





Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal NSW  
23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023

Attention: Mr Edward Jenkins

Dear Sir,



Our company assessed the proposed rate increases recently advertised by Council and lodged a submission objecting to their proposals A, B & C. It appears that Council is basically proceeding with Option C from their original proposal which we understand to be 45% plus a rate pegging increase over a 2 year period. A 45% base rate increase would be about \$4,500 per annum for our property which is a business rated property containing shops and offices. As there are about 20 empty shops in Bega plus the impacts of covid and online shopping on trade, there is very little potential for us to pass on such increases to our tenants as to do so would be unaffordable to many of them.

Council's submission for this two stage increase acknowledges that 71% of the submissions lodged on their 4 proposals were an objection to any increase above the rate peg. Despite this demonstrated rejection of their above rate pegging proposals Council has proceeded to lodge an application with IPART for this 45% increase. There is only minority support for such an increase. It is also noted that 3 of the 9 Councillors voted against this increase.

It is clear to us from Council's original proposal that they were always aiming for a 45% increase which they are proceeding with against the response received from their ratepayers. At no stage did Council propose more modest increases which may have gained community support. We only lodged an objection with Council after receipt of a letter from them advising of an impending meeting to make a rates decision. Until that time we were totally unaware of the 4 proposals. We, like many Bega Valley Rate payers, don't participate in on-line surveys.

While understanding that rate pegging over the last decade has been inadequate to meet Council's rising costs, a rate increase of this magnitude indicates that Council is "tone deaf" to the economic pressures being felt by local residents and businesses. Wages have gone backwards against the cost of living for a decade, inflation is running at over 7% and local businesses are struggling to keep their doors open due to increasing costs, supply chain problems and a shortage of workers. Large increases in electricity and gas prices have also heavily impacted residents and businesses in the

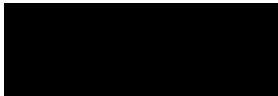
Shire.

Council is in the same position to its ratepayers in terms of economic stress. To cover rising costs many rate payers need to decide on how to cut back on their expenses. In terms of business those decisions could include whether to close their doors. Cutting back isn't easy but in the current economic climate is necessary. Ratepayers cannot live beyond their means and Council is not unique in having this problem. Some services may need to be cut. Ratepayers didn't create Council's current problem but are being asked to fully fund a solution.

It is our submission that Council should only be allowed a single increase in rates above rate pegging. This will give them time to more thoroughly assess cost saving measures which can then be communicated to ratepayers, by mail and community meetings. This will provide a basis for a further decision on future rate proposals.

We ask that the 2023/24 rate increase be limited to a one year only increase above rate pegging preferably of the order of 10%, but no more than 23%, and that the second rates increase proposal be disallowed due to lack of ratepayer support.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Author name: e. stulpinas

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

We need you IPART to help us ratepayers - you are our last line of help. They must stick to single digit Rate Pegging.

HELP!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

It has not - only the usual bureaucratic confusing data which is not even understood by the Bega News. It seems to love to generate a bureaucratic pages and pages full of meaningless data .

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

It does not - never seems to be able to curtail spending and forever making very very costly decisions - even lately advertising availability for grants for thousands and thousands of dollars - has never in the past EVER looked or inspected how any of it was used or generated for value. Airport (runs at a loss) - made airy statements that it was going to run at a profit by bringing in more people and visitors - NOW using same airy fairy argument for the new to art gallery (\$45,000 for just a name change alone - really) - even the Bega Centre Civic is running at a loss.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The confusing data could have been more readily explained by The land value just increased by 61% which impacts on your Residential and Residential Base Rate which is 25% of the Total Rates Charges by 61%. That is your impacted rates over the next 2 years will be 61% on 25% X 24%SV a compound interest + the cost on the remaining total rates charges for 2023/24 And for 2024/25 it will be further 22%SV a further compound interest on the new 25% + a Rate Peg + the cost on the remaining total rates charges. And will do this again in 4 years time.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

The take or leave it approach but it does not affect us - they just go ahead. Whenever one tries to communicate with the person within the council - not right here right now but will leave a message - then done by email or such - never face to face. How do you believe that this council is hearing us when they never listen.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Just gave it to us via media - take it or leave it. Even indicated this will be again repeated in the same manner in 4 years time - showing us just how they will intend to curtail their financial mismanagement. Some thing is very very seriously wrong with how the BVSC manages and runs this council.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It will impact my wife and I severely - we are becoming stressed to the point it is making us feel ill. If in any one month - and that could happen 4 times - i.e. every 3 months - if the Electricity and Rates bills come at the same time - it will only leave us with about \$1.30 left for that month. There H/K bills, House and Car Ins, Telstra bills, Registration trailer, water bill, repayments, petrol and medical and that if nothing goes wrong!!!!!!!!!! AND ALL THIS AGAIN TO REPEATED IN 4 YEAR TIME!!!!!!!!!!!!!! We will not be able to do this!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

This will be the largest SRV application forced on us - the largest in BVSC history - and already inferring it will happen again - how do you think that this constitutes a consideration?. They do not even take in consideration that there is a need for their curtailment on even to look into their financial management.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

What plan????????? They are led by ideology/politics and career aspirations for very poor financial planning and spending than by real issues that concern for the rest of the 96% of the peoples of the BVSC ratepayers.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No - just stated via media this is it.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and

cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The BVSC must be audited independently to how they are mismanaging our rates monies. We cannot have our rates increased by these type of SVs - the Council must take responsibility and made to be accountable.

Author name: E. Stulpinas

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Further to our plea for help - this is the latest comment by The Mayor Russell Fitzpatrick - he questioned why people might haggle over a rate rise when their recently reassessed land values doubled. Really!!! - the SRV compound interest for the next 2 years are directly impacted by this land value increase - and hence all compounded even further by these greedy SRV. The arrogance of the man (represents the council) just how out of touch they really are. How does the land value help us - whether double in value or more - we live here and it does not make a difference - it's our home. He also thinks older people may be better off selling the family home and moving into something smaller to free up larger homes for younger families. Our home, our present past and future - the arrogance of the man!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Now you see when I say - why do we think the council cannot hear when they do not even listen!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Put the council in Administration!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Eddy stulpinas

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

see other comments

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

see other comments

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

etc

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

etc

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

etc

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

etc

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etc

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

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etc

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

etc

Author name: H. Davison

Date of submission: Saturday, 25 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Many, many rate payers in the Bega Valley Shire Council are still recovering from the fires which burnt their homes, belongings and livelihoods, they do not need added expenses to their cost of living. There are huge increases in the cost of living already ...interest rates, groceries, energy, fuel and LLS fees. I say NO to rate increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: H. Gabriel

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I am a local self employed music teacher in the Bega Valley. I have great concerns and am opposed to the unreasonable increase to rates proposed in the SRV for 2023 and beyond. Friends, family and colleagues in my local community also agree that the steep increase will have a detrimental effect on rate payers, business owners and people who live in rented accomodation. I was involved in the petitions to extend the time for the wider community to have their say in regards to the SRV. I was not able to attend the public meeting regarding the SRV., but I have had discussions with people who were present and have read their submissions. My impression is that the BVSC did not consult or engage with the community in an open and transparent manner, and they did not allow enough time for this process. Could it be possible that the decision had already been made, regardless of the community's wishes and present needs? I believe the focus needs to be on rebuilding in a way that helps the community to get back on it's feet, not make it more difficult. Surely after the hardship of the last 4 years of bushfires, Covid lockdowns, loss of jobs and incomes, it would be wiser to curb spending on non essential services and big projects. A 43.6 % increase in rates is going to place an even greater burden and stress on families and businesses who are still trying to recover financially and emotionally. Yours Sincerely Helen 'Bunny' Gabriel

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

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Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: I. Robson

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

We do not support this Rate rise as they have shown no improvement in efficiency and frequently carry out bandaid solutions to issues rather than fixing issues properly the first time. They also fail to make efficient use of resources to complete all issues in close proximity, doing a piecemeal job and returning on several occasions. Work carried out is often unnecessary and substandard. Recent road resealing works were carried out on good standard roads that didn't require it. They also tried to apply sealing over grass clumps grown along the edges which have already grown back through and lifted the new surfacing. Recent Work on Merimbula Airport made no allowance for the road damage caused by the thousands of truck movements which have impacted Arthur Kaine Drive south of the airport entrance. For a project that is supposed to be complete they are still paying for temporary security fencing rather than erecting the permanent fencing. Building Approvals are taking over 8 months to process tying up rental availability and causing financial loss and stress on the applicants who are already paying rates. In reality IPART should reject this Rate increase. We also feel that an administrator should be appointed and a full audit carried out.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

We do not believe that they are using their available revenue efficiently. They do partial patchup work and on a very hit and miss nature. Things like bringing in the equipment to do road repairs on one section which hardly needed work and ignoring a much more serious issue 30 metres away.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that we are aware of and with the proliferation of Dual Occupancy developments their regular rate income is doubled from the property with little extra costs.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The council did not communicate their intention. As a ratepayer we were not sent the notification of the proposal which were supposedly sent to all ratepayers. We only learnt of this from neighbouring ratepayers and only after contacting them did we get the notification. How many other ratepayers were not notified?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. See above. Opportunity to meet with council representatives were not widely publicised and there were only a limited number of gatherings and not necessarily in more populated areas.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council has made no action or comment on the community feedback.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

A high percentage of ratepayers are on fixed incomes and are already feeling pressure by higher inflation and rapidly rising cost of living. In fact many self-funded retirees suffered a major drop in income. The report presented by council is out dated and makes no allowance for the increasing interest rates and inflation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

We do not believe the council has correctly considered the capacity of ratepayers to meet this increase. They have no idea of the lack of community willingness to which is almost zero due to the inefficiency of their operations and fail to listen to community concerns.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

If a ratepayer needs to delay payment and they are on fixed income how are they going to meet this payment in the future?

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

They did hold an extraordinary meeting but not aware if all the relevant documentation was available for comment prior to this.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.



Not aware of any plans for productivity improvement and plans to upgrade older infrastructure

Author name: J. MCKENZIE-SMITH

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I HAVE LIVED IN THE BEGA VALLEY SHIRE FOR 37 YEARS, HAVING AN ANCESTRAL HISTORY DATING BACK APPROXIMATELY 120 YEARS. THIS IS MY HOME, BUT I NOW FEEL THAT I AM BEING FORCEABLY PUSHED INTO POVERTY AS A NOW AGED PENSIONER WITH LIMITED FUNDS. THE SERVICES I USE ARE WATER, SEWERAGE, WASTE DISPOSAL, ROADS AND CARPARKS. THAT'S IT. NOTHING ELSE. MUCH OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE IS GEARED TO THE TOURIST POPULATION, SO MAYBE IT IS TIME FOR SOME USERPAY DOLLARS FOR LIBRARIES, SWIMMING POOLS, SPORTING FACILITIES ETC. AND PROBABLY A LEVY PAID BY THE HOLIDAY POPULATION AT THEIR POINT OF ACCOMMODATION BY THE LANDLORDS OF SAID ACCOMMODATION. I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD WORK HARD ALL MY LIFE TO NOW BE FACED WITH THE FINANCIAL STRESS OF OBSCENE RATE RISES & WHAT IS EQUALLY APPALLING IS THAT MY CHILDREN & OTHERS CHILDREN ARE ALREADY IN A POSITION OF PERHAPS NEVER BEING ABLE TO AFFORD TO LIVE IN THE TOWNS THAT THEY GREW UP IN BECAUSE OF ALSO OBSCENE COST OF HOUSING, BEING A PURCHASER OF A PROPERTY OR FOREVER BEING IN THE RENT CYCLE. THE PILGRIMAGE OF WEALTHY CITY PEOPLE TO OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES WHO ARE PREPARED AND ABLE TO PAY HUGE PRICES FOR PROPERTY, IS IN A GREAT PART THE PROBLEM FOR LOCAL KIDS TO GET IN TO THE MARKET. ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THAT THESE PEOPLE ARRIVE IN THE TOWNS AND IMMEDIATELY START DEMANDING THE SAME INFRASTRUCTURE AND BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT THAT THEY HAD IN THE CITIES. WELL, LET THEM PAY FOR IT. REAL COUNTRY PEOPLE JUST WANT THEIR TOWNS LEFT ALONE. THANKYOU

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

NO

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

ABSOLUTELY NOT

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

BASICALLY IGNORED THE FEEDBACK

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

MANY RATEPAYERS SUCH AS MYSELF ARE AGED PENSIONERS RECEIVING A GOVERNMENT AGED PENSION LITTLE OR NO SAVINGS OR SUPERANNUATION TO SUPPLEMENT THE PENSION WHICH DOES NOT COVER RATES, UTILITIES AND ALL OTHER LIVING EXPENSES.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I DOUBT THAT ANY CONSIDERATION HAS BEEN GIVEN TO WHAT I WOULD SAY IS THE MAJORITY OF RATEPAYERS CAPACITY TO PAY THIS PERMANENT INCREASE, THIS FINANCIAL YEAR AND FUTURE FINANCIAL YEARS. THERE ARE OF COURSE WEALTHY PEOPLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY WHO WILL HAVE THE CAPACITY TO PAY BUT THEY ARE THE MINORITY.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I ATTENDED THE COUNCIL MEETING AND THE ONLY THING I HEARD MENTIONED ABOUT ADDRESSING HARDSHIP WAS APPLYING TO THE NSW GOVERNMENT FOR SUBSIDISING OF THE DISCOUNT GIVEN TO PENSIONERS. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE WHATSOEVER OF THE NSW GOVERNMENT AGREEING. NOT ONE OTHER SUGGESTION WAS MADE.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

EXHIBITED SO QUIETLY THAT THE MAJORITY OF RATEPAYERS WERE UNAWARE AND THE NOTICE WAS SENT OUT A WEEK BEFORE XMAS WITH A CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS OF MID JANUARY. A TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN NO ONE WOULD BE LOOKING AT SOMETHING FROM COUNCIL, NOT BEING A RATE NOTICE PERIOD. ALSO THE BUSIEST TIME OF THE YEAR, HAVING FAMILY VISITING OR BEING AWAY AT FAMILIES AND NOT AT HOME. DISPICABLE UNDERHANDED SNEAKY BEHAVIOUR BY BVSC. THEY SHOULD ALL BE SACKED AND AN ADMINISTRATOR BOUGHT IN IMMEDIATELY TO LOOK IN TO THE FINANCIAL DEALING OF THE COUNCIL FOR AT LEAST THE LAST 5 YEARS.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

ABSOLUTETELY NO EXPLANATION TO THE RATEPAYERS ABOUT PRODICTIVITY IMPROVEMENT OR COST CONTAINMENT STRATEGIES.

Author name: K. Pass

Date of submission: Saturday, 25 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

In summary, I object to the Bega Valley Shire Councils (BVSC) decision to apply for a permanent Special Rate Variation (SRV) to IPART of 48% over two years (cited as Option E in the BVSC submission). The evidence put forward by the BVSC to justify the SRV increase as reasonable and necessary is flimsy and based on a community survey that provided limited options for responses. Council has received substantial Government funding for maintenance of its assets over the last few years. Other shires, such as our neighbouring Eurobodalla, share similar circumstances (bushfire recovery, low proportions of rateable land, country roads to maintain) and a similar rate peg set by IPART, but have not applied for a SRV. Bega Valley shire rate payers are already paying a substantial amount of rates and the proposed increase will put Bega Valley rates among the highest when compared with other similar regions, driving out those who cannot afford to live in the region. As a body whose purpose is to protect the ratepayer from excessive increases, I urge IPART to reject the BVSC application of a permanent SRV of 48%.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

The Council maintains it has no option but to dramatically increase our rates or dramatically reduce its services, in particular to roads, bridges and pools. However, BVSC recently received substantial funding for the following: Bridges: \$16.8 million from the NSW Governments Fixing Country Bridges project in 2021; and Roads: \$500,000 in 2022 plus an expected additional share of \$500m in 2023 from the NSW Government Regional and Local Roads Repair Program. Regarding maintenance of the Shires public swimming pools, in 2019 BVSC estimated an increase of just 11% including the 2.6% Rate Peg would be enough to maintain the six pools until 2070.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The alternatives BVSC has canvassed are all linked to reducing services. Shire residents have been given the choice to either accept the SRV of a permanent increase to general rates of 48% or the closure of our libraries and pools, and substantially reduced maintenance of the Shire's assets, including roads and bridges. The Council has not canvassed the option of seeking other sources of revenue, for example requiring State Forestry to fund the maintenance of forestry roads that the Shire currently funds, or seeking State funding of roads for national parks, which should not just be the responsibility of rate payers to maintain. The Council has also not canvassed the reduction of expenditure which would accrue if it were to improve its administrative efficiency, or revise its investment strategies.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The community survey conducted by BVSC as part of their community consultation requirements shows a majority of respondents (71.34%) opted for no SRV (Option D). Despite this overwhelming response, the BVSC opted for a SRV of 43% (Option C) permanent increase, based on a low 15.10% response rate. A subsequent decision was made to apply for a new Option E of 48.3% over two years. In providing evidence of the need to increase general rates by 48% over two years, BVSC cited the community survey results indicating a majority of respondents (79%) want BVSC to maintain and upgrade current assets. The same survey however, shows that the majority of respondents (71.3%) do not want the SRV options that the council put forward. Such responses highlight the biased nature of the survey questions that provided limited response options. A more realistic interpretation of these results would be that ratepayers expect their roads, footpaths and bridges etc should continue to be maintained (this is why we pay our general rates) but do not hold with the Councils view that to do so a substantial increase in our general rates is needed.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

BVSC, in their application, have argued that a high infrastructure cost relative to a small rate base demonstrates the need for a SRV. It is worth noting that the Rate Peg set by IPART for Bega Valley Shire is commensurate with the Rate Peg set for our neighbouring Shire of Eurobodalla, indicating that the two shires share similar attributes and criteria in determining the Rate Peg. However, Eurobodalla Shire Council have chosen to adhere to the IPART Rate Peg rather than apply for a Special Rate Variation, with no mention of the need to reduce services as a result of this decision. Bega Valley shire rate payers are already paying a substantial amount of rates and the proposed increase will put Bega Valley rates among the highest when compared with other similar regions, driving out those who cannot afford to live in the region. A commissioned report by Morrison Low,

submitted to IPART by BVSC in their application, ranks average rates for councils similar to Bega Valley. The report highlights the discrepancy between the Bega and Eurobodalla shires: Bega Valley residential rates rank 4 for the proposed Option C rate increase (the second highest rate across the 26 regions), while our neighbouring shire of Eurobodalla has a residential ranking of just 18 [BVSC application, p. 39-40].

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. A majority of respondents (71.3%) to the community survey do not want the SRV options that the council put forward, despite BVSC threatening this will mean our assets are not maintained. Bega Valley ratepayers expect their assets (roads, footpaths and bridges etc) should continue to be maintained. This is why we pay our general rates, but do not hold with the Councils view that to do so a substantial increase in our general rates is needed.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The people of the Bega Valley Shire have suffered substantially over the past three years since the bushfires. I believe the SRV application by BVSC of such an excessive amount on top of the substantial rates we are already paying is exacerbating the stress of a community in the throes of recovery. The result in yet higher rates will likely force many residents of the shire to move to more affordable regions.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: L. Burton

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Council would benefit from implementing a strategy aimed at diversifying its revenue. Possible strategies include attracting young graduates to the shire possibly in collaboration with the Innovation Hub and the University of Wollongong campus at Bega. An analysis of services that create deficits is recommended with the aim of reviewing charges and plans to improve performance. The scope of Council's services and capital expenses appears unsustainable and needs a thorough review in relation to establishing a vision for the shire where it focuses and builds on its strengths. Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission concerning the proposed rate variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

1. This submission argues that Council's default in the context of suboptimal budget management is to resort to special rate rises. Insufficient attention is given to the operational deficits embedded in numerous services and activities with no plan to develop pathways to operational revenue neutrality as a minimum and no staff identified with KPIs to address deficits. 2. As noted elsewhere in this submission, Council's underlying structural deficits are not being addressed but treated as the status quo. Please refer to Question 2 (Criterion 1) below for information on identified structural deficits. 3. One of the structural deficit drivers relates to demographic data. The demographic data of Bega Valley demonstrates that the population underperforms significantly in terms of median weekly salary and is a much older population than the NSW median. 4. University degree educated members of the Bega Valley population comprise a meagre 6.5% compared with 15.3% for NSW and this figure correlates with the very low median weekly income of \$1,501 for families and \$1,200 for households compared with \$2,185 and \$1,829 respectively for NSW. 5. In the case of household income for occupied private dwellings, 23.9% of the Bega Valley population earned less than \$650 total household weekly earnings compared with 16.3% for NSW. With regard to higher earners in Bega Valley, 11.3% earned more than \$3,000 total household weekly income compared with 26.9% for NSW. 6. These drivers suggest a need to encourage demographic diversification through incentives for young graduates and those in early career paths to relocate to Bega Valley. This should be done in conjunction with an appropriate economic business strategy drawing on suitable existing businesses and providing incentives for new businesses to establish themselves in the Shire. 7. Without a plan to address these structural deficits, which are not new to Bega Valley, Council will resort to special rate variations as the only alternative to addressing budget deficits. It is recommended that IPART considers rejecting Council's application for approval for a special rate variation set at a high level of 43% permanently.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

1. Council does not appear to have undertaken strategic assessment of the underlying structural drivers leading to the budget deficit and is not addressing those drivers. Significant structural drivers relate to the demographic composition of Bega Valley, combined with: (a) a lack of targeted prioritisation by Council in relation to funding core services rather than an extensive range outside the capacity to fund them; and (b) generating inadequate revenue from charges for specific services such as operating swimming pools. 2. As a result, alternatives to the rate rise are not being addressed and nor is there a longer term plan to address them. As such Council relies heavily on rate rises as its only solution to the problem of an inadequate base to generate funds. 3. Underlying structural deficits include, but are not limited to: (a) only 20% of land in Bega Valley Shire Council is rateable as the rest of the land comprises mainly national parks and State forests; (b) Bega Valley is locked into a very low population distributed over numerous small townships across a large geographic area; (c) demographic data from the ABS demonstrates specific adverse characteristics relating to: (i) low median educational attainment, (ii) low median salaries and (iii) an ageing population. (d) The lack of a large regional city in the shire places significant stress on Council regarding generation of an adequate rate base. 4. These underlying drivers, which are not being addressed, impact adversely on residents and investors. 5. It is clear from analysing the budget documents that particular activities are in permanent deficit and plans to address them appear absent. For example operation of the airport at Merimbula is over \$3m in operational deficit (2021/22). In 2021/2022, capital expenditure was \$15,694,000 which does not show up in operating costs. 6. Council has not adequately addressed increasing revenue for services that are in operational deficit. 7. For a very small population, Bega Valley Council lacks economies of scale while offering an extremely wide and complex range of services necessitating significant staffing levels (employee benefits and on-costs). 8. A line item in the budget referred to as "Materials and contracts" is almost as high in expenditure as "employee benefits and on-costs". 8. There may be public private partnership opportunities in some services such as the airport. It is recommended that IPART considers the drivers of structural deficits and whether Council can better address them through strategic measures aimed at diversification of the revenue base.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

1. Bega Valley Council communicated very well over the special rate variation (SV) including the full increase of the proposed SV in percentage terms and actual. Various rate increase scenarios were put forward for consideration and the impact of each of them was identified. Initially a 90% increase was Council's favoured option. 2. An online facility was available for property owners to check the rate increase for their property. 3. An officer was available to comment on any queries. It is considered

that Council be commended for its well developed communication and information provided on the SRV.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

1. The Council communicated extensively and comprehensively regarding the SV. A range of communication modes was used and information was timely and mostly informative. 2. One document was difficult to find online, the current and projected Council budget document. 3. I attended the online information session conducted by the CEO. During the Q&A session I queried how Council was streamlining its activities and addressing savings but the answer to this question was put off and ultimately not answered. Nevertheless it is considered that Council's community engagement strategy was well developed, appropriate and responsive.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

1. As noted above under Q1, Criterion 2 above, Council initially advocated a 90% special rate variation. Based on extensive community feedback and demonstrated data on elements such as capacity to pay, the increase sought currently is 43% introduced over two years, and will be ongoing. 2. Data on the consultation demonstrates that 71.34% of respondents (or 1663 people) opted for no special rate increase (see p6, Appendix 2, Survey Results). Only 15.10% (or 352 people) supported Option C, a 43% increase. The consultation demonstrates that the community predominantly opposes a special rate increase. 3. The 43% increase is itself considered excessive and disproportionate to property values suggesting underlying structural deficits that are not being addressed. The current valuation of my property is under \$140,000 yet the annual rates (without water/sewerage charges) are set at \$984.83 (total package with water/sewerage is \$2,002.78 for 2022/23. 4. Under the Option A 90% proposed SRV, the general rates would have increased to \$1,871.00 per annum with a total package of \$2,889.00 per annum, a proposal that suggests the Council is out of touch with its demographic constraints. 5. Further, capital growth on property has been marginal for decades suggesting an economy performing suboptimally. 6. The 43% SV to be introduced over two years illustrates a Council resorting to rates as a superficial solution to substantial underlying drivers of structural deficits that result in an unsustainable budget. Please refer to answers in Q2 Criterion 1 above for an outline of these drivers. 7. Council's inability to streamline and strategically target its extensive range of services and capital expenditure adds to budget deficits which are exacerbated when charges for services do not achieve either a balance or profit. 8. As a result it is considered Council will rely on ongoing rate increases to fund its activities.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The impact of the special variation of 43% is not considered to be reasonable based on the following evidence: 1. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) comparative data based on the 2021 census comparing Bega Valley with NSW more broadly, highlights specific issues of capacity to pay the level of rates being put forward. 2. The demographic data of Bega Valley demonstrates that the population underperforms significantly in terms of median weekly salary and is a much older population than the NSW median. University degree educated members of the Bega Valley population comprise a meagre 6.5% compared with 15.3% for NSW and this figure correlates with the very low median weekly income of \$1,501 for families and \$1,200 for households compared with \$2,185 and \$1,829 respectively for NSW. 3. In the case of household income for occupied private dwellings, 23.9% of the Bega Valley population earned less than \$650 total household weekly earnings compared with 16.3% for NSW. 4. With regard to higher earners in Bega Valley, 11.3% earned more than \$3,000 total household weekly income compared with 26.9% for NSW. 5. It is notable that 50.9% of the Bega Valley population reported themselves as being in the labour force in the 2021 census. This data demonstrates that the Bega Valley population are highly dependent on forms of government support and that those who do work, earn low salaries, well below the median weekly income for NSW. 6. The report by Morrison Low on 'Capacity to pay' compares Bega Valley rates with comparable Group 4 councils and observes: '...compared to these councils, Bega Valley has very low levels of rates income as a percentage of operating expenses when compared to similar councils, indicating capacity of ratepayers to absorb rises ...'(Morrison Low, 'Capacity to pay report', Bega Valley Shire Council, January 2023, p31). It is important to note that this observation appears to overlook both the low weekly income of residents in Bega Valley combined with the extremely low percentage of rateable properties in the shire, of 20 percent. 7. Capacity of pay the proposed 43% SRV is therefore considered to place harsh demands on a community characterised by demographic data that underperforms in relation to the NSW median on key criteria including income and educational attainment. 8. Renters would not be exempt from adverse impacts as rents will be increased to cover the expanded overhead costs. 9. Australia's current economic conditions which include increased mortgage interest rates, high cost of fuel and rising cost of living are drivers that are placing a high degree of financial pressure throughout the population. Bega Valley is an LGA that can least afford rate increases. It is surprising that the Council can consider it can somehow segregate the impact of the proposed SRV from the burden of heavy economic pressures already impacting the population. 10. It is considered that the Council has not adequately examined its demographic data when advocating the excessive increase in rates.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

1. As noted in the response to Question 1 (Criterion 3) above, Council is not considered to have responded either to the community's willingness to pay or its capacity to pay the significant proposed rates increase. 2. The current annual rates and

services costs (without considering the proposed 43% rates increase) are considered to be extremely high in relation to land valuations (i.e. rates are not proportional to land values). The cost of delivering the diverse range of services and capital expenditure without economies of scale to the low population of Bega Valley is considered structurally unsustainable. 3. Based on its demographic composition as evidenced in ABS data comparisons in the 2021 Census, the Bega Valley community underperforms substantially on key criteria that would support capacity to pay including: (a) low weekly incomes (e.g. In the case of household income for occupied private dwellings, 23.9% of the Bega Valley population earned less than \$650 total household weekly earnings compared with 16.3% for NSW); (b) low university education (University degree educated members of the Bega Valley population comprise a meagre 6.5% compared with 15.3% for NSW); (c) an ageing population (median age is 52 compared to 39 for NSW); (d) 42.2% were not in the labour force compared with 35.5% for NSW). 4. With regard to willingness to pay, as noted in the response under Question 3 (Criterion 2), data on the consultation demonstrates that 71.34% of respondents (or 1663 people) opted for no special rate increase (see p6, Appendix 2, Survey Results). Only 15.10% (or 352 people) supported Option C, a 43% increase. The consultation demonstrates that the community predominantly opposes a special rate increase. 5. The data identified above demonstrates that Council has not given adequate attention to the community's capacity and willingness to pay the proposed rate increase which it seeks to impose rather than to undertake the more difficult work of restructuring its services and capital expenditure in relation to available revenue while also implementing changes aimed at diversifying its underlying revenue base.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

1. Council's Hardship Policy does not appear to recognise the low salary base of most residents. 2. The policy would not provide comfort to residents struggling with the current adverse economic conditions impacting many Australians such as increasing mortgage repayments, high cost of groceries, fuel, health costs and broader cost of living. 3. There does not appear to be an analysis of the cost of defaulting ratepayers in the event of the implementation of the 43% rate increase which is to take place in the context of more difficult economic conditions outlined in point 2 above. 4. Assistance is available to eligible pensioners, subject to completion of a form.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Cannot comment on this question as I do not have the dates of when the documents were exhibited, approved and adopted in relation to when Council applied to IPART for the special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

1. Consideration of Bega Valley Councils 10 year financial plan identifies: (a) staffing costs, (b) materials and contracts, and (c) the purchase of infrastructure, property, plant and equipment as the key expenditure categories. 2. It is essential to develop a new business plan for each key expenditure category to identify increased revenue opportunities and a vast reduction of overheads including staffing. 3. Council's response to productivity and cost containment does not appear to be specifically addressed in the documents provided. 4. Council appears committed to providing a comprehensive range of services and capital expenditure to a sparse population base requiring a high staffing profile, factors that militate against cost containment and productivity.



Author name: L. Marshall

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I believe Bega Council is overstaffed with Managers on generous salary packages and cost cutting should start there. Surely a population of approx. 35,000 does not need Council to employ 350 people. Further, this Council pushed ahead several years ago with a Commemorative Centre at vast expense, the purpose of which is to hold functions etc. I daresay that if anyone looked into the revenue generated by that building, it would prove to be a loser. In other words, poor research and management of the budget. Also, there is no acknowledgment by Council of the tremendous efforts made by the community to address our needs, e.g. Cobargo Skate Park. The community raises the funds, volunteers put in the infrastructure, then Council whinges about maintenance costs. The hole for the Cobargo Pool was hand dug by locals back in the '50's. What I'm trying to say is that I'm not exactly sure what Bega Council does for us that justifies a massive rate increase. We provide it ourselves.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I don't believe Council has clearly established this need. It has spoken in general terms with no figures provided and no acknowledgment of funds contributed by the State Government.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Yes. All negative solutions such as reduction in services, inability to maintain swimming pools, etc.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I believe percentages were provided, but no actual explanation in dollar terms of the change to the various types of property, e.g. suburban dwelling, rural acres, etc.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. As far as I'm aware, no consultation was held in Quaama, my closest village. Attending Saturday morning markets in the various towns is inadequate.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

A reduction in the initial proposal of a 90% increase, to 43% over 2 years.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Bega Valley is a low income area with an aging population. Cost of living increases across the board are taking a toll. Presumably, IPART considers a 4.9% increase for this financial year as fair and reasonable. Almost 20% over and above that is excessive.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Zero. What evidence has Council produced to IPART to suggest that a population with an average weekly income of \$948 can afford this. As an old age pensioner, my weekly income is \$513.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have not been made aware of this plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I believe so.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I have not seen the Council's responses. However, I would suggest that actions such as tearing down a perfectly good library in a Shire with financial problems is quite foolish.

Author name: L. Rich

Date of submission: Saturday, 18 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I would like an independent auditor to check how the funds will really be used. How does each department justify the increases requested and what projects are ongoing vs new and not yet commenced? Uncommenced projects should be scaled back to reduce the proposed operating costs.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. The usual revenue path is charging rates. Different revenue paths would exclude requiring a raise of rates beyond CPI. Council need to reduce spending, look to tourist revenue, eg a bed tax applied to all accomodation vendors and cruise ships, which is usual to improve roads and other services strained by the annual influx of visitors to the region.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Limited. Canvassing of rate payers. What about canvassing the bed operators for a bed tax??

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No. The percentage rise has been canvassed but I have not seen the dollar amount of the proposed rate increase. In addition the percentage rises of council costs don't seem to include how much extra will be spent on improving roads, flood mitigation or other services to rate payers. The costs I have sent canvassed are the costs to run council, which amount to staffing or hiring of contractors to run council.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Some. Mainly through social media. Not sure if there have been roadshows or posters.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

More justification of only one propped revenue source: rate rises.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Not reasonable in most cases. Pockets of apparent affluence may be evident, with self funded retirees. But most older people are on a fixed Centrelink income and will struggle to rise 30% more for rates, in addition to cost of living increases across electricity, food and fuel. Even wages earners will struggle to meet the additional cost. Business owners will be forced to raise their prices to cover the extra rates, meaning cost of living prices will also increase again. In essence, the proposed rate rise will have a negative effect on the affordability of housing, food, paying other bills.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

So far I have not seen evidence of council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The only consideration that seems to be evident at this stage is revenue raising from the same small pool of rate payers.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I saw that pensioners will be offered \$100 discount, on around \$4000 per year cost! How ludicrous and insulting. A tick box exercise only.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No sure. I have not seen them.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

This has not been done. The figures provided by council indicate rises in the operational cost of every department. There does not appear to be evidence of staff cost cut backs or keeping costs to the CPI. In one area there is over 300% increase.

Author name: M. Houssenloge

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Everyone can understand a reasonable increase in rates, the cost of living is rising and so too are councils services and wages. What we can't understand is the extent to which they are proposing to increase the rates to. Where will it stop? How much will they propose we raise them in the next 2, 5, 10 years? The underlying problem here is the mismanagement of funds. A financial forensic investigation needs to be undertaken to identify assets, staffing and the flow and management of funds prior to any rate increases being initiated.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, not clear at all.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Doesn't appear to or if they have they haven't shared it with the community. The outlines of what the funding cuts would mean are vague and not clear how it could impact us.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not that I'm aware of.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Very limited, even this survey was not advertised or emailed so I'd imagine you will get a very small response rate.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I am not aware of any actions taken by the council in response to feedback.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

This will effect more people than ratepayers. It is unreasonable to increase the rise at this high level. Businesses will suffer as no one will be able to afford to go out or shop in their stores.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Impacts for rate rises have not clearly been demonstrated. With the current rate rises and cost of living, the proposed increased couldn't have come at a worse time. The cost of living is going through the roof. The flow-on effects will be enormous, for example we have an investment property which we rent out to a family for reasonable rent, we will be left with no choice to either increase the rent or sell the rental, either way potentially putting a family out of their home.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Have not read one thing about how the council proposes to address the hardship people will face.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unsure.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

No idea what their response was.

Author name: M. Rose

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

It is unreasonable for the council to claim they have adequately engaged with the community when they have not been able to provide the community with a financial plan. In my opinion our council desperately requires an independent financial audit as soon as possible, before our community is subjected to the extreme rate rises proposed.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. I was in attendance at the relevant meeting and they were very vague with financial figures and in their reasoning for needing such a large increase. They also claimed they were being transparent, however it was only discovered/admitted in the meeting (not communicated to rate payers prior to the meeting when given notice of the proposed srv) that they have no other option other than to apply for the srv to avoid becoming insolvent. At the time of the meeting we also learnt that the Council has no economic plan on how to spend the extra funding if approved by ipart, nor do they have a plan on how they intend to manage their funding better in the future in order to first dig themselves out of the current financial hole they are in and prevent financial mismanagement in the future. Attendees were left with the strong impression that the srv was to enable the proverbial can to be kicked further down the "unmaintained" road.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

In the meeting the majority of council claimed there was no other alternative other than to let the quality of roads go into disrepair, and the for the council to become insolvent.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

They have not provided adequate engagement with the community. The majority of ratepayers learned of the proposed rises not long before Christmas 2022. The main meeting was held on a business day during regular work hours, meaning the majority of ratepayers were not able to be in attendance.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Despite our community's resounding rejection of the proposal, they have decided to push ahead regardless, and have denied requests for extended community consultation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is simply unreasonable to expect the community to be able to afford such a steep increase in rates especially considering current inflation. The proposed srv is far above the current rate of inflation. Unfortunately the already struggling poorest in our community will feel the impact the hardest as rate rises are passed onto renters who are already paying very high rent as it is. In my experience support services for those needing financial assistance usually fall short of the mark. It is completely unreasonable for the community to have to pay for the councils financial mismanagement, especially when they have not been transparent (we were not informed of their potential of insolvency until the meeting), and they have not provided a financial plan for the future. We are just supposed to trust they will sort that after the srv is approved. This does not inspire community confidence.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't feel their assessment of the community's capacity and willingness to pay was accurate, particularly given the inadequacy of community engagement and their rejection of the request for extension thereof. The majority of the community cannot afford to pay this large proposed increase and are absolutely outraged.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

A plan was mentioned, however details if any, were extremely vague. This did not inspire confidence.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I am unaware of these documents.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Minimal explanation was given as to how they got into the current financial mess other than they claimed inherited it from previous councilors. There was no reasonable explanation given as to why or how things got out of control. As stated above they admitted they are at risk of becoming insolvent (not communicated to the community at large) and they also admitted they hadn't developed a financial plan for how they intend to use the srvc and rectify the council's financial situation to ensure a sound fiscal future for Bega Valley Shire.



Author name: P. Matthews

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Like many in Bega Valley I am willing to pay more on my rates if I feel confident that Council is spending and delivering services well. This has not been demonstrated. Council needs to fix their internal culture and processes to maximise value in delivering services before they seek a rate hike. The nature of their communication with the public had a [REDACTED] and suggested if residents don't pay more then public pools will close. This is not the way to win the hearts and minds of residents. Show us that you are financially sound, using every dollar in a high value way and delivering services with us in mind. Then we will consider rate increases. Their rate increase campaign focused on one option: residents rate hike. It failed to consider other revenue streams and efficiencies, consequently residents lack trust in Council's ability to spend well and recover.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Council has demonstrated that based on previous and current expenditure that their current situation is unsustainable. They have not clearly demonstrated to me or many in my community a legitimate need for different revenue path. By this I mean they have not clearly articulated where they are going to find efficiencies internally as a priority, before they ask the public to meet additional costs. They have demonstrated that costs have increased. But they have failed to show how they will tighten their belts before asking residents to do the same.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. They provided OPTIONS of rises but not ALTERNATIVES SOURCES of revenue. The Council has only proposed one source of new money to address the rate rise: rate increases. They have not demonstrated options which might include: 1. Reduced service delivery on non essential services eg grass cutting. 2. Efficiencies on existing services eg productivity gains. 3. New ways to delivery existing services eg outsourcing. Council should review their approach to a rate increase. This will be more favourable to residents when demonstrating what they are doing to lift funds before asking residents. Get their house in order first.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?  
Yes.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?  
It was limited in face to face opportunities. But it was varied.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council adjusted their rate increase options after consultation. But they failed to explore ALTERNATIVE options beyond a rate rise. Rate rises from the public should not be seen or positioned as the only option for councils. In 2023 our expectation is that Council is run with a commercial mindset that maximises the use of existing resources before they ask for more from residents. The case for an increase is part baked. It doesn't consider all options to Council. Council are still only concerned with getting more funding from residents. They need to address some of the following before they seek increased funding: 1. Efficient operations: get more from existing resources. 2. Service prioritisation: ask the public what services they can do without. or limit in certain areas 3. Service optimisation: are the existing services being delivered in a modern and cost effective way. 4. Operational excellence: are council operations and personnel focused on best practice. 5. Commercial operations: what can they run more commercially to lift revenue eg advertising on properties, events, venue hire costs and prices of existing services.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Any lift to rate rises at the moment is going to be hard for a large section of the community. So a proposal that focuses purely on rate rises and not on other revenue sources is flawed. Costs of living increases and lack of pay increases means that the proposed increase by council is not reasonable compared to cost of living increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. I don't believe Council have factored in the capacity to pay. Residents would be willing to pay more if they felt confident that Council were using existing funds well. This has not been demonstrated. Willingness to pay would also increase if Council considered other options, not just residents rate hikes. Willingness to pay depends on everyone doing their bit, including council. What other options are they exploring?

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

This further negatively impacts the case for a rate increase. I appreciate every Council and utility has a hardship stance. But those experiencing hardship is more significant now than ever. Ability to pay varies between households, so does service use. But rates do not align. I have no kids, never use parks, have one car and limited refuse. I am financially sound. BUT... My neighbour has three kids, three cars, all in school, always using public spaces and tonnes of rubbish out every week...they qualify for hardship yet are high service users and low contributors.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?  
I am unclear if this has occurred.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

This has not been demonstrated, yet is a major consideration for residents. Council want residents to do their bit and pay more. But the contribution of council to reduce spending and be more financially sustainable has not been communicated effectively. The latter should have been part of the public communication. It was a major hole. I have low confidence of any cost reduction being sustained. The chat published by council earlier in the year used costs increases and blow outs as the main reason for a rate increase. What is their incentive to keep costs low if they are successful in getting a rate hike? Its easier to ask residents for more than to spend less and change the culture internally at Council.



Author name: P. Robertson

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Current and past council members have consistently ignored community priorities such as redesign and modernisation of Merimbula sewerage treatment works which is not fit for purpose, overflowing into Merimbula back lake consistently during peak tourist season and heavy rain events, making the lake toxic to oyster farming and general water sports. Sewerage is also pumped into the ocean directly off Main Beach making the water a health risk under certain tide and wind conditions. It is obvious to the majority of ratepayers that councils priority is to prioritise development at any cost to the detriment of the very thing they are trying to cash in on; namely our beautiful and healthy Shire.ve We the ratepayers will not fund such short sightedness and further degradation of our Shire via an increase ! in our rates.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Nil

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Unreasonable

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

No genuine consideration

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Hardship will be widespread and inflationary.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

not suficently

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

obviously inadequate hence proposed rate increase.

Author name: R. Kinley

Date of submission: Saturday, 18 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

As a pensioner I cannot afford more rate increases as I believe that in my situation the rates I pay are far too high as it is.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. Its too easy to just ask for more money. In any business or household we cant just ask for money, instead we must find better ways to utilize what we have by cutting costs , prioritizing & sometimes going without what we want.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not in my opinion.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I am unaware of any action.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

In the current economic situation any increase whatsoever will be a hardship for families & pensioners.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

There is no consideration on their part .

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The council should not need to address any hardship. Better management & a more frugal approach would seem a better option.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not that I am aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

No comment

Author name: S. Brazenor

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The Council alleges that inflation is a major cause of the need for this rate rise. This does not fit with the facts as the mortgage rate rises following on the RBA rises are relatively recent. They have NOT accounted for the poor management which has resulted in the Council being in the catastrophic situation. The Council notes that rates are their main source of income. Thus, putting up rates is an easy fix. However, this is another example of end-user pays when this is a time when the end-user is paying in every way. They pay to cover others increased cost (businesses, utilities, authorities) and they pay to cover their own increased expenses

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. There has been very poor discussion of the reason for the proposed increase. Reasons such as privatization of works projects have been alleged but not addressed by the Council's advocates for the increase. To my knowledge, there has been no assessment of likely impact on low income or fixed income households nor any discussion of how those effects may be ameliorated. The Council has claimed consultation but the only evidence that this is seriously being undertaken was a stall at the Candelo market on one occasion. The stall was at the extreme extent of the Market and was not well attended

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. They claim that there is no room for economization or change of process to diminish the need for rate rises. The Council has, in the opinion of many of the ratepayers, sat on their hands for many years. Also, they have sought to discredit the effect of excessive spending during the COVID crisis. Obviously, this was a difficult challenge. However, the difficulties of this period should not be seen as a reason for poor thrift and accounting mismanagement. [REDACTED]

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

On reading the LTTP, I felt that it was a document designed mainly to address this application (mid 2022, revised February 2023 - Coincidence?) In my opinion, the Council has sought to AVOID scoping the increases and the potential effects. By this comment, I mean they have attempted to hide whatever negative impacts are likely to be certain and to closet the negatives of the variation. The Council's assessments, the causes and arguments are obfuscated. I cannot be sure if this is an intentional manipulation. I suspect that this is the case. Somewhere, the Council will have addressed this impact requirement, but as a ratepayer I have not felt informed. WHY NOT? Why did the Council not include a likely increase in an email to rate payers?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. As above, if the Council was serious about community engagement, a personal notification of likely impact would have indicated their intent to engage. ALSO, as far as I am aware, there has been no publically available audit to indicate what poor decision-making has resulted in the BVS ending up in such a disastrous. OVERALL, my view of the Council's engagement strategy is to say the words, not to be too concerned about the truth AND make the proposition for the huge rate rise look like a inescapable requirement ( which it is not)

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

In my experience, the Council has played negative comments and objections with a soft bat. Somehow, of the extensive objections, to the rate rise, these have received NO press that I have seen. In fact all the press articles that I have read, have included a response from Council to any Community concern eg Merimbula News December 2, 2022.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

NOTES 1. High proportion of retirees (36% vs 26% for other LGAs) 2. High % of lone persons (vulnerable) 3. Low % Mortgaged Property (25% vs NSW 29%) is touted to mean that ratepayers are more able to absorb rate increases. This does not ameliorate the stress caused, if the rate rise occurs, on all those who have a mortgage which of course is compounded by inflationary rises The Capacity to Pay document by consultants Morrison Low is another glossy document. I am unable to discover how much this document cost the Council.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. See previous. I do not believe the Council is seriously interested in the Community and the individuals capacity to pay. We have just endured bush Fires (2021), Covid and there are a large population of retirees in the LGA!

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed

special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

This is listed (as far as I can see ONLY expressed in its Public Policies document which it has recently reviewed which does NOT seem to include any specific ways of addressing hardship. Most likely, the Council will expect the ratepayers effected to apply to be considered?

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unknown

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

No. This has NOT been done.

Author name: S. Lea

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Submission to iPART regarding Bega Valley Shire Council's proposed Special Rates Variant. In my opinion, the letter to ratepayers before Christmas was not well presented and was misleading; indicating to ratepayers that the only options available to us were the 4 presented. We should have been asked for suggestions to present to council before these limited options were presented to us. Perhaps with consultation with ratepayers, better and more equitable solutions could have been discussed. The timing was also suspect. Sending a letter just before Christmas when people are busily distracted preparing for visitors, holiday travel, school activities and celebrations and then giving us only until 16th January to act did not allow for many to take the time to fill out a survey. Indeed, many of the dozens of ratepayers I have spoken to didn't even realise that a letter had been sent. Of those that did manage to fill out the online survey, 71.3% DID NOT WANT a SRV. According to the guidelines for councillors, in their own handbook, if a proposal made by council is likely to impact most or all ratepayers, then a 5 part process needs to be followed. The 5th part of the process is that the final decision is to be made by the people (ratepayers). Obviously 71.3% is a majority, therefore the people have spoken. We DO NOT want this SRV. Sincerely Shari Lea Bega Valley Shire rates player.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

# PETITION TO BEGA VALLEY SHIRE COUNCIL

## NO SPECIAL RATE VARIATION (SRV) FOR 2022-23 AND THAT ONLY THE IPART PEGGED INCREASE BE APPLIED.

We the undersigned are opposed to any rate increase above that set by IPART. In particular the current proposal for a 35% increase for 2022-23. Our reasons include but not limited too

1. A 35% increase is excessive given stagnant wages and household income ( source Australian bureau of statistics ABS graph annual wage growth 1998-2022)
2. Australian pensions and centralink payments are indexed to CPI currently adjusted at 3.7% (ABS consumer price index). The proposed increase is 10 times the current rate of inflation.
3. Bega Valley shire council already “enjoys” one of the highest level of rates (\$1000-\$1250) in NSW and has one of the lowest medium incomes (\$46,000). Our rate of unemployment and household relying on centalink benefits is higher than the state average. (ABS, yourcouncil website)
4. We currently have some of the highest charges for service delivery in the state including the highest sewerage charges in Australia ( Bega district news quoting BVSC director of assets and operations )
5. It is our belief that many of the ratepayers on low incomes will enter financial difficulties as a direct result of this proposed increase in rates

We the undersigned propose that instead of increasing the rates council

- 1 Apply a 12 month freeze to all new works, asset purchase and service expansion whilst the council finances are forensically examined and community is effectively engaged and consulted.
- 2 The council prepare a list of all assets including market valuation and a cost benefit description ( too the community)
- 3 The council consider in consultation with the community divesting itself of those assets and services that are considered to be underperforming.
- 4 No new works without community consultation sufficient for that community to determine its merit or otherwise.

NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

Author name: R. Geary

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This process is so flawed on so many levels that it is almost laughable. Considering comparable metrics of wage, pension increases inflation a 46% rate increase is not justifiable. I am not laughing, as a aged pensioner on \$800 a fortnight with minimal superannuation council rates is my third biggest budget expense now to increase by about \$600 a year plus services charge increases. Our council has high rates ( top 30% of shires) and lowest incomes (in the lowest 30%) in NSW. There is no mitigation processes available that proportionally reduce the rates I will pay. The council had 6 community meetings at short notice that few attended. The survey though flawed demonstrated significant opposition to any SRV and though many are dissatisfied with council services that is not the same as stating they want them improved or expanded with the implication of support for rate increases . It could also be interpreted as critical of how and where the council spends their money . For example an airport expansion that did not increase service, reduce flying cost or improve services. An expansion that now includes a large aviation industrial area without tenants or perceived need and a projected passenger number that is twice historical actual numbers. I have attached a petition from my street . Only 2 people did not sign, they were public housing tenants. Interestingly 30% of the dwellings ( many apartments) were unoccupied on the 3 evenings that I door knocked. The council consistently lacks transparency not intentionally but due to inadequate information , poor community education and lack of time to assimilate the information and time allowed for consultation.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. The council has through a limited engagement with the community ( ratepayers and residents) argued for a different revenue pathway but it has NOT CLEARLY ESTABLISHED the need for it or that this pathway is limited to the SRV. The need appears to be based on a financial deficit where income is less than expenditure or council "financial woes" as the paper reported. However this is not reflected in any local government performance data to date published by state government or BVSC financial statement 2021. Understandably the community is confused particularly councils denial of any issues up to 2022 . In addition assertions referencing the financial position does not reflect recent grants from federal government ( \$18 million forward paid grants) or state grants for roads recovery and resilience recently announced ( total value 3 million dollars). At the community meetings I attended the council argued that other pathways existed included 1. Realistic rate pegging 2. A return to previous levels of state government funding 3. A return to a level of federal government support ( as a percentage of tax revenue) previously enjoyed . Yet the council has chosen to pursue only the SRV ( though there is mention of state, federal funding arrangements in the submission) These are also alternative revenue pathways that frankly offer a better long term improvement in council finances. Elsewhere in the council response they make reference to research by Morrison low . The ratio of council rates income to expenditure is low asserting "This is a very strong indicator that council rates are below the level required to service the community" . Unfortunately it is a ratio so equally it asserts that expenditure is disproportionately high given the rate base. Secondly to equate council expenditure to service delivery ( as the council does throughout its submission) is frankly erroneous. This data also places BVSC as one of the highest rating councils ( without the SRV) already an item the council glosses over.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No In context canvassing involves council going to stakeholders in order to determine opinion or sentiment. There is 36,000 people in the Bega valley, 19,000 residents approximately 17,000 ratepayers. 1. The council reached out to this population by public meetings 6 in total with no further meetings or community in person forums. I attended 3 at which there was in total 20 members of public present. The hour long meeting involved a 40 minute presentation allowing 20 minutes for discussion. This was predominately concerned with clarification of the information presented and NOT a canvassing of opinions and subsequent discussion. However if I was to be so bold based on my experience at 3 of the meetings I would state 1. People did not understand the process for setting rates 2. How the SRV was applied and the consequences 3. They were not sympathetic to the view that council expenditure decisions were driven by resident demand for services ( nor has this been established by council), rather expressing the view that inept financial decisions exacerbated a pre-existing failure by council to operate efficiently and address inadequate state and federal government funding. 4. That a rate increase as proposed ( not as currently before IPART) was excessive given minimal pension and wage increases ( approx 4%), inflation (approx 6 %) 5. Capacity to pay, the Bega area % elderly (60) 40% state 23%, income 800 31% state 21%,. We already have the highest rates (top 30%) and lowest medium income (lowest 30%) in the state. We also have service charges higher than elsewhere in the state with the highest sewerage charges in Australia ( BVSC reported ) Other points of note: A monkey survey was conducted where some questions were ambivalent and leading. The results of which were never released to the public until seen in their submission ( discussed in council only) A single A4 sheet was sent to ratepayers that discussed 4 options ( with no mention as to the proposal currently before IPART). It provided options for feedback to council BUT significantly no statement concerning ability of ratepayers to direct submissions to IPART. All the above occurred over 6 weeks without the community being given more than 1 opportunity ( on each of the 3 options to connect with council). This does not constitute a dialogue that would be necessary to support the conclusion that "council canvassed alternatives". The council also states it is the third lowest rates to expenditure ratio in its grouping (4), as if the rates already noted to be some of the highest in the state is still too low. Frankly the

assertion is ridiculous. If the data is separated into bands of 5% increments it is the average (mode). Secondly the grouping is based on population and population density not demographics so cannot possibly support later assertions in relation to capacity to pay or peer comparison, in this regard.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes This information was presented via 3 platforms: 1. 6 meetings 2. single A4 mail out 3. council website . Communication is defined as imparting or exchanging information, all of the above three in part failed in this. The meetings which were attended by less than 0.1 of ratepayers with the scant opportunity for discussion. The mail out though potentially reaching all ratepayers allowed for no dialogue discussion or education on other options. Feedback via the survey was flawed (please review survey questions ) with limited scope to explore community options for reducing services and questions with tick box options often muted potential for criticism. The only appearance of a council listening to the community is the current proposal, option E option C but even more confusing, given the community backlash. However the council offered no forum to discuss option D as there was zero discussion on what if any services could be reduced despite many suggestions in their survey. For example BVSC has 6 public pools only one is open all year all loose money only 2 have peer acceptable attendances. The state average is 2 pools per shire ( rounded) population density and shire area places more than 90% of residents within 20 minutes of 2 pools (public pool design location 101). The only logical conclusion is the council did not want to have a dialogue on option D or transparency.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No Please read the above key points 1.Limited time frame allowed by council for community engagement 4 weeks 2. Scant community attendance at council community meetings 6 single meetings no followup 3. No followup or community discussion groups formed 4. No feedback on monkey survey or discussion of survey summary by community An appropriate variety of methods includes not only types of engagement methods but also an appropriate period of engagement to ensure that those community members that wish to engage, can, and that there is a formal attempt to determine the level of awareness that those method achieved. This has not and did not occur. After all the appropriateness of any engagement can only be measured by the improved awareness it generates.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The only response, from council, is the decision to adopt ( effectively) option C now called E. A cynic might suggest option A and B were simply there to make option C palatable. The failure to continue community consultation up to and after their decision ( currently before IPART) demonstrates that option D was never an option. The admission by council that the current SRV proposal will necessitate service contraction further underlines this disregard of community. They have made no attempt not only to engage with the community ( except as a provider of income) but also state and federal entities with whom they share inadequate funding arrangements ( council position expressed at meetings). The council argues that the SRV is reasonable (having tweaked option C to E) as it achieves a level of service that they want ( noting the impact on capital ) However this change from C to E does not reflect the communities capacity to pay or the feedback from the community. Nor does the 42 % dissatisfaction with council service delivery imply people want more services At no point have the rate payers been given an opportunity to declare they have no faith in the council or their ability to continue to budget with due diligence.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Most rate payers feel it is unreasonable with the council survey showing 71% of respondents want no SRV. Is it unreasonable? 1. the rate increase of 46% over 2 years is approximately 6-10 times pension rate increase and it is reasonable to expect that it is at least 5 times any wage increase ( based on historical example and RBA projections) 2. It is 5 times current rate of inflation By either of these metrics it is unreasonable exploring the capacity to pay is I admit difficult given demographics and subjective value judgements that may influence purchase priorities however the councils response to this question in their submission is primarily a statement of "fact" as they see it . There is no objective data that either explores capacity or objectifies the concept. Their submission confuses mitigation of impact with the determination of the capacity to pay, they are not the same ( though related I accept). Ultimately they justify their position by declaring there is no other viable alternative. This statement is in fact not correct there is but the council via their approach has precluded alternatives.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The councils consideration is simply summarised by them applying the rate increase Option C over 2 years creating option E . While a worthy initiative it ultimately generates the same rates therefore arguably the same burden on ratepayers. There is no direct proof in the council submission that the community has the willingness and the capacity to pay. Independent analysis by Morrison and Low is incorrectly interpreted, as is the communities criticism of service levels council suggesting it demonstrates a willingness to support an SRV that does not lead to contraction of services

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.



The council stated intentions does not address hardship or have provision to alleviate hardship. 1. Rates increase is a 46 percentage increase over 2 years. Pension rebates are fixed and not been changed for a number of years . 2. The current council rate relief policy is only for those suffering hardship from bushfires. 3. Deferment and repayment plans don't reduce payments of the SRV/Rates they simply delay often with interest applied. The council writes eloquently suggesting what they might do in the future regarding the above however AT THIS POINT IN TIME it is simply speculation and there is no targeted policies addressing inability to pay the SRV.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

YES provisionally However this is to the best of my knowledge as there has been at least 3 rewrites of IP and R documents in the last 12 months and as to what documents are "relevant" IP and R documents is difficult to determine as not all are printed with this acknowledgement.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

There is an extensive list of productivity improvement items, few in fact with known or anticipated savings. A review of council audited annual reports show no overall savings across years or broad categories of expenses. For example savings in administration are offset by increased contractor cost. For 20-21 they report a 56 million dollar operating surplus which to be frank makes it hard for an ordinary person to understand the need for a SRV. The council response to IPART is predominately speculative or un - quantified improvements that as previously stated are not quantified and have only vague notes if any on implementation. As for cost containment in the last 2 years council has increased new capital works. Bike path Bega to Tathra few locals ride from Bega to Tathra ( incomplete construction and interest. Upgraded capital works. Water supply filtration upgrades despite 75 % satisfaction with current supply. Sold or selling capital purchases at below purchase price. Merimbula education centre. The council has consistently failed to determine the impact to recurrent expenditure of said capital acquisitions and upgrades particularly Merimbula airport. This is in addition to no adequate allowance for potential cost overruns that are not supported by the initial grants for the project, again Merimbula airport.

BENUS RALPHS



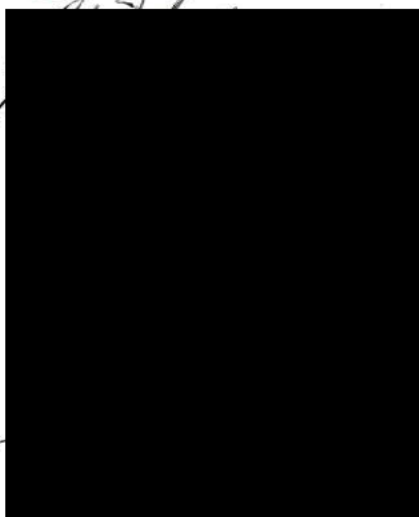
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Date

GREG WILEY



9/6/2022

Kerri Lockhart

9/6/22

Peter Leem

9/6-122

Susie Bondman

9/6/22

# PETITION TO BEGA VALLEY SHIRE COUNCIL

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We the undersigned propose that instead of increasing the rates council

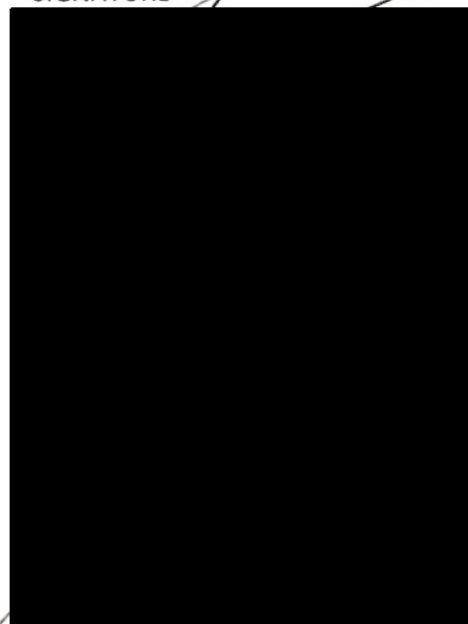
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- 4 No new works without community consultation sufficient for that community to determine its merit or otherwise.

NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

R. Gentry  
J. M. BRADY  
J. GARSZKA  
M. Tordy  
P. WONG PAR  
S. Ford  
D. DANNINGTON  
L. Hazelgrove  
Sue Campbell



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# **- PETITION -**

**01/01/2023**

## **EXTENSION OF TIME FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **REGARDING THE PROPOSED GENERAL RATES INCREASES**

We the Rate Payers of BVS require an extension to the scheduled closing date (16<sup>th</sup> January 2023) to allow for further input from the community on the proposed increases to our General Rates 2023-24.

We request that the consultation process be extended until 1st March 2023 to allow for fair and proper execution of the notification and consultation processes.

Rate payers received their letters from Council the week before Christmas, at a time when community focus is on festivities and Council is closed for business.

Rate payers require evidence to support Council's need for the options presented. More detail is required for the community to make informed decisions.



Councillor Helen O'Neil  
Bega Valley Shire Council  
Bega NSW 2550  
16/01/2023  
Re: BVSC Proposed Increase in General Rates

Dear Helen

Thanks so much for agreeing to table the attached document at Council's next scheduled meeting on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2023

The document is a list of 1,049 signatories who are objecting to the lack of appropriate notice provided by Council regarding Council's proposed increases on general rates, and the limited window of opportunity for community engagement and feedback. The signatories also request that the BVSC provide the community with full transparency of figures and content in Council's proposed increases.

It should be noted by Council that a significant number of BVS rates payers are elderly and many of them have no need for computers or smartphones, the absence of which limits their ability to provide feedback by way of BVSC website or by email.

In addition, many members of the community were totally unaware of the proposal because Council's letter was sent in the peak of tourist season, when business owners are focusing on their best opportunities for trade and families are, as tradition would have it, focused on Christmas festivities and family holidays. Many expressed their shock upon learning of the proposals.


For that reason, a very small handful of concerned BVS rates payers rallied together to provide the community with an alternative method of feedback in the form of petitioned signatures. In the short time that this document was available for signing and considering the small number of volunteers who worked tirelessly trying to physically cover the towns of Merimbula, Tathra, Bermagui, Bega, Pambula, Eden, Tura Beach, Wolumla, Millingandi and Towamba, the number of signatures procured is a very clear testament to public sentiment. We had a total of seven volunteers and the document was in circulation for only eight days. The signatures came from people who were out and about, mainly around the streets, shops and market places.

Outside of this document, the general sentiment is that none of the proposals is acceptable.

This document and a copy of such document, addressed to The General Manager, was hand delivered to BVSC office on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2023

Thank you again for your commitment  
Yours in good faith

Suzanne A Lindhorst



## SUBMISSION TO IPART REGARDING BVSC SRV.

There are 5 scenarios in the Guidelines for Application of SRV.

Scenario 3 was the only one presented to BVS rates payers and residents and by omission of all the other possible SRV Scenarios, it subsequently fails the IPART criteria. Council's eventual Application was never an option made known to the public before submission to IPART.

**The “New Variation” - (now called “OPTION E”): 43% SPLIT OVER TWO YEARS.**

This new BVSC 43% SRV increase, split over two years was never mentioned or proposed to the public for their say, prior to the BVSC Ordinary Meeting of Feb 1, 2023, when it was tabled by the CEO. And yet it was voted on and passed by Council (SIX ‘for’ and THREE ‘against’) for a 23% increase in year one and 20% increase in year two, to gain the 43%. This decision was **only then** made known to the public, after it went up on the BVSC website.

It was also made available for viewing and for public comment/submission on the IPART website from Friday 10<sup>th</sup> February (**again, only after Council's decision had already been made and after the application for the SRV had already been submitted**); public submissions closing 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.

It should be noted here that the SRV voted on and passed by Council on 1st February, **was again changed without public knowledge**, in the Official Application to IPART. According to the Application, in the chart on page 18, under the heading RATE CATEGORY IMPACT, the figures are presented as a **new percentage increase, with a new split**; ie, 24% increase in year one and 19.6% increase in year two..... **a total increase of 43.6%** (not 43%)  
The cumulative increase on the advertised 43% was stated in the letter to rate payers as 46.58%  
The **cumulative interest on the IPART Application is 48.30%**

I can only describe this as confusing and **grossly dishonest**. This is ‘fiddling the figures’ and does not demonstrate any financial accountability. Consequently, Council should be subject to a thorough, independent financial investigation; including risk management and service efficiency.

**No notification, consultation or community engagement** was carried out by BVSC on this SRV. Council's decision demonstrates failure to inform rate payers of Council's plans, which is in direct breach of the Office of Local Government NSW criteria: “community awareness of Councils plans” and the “process to exhibit relevant Council documents to the public.”

### **At Ordinary Meeting 01/02/2023**

The CEO suggested that “The application might be accepted or considered by IPART as a 43% ‘one-off’ SRV, but the Option C 43% was never presented to Rate Payers as a “one-off” SRV.

### **At Ordinary Meeting 01/02/2023 -**

Councillors were clearly not understanding the implications of the new option, 43% split over 2 years. Was it ever discussed with other Councillors BEFORE the meeting?

Councillor Cathy Griff questioned the implications.

The CEO held up a document (not sure which one), pointed to it and said "...it doesn't mean exactly what it says"! The response was confused and did not clarify the inquiry. In other words, Councillors did not understand WHY 43% was decided on by staff OR what it would be spent on.

So is it possible that the council's documentation can be described as ambiguous and/or misleading? And how can the public (especially those present in the gallery) have any **trust** in Council's presentation of documents?

Councillor Nadin stated that he didn't understand the methodology of how Council got to the 43% proposal, nor did he understand what they will be doing with the \$120m over the next ten years. He said to Council that he had not been involved in the prioritization of the spending of the money, and did not agree with 25% of the grants funding allocations being allocated to Bega Swimming Pool, which he described as "unrealistic".

### **GOOD GOVERNANCE:**

In order to achieve good governance, EVERYONE in the Government, the Shire Council and the Community should have, or be allowed to have, a full understanding of how the system works and how the decisions are made. It was clear in the BVSC Ordinary Meeting of 01/02/2023 that not all of the Councillors had a full understanding of what is going on.

If the Councillors have not been made aware, how can they make good, informed decisions? And in turn, how can the rate payers and residents of the Shire have full awareness and an understanding of what's going on and subsequently make their own informed decisions?

### **LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

#### **CRITERION 4 in the SV Guidelines:**

**The relevant IP&R documents must be exhibited (where required) approved and adopted by the Council before the council applies to IPART for a SV to its general income. It is expected that councils will hold an extraordinary meeting if required to adopt the relevant IP&R documents before the deadline for special variation applications.**

**CRITERION 4; Question 1. Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been EXHIBITED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the council before it applied to IPART for the Proposed special variation?**

### **At Ordinary Meeting 01/02/2023 -**

The CEO declared that the LTFP would have to be modified to fit the New Proposal.

Councillor Porter suggested that modifying the LTFP to fit the Newly Proposed Variation would become an 'open cheque', because a new LTFP could say anything. He added that a new LTFP would have to be written, exhibited, approved and adopted before the application to IPART (between the end



of the meeting and the submission of the application to IPART by 3rd February) – leaving a window of one day for due process.

It also means that even if Council did follow due process in that time, it would receive very limited public attention before the application to IPART. This hast action is neither good policy nor good management.

### **At the same meeting**

Mayor/Councillor Fitzpatrick, in his address to Council on his decision to support the New Proposal, stated that it was a hard decision for him because renters would be heavily impacted by a decision to go ahead with the New Proposal, with some renters facing around \$50 per week increases imposed by their rate-paying landlords. This statement appears to have been deleted from the video of the meeting, which was presented for public viewing on BVSC website. But the public whom were present heard his statement and I question why portions of the video were erased, as was also the case with the applause from the gallery after the three Councillors, Nadin, Porter and Griff had stated their cases AGAINST the New Proposal. Surely the public is entitled to the full content of the meeting and not an edited version. This is tampering with and omitting relevant content and is unethical and deceptive.

### **HOW MONEY WILL BE SPENT and COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

This Council (BVSC) has given no clear indication to the public as to how the moneys raised from SRV will be spent. Nor do they give any indication of how the problems will be solved. One of the public petitions (lodged by myself) was submitted in full to Council on 16<sup>th</sup> January (see attached letter ) and tabled at Council Meeting by Councillor Helen O'Neill on 18<sup>th</sup> January. It contains 1,040 signatures from the community. The petition asked Council for an extension on the closing date, i.e. 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023, until 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 – to allow for Community engagement and feedback and to allow a fair and proper execution of the Notification and Consultation Processes. The petition also called for **full transparency** of the figures and content in Council's letter of Proposed General Rates Increase Options for 2023-24.

Rate payers received their undated notification letters in mid December, the week before Christmas, when businesses owners and employees were working overtime to accommodate the influx of tourists into the area, and when the community focus was on the festive/holiday season. Many rate payers were away on holidays. In many instances Council's letter was not opened at this time because residents knew that there were no rates payments due and the focus was on Christmas. The timing of the Rate payer is unfair and unacceptable strategy.

There was no written response to the said petition after it was tabled at the meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> January and neither was there any feedback from Council to the public in response to the community's thousands of submissions calling for transparency and change. There were repeated mentions in the public submissions online, asking for reductions in council staff.

it was never mentioned in the Ordinary Meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023. Neither was any of the community feedback spoken of.

It is unclear whether any of the community responses and feedback was ever considered before the decision making.

### **ALL FORMS OF REVENUE AND IMPACT**

Councillor Nadin raised the issue that Council should be looking at all forms of revenue. He stated that  
i) User Fees and Charges had not been touched by Council.

And that

ii) Council had NOT reviewed the rating categories.

As an age pensioner, I am aware that NSW Pensioner Rate Concession has not been reviewed or increases since 1993, It is therefore Long overdue that Government fully funded Pensioner Rate Rebates be introduced.

Pensioners have no way of knowing or budgeting ahead of time in any financial year, let alone be able to financially plan and budget for a significant rate increase. The figures presented mean nothing to a significant proportion of pensioner residents.

### **REASONABLE IMPACT**

#### **The impact on the business rating category was not raised or consulted on.**

Councillor Nadin gave an example of the (**unreasonable**) impact that the SRV will have on rates payers:

A small business owner with whom he had spoken was facing a rates increase from \$6,700 per year to almost \$10,000 per year; PLUS an increase of \$800 on her residential property, adding up to a sudden increase of \$4,100.'

Regardless of the increase being implemented over two years, the impact on the small businesses in our shire can hardly be considered to be 'reasonable'. This very real and worrisome impact clearly has the potential to force some small businesses into devastating circumstances such as bankruptcy and/or foreclosures.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023, Councillor Allen mentioned a \$20M budget hole had been inherited by this Council. The said hole appears in Council documents in the FY 2019/2020. As far as I am aware, all historical financial Council deficits have continued to be a drain on this shire and have impacted both residents and services delivered.

### **CRITERION 3 in SV Guidelines asks for a demonstration of the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay rates.**

'One size fits all' is not a true indication of the impact on differing demographics groups and in particular, the heavy impact of rates increases on low income earners.

The growing number of homeless who are forced out of their homes by unaffordable rents clearly have no capacity to absorb rates 'trickle down' effects from their landlords. So the negative impact is felt by more than just the rates payers. This does not demonstrate that any consideration has been given by Council to this very real issue in our current society.

**On the BVSC Application for SRV, under the heading:**

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY**, none of the **petition results** have been included in the supporting documents. And yet the collection of 1,049 signatures on the petition lodged by myself has not been mentioned. Another approximately 600 signatures were submitted to Council from an online petition created by a Bermagui resident, as well as approximately 100 more signatures on a BVSC Petition Form submitted by the same resident. That total of approximately **1,749** signatures of community feedback **against Council Practice and Proposals** is not included in the figures.

In response to the online feedback question: "Which option do you prefer?" the public submitted 2,331 votes, broken down as follows:

SRV OPTION A	2.79%	(65 votes)
SRV OPTION B	10.77%	(251 votes)
SRV OPTION C	15%	(352 votes)
<b>Rate Peg Only OPTION D</b>	<b>71.34%</b>	<b>(1,663 votes for no SRV)</b>

And so yet again, I question whether any of these responses were ever taken into consideration. The response and vote numbers demonstrate that the larger proportion of shire residents are unaware of these changes and significant impacts.

Author name: S. Lindhorst

Date of submission: Sunday, 26 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Please read Attached documents: 1. Submission to IPART BVSC 2023 SRV 2. Cover letter to Councillor Helen O'Neil regarding Petition 16/01/2023 3. Petition header

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 17 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Not knowing what will be adopted.. but their comments on Service Level Charges which I assume is outside general rates are very scary. Option A - This option will allow Council to meet current asset management and operational needs and financial sustainability ratios. Option B - This option will allow Council to meet current asset management and operational needs; however the rate increase will be introduced over 2 years. Option C - Council will need to significantly reduce current levels of service by an average of \$13.9 million each year. [and this is with a 43% increase permanently applied] Option D - [in part] This option continues the unsustainable financial trajectory and will mean we are not able to manage core assets such as roads and bridges [This despite receiving special funds etc from Governments] Council is again using methods of the past and literally scaring the hell out of our small community where a small population and a massive shire size with lots of un-rateable areas pose significant burden on the ratepayers through the Council. It is way past time that un-rateable lands in the shire must start to contribute to the overall well being of the Shire.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I don't think the Council have done this. They have released so much information but it is not broken down in General Rates only. ie on one brochure released they say they use general rates for 1451 km of sealed roads, 127 km of urban stormwater infrastructure, 83 parkland reserves, 14 cemeteries, 43 playgrounds, 25 sports fields, 227 bridges, 53 public toilets. Yet we know they have qualified for special "grants?" for repairing the sealed roads and the bridges. I have been a resident, and now retired business owner, since 1997 and this issue keeps cropping up time and again.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The basic answer is yes, but they could have put more efforts into what services may be able to be downgraded.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes, they have offered a small chart indicating the impact on the residential rates. Haven't seen any business or farming rates. Some of these options would be absolutely scary for our low socio-economic group - adding between \$472.00 and \$2,309.00 for the 2024/25 year (including a 2.5% rate pegging). We already have a chronic housing shortage, not that this is a council responsibility. We also have an aging population well into the future.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Council will always say yes to this question. Unfortunately it has been "same old", "same old" for years when it comes to community awareness. The community generally don't show a great interest as it is often a "done deal" regardless of what the community would like.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They listened then still went ahead with a 45% in 2024 and 37.2 in 2025 after scaring the pants off the community with their option a - a 90% increase permanently. At the time of their writing this brochure, they had two Option A's, two Option B's, two option C's and coming in last the Option D - Average residential rate under rate peg increase only (4.1%).

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I believe in the current economic climate, Council has not used reasonableness in determining the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't believe this has been fully explored by council. The response from community is more resigned to what will happen regardless as they think they don't really have a voice with council. I for one no longer participate in an active way due to Council's presumed consultations, where they tell you what they want, not think about effects on the whole community.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Not aware of their hardship plan....

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes, they appear to have followed the required guidelines. Most of the problems lie in the earlier stages of process.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

As it has been a long drawn out process, I cannot make an accurate statement on this.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I plead to the people at IPART not to allow this as the problem with the council is that they don't know how to control spending, the problem is the more money you give them the more money they spend, they have no idea on how to be a responsible spending council. If this was a company it would be in receivership by now, administrators would come in to clean them up. I know I can't afford this as I already pay \$3440.00 in rates. There are people in the shire who can afford this but there are a whole lot more who can't afford the increase. I realise we do need an increase but let it be the rate peg as many other councils go by. Thanks for your time

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, I don't believe the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund. They just pointed out things would have to be cut back, I believe that the council doesn't know how to be a responsible council with rate payers money.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No, I don't believe they have, originally the council wanted a rate rise of 90%.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The council did try and show how much 90% increase would mean on it's web page but when I tried to get on to the page to show me how much extra it would cost the calculator wouldn't work for me. When they decided to raise to 43% over 2 years there was no consultation with the ratepayer they just voted it in

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

NO!

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They didn't go as high as 90% but the 43% hike is way too much for ratepayers to handle so my belief is that they didn't listen hard enough.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I believe the impact of 43% will be catastrophic on the rate payers, as we pay \$3440 pa to the council now people can't afford that sought of increase. People are doing it tough now with the cost of living. Businesses will do it tough as rents will go up, prices will go up and can't keep slugging the ratepayers.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. There has been no consideration given to the people! They don't know how to put out a responsible budget or stay within that budget they keep on spending.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I'm afraid I don't know what their plan is if they have one.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes, I think it has.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I don't believe they have a cost containment, as the debt they have got themselves into over the years is ridiculous and shows it has no cost containment strategies

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I believe it's time for council to restructure itself to meet the changes in the economic climate we now find ourselves in. Upgrading and improving the shire may be a nice idea but not economical viable due to the rising costs. Keeping the shire maintained and reducing costs by removing unnecessary services and assets would solve some of the problems. If council proposed a realistic rate rise it may not of met with so much opposition as increases in rates flow onto residents in other ways besides just extra rates. Businesses increase prices to cover their costs which then gets passed on to the local consumer. Better strategies to increase revenue by getting more investment by business in the area by encouraging them to setup and operate in the area getting more jobs. More jobs more rates. Industry in the Bega shire has dwindled over the years forcing people to leave reducing councils revenue. Forcing up rates will get people to find cheaper alternatives and move elsewhere. The solution proposed by council will only punish the little ratepayers they have left. Everyone is feeling the increases across the board and then to have such a large increase in rates put upon us i find very rude to say the least. If most people are cutting back in all areas of their lives to make do why does council think it can continue at the rate they are and expect everyone else pay for the inefficiencies and poor decisions. If council was a private business running the way they are, it would of gone broke long ago. An increase is inevitable but a realistic amount would of been better received. I ask you then to deny councils srv submission as it comes at a time when the majority of people just can't cope with more increases and the stress of the disasters over the last few years (Fires, floods and covid).

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Hardly. Only a massive increase in rate's to continue council's inefficiencies. No talk of off loading assets that aren't running at least to sustain themselves. Nothing about reducing councils massive staff numbers consuming 34% of rates. No talk of restructure to save ratepayers money in anyway.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

NO from what was presented to me the council presented one of five options available to them that should of been proposed to ratepayers.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

a maximum of 90% increase in one hit was way over the top. Hinting that the 43% increase would hardly be sufficient to meet increase in council's costs.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Only found out about it through someone else's research on the matter explaining that the council has mislead ratepayers on other alternate methods that could avoid such a huge rate rise. Then started to look it up and follow up on it. Very poor advertising by council regarding the matter.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

have settled on a 43% increase over 2 years is the proposal that I read about.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The area of the Bega valley shire is a remote area and has limited facilities. Most here are retired, disability pensions or unemployed. Most live here because the rates are lower than in towns which are a lot higher. The threat of a 90% increase was so unrealistic to near double the rates on ratepayers that would start to price people off their properties. With all other increases and interest rises it would be way to much for a lot of people around here.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

What i have read it was over 71% of people who responded weren't in favour of any rise. The options presented by council weren't realistic in any economic climate.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Only by an interest free repayment plan to eligible people who sign an agreement to repay. Bad luck if you still can't meet the increase. No mention of waivers or reductions for people struggling.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted



by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?  
as far as i can see. it was set for 43% spread over 2 years.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

For the area I live in which is Eden rural west which happens to be the largest area represented in the council's capacity to pay report. It is the largest area which is larger than the rest of the shire combined with just over 7000 residents. It has the lowest rate of improvement in the shire. Most of the improvements over the last few years has been due to state funding for fire and flood grants. Over the years council's service's out here have been reduced considerably that the communities have resorted to applying for grant's to get new infrastructure put into communities that council then won't service.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I oppose any special rate variation by Bega council until it improves its performance, productivity and culture.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. The Bega application does not establish the community's desire or need for increased projects that cause the desire for increased rates. In fact, the Bega application includes evidence of the community desire to NOT increase rates in that it shows over 70% of its respondents are opposed to a rate increase.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. The Bega application concentration on a rate increase seems to have missed the opportunity to improve its working relationship with its community. The community has spoken about alternatives that should have been considered by the council including changing the culture of the council staff to provide service to its customers i.e. its ratepayers, divesting itself of unnecessary assets, removing staff that are incompetent and/or dead wood, outsourcing peak workloads rather than carrying staff for peak workloads. Staff is over 30% of operating expenses so is an obvious area of consideration of improvement and hence savings.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Bega council concentrated only on the percentage of rate increases in its survey results i.e. rate increases of 90%, 45%, 37.2%, 43% and 0%. The survey results show no consideration of community acceptance of the full cumulative increase of rates on the average ratepayer. It does not mention ongoing efficiency measures or its achievements against these measures, if they actually exist.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. The engagement plan in the Bega submission does not mention engagement methods. Methods include media (TV, newspapers, social media...), public meetings, community group meetings and one on ones. The engagement plan should have focussed on what questions it needed answering to justify each and every rate increase option, as an example willingness to pay each option. The engagement plan concentrated only on what messaging to use for justifying the rate increase.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The only evident council response to community feedback is the submission to IPART. The engagement method mentioned in Question 2 (Criterion 3) above should have been used to communicate the results of community feedback particularly to inform feedback on what the community saw as ways of improving productivity by the council.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The rate increase will significantly and unreasonably impact ratepayers. As pointed out by the Commonwealth government since it came to power wages growth has been absent for several years. Ratepayers income has not risen to anywhere near the extent of the rate increase except for the no increase option. While rates might be a small part of a ratepayer's outgoings, recently inflation has exceeded average wage rises so that with cost of living generally increasing and wages not increasing it is unreasonable to not establish the impact on ratepayers.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The willingness to pay the rate increase has not been established by the council. It has assumed that because its financial management has left it short of funds the only option it has is to increase its rates rather than considering decreasing its operating expenses. As less than 50% fully own their houses, the current and coming increases in interest rates and associated rent increases will make the other 50% of the community's capacity to pay the rate increase difficult. Further use to Dec2019 - Jan2020 bushfires a significant number of ratepayers lost their houses and their rebuild costs have been significantly increased by council delays and taking years to approve development applications for the rebuilds. These costs are not only council's fees and charges but more significantly inflation of building materials has been significant, some steel products have increased by more than 100% during the council's approval delays.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Council does have a hardship policy. It does not specifically address what council intends in regards to hardship caused by the proposed special variation to rates. Further, this policy is not applied by the council as it is written. Council incompetently

had been sending rates notices to the wrong address for decades. These rates were accruing interest which council did not waive in accordance with its policy.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No comment.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

As submitted above council does explain and quantify its productivity improvements. Even though cost containment strategies were submitted in the community engagement, there is no evident recognition of this approach by council.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Our council has a history of mismanagement and [REDACTED]. There is already a short fall in services provided, so where has the money gone? They are not transparent in their conversations with the public. They continue to employ people even though they've run out of money! They spend hideous amounts on unnecessary upgrades to buildings, misuse state given funds, over pay contractors while expensive equipment sits rusting in their yards and council cars are unused in the lot. There needs to be an audit done within the ranks of both the money issues and the number of employees. Get rid of the rate payers funded credit cards. Sell off the rusting equipment and unused council cars. Reuse waste to make money instead of polluting our oceans further. Restructure how contractors are paid and offer the work through a quote system. An ex council employee has told me of the extreme waste of our money [REDACTED]. We simply cannot keep reaching into our pockets to find ineptitude within our Government run institutions. We must be listened to and respected. I will not stand by and keep being stolen from whilst this [REDACTED] continues.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No they have not. They are making threats of withdrawing basic services if we do not comply.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. They are very close minded and will not look at environmental solutions to make money for the region rather than continually raising rates to cover their ineptitude at managing the money. Victims of the 2020 fires still haven't received the grants promised and given to the council from Government. They have been caught out many times misusing funds.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

I am unaware of any community engagement by the council so, no.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The council has not released any comments or public opinion re this ridiculous proposal. They keep advertising for more council staff, upgraded their chambers and work place, are spending outrageous dollars on a pipe to put our waste into the ocean instead of looking to use it for fertiliser that would make the region millions of dollars. They are short sighted and using rates funds for their own agenda, not for the community.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

There is none! Everyone is already under duress from rising costs of living. This increase is completely unreasonable and unnecessary. We need to know where the money has gone.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The council is not interested in the community and their opinions. As stated before, they haven't released any of the comments or public's view on this increase. There have been several petitions around the district with thousands of signatures from rate payers opposing council's rate increase proposal.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I haven't seen any mention of this. Only threats of reduced services if we don't comply.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unknown

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

There is no specific mention of proposed improvements etc. Only 'asset management and operational needs' and how services will be drastically reduced if the huge increase is not agreed to.



From: [REDACTED] >  
Sent: Wednesday, 22 February 2023 12:34 PM  
To: IPART <[ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au)>  
Cc: [REDACTED] >  
Subject: Bega Valley Council's 2023-24 Special Rate Variation Application-Submission

Thank you Gerard for a very informed discussion on the issue. We are both elderly 80+ on a means tested Centerlink pension, and rely mainly on income from Rents, that have not kept pace with costs.

We wish to object to the size of the increases for the following reasons in point form.

- 1 Increase would unfairly impact on high value land value because of add valorem component.
- 2 Flow on effect to Tenants of rented properties \$Rents at a time of massive interest increases and revaluations.
- 3 Council is being unrealistic at the present time in asking for such massive increases.

We thank you for the opportunity to make comments and would appreciate if our personal details are not published.

Regards

[REDACTED]

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.  
There needs to be an audit of BVSC spending

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Absolutely not

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Not aware of anything undertaken

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Long term and older residents are being asked to sell their homes and downsize. Is this reasonable?

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

No apparent provision of a management plan for hardship cases

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Not adequate

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not sure

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

There is little to no transparency as to past council expenditure

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

If the Bega Valley Shire Council was presenting a strong argument for a rate rise, alongside clear and concise explanations of where funds are actually going to improve our beautiful community I might be in support. I strongly oppose this suggested rate rise as underlying issues with fund management of council are not being addressed. They may in fact be successful in this application, but the same problems will arise only with more money wasted. It is sometimes startling to hear about how some of our council's income is spent. Council offices upgraded whilst employees were directed to work from home during covid, a T intersection changed so the small amount of traffic using the road did not have to give way (millions of dollars spent on a road not identified as a black spot), a \$6 million dollar sporting complex in a small village (Pambula, pop. 3228) when another sporting complex is accessible less than 10mins away, and the list goes on. Please deny this application so that council has to look at other ways to provide good services. Other councils can, so can we. More money is not the solution to this problem, a full financial audit would be a good start.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Absolutely not. Communication is minimal and hidden in small links in rate notices. There was one email sent out to remind us to 'have our say' where all of the above 'criteria' was outlined in a way that would probably 'tick the boxes' but other than a few posts on their Facebook page (which not everyone would access). The notice we received outlined minimal data of what our current rates pay for e.g 1451km of sealed and unsealed roads, 127km of urban stormwater infrastructure (which I didn't think fell under what general rates pay for), 83 parkland reserves, 43 playgrounds, 227 bridges, 14 cemeteries, 25 sports fields, 51 public toilets and a statement reading 'among other assets and services we provide. No monetary value attached to indicate spending and this information is extremely hard to find anywhere on their website. The notification very broadly outlined what each option would allow council to do. For example, Option A - This will allow council to meet current asset management and operational needs and financial sustainability ratios. Option C - Council will need to significantly reduce the current levels of service by an average of 13.9 million each year. The long term financial plan available on the council's website is unclear and not easy for the average resident to understand. [https://begavalley.nsw.gov.au/files/Long\\_Term\\_Financial\\_Plan\\_2023-32\\_February2023update.pdf?v=1676452324](https://begavalley.nsw.gov.au/files/Long_Term_Financial_Plan_2023-32_February2023update.pdf?v=1676452324) On the Your council website <https://www.yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au/council-data/bega-valley/2020/> Council's 20/21 income is reported as: 2020/21 Revenue (\$'000) 142,047 and Expenses reported as 2020/21 Expenses (\$'000) 107,648. Where is the shortfall here? I have tried to read the past financial statements that are available on the council's website and I cannot see where the council is falling short of funds, so no, not clearly established at all.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The alternative communicated is to significantly reduce the current levels of service if the rate rise is not introduced. I have not seen any communication around how current funds could be managed differently or audits done on current spending.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes they did.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

I question how far their engagement strategy reached? There was initial (brief) communication about the proposed rate rises via email and their Facebook page. A lot of communication was generated on local community Facebook pages. Council's Facebook page did not communicate anything about the community being able to have their say on the application with Ipart. (I'd be interested to know how many people have actually given feedback to you). In fact, council 'limits' the ability for people to make comments on their posts so questions could not even be asked in this way.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council choose to submit the middle option for the proposed rate rise, but I, as do many others, believe that this was a strategy to 'shock' the community with an extreme rise of 90% with the thought that residents would be much more accepting of a rise half that amount.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

In these hard financial times, this rate rise is in no way reasonable and will affect ratepayers and the community significantly. I cannot see anywhere in the Long Term Financial plan where the council clearly shows the impact of any rate rises upon the community except for outlining the amount ratepayers will have to pay. This is an area, like many others, that is experiencing a



housing shortage especially for rentals. Unfortunately, any rate rise will be passed on to those in the community who are renters, really impacting on their quality of life. I urge you to take into consideration our Socio-Economic Index Rank (1 low, 128 high) being 57 and our average Taxable Income being \$45,986 (<https://www.yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au/council-data/bega-valley/2020/at-a-glance/>).

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. It is also unclear how the council has considered the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The overall sense from the community is that they do not want to pay. We understand major budgets are needed to offer services in our community but there is already significant funds coming into the council's budget. A rate rise is not needed, a forensic financial investigation needs to be carried out to see where the current funds are being mismanaged. This is a strong sentiment within the community. Other successful councils need to be used as a model of best practice when it comes to using funds wisely.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I cannot comment on The Delivery Program as I cannot find it on the council's website and I see no mention of it in the Long Term Financial Plan. I assume it would be the same statement as is on our regular rate notices about contacting council if you are experiencing financial hardship, but I do not know what the plan is.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I think this is the case, although I cannot find the Delivery program anywhere on the website or on iPart's website. I'm assuming the recorded meeting on the council's website, was the 'extraordinary meeting'. This shows attendance of 18 people including the 2 council employees presenting.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I do not believe these have been incorporated in the council's Long Term Financial Plan. The Performance Monitoring section of the plan outline the different options and are just percentage projections with no real explanation of them. Page 23 of the plan outlines the proposed option and shows decreased performance in most areas. How can the council request a rate increase yet show no explanation of strategies that could be used to improve performance.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

From the responses of many that I have met in the local community, if IPART approve this without an audit of council or bringing in an administrator something is very wrong. Council need to have a good hard look at how they are spending rate payers money and managing their staff and assets. They also need to consider the current rising inflation and cost of living with regard to the lower income earners who are doing all they can to stay afloat without having to wear a rate rise from a mis-managed council.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

If you look at the responses to the council's own survey on the rate variation, the percentage of people who answered not important - important took up 61.01% of respondents for the council to maintain and upgrade its current assets, that is not a clear community need/desire for service levels/projects. And the only reason this is skewed is because in answering these questions the ratepayers did not know the context of the question. If it had been asked would they prefer the service level to remain the same with no increase, or improve with an increase then the answer to that question and the percentage would be different, typical beaurocratic question style to illicit what they need to succeed in their quest for more rate payer money to waste by not managing their financials or staff adequately. Over 70% of respondents to their survey preferred option D - No SRV with significant service changes required - and this is because nobody in the shire has faith that the council is managing their financials adequately - councils lack of transparency when asked for their financials is proof of this. Their LTFP should have been made available to the public much sooner and it should have been accompanied by their full financials for assessment, but typically its quietly put forward without enough information for people to make an informed decision.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The council have endeavoured to make a nice little document to prove that they have canvassed other options, when in reality they have done no such thing. They continue to employ more staff than necessary, particularly in the main office building. The organisation structure is very top heavy. Along with this they do not manage their staff to ensure that the jobs are done in adequate time frames and that no time is wasted between jobs or with staff that do not need to be at certain locations (i.e. 3 men on a work crew to erect a speed sign). They also spend funds willy nilly on real estate and make a loss such as the Australasia, and it is well known that there is a mentality of "jobs for the boys/mates" despite things going out to tender generally they go to someone who is "in" with council. Using the Merimbula airport as an example, they decide on a contractor, they don't make that contractor sign an agreement to warrant their work, so then when it is damaged in 12 months time they cannot go back to that contractor and require them to fix it for nothing, they instead pay them all over again!!

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Council have covered what they needed to cover to make it all appear that they have met this requirement, when in truth they have set meeting times that do not work for all and I have heard that some meetings started before the allocated times. I was unable to attend any of the consultation meetings, and as such I was not even aware of councils LTFP or where to find it as there was no information put out to state that it was available.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

They have used various methods including face-to-face (but as stated above at inconvenient times) and various other methods.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council had originally wanted to peg a 90% increase, and they have reduced that down to the now 43% over 2 years. This was in response to the amount of backlash they received. But it remains that the council will already be getting an increase due to a 70% increase in land values in the Bega Valley, and they want more on top - originally 90% more - any institution that cannot manage its funds and requires increases to this degree should be audited and if necessary put into administration. If IPART don't fully investigate the 13 councils requesting an increase then I don't know how they can claim to be an independent body - If I asked my boss for a 90% pay rise tomorrow, but couldn't deliver on the required paperwork and evidence to support my worth, do you think I'd succeed?

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is quite clear that what council has proposed is unreasonable given the responses to the survey that they have conveniently tried to skew to work in their favour in the financial plans.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Clearly the community does not have the capacity and most certainly not the willingness, with the rise in cost of living in every area of people's lives, this increase will put immense pressure on pensioners, single parents and many others who are mortgaged to the hilt, paying \$2 per litre for fuel, a family food bill on average a week for a family of 4 of at least \$400. And I have heard of one councillor telling a local shiftworker, just pick up a couple of extra shifts to cover it - no regard for families or pensioners already doing it tough!

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Yes the council has outlined its hardship policy

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I do not know, I am assuming so

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council have outlined a number of planned strategies, but I and many others feel like these are just words on paper and they will not adhere to them.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Council may appear to have some good arguments for a rate rise. In an ideal world we'd all love the best of services and assets, tge best roads, pools, libraries and museums, but in this current economical climate, it's not realistic. Council need to contain their expenses like the rest of us. We have far too many pools in one shire. And they're all loosing money. Sure, we'd all love a pool close by, but surviving is more important than pools.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. Long term financial plan should consider the number of assets owned that are draining the council's general fund. The community has been clear - we'd prefer to loose some services, such as pools, the new SECCA arts centre etc, so rates don't rise in this already difficult financial times for most if the rate payers. We have low wages here, so the cost of living rental prices and interest rate rises are putting more and more people under financial strain, increasing homelessness in the area.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

They say they have consulted with the public. They have, but haven't listened. They had their plans and aren't willing to budge. The community have overwhelming said we prefer a reduction in council owned assets than a rate rise.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes, they communicated this to the community and explained how the current rates don't cover what they say the shire needs. But we are willing to reduce services. They have not listened at all.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes, there was a variety of engagement methods, but they don't seem to take the feedback on board

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The council has not changed its position from the time they first advised us of the proposed rate rise to now. The consultation process was just a show. One of the initial options they gave us was a reduction on services. In the last lot of options, it was removed.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The council has shown a lack of local knowledge in terms of the general rate payers current financial issues. The cost of living is through the roof here, huge increases in rent and mortgage rates. I know of at least 20 properties that are about to be foreclosed on just in Bega (not the whole bega valley, just tge bega township)

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

No consideration whatsoever. Their consultation process revealed both capacity and willingness of us rate payers being able to pay more was not listened to at all. This council has continued to apply for "special" rate variations for years. They were even told not to apply for any further rate rises for a certain number of years - they lasted 1 year!

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I've read it and honestly don't think this council understand what hardship is! Unless they can reduce the cost of living, rent and homeloan interest rates, then none of their proposals will make a dent in the increased hardship this will cause. This council needs to understand there are things outside of their control and they can't just hope things will somehow workout with this rate rise. They're going to have less people paying rates as they'll be on the streets, leave the shire or move in with people who already pay rates.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I think you'll find productivity and cost containment strategies have failed (an independent audit may be warranted). Their own

staff wages are above the average wages of the shire and they continue to increase their staffing numbers. They buy assets that make no money and then they ask us to pay for it.

# IPART SUBMISSION – BEGA VALLEY RATES SPV Proposal 23-24

## CRITERION 1

### **Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?**

No. This question requires an examination of Council's financial history to consider Council's SPV proposal in a 'is it reasonable' context.

BVSC Council has a record of widening its tax base in recent years from:-

- purchasing/constructing assets which add significant depreciation and carry charges into the rate revenue base;
- poor financial management in delivering major projects (i.e. the Airport Master Plan, the Merimbula Training Complex, the Tathra/Kalaru bicycle path); and
- accepting grants for projects/work that require an unbudgeted \$ for \$ contribution from Council.

The community has little trust that in recent years Council has every turned its mind to achieving a balanced budget. Many of the current problems might be attributed to Council mismanagement or incompetence under the former council's stewardship. (See Media clip copies attached).

An SPV (i.e. Tax) to underwrite poor past management and incompetence is not an equitable solution to the Shire's current financial issues. Particularly if the financial impacts of the past are still contributing to the situation.

Council's LTFPs include substantial upgrades of assets rather than maintenance (i.e. the *Bega Swimming pool* project embedded in the current SPV proposal) and it's problem solving approach is to simply ask for more of "other people's" money (i.e. more Tax on ratepayer's) every couple of years (Note: - Council foreshadows in current application that it will be asking for further SPVs in 4/5 years).

Four Year Expense Comparison				
General Fund Service/Activity	\$ Net Expense 2016/2017	\$ Net Expense 2019/2020	\$ Net Expense Increase	% Net Expense Increase
Regional Gallery	166,000	262,000	96,000	57.8%
Sporting Grounds & Facilities	334,000	2,083,000	1,749,000	523.7%
General Manager's Office	590,000	767,000	177,000	30.0%
Risk Management	881,000	1,705,000	824,000	93.5%
Environment & Sustainability	1,100,000	1,324,000	224,000	20.4%
Information, Comm & Tech	1,483,000	1,848,000	365,000	24.6%
Ecocomic Development	325,000	436,000	111,000	34.2%
Strategy & Business Services	345,000	1,437,000	1,092,000	316.5%
Employee Costs	26,203,149	30,075,000	3,871,851	14.8%
Other Expenses	4,126,168	7,210,000	3,083,832	74.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,553,317</b>	<b>47,147,000</b>	<b>11,593,683</b>	<b>32.6%</b>

Council has clearly not established the need for its proposed SPV revenue path for the council's General fund as opposed to undertaking real asset and operating cost reduction.

### **Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?**

Yes. However not adequately as Council has not provided detailed information in respect to what particular services (employment costs, asset maintenance and renewal and facility operation) it would cut/reduce if rate revenue only rises by the General fund 4.1% rate peg proposed by IPART. Rather Council limits the information it disseminates to the cost centre level which is of little value to ratepayers.

## CRITERION 2

***Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?***

No. Council provided an online tool for ratepayers to calculate the impact of its SPV proposal/s. However it did not/has not provided the Basic Rate figure nor the Ad Valorem figure it will apply in 2023/24 nor the VG UCV figure for each property which was available from the Department online in January. Accordingly ratepayers have not been able to, and still can't, calculate the increases that will apply in the next rate year and beyond.

***Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?***

No. The consultation/s ignores the fact that 37% of the shire population is over 60 years of age and many residents are not computer literate nor do they have the financial analysis skills or resources to interpret the hundreds of pages of documents Council prepares as a basis for ratepayer consultation.

***Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.***

The result of Council's web survey consultation is that 71.3% of respondents do not favour (i.e. oppose) approval of any SPV. Significantly the key themes indicated that in the proposals in the survey responses are that there is currently a lack of:-

- evidence of sound financial management and full transparency;
- efficiencies being demonstrated; and
- insufficient time being allowed for consultation.

I can see no evidence, beyond Council's recursive assertions that it will take ill defined action to improve its financial management in the future.

## CRITERION 3

***Question 1 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.***

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Council's proposal is its consideration and dismissal of community concern about ratepayer's capacity to pay the increases proposed.

If the SPV application is granted some residential ratepayers will be charged a total of approximately \$80 to \$100 per week for general rates plus the mandatory services the Council imposes. It will also drive up rental prices and worsen the housing affordability problems in BVS.

Council again employed its [REDACTED] Consultant Morrison Low to provide advice that ratepayers can afford to pay. Its report does not sufficiently consider the SPV proposal in the context of the financial difficulties being experienced by many in the community.

The ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) ranks the Bega Valley 72<sup>nd</sup> out of 130 Local Government Areas in 2016, meaning it was the 72nd most economically disadvantaged Local Government Area in NSW. Eden remains one of the most relatively disadvantaged SA2 areas in New South Wales with its population on average being more disadvantaged than 87% of the State. The whole Shire has a 6% unemployment rate, approximately double the national average.

While Council has a hardship policy that is a deferred debt, compounding interest (6%), this scheme has the hallmarks of a death tax rather than a hardship policy.

#### CRITERION 4

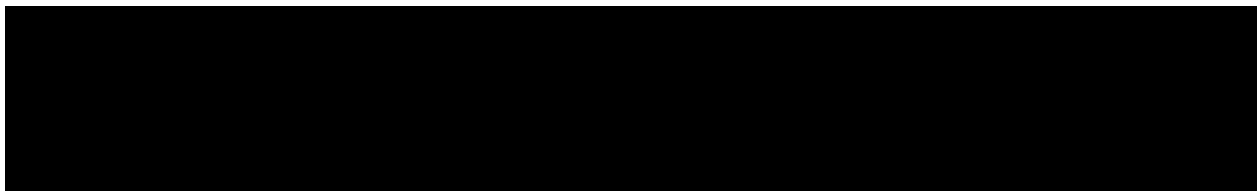
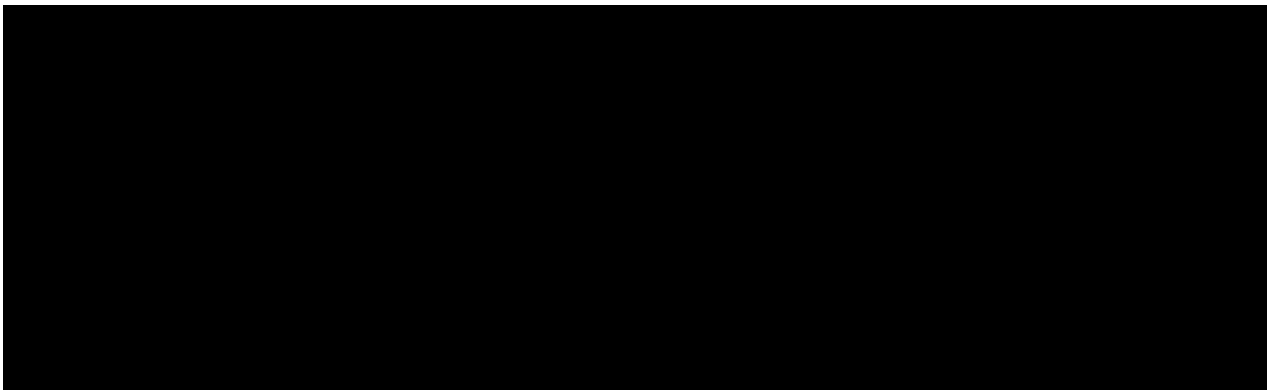
**Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation? Yes.**

#### CRITERION 5

**Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.**

Adequate governance of the Council's financial management must be proven in considering this SPV proposal.

There is little evidence Council has proposed a balanced budget for many years. It has adopted multiple LTFP in the last 5 years and every one of these has included a SV component.

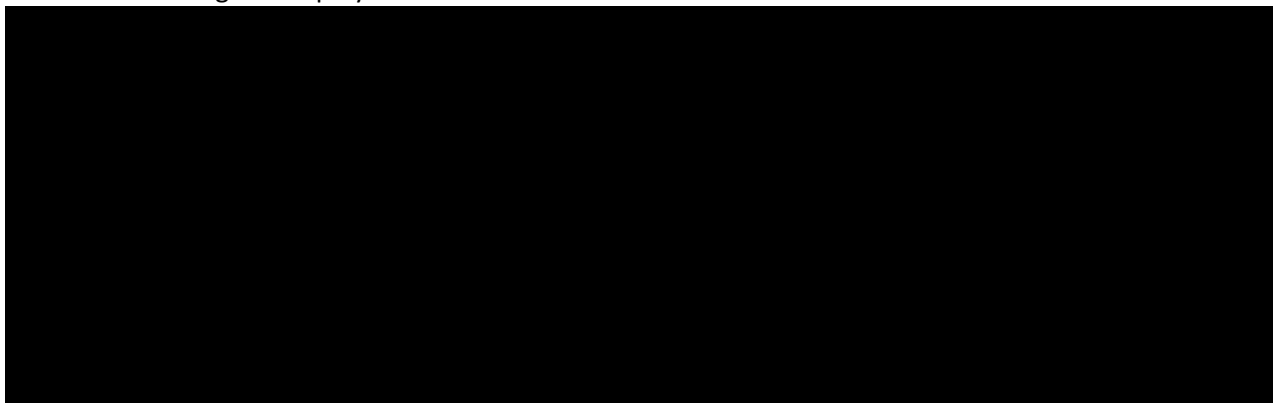


This demonstrates that Council has a financial management cultural issue.

In December 2020 an independent review of council's finances from 2015/16 to 2018/19 by *Morrison Low* found significant gaps in reporting procedures in council's accounting practises. The report compared Bega Valley Shire Council with other similar group 4 councils in 2018/19 finding that in many categories council performed well below the average.

I can find no specific detail in Council's proposal as to whether or not, or to what extent, Council has incorporated addressing the identified deficiencies from the Morrow Report into its financial management.

Council has increased its staffing including by employing casual and contract staff 'off establishment' rather than containing it's employee costs':-





## COMMENT

*Any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.*

In the context of Council's history of poor financial management it is not possible for IPART to have any confidence in the completeness and veracity of the information in the documentation presented to support Councils current SPV proposal.

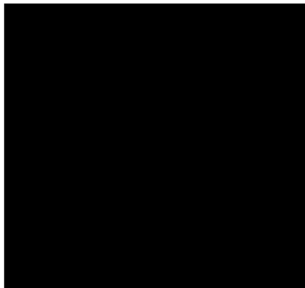
The shire does not have the population base to support the 'build it and they will come' approach by Council (i.e. the Airport Master Plan).

It is noteworthy that 78% of the shire are State Forests and National Parks and pay no Local Government rates while contributing significantly to the maintenance costs of the unsealed collector road network and that ratepayers are being asked to fund this expense.

The solution to the Councils financial challenges should not be its ongoing historical approach of simply increasing rates and charges (i.e. spending other peoples' money) beyond the rate peg set for it independently each year by IPART.

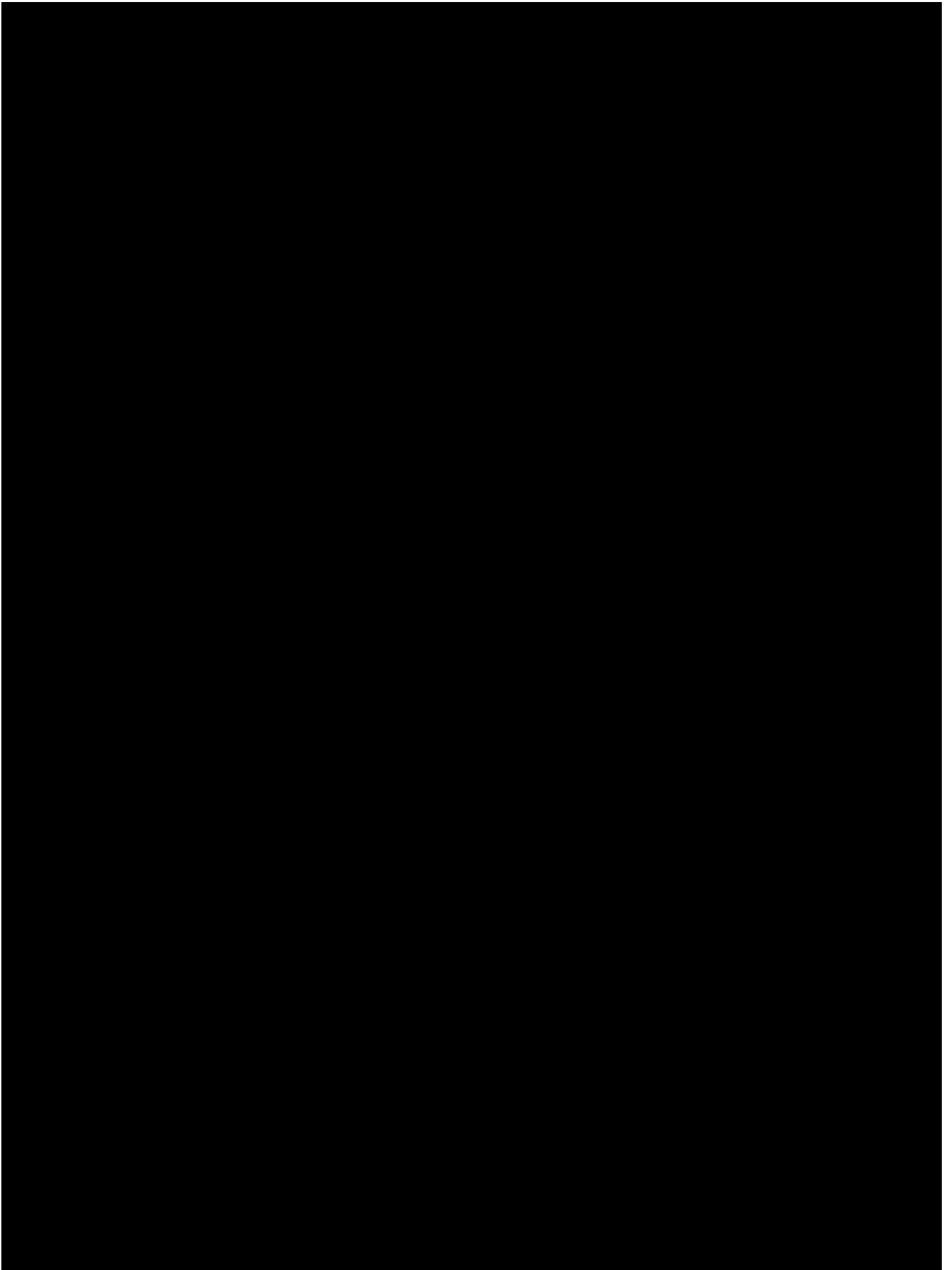
Pathways IPART might consider to recommend to Bega Council to manage its finances include:-

1. Conduct and publish a 'line-by-line' audit to enable ratepayers to fully understand what Council is currently spending its funds on within each 'service' ;
2. Identify and cost all actions that are within in Council's 220 Operational Plan to enable options for service action elimination to balance the budget (i.e. Budget repair);
3. Prepare and publish a detailed Asset Rationalisation Plan (All assets considered and listed individually);
4. Finalise a council resolution to refuse any future grants that require council co-contribution and/or or do not include full funding for future budget costs (depreciation and maintenance etc); and
5. Identify and publish what Efficiency Dividends can/will be imposed on each Council branch/section budget on a year by year basis going forward.





December 15 2020 - 5:00PM



the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase from 1.5 billion to 2.2 billion.

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of children in the 21st century. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is the first legally binding international instrument to set out the rights of children. It has been ratified by 113 countries, including the United Kingdom.

The Convention sets out the rights of children in the following areas:

- The right to life, survival and development.
- The right to be heard.
- The right to a family.
- The right to education.
- The right to play and recreation.
- The right to be protected from abuse and exploitation.

The Convention also sets out the responsibilities of adults towards children.

The Convention is a landmark document in the history of children's rights. It has helped to bring about a change in the way that children are viewed and treated.

The Convention is a key document for anyone working with children. It sets out the principles and standards that should guide all work with children.

The Convention is a living document. It is constantly being updated and revised to reflect the changing needs of children.

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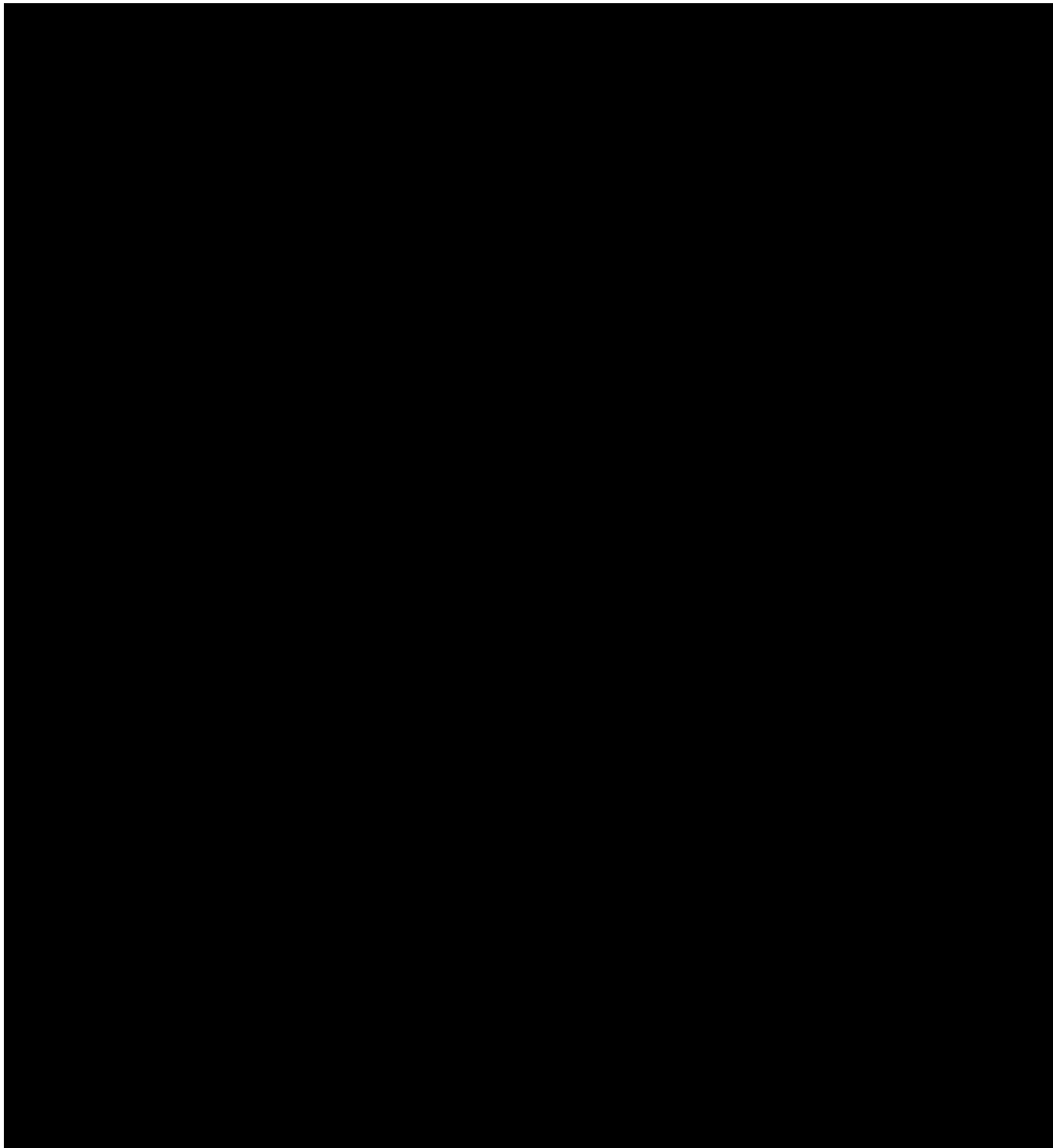
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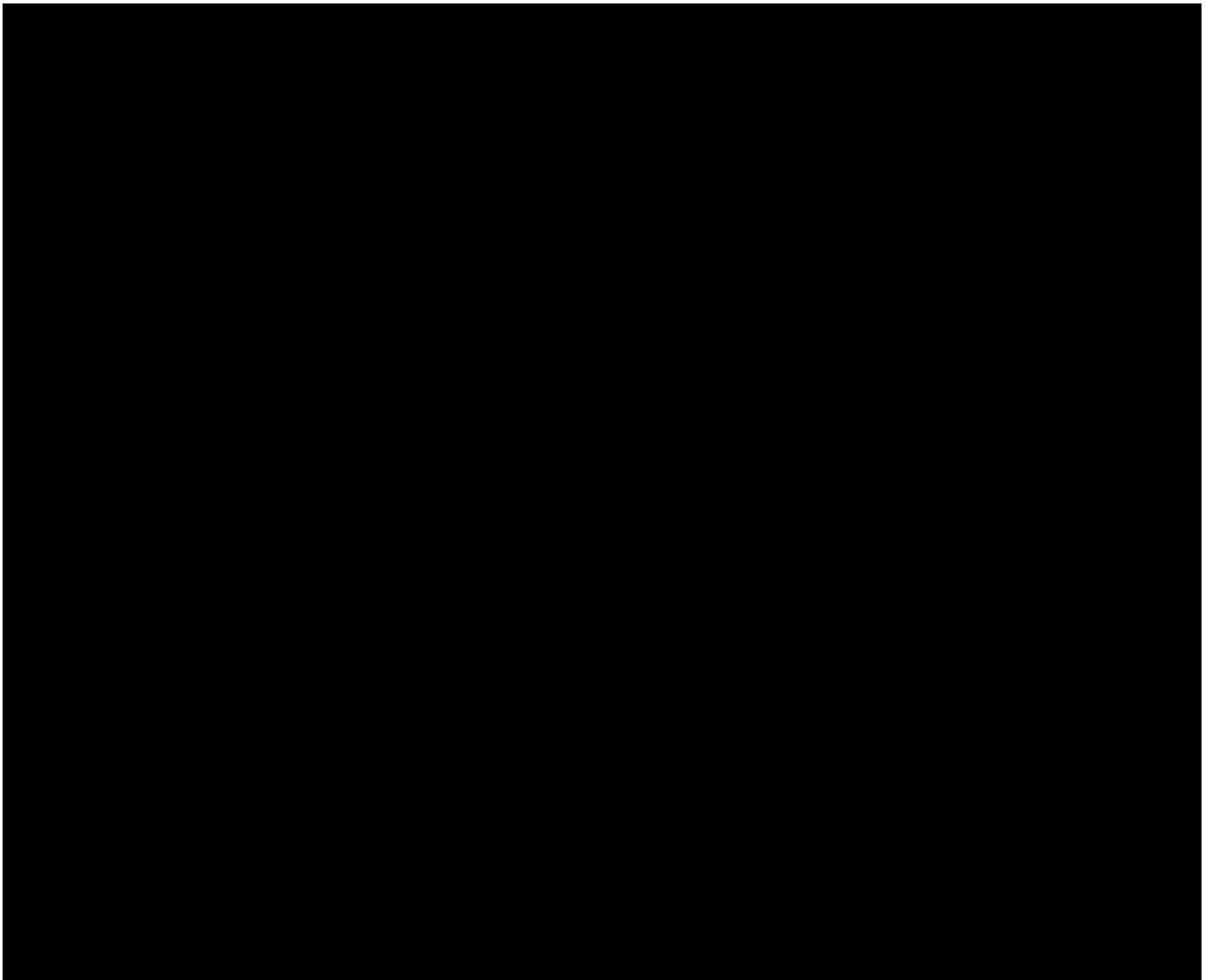
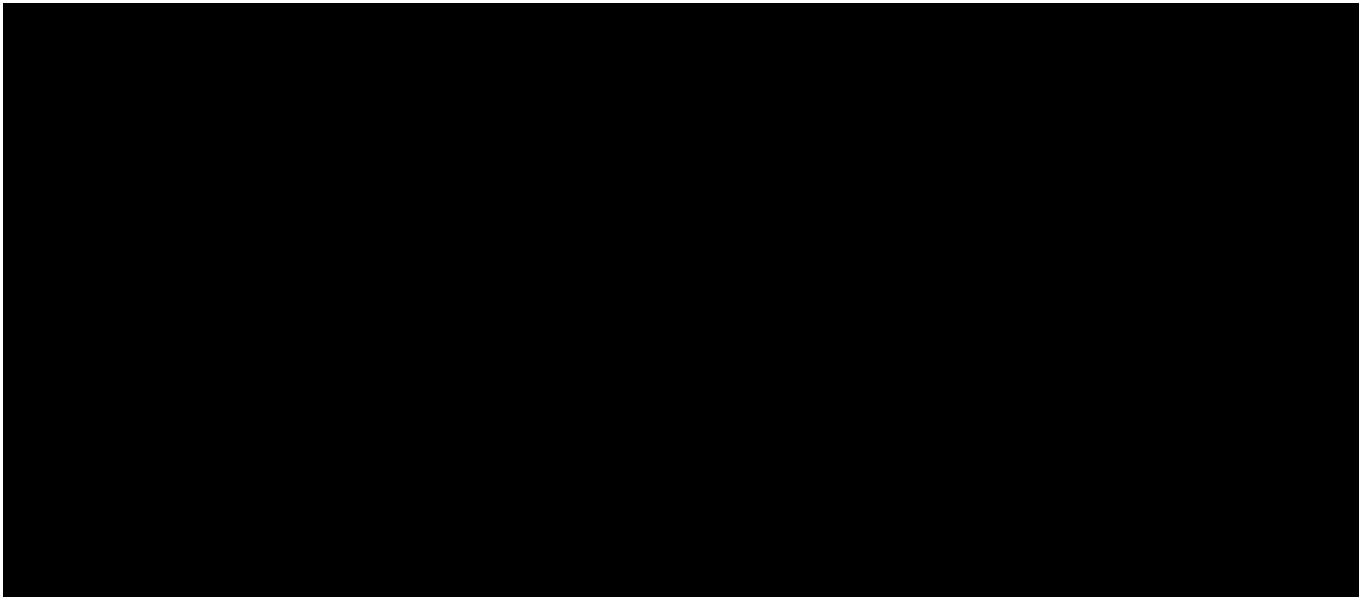
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What's On

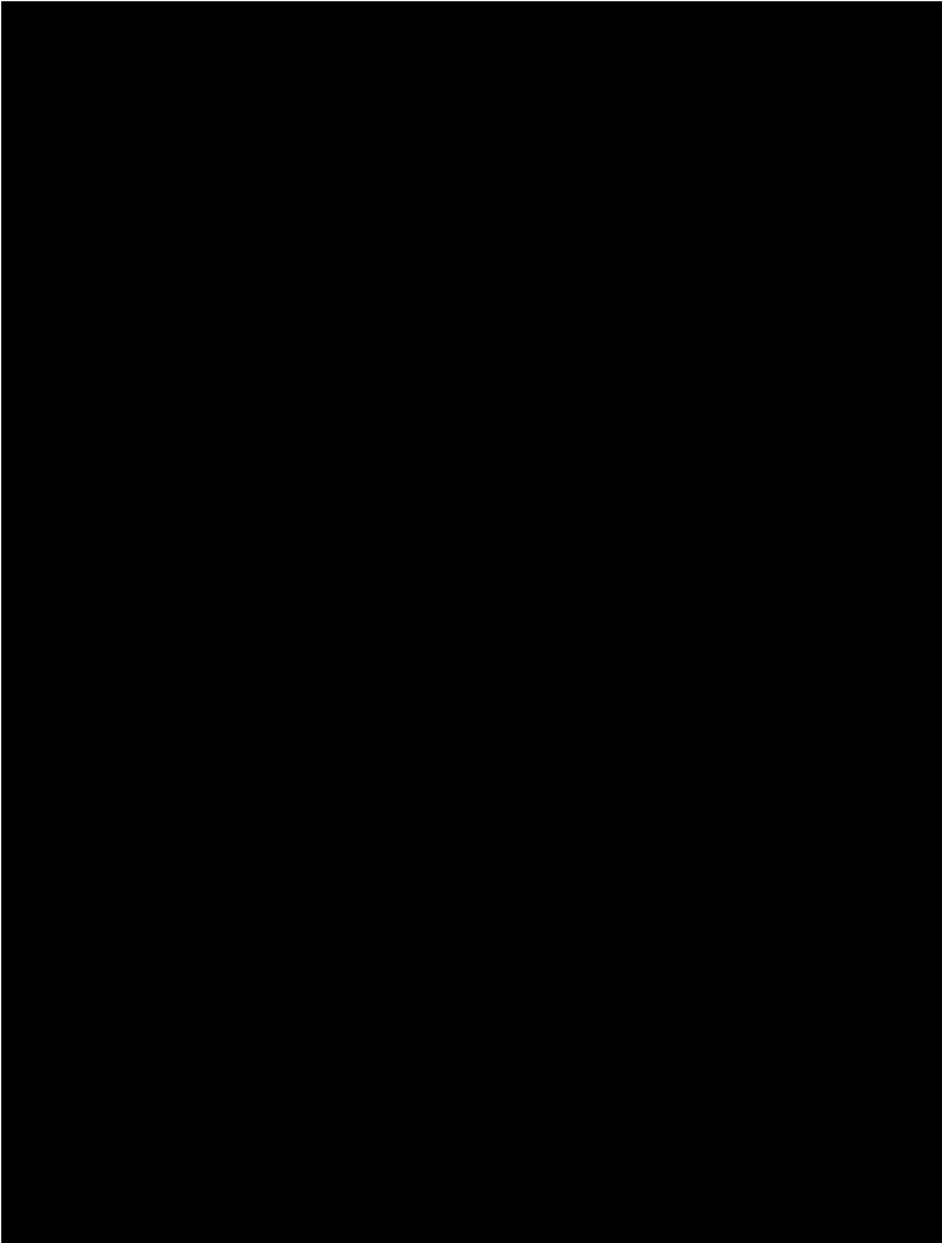
Community

Comment

Life & Style

Classifieds

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News

Sport

What's On

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**News**

Sport

What's On

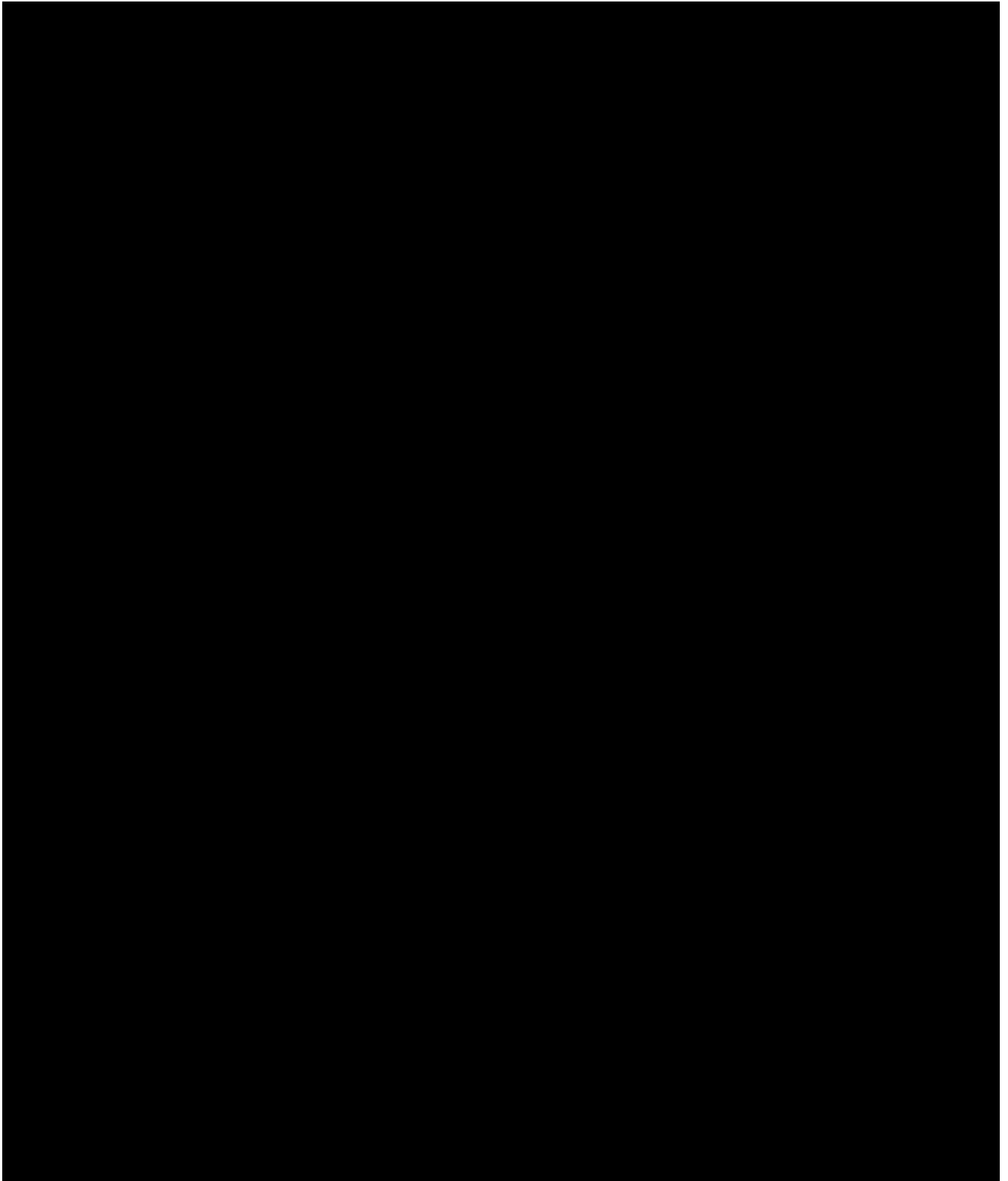
Community

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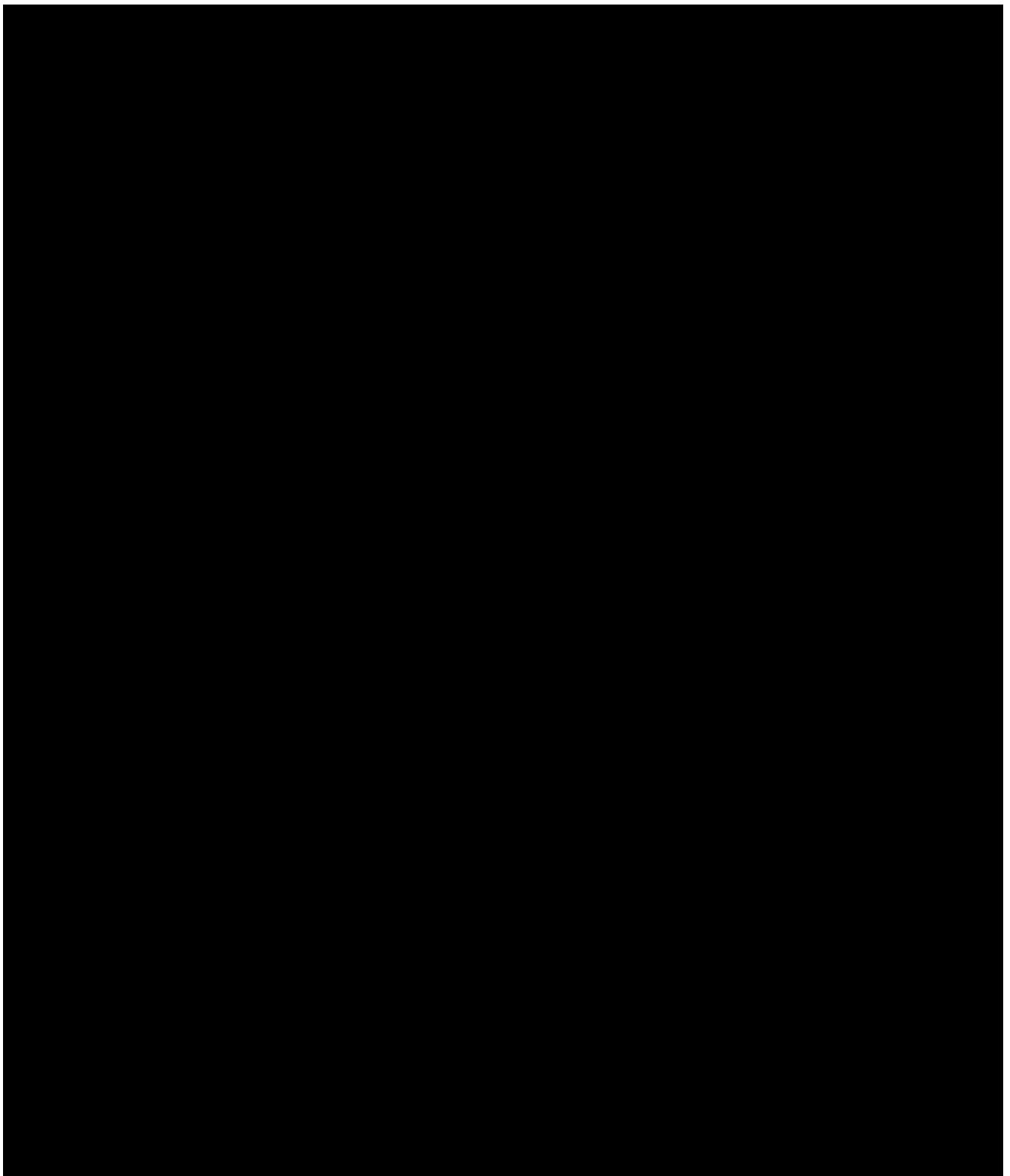
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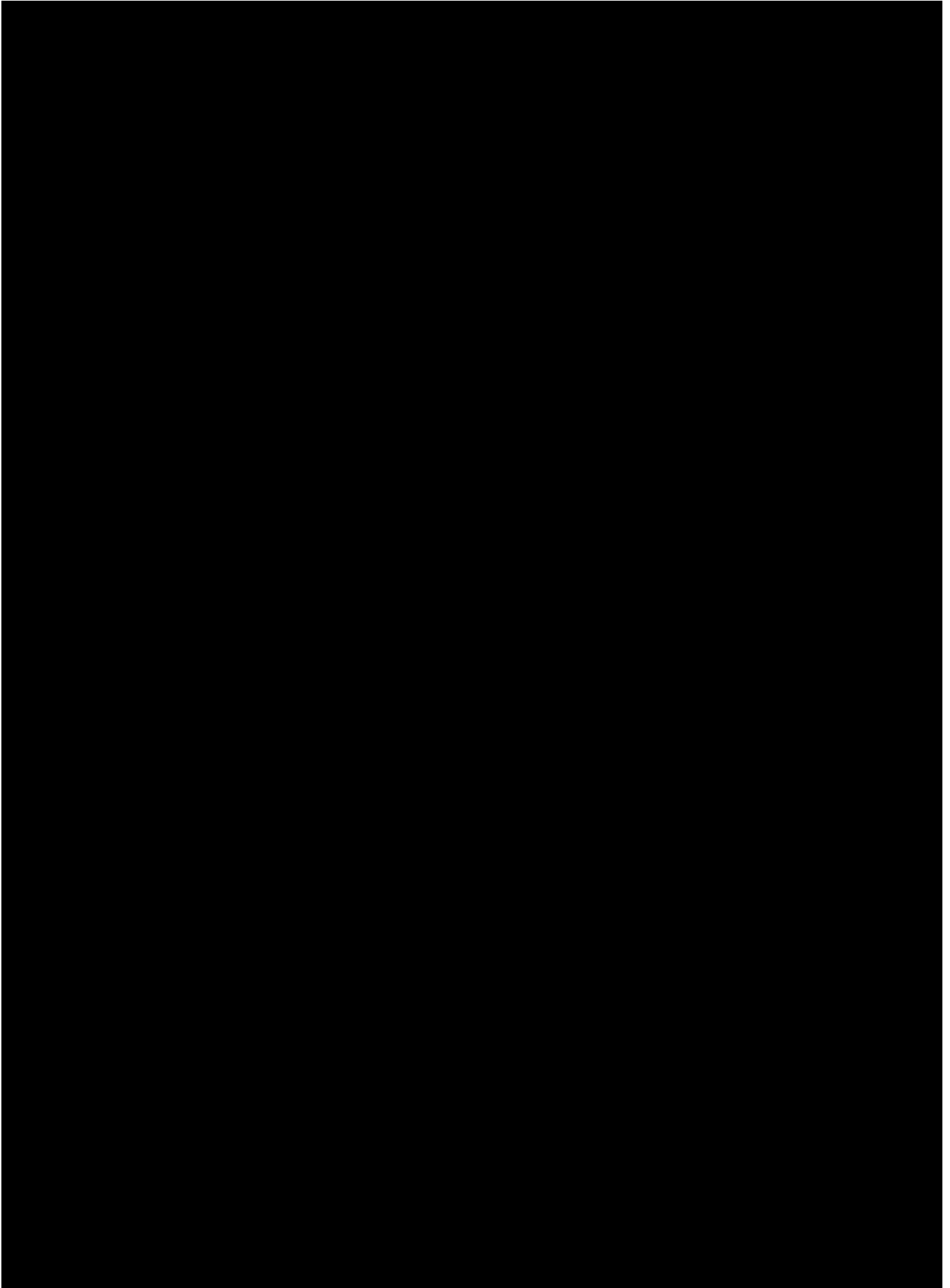








July 13 2020 - 1:45PM



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 10 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Bega Valley Council appear to be inefficient and wasteful when it comes to projects that we see being done. They should be audited and savings made to reduce wasteful non productive practices. Even things like FOGO waste reduction. We got a plastic bin and bin liners without being asked if we even wanted them. (We compost our own green waste) Waste. Merimbula roundabout rebuilt after it was made with faults. Waste. Some Council guy going up our road with weedkiller to kill grass on the verge while potholes grow large in the same street. Waste. Kalaru roadworks going on for months, while a footpath as wide as half the road is built that goes nowhere when much of the town is on the other street side and yet has no path at all! Waste. Those are some examples. The Council should be audited and wasteful areas cleaned up before slugging ratepayers who cannot afford it with higher rates.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

i wouldnt say they have done this clearly but they have tried to satisfy their requirement to do so in a survey to residents.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

yes they gave a number of options, only one was a reduced rate that was affordable by residents.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I do not recall.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No I dont think so

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They applied for a large rate rise over 2 years that will impact local residents greatly who cannot afford it.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Bega valley has been affected by bushfires floods and some people are homeless. Bega Council works seem to run overtime in completion like Kalaru and Merimbula Roadworks and Airport, they do not consult with community over some other regional roadworks and spending appears wasteful and should be audited to reduce waste. there is no promise to us they will spend ratepayer money diligently with open dialogue with residents.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I dont think they have taken this into account at all. We were given a survey and given options but they went to a 45% rate rise over 2 years anyway. many locals are senior or on rural properties and do not have loads of money to pay Council especially when we do not see a good return on investment

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I did not see any provision for a hardship allowance at all. How can I comment on something they didnt make clear to us?

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No, not to ordinary residents. Did I see anything in the mail? No. Email ? No. Just telling people to go to a website is unsatisfactory.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Also I dont recall anything easily accessed by the public.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.  
please listen to the ratepayers. Many rate payers will not be able to afford the proposed increases. Please take a good hard look and be totally accountable as to decisions made by council to purchase different buildings in the shire. The amount of money spent at Kalaru is beyond a joke.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, definitely not.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No, council should revise expenditure within their own office.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

no

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

no

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

no action has been taken. Please listen to the ratepayers. We won't be able to afford to live in our own homes if this rate is introduced.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Please listen to the ratepayers. We won't be able to afford to live in our own homes if this rate is introduced.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Please listen to the ratepayers. With the new valuer general land price increase (which is more than double the previous value) the rates would increase by at least a third which is much more than people can afford.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

It is abhorrent that ratepayers are seen as the first resort for massive increases year after year. People are struggling after years of bushfires, Covid and flooding and if anything they should freeze rates and offer greater pensioner discounts

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. It seems to use Ratepayers as a cash cow. The rates go up every year anyway by 3-4% yet this Council appears to be unable to Manage. Many workers dont get that rise each year, and particularly ratepayers with Mortgages are already suffering extreme mortgage rate rises. There are those amongst us with mortgage repayments and rates as they are (already expensive) that simply may have to sell, and there is no alternative for accommodation here.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No, There was a proposal put out asking one of four options, all included a rate rise. There was no option that Council has even attempted an alternative.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No I only saw percentages without translation to the actual \$ value comparison

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No again their only strategy is to raise rates

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I have seen no feedback

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

No, the Council seems to assume that it wont be a problem for its rate payers, and are not listening to those of us suffering financial hardship

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I havent seen it considering this at all. In fact it does not even seem to address the capacity and willingness. I have neither, and expressed this in the survey that outlined 4 options all of which involved an increase

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

No

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I havent seen the full application

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Not seen

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This Council has a sad history of ineptness and spending in areas which many consider to be not in the best interests of ratepayers. No increase to this Council should be considered in the absence of a thorough audit of past expenditure decisions and Council operations more generally. I would join many others in supporting the appointment of an experienced administrator to replace the current administration.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

The Council has failed to acknowledge the circumstances of its own making that have led to the financial situation in which it now finds itself. The need for additional funding is a consequence of abysmal management and should not be rewarded!

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not in any meaningful sense - options around improved user pay scenarios, removing a range of over servicing situations (such as regional facilities being severely underutilized but fully staffed), overstaffing more generally, top heavy management and remuneration at the top end, and services it cannot afford have NOT been canvassed - this Council needs to "cut its cloth" to what it can afford NOT to the excesses in which it indulges.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The audacity with which Council has communicated with ratepayers and then disregarded any feedback is simply pathetic - the general view is that Council will do as it wants and responding to them is pointless - this is the norm!

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

See above

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council would argue it has not proceeded with a 90% increase as foreshadowed - the original figure floated was 35% - they have been deceptive in their approach and more generally in their submission.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The arguments Council has put forward in terms of affordability to ratepayers fail to appropriately acknowledge the extent of this increase - Bermagui in particular has a low socio economic base, high proportion of elderly and pensioners, rental properties are scarce and highly priced and opportunities for employment limited due to housing and income issues. Interest rate increases and cost of living pressures are affecting everybody - Council needs to cut its costs and services.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Willingness to pay is largely non existent - the waste and mismanagement of Council is tangible and this is evidenced by the survey data. In terms of capacity see above.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The fact that Council proposes a third party to undertake such assessment stands as testimony as to its willingness to spend even more money on services that should be internalized. The hardship from this proposal will be widespread and extreme in many situations and is NOT acknowledged by Council.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I saw no documents exhibited until now other than options for more dollars - there appears to be no real consideration of actually cutting services or rationalizing staffing numbers.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The Council has failed to acknowledge the circumstances of its own making that have led to the financial situation in which it now finds itself. The need for additional funding is a consequence of abysmal management and should not be rewarded!

Increases in staffing numbers and excessive spending are more in evidence than any productivity or cost containment strategies.



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Council had provided the required information in the LTFP to provide confidence that the SV is required

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

From the documents provided it is apparent Council has focused on reducing costs for a number of years

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

A table was included in both the mailout and the LTFP.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

I was able to find a number of different mechanism to get informed

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I suspect Councils decision to change the rate increase to be over two years showed Council were listening to the public

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I think this increase is modest and is much smaller than either my insurance or interest increases and for what I get for the money I think its good value

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I think this may have influenced the councilors decision to select the 43% and to bring the rate increase in over two years not one

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I think the plan was reasonable

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes and Council also included in last years IP&R documents the need for an increase

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I think that Council have made some changes for the better in an environment of inflation that has eaten away with these improvements

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 15 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Look Im not good with words, I just think the increase is wrong and unjustifiable, so many wont be able to cope,

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No, oh wait, yes they said if we dont increase rates we cant maintain roads

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

They said 90% increase on rates

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

A survey, that was very general & you didnt even have to be a rate payer

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They dont seem to care & 90% increase is just ridiculous, where has there money been spent, maybe an audit would be a good idea, maybe paying too many people to do not much

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 16 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No it has not

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No it has offered no alternative

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The council has reduced the proposed 90% increase to 43% but has no indication of how funds can be better managed and not spent on outside consultants for particular community projects such as the Tathra headland proposal where no consultants from Sydney actually visited the area or listened to the public or businesses who are directly impacted by proposed changes to shared public areas and parking

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The demographic of the Bega Valley shire is largely consisting of income poor-pensioners, youth unemployed and relatively low income workers Tourists provide holiday season income but generally the area is not a wealthy one. The impact of such a rise from a council who have blatantly squandered funds is devastating

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

There has been little consideration and this seems a knee jerk measure to raise funds quickly in a short term vision

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

This has not been publicly articulated

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not to my knowledge

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Their response is evasive and does not articulate how cost saving measures will be employed The continual spending on the Kakadu footpath / walkway has been extraordinary and has not been justified in any way

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 18 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Bvsc is being unreasonable in the request and is clearly not listening to the rates payers of BVSC, 90% that completed the survey asked for NO INCREASE above peg. BVSC need to be in administration while a full audit is carried out and realistic financial options are explored.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, the process has been very rushed, ran nearly entirely via social media interaction. There has been little to explain how the BVSC has all of a sudden become unfinancial.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Options have been tabled, the rates payers survey is heavily leaning towards the standard rate peg and cut services. Council still insist on spending more and more.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

While some information is out there there has been absolutely no information regarding the Valuer Generals 2022 land values. This information is yet to be sent to rates payers. On average the land value in the bega valley shire has increased 70% on LY. NOW add the proposed rates increase. THIS HAS NOT BEEN COMMUNICATED.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

As stated before, nearly entirely ran via social media, community meetings were screened for participation to filter crowds. Little documentation has been in public display.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Look at the community survey. 90% to NO VARIATION, BVSC still request 48% accumulation over 2 years, this wasnt even a tabled option. BVSC do not listed!

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Land values this year have increased 70% on average. Now add the requested rates variation. Most people are struggling as it is to pay bills let alone over 100% increase on rates(factoring in the land value increase)

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

There is none, again look at the community survey.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Basically only if there is a natural disaster will anything be waived, or an extension.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not for long enough and not all documentation is easily accessible to the average rates payer.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Next to no explanation on this or how BVSC all of a sudden got into this situation.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 18 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

We can't afford double the cost or even a 50% increase in rates and will have to sell and be homeless

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No.. just frivolous spending

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Yes.. but hidden in their surveys

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes 90% increase.. but not the dollar amount

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

They have spent more money to tell us they want to spend more money

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

None

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

We will be having to sell our property as our business was destroyed in the fires and we can't afford double rates

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

They don't care... They spend money Bega south with tourists

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

They don't care.. we can't afford the costs

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No idea

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They don't explain.. they just keep spending and try to justify more spending... Their in house costs are more than the budget



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 18 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This proposed rise is outrageous and it will severely impact many people including me. They would have to give people on benefits a bigger discount or people are at risk of losing their houses. It is causing massive anxiety in the community. Maybe they did need to split into two councils as it was before

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No it hasn't at all

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Just cutting services

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No dollar increase, only a percentage

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They have lowered what they're asking for but not by much

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is no way reasonable, we have a lot of people on pensions in the shire and this rise would impact people significantly especially with the cost of living at the moment

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

They have had no consideration on the community's capacity to pay and no one willingly would but most probably can't afford this massive rise.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I didn't see anything about helping people who experience hardship

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Don't know

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 19 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I can barely pay my mortgage and rates as it is We are a low income area full of retired and single parent households We cant be paying for councils mistakes when we have kids to feed and clothe

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. They have no idea They think we all live in mansions with disposable incomes I can barely feed my family and pay for swimming lessons let alone more rates

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

They dont live in the real world How will their plans help me pay my bills? They wont!

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No idea

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They will continue to waste money and get us further into debt

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 21 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Absolutely not . The council are far to top heavy and the expenditure is from their mismanagement and nothing more . The needs have not changed in the shire from residents only the poor culture within rising from the top that its ok to milk tax payers money on wages etc .

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

This council need to evaluate from top to bottom and realise that the associated extra costs can and should lawfully be done within their own ranks Changes need to occur at all levels . The snap solution to increase rates to unaffordable levels is not a solution to the crisis in council .

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

They have documented obviously a clever sales pitch however the maths is incorrect . The financial overflow is so deeply corrupted within . That Needs to be investigated alone

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Absolutely not

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The council are adamant that increasing rates is a solution to their problems This is not the case Putting pensioners into dire financial straight due to their lack of management is unacceptable

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Ratepayers not only pensioners and aging population in the shire will fall on incredible hard times due to this . Familys etc The entire world and Australias current conditions would reject this proposal and recommend cost cutting within. Their are very few people in the shire with ability to pay such extortionate rate increases and maintain a healthy mental and physical existence .

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The council just believe we will all just roll over and its a sealed deal. This is a very complex issue and curing such tough times the council need to dig deep and support their rate payers not take more . People will lose their homes over this .

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have no knowledge of this and I dont believe it will ever be addressed

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No comment

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The council have explained the increases however big explained to a bewildered audience their expenses and how that may change to reduce rate rises . This appears to be a magic wand solution for council rather than a long term fix

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 22 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

How can you justify this, the councils gross mismanagement of funds , is the reason the council is failing gto serve th ratepayers of the shire, we cannot afford to prop the council up any longer an admistrators should be brought in and you lot should all be sacked.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

How can you justify this, we get nothing for our rates as it is.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Have you considered cutting you wages

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 23 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Sack the councillors and the mayor for sure. Bring in auditors and run it like a business. Yes keep our pools, but be serious, 10 mil for a board walk??? how about asking for sponsorship, and branding in return for funds for the boardwalk., for eg.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

no

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

i don't believe enough consideration has been made in this regard. I hold concerns about councillor integrity.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

They can't add up. So no. The council bleeds money. It may require an outside auditor to take control

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

no

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I feel the council ignores community input

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Interest rates are up, inflation is up. People are maxed out and the council would like to double the rates.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The council and the councillors have not taken the community's capacity and ability to pay let alone considered why 90% of ratepayers don't trust the council to utilise the extra funding correctly.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

It's dream, tell low income earners, renters, stressed mortgage holders they need to find another 1500 a year.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

not sure

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The council state the money is needed just to keep services going, not improve the dire situation. There isn't an exit strategy. If its so bust, go to GVT and ask for assistance. after all the state Gvt can bankroll projects for mates and in swing vote towns. why not the valley.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 26 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I believe that there are many areas that efficiencies and savings can be made. Money is being spent on unnecessary activities that do not support the local community.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I dont believe so

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Inappropriate given current economic conditions and council actions of the last few years

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

NoneNo

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Im not clear on where they think they have made such improvements

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Council has displayed a willingness to spend ratepayer funds on non ratepayer development such as tourism from which only businesses involved in tourism reap a financial benefit. This council has operated beyond its financial means for many years and is now expecting rate payed to fit the bill. I think council should be replaced by an administrator until we can function within our financial means. If council is awarded this increase our rates will more than double and on top of that will be a sizeable increase due to recent very high increases in land values. I do NOT have the capacity to pay this extraordinary increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Yes, however, with a biased view to increase revenue without any attention to pathways to reduce operating costs.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

A biased view for the need to increase rates with no effort to operate within councils financial means.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I feel this is TOTALLY unreasonable. Council has operated beyond its financial means for far to long and is now in financial stress.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Council have made no effort on the communities capacity or willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have no knowledge on this subject.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I don't know.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I have not seen or am aware of any strategic plan to improve productivity or cost containment.

Four Year Expense Comparison				
General Fund Service/Activity	\$ Net Expense 2016/2017	\$ Net Expense 2019/2020	\$ Net Expense Increase	% Net Expense Increase
General Manager's Office	590,000	767,000	177,000	30.0%
Risk Management	881,000	1,705,000	824,000	93.5%
Information, Comm & Tech	1,483,000	1,848,000	365,000	24.6%
Ecocomic Development	325,000	436,000	111,000	34.2%
Tourism	590,000	868,000	278,000	47.1%
Strategy & Business Services	345,000	1,437,000	1,092,000	316.5%
Employee Costs	26,203,149	30,075,000	3,871,851	14.8%
Other Expenses	4,126,168	7,210,000	3,083,832	74.7%
Total	34,543,317	44,346,000	9,802,683	28.4%



Audit BVSC before any rate rise.

To the General Manager and Councillors

Bega Valley Shire Council

By email council@begavalley.nsw.gov.au 14/12/22

Dear Councillors, Submission in relation to proposed special rate variation options being considered by Council.

Ratepayers have witnessed the council expending money on many non-core items over recent years. The effect on the council balance sheet has obviously destabilized the shire to a significant extent. This has largely contributed to the current move by council to push that cost onto ratepayers.

I refer to; rebuilding the Bega Civic Centre and now the Library and Gallery. Add the Twyford Hall Theatre development, a cycleway from Tathra to Kalaru, the Lake St cycle/walkway, the Short Point upgrade, and major expenditure on the Kisses Lagoon upgrade in Bega to name a few

The significant investment of ratepayer's funds into the Airport infrastructure blew out. For example, consider the terminal building replacement. This was budgeted to cost \$ 2.4mil (\$ 1.2mil each between ratepayers and the Federal Government). The cost doubled and we the ratepayers had to pick up the additional \$2.4mil.

We note that we have contributed to the subsequent airstrip refurbishment, the runway extension and a business park. This was after we had (recently) paid \$8-10mil on redoing the tarmac, which was meant to last 20 years. The BVSC mismanagement of this project meant that we received about 3 years of value instead of 20 years. The horrific wastage does not stop here.

We also note substandard roadworks around the shire, which again pushes impost on ratepayers which you propose to recover by asking us to pay higher rates.

Roadwork examples:

About 4 years ago the road from the bridge into town, in Merimbula, was ripped up and fully restabilised and then sealed with an emulsion surface. That had to be redone almost immediately afterward, at the ratepayer's expense, due to poor contractor workmanship. Mismanagement meant the BVSC had no recourse.

Sapphire Coast drive, running up Tura hill, was fully redone around the same time. Now look at it. The lefthand side of the road is a hazard.

Arthur Kaine drive, past the airport entry to the Council depot, was fully rebuilt 3 years ago and again, it is a disgrace.

You can try and blame rain, but we have had wetter times before. The reality is that the work is inferior and accountability is limited or non-existent. The Jetpatcher pothole filler does an inferior job. It could be considered akin to a Swiss Army knife; just a multifaceted tool that does nothing properly. Every pothole, or those that receive attention, get patched and then remain on a rotational system (because the repairs never last).

The 'repaired' potholes basically return at the first dump of rain. It appears that the compound being used often does not even set hard (remains soft). We could go on forever about gross wastage of public and grant money. It is embarrassing. The public see this substandard work all the time, shake their heads, and recognise they are getting shoddy work and poor value for their rates.

Management needs to step up rather than holding out your hand to further bleed ratepayers to cover for your mishandling of shire maintenance.

And now, on top of this, you add insult to injury by trying to coerce us and threaten to impose a 90% rate hike on the public. Many ratepayers and renters cannot possibly absorb such an impost.

It is incomprehensible, that you can consider imposing something like this on our area's large number of low socioeconomic people. They are struggling to cover the ever-increasing costs of power (electricity and gas), the exorbitant cost of fuel, food inflation, rising commodities and rising interest rates. These cost increases are making life almost unbearable. If you were to proceed it would genuinely threaten their well-being and health. People who are renting will have these charges passed onto them by their landlords. Small businesses, who are already paying through the nose, will be pushed over the edge and some will likely have to close their doors.

We politely suggest you go back to the drawing board, make genuine in-house savings, improve efficiencies, and change your culture. By managing your position properly, you would set an example to the public. Stop wasting money on non-core projects until your balance sheet is once again manageable.

Ratepayers clearly need you to become efficient during this highly challenging economic time. Stiffen up with the State and Federal Governments and demand more money from them as the ratepayers can't bear this. It would also help if you didn't take on pork barrelling projects that are offered up when elections are imminent. They are inevitably an unplanned and non budgeted for additional burden on the ratepayer.. What is the value of having combined Council Groups, if they've got no clout in forcing the other levels of government to come to the party with more funding for core Local government needs, it appears these groups are putting their attention o supporting globalist agenda desires like Smart Cities, Agenda 21 or 2030 which has never been through public scrutiny....just a globally driven planning fest that is wasting precious and increasingly scarce public funds?

Management might also consider the cessation of burning money on non-core requirements, such as excess consultancy, PR propaganda and legal fees; all exorbitant. Stop promoting tourism (we have been discovered) and wasting moneys on promoting cruise ships etc. let the industry be responsible for themselves.

Do your duty by instead looking after the ones who can least afford it, get back to basics. Come back after you have done all this if you wish to restore your dignity and credibility.

Below is an example, from a couple of years ago, of some in house areas where expenditure was blowing out, areas where savings should be made but instead, rest assured, nothing has changed just further unjustifiable flamboyance.



We, and other members of the community, are at a point where we are considering establishing a Peoples Council to go and do some of the work such as fixing potholes and other basic things that are being neglected. We believe strong measures may be necessary as they have been in the past.

We therefore strongly reject your proposal to increase the rates at any level, above the rate pegged amount, until such time as you can show an improved culture of managing the BVSC affairs and budget responsibly, focusing on core needs. You need to show significant savings in non-core areas, except closing pools in the towns that mostly need them like Candelo, Bemboka and Cobargo. Savings in the area's identified in the table above need to be the priority.

Yours sincerely,

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 19 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Audit Bega Valley Shire Council prior to any rate increase. Council's carries out substandard work that needs constant repairs. Does not oversee contractors correctly who also carry out substandard work at high payment. The public see this substandard work all the time, shake their heads, and recognise they are getting shoddy work and poor value for their rates. Management needs to step up rather than holding out their hand to further bleed ratepayers to cover for their mishandling of shire maintenance. Many ratepayers and renters cannot possibly absorb such an impost. It is incomprehensible, that you can consider imposing something like this on our areas large number of low socioeconomic people. They are struggling to cover the ever-increasing costs of power (electricity and gas), the exorbitant cost of fuel, food inflation, rising commodities and rising interest rates. These cost increases are making life almost unbearable. If you were to proceed it would genuinely threaten their well-being and health. People who are renting will have these charges passed onto them by their landlords. Small businesses, who are already paying through the nose, will be pushed over the edge and some will likely have to close their doors. We, and other members of the community, are at a point where we are considering establishing a Peoples Council to go and do some of the work such as fixing potholes and other basic things that are being neglected. We believe strong measures may be necessary as they have been in the past. We therefore strongly reject your proposal to increase the rates at any level, above the rate pegged amount, until such time as BVSC can show an improved culture of managing the BVSC affairs and budget responsibly, focusing on core needs. BVSC need to show significant savings in non-core areas, except closing pools in the towns that mostly need them like Candelo, Bemboka and Cobargo. Yours sincerely,

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes % No \$

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council has reduced it's threatened 98% increase to 43% over 2 years

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Due to living in a country area all of our standard cost's are more than City dwellers and all of these cost's have risen considerably since the bushfires. Bega Valley has a high % of retiree's, unemployed and also out of work small business owners since the impact of Bushfires and Covid. This extra rate hike could be the nail in the coffin of many in the Valley.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The Council has taken no consideration of the general rate payers willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

What Council say's it will do and what is does is 2 entirely different things.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

As far I as know

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

From: [REDACTED] Sent: Friday, 24 February 2023 12:45 PM To: IPART Subject: Bega Valley Shire Council SRV application reply [REDACTED] To IPART, please find attached my reply to the SRV being sought by BVSC. Regards, [REDACTED]

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

## **Letter to BVSC regarding their decision to apply to IPART for an SRV from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2023 onwards**

I refer to BVSC's proposal to apply to IPART for an SRV to increase rates effective from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2023.

BVSC have indicated that ratepayers can send in their views to BVSC by 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 – hence this letter.

1. Let me firstly state that I am shocked to see the scale of BVSC's proposed rate increases to apply to general rates from July 2023 – I also note from information in BVSC's notes that up to 15 other Councils have applied for SRVs with proposed rate increases ranging from 4% to 86% - this alone indicates that the majority of Shires in NSW have not applied for SRVs, and for those that have, BVSC has proposed one option that is the highest in NSW (namely Option A which proposes an increase of 90%)
2. There are a significant amount of ratepayers in BVSC who are in the lowest socio-economic category (ie earn less than \$800) – the average across NSW is 21.0% of the population is in this category, whereas in BVSC, the average is 30.7% - this is due to many reasons, but two important reasons are that there are a relatively high number of people aged 65 years and older in BVSC and also there is a relative shortage of well -paid jobs in BVSC compared to the rest of NSW.
3. These reasons cited above indicate that the major problem for BVSC ratepayers is not whether they want to have average or first rate local amenities etc but that they simply cannot afford higher rates !!! – many of them already have great difficulty in living expenses, and to add further burdens to them could well mean that they have got to make choices such as eating cheaper or less food, limiting travel with higher petrol costs, turning heating off in winter to save on fuel costs, or having to resort to move out of the area to Shires where rates are not going up so high !!
4. Despite the above comments, should IPART still agree to an SRV rate increase for BVSC, I would implore them to consider rate increase options with a much wider choice than those recommended by BVSC. For instance, to have only 3 options (A,B and C) above the rate peg option (Option D) is unbelievable – ie to jump from a base increase over 2 years of 6.60% to options of 46.58%, 94.75% and 98.94% is Cloud Cuckoo land – what is wrong with other options such as 10% or 12.5% or 15% etc ?
5. BVSC should stick to basic services only (such as roads, waste management, provision of water, sewerage etc) and eliminate the majority of other projects, which maybe nice to have but only if you can afford them. In my opinion, BVSC have a poor history of business and money management, as instanced by many of the decisions made in the past 20 years – for instance, although perhaps well-meaning, BVSC had no right to give ratepayers money away to such things as floods in Queensland, donations to East Timor, sister-city arrangements with places like Outer Mongolia etc – I believe that these are considerations the NSW State or Federal Government make – not Councils. Then , I believe there are many other examples of costly mistakes such as the purchase of some hotels, old hospitals etc.
6. 'User pays' policies should be widened and charges for services and usage should be increased to services such as libraries, swimming pools, use of public halls, Sports facilities etc etc.

7. I believe that the overall aim of BVSC should be to only provide basic services and to have appropriate levels of user pays charges so that Council do not subsidise services only a minority use, and do not operate on a basis of Spend, Spend, Spend so that all interested groups' wants or pet projects are met – their policy should be to only spend Ratepayers money wisely and to concentrate on Essentials – that is all many ratepayers can afford in these days of economic hardship, and to increase rates at this time would lead to economic misery for many!!

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

As my attached submission to Council shows, the ratepayers will have difficulty paying for annual rates with CPI adjustments - let alone paying far higher rates - they are just not affordable or sustainable - particularly bearing in mind the past history of the Council over the last 15-20 years where pet projects have been funded without any community benefit - if there are any increases to be agreed to for the new Tax Year, they should increase User Pays rates for swimming pools, libraries, Sports facilities etc etc so that those ratepayers who still want to use them at these higher charges can still do so

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I do not believe Council has shown any in-depth information on what the community needs or desires, rather it has assumed ratepayers are in favour of all Council's wishlists - there appears to be no assessment, for example, of what proportion of ratepayers want 6 swimming pools retained on an operational basis, what proportion want a cycling path from Bega to Tathra, what proportion want upgraded floodlights in sports parks etc

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The Council received over 200 inputs from ratepayers, the vast majority of which were against the proposed rate hikes. The ludicrously high initial gambit of an increase of 98% was reduced to a still huge level of 43% over 2 years - increases of less than 43% over 2 years was never genuinely canvassed nor considered

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes - although it is misleading to only quote the likely dollar impact for the average ratepayer, particularly where there is a large variation in the Shire of rateable values on which the ad-valorem is based - it should also show the old and proposed new ad valorem rate on the new property's land valuation which will be applying as from 1st July 2023, so that the overall % change could be determined

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes, there were a number of community presentations on the SRV proposals - however, from past experience, many ratepayers do not attend the sessions since none of their views seem to be taken onboard

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

There appears to be little or no response from Council to the absurd proposed increase made - other than to drop the gambit and 'settle' on a proposed increase of 43% which appears to be a concession, but in reality is not

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

As I said in my submission to Council, this Shire is in one of the lowest socio-economic categories in NSW (30% of ratepayers below the poverty line, compared to 21% of the balance of NSW) - many ratepayers simply cannot afford to eat properly or keep warm in winter or buy petrol let alone pay more in rates - they just simply can't afford it !!!

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Council appear to have completely ignored both the capacity of ratepayers to pay and also their willingness to pay and their support of what Council themselves believe to be worthwhile causes.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Already noted above

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes, but the timing over the Xmas and holiday period meant it was difficult for many to view them

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I do not think that Council have adequately shown what savings they have made in past years - it appears that funds have been moved around in different areas, making it difficult for the average ratepayer to understand what has been achieved





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I am responding to the special rate variation by Bega Valley Council. The following examples inform my belief that council have not explored enough options nor examined their situation thoroughly. Significant cost cutting measures are required, I believe passing on a rate rise will only delay their insolvency if they continue to operate as is.

Operationally there needs to be a complete review with transparent savings published to the community. I have seen many jobs advertised, none have been for Process Improvement Management/ Officers roles. there are major cost cutting options available and its clear Council need to do something differently.

Example 1. When I moved to the Bega Valley, the solicitor provided a previous address. For 1 year rates were sent to an interstate address, a recoveries team was engaged, court proceedings initiated, a sherrif was even sent interstate to the old address and then finally the Sherrie arrived to the actually property address in the Bega Valley. This was the first time the issue was brought to my attention. At no point did Council call or try to contact the residence in the Bega Valley, they had all our details as we had submitted and paid a Development Application through that year. Being a new home owner i just expected the rates to arrive at the end of the year and was none the wiser. I called council multiple times to follow up and wrote a note to explain the situation, no one followed and I could not speak to anyone on the phone. The approx \$1000 in costs and court case just disappeared with no respose to me from council.

Through process failures, thousands would have been spent following up this issue.

Example 2.

We live on a rural road, there was a tree reported to council that was overhanging the road and needed to be cut down as it was overhanging the road.

Council subcontractors arrived in multiple trucks and cars with a wood chipper. They took over a residents property to park all the vehicles and all the team members piled out. It was astonishing. All this expense for one tree? It was cut and chipped, the chip tyen needed to be disposed of. This is a rural road with fallen trees every few meters, these trees are pushed to the side of the road or chopped into pieces and pushed to the side. We have trees down in most storms which are all treated the same. We don't have the chipper travelling around after the storm. The amount of people, vehicles and the entire operation was completely excessive and overkill, all completed by a contractor another example of blatantly wasting tax payers money.

Example 3. The development process, completely flawed and disorganised, we were asked multiple times to submit the same documentation, not once many times were told they can't continue till we send another document. We had sent all the documents together at the beginning of the process. I can only imagine the amount of times our application was

picked up and then dropped again causing delays and again financial expense. The application was passed from hand to hand before being approved on the original submission with no issue.

Example 4. Community expense, South East Centre for Contemporary Art. An absolute eyesore and completely at odds with how the majority of community are actually living. It's not with keeping the look of the Shire, another extravagant spend that will benefit few. The coastal towns are crying out for accommodation and workers to keep business going and we are investing instead in an eyesore in Bega.

Overall I believe Council needs to do alot more work internally to strip out the waste, find efficiency in process and employ a team of skilled people to solely focus on operational savings. This should be funded through existing roles.

Each department needs to be reviewed, transparently reported on ro the public and cost saving measures implemented prior to increasing community rates.

These rate rises are crippling a large proportion of the community and will only delay insolvency if council don't drastically change the way they are doing business.

Please accept my anonymous submission.

Kind regards.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 9 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

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Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Dear Minster Tuckerman,

I am writing to you regarding the proposed rate increases by the Bega Valley Shire Council. Recently it was reported that, 'a single year special variation increase to rates of up to 35% permanently applied in the rate base'.\*

This increase, whether over a single year or a number of years, will severely impact the already strained finances of Bega Valley families. Even the current financial year application of 2.5% adds to an already struggling community attempting to rebuild and re-establish itself after the major bushfires and impact of covid. Now the prediction that energy costs, including electricity, ( up to 200% increase to some) gas and fuel (expected to be over \$2.50/litre by the end of the year), along the with the associated increase in food and costs of other essentials, only adds to this financial stress.

Looking at the NSW Governments 'Measuring Council Performance', it is noted that BVSC spends 26% on Governance and Administration, whereas the State average is 17%. BVSC also spends 33% on public order and safety, whereas the State average is only 4%. There alone is a big discrepancy.

Also reported recently, 'Council is predicting a loss of \$9.45 million in its general fund for the next financial year, 2022/23'. (ABC News) If this prediction is the case then, I strongly suggest, instead of agreeing to a rate increase for the BVSC, you as the Minister should immediately appoint an Administrator to the council and have a Forensic Accountant closely examine the operation of the Councils finances.

The BVSC cannot, in all good conscience, continue to financially penalise rate payers for the Councils inability to manage their finances. If the trend of continued rate increases continues the Council runs the risk of making the Bega Valley a place only for 'the rich' members of society to reside.

Thank you for taking the time to read this comment.

Yours Sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 14 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I sent the letter attached below mid 2022 to Wendy Tuckerman, Minister in charge of Local Council. Since that time Bega Valley Shire Council has asked residents to answer a questionnaire regarding the rate rise - from all accounts the residents voted unanimously against any rate rise. There are a number of inefficiencies in the Council which are clear to members of the public at a very basic level. As an example, roadworks being tendered out to contractors, who do a poor job, and are back only months later to repair the same section of roadway. As outlined in my letter the BVSC seems to be well above average in most areas reported and until these discrepancies are rectified, no rate rise should be granted. Regards [REDACTED]

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

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Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.