt.

In addition, almost \$8million will be added to the renewal program, with works to include heavy patching, surface resealing, gravel resheeting and road reconstruction.

A fully detailed outline of the proposed work schedule can be found at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).

To have your say, visit Council staff at the temporary "SRV pop-up shop" located beside Taree Central shopping centre in Manning Street Taree, between 10am and 6pm next Monday 16 – Friday 20 November.



# Media Release

**For immediate release 10.45am Thursday 12 November 2015**

## Focus on our failing roads

The team at Greater Taree City Council will be all-ears next week as they head into community consultation about the special rate variation (SRV) proposed to deliver safer roads across the community.

Local residents, road-users and rate-payers will be given the chance to have their say about the state of our roads and SRV, during next week's face-to-face consultation. A temporary shopfront in Manning Street will open for a week, from Monday at 10am, with Council staff inviting the community to drop in to learn about the proposed SRV, how this will affect their annual rates, and the impact it will have on the deteriorating road network.

Come one, come all, but come to hear some information, is the message from Council. "Next week's consultation is much more than a forum for rate-payers to air their grievances, it's a chance for the community to gain an understanding of the challenges our region faces with its infrastructure backlog", comments Ron Posselt, General Manager.

Greater Taree is not alone, with NSW regional towns currently bearing 76% more backlog than the state average, despite spending 34% more per person on their roads, bridges and footpaths.

The proposed 6% per year increase on base rates, over 6 years, will deliver \$9.961million and for rate-payers equates to a 46% increase after year 6. The estimated cost to rebuild our 1,725km road network, at around \$1million per kilometre, is in the vicinity of \$1.7billion.

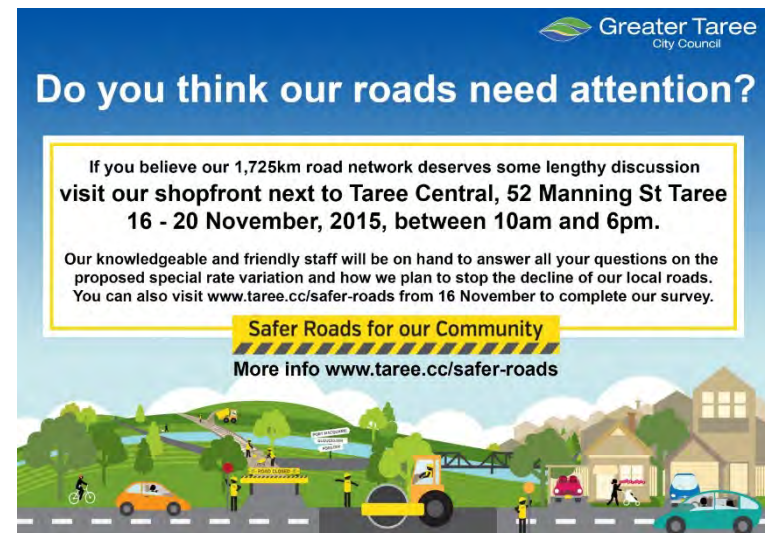
"The SRV, if it proceeds, will arrest the decline in the condition of our roads", explains Mr Posselt. "The proposal has been carefully planned to minimise the impact on our rate-payers while delivering a safer road network that can be sustained into the future".

To assist in generating meaningful input from the community, a fully detailed breakdown of what will be achieved through the proposed SRV funding has been made available on Council's website and will form an important part of next week's consultation.

"We expect plenty of feedback from our rate-payers, and we urge everyone to look at the bigger picture including the legacy we leave our future generations", added Mr Posselt.

The SRV shopfront will be open 10am to 6pm, Monday 16 – Friday 20 November, at 52 Manning Street Taree (next to Taree Central). An online survey will be available from Monday at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) for those who can't make it into the shopfront.

## Attachment: Flyer Invite



The flyer is a blue rectangular poster with a white border. At the top right is the Greater Taree City Council logo. The main heading is 'Do you think our roads need attention?' in large white letters. Below this is a yellow-bordered box containing text about a shopfront consultation. Underneath the box is a yellow banner with the text 'Safer Roads for our Community' and a URL. The bottom of the flyer features a colorful illustration of a town street scene with a road roller, cars, and people.

Greater Taree  
City Council

### Do you think our roads need attention?

If you believe our 1,725km road network deserves some lengthy discussion  
**visit our shopfront next to Taree Central, 52 Manning St Taree  
16 - 20 November, 2015, between 10am and 6pm.**

Our knowledgeable and friendly staff will be on hand to answer all your questions on the proposed special rate variation and how we plan to stop the decline of our local roads.  
You can also visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) from 16 November to complete our survey.

**Safer Roads for our Community**  
More info [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads)

# Media Release

**For immediate release 12.00pm Tuesday 17 November 2015**

## Council opens Roads & SRV pop-up shop

If you think our roads deserve a lengthy discussion, Greater Taree City Council would like to hear from you. Their temporary pop-up shop next to Noodle Paradise in Manning Street is open from 10am to 6pm until this Friday 20 November.

It's no secret that our roads need attention, and that rates income is not sufficient to address the growing infrastructure backlog throughout our region. Greater Taree City Council's proposal to deliver safer roads across the community through a 6% rate increase, each year for 6 years, is this week on the table for community consideration.

Residents, rate-payers and road users are invited to visit the shopfront to talk with Council staff about our roads and the challenges ahead in halting the decline of our ageing road network. Visitors will be guided through our current situation, the detailed plan of maintenance and renewal works to be undertaken if the special rate variation (SRV) goes ahead, and how their rates will be impacted over the 6 year period.

The team have also compiled data that shows how our rates have changed over time, and how we compare with neighbouring council areas.

The information has been prepared to provide an important and very relevant context as the community considers the impact of the proposed rate increase – on both their financial situation, and the outcome that can be expected on the region's transport network.

The pop-up shop, next to Noodle Paradise on Manning Street (outside Taree Central) is open until 6pm on Friday. Community members are also invited to complete a short survey to provide their feedback, either at the shop or online at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).

Attachment 1: Your Invitation

Greater Taree City Council

## Do you think our roads need attention?

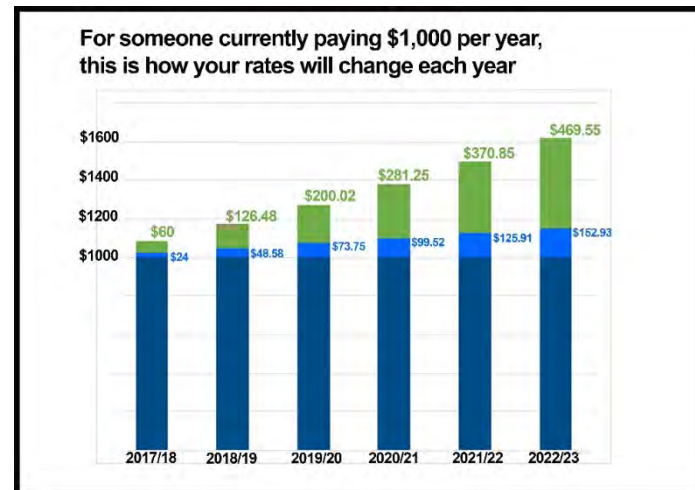
If you believe our 1,725km road network deserves some lengthy discussion visit our shopfront next to Taree Central, 52 Manning St Taree 16 - 20 November, 2015, between 10am and 6pm.

Our knowledgeable and friendly staff will be on hand to answer all your questions on the proposed special rate variation and how we plan to stop the decline of our local roads. You can also visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) from 16 November to complete our survey.

**Safer Roads for our Community**  
More info [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads)

The poster features an illustration of a road with a car, a bicycle, a pedestrian, and a road roller, set against a backdrop of houses and trees.

Attachment 2: SRV Annual Graph



# Media Release

**For immediate release 8.15am Friday 4 December 2015**

Community's SRV feedback taken on board

Community consultation around the proposed special rate variation has now closed and as a result, Council has prepared a refined proposal that will be further tested with the community.

The consultation involved a week-long "pop-up" shopfront last month, where around 500 people dropped in to share their views. Council staff were available to assist them in learning more about the proposed rate increase of 6% each year on top of the rate peg (total 8.4%), for six years, dedicated to funding road maintenance and renewal.

An independent telephone survey was also conducted with a sample of 400 residents, and 497 people responded to an online survey through Council's website.

General Manager, Ron Posselt, stated "We were very pleased with the penetration of our media campaign via TV, radio, social and printed media and delighted that we could speak directly to 500 people and hear their views".

The independent survey found that 40% of respondents supported the proposal and 38% opposed the proposal, with 22% neutral or unsure.

Mayor, Paul Hogan attended the shopfront on several days and concluded "There is an overwhelming view that we have a problem with our roads and something needs to be done. At the same time the clear message from pensioners is that it is unaffordable for many of them, with the total rate increase being proposed over the six years adding up to 62%".

Results from the independent survey supported the views expressed at the shopfront, with more than 80% of respondents being dissatisfied with the condition of local roads.

"We have listened to the community and we understand there is a desire to have the roads improved but the burden on local ratepayers, especially pensioners is significant. Based on that genuine feedback, staff have refined a proposal that reduces this burden and makes it more affordable", stated Mr Posselt.

The refined proposal recommends a 42% increase in rates over six years, being 6.9% increase in total (inclusive of any rate peg) each year for the six years. This is down from the 8.4% originally proposed.

In addition the proposal includes a 35% discount on this increase for eligible pensioners, by increasing the pensioner rebate by this amount each year.

"The end result will be an increase to pensioner rates of a more modest 27% over the period" added Mr Posselt. "While the refined proposal leaves a gap in funding required to deliver safer roads across the community, Council will continue to drive costs down through efficiencies across our operations".

At its meeting on Wednesday 9 December, Council will consider a report that recommends the next steps in the process. These recommendations involve expressing intent to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to lodge an application for a Special Rate Variation of 6.9% (inclusive of any rate peg) over 6 years, to remain permanently in the rate base for road maintenance and renewal purposes subject to further public consultation. A further report will be considered in January prior to the deadline for applications to IPART in February.

# Press Coverage



## Open space update

WE have made some terrific headway in regards to the outdoor spaces in Harrington and Crowdy Head, following workshops that were undertaken in Harrington last month. All feedback has now been collated into a mapped action plan, which staff will share with residents at the Harrington Multi-Function Centre next Tuesday, October 27. Everyone is invited to drop in, any time between 10am and 2pm, to see how the plan is coming together and to tell us if we got it right. We'll also be looking for members of the community to tell us which of the projects they would like to be actively involved in delivering. With some realistic, quick-turnaround projects already shortlisted, and by working together, we are much closer to making some fabulous improvements in the area.

In preparation for Tuesday, we have uploaded a video explaining the process and the mapped action plan to our website. For those who can't make the drop-in session, you can also provide feedback online.

## Manning on the Move

With Greater Taree City mayor  
**Cr Paul Hogan**



## Over 1700km of roads?

WE'RE second only to Clarence Valley across the entire NSW north coast when it comes to the extent of our road network. Add our 190 bridges (many of which are still timber) and it's soon easy to understand why roads remain as our number one priority. Since 2010, over \$120 million has been invested across hundreds of different sites, to renew and maintain our roads and bridges. Our roads connect our community, and our determination to continue to deliver results has never been stronger.

As part of our move towards remaining "fit for the future", council approved a report back in June that acknowledged intervention by way of a potential special

rate variation may be necessary to maintain a healthy transport network. A subsequent report will be tabled at tonight's council meeting, seeking endorsement to proceed with community consultation around this. If approved, it will open the doors to some very meaningful conversations with our community about the state of our roads and how together we can create a way forward.

## Environmental sustainability

REMAINING fit for the future also means looking after our environment, and I'm very pleased to hear the environmental services team here at council were recently acknowledged for their efforts in improving the quality of water draining into the Manning River. The "Big Swamp" project has taken out top honours in the annual "Green Globe Awards" in the category of natural environmental sustainability. The team's aim of converting the over-drained landscape into a healthy tidal wetland has led to significant results for our local oyster farmers, the marine environment and our tourism industry.

## Concerns raised about community engagement on council's rates and roads proposals

OVER the past four days, I have received many telephone calls, emails and messages from a range of people in the community in relation to recent statements made by Greater Taree City Council's general manager in the Manning River Times.

Last Friday, an article entitled "Rates and roads on agenda" was published on page 3 of the Manning River Times (October 16-17). In this article council's general manager, Ron Posselt, is quoted in the following context: He (Mr Posselt) stressed the need for the community to note that at the June meeting of council, "all councillors including Cr Bell and Cr Epov endorsed a submission to the State government via IPART that included a six per cent rate increase for six years as councils approach to becoming Fit for the Future."

The assertion that Councillor (Kathryn) Bell and I voted for "a six per cent rate increase for six years" contained in the IPART proposal is not true. Further there are also a number of other elements of that statement that are inaccurate and misleading.

Section 439 of the Local Government Act describes how councillors, staff, delegates and administrators should behave. Council also has its own code of conduct.

(On Monday) I sent a detailed letter to Mayor Hogan in relation to this matter seeking immediate action. The mayor has yet to respond.

This proposed SRV is being rushed through at five minutes to midnight. IPART needs to be advised of a proposed SRV application by December 11 and full submission has to be lodged by February 15, 2016. This

provides very little time for an open and transparent community engagement process based on the social justice principles of access, equity, participation and rights.

Council's own report now reveals that the rate hike sought will be between six per cent and seven per cent each year, compounded for six years. However what needs to be understood is that an application to IPART also has to include the annual rate peg, which for the 2015/16 year was 2.4 per cent.

Over the past 10 years that rate peg has averaged around three per cent. Therefore when you add the proposed SRV increase of six or even seven per cent to the rate peg you arrive at nine per cent or even 10 per cent, which would be compounded for six years. The nett impact on rate payers at a nine per cent rate increase compounded would total 68 per cent increase over six years and at 10 per cent it would be 77 per cent.

In terms of the nett impact on ratepayers what also needs to be taken into account is:

□ That council has had a recent SRV increase of 33.1 per cent between the 2010/11 years and 2012/13.

□ Council has currently in place a five per cent environmental levy.

□ Council's long term planning documents foreshadow a further environmental levy of five per cent for 2019.

**Peter Epov**  
Greater Taree City councillor



## Special variation sought on rates by council

RATES and roads will be on the agenda of Greater Taree City Council's meeting tonight.

Two councillors have broken ranks to flag that council intends to try to raise rates and allege the proposal "will see annual council rate rises of between eight per cent and nine per cent per annum until the 2022/23 year; resulting in council rates increasing by between 57 per cent and 68 per cent by 2021."

Councillors Peter Epov and Kathryn Bell claim that council seeks "a Special Rate Variation (SRV) of six per cent per year for six years above the annual rate peg increase of between two per cent and three per cent commencing from the next financial year (2016/17)."

The councillors contend that at tonight's meeting council's general manager, Ron Posselt will table a report that will include a "recommendation that council commences the process for an application to the Independent Regulation and Pricing Tribunal (IPART)."

"Whilst we understand that there has been an urgent need for a number of years, to address council's dilapidated and ailing road network, the proposal on the table is full of potholes - it's inflationary and not sustainable," Cr Epov said.

"If adopted, it would financially impact all ratepayers and have a knock-on consequence on tenants and businesses," Cr Bell said.

"We seem to have a problem with process. I understand that IPART's requirements are for comprehensive community consultation which to my mind includes information assimilation and engagement before an application is submitted for a proposed SRV that will affect the entire community," Cr Bell said.

"I have not seen a plan for community consultation although it has been suggested that consultation will occur in

November, which in my view is inappropriate as it's too close to Christmas."

"I think that this proposal is being rushed through so that council can lodge a submission with IPART by early February 2016."

Cr Bell suggests that "to meet the IPART requirements properly, council will have to spend considerably more than the proposed \$14,000 on a telephone survey. It may cost as much as \$50,000 in information, staff time, surveys, printed literature for community engagement and the net effect may be that the community will be overwhelmingly opposed to the proposal."

Councillor Epov added that whilst council may have included a proposed rate rise to the NSW government's 'Fit For the Future' process, there is no need to rush in and bring forward such a massive and severe rate hike, before the NSW government has addressed all the submissions and announced its position on the next steps."

Greater Taree City Council general manager Ron Posselt yesterday confirmed the report would be tabled at the meeting.

"The report asks council to endorse a consultation process with the community to determine what they think of the proposal," Mr Posselt said.

He stressed the need for the community to note that at the June meeting of council, "all councillors including Cr Bell and Cr Epov endorsed a submission to the State government via IPART that included a six per cent rate increase for six years as council's approach to becoming Fit for the Future."

"The timing of the increase was in the report and in council's Long Term Financial Plan, also endorsed by all councillors," he said.

"It is very clear that there is no requirement to lodge a Special Rate Variation by endorsing this report, it is merely to discuss the issue with the community."

news

## Consultation to begin on rate rise

By Lachlan Leeming

lachlan.leeming@fairfaxmedia.com.au

COMMUNITY consultation will soon begin regarding a proposal for a special rate variation (SRV) increase of six per cent after the majority of Greater Taree City councillors voted for the motion at Wednesday's council meeting.

Councillors debated for more than an hour over whether to enter the consultation phase, with Cr Kathryn Bell and Cr Peter Epov both speaking against the proposal.

Speaking on the issue, mayor Paul Hogau said it was "time for a serious conversation" with the community about the potential rate rises that would be used to address "the single most contentious issue facing them (the community), the condition of our road network."

"What we have before us is a report advising that the decline in our road network can be arrested with a six per cent rate rise for six years," he said.

"Whether that is an investment our community wishes to make is something our community should tell us."

The potential SRV was first raised in June when council lodged a Fit for the Future submission to IPART that proposed the rate increase.

Greater Taree City Council was one of the council's deemed to be "not fit" for the future based on a range of economic stipulations set by IPART.

The October council report stated that the process "fails to consider the infrastruc-



**SRV proposed to raise extra million annum for infrastructure**

ture that each council is responsible for compared to the rate base," an issue in the Greater Taree area given the high amount of infrastructure compared to the population density.

Speaking against the motion, Cr Epov reiterated points made in the Manning River Times on Wednesday, October 21, that the proposal is being rushed through "at five minutes to midnight."

He raised concerns that it would offer little time for a thorough community consultation as well as the stresses a rate rise would place on businesses and other community members.

Cr Bell also cited the pressure a rate rise would put on members of the community

who were low-income earners and pensioners.

Deputy mayor, David West spoke in support of the motion, saying that he "absolutely supported finding a solution to the road issue."

All councillors voted in favour of the consultation phase, with the exception of Cr Bell and Cr Epov. Cr Alan Tickle was absent.

The community consultation process will now proceed based on a SRV proposal of a six per cent increase in general rates above the normal cost of living increase, compounded each year for the next six years.

Use of the increased rates would be re-

stricted to infrastructure and renewal, the report states.

The feedback process will also canvass community opinion on raising the SRV a further one per cent, to seven per cent in total.

The report also endorsed the use of \$40,000 from council's budget for the consultation process.

Feedback received will be used in a report to council in January 2016 to inform a decision about a SRV.

According to council the SRV of six per cent over a period of six years would provide a \$10m per annum addition to the infrastructure budget by year six.

With \$120m invested on local roads over the last five years, council general manager Ron Posselt said council couldn't rely on State and federal grants alone to complete continuing infrastructure work.

"The model for distributing the federal and State government funding component is broken," said Mr Posselt.

"Federal Assistance Grants are currently allocated on the basis of population density, which sees metropolitan councils with large high-density population and corresponding rates income, get more federal assistance grants - while rural and regional councils suffer."

The upcoming consultation process will aim to provide information about why roads are in poor condition and what needs to be done.

The consultation process will include a pop-up shop in Taree's CBD in November.



## October council meeting outcome

HERE in the Manning Valley our roads are a constant source of chatter, and in last week's council meeting it was agreed that now is the time to formalise the conversations around our deteriorating road network. We are looking forward to talking with our community about a proposed special rate variation dedicated to delivering safer roads.

Our road network spans over 1700km, which means that on the entire NSW North Coast, we are second only to Clarence Valley in terms of the length of roads we're responsible for. At a construction cost of around \$1 million per kilometre, and an annual rates income of around \$27 million, the enormity of the challenge posed by our failing transport network really sinks in.

I'm often asked about government funding for our roads, and while we actively and

## Manning on the Move

With Greater Taree City mayor  
**Cr Paul Hogan**



successfully win grant funding, and despite securing \$14.4 million for roads projects last year, it's simply not enough. Seventy per cent of all Federal Financial Assistance Grants are allocated based on population, which means regional councils with lower populations are disadvantaged in comparison to metropolitan councils.

The community consultation to discuss roads and SRV will take place during November and we aim to make sure that as many people as possible come and learn a little more about our roads and the options before us. More information is available on

our website, where you can also sign-up to stay informed about the process and consultation dates. Head to [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).

## Fit for the Future

BACK in June, along with 139 other NSW councils, we were required to lodge a proposal to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal that assessed our sustainability. In the findings that were released last week, we were not surprised to find that IPART agreed with our assessment that Greater Taree City Council does not meet the financial sustainability criteria. Nor do most regional councils in NSW.

The NSW Government's benchmarks included scale and capacity, and a range of financial measures. We demonstrated scale and capacity, through the size of our region and manageable population. We met their efficiency benchmark relating to real operating expenditure, with a 35 per cent reduction in our operational costs since 2011/12 that achieved savings of over \$3 million. At

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[www.winghamchronicle.com.au](http://www.winghamchronicle.com.au)

# Wingham Chronicle



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SPECIAL RATE VARIATIONS

At last week's Council meeting it was announced that community consultation will be undertaken to discuss the potential for a special rate variation to combat our ageing road network. These discussions will happen during November, when we will be encouraging everyone to come and learn more about our roads and the options before us. With SRV being a central part of the discussion, here's a quick summary of how it works:


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- The extra rates income generated by the increase, compounded each year, is set aside for the specific purpose stated in the IPART application
- The SRV which will form part of our upcoming community consultation proposes a 6% increase over a period of 6 years, and will be dedicated to delivering safer roads for our community

For more information, take a look at the Frequently Asked Questions at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads)

[tareecouncil@gtcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tareecouncil@gtcc.nsw.gov.au)

[www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au)

[www.manningrivertimes.com.au](http://www.manningrivertimes.com.au)

 the Manning Valley...natural

## First impressions last

A topical post on social media last week piqued our interest and got us asking ourselves the question - what do our visitors remember about their trip to the Manning Valley?

This question should lead to answers like beautiful National Parks, top lookouts, Ellenborough Falls, 45km of pristine beaches, fishing on the Manning River and great camping spots. However, it would seem that our deteriorating and 'quite embarrassing' road network is the thing that is leaving a lasting impression on our visitors.

To give this a bit more context, a local man returned from a 10,000km trip around Central Australia where he travelled to remote areas along dirt roads, but it wasn't until he got home to Taree that he realised just how bad our roads were. He posted this on social media along with the statement, 'imagine what the tourists think?'

It is coincidental that this was posted last Wednesday morning and that evening, Council decided to go ahead with a community consultation about a special rate variation to address the state of our road network. This comes off the back of much discussion that without changes to the State Government funding models for regional councils, it is the community that has to make this investment in our safer roads.

There is no doubt that the impact of a rate variation, if it goes ahead, will hit the hip pockets of our ratepayers, but there is a bigger price to pay if we allow our road network to continue going in a 'downhill' direction, so to speak.

The key point from a tourism perspective is that roads affect more than just road users and can have the potential to impact on the future growth of our region. A failing road network leaves a lasting impression on our visitors and can deter them from considering us as a future holiday destination. As a knock-on effect of this, our local businesses suffer, the value of investments drop and future investment in the area will come to a standstill.

So, back to the question, what do our tourists think? Everyone loves a good old fashioned road trip and with the lure of fishing, camping, events, hiking, mountain biking and more, the Manning Valley attracts around 700,000 visitors every year. While they may enjoy their time here, getting from A to B may not be the most pleasant experience when they are forced to dodge potholes on many roads that are labelled 'scenic drives'.

Simply put, better roads make the place look good and can make a significant difference to the overall visitor experience.

This is a bit of food for thought as we continue to hear chatter in the community about the state of our road network and as Council is about to go to the community with a potential solution to get our roads back up to scratch.

Perhaps the real question is, what price do you place on safer roads for both our community and our visitors?

**Donna and the Tourism Team**

 Manning Valley  
O...naturally

[www.manningvalley.info](http://www.manningvalley.info)



[/manningvalley.info](https://www.facebook.com/manningvalley)



[#manningvalley](https://twitter.com/manningvalley)

31/10/2015

# MANNING RIVER Times



# The Manning Community News

decent land and others land that was hard yakka,' explained Don.

Don started collecting after he retired.

'About twelve years ago I started collecting rabbit traps and hung them on the shed wall. 'I never collected things as a kid. No one had any money to just collect things to hang on to,' he explained. 'I did collect cordial bottles

spend their life getting educated and I don't know if they ever use it! Kids go there to meet the requirements but never seem to get a job, but they still get government support!'

In his twenties Don went into partnership with another builder to do renovations and build houses which he did for twelve years. Then I bought a couple of properties and developed them

But now no one knows what to do with their antecedents belongings. We've met people who have great collections, as we are in the collectors club. But they keep them in boxes packed away so no one can see them. We think that when we were travelling around the place if we'd seen a museum like this we would have thought, Ooh wow. Of course the Wingham Museum is very well done and Barbara Waters if very good at

keeping and collecting local history which is so important.'

So Don and Kate open their private museum by appointment only for groups and the community as a public service. There's no fee and it's proving a popular stop for clubs and groups.

Don gives very entertaining talks to an audience perched on the old seats from the now lamented Terrace Cinema in Tinonee.

They have no idea how many items they have collected though everything is itemised and written down in books.

Don's shed started to get so 'chokka' when a building he owned in Taree became available he set up the Olympia Antique Solutions where collectors can rent a stall space and sell their collectibles.

'Through our involvement with the PCYC antique fair and the Collectors Club we realised there was a need for a space for people to sell their excess collections. And some people get to a stage where they decide to downsize into a flat or one passes on and the family decide they should get rid of everything. So some people bite the bullet early and say I'll downsize while I can control it.'

He adds, 'My kids are partially interested in our collection. At that age I wasn't interested in collecting old stuff. There are some young people who might collect something but don't have time to go around looking for things. We find it a great hobby in retirement.. and of course you have to have some money to buy the goodies you see.'

Don admits they still get excited if they find something unusual or different.

'We got shoe shine box the other day. Remember when you'd stop to get your boots polished in Sydney before getting on the train? Or in a posh hotel? His eyes light up with enthusiasm.

It seems Don, and Kate, are not over the collecting bug just yet.



## Do you think our roads need attention?

**Visit our shopfront next to Taree Central,  
Manning St Taree, 16 - 20 November, 2015,  
between 10am and 6pm.**

**Our friendly staff will be on hand to answer all  
your questions about our roads, the proposed  
special rate variation and how we plan to  
stop the decline of our local road network.**

**Safer Roads for our Community**

Or visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) from 16 November to complete our survey.



## Weekly work for pothole patching crews

POTHOLES on Wingham Road will be patched weekly if Greater Taree City Council gets the green light from ratepayers for its proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV).

Wingham Road currently gets patched every fortnight but council is keen to see weekly work done to maintain this major regional road but it needs more cash in its coffers to fund the works.

The proposed boost to the road patching schedule is one of many projects that could be delivered to our community if ratepayers agree to fund a six per cent SRV for six years.

According to council, the SRV would "deliver more than \$2 million per year for maintenance activities" and Wingham Road is not the only regional road that would benefit - all regional roads in the local government area would get a weekly once-over.

Under council's planned program, col-

lector roads, such as Muldoon Street, would be reviewed fortnightly and local and minor roads, currently only reviewed based on a report being lodged, would be inspected on a four-week cycle.

Other maintenance activities that would be undertaken include line-marking, drainage management, roadside vegetation management, gravel patching, shoulder grading and the installation of safety barriers.

Pothole patching remains a constant source of community complaint to council and general manager, Ron Posselt says "that unless potholes are patched frequently, the entire pavement under the surface can be damaged."

"The seal on a road is like a coat of paint, protecting the road pavement underneath," Mr Posselt explained.

"After about 15 years, bitumen can crack and allow water into the pavement, which softens the road base. Unless potholes are

patched frequently, the entire pavement under the surface can be damaged, further contributing to our infrastructure backlog".

Mr Posselt is keen for the community to understand the extent of council's infrastructure backlog.

"Infrastructure backlog refers to the value of work that needs to be undertaken to bring a region's assets up to an acceptable standard," Mr Posselt explained.

"NSW councils have a combined backlog valued at over \$5 billion. Regional towns like Greater Taree currently have 76 per cent more backlog than the state average, despite spending 34 per cent more per capita on their roads, bridges and footpaths."

The community consultation process will include a council shopfront in Manning Street, Taree that will open from Monday, November 16. For more information, visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).

# MANNING RIVER Times

## Safer roads for our community

WITH the proposed special rate variation (SRV) on the table, I'm often asked what the extra funding will be used for. The answer, simply put, is safer roads across the community. Our failing road network contributes to unsafe driving conditions, and without intervention now, it will continue to deteriorate. If the proposed SRV goes ahead, a carefully planned schedule of maintenance works will lead to significant improvements in the level of service we can currently achieve.

Here are some examples:

- ❑ Linemarking to provide clearly defined traffic lanes will double in frequency.
- ❑ Twice the current level of drainage management will be undertaken, ensuring that water is directed away from our roads.
- ❑ Weekly pothole patching will be carried out on our regional roads, up from our current fortnightly cycle.
- ❑ A monthly pothole patching cycle will be introduced on our local roads, which are currently only reviewed when a report is logged.

Other safety works include gravel patching, shoulder grading, installation of safety barriers and roadside vegetation management.

The details of each of these activities, including expenditure and outcome, will form an important part of the consultation process. I encourage everyone to visit our website [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) to find out more, and to drop in to our shopfront, November 16 to 20, to talk about our roads and the impact of the SRV.

### Our important small business sector

### Manning on the Move

With Greater Taree City mayor  
**Cr Paul Hogan**



Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). To coincide with the forum, the Small Biz Bus will also be on hand in Victoria Street Taree, offering free advice to small businesses across a range of

disciplines including marketing, finance, staffing and on-line opportunities.

As an aside, the success of our local businesses relies heavily on our transport network, as goods are shipped into or out of our region, and those involved with tourism promote the Manning Valley as an appealing destination.

The proposed SRV becomes very relevant to the business sector, and again I encourage everyone to make time to participate in the upcoming SRV discussions.



**What happens after you flush?**

**Come and see for yourself**





## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SPECIAL RATE VARIATIONS

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# How do our roads relate to Fit for the Future?

LAST week the NSW government released their findings on the sustainability of 139 councils across the State.

With a road network that spans over 1700km, it's no surprise that the Greater Taree City LGA was deemed unfit.

All NSW councils were required to lodge a proposal with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) by June 30, to be reviewed against their scale and capacity benchmarks, and a range of financial criteria.

As a result 60 per cent of all councils are now deemed "not fit".

For Greater Taree City Council and other regional councils with significant infrastructure assets to manage, this is in line with the review by the NSW Treasury Corp two years ago and subsequent commentary by various academics.

While Greater Taree City Council is considered to have sufficient scale and capacity, meaning plenty of geographic area and an appropriately manageable population, the burden that is its deteriorating road network led to poor performance in the financial measures.

In simple terms, low population density means rating income is not sufficient to fund essential transport infrastructure, particularly poignant given the population is spread across a large area.

As a result renewal of the 1725km road network is unable to keep pace with the level of its deterioration.

"The Fit for the Future process asks councils to cash fund depreciation, fully fund road, bridge and stormwater maintenance and operate with more than 60 per cent of own source revenue. This approach requires ratepayers to fund their local infrastructure," Ron Posselt,



Greater Taree general manager Ron Posselt said.

This month's consultation with the Greater Taree community comes off the back of IPART's findings, with a special rate variation (SRV) being central to discussions for delivering safer roads for our community.

"Although we were given the option to lodge a submission that involved merging with Gloucester Shire Council, doing so would increase our area size by 44 per cent, and our length of roads by 40 per cent. In contrast, our population and, as a by-product our rates income, would increase by only 10 per cent,"

Mr Posselt added.

"Even IPART has since found no evidence of a better alternative for us than the stand-alone option".

What it means is that council's ability to fund the region's failing road network falls directly back into the hands of its ratepayers.

And the longer it is before intervention takes place, the further the road network deteriorates.

For more information about roads, SRV, and upcoming consultation dates, subscribe to Stay Updated at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).

## Value for money: measuring real expenditure per capita

AS one of the 60 per cent of all NSW councils deemed not fit in the recent "Fit for the Future" review, Greater Taree City Council demonstrated strong efficiencies, according to IPART.

When it comes to efficiency, it's all about achieving value for money and in IPART's world, it's measured by real expenditure per capita over time. Greater Taree's result was a healthy decline since 2011/12 in real operating expenditure by more than 35 per cent.

The benchmark is used to indicate how well councils are utilising economies of scale and managing service levels to achieve efficiencies.

"Our healthy results in this area have been driven by an active focus since 2010 on reducing our operational costs," general manager Ron Posselt explained.

"Through service reviews and efficiency projects, over \$3million in savings have been achieved which has allowed more expenditure in the road and bridge network and a pro-

fessional approach to asset management overall. In a nutshell, Greater Taree is a lean organisation, with significantly less staff per head of population, and per km of infrastructure and hectare of open space managed."

GTCC also met the requirement to fund its operations independently. The measure in this case requires that 60 per cent of funding should be derived from internal revenue sources, meaning rates income.

"We have little choice but to look to our ratepayers for funding, particularly when it comes to our failing road network," added Mr Posselt. "With 70 per cent of all Federal Financial Assistant Grants allocated on a per capita basis, metropolitan councils and those with high populations win the lion's share, even though their rates income is already higher. It means that regional and rural communities are at a disadvantage."

With more than 1700km of roads, and almost 200 bridges to maintain, council currently allocates more than 40 per cent of all

rates income to maintenance and renewal of its infrastructure. This compares to the state average of 16 per cent.

Through the "Fit for the Future" process, the State government has been unable to recommend any better alternative for Greater Taree City Council than standing alone. This means that in order to become fit, and to deliver safer roads across the community, the current level of rates income is not sufficient.

It is off the back of the Fit for the Future results published last week that Council will now commence community consultation around the state of the region's roads, and the possible introduction of a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to return the road network to a fit and sustainable standard.

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# MANNING RIVER Times

## SAFER ROADS FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND SRV

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- The SRV which will form part of our upcoming community consultation proposes a 6% increase over a period of 6 years, and will be dedicated to delivering safer roads for our community

A fully detailed plan of maintenance works, such as linemarking and pothole patching, combined with renewal works designed to halt the deterioration of our road network, will deliver sustainable, safer driving conditions throughout our region.

### How to participate:

Visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads), and register to be kept updated. Drop in to our shopfront at 52 Manning Street Taree, 10am – 6pm, 16 – 20 November.

Complete the online survey from 16 November, at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).



## Opinion

### Where will ratepayers get the extra money?

IT is no surprise that Greater Taree Council has been deemed unfit.

They have been unfit for a number of years now. The roads have gone from bad to worse, to worse.

Now they are putting it onto the ratepayer by asking for a huge rise in their rates, knowing that once again the most vulnerable of this community cannot afford to pay.

I would like to know if someone from the council can tell these ratepayers where to get the money from.

**Lee Patterson**  
Taree



## Manning on the Move

With Greater  
Taree City mayor  
**Cr Paul Hogan**



## Remembrance Day

TODAY is an important event in our national calendar, as we take a minute from our busy schedules to remember our fellow Australians who have died as a result of war.

It's always heartening to see residents across the Manning Valley come together on these important occasions, not only in commemoration but as a way of ensuring the true spirit of our nation is celebrated and lives on through our future generations.

## SRV and our roads – have your say

OUR roads continue to be a "hot topic" throughout the community. No matter where I go, conversations frequently turn to the state of our roads and what could be done to improve them. I'm also well-informed that many of our concerned residents have recently joined in discussions on social media. This is a great start to the formalised consultation process that will take place next week, when council staff invite the community into a temporary shopfront in Manning Street to have their say.

Whether you pay rates or not, I urge all from across the community to make time next week to drop in to find out more about the proposed special rate variation (SRV), how it will impact you, and what you can expect to see as an outcome. It's important to understand that the proposal is an increase on base rates of six per cent each year, over six years, and at the shopfront, staff will help you calculate exactly what this means in dollar terms to your annual rates notice. You may be surprised to know the impact of the proposed SRV when modelled on an annual base rate of \$1000 equates to a cumulative total of \$470 after six years – or about \$1.50 per week.

There's no doubt that everyone's situation is different and that the proposed SRV will generate a range of differing viewpoints.

To make sure yours is heard, visit the shop at 52 Manning Street, join the discussion, and fill in the survey - It will be open Monday to Friday, between 10am and 6pm. The survey will also be on the council website for those who can't make it in person.

## Opinion

### GST increase why?

PRIME Minister Howard told us: "Certain things will be free of the GST including basic food, most health and education services, nursing homes, eligible child care and local government rates.

"Every last cent of the GST revenue will go to the States.

"Every State in Australia, over time, will have more money to fund the roads, police, schools and hospitals so important to our daily lives.

"This is the best possible guarantee any national government can give that essential community services will not only be maintained, but strengthened in the years ahead."

So why isn't the strengthened self-regulating 10 per cent GST revenue raising concept, that sustainably grows its revenue in concert with increases in salaries and wages, no longer adequate to Premier Baird who initiated the debate?

**Richard Barnett**  
Hallidays Point

### Within our borders

GOVERNMENT has turned back the boats and secured our borders from all those vexatious asylum seekers and refugees. Job done and dusted?

Attention now needs to focus on what is happening within our borders.

Our land is being leased or sold to the highest bidder and then systematically violated. And with government continually shifting the goal posts to favour foreign corporations when legally challenged by landholders, the outcome is rural communities being continually bullied and divided, leaving shattered lives and suicides in their wake.

And the audacity of government and corporations to claim the moral high

ground that raping and pillaging of our land is for the good of third world countries is both shameful and tasteless.

We need to reclaim our integrity and democratic rights to our land, water and future.

Vale George Bender.

May the Force protect us.

**Margaret Tappert**  
Moorland

### Strapper the real winner

NO program, no TV special, no you beaut policy from the federal government would have delivered the outcome of bringing to people's notice the plight of disabled people as well or as delightfully as the result of the Melbourne Cup, November 3, 2015.

The result was very gratifying and interesting to me as a woman, but the real winner was the strapper who delivered such dignified and measured responses to all those who were clambering to have him speak.

Disabled people are not different, having worked as a carer at Sunnyfield home for the disabled, they are "special".

**Mary Pilotto**  
Wingham

### Rate rise clarification

THE Times has received several letters regarding Greater Taree City Council's proposed special rate variation, and statements made in its Manning News advertisement in last Friday's Times.

In response, council has apologised for incorrect wording and issued the following clarification. "It is six per cent each year for six years. The total impact of this proposal is a 47 per cent increase in rates at the end of the six years. Our intention is to be open and transparent about the financial impact."

## SAFER ROADS FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND SRV

A community consultation process will be undertaken 16 – 20 November to discuss the potential for a special rate variation to combat our ageing road network. With SRV being a central part of the discussion, here's a quick summary of how it works:

- IPART (the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal) is responsible for regulating council rates, and each year applies a "rate peg"
- This "rate peg" is the maximum allowable increase that councils can apply (usually around 2.4%), unless special approval is granted
- For a special increase to be considered, an application must be made to IPART that demonstrates the need for an increase, that community feedback has been sought, and the implications of no increase
- Many councils choose to seek a special increase to assist with replacing ageing infrastructure or fund growth within the community
- An application may be for a single-year increase, or an increase that is applied gradually over a number of years; the staged approach is more common as it is easier for rate-payers to manage a smaller year-on-year increase
- Our neighbouring councils, Kempsey and Gloucester are both currently in the process of implementing a special rate variation – Kempsey's being 7% each year for 3 years followed by 1% in year 4, and Gloucester's being 13% each year for 3 years
- The extra rates income generated by the increase, compounded each year, is set aside for the specific purpose stated in the IPART application
- The SRV which will form part of our upcoming community consultation proposes a 6% increase over a period of 6 years, and will be dedicated to delivering safer roads for our community

A fully detailed plan of maintenance works, such as linemarking and pothole patching, combined with renewal works designed to halt the deterioration of our road network, will deliver sustainable, safer driving conditions throughout our region.

### How to participate:

Visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads), and register to be kept updated.

Drop in to our shopfront at 52 Manning Street Taree, 10am – 6pm, 16 – 20 November.

Complete the online survey from 16 November, at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).







## Movie review: Spectre

**SPECTRE** is a highly fourth-wall-breaking 'Actioning Grand Guignol' that performs like a James Bond. A master-makeup team lend a good amount of time to ensure a suitable representation of Spectre, while M's new look is hoped to keep the special nature alive. Bond's first bond (the name of Spectre) is the first of the film's global cinematic action.



## A 'good old fashioned country fete'

LOWER Manning United Church is having its good old fashioned country fete on Saturday, November 14 from 10am to 4pm. It is a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Fete. All Fete of the Country Club in the Church in the Church in the Church.

Among the many regulars will be the Lower Manning United Church's 'good old fashioned country fete' on Saturday, November 14 from 10am to 4pm. It is a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Fete. All Fete of the Country Club in the Church in the Church in the Church.

# Special collaboration concert

A CONCERT of music for all ages and abilities is coming to Manning. It will be a special collaboration concert between the Manning United Church and the Manning United Church.

The Manning United Church is having its special collaboration concert on Saturday, November 14 from 10am to 4pm. It is a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Fete. All Fete of the Country Club in the Church in the Church in the Church.



Left: The Manning United Church's 'good old fashioned country fete' on Saturday, November 14 from 10am to 4pm. It is a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Fete. All Fete of the Country Club in the Church in the Church in the Church.

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& follow the links to the e-Edition subscription page.

**Greater Taree City Council**

## Do you think our roads need attention?

If you believe our 1,725km road network deserves some lengthy discussion

visit our shopfront next to Taree Central  
52 Manning St Taree  
16 - 20 November 2015, 10am - 6pm.

Our friendly staff will be on hand to answer all your questions on the proposed special rate variation and how we plan to stop the decline of our local roads. You can also visit [www.taree.cci/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cci/safer-roads) from 16 November to complete our survey.

**Safer Roads for our Community**  
More info [www.taree.cci/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cci/safer-roads)

# What price do you put on safer roads?

GREATER Taree City Council encourages ratepayers to review the real impact of its proposed special rate variation, in view of the community consultation happening this week.

Along with our stunning coastline, rain-forests and waterways, the Manning Valley boasts over 1700km of roads and almost 200 bridges. But unlike its natural assets, the road network and its associated infrastructure is failing.

In a bid to halt the deterioration and deliver safer roads across the community, council staff will next week open up discussions with rate-payers to find out what they think about both the state of the roads, and the proposed SRV.

"It's important that rate-payers assess the impact of the SRV, not only on their hip-pocket, but the results it will deliver across our region," general manager Ron Posselt explained.

"The six per cent over six years proposal has been carefully calculated to optimise the cost to delivery ratio, and we're confident of achieving every one of the intended outcomes."

The annual cost to rate-payers is six per cent on top of their base rate, each year for six years, which is calculated over and above the annual rate-peg increase (in recent years around 2.4 per cent). In simplest terms, a base rate in 2014/15 of \$1,000 will mean the SRV adds an average of \$78.26 per year, or \$1.50 per week, over the proposed six year period.

The compound nature of applying the SRV over six years, means the increase continues to grow year-on-year. Based on the current \$1,000 base rate, the SRV adds \$60 in year one, up to \$98.70 in year six.

"Spreading the SRV over six years means smaller annual increases and ultimately less impact on households with fixed incomes. At \$1.50 per week on average, it may be considered a small price to pay for a road network that can be sustained at far safer levels than we can currently achieve," Mr Posselt added.

Should the SRV proceed, Greater Taree City Council intend to deliver safer roads through a range of maintenance and renewal treatments, in many cases doubling what can be currently achieved, and in some cases dramatically increasing current standards by up

to 12 times.

More than \$2million will be invested in maintenance activities that include linemarking, roadside vegetation management, pothole repair, drainage management, gravel patching and shoulder grading, and the installation of safety barriers.

Ten per cent of this maintenance work, or \$200,000, will "put paid to potholes, with a weekly repair cycle introduced on our busiest roads, and a monthly program for our local and minor roads which are currently only addressed when a report is logged," Mr Posselt added.

In addition, almost \$8million will be added to the renewal program, with works to include heavy patching, surface resealing, gravel resheeting and road reconstruction.

A fully detailed outline of the proposed work schedule can be found at [www.taree.cci/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cci/safer-roads).

To have your say, visit council staff at the temporary "SRV pop-up shop" located beside Taree Central shopping centre in Manning Street Taree, between 10am and 6pm this week (finishes Friday).



## WHY FIX 'PERFECTLY GOOD' ROADS?

If you've often wondered why we are fixing roads that appear to be in much better condition than others, then compare fixing a road with painting a house. A new house requires little maintenance, however the longer you leave it, the more expensive the repair bills become and with a limited budget, being able to get the 'best bang for your buck' becomes really important.

### Resealing a road is like repainting a house

After 10 years, most of the paint has reached its 'guaranteed' life and repainting will require minimal prep, with a single coat bringing it back to its 'as new' condition. This equates to a resealed road and represents good value. \$1 million buys 28km of resealed road.



### Heavy patch and resealing a road is like repairing and repainting a weatherboard house

If we wait 20 years to repaint the house, the prep time increases with repairs and you will likely need more than one coat. It's the same for a road - if we leave it too long, it requires significant heavy patch prep, prior to the reseat. \$1 million now only buys 8km of repaired road.



### Reconstructing a road is like rebuilding an old weatherboard house

If we wait 30-40 years to repaint the house, the inside walls are cracked and damaged and the outside walls are beaten and warped, meaning it might be easier to renovate and replace the walls with new ones. A road is no different - now the only option is a full reconstruction at a significant cost. \$1 million in this case buys only 1.5km of reconstructed road.



TALES147

# MANNING RIVER Times

## Talk about roads!

City council sets up pop-up shopfront in Taree to discuss proposed rate variation

By Ainslee Dennis

ainslee.dennis@fairfaxmedia.com.au

RON Posselt stands in a room humming with conversations about roads, bridges, local government and money.

The general manager of Greater Taree City Council is in council's pop-up shopfront next to Taree Central and is keen to listen and talk to anyone who walks in off Manning Street.

He looks to walls plastered with maps and posters, display boards coloured with charts, and a central bank of computers that deliver quick information to the community about council's proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) of six per cent per year over six years.

It is early morning and Ron stands ready to spend time with people explaining the state of council's failing road network and infrastructure; he knows it will not be a quick conversation but says it is important, and one that he will happily have again and again as part of council's community consultation process.

Council's proposed SRV seeks to help remedy an infrastructure backlog that has its roots in the 1970s and decades on sees council burdened with 1700km of roads, almost 200 bridges and simply not enough money from ratepayers, the State government or the federal government to maintain them at a level that meets community expectations.

The SRV in its simplest terms is this - a base rate in 2014/15 of \$1000 will mean the SRV adds an average of \$78.26 per year, or \$1.30 per week, over the proposed six-year period.

According to Ron, the compound nature of applying the SRV over six years, means the increase continues to grow year-on-year. Based on the current \$1000 base rate, the SRV adds \$60 in year one, up to \$98.70 in year six.

"Spreading the SRV over six years means smaller annual increases and ultimately less impact on households with fixed incomes. At \$1.30 per week on average, it may be considered a small price to pay for a road network that can be sustained at far safer levels than we can currently achieve."

Council knows the community expects more of council, particularly in relation to the construction, repair and maintenance of its roads.

Ron says council staff are listening and he wants people to see the pop-up



Council staff are listening says Greater Taree City Council general manager, Ron Posselt pictured at council's pop-up shopfront in Manning Street, next to Taree Central. Council proposes a special rate variation to arrest the decline in the condition of our roads.

shopfront as "much more than a forum for ratepayers to air their grievances."

"It's a chance for the community to gain an understanding of the challenges our region faces with its infrastructure backlog," he said.

"The estimated cost to rebuild our 1725km road network, at around \$1 million per kilometre, is in the vicinity of \$1.7 billion."

"The proposed six per cent per year increase on base rates, over six years will deliver \$9.961 million."

"The SRV - if it proceeds - will arrest the decline in the condition of our roads."

Council's senior staff also stand ready to talk to members of the community, and ac-

cording to council's senior leader property and procurement Dan Aldridge, the conversations reveal recurring themes: concerns about the allocation of money to roads, complaints about the quality of work undertaken by council and contractors on roads; and anxiety about the impact of the proposed increase in rates from pensioners.

He says the conversations are revealing, educational and not short.

"We want to people to walk away understanding the issues and the proposed solution," Dan said.

"People want to know, they are looking for answers and to understand what we do with money that is allocated to infrastruc-

ture." Dan says his contact with the community has been positive and at this early stage summarises feedback as being "a 50-50 split; people see the need for the SRV and seem supportive of the proposal and then there are the pensioners who say they simply cannot afford any increase to rates."

The pop-up shopfront will be open 10am to 6pm until Friday, November 20. An online survey is available at [www.taree.nsw.gov.au/safer-roads](http://www.taree.nsw.gov.au/safer-roads) for those people who can't visit the shopfront.

**Page 2: Detailed roadwork schedule prepared**

## Council survey closes November 25

NOVEMBER 25 is the deadline for people to complete Greater Taree City Council's survey on the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV).

The SRV survey is on council's website and takes about five minutes to complete.

The survey provides Greater Taree residents with the opportunity to indicate whether they support or do not support the proposed SRV, to express an opinion on the condition of roads, the amount of money spent on infrastructure, to identify their priorities for roadworks and to offer suggestions.

Visitors to council's pop-up shopfront in Manning Street, Taree will be able to complete the survey. The shopfront will be open until Friday.

## Detailed roadworks schedule prepared

GREATER Taree City Council has developed a detailed outline of its proposed roadworks schedule if its Special Rate Variation is supported by the community.

It seeks to invest more than \$2 million in maintenance activities that include line-marking, roadside vegetation management, pothole repair, drainage management, gravel patching and shoulder grading, and the installation of safety barriers.

According to Greater Taree City Council general manager, Ron Posselt 10 per cent of this maintenance work, or \$200,000, will "put paid to potholes, with a weekly repair cycle introduced on our busiest roads, and a monthly program for our local and minor roads which are currently only addressed when a report is logged."

"In addition, almost \$8 million will be added to the renewal program, with works to include heavy patching, surface resealing, gravel resheeting and road reconstruction."

A detailed outline of the proposed work schedule can be found at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).

**For someone currently paying \$1,000 per year, this is how your rates will change each year**





## Nominations open for Australia Day awards

I OFTEN marvel at the tremendous efforts of volunteers, community groups, and community-minded individuals who simply get things done. They are the people who make our region a better place to live and work. Now is the time to start thinking about who deserves to be recognised and thanked for their contributions.

The Australia Day awards take place each year, and we are currently inviting nominations across four different Categories: Citizen of the year, Young Citizen of the Year, Community Event of the Year, and Ken McDonald Memorial Sportstar of the Year.

It may be a friend or neighbour, a work colleague, a community leader, or someone who has excelled in their chosen field within our community. These are the people who go above and beyond to positively impact the Manning Valley.

If you know someone who should be acknowledged at our January 26 Australia Day celebrations, please make a nomination today. The nomination process and official forms can be found on the council website.

## Do you think our roads need attention?

Our pop-up shop in Manning Street opened on Monday and attracted a constant stream of visitors who dropped in to talk about our roads, the challenges we face, and how the proposed special rate variation (SRV) will be used to deliver safer roads throughout our community. I encourage everyone to make the time to call in and chat with the team, and complete a survey to make sure your feedback is heard.

## Manning on the Move

With Greater  
Taree City mayor  
**Cr Paul Hogan**



At the shop the team will guide you through our current situation and what we achieved with the previous infrastructure rate variation, the detailed plan of works that will be funded by the proposed rate increase if it goes ahead, and importantly, how this will impact your rates.

They've also compiled a snapshot of how our region compares with our neighbours in terms of our respective road lengths, bridges, populations and average rates. You may be surprised to know that our 1725km road network is 36 per cent longer than our Great Lakes neighbours, and while their average annual rates are more than 15 per cent higher than ours, they are also currently speaking to their ratepayers about a proposed special rate variation. You may also be unaware that our neighbours in both Kempsey and Gloucester currently have a special rate variation in place that will impact their rates over a number of years.

All of this information is also available on our website, and provides very relevant context as our community considers the impact of the proposed SRV both in dollar terms and the outcome that can be achieved on our roads.

The pop-up shop is open from 10am to 6pm, until Friday and we are aiming to meet with as many people during this time as possible.

For those who can't make the shop, please visit our website and complete the survey online.

## Opinion

### Where does the extra money for rates come from?

IT is alright for the council to clarify that the rate rise will be six per cent for the next six years.

The question that needs to be answered is, where does the council think the most vulnerable of the town, which is the pensioner, is going to get this extra money from.

The pension only goes up twice a year. March increase was 1.5 per cent and September 1.5 per cent, but then electricity and water rates go up and you have to find the money for that.

So, GTCC, can you answer the question, "Where does the extra money come from?"

**Lee Patterson**  
Taree



If you've often wondered why we are fixing roads that appear to be in much better condition than others, then compare fixing a road with painting a house. A new house requires little maintenance, however the longer you leave it, the more expensive the repair bills become and with a limited budget, being able to get the 'best bang for your buck' becomes really important.

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After 10 years, most of the paint has reached its 'guaranteed' life and repainting will require minimal prep, with a single coat bringing it back to its 'as new' condition. This equates to a re-seal of road and represents good value. \$1 million buys 28km of resealed road.



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If we wait 20 years to repaint the house, the prep time increases with repairs and you will likely need more than one coat. It's the same for a road - if we leave it too long, it requires significant heavy patch prep, prior to the re-seal. \$1 million now only buys 8km of repaired road.



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If we wait 30-40 years to repaint the house, the inside walls are cracked and damaged and the outside walls are beaten and warped, meaning it might be easier to renovate and replace the walls with new ones. A road is no different - now the only option is a full reconstruction at a significant cost. \$1 million in this case buys only 1.5km of reconstructed road.



04/12/2016

# Wingham Chronicle

## Focus on our failing roads

THE team at Greater Taree City Council is "all-ears" this week as they head into community consultation about the special rate variation (SRV) proposed to deliver safer roads across the community.

Local residents, road-users and ratepayers will be given the chance to have their say about the state of our roads and SRV, during this week's face-to-face consultation. A temporary shopfront in Manning Street will be open from Monday, with council staff inviting the community to drop in to learn about the proposed SRV, how this will affect their annual rates, and the impact it will have on the deteriorating road network.

Come one, come all, but come to hear some information, is the message from council.

"(This) week's consultation is much more than a forum for ratepayers to air their grievances, it's a chance for the com-

munity to gain an understanding of the challenges our region faces with its infrastructure backlog," general manager Ron Posselt said.

Greater Taree is not alone, with NSW regional towns currently bearing 76 per cent more backlog than the State average, despite spending 34 per cent more per person on their roads, bridges and footpaths.

The proposed six per cent per year increase on base rates, over six years, will deliver \$9.961million and for ratepayers equates to a 46 per cent increase after year six. The estimated cost to rebuild our 1725km road network, at around \$1 million per kilometre, is in the vicinity of \$1.7 billion.

"The SRV, if it proceeds, will arrest the decline in the condition of our roads", explains Mr Posselt. "The proposal has been carefully planned to minimise the impact on our rate-payers while delivering a safer

road network that can be sustained into the future".

To assist in generating meaningful input from the community, a fully detailed breakdown of what will be achieved through the proposed SRV funding has been made available on council's website and will form an important part of next week's consultation.

"We expect plenty of feedback from our rate-payers, and we urge everyone to look at the bigger picture including the legacy we leave our future generations," Mr Posselt said.

The SRV shopfront is open 10am to 6pm, through to Friday, November 20, at 52 Manning Street, Taree (next to Taree Central).

An online survey is available at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) for those who can't make it into the shopfront.

## 10 days to do SRV survey

By Ainslee Dennis

ainslee.dennis@fairfaxmedia.com.au

NOVEMBER 30 is the deadline for Manning Valley residents to complete the Greater Taree City Council survey on its proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV).

Greater Taree City Council has been pulling out all the stops to try to engage and educate the community about its proposal to increase rates by six per cent over six years.

This week senior council staff manned a pop-up shopfront in Manning Street, next to Taree Central, to give members of the community easy access to information about the proposed SRV and council's strategy for using the additional \$9.96 million dollars that could be raised for road maintenance.

Numbers of visitors to the pop-up shopfront have been around 80 a day, according to a Greater Taree City Council spokesperson. Today (Friday) is the final day of the pop-up shopfront with staff set to be there until 6pm.

Reaction to Greater Taree City Council's community engagement on social media has generally been negative with the forum delivering numerous comments from peo-

ple about the quality of previous work undertaken by council staff, the management of money, and its ability to source additional revenue from the State and federal government.

Council staff have responded to most comments and consistently directed the community to visit the pop-up shopfront or its website for detailed information and access to the SRV survey. As of yesterday council reported that 166 people have completed the survey.

According to council, the SRV's sole purpose is to stop roads in the Greater Taree local government area from deteriorating further. It will not be used to construct new roads and bridges, but invested in maintaining existing infrastructure.

Currently, council spends 40 per cent of the \$27.7 million generated from rates on infrastructure. It proposes to boost that spend to 51 per cent on infrastructure if the SRV is supported and it secures the additional \$9.96 million.

The millions will come from the rates paid by residents who own property in the Greater Taree local government area and according to council, "the average weekly increase, for someone currently paying annual rates of \$1000, is \$4.83. This starts at \$1.15 per week in year 1, and increases each

year, up to \$9.03 in year 6."

This figure differs from the one originally calculated and promoted by Greater Taree City Council of "an average of \$78.26 per year, or \$1.50 per week, over the proposed six year period."

Council's new calculations were this week promoted at its pop-up shopfront and on the website.

The average of \$4.83 on the annual rates figure of \$1000 comes from council's calculation that the SRV would add the following amounts per week to the annual rates figure over the six years.

In year one of the SRV ratepayers would need to find an additional \$1.15 per week; it would increase to \$2.43 in year two; \$3.85 in year three; \$5.41 in year four; \$7.13 in year five and finally, it would cost an extra \$9.03 per week in its sixth year.

Evidence of community consultation is an essential component of the SRV application process to the Independent Regulatory and Pricing Tribunal (IPART).

Council in its application must demonstrate the importance of the SRV for the Greater Taree region; the impact to our roads without the SRV; and the level of ratepayer support for the SRV.

Council will make its application in early 2016.



## 'No other option' says Cr Christensen

By Ainslee Dennis

ainslee.dennis@fairfaxmedia.com.au

"NO other option." That is the view of councillor Brad Christensen on Greater Taree City Council's proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) of six per cent over six years.

Cr Christensen wants the community to understand the SRV, to understand the re-

gions roads infrastructure and the realities of repair and maintenance with its current revenue sources.

This week he has been with council's senior staff at the SRV pop-up shopfront in Manning Street, talking with people about the proposal and active on social media trying to get factual information into the community conversation about the controversial proposed rate increase.

Today (Friday) is the last day of the pop-up shopfront and Cr Christensen is urging people of "this wonderful region to get as much knowledge, as many facts as possible about our council, how it works and some of the comparisons with other local councils." Adding that "if you can't make it to the pop-up shopfront please jump on the council website and have a look at the information posted."

Cr Christensen says he is understanding of community opposition to the proposed SRV and says "there isn't one individual involved with council who wants a rate rise but this is what we have been left with - no other options."

"I appreciate the thoughts of locals and the perception they have of council but I can guarantee this council has made great changes over the last few years and we continue to improve in all areas," Cr Christensen said. "If we do not work together now as a community we won't have to worry about our economy because we won't have anything or anyone in this region in 20 years time," he said.

"We also have no other option as we



City councillor Brad Christensen is urging the community to learn about the proposed Special Rate Variation and says "the community can be assured that revenue raised from the SRV will be spent on roads."

have tried everything else.

"Our roads are such a huge part of our sustainability, our future, our agricultural industry, our tourism - everything that we rely on all reflects back to our road network."

Cr Christensen says the community can be assured that revenue raised from the SRV will be spent on roads.

"All expenditures of any SRV are reported and on the GTCC website for all to see - 100 per cent of any SRV will be spent on roads and maintenance," he said.

Cr Christensen says that "in this day and age you don't have an excuse to not be informed."

"If you can't get your information from the website, just contact a councillor and ask them; we are here to assist you and to put this special place back to where it should be in the minds of not only locals, but visitors," Cr Christensen added.



Transport  
Roads & Maritime  
Services

### Martin Bridge, Taree Bridge Closures

The NSW Government is funding essential maintenance work at Martin Bridge. Additional single night closures of Martin Bridge are required to enable the work to be completed.

**The bridge will be closed to traffic from 7pm to 5am on Sunday 8, Sunday 15 and Sunday 22 November 2015**

A detour will be in place via the Pacific Highway and Cundletown.

We apologise for any inconvenience and appreciate your patience.

2016/73

For more information or a copy of the detour map please contact  
Mikhail Lyte on (02) 4924 0294  
mikhail.lyte@rms.nsw.gov.au  
or visit rms.nsw.gov.au

## ROADS AND SRV – IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO HAVE YOUR SAY

A big thanks to the hundreds from our community who have visited our pop-up shop this week to talk about our roads and the proposed special rate variation. For those who haven't, hurry, as the shopfront will close today at 6pm. While the survey will remain open on our website **until 30 November**, a quick stop-off at the shopfront will provide you with valuable context as you consider the impact of the proposed SRV on both your annual rates, and the outcome you can expect to see on our roads.



Visit us next to Noodle Paradise in Manning Street today to be guided through our current situation, the fully detailed plan of maintenance and renewal works that will deliver safer roads across our community, how our rates have changed over time, and the impact of the SRV on your rates. For those who can't make it, visit our website at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads).

### Correction - average weekly increase with SRV

The quoted figure of \$1.50 per week printed in Wednesday's Manning River Times is incorrect. The average weekly increase, for someone currently paying annual rates of \$1,000, is \$4.83. This starts at \$1.15 per week in year 1, and increases each year, up to \$9.03 in year 6. Anyone visiting our pop-up shop can view a chart showing the correct figures.

## ourview

### Have your say on proposed special rate variation

THE Manning River Times has received several letters commenting on the Greater Taree City Council special rate variation proposed to apply over the next six years.

This is a cumulative rate rise and the money raised is to be used on roads.

Greater Taree City Council has set up a pop-up shopfront in Manning Street, Taree next to Taree Central Shopping Centre, to gain feedback and help people to understand what the rate rise will mean. Today is the last day to visit the pop-up shop and ask questions of senior council staff.

The Manning River Times encourages people to visit and have your say.

If you can't visit the pop-up shop, a survey is available online until Wednesday November 30.

Please let our council know your thoughts on this issue.



# Manning River Times

## A big thank you

I WAS pleased to see so many people come to the pop-up shop last week and talk to the council staff about our roads, the challenges we face, how we compare to our neighbours and how the special rate variation (SRV) will be used to deliver safer roads for our community.

We had around 500 people through the doors and I would like to thank every one of you that made the effort. For those who couldn't make it, the SRV survey is open until Monday, November 30 at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads), so jump online and have your say heard.

## Manning Valley to host hockey events

HERE in the Manning Valley, we love our sport and I'm pleased to announce that we've been working with Hockey NSW and the Manning Valley Hockey Association to

## Manning on the Move

With Greater Taree City mayor  
**Cr Paul Hogan**



secure four key hockey events in the coming years.

We've secured the Under 15 Girls State championships with 30 teams in June next year, the Women's Half State Masters with 60 teams in July next year as well as the Under 15 boys or girls championships in 2017 and 2018.

This is a great economic boost for the Manning Valley and also a fantastic opportunity to showcase the strength of hockey in our region. We look forward to welcoming these new visitors over the next few years.

## Opinion

### Time to demand a more equitable share of levies

I HAVE recently completed the "on-line" special rate variation (SRV) survey being conducted by Greater Taree City Council.

I am a rate paying resident of Wingham and have been critical of GTCC, especially in relation to our roads.

I am also retired and, apart from a minimal contribution from the Department of Veteran Affairs, I am self-funded. Everyone knows, or should, that those reliant upon investment income receive very small returns unless they are prepared to make high risk investments.

The proposed SRV increase proposed by GTCC will be unaffordable for many in our community.

In my own case the total extra amount payable over the six year period equates to just over \$8 per week, each week over the six years. A total of \$2521 more than would be payable with an average three per cent per annum rate peg over the six year period.

Cr Christensen says we have no other option but to seek the SRV. Surely the Local Government Association can demand of both State and Federal Governments that local government agencies get a more equitable share of the multitude of taxes and levies imposed upon the hapless motorists of NSW.

A very small percentage of revenue gained from the motorists via taxes and levies goes into road funding. It seems to me to be unfair to impose a significant increase on all ratepayers, regardless of

whether or not they are motorists, to fund road maintenance.

I accept that GTCC, and most rural councils especially, are "between a rock and a hard place".

Rural communities are certainly the "poor cousins" when it comes time to make road funding grants.

It is time for this inequity to stop but it is certainly not time to impose a six per cent per year, for six years, SRV on the ratepayers of the GTCC local government area.

**Tony Ryan**  
Wingham

### Dogs suffering in heatwave

I WAS in town last Friday in that dreadful heat and as I came out of Manning Mall I noticed a dog tied up outside the Mall.

It was an old dog and it was there in that heat without any water to drink.

I had some water on me but no bowl so I poured some on the bricks but he/she would not drink it. It was just looking around for its owner.

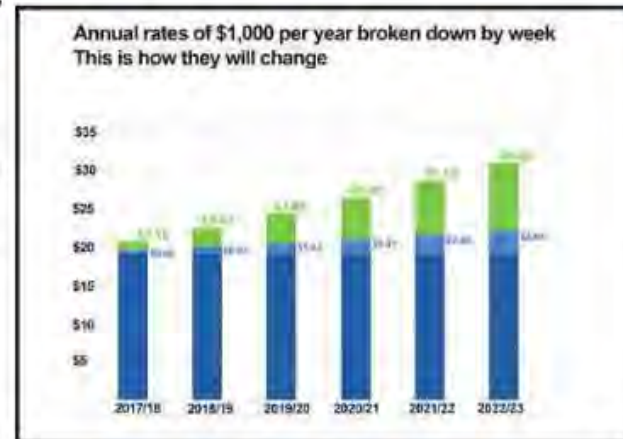
Please, if you are going to take your dog to town and it is hot, do take water for your precious animal. You see, you can go and buy a drink and quench your thirst, but your animal cannot.

**Lee Patterson**  
Taree

**Editor's note:** The temperature was over 40 degrees in Taree on Friday, November 20, with reports of 44 at Kanangra Ridge, 43 at Cundletown, 45.5 at Lansdowne, 46 at Langley Vale and 42 at Moorland.

## ROADS AND SRV – IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO HAVE YOUR SAY

A big thanks to the hundreds from our community who visited our pop-up shop last week to talk about our roads and the proposed special rate variation, and to those who have completed the survey. Our roads are a hot topic and we want to hear from as many of you as possible. If you haven't already, please visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) and take the survey before it closes on **30 November**.



While you're on the website, click-through the Safer Roads section to find out about current situation, the fully detailed plan of maintenance and renewal works that will deliver safer roads across our community, how our rates have changed over time, and the impact of the SRV on your rates.

### Your rates and SRV

The proposed special rate variation involves a 6% increase each year for 6 years. The above graph shows how this will impact your rates, based on someone currently paying annual rates of \$1,000. Here, the SRV means an additional \$1.15 per week in year 1, increasing each year, up to \$9.03 in year 6.



## GTCC SRV misleading

COUNCIL is not being honest with the community as the six per cent rate increase over six years is plainly misleading.

In the rate years 2015 to 2017 there will be a 2.4 per cent increase on a \$1000 example rate base as is the case now, plus the unmentioned five per cent environmental levy.

From 2017 to 2019 the rates collected would be 8.4 per cent plus the five per cent levy on top of that (13.5 per cent) and from 2019 to 2023 if no more levies exist, the rate will be the 8.4 per cent extra on already compounded rates.

So after 2023, rates will be 62.25 per cent higher than they will be in 2016 making a \$1000 rate base of 2015/2016 a base of \$1,622.50.

Then that will be subject to any capped rate rise and no new roads or guaranteed repaired ones.

No wonder councillor Christensen is finding total opposition to his unpopular support for the special rate variation as proof is needed on whether they can be relied on to manage it.

**Bob Smith BM**  
Harrington

## Consultation or con

LAST week's issues of Times have carried outright false or at the best misleading statements regarding the Greater Taree City Council's proposed Special Rate Variation.

The wordings of the announcements have vastly understated the amount that ratepayers (and ultimately tenants) will be paying. The article in Times November 20 states 'Council intends to increase rates by six per cent over six years'.

In actual fact by the sixth year council proposes to increase rates from \$1000 (on the example used) to \$1600 per year. This is an increase of 60 per cent and can be gleaned from studying the graph in Times on November 18 and verified from council officers.

Council conveniently left out mention that the increase is in addition to the annual rate increases that will flow from normal rate pegging and the fact that most residential and probably all commercial and hobby farmers pay substantially more than \$1000 to start with and of course garbage and septic tank levies will be probably also increased.

Residents (both renters and ratepayers) should ring council or their councillor now if they have been misled before it is too late.

**Bruce Bartlin**  
Kooragang

## More efficient road construction needed

RE: Response to (Greater Taree City Council general manager) Ron Posselt article in the Manning River Times, weekly

work for pothole patching crews (Wednesday, November 4).

That was the best advertisement for ratepayers not handing over more money to council. People don't want even more wasting of rates, we want our roads constructed properly in the first place.

Council has just repaired a part of the Bucketts Way, near Duakes Lane. The repair work was in three small sections, each roughly five metres by 2.5 metres, over about a 30 metres distance.

Crews were there for four days. The job was completed on Friday, October 21 but by 6pm Monday, October 26, the surface had become just as rough as before the work had started and in one section, the surface seal had already broken and a pothole was forming.

A week later, in one "patched" section alone, there were about eight holes forming where the top seal had lifted.

To me, that job has been a waste of time, rate wise. How many other road repairs end up the same way?

We don't want even more rates wasted on just "band aid" jobs, as it ends up costing more in the long run.

GTCC needs to be more efficient, cost effective and minimise wastage before any SRV.

**Brian Carney**  
Taree

## 15 per cent GST burden

INTERESTING, our MP thinks the best way for the government to raise revenue is a 15 per cent GST on everything, despite the fact that his electorate has high unemployment, many low income families and a high percentage of retirees.

This he regards as better than raising revenue by cutting back on the tax breaks on property investment or reducing the super tax benefits enjoyed by the wealthy.

**Patrick Devlin**  
Taree

## Laminated Australian oak planks

The other day I went to the local hardware shop, where I saw a good looking laminated plank of Australian oak (probably tasweger).

I had to take it home, just to see what I can make out of it.

Suitable, I thought, for something I had in mind for years, just never got around to making it.

Templates made, I marked it off and proceeded to cut out the pieces.



## ROADS SRV – IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO HAVE YOUR SAY

A big thanks to the hundreds from our community who visited our pop-up shop last week to talk about our roads and the proposed special rate variation, and to those who have completed the survey. Our roads are a hot topic and we want to hear from as many of you as possible. The number of surveys completed so far is lower than we expected, so if you haven't already, please visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) and take 5 minutes to complete it, before it closes on **30 November**.

While you're on the website, click-through the Safer Roads section to find out about current situation, the fully detailed plan of maintenance and renewal works that will deliver safer roads across our community, how our rates have changed over time, and the impact of the SRV on your rates.





## Low public response to SRV survey

By Ainslee Dennis

ainslee.dennis@fairfaxmedia.com.au

LESS than two per cent of Greater Taree City Council ratepayers completed the online survey on council's proposal to introduce a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to boost spending on road infrastructure in the Manning Valley.

Council this week revealed 497 people completed the online survey - with around 25,000 ratepayers in the Greater Taree local government area - it delivers to council the opinion of just 1.988 per cent of the population. If you were to calculate community participation in the survey on the number of residents - around 49,000 - the figure plummets to just 1.01 per cent of Manning Valley residents.

Council also launched a second public consultation process and surveyed 400 people independently by telephone.

A council spokesperson said council was "currently analysing this information, some of which we have only received in the last 24 hours, and determining the best response."

Community consultation, education and feedback is a requirement of the Independent Regulatory and Pricing Tribunal (IPART) as part of any application by a NSW council for a variation in rates.

The process requires council to demonstrate three key elements in its application:

- the importance of the SRV for the Greater Taree region;

- the impact to our roads without the SRV; and

- the level of ratepayer support for the SRV.

Information gathered by council staff at its pop-up SRV shopfront in Manning Street, and from its online and telephone survey will be used by council to demonstrate to IPART the level of ratepayer support for the proposal.

The deadline for council's application to IPART is early 2016 and if it is approved, the SRV will begin in the annual rates notice issued in July 2016. It will have the following impact on rates, according to council - "the average weekly increase, for someone currently paying annual rates of \$1000 will be \$4.83. This starts at \$1.15 per week in year one, and increases each year, up to \$9.03 in year six."

Council's senior staff manned the SRV shopfront when it opened for five days during the consultation process. Council's senior leader property and procurement Dan Aldridge, was one of many staff who talked to members of the community and he shared with the Manning River Times that his conversations with residents revealed recurring themes; concerns about the allocation of money to roads, complaints about the quality of work undertaken by council and contractors on roads; and anxiety about the impact of the proposed increase in rates from pensioners.

Mr Aldridge worked with other senior staff at the shopfront, including general manager Ron Posselt, to put council's case for the SRV to about 500 people who visited.

Council staff worked to address key issues in their conversations with members

of the community; that council currently spends 40 per cent of all annual rating income on its roads and bridges - with the average NSW council spend behind around 16 per cent. Staff revealed that council would be able to increase the amount of money dedicated to its roads to 50 per cent without impacting any other services if the SRV was given the green light. The additional revenue would be "channeled directly into maintenance and renewal projects such as drainage management, heavy patching, resealing and shoulder grading."

Council staff responded to community questions about other funding sources, such as State and Federal government grants with the advice that "these make an important difference but are available on a project basis only" and are "mostly suitable for reconstruction and rehabilitation works" and promoted the fact that it had been "successful in winning in excess of \$14 million in grants" in the last financial year.

Council intends to "continue to lobby the State and Federal government for a change in the distribution of Federal Assistance Grants which are currently allocated on the basis of population density."

In advocating the need for the SRV, council argued "the impact of allowing our road network to continue to deteriorate has far-reaching consequences" and cited risks to road users of failing roads, a poor impression left on visitors to the Manning Valley, a negative impact on the cost of freight, a reduced appeal to businesses looking to relocate or invest in the Manning Valley, and reducing value of properties.

# SRV public consult in spotlight

**Reports by Ainslee Dennis**

ainslee.dennis@fairfaxmedia.com.au

THE results are in. A telephone survey of 400 people in the Manning Valley on Greater Taree City Council's proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) found that 40 per cent supported the proposal.

Council this week released the results of its independent survey on the SRV and it also revealed 38 per cent opposed the proposal, with 22 per cent of respondents unsure.

Council's community consultation process involved a pop-up shopfront in Manning Street, Taree which serviced about 500 people and an online survey via council's website.

Only 497 people completed the online

survey on council's website, representing 1.988 per cent of the 25,000 ratepayers in the Greater Taree local government area.

Council's general manager Ron Posselt said council was "very pleased with the penetration of our media campaign via TV, radio, social and printed media".

However, mayor Paul Hogan expressed his concern at the low public response to council's campaign to consult.

"It has been the biggest public communication event since I have been there, the only thing that comes close to it is when we did the 30 year plan," Cr Hogan said.

"I did question the amount of people included in the telephone survey and learned that it is the standard taken by every agency in Australia.

"I attended the shopfront on several days and heard the overwhelming view that we

have a problem with our roads and something needs to be done.

"We wanted to talk to the community about it and I don't think they (council staff) could have done it any better."

Cr Hogan said he does "not know how the break the cycle of negativity that exists in the community about council".

"Not all of our community know what happens in council and that is the unfortunate part; seeing the amount of staff work involved, it has been huge.

"I think people just disengage, that's a good word to use, because the negative side of council is a good talking point for a great part of the community all the time - there is always that negativity.

"I hear that all the time and really, I just don't know how to break that cycle. I don't know the answer."



## Our readers have their say

MANNING River Times readers responded to the November 4 article, 'Low public response to SRV survey' on Facebook. The article revealed that less than two per cent of Greater Taree City Council ratepayers completed the online survey on council's proposal to introduce a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to boost spending on road infrastructure in the Greater Taree.

We asked readers if they had their say in the survey - here is an edited selection of posted comments:

❑ **Darrell Croker:** I did the online survey and I personally feel there was not enough advertising to make people aware of its existence.

❑ **Greg Newell:** The site wasn't working when I tried but what else would you expect from them.

❑ **Shelly Cause:** Not all the elderly ratepayers have internet let alone a computer.

❑ **Matty Lansdowne:** ... Homeowners don't want to pay for this. Landlords will increase rent to cover this. And potentially businesses increase prices to recover their own rent increases so everybody is affected. Only sharing this as I feel everyone deserves to know and have the chance to discuss it and hopefully we can have five out of nine listen to us and perhaps secure more state funding to fix the roads.

❑ **Bettie Merchant Hollis:** There are still a lot of ratepayers out there with no access to online surveys. With the repairs needed in recently completed sections of the roads maybe it's not a rate increase needed but to

hire someone that knows what they are doing as who is there now isn't really doing a great job.

❑ **Shane Cudlin:** In typical fashion the online survey failed in my two attempts to use it so I gave up ... the infrastructure in this area is worse than many so called third world countries I have visited. No, I don't want to pay any more in rates until I see the rates I'm already paying spent and managed better.

❑ **Deborah Donald:** Because it's nonsense and not addressing relevant issues, such as giving the community some assurances about how rates are spent? And what is different about this increase? I don't have money to keep throwing good after bad! And therefore I don't agree with the increase, though I'm not a land owner I contribute to rates via rents and any increase has a flow-on effect of pushing cost of living up. I and anyone I know doesn't want this increase and people feel the Greater Taree City Council process of consultation is patronising, 'lip service' at best! Maybe you should address the lack of confidence in the community for council first and then your response rate may be improved.

❑ **Narelle Smith:** Wasn't aware it was online but did get a phone call and did it that way.

❑ **Anne Marie:** Well this is the first time I've seen it ... a lot of ratepayers don't have access to the internet, there wasn't anything put in our mailboxes so of course there's going to be a low rate.

## Discount for pensioners

PENSIONERS will receive a discount on the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) increase to rates under Greater Taree City Council's revised proposal.

This is just one of the proposed changes to council's original SRV plan that it recently put to the Manning Valley community for consultation; councillors will discuss the SRV and council's proposed revisions at tonight's meeting of council in Taree.

General manager Ron Posselt said community feedback was used in refining council's SRV proposal and described it as "more affordable".

"We have listened to the community and we understand there is a desire to have the roads improved but the burden on local ratepayers, especially pensioners is significant," Mr Posselt said.

"The refined proposal recommends a 42 per cent increase in rates over six years, being 6.9 per cent increase in total (inclusive of any rate peg) each year for the six years. This is down from the 8.4 per cent originally proposed.

"In addition the proposal includes a 35 per cent discount on this increase for eligible pensioners by increasing the pensioner rebate by this amount each year."

Mr Posselt acknowledged the refined proposal would leave a funding gap that council would look to plug by driving down the costs of council operations.

"While the refined proposal leaves a gap in funding required to deliver safer roads across the community, council will continue to drive costs down through efficiencies across our operations," he explained.



## It's starting to feel a lot like Christmas

HAVE you noticed the streets are a hive of activity as everyone starts to prepare for Christmas? It's lovely to see the Christmas spirit is well and truly alive throughout our community, with decorations in our streets and shop windows, and Christmas lights adorning homes throughout our neighbourhoods. Carols in the Park is on this Sunday from 5pm, so make sure you pack the kids, a picnic blanket and your best singing voice and head down to Fotheringham Park to be part of the fun.

## SRV feedback shapes the way forward

Thank you to all of you who made the time to participate in last month's SRV consultation. Whether that was visiting our team at the pop-up shop or completing the survey, your input has been extremely valuable in understanding community concerns and helping to refine a recommendation that will be considered at tonight's council meeting. The feedback you offered was both consistent and clear - our roads need to be improved, but the proposed increase of 62 per cent after six years is too much of a burden on our rate-payers.

The refined proposal factors in this feedback and makes the SRV, if it proceeds, more affordable. This has been achieved by reducing the SRV to 6.9 per cent per year for six years inclusive of any rate peg, which in turn reduces the overall impact on rates to 42 per cent (or 27 per cent for eligible pensioners who will receive a 35 per cent discount on the increase). With council's commitment to close the gap through operational efficiencies, the scope of maintenance and renewal works that has been developed remains achievable. Depending on the outcome of the council meeting tonight, the next steps in the process may include:

## Manning on the Move

With Greater Taree City mayor  
**Cr Paul Hogan**



expressing intent to IPART to apply for the SRV. All are welcome to attend the meeting, which commences at 5pm in council chambers.

## Airport funding secured

It was announced yesterday that Taree Airport will benefit by a grant of over \$400,000 through the NSW government's Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund, Regional Airports program. This is terrific news which will help us in driving economic development throughout the region. We applied for the grant back in August, with the objective to improve infrastructure and tourism at the airport. The funds will deliver enhanced services for businesses, our tourism industry and the community, and will continue to drive visitors into our region through a 12-month collaborative marketing campaign.

## Environmental grants boost

After winning \$1.7 million in grant funding for environmental projects last year, the team have recently secured an additional \$270,000 through the 2015-16 NSW Estuary Management Program. The funding allocation includes \$70,000 for arresting riverbank erosion within the Manning River estuary and \$200,000 to implement stage three of the Big Swamp Acid Sulfate Soil Remediation Project. Both projects will lead to important improvements for the Manning River estuary and the health of the Manning River.

## Opinion

### New funding arrangements needed to succeed

BEFORE we think about charging the ratepayers above the rate-pegged amount for the roads and bridges work, we have to have a close look at how much is collected from the motoring public.

The three key elements IPART clearly do not touch on or mention is the massive amount of money taken out of our council area by the state and federal governments.

Now for IPART to do what it has clearly stepped around, it would total the amount of income paid in by the paying public in the following four areas of collection:

1. RMS charges
2. Stamp duty (state)
3. Fuel tax
4. GST (federal).

We have to do better and we can do better than just "winning grants" to receive proper funding and with the state and federal governments and our representatives in each of our governments adopting an attitude of fairness, and fairness is required in all situations to get a reasonable result.

The people of the Taree council area are not greedy, they just want a fair go.

The cry from governments of "user pays, user pays," they do have a tendency to bleat the obvious over and over, is something that we already know, and now it is time that the user received a sufficient amount of what the user pays to do the required amount of work on roads and bridges.

So, because grant funding has been grossly insufficient we do need a new funding arrangement to meet our needs.

I suggest and recommend to council, IPART, and state and federal governments the following: (the number six seems to be popular)

1. Six per cent of RMS charges
2. Six per cent of stamp duty charges (state)
3. Six per cent of fuel tax
4. Six per cent of GST (federal) collected in our council area.

This will be a big help in doing the catchup work that is needed and might be the boost to restoring some confidence in our system of government.

A written response to this letter by council, IPART, and our state and federal members to be presented and published in our newspaper, the Manning River Times, so that their attitude can be assessed.

**Barry Wright**  
Taree

## Note to letter writers:

Letter writers to the Times are reminded of the following:

1. Letters must be of a topical nature
2. A maximum of 300 words
3. Letters are published at the discretion of the editor
4. All letter writers must include a telephone number for verification
5. The Times reserves the right to edit letters with respect to length, accuracy and legal implications.

## WE AIM FOR ACCURACY

The Manning River Times aims to provide accurate local news. If you notice an error please call the newsroom on 6552 1988 and a correction, if appropriate, will be published in this space.

# Wingham Chronicle

## Next steps to rate variation

GREATER Taree City Council will tonight discuss a report which recommends the next steps to be taken in introducing a special rate variation aimed at improving the state of the area's road network.

Community consultation around the proposed special rate variation closed last week with council using the results to prepare a refined proposal that will be tested with the community again.

Consultation involved a week-long shopfront which serviced about 500 people and an independent telephone survey of 400 residents. The independent survey found that 40 per cent of respondents supported the proposal and 38 per cent opposed the proposal, with 22 per cent neutral or unsure. Just 497 people responded to an online survey on the council's website, representing 1.988 per cent of the 25,000 ratepayers in the Greater Taree local government area.

"We were very pleased with the penetration of our media campaign via TV, radio, social and printed media and delighted that we could speak directly to 500 people and hear their views," council general manager Ron Posselt said.

The proposed rate increase involves a rate rise of six per cent each year on top of a 8.4 per cent rate peg for six years, with the funds to go towards road maintenance and renewal. Mr Posselt said that community feedback was used in refining a proposal that reduces the burden on ratepayers "and makes it more affordable."

"We have listened to the community and we understand there is a desire to have the roads improved but the burden on local ratepayers, especially pensioners is significant," Mr Posselt said.

The refined proposal recommends a 42 per cent increase in rates over six years, being 6.9 per cent increase in total (inclusive of any rate peg) each year for the six years.

This is down from the 8.4 per cent originally proposed. In addition the proposal includes a 35 per cent discount on this increase for eligible pensioners by increasing the pensioner rebate by this amount each year. Mr Posselt acknowledged that the refined proposal would leave a funding gap that council would look to plug by driving down the costs of council operations.

"While the refined proposal leaves a gap in funding required to deliver safer roads across the community, council will continue to drive costs down through efficiencies across our operations," Mr Posselt said.



## Don't be negative

By Lachlan Leeming

lachlan.leeming@fairfaxmedia.com.au

THE proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) continues to divide Greater Taree City Council after mayor Paul Hogan accused several councillors of continued "negativity" during the December 9 council meeting.

Debate raged around the report which recommended that council's general manager Ron Posselt advise the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of council's intention to submit an SRV application.

Before putting the motion to a vote Cr Hogan accused Crs Peter Epov, Kathryn Bell and Robyn Jenkins of "negativity" regarding a solution to fixing local roads.

"You just say no with no offer of anything positive for the future," Cr Hogan said.

Cr Hogan then referred to a letter written by Taree resident Barry Wright and published in the Manning River Times on Wednesday, December 9.

In the letter Mr Wright suggests a new funding arrangement to meet council needs.

"At least he has the brains to offer a solution," Cr Hogan said.

Speaking against the potential SRV, Cr Epov took aim at the research and survey process that was undertaken by council.

Cr Epov said the proposed SRV didn't take into account rising costs over the six year period.

"It appears there was no factoring incorporated in calculations for annual rising costs and prices," Cr Epov said.

"Now is the time to drop this and look at it next year."

"I remain unconvinced that our community wants it or can afford it," Cr Bell said in opposing the report recommendations.

Cr Christensen, who supported the SRV, acknowledged that "you're not going to get everyone or many on board for a rate rise or SRV," but said that in his experience many businesses supported fixing the local road network.

Crs Jenkins, Bell and Epov opposed the motion, with Crs Hogan, West and Christensen voting for it.

Cr Hogan used his deciding vote to support the motion.

Crs Alan Tickle, Trent Jennison and David Keegan were absent from the meeting.

The report also recommended that



Mayor Paul Hogan has called for councillors to propose solutions to the roads issue, instead of displaying continued "negativity." Photo: Lachlan Leeming

funds raised be guaranteed to specifically fund the maintenance and renewal of roads.

Community consultation involved a week long pop-up shop where council staff explained the proposed rate rise, as well as an independent telephone survey and an online survey.

Following this process the refined proposal now advocates a 6.9 per cent rate increase, inclusive of a rate peg, down from the 8.4 per cent increase that was originally proposed.

The proposal includes a 35 per cent discount on this increase for eligible pensioners, by increasing the pensioner rebate by

this amount each year.

General manager Ron Posselt will now advise IPART of council's intention to submit an application for the SRV.

A further report will be considered in January prior to the deadline for applications to IPART in February.

## Opinion

### Fed up with talkfests

IN response to the report in the Manning River Times on Friday, December 4 that less than two per cent of Greater Taree City Council ratepayers completed the online survey to introduce the special rate variation to boost spending on road infrastructure in the Manning Valley. May I suggest that the majority of long suffering ratepayers are 'fed up to the neck' with the ongoing talk-fest about this very subject over many years.

The quality of council's service to the people of my own town began to slide when Wingham was amalgamated with Taree council.

I could go on ad nauseam but I believe the ratepayers of the Manning Valley will vote with their feet when invited.

Probably need a consultant to now examine why only two per cent of the ratepayers have enough confidence in the rhetoric of the council to be bothered to take any interest.

Mary Pilotto  
Wingham



## Opinion

# Opinion

### Not sufficient information

I NOTE the mayor's comments on the front page of Friday's MRT regarding the alleged negativity of some councillors. I do not dispute the need for more money for roads and other infrastructure in the Manning Valley.

I voted against the motion for the simple reason that I had not been given sufficient accurate and comprehensive information on which to make a considered decision.

**Robyn Jenkins**  
Wingham

### Levy the surfers

ON North Coast news each night is the ongoing story of shark protection for board surfers.

December 10 showed a surfer on the coast almost crying and asking when was the government going to do some thing about protecting board surfers as he wants to go surfing.

Well, tough luck mate. All my life every interest I have ever had I have had to fund it myself.

Why should the government foot the bill only for expensive shark nets and other shark attack devices.

How about a levy be put on every board surfer along the entire coast and not just a token few cents either.

How come every day all along the coast there are young men and not so young men out there enjoying themselves when everybody is toiling at work.

Sorry people, it's a user pay world so get real and start forking out some money instead of buying a board then enjoying a

### Should have been deferred

Re Manning River Times Friday/  
Saturday December 11-12

IT is very disappointing that there was a third of the councillors absent at Wednesday December 9 council meeting to debate such a very important and controversial item as the proposed SRV increases for the GTCC area.

The dates for council meetings are set and publicised well in advance so councillors cannot say they did not know when the December council meeting was to be held.

I believe that council should have deferred the SRV item on the agenda and called a special council meeting at a date and time convenient to all councillors prior to the deadline date for correspondence to be received by IPART. This would then have enabled a decision to be made by all councillors and not just by one third of the councillors and a casting vote by the mayor.

I fully agree that the State and federal government should be subsidising local Government with larger grant monies especially in country areas and believe that both State and federal government have been giving Local Government additional responsibilities with NO additional monies to carry out the additional responsibilities - this issue has been ongoing for many years one example being the MOU that GTCC have with Crown lands re maintenance of State parks in the area.

**Joan Hall**  
Harrington

Editor's note: Cr Alan Tickle was absent from the meeting because of illness.

extralife



Holly and Lauren perform on stage at the Taree Carols in the Park.



Jeremy Miller and George Costello welcome Santa Claus to the stage.

## Taree Carols in the Park



Heavenly dancers Sam and Tilly perform with Kate Fletcher.



Deegan Latham and Leon Sprue.



Super Lady and Wonder perform on stage, accompanied by Elizabeth Hall, Josh Cooper, and Kim Stevens.



Lynette Hall and Jeremy Miller perform.

For EXTRA classifieds EASY CALL 6651 9866

**Greater Taree City Council**

### Safer Roads for Less

Thank you to all who provided feedback on the proposed Special Rate Variation.

As a result, we've revised our proposal so we can deliver safer roads for our community in a way that is more affordable for all.

Visit [www.taree.co/safer-roads](http://www.taree.co/safer-roads) to see how the lower 6.9% proposal (down from the original 8.4%) will impact you. You can also tell us what you think by completing the online survey.

If you can't access the online survey, let us know what you think by writing to 2 Pulteney Street Taree NSW 2430.

**Safer Roads for our Community**

**FAYE'S TWIN CINEMA**

PROGRAMME FOR 17/12/16 to 23/12/16

OUR BARGAIN DAY - TUESDAY before 1pm  
Adults \$12.00! All others \$10.00!  
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FRI, SAT, MON, TUES & WED AT 11:15AM, 12:30PM, 3:30PM, 5:30PM & 7:30PM  
SUN AT 11:45AM, 2:25PM, 4:30PM & 7:30PM  
Thanks to our sponsors at the back of the house!

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IN CINEMAS DECEMBER 17

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SUN AT 11:15AM

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The EXTRA Thursday December 17 2015 7

## SAFER ROADS FOR LESS

Thank you to all who provided feedback on the proposed Special Rate Variation last month. Your message was loud and clear - something needs to be done about our roads, but the proposed 8.4% each year for six years is too much to bear.

As a result, we have revised the SRV proposal to 6.9% each year for six years, and increased the rebate for eligible pensioners. The chart below shows how this will impact someone currently paying a \$1,000 ordinary rate\* per year.

### SRV Impact: a comparison of the original v revised proposals



**Important note – the Special Rate Variation applies to the ordinary rate only; it is not applied to other charges that appear on your rates notice.**

\* All proposals include the cost of living increase (Rate Peg).

\* IPART has advised the Environmental Levy which finishes in 2018/19 must be removed from all calculations. Its continuation after that time will be determined through community consultation and cannot be factored into these calculations.

Visit our website to view charts based on the average ordinary rates paid by pensioners, residential rate-payers, businesses, and farmland rate-payers. While online, please also complete the updated survey to tell us what you think. If you can't access the online survey, let us know what you think by writing to us.

\* Important note – the Special Rate Variation applies to the **ordinary rate** only; it is not applied to other charges that appear on your rates notice.

TA1782940



# MANNING RIVER Times

## Our Community Spirit

IT always makes me feel extremely proud when I see our community working together to achieve common goals. Christmas, New Year and the holiday season is a great time to think about all those uplifting community events that bring us together in celebration, and I was so very pleased to hear of the strong attendance at carols in Fotheringham Park last weekend.

All of our community events and projects that happen throughout the year allow us to work and play harmoniously together. They would not be possible without the generous contribution of the individuals and groups within the community who give up their time, energy and passion for the benefit of all of us.

Thankyou to all of you - what an amazing year your generosity has brought to our region.

## Our Australia Day Ambassador

IT is also at this time of year that I have the pleasure to acknowledge one very special person among us who has gone above and beyond in positively contributing to the people of the Manning Valley.

I am delighted to announce the 2016 Australia Day Ambassador, Michael Diessel, who is well-known across our community for his active contribution to projects and events that benefit each and every one of us.

As a long-term Lions club member, Michael is always first to help out with fundraising activities.

He has been instrumental in delivering a host of successful events and festivals that not only promote community but bring visitors into the Manning Valley. These have included the Manning River Aquatic Festival or Manning River Summer Festival, and staging for one of our biggest annual events, the New Year's Eve fireworks on the foreshore.

Michael is a fantastic example of someone who is prepared to give generously of his service to our community, without any expectations of accolades.

His tireless efforts make our region a better place to live, and for that we are delighted to be able to recognise him as

## Manning on the Move

With Greater  
Taree City mayor  
**Cr Paul Hogan**



our Australia Day Ambassador. Thankyou Michael for all you have contributed, and congratulations.

Our Australia Day Awards are closing soon, so if you would like to nominate someone who deserves to be acknowledged, please visit our website to download the nomination forms.

## A more affordable SRV proposal

OUR roads continue to be a topical and very challenging issue, highlighted even more at this time of year as many of us host visitors into the region over the holiday period.

Community feedback that was collated in November about the proposed 8.4 per cent special rate variation (SRV) sent a very clear message, with an overwhelming response that our roads are unsatisfactory, along with key concerns about the affordability of the SRV proposal.

But to sit back and do nothing about our failing road network is simply not an option - the longer our roads go unaddressed, the bigger the issue becomes.

As a direct result of community input, we have revised our SRV proposal to deliver safer roads for our community in a way that is more affordable for all. The revised proposal includes a lower 6.9 per cent per year SRV for six years (which includes any rate peg) and an increased pensioner rebate.

We are seeking further input and I urge everyone to come forward on this very important issue and have their say.

Visit our website to see how the revised SRV will impact your rates, and take five minutes to tell us what you think by completing the online survey. If you don't have access to the online survey, write to us at 2 Pulteney Street, Taree. The time to act is now, so we can work together towards improving our roads.

## Opinion

### Councillor positive she made the right choice

HAVING been "slammed" by the mayor for being negative (MRT, December 11), I would like the opportunity of a right of reply.

It's not okay for our civic leader to resort to name calling, accusations and insults essentially aimed at three councillors who spoke and voted against the special rate variation (SRV).

There were only two options - vote for or against.

I am positive I made the right choice to vote against.

At the council meeting, the mayor labelled us negative.

Referring to Mr Wright's letter printed by MRT last week, the mayor made the aspersions, "At least he has some brains?", implying that councillors who voted against the SRV don't "have some brains".

To say "You just say no with no offer of anything positive for the future" is simply not true.

There have been a number of possibilities raised that haven't seen the light of day.

Maybe we had better agree to disagree or play the ball, not the man.

Having considered myself a positive person, below are some things that I am positive about in relation to the SRV and comments.

I am positive:

▢ that I represent a large proportion of the community who believe the proposed SRV is unfair.

▢ that our community can ill afford the proposed SRV.

▢ there are other opportunities to save money and find other funding.

▢ the vote to advance the SRV was three each way with the mayor using a casting vote.

▢ that I was not provided with the information requested to inform my decision making.

▢ it was reported as a "done deal" before it was determined.

▢ the numbers, practically 50:50 were too close to call and are not a mandate.

▢ that council will have spent at least \$50K asking does the community want it.

▢ the information was confusing and inconsistent.

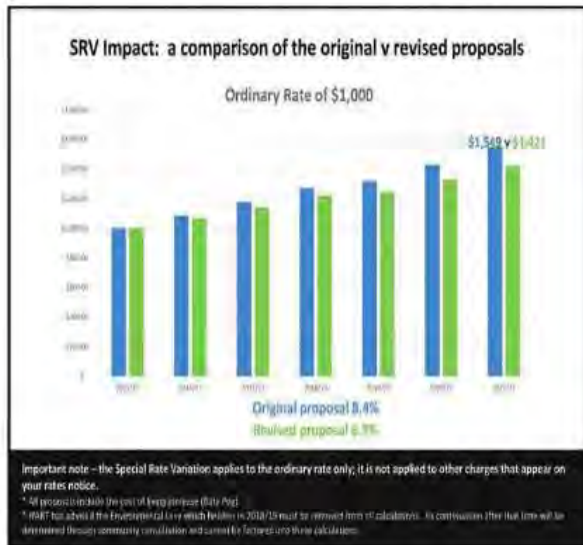
▢ that there are constructive means to get your point across instead of name calling and insults.

I remain unconvinced the community want or can afford the SRV and leave it to the readers to determine if that position is negative.

**Cr Kathryn Bell**  
Taree

## SAFER ROADS FOR LESS

Thank you to all who provided feedback on the proposed Special Rate Variation last month. Your message was loud and clear - something needs to be done about our roads, but the proposed 8.4% each year for six years is too much to bear. As a result, we have revised the SRV proposal to 6.9% each year for six years, and increased the rate for eligible pensioners. The chart below shows how this will impact someone currently paying a \$1,000 ordinary rate\* per year.



Visit our website to view charts based on the average ordinary rates paid by pensioners, residential rate-payers, businesses, and farmland rate-payers. While online, please also complete the updated survey to tell us what you think. If you can't access the online survey, let us know what you think by writing to us.

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**Ron Posselt, General Manager**

2 Pulteney Street Taree | PO Box 482 Taree NSW 2430 | 02 6592 5399

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## Manning on the Move

With Greater  
Taree City mayor  
**Cr Paul Hogan**



event kicks off at 5pm and I encourage families in the area to pack a picnic and come along early to get a prime position and enjoy the fun atmosphere.

## New Manning Valley website launched

If you have family and friends coming to the region for the holidays and you're stuck on ideas for things to do, I'm pleased to announce that a new Manning Valley website has launched, just in time for Christmas. The new site has a fresh look with lots of beautiful images and detailed info about our towns, events, markets,

beaches, restaurants, activities and more! Not only that, the website is easy to navigate, with even Patti and I finding our way around the site with ease. Go to [www.visitmanningvalley.com.au](http://www.visitmanningvalley.com.au) to check it out.

## SRV – have your say before it's too late

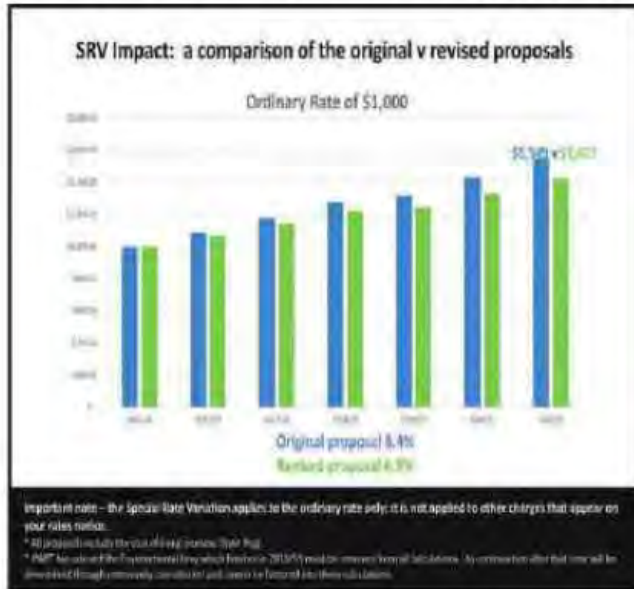
I HAVE to say, I'm a little disappointed with the response to the latest SRV survey. We listened to the community during our original consultation and the message was loud and clear - something needs to be done about our roads, but the proposed 8.4 per cent each year for six years was too much to bear. As a result, we revised the SRV proposal to 6.9 per cent each year for six years, and increased the rebate for eligible pensioners. This new proposal offers safer roads for less and I know that more than 19 people in our community have an opinion about this. Please go to [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) to view the new proposal and fill out the survey.



## SAFER ROADS FOR LESS

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**Ron Posselt, General Manager**

2 Pulteney Street Taree | PO Box 482 Taree NSW 2430 T 02 6592 5399



# T<sup>o</sup>times

## Christmas spirit returns to the Manning

THE Christmas Spirit has returned in the Manning.

Not only did the houses display the Christmas lights, the shops and main street looked very festive. The churches and NGOs enable families with hampers and emergencies relief to celebrate Christmas at home. But in my opinion it is also important that people on their own have somewhere to go on Christmas day. This year

Valley Industries provided a free breakfast from their shop in Manning Street and shared the surplus of fruit, fresh rolls and gifts with the seniors. Thank you Trent.

The Baptist Church in Kololong arranged a luncheon. I believe a family in Harrington opened their home and they are only the ones I have heard of.

The seniors in Ormsby House in partnership with the Manning Valley U3A and Greater Taree City Council again put on a luncheon for 43 seniors. I also very much appreciated the offer from the owner of Mansfield on the Manning to assist if there are too many to facilitate.

On behalf of the seniors I thank the volunteers who gave up their day to help out at Ormsby House.

Craig and Colleen come every year. Patty and (mayor) Paul Hogan joined us and worked very hard on the day.

Our members also contributed making a homemade Christmas pudding and fresh fruit salad and roast pork. Thank you Wilma, Liz and Craig. Paul cooked the prawns in the last minute to divert a catastrophe because I bought raw ones.

The bowlers and another Paul helped us setting up.

This just shows it was a combined effort so that we could share the day with friends, have a few games, get a little gift or two, have a laugh and share lunch.

Personally I would like to thank my seniors and Iudvik for their assistance not only on the day but in the last few months as I am laid off with a broken hip.

It is great to know that the community spirit is well and alive in the Manning.

Thank you and have a healthy and happy 2016.

Lucia Bokulic OAM  
Holidays Point

## Delight that not all councillors are the same

WE are positive that Cr Kathryn Bell has gone up in our estimation.

What a well worded reply to the mayor about certain councillors' negativity. It has taken a while for me to reply to her letter in the MRT December 18/19 as we are all pre-occupied and busy at this time of the year.

However, we felt the need to express our personal delight to know that all councillors are not of the same mould.

Well done to those three musketeers who have an independent thought and opinion as well as the gumption to express it.

The mayor wonders why the community doesn't express their views. Well, we knew it was a done deal the moment you set out

to spend all that money to tell the community.

The first question was whether we thought the roads needed fixing? Then we are told we can have our potholes constantly fixed! Who wants to have all that tar and gravel constantly on our tyres?

There was no long term vision in the plan, only short term fixes which washes away the next eight, six year plan? I wonder who has the "brains"?

Thank you Kathryn and keep up the intelligent, thought provoking discussions.

Ann Ryall  
Redhead

## Education of responsible pet care aids prevention

MEMBERS of the Taree and District Branch of the RSPCA would like to congratulate Greater Taree City Council on the recent article published in the Manning River Times regarding responsible pet care and microchipping of pets.

Education of the public regarding responsible pet ownership is a major function of the work of the RSPCA and awareness of the benefits of both desexing and microchipping animals may help to prevent the large number of unwanted dogs and cats from ending up at the pound or being dumped on the streets.

Additional information on pet care and owners responsibilities can be obtained from the local branch on 6552 7177 or website [www.rspcansw.org.au](http://www.rspcansw.org.au)

Jan Swift  
Secretary  
RSPCA Taree and District Branch

## Leave access charges alone

LET'S hope the new GM for MidCoast Water will not increase our access charges for water and sewerage.

Our recent bill shows total access charge \$296.25 per quarter, which is almost \$1200 per year before we even turn on a tap.

We must have the most expensive access charge in Australia.

This is outrageous and the pensioner rebate doesn't increase. How can they justify these charges?

Faye Caddy  
Harrington Waters

## MidCoast Water response:

MidCoast Water access charges are for both water and sewer services. The water component is \$53.75 per quarter. Both water and sewer services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and our systems are regularly upgraded and maintained.

While MidCoast Water's access charge is higher than metropolitan areas which benefit from economies of scale and more customers per kilometre of water or sewer main, they do not have the most expensive access charge in Australia. Prices are compared annually by the NSW Office of Water (now DP Water) and the board of MidCoast Water is very mindful of the impact and affordability of further increases.

MidCoast Water's price path is set by the board and displayed for public comment in June each year.

The eligibility criteria for the pensioner rebate is established by the NSW State Government in section 575 of the Local Government, not by MidCoast Water.

MidCoast Water has been lobbying for its increase for some time, as we believe it should be increased to reflect the increasing cost of living. To this end MidCoast Water has made representations at State and Federal levels and gained support for the review at the NSW Local Government Conference.

## Rates legislation a folly

NEVILLE Wran would be pleased. A Liberal Government doing what he would have dearly loved to do.

Local government was the bane of his life, and he won several elections when he said "no" to council rate rises when the inflation rate was nine or 10 per cent, and interest rates on houses reached 18 per cent, in my personal cost.

Councils went backwards over the legislation that he enacted and State Governments since (on both sides of the fence) have refused to repeal it, and gloried in its use.

It's all very well for the Premier Baird to "negotiate" helping hands for the current round of amalgamations but it wouldn't be necessary if that legislation had not been enacted.

None of it was necessary, because local government in general was precluded from keeping abreast of inflation, and going to the people direct when some large expenditure warranted it.

Elections are the way to keep councils in

check, just the same as for State and Federal governments. The states (more than NSW now) have Wran to thank for the whipping boy that local government has become.

The rates problem has a long way to go but unless there is a very generous injection of funds into local government, councils will continue to keep the begging bowl handy and levy what extra charges they can.

All local government needs funds, some more than others, but 10 per cent off the rates in 1979, and compounded ever since, will take a lot of making up.

To single out some councils for derision now makes Wran's folly even worse, because he didn't think it through. Or did he?

Bob Newling  
Taree

## MP's presence noticed

I WAS so pleased to see our member for Lyne present in the parliament whilst the PM was giving a summary of this year's business, both past and present, and wishing all a happy Christmas.

Only a handful of members were present and I found this quite disturbing as the average citizen can't pack up and go home (one day early) for their Christmas break, even if they live many kilometres away.

The members of both sides of the House of Representatives were conspicuous by their absence.

Oh well, it is the season to be jolly. Jolly good luck to them, while it lasts.

Mary Pliotta  
Wingham

## SRV just a marketing exercise

THE proposed special rate variation (SRV), whether one wants to believe it or not, will not be influenced by the public debate or feedback that council receives, it will have been decided well and truly before it became public knowledge.

We all know that this council is unviable, also it suffers from large infrastructure outcomes and with the overall ratio of people to area, will never be viable and infrastructure will still lag behind outcomes due to the continuation of rising costs associated with deterioration of roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

The problem can be viable if councils received a better system of funding whether it comes via States distributing a better funding outcome with no interest component attached (remember they own or owned it in the first place but have buck passed it on), and also we have a federal government that can and should develop a better funding system even directly to the councils.

Overall we have a topsy turvy system of government and one can rightly question why we need a State government when the whole system of government is riddled with duplication, which itself is a total cost burden for the taxpayer.

We have two members of parliament

here and its about time they worked for the electorates' outcomes and helped in devising a better scheme and outcome in reference to a better system of funding to councils for the infrastructure problems that exist, not rely on sucking the final dollar out of the ratepayers who in most cases do not have it.

Tea and scone politics does not solve this area's problems, neither will being party only politicians.

Rate variations, higher rate outcomes, will not solve the problem of poor infrastructure. It must come from a total reorganisation of the financial structure relating to State and Federal funding.

The money is there considering well over 1500 corporations have not paid one red cent of tax, plus others that have not been included for the public domain. Let's have our elected representatives do a little work for once to get a better distribution of funds. Remember they can spend billions propping up Sydney and all the fancy hopeful outcomes.

**E deBouter**  
Caparra

## Checking for the positives

RE: Councillor Kathryn Bell's letter in the MRT on December 18 (Councillor positive she made the right choice). Let us go through her bullet points and see how positive it is:

## Checking for the positives

RE: Councillor Kathryn Bell's letter in the MRT on December 18 (Councillor positive she made the right choice). Let us go through her bullet points and see how positive it is:

1) She represents a large proportion of the community who believe the special rate variation (SRV) is unfair. That is a negative point of view. What is the proportion? How does she, and how do they, think the roads can be done up with no money?

2) Our community can ill afford the SRV. That is not true of all of us. How many of us would rather die in an accident caused by a defective road surface than pay a few extra dollars in rates?

3) There are other opportunities to save money and find other funding. What are these opportunities? Can Cr Bell tell us what she has done and is doing to pursue them?

Did she vote for or against the pay rise for councillors a few months ago? Is she badgering our MPs and the governments daily for a huge road grant, or for GST and Road Tax to be shared with us?

4) The vote to advance the SRV was three each way with the mayor using a casting vote. Well, at least that's correct.

5) She was not provided with the information requested to inform her decision making. What was that information? How much information do you need to decide whether to tell government you 'may' do something?

If she needs information about the state of the roads she should drive from The Tip to Tinonee on the Bucketts Way, and turn right to Wingham, and look at the size of the holes for 15 kilometres. Someone will die there soon.

6) It was reported as a 'done deal' before it was determined. Can we see the evidence, please?

7) The numbers, practically 50-50, were too close to call, and are not a mandate. Those in favour were 56 per cent; those

## Head2Head Ocean Sw

THIS week's Throwback Thursday gallery feat Swim Classic between 2010 and 2015. Go to The 2015 event will be held on Sunday, Janu the day a 1500 met

against were 42 per cent. In most Federal elections that is a mandate. Why is the council different? Once again, this is about telling IPART 'we may do something'.

8) The council will have spent at least \$50k asking does the community want it. Is the councillor suggesting that the community should not have been consulted? They'd be damned if they do, and damned if they don't.

9) The information was confusing and inconsistent. Can we see the evidence, please?

10) There are constructive means to get your point across instead of name calling and insults. The last PM invented 'Juliar'. Did the mayor say anything like that?

Where is a really positive, practical proposal from Crs Bell, Epov and Jenkins? And when will they bring in the money?

**Terry Stanton,**  
Tinonee

## In the name of all things sport

BIG Bash! Test Cricket! Football - all codes!

I watch sports the way a dog (Buttons the Wonder Dog no less) watches TV.

I'm attracted by the motion and colour, but no actual comprehension is taking place.

**Mary Pilotto**  
Wingham



## Opinion

### Vote for representatives who will bring money to town

BOB Newling's letter ("Rates legislation a folly") is totally accurate. While country people vote for big parties which only look after the big cities with bread and circuses (\$150 million for Randwick Racecourse, for example), things round here will only deteriorate.

Whilst I agree with Ann Ryall in the same issue that is delightful that "all councillors are not of the same mould", I cannot agree with her that the mayor and those who voted with him about the SRV are negative. They voted for doing something to help get our roads sorted out. Councillor Bell and those who voted with her voted for doing nothing, and put up nothing in its place. That is negative.

The special rate variation (SRV) may be a distasteful proposition to some, but I should prefer to pay more rates and have the roads done than read an obituary when a car hits a big pothole and careers into a tree.

It might be her child or grandchild. Or mine. Saving a few dollars would seem pretty expensive then.

As I understand it all the council have done is tell the government that they may apply for an SRV. Whether they do remains to be seen.

The people of the Lyne and Myall Lakes electorates have got to vote for MPs who will bring the money into town, as Rob Oakeshott did. The Nationals have given us nothing that Rob had not already won for us, but which they took away.

**Terry Stanton,**  
Tinonee



## Opinion

### Support for Cr Bell's stand against rate rise

COUNCILLOR Bell deserves better than the comments in "Checking for the positives" (Manning River Times January 8).

As one of the vast unheard majority who fully support her stand against this council's insane attempt to slug residents with a massive future rate rise I applaud her attempt to bring sanity to our local council.

No Mr Stanton I do not know exactly how many oppose the SRV as no figures are available. I do know that not one ratepayer I have spoken to supports the rise in either its original form or the last version.

Obviously the council was shocked at the adverse response at their limited shopfront marketing exercise as council must show they have community support for the rise to obtain approval for the SRV. They made a few changes and asked for a further response from an even more limited group (computer literate and users).

The initial response from this group was from only 19 people indicating that people are sick of it and don't believe that they are being listened to anyway.

If council spent \$50,000 on the survey it is an example of wasting ratepayer money as this equates to approximately \$1.40 for each resident over 14 years of age. A mail-out to ratepayers would have been far cheaper and accurate.

Those of us who are old enough know that the rate cap was introduced in 1979 because councils were out of control with their spending and increasing rates was easier than reform in their way of operating.

It is said that 42 per cent of rate income is spent on roads/bridges. What about the remaining 58 per cent of rates and all the other income/grants?

As for roads the area has never had it so good and the number of accidents still occurring on the expressway confirms motorists just need to stay off drugs and drive to the conditions.

By sending the grant, proposed for that mosquito breeding ground known locally as Cattai Swamp, back to the government the council could save a quick quarter million dollars by not having to match the grant amount.

Environmental work should be a federal responsibility shared by all taxpayers, not local councils, and it is false economy to spend unnecessarily.

**Bruce Barlin**  
Koorainghat

### Clarification sought

HAVING just read Ann Ryall's letter to the editor (Wednesday, December 30) I find that some clarification will be needed if I am to understand what it is that she wishes to inform.

I was pleased that Ann was delighted that all councillors are not of the same mould. That observation also delights me.

I have noticed consistently that the majority of councillors are people of good intention, intelligence and understand the need for fiscal restraint and responsibility.

Towards the completion of Ann's letter it reads "only short term fixes which washes away the next eight, six year plan." To what, is she referring?

Some clarification may help from Ann. Or in other words - "Please explain."

**Del Dennis**  
Taree

# Radio Advertising

## Phase 1 Script:

*If you think our road network needs attention, the team at Greater Taree City Council want to hear from you.*

*Visit their pop-up shop next to Taree Central in Manning Street, Monday 16th to Friday 20th November, to talk about our roads and the proposed special rate variation.*

*Visit taree.cc and search safer roads for more information.*



**2MC**

12 – 18 November 2016

24 x 15secs

plus 10 x bonus spots



**MaxFM**

11 – 19 November 2016

56 x 15secs



**2RE**

11 – 19 November 2016

56 x 15secs

Plus bonus 60sec live cross



## Phase 2 Script:

*Greater Taree City Council has listened to your feedback about the proposed SRV.*

*As a result, a more affordable SRV is now proposed.*

*Find out how it will deliver safer roads in a more affordable way. Visit [taree.cc](http://taree.cc) and search safer roads for more information and to tell us what you think.*



### **MaxFM**

18 – 23 December 2016

30 x 15secs plus 10 bonus spots



### **2RE**

18 – 23 December 2016

30 x 15secs plus 10 bonus spots

**Facebook**



The screenshot displays the Facebook profile of the Greater Taree City Council. The page features a banner titled "Safer Roads for our Community" with an illustration of a road construction scene. Below the banner, the page name "Greater Taree City Council" and "Government Organization" are visible, along with a "Contact Us" button. The navigation tabs include "Page", "Messages", "Notifications", "Insights", "Publishing Tools", "Settings", and "Help".

On the right side, a "Promote" dropdown menu is open, showing statistics for "THIS WEEK": 13 Page Likes, 3,954 Post Reach, 0 Contact Us, 0 Website Clicks, 6 of 5 Response Rate, and 19 days Response Time. Below this, a "Recent" list shows the years 2015, 2014, and 1981.

The main content area shows a post from "Greater Taree City Council" published by Scarlett Levy on January 8 at 4:39pm. The post text reads: "Are the kids starting to play the 'I'm bored' card these school holidays? Well, there are plenty of fun activities happening throughout the region, which can be found in our community events calendar. We're sure you'll find something to keep the boredom at bay. Check it out here [www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au/play/events/calendar](http://www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au/play/events/calendar)." Below the text is a photo of a child in a Superman costume.

On the left side, there are several widgets: a "100% response rate, 19-days response time" badge, a "989 likes +13 this week" badge, a "3,954 post reach this week" badge, a "View Pages Feed" button, an "Invite friends to like this Page" button, and a "More Reach. Less Money." advertisement for reaching 57,000 people near Greater Taree City Council for \$29.00, with a "Promote Local Business" button.



**Greater Taree City Council** added 2 new photos.  
Published by Meagan Cooper [?] · October 22, 2015 ·

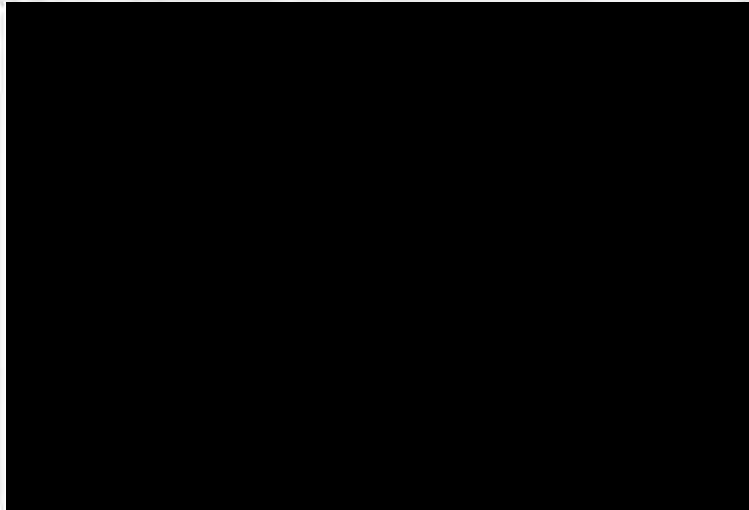
What price do you put on safer roads? In last night's Council meeting it was agreed that the community will be engaged in a discussion about a special rate variation to combat the decline in our ageing road network. A consultation process will soon roll-out so, hold that thought, and stay tuned for dates. For more information, bookmark this page =><http://bit.ly/1PBSsid>




208 people reached [Boost Post](#)

208 people reached [Boost Post](#)

[Like](#) [Comment](#) [Share](#)



 **Greater Taree City Council**  
Published by Scarlett Levy [?] · October 27, 2015 ·

The State Government recently deemed us 'not fit' for the future because the burden of our deteriorating road network led to poor performance in the financial measures.

Click below to see how well you know our roads... Let us know if you got it right!



**Safer Roads for our Community**  
WOODOX.COM

378 people reached [Boost Post](#)

378 people reached [Boost Post](#)

[Like](#) [Comment](#) [Share](#)



 **Greater Taree City Council**  
Published by Scarlett Levy (P) · October 29, 2015 · 🌐

What percentage of your rates do you think go towards our deteriorating road and bridge network?  
Click below to take the quiz!



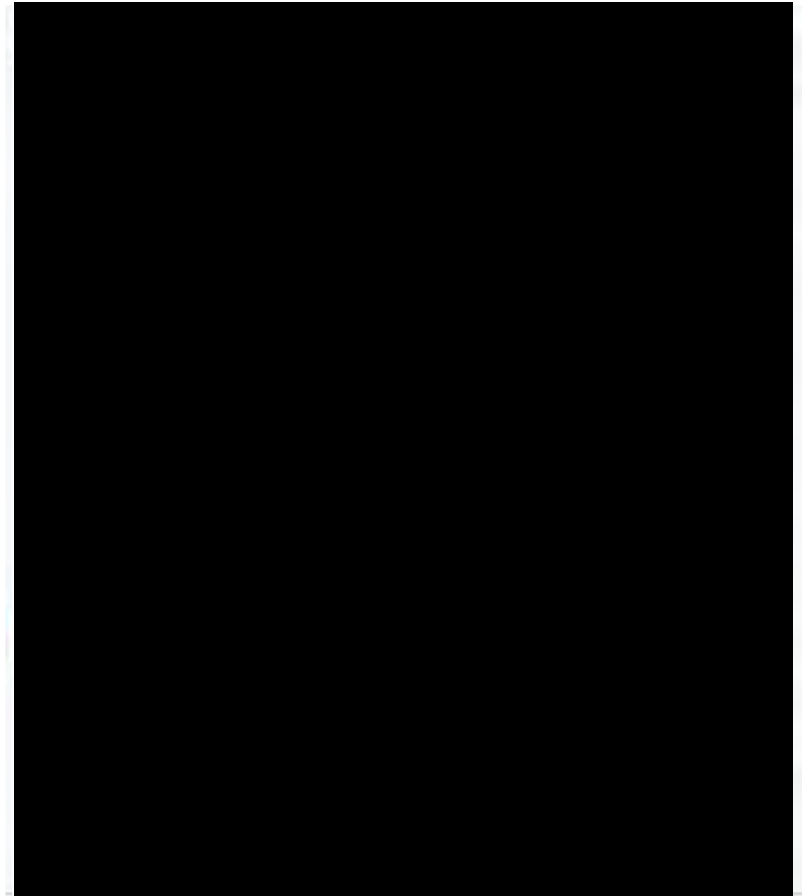
**Safer Roads for our Community**  
On average, NSW councils allocate 16% of their rates income to roads and bridges.  
WOODOX.COM

228 people reached [Boost Post](#)

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

Nev Finch and Tanya Cross like this.    [Top Comments -](#)

 Write a comment...  







Greater Taree City Council

Published by Scarlett Levy FPI · November 2, 2015 ·

### Clever new business idea for residents of Taree?

We realise that potholes are no joking matter, which is why the proposed SRV will increase our pothole response program to every week for regional roads and every two weeks for collector roads.

Join the conversation and stay up to date at [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads)



1,358 people reached

Boost Post

Like Comment Share

- Attachment (i)

3 November

 **Greater Taree City Council**  
Published by Scarlett Levy 191 · November 6, 2015 · 0

Dear resident road experts,

We'd like to talk to you about the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) to stop the decline of our 1725km road network.

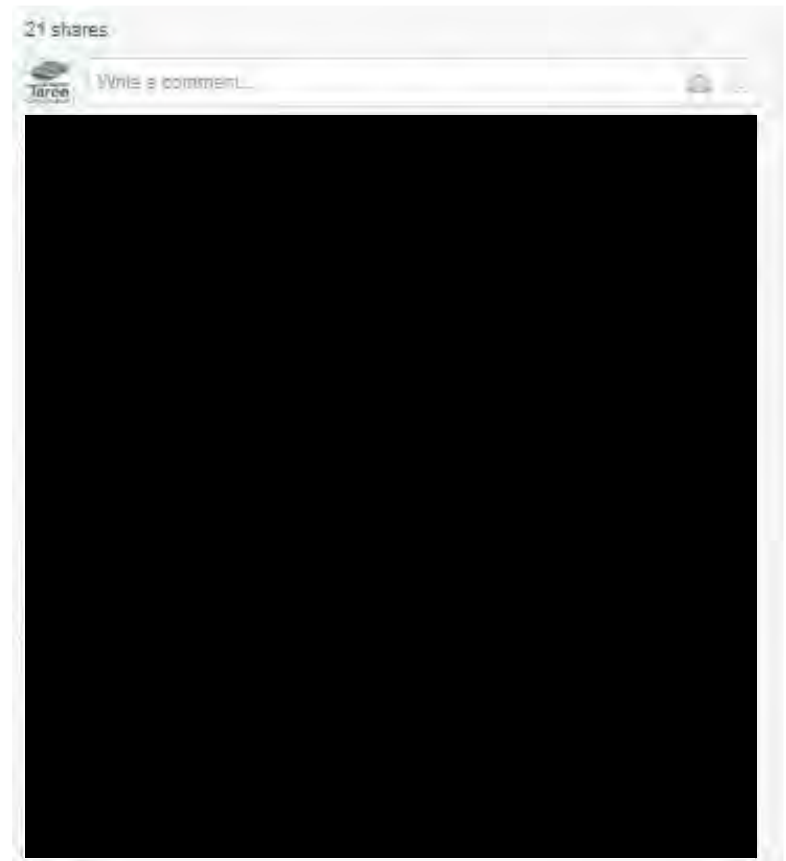
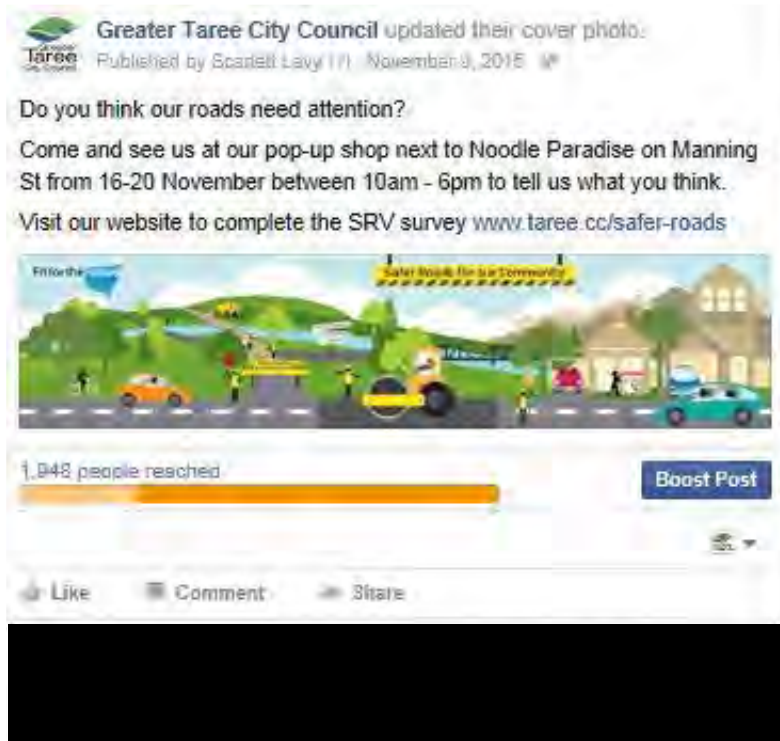
Come and see us at our pop-up shop from 16-20 November, but in the meantime visit our brand-spanking new web pages dedicated to everything SRV [www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au/safer-roads-for-our-community...](http://www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au/safer-roads-for-our-community...) See More



1,751 people reached

Boost Post

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**Greater Taree City Council**  
Published by Scarlett Levy (P) · November 11, 2015 · A

There's been a lot of chatter about roads and SRV which is great and we hope you visit the pop-up shop next week.

Unfortunately we haven't seen much action on the website which is where you'll find all of the information you need to make an informed decision.

We challenge you to put your preconceptions about 'bloody Council' aside and actually click below and read what we're proposing... Go on, we dare you.



**Safer roads for our community » Greater Taree City Council**

Do you think our roads need attention? Our 1,725km road network is deteriorating, and at a cost of \$1 million per kilometre, rebuilding it is not an option. With a...

STCC.NSW.GOV.AU

995 people reached

[Boost Post](#)

Like · Comment · Share



Greater Taree City Council

Published by Scarlett Levy 1/1 November 18, 2015

Our pop-up shop is ready to roll and we hope you come and visit us next week to discuss our roads and the proposed SRV.

We'll be next door to Noodle Paradise on Manning Street from Monday-Friday from 10am-6pm.

Click below to see our proposal:



### Safer roads for our community » Greater Taree City Council

Do you think our roads need attention? Our 1,725km road network is deteriorating, and at a cost of \$1 million per kilometre, rebuilding it is not an option. With a...

STCC-NEW 30V/AU

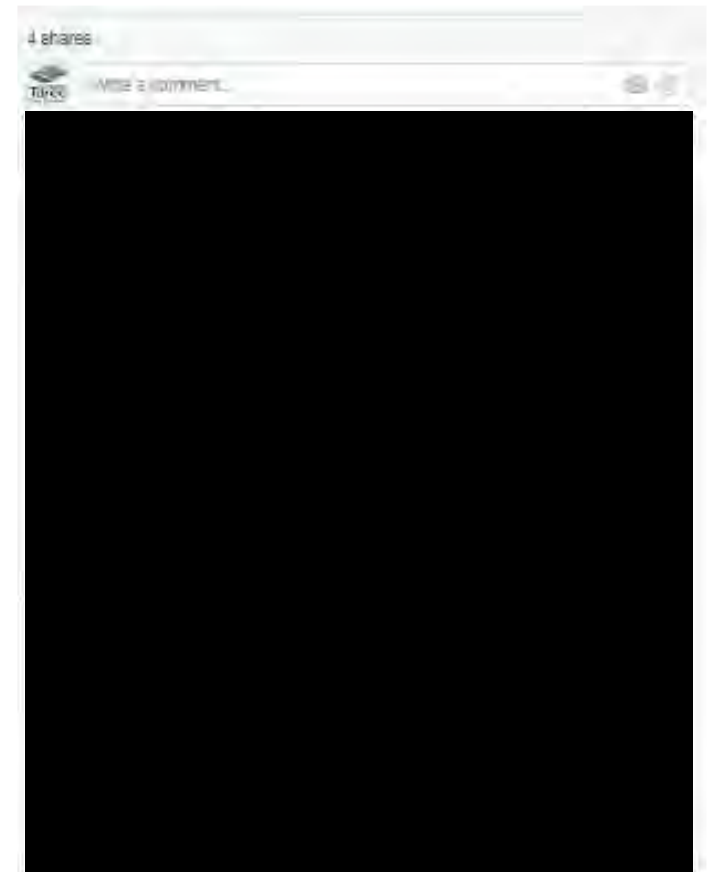
700 people reached

Boost Post

Like

Comment

Share





**Greater Taree City Council**  
Published by Scarlett Levy (9) · November 17, 2015 ·

Don't have time to get to the pop-up shop, but have an opinion about roads and rates?

Jump online and complete our survey to have your say heard  
[www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads)



**Safer roads for our community » Greater Taree City Council**

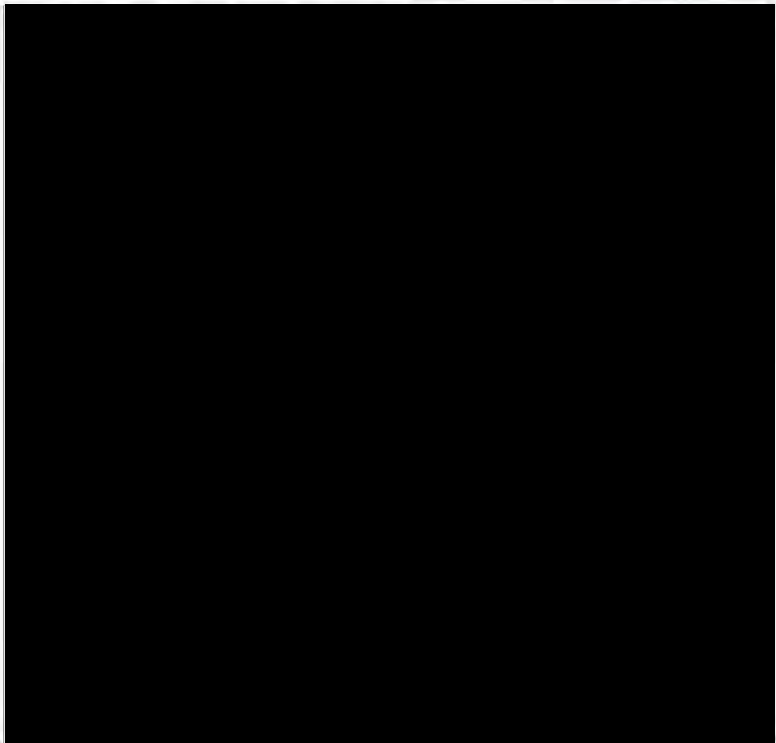
Do you think our roads need attention? Our 1,725km road network is deteriorating, and at a cost of \$1 million per kilometre, rebuilding it is not an option. With a...

TAREE.CC

795 people reached **Boost Post**

795 people reached **Boost Post**

Like Comment Share





## Greater Taree City Council

Published by Scarlett Levy (P) November 19, 2015 - (A)

We know you have an opinion about the SRV, but this is not reflective in the number of survey responses we've received.

If you want the opportunity to make your opinion heard and count, click below and fill out the online survey.

Surveys close on Monday 30 November - share this post so you, as a community have your say heard. Remember, actions speak louder than words.



### Safer roads for our community » Greater Taree City Council

Do you think our roads need attention? Our 1,725km road network is deteriorating, and at a cost of \$1 million per kilometre, rebuilding it is not an option. With a...

GTCC.NSW.GOV.AU

592 people reached

Boost Post

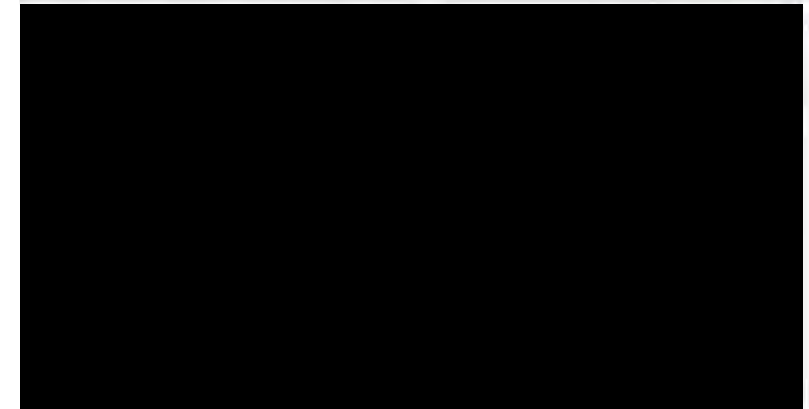
592 people reached

Boost Post

Like

Comment

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**Greater Taree City Council**  
Published by Scenell Levy · 11 · November 2018 ·

Thanks to everyone who came to visit us at the pop-up shop this week, we had some great conversations with the community.

Now's the time to make your say count and complete the online survey... it'll only take 5 minutes of your time to have your say heard. Survey closes on 30 November.



**GTCC SRV Online Survey**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief survey on behalf of Greater Taree City Council. It takes only 5 minutes, and all r... [Click for More](#)

GTCCSRV15 QUESTIONPRODUCTION

1,152 people reached

[Boost Post](#)

Like Comment Share





**Greater Taree City Council**  
Published by Scarlett Levy | ? | November 30, 2015

Last day to have your say!  
Complete our Special Rate Variation survey today and have your say heard...



**GTCC SRV Online | Enterprise Survey Software**  
Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief survey on behalf of Greater Taree City Council. It takes only 5 minutes, and all r... Click for More  
[GTCCSRV15.QUESTIONPRO.COM](http://GTCCSRV15.QUESTIONPRO.COM)

120 people reached [Boost Post](#)

 Like  Comment  Share





Greater Taree City Council

Published by Scarlett Levy | 7 December 7, 2015

Thanks again to everyone who told us what they thought about the proposed Special Rate Variation.

We've listened and your feedback has been taken on board.

Click below to find out about the refined proposal which will go to the next Council meeting on Wednesday.



## Community's SRV feedback taken on board » Greater Taree City Council

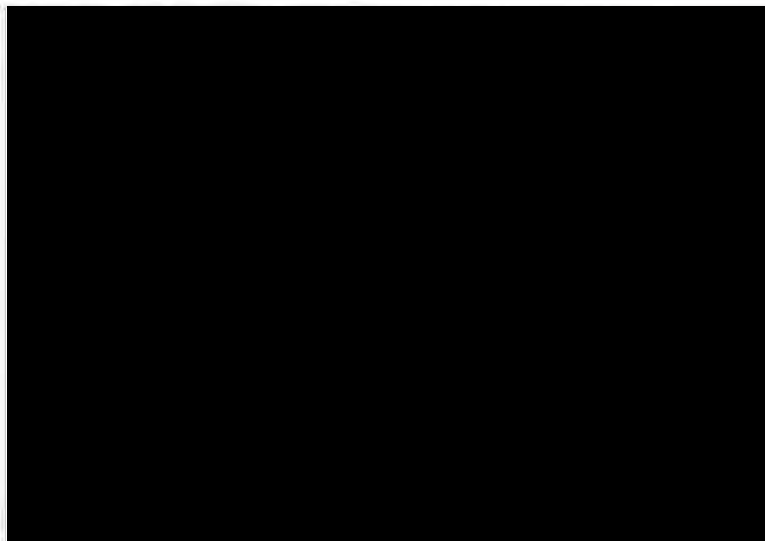
Community consultation around the proposed special rate variation has now closed and as a result,...

GTCC.NSW.GOV.AU

1,588 people reached

Boost Post

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# Website

## LIVE

Roads & bridges

Rubbish & recycling

Rates

What's on

eBusiness portal

Our community

Safety & wellbeing

Pets & animals

Your backyard

Visitor information

Community Infrastructure Projects

## Special Rate Variation (SRV) and our roads

At the October council meeting, a decision was made to engage the community in a discussion about a special rate variation to combat the decline in our ageing road network.

We will be building content on this page over the next couple of weeks so that you have a clear picture of what outcome you can expect from your SRV dollar, what impact it will have on your rates and how we will report this to you in an open and transparent way.

There will be a number of opportunities for you to provide feedback on the proposal as outlined below:



1510 GTCC RatesPieChart white RGB 72dpi 714px

### The big picture

We currently have a roads network of **1700km** and it costs in excess of **\$1 million** to build just **1km** of road.

If we were to rebuild this network, it would cost close to **\$1.7 billion** and we only have an annual rates income of **\$27.7 million**.

Our current situation is that our rates income can't meet the demand of our ageing road network. But, we think we have a solution by using a variety of maintenance and renewal treatments. Over the coming weeks we will provide more explanation. **If you would like to be kept informed please subscribe here for updates.**

Did you know that 40% of rating income is currently spent on infrastructure?

### We promised and we delivered

Since 2010, rating income and grants totalling \$120M has been invested in a combination of renewal works across our region. Some of the bigger projects that you may have noticed, including how much each of them cost can be found here.

Adding to the total and looking after what we have are:

- works relating to footpaths and kerb and gutter replacement totalling \$2.7million
- grading and maintaining our extensive 958km gravel road network, totalling over \$4million, and
- routine maintenance including pothole patching and storm-water drain cleaning, totalling around \$30million.

Keep an eye on our planned works and find out if your road's on the list [here](#).

LiveWorkPlayBuild & DevelopCouncilEnvironmentContact UsA-Z Index


Fit for the Future


Safer Roads for our Community


Revised SRV proposal


Based on your feedback, the SRV proposal to deliver safer roads has been made more affordable.


FIND OUT MORE »


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Work

Play

Build & Develop

Council

Environment

I Want To...

Latest News

What's On

I Want To...

Apply for a job

Contact council

Request a service

Pay my rates



## Safer roads for our community

**So you agree, our roads need attention?** The feedback you gave us in our recent SRV consultation was loud and clear. Something must be done about our roads, and affordability of the proposed SRV was a key concern.

Based on what you told us, we've revised the proposal from 8.4% each year for six years, to 6.9% (inclusive of any rate peg), as well as increasing the rebate for eligible pensioners.

[Click through](#) to view how the revised proposal will impact your rates.

[Learn more about our roads >](#)

[Sign Up](#)

### LATEST NEWS

Greater Taree hits efficiency measures

### Safer Roads for our Community

Fit for the Future



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2 Pulteney St, Taree NSW 2430 | 02 6592 5399 | [tareecouncil@gtcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tareecouncil@gtcc.nsw.gov.au)



## Safer Roads and SRV

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[How the revised SRV impacts you](#)

### A snapshot

Without the luxury of funding to rebuild our ageing roads, the proposed SRV provides a solution that will improve the safety of our roads.

Here are some important considerations to take into account:

**GTCC currently spends 40%** of all annual rating income on our roads and bridges.

The average NSW Council spends **16%**.

With the proposed SRV, this spend will increase to **50%** without impacting any other services we provide.

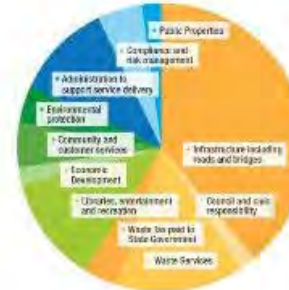
**The impact** of allowing our road network to continue to deteriorate has far-reaching consequences. Some of these include:

- risks to road users of falling roads, which may result in injury or impact on vehicle maintenance costs
- a poor impression left on visitors to the Manning Valley and a downturn in our local economy
- a negative impact on the cost of freight, which in turn affects local businesses relying on transport of goods and services into our out of the area
- reduced appeal to businesses looking to relocate or invest in our region
- a place we won't want to call home, impacting the beauty of our Valley and reducing the value of our properties

**We promised**, and we delivered over \$120million investment across a combination of renewal works since 2010. This was made up from around \$55million in rates income and \$65million secured through successful grant applications.

### For more information:

- Check our [frequently asked questions](#)
- Sign up to be kept updated
- Click through the "hot spots" on our [home page](#)



### Stay updated

Keep on top of the SRV consultation process! Sign up to receive email alerts here

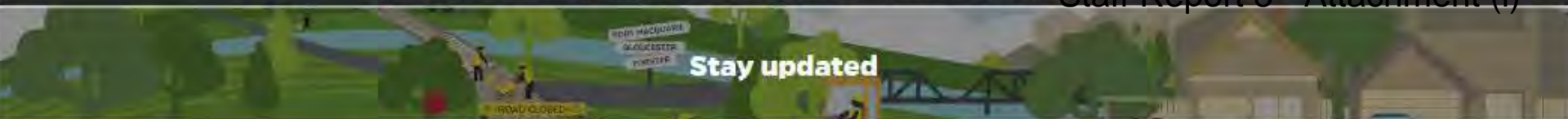
[Read More >](#)



### Frequently asked questions

Click here for answers to our most frequently asked SRV questions.

[Read More >](#)



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### Safer Roads and SRV

#### Stay updated

[Frequently asked questions](#)

[Major renewal projects since 2010](#)

[How the revised SRV impacts you](#)

As part of our consultation with community about SRV and our road network, we want to open up the lines of communication as broadly as possible.

Our website will be updated frequently, but to keep on top of what's happening and receive alerts when new information is available, please subscribe below.

By signing up, you'll receive emails, to the address you nominate in the subscription form, which will:

- Tell you when new information is available on our website
- Update you on any important changes or events relating to the discussions
- Keep you informed of the timeline
- Ensure you have the latest information throughout the entire process

To subscribe, you'll first need to create an account.

- Scroll to the bottom
- Click "New user"
- Follow the prompts

Once you've registered, your login will then allow you to change or update your details at any time.

Sign up now...

#### Log in to your account

To log into your account, please enter your Username and password.

Username  ☒ Remember my username

Password

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Subscribe to stay updated



## Frequently asked questions

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**Safer Roads and SRV**

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**Frequently asked questions**

Major renewal projects since 2010

How the revised SRV impacts you

Updated: 16 December 2015

### What is the proposed Special Rate Variation for Infrastructure?

- A Special Rate Variation (SRV) has been proposed as a means of delivering safer roads for our community. If it proceeds, the SRV will be dedicated to funding improvements to our 1,725km of roads.
- More specifically, works that would be undertaken using the proposed SRV will halt the deterioration of our current road network.
- If Council makes a successful SRV submission, an approved rate increase would be applied to your annual rates over an approved period. The current proposal is that the SRV would commence FY16/17 and involve a 6.9% increase each year for 6 years, which is inclusive of any rate peg.
- Based on this proposal, the SRV combined with achievement of efficiencies, would provide the required \$10M per annum addition to the infrastructure budget by year six.

### Why do we need a Special Rate Variation?

- A SRV has been proposed because our roads will continue to deteriorate without intervention.
- The revenue Council receives from rates is not enough to cover the investment required to prevent our roads from deteriorating.
- By boosting our roads budget through the proposed SRV, a six year plan of safety and renewal works can be implemented.
- A deteriorating road network has broader impacts on the economy and growth of our community. It reduces amenity and appeal to residents looking to move here, to visitors and to investors. It may even deter existing businesses from expanding or doing business here at all.

### What will it be spent on?

- The SRV's sole purpose is to stop our roads from deteriorating further. This means it will not be used to construct new roads and bridges, but invested in looking after what we've already got.
- A combination of maintenance and renewal works will be undertaken including:
  - Line-marking
  - Drainage management
  - Roadside Vegetation management
  - Pothole patching, sealed roads
  - Gravel patching
  - Safety barriers
  - Shoulder grading
  - Gravel road resheeting
  - Renewal heavy patching
  - Resealing
  - Rehabilitation
  - Upgrades



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[Safer Roads and SRV](#)

[How the revised SRV impacts you](#)

Updated: 16 December 2015

#### What value do you put on safer roads?

We understand that times are tough for the residents in our community. We know the costs of electricity, water, phones and internet keep going up, and worse, for no extra benefit. But when it comes to your rates, we know the services we provide represent good value for money.

Average annual residential rates are \$1,074.76, currently over 15% less than our Great Lakes neighbours, and fund a range of services like:

- free libraries
- maintained parks and reserves
- sporting facilities
- a regional art gallery
- subsidised access to swimming pools
- beach patrols in summer
- community facilities like senior citizens centre and other public buildings
- an award winning airport
- economic and tourism development support
- event sponsorship

#### Average residential rates



Our total rates income is only \$27.7 million per year, so providing this range of services and maintaining our significant road network is no mean feat.

#### What will an SRV of 6.9% for 6 years mean to my rates?

After hearing your feedback on the 9.4% SRV proposal, we've revised it to be more affordable. The revised SRV proposal involves a 6.9% per year rate increase, for six years, which is inclusive of any rate peg. The revised proposal also includes an increased pensioner rebate. [Click here](#) to see how the revised 6.9% SRV proposal will impact on your rates.

#### What will the extra rates income be used for?

The proposed SRV will be spent on increased maintenance and renewal activities on our road network, a carefully considered combination of works that will not only deliver safer roads but over time, prevent further deterioration.

For example, our current 100 year cycle on road surface resealing will be reduced to 20 years. To find out exactly what we can achieve with the proposed SRV, review the [maintenance](#) and [renewal](#) pages.

#### How do I know this is what you'll spend the money on?

As with all SRV income, it is restricted both for accounting purposes and reporting purposes. Should the SRV get ratepayer support and be approved by IPART, we will report it here on our website in a transparent and open way so that everyone can see what has been achieved and how much it cost.

Apart from that you will see a difference in the community as we increase our service levels. Take a look at the detailed breakdown of expenditure and what you can expect from [maintenance](#) works, and [renewal](#) works.

## How the revised SRV impacts you

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### This is what you told us

Our recent special rate variation consultation revealed a high level of dissatisfaction with our roads and a belief that we should be spending more rates income on our roads. We found that 42% of people supported a rate increase and 38% were opposed, with 20% undecided.

The primary concern raised was affordability, so as a result we have revised our SRV proposal from 8.4% to 6.9% (which is inclusive of any rate peg).

### How will the revised SRV impact you?

The cumulative effect of the SRV is now reduced from 62% over 6 years, to 42%. To address affordability for those on fixed pension incomes, an increased rebate will be given to eligible pensioners, so the overall impact reduces from 62% to 27%.

Here's how the new proposal compares, based on someone currently paying an Ordinary rate of \$1,000 per year:



Everyone's Ordinary rates are different, so we've provided the same comparison based on the Average Ordinary Rate for:

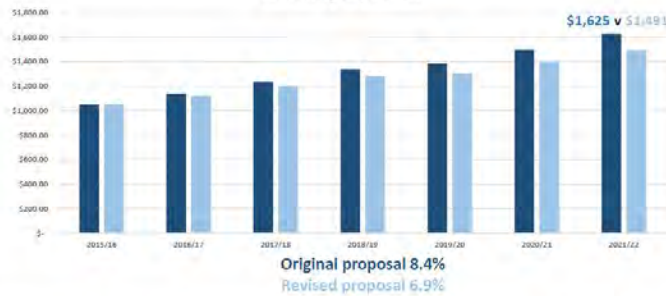
- Pensioners
- Residential rate-payers
- Businesses
- Farmland rate-payers

Click on your category to see how the revised SRV will affect your rates. Note that the SRV applies to your ordinary rate only; it is not applied to any other charges that appear on your rates notice.



## SRV Impact: a comparison of the original v revised proposals

Average Residential Ordinary Rate  
Currently \$1,048.84

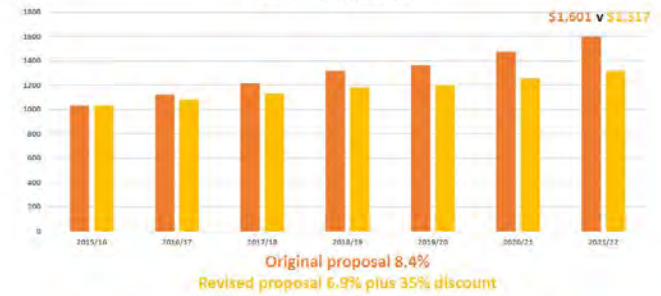


**Important note – the Special Rate Variation applies to the ordinary rate only; it is not applied to other charges that appear on your rates notice.**

\* All proposals include the cost of living increase (Rate Peg).  
\* IPART has advised the Environmental Levy which finishes in 2018/19 must be removed from all calculations. Its continuation after that time will be determined through community consultation and cannot be factored into these calculations.

## SRV Impact: a comparison of the original v revised proposals

Average Pensioner Ordinary Rate  
Currently \$1,033.42

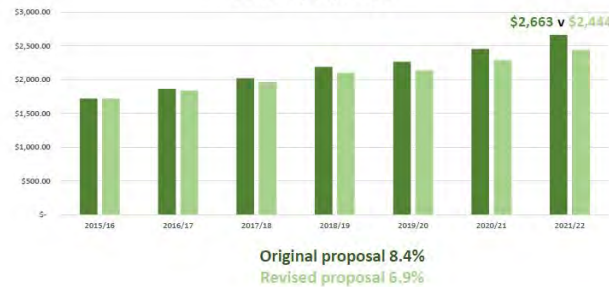


**Important note – the Special Rate Variation applies to the ordinary rate only; it is not applied to other charges that appear on your rates notice.**

\* All proposals include the cost of living increase (Rate Peg).  
\* IPART has advised the Environmental Levy which finishes in 2018/19 must be removed from all calculations. Its continuation after that time will be determined through community consultation and cannot be factored into these calculations.

## SRV Impact: a comparison of the original v revised proposals

Average Farmland Ordinary Rate  
Currently \$1,719.25

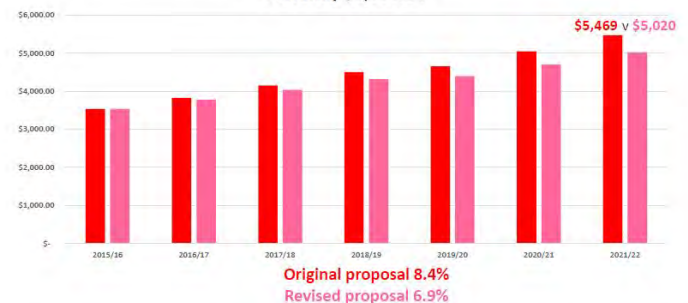


**Important note – the Special Rate Variation applies to the ordinary rate only; it is not applied to other charges that appear on your rates notice.**

\* All proposals include the cost of living increase (Rate Peg).  
\* IPART has advised the Environmental Levy which finishes in 2018/19 must be removed from all calculations. Its continuation after that time will be determined through community consultation and cannot be factored into these calculations.

## SRV Impact: a comparison of the original v revised proposals

Average Business Ordinary Rate  
Currently \$3,530.84



**Important note – the Special Rate Variation applies to the ordinary rate only; it is not applied to other charges that appear on your rates notice.**

\* All proposals include the cost of living increase (Rate Peg).  
\* IPART has advised the Environmental Levy which finishes in 2018/19 must be removed from all calculations. Its continuation after that time will be determined through community consultation and cannot be factored into these calculations.



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In October, the State Government released the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART's) review of 139 council's Fit for the Future submissions.

Of those submissions, 52 councils were deemed to be 'fit for the future' based on scale and capacity and their financial situation.



60% of the proposals were determined not fit for the future:

- 60 were assessed as not having sufficient scale and capacity, but did meet the financial criteria
- 18 were assessed as having sufficient scale and capacity, but did not meet the financial criteria, and
- 9 were assessed as not having sufficient scale and capacity and not meeting the financial criteria.

**GTCC falls into the second category.** We were considered to have sufficient scale and capacity, meaning plenty of geographic area and an appropriately manageable population, but it was the burden of our deteriorating road network that led to poor performance in the financial measures, and confirmed what we already knew. Our full submission can be found [here](#).

While we had the option to lodge a submission to merge with Gloucester (who were also deemed not fit), doing so would have increased our area size by 44%, increased our roads length by 40% (2259km), the number of bridges by 79% (341) and only increase our population by 10%, meaning no real increase in rating income. It was decided that this would provide no financial or community benefit.

IPART's analysis of our submission "did not find sufficient evidence for a better alternative than the stand-alone option."

This however, does not resolve our capacity to fund our failing infrastructure. Our relatively low-density population base of 49,000 means that our rates income is insufficient to maintain our network to an acceptable standard. The lack of government funding has meant that the only option available to us is to talk to the community about a special rate variation.

Click to link to the [full report](#), [summary report](#) and [Premier's media release](#).



## Maintenance

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#### How the revised SRV Impacts you

Unlike our neighbours in Port Macquarie Hastings and Greet Lakes, Greater Taree hasn't experienced a population boom. This means no incremental rating income which in turn means that much of the work on the road network predates the 1970s.

Rebuilding our road network would cost close to **\$1.7 billion**. Our current rates income of **\$27.7 million**, makes this an impossible task...even though we spend 40% directly on our infrastructure.

We believe that the solution lies in a mixture of **renewal** activities and increased maintenance activities to provide a safer network for users.

From the SRV, \$2,011 million will be invested in maintenance activities to deliver:



#### Linemarking

\$66,000 added to the program will mean all sub arterial and collector roads are always clearly marked, and marked twice as often

[Read More >](#)



#### Roadside vegetation management

An extra \$475,000 will mean more frequent roadside clearing - 4-monthly on sealed roads (down from 6), and yearly on unsealed roads (down from 3 yearly).

[Read More >](#)



#### Drainage management

\$475,000 added to the program will double the number of drains cleared to 10 per week, allowing a 6 year cycle (versus current 12 year cycle).

[Read More >](#)



#### Pothole response

Just \$200,000 added to the program will mean improve our reach and frequency, with weekly patching on regional roads, fortnightly on collector roads, and every monthly on local/minor roads.

[Read More >](#)



#### Gravel patching

\$120,000 added to the program will mean we can schedule a 3 monthly patching cycle (currently only done on inspection/report)

[Read More >](#)



#### Safety barriers

\$85,000 added to the program will mean installation of 500 linear metres of safety barriers per year (currently only 85). This regular replacement will remove the backlog in 5 years.

[Read More >](#)



#### Shoulder grading

\$592,000 added to the program will mean that we can shoulder grade 100km per year (versus current 8.5km per year) - a 12 fold improvement, creating a 7.5 year cycle.

[Read More >](#)





## SAFER ROADS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

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### You know that lines on the road make driving easier.

We currently can only afford to linemark every 10 years. A proposed SRV means we can do this every 5 years. By adding **\$66,000** to linemarking, **all sub arterial and collector roads will be clearly marked.**

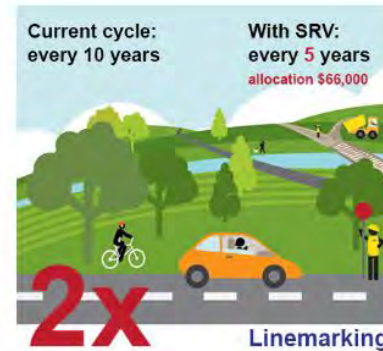
The outcome will be clearly defined **traffic lanes, roads widths and alignment.**

Reports have proven that linemarking can reduce car accidents by up to 60%, and with correct levels of contrast and brightness, the reflective lines can prevent crashes at night on bends on rural roads.

Linemarking is an essential element of a modern road system and also the most cost effective road safety measure.

Mr Paul Gibson, Chairman of the NSW State Government's StaySafe committee believes the simple white reflective lines dividing a road are just as important as speed cameras and random breath tests and are the most fundamental counter-measure ever introduced into road safety.

### Here is what it looks like:



## Roadside vegetation management

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 Roadside vegetation management

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We all know that **clear sight distances** make a difference to our **driving confidence**.

With an additional **\$475,000** for **roadside vegetation** the proposed SRV will mean we can be out on rural roads managing roadside vegetation on:

- sealed roads every 4 months (currently every 6 months)
- unsealed roads every 12 months (right now every 36 months)
- unsealed local/minor roads every 36 months.

**The outcome will be Improved line-of-sight on rural roads and low roadside vegetation on sealed roads.**

This means we have more visibility for changes in driving conditions such as:

- road direction,
- oncoming traffic
- tight corners
- narrow roads
- and other possible obstacles.

Obviously our roads that wind through our valley are all affected but long grass in open farm land can also be an issue.

**Here are some examples - can you see the difference?**



## Drainage management

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### Good drainage is essential to a safe and efficient road network.

With an additional **\$475,000** added to the drainage management program, the **proposed SRV** will enable us to clean out **10 drains** per week rather than **5**.

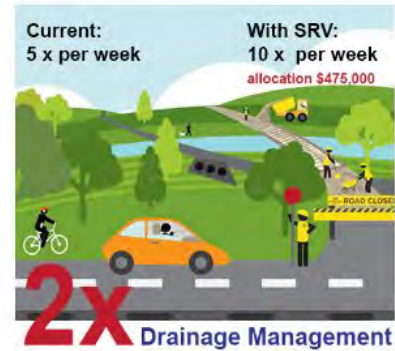
This means we can get around our entire road network every 6 years, rather than every 12 years which is our current capacity.

#### Why is drainage so important?

Efficient removal and disposal of water contributes to:

- **Improved road safety** by preventing a loss of friction between tyres and the road
- **Increased visibility** (because spray is reduced)
- **prevention of flooding** of the road and adjacent areas
- **protection of our roads** by preventing water from weakening the road pavement
- **reduced erosion** of embankments
- **reduced environmental impacts** in not just the vicinity of the road but also beyond.

#### Here is what it looks like:





## Pothole response

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With an extra \$200,000, the SRV will mean pothole patching can be conducted more frequently:

- **Weekly on regional roads** (currently fortnightly)
- **Every 2 weeks on collector roads** (currently 2 weekly)
- **Monthly weeks on local/minor roads** (right now, only when a report is logged)

The outcome will mean potholes will be filled between 1 (high traffic) and 4 (low traffic) weeks, subject to weather.

Potholes form when a crack in the bitumen surface of a road allows moisture to enter the pavement. The pavement may soften slightly or water may penetrate horizontally under the bitumen surface. In either case, a small area of the cracked surface is likely to lift out under the action of traffic, starting a pothole. Potholes usually appear after rain.

Patching is like a band-aid - a temporary fix that is likely, over time, to again allow water under the road surface, and so the cycle continues.

Here is what it looks like:



**Current intervention:**  
every 2 weeks

**With SRV:**  
every week  
allocation \$200,000

**Pothole response program**

## Gravel patching

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With an additional \$120,000 for gravel patching, the SRV will mean we can cover our unsealed road network on a 3 month cycle.

This means gravel roads will be patched every 3 months, while at the moment it's only done on inspection/report.

Pavement materials that make up the surface of an unsealed road are lost over time as a result of degradation, wind and rain, scour and traffic abrasion. Gravel patching is the process of replacing these materials to create a safer driving surface.

"The rate of gravel loss is not consistent over the life of the pavement. The rates of gravel loss are approximately constant for the first two to three years only following resurfacing and vary with vehicle speed, residual pavement thickness and climatic conditions. As the wearing course is reduced in thickness, other developments such as the formation of ruts will affect the lost of pavement materials". (Jones 1984a – Australian Road and Research Board)

#### Here is what it looks like:



Gravel patching



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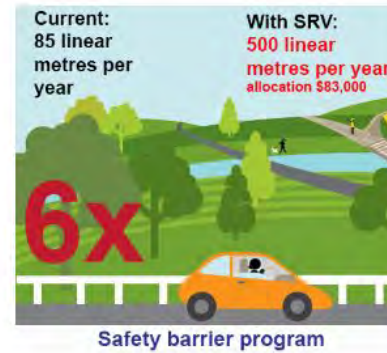
By adding \$83,000 to the safety barrier program, the SRV can deliver 500 linear metres of safety barriers per year, where at the moment we're only achieving 85 linear metres each year.

**The outcome will be regular replacement of safety barriers, with no backlog within 5 years.**

Safety barriers, guardrail or guard fencing helps define the roadway, deflecting traffic from hazardous locations, and reducing the severity of accidents where vehicles may otherwise leave the road. Guardrail is commonly used, although the older types of post and cable, post and chain wire, and wooden post and rail can still be found throughout rural areas.

In a safe system, roads (and vehicles) should be designed to reduce the incidence and severity of crashes when they inevitably occur and safety barriers are an important part of reducing these risks.

**Here is what it looks like:**





## Shoulder grading

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With \$592,000 added to the shoulder grading program, the SRV will mean we can grade 100km per year compared to the 8.5km per year we can currently achieve.

**The outcome will be maintained road shoulders that keep water off the road and provide a safe place to pull over.**

The road shoulder is the portion of the road adjoining and flush with the pavement. The width of shoulder is that available to traffic inside guide posts or safety barriers.

A shoulder should have a smooth running surface, a minimum of loose material, an adequate slope for drainage, sufficient strength to support wheel loads and a surface flush with the pavement edge.

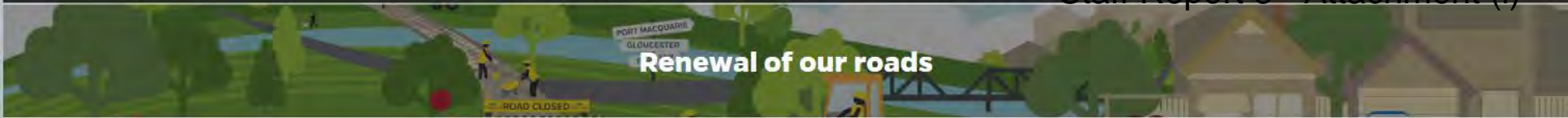
Shoulders are important to:

- provide lateral support to the pavement
- carry surface water clear of the pavement to table or batter drains
- prevent or minimise moisture getting into the pavement
- provide extra width for traffic to stop or stand, or for use in emergencies
- provide overtaking and passing movements, particularly on single lane roads
- create a sense of open space and thus increase the effective use of traffic lanes.

Shoulder grading and maintenance improves traffic safety by providing a clear and uniform zone to the immediate edge of the traffic lane. It also extends the life of the road by allowing water to drain quickly away and not remain pooled on the road.

**Here is what it looks like:**





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With a road network that spans 1,725km, and a construction cost of over \$1million per km, rebuilding our roads is simply not achievable. Instead, the proposed SRV will deliver a range of renewal treatments to make our roads safer.

#### A sealed road has two components:

- Gravel pavement underneath the surface that provides the strength to carry traffic
- The bitumen seal, which provides a smooth surface, keeps water out, provides better traction and reduces dust and mud

After 15 years bitumen becomes brittle and can start to crack. Stones start to pluck out, cracks widen and water enters the gravel pavement underneath. Potholes will then form – they can be patched by plugging the small hole with bitumen, but a patch is never as good as the original road.

The extent of the damage to the road pavement determines the treatment required, which ranges from **heavy patching** which involves digging out and replacing sections of the pavement before resealing the surface, through to **rehabilitation or full reconstruction**.

**From the SRV, \$7.95million will be invested in renewal treatments to deliver:**



#### Heavy patching

An additional 180,000 square metres per year (\$3.6million)

[Read More >](#)



#### Surface resealing

An additional 33km per year, and reduction from 100 to 20 year renewal cycle (\$1.4million)

[Read More >](#)



#### Gravel resheeting

Reduced resheeting cycle for high use gravel roads, from once every 60 years to 15 years (\$550,000)

[Read More >](#)



#### Rehabilitation & Reconstruction

Increase from 1km to 3kms per year (\$2.4million)

[Read More >](#)



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**With \$3.6million added to the heavy patching program, the SRV will allow 225,000 square metres of heavy patching per year, which is 5 times what we can currently achieve.**

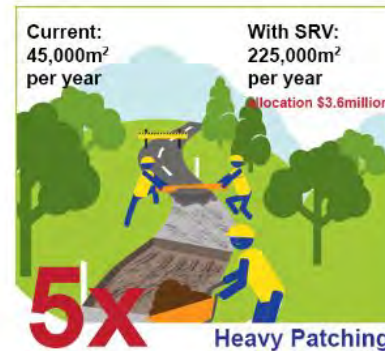
Heavy patching targets repairs to localised areas where the gravel pavement has deteriorated. Patching involves either:

- excavating defective pavement and replacing with suitable materials; or
- modifying and stabilising the material in the defective areas with an additive.

Where the problem area is relatively localised, this treatment provides a similar pavement improvement and life expectancy for the treated area as reconstruction or rehabilitation.

Heavy patching is very cost effective when combined with a resurfacing treatment. Resurfacing can only occur once the problem areas have been patched and where the remainder of the road pavement is in acceptable condition.

#### Here is what it looks like





## Surface resealing

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With an extra \$1.4million in the reseat program, the SRV will allow 40km of reseat to be completed per year, which is more than 5 times what we can currently achieve. This will reduce the time between reseals (our cycle) from once in 100 years, to once every 20 years.

Resealing returns a worn road surface to its original as-new condition.

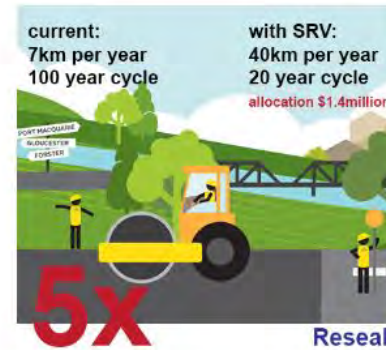
The process involves applying bitumen and aggregate to the surface of a road, providing a smoother surface and waterproofing the underlying gravel pavement.

It also ensures a dust free, skid resistant surface to not only enhance comfort for road-users, but for improved safety conditions.

Resealing can only be undertaken if the underlying pavement is in a sound condition. If so, repairs are conducted prior to the reseat, including repair to potholes and edge breaks, and for more extensive deterioration, heavy patching.

Increasing the frequency with which we reseat roads leads to greater protection of the underlying pavement, and in turn prevents deterioration.

#### Here is what it looks like





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With an additional \$550,000 in the resheeting program, the SRV will allow 35km of gravel resheeting to be completed per year, which is 75% more than we can currently achieve. This will reduce the time between resheeting (our cycle) from once in 60 years, to once every 15 years for our high-use gravel roads.

With 958km of unsealed roads in our region - over half of our total road network - many of us frequently travel on gravel roads.

Gravel resheeting is the process we use to maintain the life of a gravel road surface. It involves the application of a 100 - 200mm layer of new gravel over the existing gravel road surface.

Gravel resheeting targets repairs to pavement failures by either excavating existing defects and replacing with suitable materials or modifying existing failed areas by stabilising with an additive.

#### Here is what it looks like



<b>Current:</b> 20km per year	<b>With SRV:</b> 35km per year allocation \$550,000
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## Rehabilitation & Reconstruction

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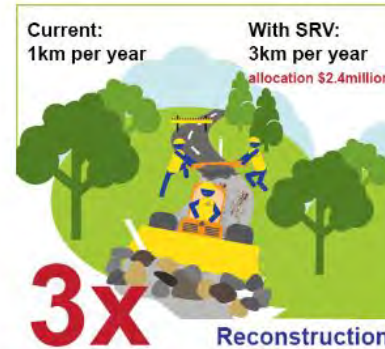
[How the revised SRV impacts you](#)

**With an additional \$1.6million, SRV will allow 3 times the current level of reconstruction, to 3km per year.**

Rehabilitation and reconstruction works are the major, high-expense projects that must be undertaken when a road is beyond repair. With SRV focusing on treating roads before they reach this point, we aim to minimise the amount of reconstruction work required into the future.

These works are often combined with an element of upgrade, most frequently lane widening, to maximise long-term value and cater for future needs of those using the road.

Reconstruction works are often good candidates for grant funding, because they are specific projects. The works being done on The Buckett's Way are a current example.





# Rates notice

## **Our 1,725km road network makes for lengthy discussions**

Do you think our roads need attention?  
Consultation to talk about a special rate  
variation (SRV) opens mid-November.

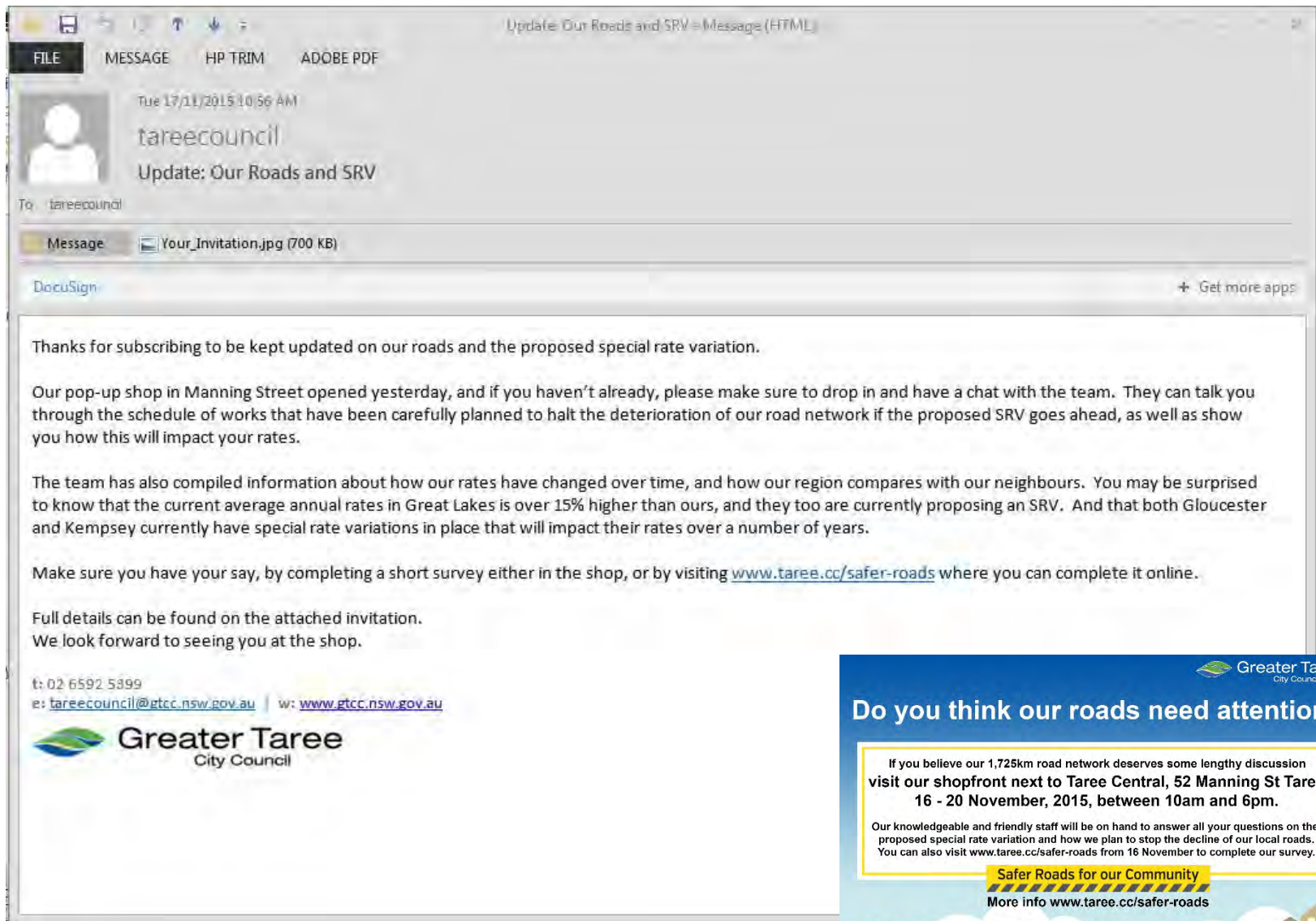
Stay updated: [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads)

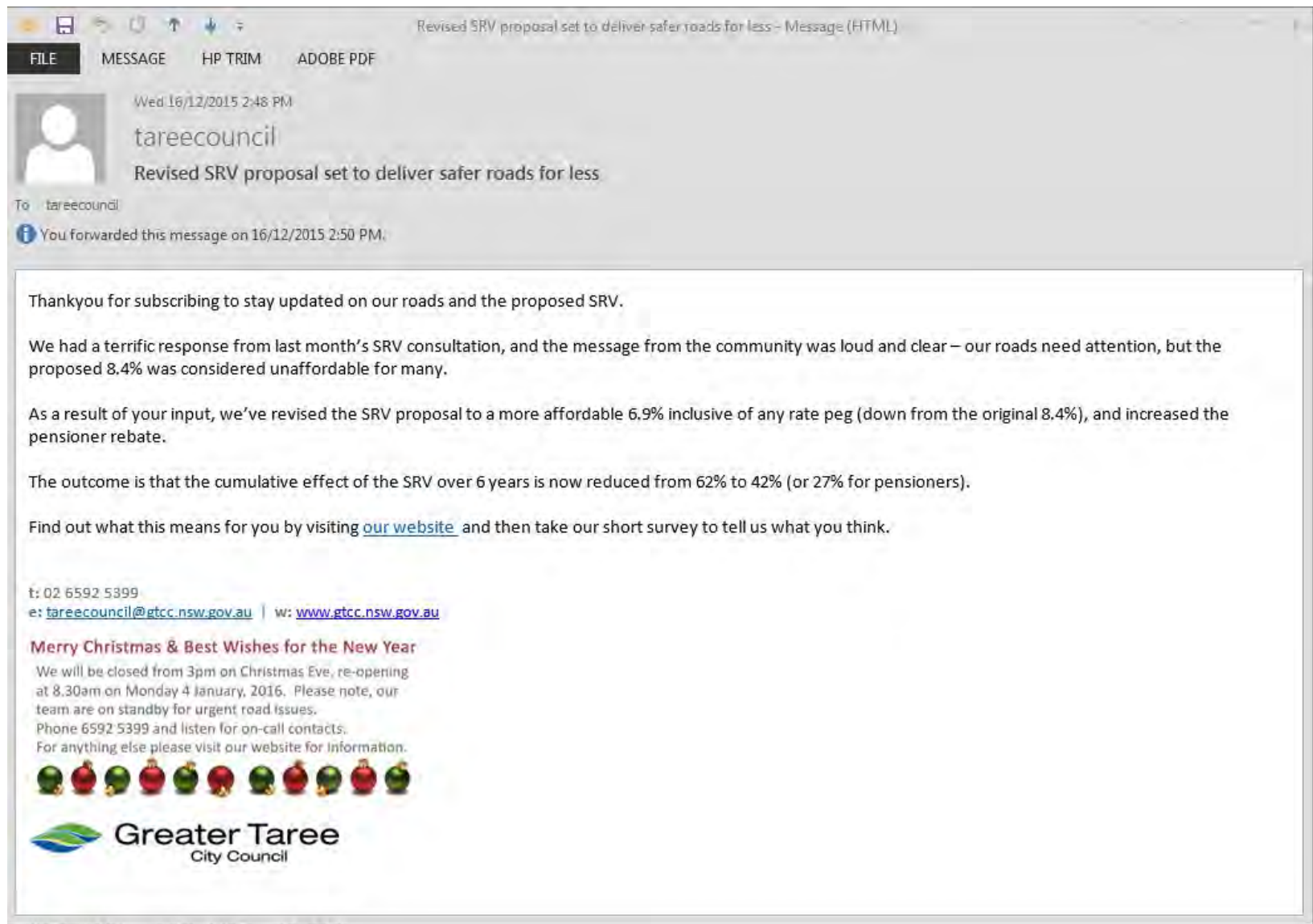
Visit our pop-up shop next to  
Taree Central in Manning Street Taree  
16 - 20 November, 2015.

## **Safer roads for our community**

# Subscriber eDM







# Town signage





# A5 Flyer

## What price do you put on safer roads?

**Come and see us in our pop-up shop next door to Noodle Paradise to discuss the proposed rate rise that will address our deteriorating road network.**

**We'll be there from 10am-6pm 16-20 November**

**Safer Roads for our Community**

**More info [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads)**

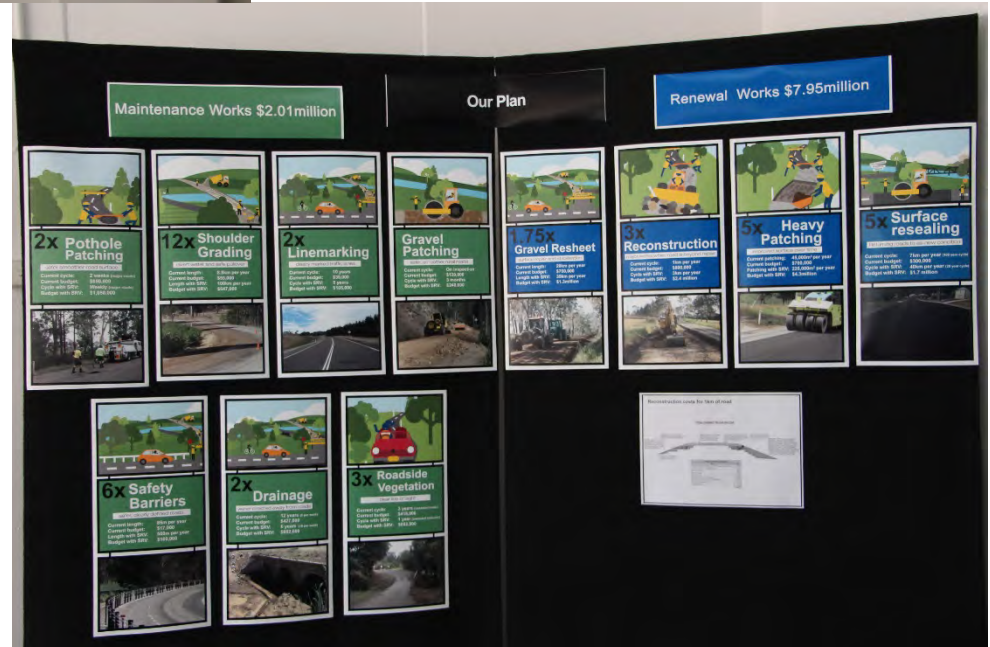
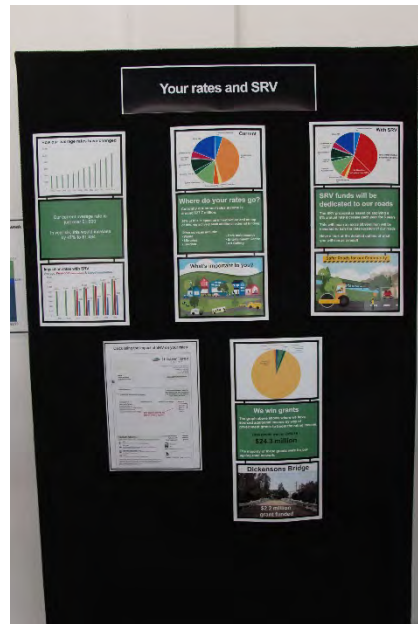


**Distribution through shops, Council Customer Service centre and libraries**



# Display materials – Phase 1







# We'll be here soon

## It's time to talk about our roads...

Join the conversation  
Monday 16 - Friday 20 November  
10am - 6pm



# We're open

## It's time to talk about our roads and we want to know what you think

We'll be here from 10am-6pm  
16-20 November





Greater Taree  
City Council

## Thanks for taking the time to chat with us today...

**Don't forget to  
complete our survey**

If you haven't already, visit  
[www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads)  
to complete our survey.

**Visit our website for more  
information**

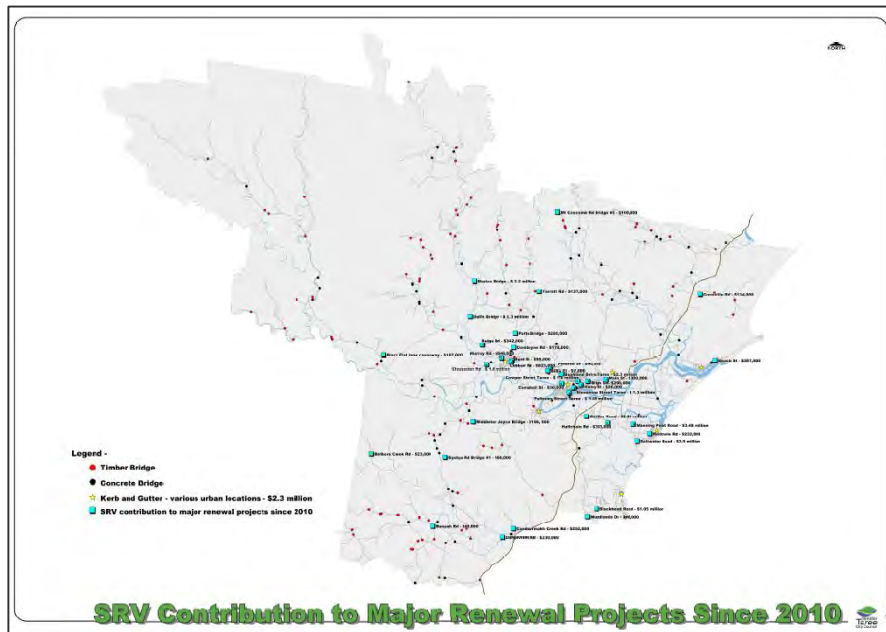
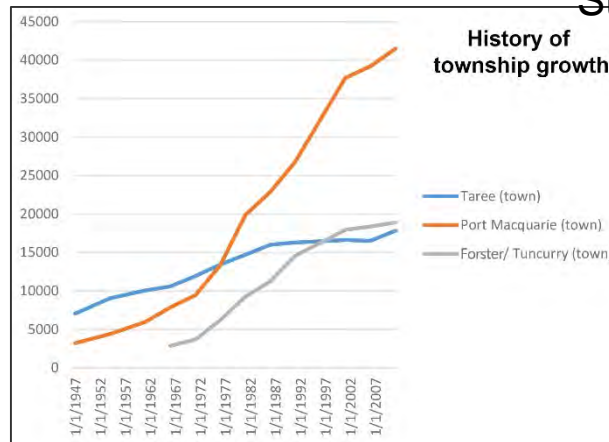
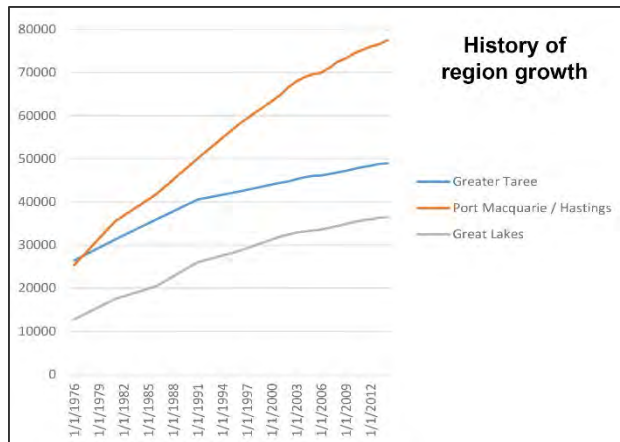
If you'd like to know more,  
everything you need to know  
is on our website.

**Safer Roads for our Community**

**More info [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads)**



**Take home flyer (A5)**



## What we delivered...

### Roads:

The Lakes Way	\$2,400,000
Wallanbah Road	\$6,000,000
Pulteney Street Taree	\$2,580,000
Manning Point Road	\$4,080,000
Wingham Road	\$3,650,000
Manning River Drive	\$1,760,000
Old Bar Road	\$2,900,000
Saltwater Road	\$4,000,000
Blackhead Road	\$1,050,000
Bushland Drive	\$2,500,000
Cowper Street Taree	\$1,520,000
Stevenson Street Taree	\$1,171,000
Queen Street Wingham	\$1,400,000

### Bridges:

Marlee Bridge	\$3,400,000
Duffs Bridge	\$3,600,000
Dickensons Bridge	\$2,100,000
Dyers Crossing Bridge	\$2,800,000
Potts Bridge	\$280,000
Tappin Creek Bridge	\$1,000,000



Resealing a road is like repainting a house...



...and \$1 million buys 28km of resealed road.

Heavy patch and resealing a road is like repairing and repainting a house...



...and \$1 million only buys 8km of repaired road.

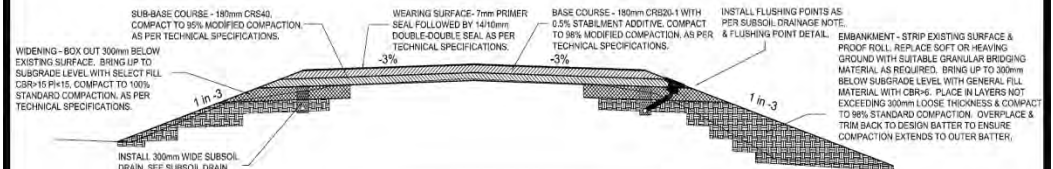
Reconstructing a road is like rebuilding an old weatherboard house...



...\$1 million buys only 1.5km of reconstructed road.

## Reconstruction costs for 1km of road

### TYPICAL PAVEMENT RECONSTRUCTION



Typical Reconstruction Costs Per 1km	
Item	Cost
Project management and controls, traffic management and survey	\$75,000
Site establishment and delattribution	\$40,000
Culvert extensions	\$20,000
Subsoil drainage	\$80,000
Bulk earthworks	\$180,000
Replacement of unsuitable material	\$100,000
Pavement construction (base, subbase and seal)	\$780,000
Linemarking and signage	\$12,000
Utility relocations	\$10,000
	<b>\$1,288,000</b>

Why fix perfectly good roads?

Reconstruction costs



## 2x Pothole Patching

safer, smoother road surface

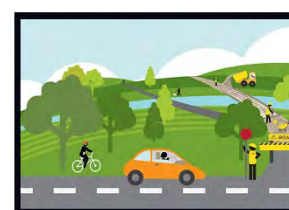
Current cycle: 2 weeks (major roads)  
Current budget: \$850,000  
Cycle with SRV: Weekly (major roads)  
Budget with SRV: \$1,050,000



## 12x Shoulder Grading

divert water and safe pullover

Current length: 8.5km per year  
Current budget: \$55,000  
Length with SRV: 100km per year  
Budget with SRV: \$647,000



## 2x Linemarking

clearly marked traffic lanes

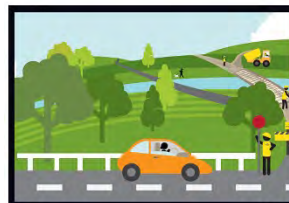
Current cycle: 10 years  
Current budget: \$39,000  
Cycle with SRV: 5 years  
Budget with SRV: \$105,000



## Gravel Patching

safer, smoother rural roads

Current cycle: On inspection  
Current budget: \$120,000  
Cycle with SRV: 3 months  
Budget with SRV: \$240,000



## 6x Safety Barriers

safer, clearly defined roads

Current length: 85m per year  
Current budget: \$17,000  
Length with SRV: 500m per year  
Budget with SRV: \$100,000



## 2x Drainage

water directed away from roads

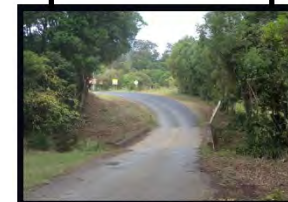
Current cycle: 12 years (5 per week)  
Current budget: \$427,000  
Cycle with SRV: 6 years (10 per week)  
Budget with SRV: \$902,000



## 3x Roadside Vegetation

clear line of sight

Current cycle: 3 years (unsealed roads)  
Current budget: \$418,000  
Cycle with SRV: 1 year (unsealed collector)  
Budget with SRV: \$893,000







**1.75x**  
**Gravel Resheet**  
surface repair and stabilisation

Current length:	20km per year
Current budget:	\$750,000
Length with SRV:	35km per year
Budget with SRV:	\$1.3million



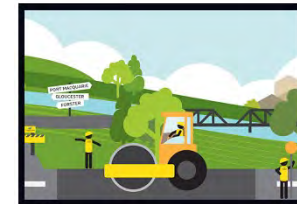
**3x**  
**Reconstruction**  
major works when road is beyond repair

Current cycle:	1km per year
Current budget:	\$800,000
Cycle with SRV:	3km per year
Budget with SRV:	\$2.4 million



**5x** **Heavy Patching**  
improved surface over time

Current patching:	45,000m <sup>2</sup> per year
Current budget:	\$700,000
Patching with SRV:	225,000m <sup>2</sup> per year
Budget with SRV:	\$4.3million

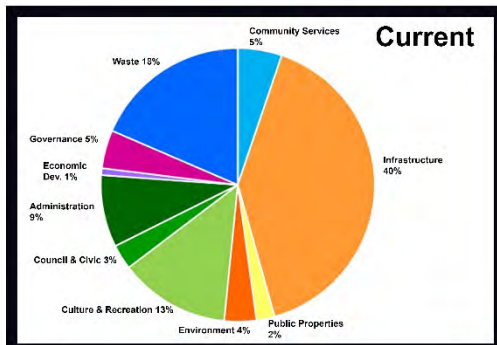


**5x** **Surface resealing**  
Returning roads to as-new condition

Current cycle:	7km per year (100 year cycle)
Current budget:	\$300,000
Cycle with SRV:	40km per year (20 year cycle)
Budget with SRV:	\$1.7 million







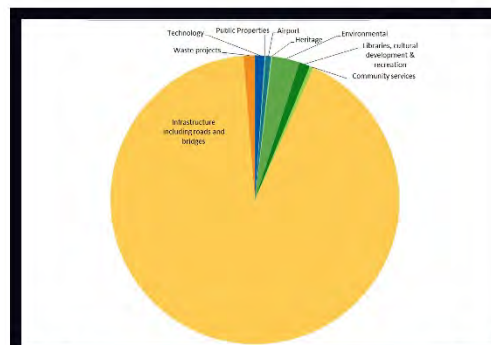
## Where do your rates go?

Currently our annual rates income is around \$27.7 million.

40% of this is spent on infrastructure and on top of this, we actively seek additional external funding.

Other services include:

- Waste
- Libraries
- Tourism
- Park maintenance
- Entertainment Centre
- Art Gallery



## We win grants

The graph above shows where we have sourced additional income by way of government grants to boost the rating income.

Total grants won in 2014/15 =

**\$24.3 million**

The majority of these grants were for our ageing road network.

## What's important to you?

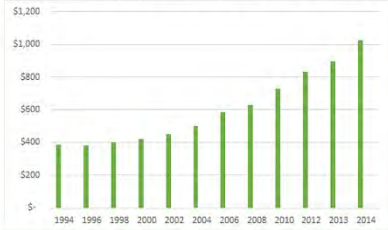


## Dickensons Bridge



**\$2.2 million grant funded**

## How our average rates have changed

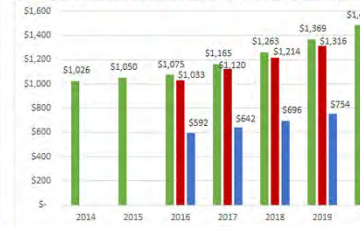


Our current average rate is just over \$1,000

In year six, this would increase by 47% to \$1,484

## Impact on rates with SRV

Average, Pensioner (before rebate) & lowest residential



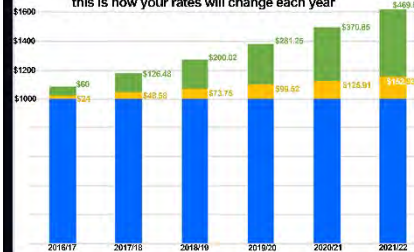
## How will SRV impact your rates? If you currently pay \$1,000 per year

	Rate Peg Only Increase 2.4%		Rate Peg + SRV Increase 2.4% + 6%		SRV adds
2016/17	\$1,024	\$24.00	\$1,064	\$84.00	\$60.00
2017/18	\$1,049	\$24.58	\$1,175	\$91.06	\$66.48
2018/19	\$1,074	\$25.17	\$1,274	\$98.70	\$73.54
2019/20	\$1,100	\$25.77	\$1,381	\$107.00	\$81.23
2020/21	\$1,126	\$26.39	\$1,497	\$115.98	\$89.60
2021/22	\$1,153	\$27.02	\$1,622	\$125.73	\$98.70

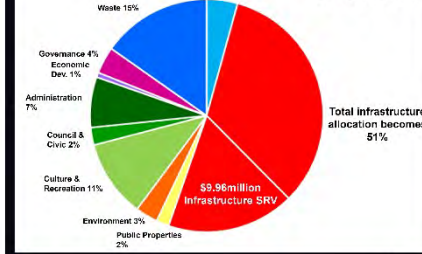
In year one, the proposed SRV adds \$60 to the annual rates total, or \$1.15 per week

This compounds each year so that by year six, the annual rates total increases by \$470, or \$9 each week

## For someone currently paying \$1,000 per year, this is how your rates will change each year



## With SRV



## SRV funds will be dedicated to our roads

The SRV proposal is based on applying a 6% annual rate increase each year for 6 years

This will mean an extra \$9.96million will be invested to halt the deterioration of our roads

Have a look at the detailed outline of what you will see as a result

## Safer Roads for our Community



## Calculating the impact of SRV on your rates

Greater Taree City Council

Calculating the impact of SRV on your rates

Name: [ ] Street Address: [ ] Suburb: [ ] Postcode: [ ]

Assessment Number: [ ]

Rating Category: [ ]

Location and description of property: [ ]

Particulars of rates and charges: [ ]

Rateable Value: [ ]

Rate in dollar charge: [ ]

Amount: [ ]

SRV applies only to the total of these 2 figures

Payment Options: [ ]

Assessment Number: [ ]

Rate Amount: [ ]

First Instalment: [ ]

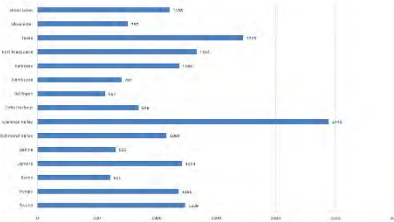
Amount: [ ]

SRV adds: [ ]

Total: [ ]



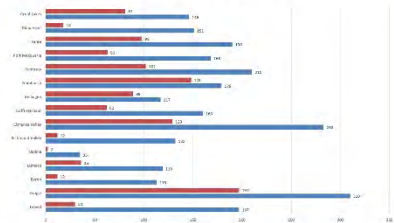
North Coast Councils - total road km



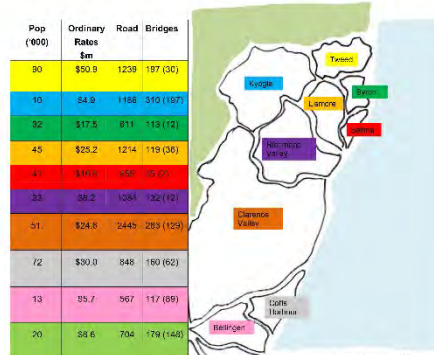
Our 1,725km road network means we are second only to Clarence Valley on the entire North Coast

We come in fourth with our 190 bridges and over half are still timber

North Coast Councils - total bridges

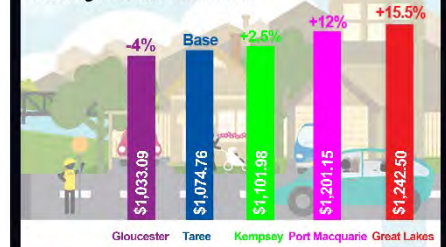


How we compare with our neighbours



Population ('000)	Ordinary Rates \$m	Road (km)	Bridges Total & Timber
80	\$11.2	1188	211 (102)
77	\$40.6	1334	169 (53)
43	\$25.7	1725	190 (88)
5	\$9.6	782	151 (81)
38	\$29.3	1109	148 (81)

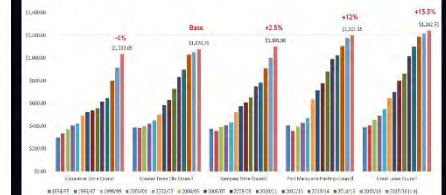
Average Residential Rates



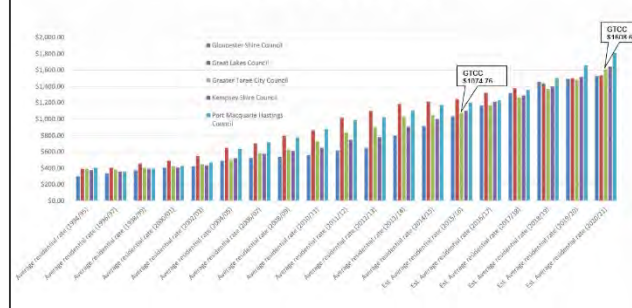
In 1994/95, our residential rates were in line with our Great Lakes neighbours.

Since then, their rates have risen to be over 15% higher than ours

Average Residential Rate Comparison 1994 - 2016




Average residential rate increases, incorporating Fit for the Future submissions





# Display materials – Phase 2


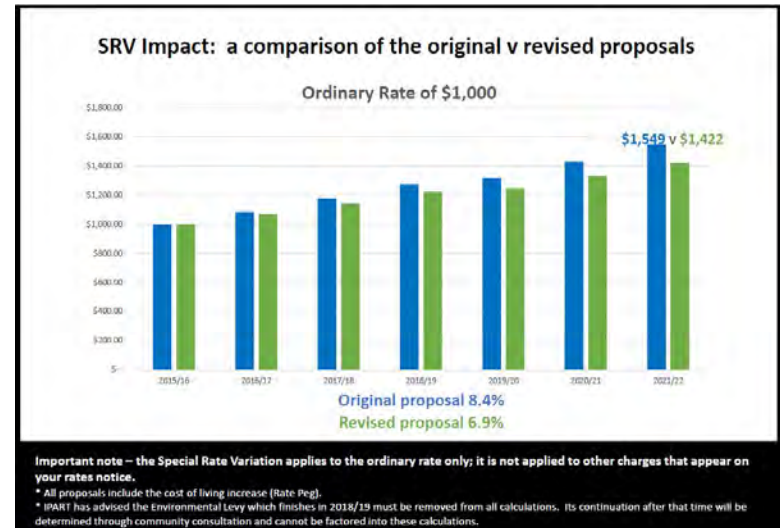
 Greater Taree  
City Council

# Safer Roads for Less

**Thankyou for your feedback on the proposed  
Special Rate Variation**

As a result, we've revised our proposal so we can deliver  
safer roads for our community in a way that is more affordable for all.

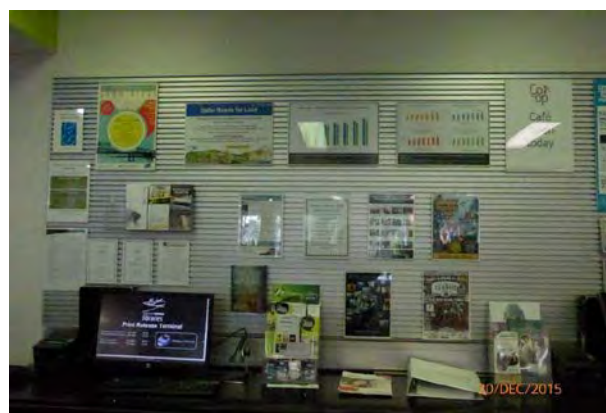
Take a look at the charts to see how the  
**lower 6.9% proposal**  
will impact you then visit [www.taree.cc/safer-roads](http://www.taree.cc/safer-roads) to complete our short survey  
and tell us what you think (or write to us at 2 Pulteney St Taree)

Shopfront window display, Taree CBD







# Council Meeting - Minutes

#### 1 SPECIAL RATE VARIATION CONSULTATION (\$1433)

Report Author: Laura Black Executive Leader Corporate Support  
 Authorised: Ron Posselt General Manager

#### SUMMARY

Prior to lodging a Special Rate Variation (SRV), the determining body, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), requires councils to provide evidence of community consultation that gauges support or sound objections. The process calls for councils to notify IPART of their intent to submit an SRV application in December and determine whether or not the application will be formally lodged prior to the closing date in February. While Council is required to indicate an intention to lodge an SRV in December, this action does not compel Council to submit a formal application in February should we choose not to do so.

This report recommends that we seek feedback from our community over the coming months through a consultation process that is designed to inform of the infrastructure problem, identify how the funds raised through an SRV would be used and what the impact of increased rates would be on the ratepayer. The proposed SRV focusses on a number of improved road infrastructure maintenance and renewal service levels that are designed to increase safety for road users, while addressing the decline in quality. It is in relation to the extent of these activities that feedback is specifically sought. The nature of the community's response to consultation will be reported to Council in early 2016 as a means of informing any decision to make a formal SRV application.

At the October Councillor workshop, a request was also made that while consulting, we canvass the community's appetite for an additional 1% increase above the proposed 6% SRV, which equates to a 7% increase above the normal cost of living increase (rate peg). The intention being to restrict expenditure of the 1% to maintaining and enhancing community facilities.

#### RECOMMENDATION

- (i) That a community consultation process occur in accordance with the engagement plan attached to, and outlined in, this report based on a special rate variation proposal of a 6% increase in general rates above the normal cost of living increase, each year for the next 6 years to be restricted to infrastructure maintenance and renewal.
- (ii) That during the consultation period, community feedback also be sought about increasing the proposed SRV a further 1% to 7%, to improve maintenance of community facilities.
- (iii) That a budget variation of \$40,000 to facilitate the consultation process be endorsed.
- (iv) That following the period of consultation and collation of the feedback received, a report be submitted to Council in January 2016, to inform a decision about a special rate variation.

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#### 1 SPECIAL RATE VARIATION CONSULTATION (\$1433)

**MOVED** Cr Hogan/West

- (i) That a community consultation process occur in accordance with the engagement plan attached to, and outlined in, this report based on a special rate variation proposal of a 6% increase in general rates above the normal cost of living increase, each year for the next 6 years to be restricted to infrastructure maintenance and renewal.
- (ii) That during the consultation period, community feedback also be sought about increasing the proposed SRV a further 1% to 7%, with the extra 1% being restricted to improved maintenance of community facilities.
- (iii) That a budget variation of \$40,000 to facilitate the consultation process be endorsed.
- (iv) That following the period of consultation and collation of the feedback received, a report be submitted to Council in January 2016, to inform a decision about a special rate variation.

**CARRIED**

For: Jennison, West, Keegan, Jenkins, Christensen & Hogan.

Against: Bell & Eppov.

Refer to report attachment,  
Engagement Plan, following



## Engagement Plan

Project Name: Special Rate Variation (rate increase) ratepayer consultation  
 Project Approved: TBA Council resolution sought October 2015  
 Project Owner: Executive/Councillors  
 Project due for Delivery: November – December 2015

<b>Objective</b>	<p>We are seeking ratepayers response to a proposal to increase rates as follows:                      6% over 6 years (excl. rate peg), after which to remain in the base rate.                      The SRV is proposed for distinct road infrastructure improvements.                      Ratepayer response is sought, recognising that response may be in the form of support or objection.</p>
<b>Scope</b>	<p>Prior to lodging a Special Rate Variation (SRV), the determining body (IPART) requires Councils to provide evidence of community consultation that gauges support or sound objections. The process calls for Council to notify IPART of their intent to lodge an SRV application in December, consult and determine whether the application will be lodged prior to the closing date in February.</p> <p>The consultation element of this SRV proposal is proposed to be intense over a short period of time. The period of consultation will commence early November and conclude mid December (7 weeks).</p> <p>We have a story we wish to tell the rate payer, before proposing a solution to the problem that requires an increase in property rates. Ratepayer response to the proposition will then be sought. Response is likely to be one of two things, support for the proposal or objection to the proposal. Objection may be accompanied by alternative solutions, which need to be assessed on merit.</p> <p>While Council's notification to IPART in December 2015 may indicate that it intends to lodge an SRV, Council is not compelled to submit an application. The nature of ratepayer response, may influence Council's decision to make an SRV application in 2016.</p> <p>Ratepayer response to this consultation may influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proposed SRV percentage;</li> <li>the time frame for increase; and/or</li> <li>the period over which any increase is applied.</li> </ul> <p>In addition feedback may also influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the priority and implementation order of improvement aspects;</li> <li>the quantum allocated to improvement aspects; and/or</li> <li>the proposed service levels for road infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<b>Non-negotiable elements</b>	<p>The SRV proposes an improved level of service for road infrastructure and it is not intended that feedback received from ratepayers can influence a changed focus about a different service type provided by Council, or about a service type that is not currently provided by the Council.</p> <p>This is because the proposed SRV is underpinned by significant data that is drawn from asset plans that indicates a need to improve service levels on road infrastructure to make them safer for community use. Improved road infrastructure management has been a focus of Council for five years.</p>
<b>Timing</b>	<p>The engagement will commence in early November (WB 2/11/2015) and conclude (WB 14/12/2015). And includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media stories</li> <li>Open shop front in CBD</li> <li>Radio slots</li> <li>Handouts</li> <li>Surveys</li> </ul>

<b>Key Stakeholder/s</b>	Ratepayers are the key stakeholders in this engagement, as they are directly impacted financially.
<b>Communities of interest</b>	Road users are the communities of interest, as any improvement in road infrastructure is a benefit in which they share, but do not contribute to financially.
<b>Engagement Methods</b>	<p>The planned approaches of engagement are in two phases:</p> <p><b>Inform:</b> Create the story hub on our website and push that story out through face to face public presentation, targeted presentations to interest groups, media, social media and electronic distribution lists. The intent is to draw an audience to the story hub to ensure an accurate understanding of our infrastructure issue.</p> <p><b>Seek:</b> Conduct a week long presence in the CBD that seeks feedback from the community through a survey in addition to engaging an independent survey company to conduct a phone survey, in accordance with the IPART recommended sample size for a local government area of this size (450).</p>
<b>Communications Channels</b>	<p>GTCC Website</p> <p>Face to face</p> <p>Media representation</p> <p>GTCC Social media</p> <p>GTCC email distribution lists</p> <p>CBD shop front</p> <p>Independent survey</p>
<b>Risk</b>	<p>The most significant risk to the engagement project is that response from the key stakeholders cannot be discerned from the response from communities of interest.</p> <p>Any survey of community needs to identify ratepayers as a distinct group, as they are financially impacted.</p> <p>It is critical that there be a single source of truth for the story and this will be controlled through the story hub created on the GTCC website.</p>
<b>Key messages</b>	<p>The proposal involves an investment of \$10m per annum with \$2m going to improved maintenance to maintain a safe road network and \$8m going to renewal of roads through appropriate interventions that are generally not full reconstruction.</p> <p>The \$10m will be raised through additional rates by a 6% increase on top of the statutory cost of living increase each year for six years. At the end of the six years the level of rates paid by Greater Taree residents will be similar to those of surrounding communities. The \$10m will be locked in for this purpose in perpetuity and Council will report annually on how this money has been spent and what the performance is against agreed service level benchmarks.</p>
<b>Outcome / Next Steps</b>	<p>Following the engagement period, collation of the responses will be required. This will occur in late December early January. It is then intended that the collated responses be reported to Council either in January or to an extra ordinary meeting of Council in early February. This report will require the Council to resolve whether to make an SRV application. The timing of this meeting is dependent on the IPART SRV submission date, yet to be advised, but believed to be mid February. Key stakeholders and communities of interest will be informed of the recommendation of the report through the story hub created on the website and pushed through the identified communication channels.</p>

## EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING – 9 DECEMBER 2015 STAFF REPORTS

### 1 PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION (\$1433)

**Report Author:** Ron Posselt      **General Manager**

#### SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the General Manager notify the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of Council's intention to apply for a Special Rate Variation that is proposed to commence in 2016/17 subject to further community consultation.

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the General Manager advise the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of Council's intention to submit an application for a Special Rate Variation in 2016/17 prior to the 11 December 2015 closing date indicating:

- (i) a 6.9% Special Rate Variation (including the rate peg) each year for 6 years that will permanently remain in the rate base;
- (ii) the application will be made under Section 508(A) of the Local Government Act 1993;
- (iii) the funds raised will be quarantined to specifically fund the maintenance and renewal of roads; and
- (iv) the General Manager will be Council's contact point for the application.

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### 1 PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION (\$1433)

***MOVED*** Cr Hogan/West *(as per recommendation)*

That the General Manager advise the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of Council's intention to submit an application for a Special Rate Variation in 2016/17 prior to the 11 December 2015 closing date indicating:

- (i) a 6.9% Special Rate Variation (including the rate peg) each year for 6 years that will permanently remain in the rate base;
- (ii) the application will be made under Section 508(A) of the Local Government Act 1993;
- (iii) the funds raised will be quarantined to specifically fund the maintenance and renewal of roads; and
- (iv) the General Manager will be Council's contact point for the application.

**CARRIED** on the casting vote of the Mayor

For: West, Christensen & Hogan.

Against: Bell, Epov & Jenkins.



## \* SPECIAL RATE VARIATION APPLICATION (\$1433)

**Report Author:** Laura Black  
**Authorised:** Ron Posselt  
**Executive Leader Corporate Support General Manager**

**SUMMARY**

Special rate variations (SRV) provide councils with an opportunity to vary general income by an amount greater than the annual rate peg. They are an important means of providing additional funding to councils in delivering services and infrastructure that the community expects and which the council is unable to fund within existing revenue.

Greater Taree City Council commenced consideration of the potential for special rate variation to increase expenditure on infrastructure in June 2014 when it adopted a Long Term Financial Plan scenario that included a 5% SRV to commence in 2016/2017. With adoption of the LTTP in June 2015, this was revised to 6%, over two years in one scenario and over 6 years in another. In June 2015, the latter formed the basis of the Council endorsed submission of its 'Fit for the Future' proposal, to the NSW State Government.

*Council's draft 2015/2016 budget proposes a Long Term Financial Plan scenario 3 that indicates a rate variation of 6% in addition to the IPART rate peg for 6 years, with the additional rating income to remain in the budget following this period. By 2022/2023, this increase would realise an approximately \$10M in additional rating income per annum all of which it is proposed be quarantined for expenditure on infrastructure maintenance and renewal. The aim of this being to decelerate deterioration of the road and bridge infrastructure.*

Fit for the Future Submission endorsed by Council – June 17 2015.

Since June 2014, a significant amount of work has been done to quantify the infrastructure related work that would be completed under an SRV, and this has now been communicated through extensive measures to our community.

Feedback received through consultation gave rise to a reduction in the quantum of the SRV from 8.4% to 6.9% (inclusive of the annual rate peg) and inclusion of an additional rebate for eligible pensioners.

This report details the SRV proposal including increased income, the impact on ratepayers and the infrastructure maintenance and renewal deliverables, the community consultation undertaken and the feedback received. It also seeks the consideration of council to submit an SRV application to IPART by the due date of 15 February 2016.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That a Special Rate Variation application under s508 of the Local Government Act 1993 be made to IPART by the due date of 15 February 2016 indicating:

- (i) a 6.9% rate increase each year, for 6 years that will remain permanently in the rate base;
- (ii) the special rate variation commence in 2016/2017;
- (iii) that the purpose of the special rate variation is infrastructure maintenance and renewal;
- (iv) the consultation and communication approach that has been applied to preparation of this special rate variation;
- (v) that community support for the special rate variation, gauged through an independent statistically representative random study, outweighs opposition 49% to 32%; and
- (vi) ~~that~~ the General Manager be council's contact for the application.