

Attachment B - Submission Report – Special Rate Variation

Bellingen Shire Council received 107 submissions regarding the Special Rate Variation proposal. These submissions were collected through survey responses, emails, letters and website. The open field section of the online survey has been included in this report. The multiple-choice analysis can be viewed in the survey analysis report **Attachment C**.

Of these 107 submissions, two were received after the consultation period concluded on 31 January 2023. It is noted that these submissions have been accepted and considered as part of the engagement process.

The types of submission received were as follows:

- 73 online surveys
- 13 hardcopy surveys
- 19 email submissions
- 2 letters
- 1 general website query

A full list of submissions received have been included below. Personal details have been redacted or removed to protect privacy.

NAME	TYPE	COMMENT
Submission 1	SURVEY – HARDCOPY	Cut out expensive consultants Get rid of resilience Get back to basics The NSW State Gov us pursuing tourism in this shire (vis.). Various campaigns – new Dorrigo – ARC – and rainforest centre etc. The State Gove should foot the bill for our roads which are being destroyed by trucks and tourists and developers.
Submission 2	SURVEY – HARDCOPY	Council have done what’s necessary to inform ratepayers and most importantly Councillors were present at all the meetings. Local Government is inadequately funded by both State and Federal Government and that is the primary reason that Councils have to resort to special rates over and above the rate cap.
Submission 3	SURVEY – ONLINE	As a rural resident I do not receive any council services to my property other than the very limited road maintenance and mowing of verges. the provision of services to the general community is required as an essential service and hence the payment of rates. As with all businesses in this current environment costs are rising and businesses and individuals are having to make budgetary cuts and realign their spending to their income. Council must do the same and make deeper cuts to the proposed expenditure.



Submission 4	EMAIL	<p>Hi at Bellinghen council Our rates now far exceed the north shore in Sydney, now this would be ok but, when I have a problem and approach the council I don't ever seem to achieve anything. I am a pensioner and am not able to pay rates as it is. Help! Regards</p>
Submission 5	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	<p>BSC rates already very high. I'm aware of unrateable land reasons and others. It's not that long ago that BSC applied the last SRV. More economic measures need to be sought. For example the Street Sweeper is not necessary or effective, a complete waste of money. Also, I don't agree with BSC continuing to promote tourism, as we already have more tourists than facilities and parking etc. to accommodate them.</p>
Submission 6	EMAIL	<p>To the Elected Representatives and Officers of Bellinghen Council</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into your consideration of a Special Rate Variation (SRV). I have tried unsuccessfully to access the Council Website since attending the "Drop In" at Dorrigo on 18 January. I called Council and was advised that an email submission would be an appropriate alternative to responding to the survey.</p> <p>As background, my wife and I are self-funded, semi-retired owners and residents of [REDACTED] on the Dorrigo Plateau.</p> <p>I wish to state my objection to any SRV.</p> <p>I strongly believe the Council has an obligation to manage its costs in a responsible manner. Many businesses and households in the shire would like to spend more money and provide more services, but we are limited to what funds are available. We are all suffering increased costs in many aspects of our lives at present. Councils situation is only different because of its ability to impose legally enforceable charges to its ratepayer "customers".</p> <p>The Council representative I spoke to at the "Drop In" suggested that some ratepayers really only want "roads and rubbish collection". I suppose I am one of the people who would prefer Council provided less services at my expense. You claim that Council provides more than 50 unique services. I pose a serious question as to why?</p> <p>I am a rural resident. We get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• no sewer;



- no water;
- no rubbish collection;
- no footpath maintenance;
- very little road maintenance;
- no street lighting;
- etc...

According to your Flyer seeking support for the SRV, the average rural property rates are roughly 2.22 times that of a residential property...despite access to less services...I understand this is probably not the forum to explore the unfairness of that reality, but it is part of the background for my objection.

I also wonder how many ratepayers understand the long term impact of your proposal. It was confirmed by the Council representative I spoke to that the SRV was not proposed to be temporary. That is, at the end of the 4 year period, the SRV will not be reversed, but rather will remain as part of the ongoing rate base for future increases.

If the SRV is adopted, 10 years from now you will be asking me to pay close to \$5,000 p.a. in rates rather than \$4,000 I would be paying without the SRV. I imagine I will still get:

- no sewer;
- no water;
- no rubbish collection;
- no footpath maintenance;
- very little road maintenance;
- no street lighting;
- etc...

So, I absolutely disagree with any SRV. Rather, I request that Council take a long hard look at what services are actually accessed by ratepayers. Anything that is not broadly utilised across the community should be considered for possible termination or reduction. Council should get back to its role of "Roads and Sanitary Services". When money is tight, as with any responsible household or business, Council must take difficult decisions and non-essentials must go.

Continuing to increase ratepayer charges and providing numerous underutilised services is NOT sustainable.



		Kind Regards, [REDACTED]
Submission 7	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	Council should cut staff in areas like Resilience etc. and focus on core tasks (i.e. roads, bridges, outdoor maintenance etc).
Submission 8	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	I do not comply. Will the rate variation expire after 2027? I would appreciate someone responding to me. [REDACTED]. The feedback opportunity was all lip service from Councillors.
Submission 9	EMAIL	<p>Dear Council Members</p> <p>I write to inform you of my opposition to your proposed rate increase on the Bellingen Shire rate payers.</p> <p>On the basis that it will further detrimentally impact people on low incomes, including myself as a full-time student, I suggest you first look elsewhere if you believe you have insufficient funds. We are witnessing extreme hardship in our community due to increases in cost of living, lack of affordable housing and diminishing public services. In particular many residents rely on the pension or social security to survive, both of which are below the poverty line as you must surely be aware.</p> <p>For a start, I suggest you engage a forensic accountant to review the staffing of our shire as I believe we have one of the highest staff to resident ratios in the country. I very much doubt however that you will consider this as many community members voiced their opposition to the last extra-ordinary rate increase several years ago however their concerns, including those of my late Mother were simply ignored.</p> <p>None the less let it be on record that you have been informed.</p> <p>Sincerely</p>
Submission 10	EMAIL	To whom it may concern,



		<p>The cost of living is off the richter scale right now and dose not appear to be improving anytime soon. Raising the rates will only increase the financial stress and suffering experienced by many within the Shire. Furthermore, raising the rates will add to the current housing crisis. Financial burdens via a rate increase will also impact on mental health and poor nutrition within the Shire.</p> <p>Our BSC could try finding other means of financial gain. Our communities are struggling. Have you explored all the options available?</p> <p>Kind regards</p>
Submission 11	SURVEY – ONLINE	<p>Due to living in Repton and having very limited input from council in our area I don't see why we should be paying more for our rates. Our roads are rarely repaired, the verges are occasionally mown and only along Perrys Rd, we have dogs roaming the neighbourhood with little done by the council ranger. We have actually given up complaining about the neighbouring dogs and even ended up with a litter of pups because of the dogs not being contained. We are not going to have kerb and gutters or town sewerage provided, so no actual benefit to us. Nothing will change for us except having to pay more that we really can't afford. Too many other bills have increased, now is not the time to put more pressure on households. Maybe reduce the admin heavy council staff.</p>
Submission 12	SURVEY – ONLINE	<p>I disagree with this SRV and agree with any reductions needed in council services. We live Repton which for the last 20 or so years I have seen council do work in our area very seldom if at all. Occasionally they slash Perrys Rd upto perry lane and do sometimes venture into Repton to conduct road pot hole repairs. I suppose the worse thing is the mobs of dogs that roam freely around Repton especially at night and the local Koalas have no chance. Which we thought the ranger was supposed to monitor but that's a complete waste of time even considering getting them out. Other than that we don't really even see anything from council in our area. I am sure the council outdoor staff try their best. As people are hurting financially and this constant ask for \$\$ from our council will send a lot of ratepayers to the wall. Thats my opinion thank you</p>
Submission 13	SURVEY – ONLINE	<p>I find this proposed rate rise outrageous! Council needs to work more efficiently and to tighten its belt like everyone else in this community. I am disgusted that this is even being raised by Council at this time.....after Covid, bush fires, floods and the ever increasing cost of living. My wages certainly haven't increased in the past 3 years.</p>
Submission 14	LETTER	ATTACHED
Submission 15	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	<p>Variation of rates in just the Urunga area is out of sync for a small village. I doubt that any feedback from ratepayers will affect Council's decision re the SRV.</p>
Submission 16	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	<p>I gave feedback at the Drop in session. I am not confident council will act as I had hoped. Bellingen Council doesn't listen or act to residents comments.</p>



Submission 17	SURVEY – ONLINE	As a rate payer in the Bellingen Shire, I oppose any rate increase over and above inflation due to the negative impact on all residents and in particular, pensioners, retirees and renters. Bellingen Shire has an increase and a large number people who are priced out and unable find suitable affordable housing for their needs and they are forced to live rough or leave the shire due to an ever increasing high cost of living, which seems to rise everyday such as fuel, insurance, food, interest rates, medical fees etc etc. Yes all of the reasons Council has quoted for requiring the special rate increase, however the residents are doing tougher than the council. Decrease wages and over staffing or at least put a freeze on the highly paid staff of council and reduce the waste within before asking the residence to agree to this outrageous increase. Long term, community minded residence are valuable to this shire through their continuous voluntary community contribution and simply are not able to keep up with ever-increasing cost of living as it is without a special rate increase. It is outrageous that council is even considering this in this economic environment when everyone is struggling as it is. I expected better of this elected council, I thought they would have our (the community residents) interests at the forefront of their decision making and in my opinion this is not in any ones best interests. Cutback and do what you can with what you have and stop hurting the people that make this community great.
Submission 18	SURVEY – ONLINE	Mylestom has not received the promised sewage to our town , Bellingen Council had ample time to organise this with budget afforded but now they have left it too late and it can now longer be afforded. Bellingen Council does not look after this town ship as it does Urunga or Bellingen . The pressure of tourism is increasing in this township more each year environmentally and the river system and the environment will suffer from the neglect . I will not endorse a increase in the special rate variation ever until Bellingen Council upholds it's promise to bring sewage to these areas as promised
Submission 19	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	I am a single parent and we are single income household. My mortgage payments have just gone up by nearly \$300 p/m and the cost of living has risen significantly. In the current economic climate, another rate rise will put even more financial pressure on me, trying to raise my children. I am already working so hard. Please don't.
Submission 20	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	Rather than increasing our rates, I propose that Council increase their efficiency. We cannot afford to increasingly finance the inefficient way this Council is run.
Submission 21	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	- We cannot afford the increase. The DA + CC teams are under resourced. It should not take 12 months to get construction consent/certificate. We are paying 2 x GMs. - The roadworks heading towards the motel had to be redone about 10 times. Similarly the roadwork near the dog kennels took ages. We use a lot of ratepayer money on ineffective work. AN SRV won't fix the quality. - How will Council support those who cannot afford the rise and continue to pay their mortgages?
Submission 22	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	NO! We cannot afford anymore. I live in a caravan at the bottom of my block because I can't afford to live in my house. Council is not listening. It is disgraceful.
Submission 23	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	My only other comment is that work should be prioritised on roads from the heart out (i.e. most populated/used roads and bridges).



Submission 24	SURVEY - HARDCOPY	It was a waste of time and resources i.e. petrol and council workers time. It was a complete WASTE to have bottled water there given out. If people can't drink the water in tap there than council is not doing its job!! Still haven't been told how much it cost us ratepayers for all the billboards, graphs etc. despite being told lady would have info next day at Urunga!!! Should have been a fill day so more could go – 2 hours really!!! If you take the E off Email you could MAIL info.
Submission 25	SURVEY – ONLINE	This council's rates are already extortionate. Yes, extortionate. I am already paying more on rates than I am on food. The rates are already not affordable. In the decade I have been here there have been two SRV's already. These are meant to be rare, aren't they? Increasing the fees you charge ratepayers - who are all suffering from the increased cost of living - is not the answer. The rates are not affordable. Enough with the SRV's. There needs to be another way. I realise there has been a lot of cost-shifting from federal and state govts onto local councils and this is part of the, or perhaps the major, reason council keeps running out of money. Perhaps the smart thing to do is to push back. You have an entire community that is pissed off at the prospect of higher rates. Why not harness that to demand a set of changes from the above levels of government? We cannot be the only shire dealing with this issue. I don't know the details of what costs could be pushed back up a level, except for the way state forestry is subsidised to run at a loss and destroys our local roads without paying a cent toward maintenance of these roads and bridges. An SRV is not the answer. Get creative. Harness the ideas in the community. Find other ways. The rates are not affordable now, let alone with any increase.
Submission 26	SURVEY – ONLINE	I would like to know whether council has done anything to reduce their operating costs or to evaluate internal inefficiencies with both processes and staff performance. I believe that this should be a priority before asking rate payers for a rate variation.
Submission 27	SURVEY – ONLINE	The current council campaigned on a promise of lower rates. You now propose much higher rates than the previous council. Why aren't council lobbying the state and federal government for more funds?
Submission 28	SURVEY – ONLINE	It is still not clear to me what financial impact the SRV would have to me and my husband. I used the calculator. I read some great information from councillor Ellie Tree and councillor Jennie Fenton on Facebook. I know the SRV only applies to one area of our rates, but how much will the other areas rise outside of this? I think there is a need for balance between council's financial needs (which I appreciate) and ratepayers financial needs. Committing to a potential 4 years of SRV rate rises is a big ask when lots of people have big mortgages and other responsibilities. It will also have a negative impact on renters, many of whom are already struggling. If it was 1-2 years, I'd be more supportive of this motion but as it stands I have mixed feelings. Would council consider the other financial stressors on ratepayers before implementing the SRV? How would that factor into rate rises? Could council communicate their thoughts on this? I understand this is a difficult situation, and inflation is affecting everyone. I wasn't able to attend any drop-in sessions but I appreciate this opportunity to share some of the thoughts I have. Thank you to everyone at council for your work this far. [REDACTED]



Submission 29	SURVEY – ONLINE	I am a pensioner on a fixed income like many, many others in Urunga and simply cannot afford this increase. Please put yourselves in our shoes. We already pay extremely high rates which is the biggest bill that we have all year and the pension just doesn't stretch that far. I am extremely distressed by the possibility of another increase. Maybe an increase in the pensioner concession to offset this would help.
Submission 30	SURVEY – ONLINE	Bello Council area is a big area so maybe we need to look at the cost per suburb to the council and what revenue each area is providing and spend accordingly in ea. area. look at revenue against giveaways look at what is costing council the most in regards to services that are for free.. maybe they need to be making money somehow Suggestions to increase revenue without rate payers paying - Paid parking and camping, 4WD permits, Jet ski river access permits to help cost of erosion, visitor charges to help cost of impact - promoting koala corridor rather than deforesting tourism \$ need to be looked at and build on this with proper planning - this area has massive potential for the gain. Reduce GM wages and have more rangers fining and taking payment for camping - we pay huge rates but yet people that pay zero are living in some of our best areas without a worry-deso camping areas, entry costs to glennifer and other of our natures best (before its too late) - also pet control fines should be in place and possible signage - do u think this is fair to have pets allowed on Urunga boardwalk and right of boardwalk times only 6pm - 9am everyday then people without pets have the rest of the time without worrying..This is in place on the gold coast and works quiet well. I have many other idea to help revenue I just hope these help :)
Submission 31	SURVEY – ONLINE	I understand the rate base and rateable land is small for this council, but increasing rates will make it harder for people in the shire. Some have low incomes, some just dont have extra money sitting there for this. In the glossy brochure mailed out and on facebook it refers to just a cup of coffee, lots of people in this shire can't afford a cup of coffee. We also have just started to be charged for green waste at the tip, it feels like we are just constantly putting our hands in our pockets
Submission 32	SURVEY – ONLINE	I think the Special Rate Variation makes sense under the circumstances
Submission 33	EMAIL	Dear Council I write to strongly object to the proposed special rate variation. 1. The special rate increase is significantly higher than the basic peg increase and is poorly justified in terms of inflationary pressures on council costs. 2. Pandemic linked supply chain pressures and increased oil prices as a result of the war in Ukraine are the reasons given for this hike. Yet Council is seeking approval for increases four years into the future. This runs counter to the reserve bank's prediction that inflation will ease through 2023 as China emerges from pandemic isolation.



		<p>3. Council staff have used statistics and calculations in misleading ways to suggest that the proposed increase is minor. It is not. It is significant and will impact residents for several years to come. Quoting the increase as a weekly figure when rates are billed annually is to deploy deception of scale.</p> <p>4. Residents already face an accommodation crisis due to an exponential increase in rents and house prices over the past 2 years. This has increased land values in Bellingen, in particular, with rates already rising as a result of higher land values.</p> <p>5. This accommodation crisis is on top of a cost of living crisis that has affected fuel, electricity and food. That council should compound this problem by hiking its rates adds insult to injury.</p> <p>This proposed rate increase is ill timed, unfair and unreasonable.</p> <p>Council should reduce its spending or seek alternative sources of income from state or federal governments and not burden its owner ratepayer base.</p> <p>Regards</p>
Submission 34	SURVEY – ONLINE	Retirese don't get the increases in income that you are proposing over the pegged rate. Tighten your belts and reduce your costs whilst maintaining the current services. I haven't seen anything to suggest that council are reducing costs.
Submission 35	SURVEY – ONLINE	The way I see it, I already pay significantly higher rates than I did in Nymboida, and I don't even get a rubbish collection here. 8% is a ridiculous rise - especially with no income at all. Try 4% - it's still high, but doable.
Submission 36	SURVEY – ONLINE	I strongly support a rate rise. It will help our community thrive and will allow us to continue to have the services we all currently enjoy.
Submission 37	SURVEY – ONLINE	The Council should look into business for the area first. There is under use of building in the area. the Council has land why not use it to generate income with leasing off said land etc.
Submission 38	SURVEY – ONLINE	All households are currently facing increased costs without increased income. Council needs to live within the same constraints.
Submission 39	EMAIL	I understand that the cost of living is increasing overall but I do not agree with the proposed Special Rate Variation. I am concerned that people who are of a lower income will be priced out of living in the Shire if rates increase as predicted, as has



		<p>happened in other shires in NSW. Is Council catering for the new residents of the Shire who have moved into the area and demanding services they had in the cities and catering for the tourists who come into the Shire bringing short term financial benefit to the Shire. Is the Council catering for the residents who have been born and bred, with generations of history, who have been paying rates for 40-50 years or more. Is there loyalty to those residents. Some long term rural people are asset rich but cash poor. An increase of over \$1,000 in 5 years could bring a strain to those residents.</p> <p>I think we best look at the Council spending and prioritise what is necessary, like roads, water, sewerage and community services, and tighten on the luxuries, like upgrading parks, creating bike tracks, increasing wages and staffing, beautifying streets, putting up ugly sculptures. This is what we all have to do with whats coming before us, tighten our belts and realise that we cannot just keep biggering and biggering if we cannot afford it</p> <p>I believe we all need to have a big wake up to whats really going on world wide. We need to come back to community and caring for each other in our decision making and let go of the making decisions based on finances alone.</p>
Submission 40	SURVEY – ONLINE	Please consider other ways to direct funds for council needs. long term Rate paying residents such as us are working as hard as we can to keep our heads above water financially while raising children and struggling with the rising costs of living.
Submission 41	SURVEY – ONLINE	In 2015 in Urunga the GM stated funding is available to rid the foreshores of invasive plants. Since then about 50 trees (weeds?) have been planted along the foreshore north of the Morgo St park with weeds now extending from the Lido to the CEX.
Submission 42	SURVEY – ONLINE	In principle, I do not support the rate rise. I pay tax via PAYG and would prefer that the state and federal governments change the local council funding model so that low rate base shires like ours are compensated for state owned land like forestry.
Submission 43	SURVEY – ONLINE	Our land is zoned flood way so unable to subdivide yet rated higher than the rural figure quoted in the council flyer
Submission 44	SURVEY – ONLINE	Insurance up (105%). Mortgage up. Rates up. Electricity up. Diesel up. Food up. Wages stagnant. Maybe reduce the amount of council staff, there seems to be a lot of them.
Submission 45	EMAIL	<p>I attended the council rates variation gathering last evening.</p> <p>A group of us spoke with the acting General manager about the money grab. We expressed that most of us are retired and on minimal pension payments.</p> <p>We worked hard all our life. We raised families and looked after whoever needed it.</p> <p>Now we are old, sick, and tired. We were promised a retirement that would allow us to rest after a life of service.</p> <p>You people in council are paid astronomical amounts of Money in management to run the council efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>Do your job.</p> <p>Scale back where necessary. Look at your budget and work within your limits.</p>



		<p>The parks are not mowed regularly any more. You built and we paid for a solid concrete path from town to Dangar Falls.. what for?</p> <p>That's not necessary.</p> <p>The workers are paid from depot in Raleigh drive the mountain in council vehicles transporting machinery required up and down the mountain. That alone would save a mountain of money. Start your workers in Dorrigo. No agencies required to be involved in staff selection. You have the intelligence to select labourers.</p> <p>Seriously my blood boils at the lunacy of the stupid decisions being made. Go back to basic consideration and common sense.</p> <p>Yours sincerely, [REDACTED]</p>
Submission 46	SURVEY – ONLINE	Why isn't this council discussing creation of a GKNP so Federal Government would have greater responsibility of our green areas that council is constantly complaining about as cause for lack of funds to provide adequate infrastructure to residents?
Submission 47	SURVEY – ONLINE	At present I am self-funded retiree without any form of income. Where do you think I take more money for rates? I feel very strongly against an increase in rates.
Submission 48	SURVEY – ONLINE	I live in a caravan at the bottom of my block. I can't afford to run a home alone. I worked my whole life for this retirement. How disappointing. I could help you to budget effectively. There is so much excess waste, too many big salaries to pay.
Submission 49	SURVEY – ONLINE	I am totally opposed to the rate increase and I would like my answer of no noted
Submission 50	SURVEY – ONLINE	I really canny believe council are even considering a rate rise in this economic climate. Cut down on services if necessary! A poor electorate should not have to pay exorbitant rates, rents will go up housing sustainability will suffer. Less tourism!
Submission 51	SURVEY – ONLINE	We need to increase council income to stay in line with inflated costs. Nothing will progress until we accept that everything is increasing in cost. Services must be maintained, staff must NOT be let go. We need more staff in grants writing Dept.
Submission 52	EMAIL	<p>I am writing to Bellingen Shire Council to register my objection to the proposed rates variation, in any form.</p> <p>NO, is the answer.</p> <p>Further to my objection to any suggestion of a rates variation increase, I have been asked by the acting General Manager at the Dorrigo meeting this afternoon, to say a few words further about my objection.</p> <p>Firstly I am single and I live on \$25 000 a year.</p>



		<p>The General Manager, being on hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, is completely out of touch with what that could possibly be like.</p> <p>I am already stretched as far as I can stretch financially, due to the increase in the cost of living, that I have had to pull my meager belt further in for, to exist.</p> <p>Why is it that single people have to pay as much for rates as a house full of people, by the way?</p> <p>That is so not fair.</p> <p>When I am deliberating in the supermarket whether I can afford a potato or not, I am not about to go without even more, to pay an increase in rates that pay obscene salaries to a select few who mismanage the rest.</p> <p>Council needs to pull its belt in, reshuffle its priorities, cut some salaries and administration staff, and stop funding anything other than infrastructure maintenance.</p> <p>Cut back to basics.</p> <p>And if you can't manage to do what you are being paid repulsively well to do, then amalgamate so we can be rid of the lot of you.</p>
Submission 53	WEBSITE – HOW CAN WE HELP?	<p>Special Rates Variation. I recently received a notice and explanation regarding council special rates variation. All the figures presented are just for actual land rates. The land rates make up less than half of what I have to pay to council each year. It would be more useful and honest if you gave some indication of what we will really be paying to council in the coming years. I'm assuming there is also going to be significant increases to water, sewerage and waste charges on top of the planned increases to land rates. Be up front with the community and tell us what we are really going to be paying to council each year.</p>
Submission 54	SURVEY – ONLINE	<p>I greatly value services such as the library at Dorrigo and would be very upset to see changes such as consolidation of library services or reduced servicing and maintenance of public amenities.</p>
Submission 55	EMAIL	<p>Morning,</p> <p>In reference to the variation letter received this morning, we'd like to make mention that the last land rezoning of properties off [REDACTED] road predominantly [REDACTED] where a recent decision a few years back was to alter our properties from rural</p>



		<p>to large house blocks and through in Koala corridors with no notification shows that it was for predominantly additional revenue and then when town sewerage was being planned, Urunga side of the highway was completely left out with the town sewerage plan project stopping at the industrial estate the opposite side of the bridge.</p> <p>Not receiving anything in writing regards the rezoning but leaving us off the sewerage run after rate and rezoning rises was a slap in the face.</p> <p>Was hoping the new council major would look into this noting how long Urunga residents have felt like the poor cousins to Bellingen when looking at council assistance especially with roadside mowing and so forth.</p> <p>Any help appreciated to have [REDACTED] road and [REDACTED] added to the sewerage instillation project would be appreciated.</p> <p>Against rises with minimal advancement, poor notification, pot holes and having to mow large area of [REDACTED] Road as council tractor only does one road side strip so We are doing ourselves.</p> <p>Regards</p>
Submission 56	SURVEY – ONLINE	This is a terrible time to put this information out - are you hoping people don't read or take any notice? I stumbled on it via a comment by [REDACTED] on fb - this will not endear support. Bad news is way worse this time of year.
Submission 57	SURVEY – ONLINE	Council wastes an enormous amount of money on things local government doesn't need to be involved in. Instead of increasing rates, Council should cut back expenditure.
Submission 58	SURVEY – ONLINE	No comment left – submission captured through survey response.
Submission 59	EMAIL	<p>Dear Council</p> <p>I write to object to the proposed special rate variation for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Council cannot claim to have properly consulted community using the survey on its website. The survey is poorly designed and worded in order to elicit council's desired response. This is known as a 'push poll' and has no scientific validity. If council is serious about consulting community they should have an independent social scientist design a proper unbiased survey with a rigorous sampling strategy.



		<p>2. The special rate increase is significantly higher than the basic peg increase and is poorly justified in terms of inflationary pressures on council costs.</p> <p>3. The reasons council gives for this increase are pandemic related supply chain pressures and increased oil prices as a result of the war in Ukraine. Yet the increases are planned up until 2026/27. Council cannot presume these issues will continue to impact prices for another 4 years. In fact, the reserve bank is forecasting an easing of inflation through 2023 as China emerges from 3 years of pandemic related closure and lockdown. (https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/smp/2022/nov/economic-outlook.html)</p> <p>4. Relative to other NSW councils Bellingen rates are already very high and higher than the NSW average. This is despite average weekly incomes in the Shire being at least 30% lower than the state average. (https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA10600)</p> <p>5. Mainstream economic theory dictates that in a high inflationary environment governments should curtail their taxation and spending, not increase it. Increasing council rates is tantamount to pouring petrol on the fire. (https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2022/11/21/how-fiscal-restraint-can-help-fight-inflation)</p> <p>6. Households are already under significant stress from rising prices, a rate increase will affect both owners and renters as the cost will be passed on by landlords. Tenants have experienced exponential growth in their rent in the past 2 years leading to what has been widely described as a housing affordability crisis in the Shire. And according to census data, around half of Bellingen shire residents are not in the workforce. This is because of a large community of retirees, many of whom are self-funded and are ineligible for any kind of pensioner discount.</p> <p>In summary, this proposed rate increase disproportionately affects those least able to afford it. It is unfair and unreasonable, coming at a time of significant financial pressure on households. Council should instead reign in its spending until economic conditions improve.</p> <p>Regards</p>
Submission 60	SURVEY – ONLINE	I have emailed you with my objections. The questions above are loaded against the council needing to look at why the rates have more than double since I moved back here 8 years ago



Submission 61	SURVEY – ONLINE	We are dual rate payers in the shire and I feel council is heading in the wrong direction in more than one area, mainly councils insistence on promoting tourism & development with failing infostructure ,this does not help the rate payers at all
Submission 62	SURVEY – ONLINE	As a family of 5, we are experiencing the same rising costs too. An increase in the largest bills we have can put us under more financial pressures. I know some members of the community will not be able to afford any increase at all. Kind Regards.
Submission 63	SURVEY – ONLINE	No comment left – submission captured through survey response.
Submission 64	EMAIL	<p>Good afternoon,</p> <p>Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the Urunga Literary hall on Thursday 19th January to hear the council’s submission for requesting a special rate variation to the independent Pricing and Regulator Tribunal.</p> <p>My immediate thoughts are, I would appose strongly this council’s request.</p> <p>Everybody in this present economical environment which is impacting Australians in general, have to tighten their belts, maintain existing standards by looking for and working more efficiently. I suggest the council follow the same principles, reducing staff numbers if necessary as a last option.</p> <p>I wish to be recorded as a NO against this proposed rate increase and I would appreciate confirmation that my email and response has been noted by council.</p> <p>Regards [REDACTED]</p>
Submission 65	EMAIL	<p>Dear Mr Allen</p> <p>I received your mail circular about the council's application for a Special Rate Variation (why can't it just be called a raise?).</p> <p>I expect you are aware that the three consecutive public meetings set for this week all fall within work hours, or leave little scope for working people to get to them after work (the two 4pm -- 6pm ones).</p> <p>In addition, they're taking place when many of the town's ratepayers will still be away on holiday.</p> <p>It should not have been beyond the wit of the council to hold these meetings a month earlier or a month later, at times in the evening or at a weekend when they would not have been impossible or very inconvenient for ratepayers excepting the retired to get to them. But then, perhaps it was not beyond the wit of the council, and the timing of the meetings is intentionally calculated to elicit minimum public participation.</p>



		<p>Lastly, I've written to the council twice in the past five years: once about a circular on sub-division, and a second time about householders leaving their bins permanently on the street. On neither occasion did I receive an acknowledgement, far less a considered reply—so don't worry, I won't be expecting a response to this.</p> <p>Regards</p>
Submission 66	SURVEY – ONLINE	<p>I strongly disagree with the rate rise. The last time Council applied for a special variant, I did not strongly object. however, this time I am. The ratepayers of Mylestom pay the highest rates in the shire already</p>
Submission 67	EMAIL	<p>With increased cost of living, we the people have pulled our belts right in already to afford the essentials for life. I suggest that Council follow suit and pull its belt in too, and dispense with things it can't afford. Not let its already big fat belt OUT further, by a third! You can forget that idea!!</p> <p>How about STOP using an expensive agency to supply workers who only receive HALF of what is paid out to employ them? That's just STUPID. I won't be funding STUPID!</p> <p>You state that your electricity has gone up. But yet you have this huge ratepayer funded solar array which would mean your electricity has gone up minimally if at all..!</p> <p>I won't be funding prevarication and exaggeration.</p> <p>I see you have broken up the obscene costs of your bureaucracy into two categories "Governance and Administration, and "Regulatory Management" rather than show its actual massive toad- like occupation in the pie chart.</p> <p>Make some cuts there!</p> <p>You pay yourselves way too much in salaries, for too many of you, for such a small Shire. I won't be funding unreasonable excess.</p> <p>So, pull your belts in like everyone else, and we may let your fraudulent, unlawful collection of rates continue, as long as it is spent on what we the people agree it be spent on.</p>
Submission 68	EMAIL	<p>Dear Council,</p> <p>Given the current economic hardship being felt by the ratepayers, not only in our shire, but nationwide, I find it extraordinary that Bellingen Council are proposing to increase our rates.</p> <p>Surely now is the time to seriously & honestly review Council expenditure - as all ratepayers are having to do on a personal level - to deal with the increased pressures on the costs of living.</p>



		<p>For some time, it has been acknowledged that Bellingen rates are already higher than the NSW average (https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA10600) whilst the average weekly incomes in the Shire are at least 30% lower than the state average.</p> <p>I also understand that the proportion of our rates revenue spent on staffing levels within the Council is significantly higher than our neighbouring Shires (Coffs Harbour & Nambucca) - leaving me to conclude that Bellingen Shire has a higher than average staffing level. Perhaps this is an area of revenue saving to be examined before increasing our rates?</p> <p>Regardless of where the savings are found, ethically the Council needs to examine all areas of its expenditure before expecting the ratepayers to bear additional costs.</p> <p>As to your claim of community consultation I find this offensive. Council have once again drawn the conclusion they want from an ill formed & poorly designed online survey cynically devised to give the conclusion they want rather than what the ratepayers want.</p> <p>What Bellingen Council is proposing is wrong. Increasing rates to solve an expected expenditure increase during a time of serious economic hardship not only impacts those who can least afford it (i.e ratepayers) it also smacks of economic ineptitude on the part of those proposing it. Look harder at your own costs and plans and reassess to match the current times. regards</p>
Submission 69	SURVEY – ONLINE	I suggest that council pull it's belt in too, and dispense with things it can't afford. Not let it's belt OUT by a third! You can forget that idea!! I won't be funding STUPID.
Submission 70	SURVEY – ONLINE	We are too top heavy in the in door staff and need at least another 10 out door staff .
Submission 71	SURVEY – ONLINE	Insufficient evidence has been provided that Council has undertaken adequate cost reduction activities. Current consultation is inadequate. Also, the "Other please clarify" on the final question below doesnt work.
Submission 72	SURVEY – ONLINE	No comment added
Submission 73	SURVEY – ONLINE	Council need to apply pressure to the insane insurance costs NOT add more pressure to households where it is difficult to absorb increased costs. A few less events is acceptable. Council employees on 6 figure incomes need a wage freeze / wage cut.



Submission 74	SURVEY – ONLINE	No comment added
Submission 75	EMAIL	<p>I have just wasted over an hour trying to fill in council's questionnaire & send it, & failed.</p> <p>Too many glitches, how do you expect to get a true response on Variable rates? Feels like a set-up, so council can get it's bulldozing way of increasing our rates more. Your communication methods are flawed & need looking at.</p> <p>I've sent correspondence to council before with no response after 21 days, so I've repeated it before getting a response & an apology.</p> <p>NO TO A SPECIAL VARIABLE RATE INCREASE, time to consolidate & cut obsolete or less used services, like Libraries. The Front Office is not as important since internet, so why spend money on regular upgrades. Staff cuts, overstaffed with admin.</p> <p>HOW LONG BEFORE A RESPONSE, yes, I am frustrated trying to communicate with council, you are spending money we don't have.</p> <p>Yours Sincerely,</p>
Submission 76	SURVEY – ONLINE	Loose so staff, get rid of the cars and other perks. Stop over spending
Submission 77	SURVEY – ONLINE	Council need to become more efficient in how they operate as us as business owners do. I also think in today's digital world we don't need library's .
Submission 78	SURVEY – ONLINE	I don't support any further SRV requests until the following happens - external audit of expenditure and personnel. Review of road works methods - too many times I have seen council do the job three times before getting it right. Allow more words!!!!
Submission 79	SURVEY – ONLINE	No more grants other than Roads, Water & Waste water and waste. No grant applications for new assets that you have no financial means of maintaining. No grants that require council to match funds, focus on essential, pretty can wait til is affordable
Submission 80	SURVEY – ONLINE	We can not access some facilities due to influx of tourists. Its full of illegal campers any day of the week/year. I'd rather council raised revenue by policing this. Why should residents pay more for facilities we can not use due to tourists.
Submission 81	SURVEY – ONLINE	n/a



Submission 82	SURVEY – ONLINE	Council has to work smarter and more efficient to reduce costs. I , as a ratepayer don't allow an increase above the rate cap.
Submission 83	SURVEY – ONLINE	This is our third or fourth Special Rate Variation, plus increase in Rateable value of Land. Most retirees are on a fixed income and your demographic thru Census guves you this information. Most with raises across the board in Power, Electricity, NO
Submission 84	EMAIL	<p>Unfortunately I cannot be at your meeting as I work. This will very likely be a common problem across the community so I hope you will take this email and any others into consideration. As you say cost have gone up dramatically in the past few years- including my rates. They have already more than doubled since I rebought back into Bellinghen 8 years ago.</p> <p>I find this variation ill considered. In the public sector if costs were to go up by so much (taking into account the many new builds that have taken place over those years and therefore the increased rates income from these as well) the company would be taking a good hard look at where they have overspent. In my experience, the first thing they look at is if they have too many employees, especially in the upper management.</p> <p>My question to you, discounting my previous points, is where is this money to come from ? Interest rates are going up, food costs, fuel, energy and wages have hardly risen. The rate discount to pensioners will not cover this either so people already doing it hard will find it even harder. Rents will go up ensuring an even greater homelessness issue.</p> <p>As you gather, I am strongly against this extra rate rise Yours sincerely</p>
Submission 85	SURVEY – ONLINE	I live out of town so assume this does not affect me very much.
Submission 86	SURVEY – ONLINE	No comment left – submission captured through survey response.
Submission 87	SURVEY – ONLINE	No comment left – submission captured through survey response.
Submission 88	SURVEY – ONLINE	No comment left – submission captured through survey response.
Submission 89	SURVEY – ONLINE	Council needs to get its ducks in a row. There are assets not being utilised properly eg the renting out of the tourist centre at Urunga at a rediculous / nonexistent rent. The building is never open and facilities for travellers unobtainable.
Submission 90	SURVEY – ONLINE	No comment left – submission captured through survey response.
Submission 91	SURVEY – ONLINE	n/a – submission captured through survey response.
Submission 92	SURVEY – ONLINE	I strongly disagree to rate increase. If you want to do a survey & ask for comments 250 characters is not enough, which limits effective feedback. Times in Bellinghen 8am - 10am?



Submission 93	SURVEY – ONLINE	No to a rate rise!
Submission 94	SURVEY – ONLINE	My husband and I own 2 properties in Dorrigo, one of which doesn't even have access to waste services, and our rates bills are ridiculous. Frankly we don't receive any service from the council at all, what are we even paying for?
Submission 95	SURVEY – ONLINE	Please consider adding a non-residential occupancy rates levy of 150-300% for family homes that are being leased as short stay accommodation properties.
Submission 96	SURVEY – ONLINE	People just don't have any money left.
Submission 97	SURVEY – ONLINE	Roads, garbage, water etc. These are important.
Submission 98	SURVEY – ONLINE	We have waited so long for the work to be done on Hill St. The damage of water is too much. How can we have poor water quality at this time of year to recommend not swimming? We need river wardens helping visitor understand care of river reserves
Submission 99	SURVEY – ONLINE	All I have are bins and water. If I have a reduction in services do I have to draw water from the river and take my rubbish to the tip myself. I object to my rates continuing to increase when the level of service continues to drop!!!
Submission 100	SURVEY – ONLINE	This survey does not allow residents to meaningfully engage in this process. BSC is known for its poor staff satisfaction and long waiting times for DAs. There is huge potential to save money by reorganising the organisation avoiding rate increases.
Submission 101	SURVEY – ONLINE	No comment left.
Submission 102	SURVEY – ONLINE	It would be great if Council was transparent about what "reduction in current level of services" actually means. Services seem bare minimum at best? A significant rate rise in the middle of a "cost of living" and housing crisis is a pretty savage.
Submission 103	SURVEY – ONLINE	n/a – submission captured through survey response.
Submission 104	LETTER	ATTACHED.
Submission 105	EMAIL	This Branch Opposes any rate increase over and above inflation due to the impact on all residents, particularly pensioners, retirees and renters.



		Calls on the Bellingen Shire Council to cut the number and remuneration of middle and senior managers before proposing any further extraordinary rate increases and channel the money into frontline services.
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RECEIVED AFTER CONSULTATION PERIOD ENDED		
Submission 106	EMAIL – RECEIVED AFTER CONSULTATION CLOSED	<p>To whom it may concern</p> <p>I missed the deadline of 30 January to complete an online survey for the above.</p> <p>Unfortunately this deadline wasn't advertised in the Special Rate variation pamphlet under "Having your say" flyer sent out to residents and I have only just realised the survey has been removed from the council website.</p> <p>As a rate payer, I would like to formally state that I strongly disagree with the special rate variation Council are proposing.</p> <p>The timing of this rate rise after coming out of two years of extreme financial difficulty for myself (and most people) due to Covid impacts doesn't seem to have been taken into account.</p> <p>I have been paying rates on a vacant town block of land now for nearly 2 years without any services. I asked for a green bin but was denied because I don't have an occupancy certificate. I find this outrageous that council have been charging me and yet I can't receive a bin to sustainably dispose of my green waste so have been having to 'borrow' room in my neighbours green bin which isn't ideal and doesn't offer enough room.</p> <p>The Council manager suggested I buy a bin at Bunnings and then ship my waste to Raleigh which would be costly to me and inefficient.</p> <p>I have been living in [REDACTED] Bellingen for the past three years and the state of the road here is appalling. To the point where neighbours trip and fall whilst navigating several pot holes and uneven road surface. I then hear that Council are investing in a huge project that would increase Tourism into Dorrigo Rainforest by installing walking tracks etc. If this rate rise is helping to support that project; I'm not interested.</p>



		<p>I believe Council should get their priorities in order and concentrate on supporting ratepayers by getting local roads fixed asap as these potholes cause potential injury to residents, and wear and tear on their vehicles.</p> <p>Another reason I strongly appose this rate increase is that my rates here in Bellingen are so much higher than Sydney suburban rates and amount to approx \$36 a week which will be higher once my house is built and rates go to the full amount. With an approx increase from the proposal of \$2.09, my rates would increase to approx \$38/week.. that is without a house.. it will be substantially more once I have my occupancy certificate.</p> <p>I personally would struggle financially to cover this amount as barely am able to cover the current rates.</p> <p>As I missed out on the opportunity to voice my objection in the official survey, please ensure my voice and vote for a NO is recorded for this proposed increase.</p> <p>Kind regards [REDACTED]</p>
Submission 107	EMAIL – RECEIVED AFTER CONSULTATION CLOSED	<p>Dear Bellingen Councillors,</p> <p>I respectfully request that Council refrain from pursuing another special rate variation.</p> <p>I understand the burden that inflation is placing on the Council budget but the same is also occurring on people’s personal budget.</p> <p>Unfortunately, it seems like all those who can put their prices up are. Resulting in people on fixed income suffering the burden of bringing down inflation.</p> <p>As an example of how this has affected me personally since moving to Bellingen 5 years ago we regularly shop at the closest Woolworths being at Sawtell as we found the prices at the local IGA were unsustainable for our personal budget. In that time the price of bread has increased from \$1.60 a loaf to a current price of \$2.20. That is an annual increase of 8%. For the whole of these 5 years I worked [REDACTED] and received the standard award increase of around 2%. Meaning my income has significantly fallen short with keeping up with the cost of bread. I am in the same situation as Council in that my electricity bill has gone up at the same rate as Council’s, my maintenance bills have gone up at the same rate as Council’s my fuel bill has gone up at the same rate as Council’s, my insurance has gone up at the same rate as Council’s. But unlike the Council I can’t charge my employer more money. Unfortunately, this has resulted in me having to quit my job [REDACTED] and pursue employment elsewhere.</p>



		<p>I realize the financial pressure that Council may be under. But this is no different to those in the community who are on fixed income. The burden of increased financial pressure is a burden that should be shouldered by all. Instead, what is occurring is those who can push the burden onto someone else are doing so. Consequently, what is becoming evidently clear in this community and many others is that ultimately the buck (or lack thereof in this case) is stopping with those who can't do anything about it and definitely can't afford it.</p> <p>Regards</p>
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19/01/2023

I say NO to the Special Rate Variation, as the Bellingen Shire Council has not delivered on it's commitment of connecting the towns of Repton & Mylestom, to the sewerage system project.

The Council has been discussing Sewering these areas for the past 30 odd years and it is yet to be done, even though the 50% State Government funding grant had come through.

Question; Where is that grant money?

I do not trust the Bellingen Shire Council to have an increase of rates, when they show that they are unable to handle the money that comes to them and handed to them on a silver plater. This increase that they are asking us residence to give them, will allow them to use the Special Rate Variation to increase rates as they see fit. This is dangerous, very dangerous.

I would like to also talk about Fluoride in our water, Do you realise that 11 counties have now banned fluoride in their drinking water, China, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands, Hungry and Japan because it is In Affective & Toxic.

There are only 8 countries in the world that continue the use of Fluoride in their drinking water, they are, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Singapore, Malaysia, Ireland, Colombia and America.

Fluoride is a man made substance, it is Hydro Fluosilicic Acid, it corrodes metals, yet the council allows it in our water!

19th Jan. 2023

The General Manager,
Bellinghen Shire Council.

Submission regarding proposed Special Rate Variation.

I would like it noted that I oppose the proposed increase to Rates above the Rate Peg limit.

While I understand the financial pressures on Council, I do not support the move to continuously expect the Ratepayers to fill the gap that Council is experiencing. Since my time on Council (1999-2008) I have seen both one off and permanent Rate increases due to Council successfully achieving such Rate Variations. The cumulative impact has been to provide a significant financial burden upon Ratepayers, who live in a low socio-economic area, many with incomes or wages failing to increase in line with cost of living expenses.

I would be willing to accept a reduction in the current level of Council services to avoid the proposed Special Rate Variation. For example - closing all Council run Libraries by one or two days per week, would be acceptable.

I would also like to see Council continue

to achieve greater efficiencies in its overall operating costs. One area of considerable concern to many residents and ratepayers is the increased number of Senior Management positions created on Council. I think that Council needs to do its share of 'belt-tightening' to reduce operating costs by reducing the positions of Deputy General Managers. It will be more difficult to remove these new additions to staff, but even if it takes time, it would be a worthwhile goal to pursue. This would help to regain the trust and respect of the community, which I believe has been diminishing ever since these new positions were created.

I understand the significant financial pressure 'cost-shifting' has had on Council, as well as the low rate base due to many State Government agencies which operate and yet cannot be levied rates. These are significant issues of concern that can only be rectified by achieving a better funding share for local government. With the upcoming State election in March, now is the time Councils (and the local government and Shires Association) needs to be publicly lobbying all those standing for this election, to gain commitments to address and change these positions. The Departments that cover Crown lands, State Forests and National Parks should all be required

to pay Rates, as they currently receive income, while paying nothing towards the upkeep of roads, bridges and facilities that come with the thousands of tourists that access their respective areas. This needs to change. When it does change, Council will have a significant improvement in its Rates base and be financially significantly better off. Now is the time to be pro-active, as this opportunity to rectify this blatantly unfair impact on local governments only comes every four years.

Finally, I commend Council making people aware of the Financial Hardship Policy (which I do not wish to see it used as part of the justification for why a special Rate Variation should be allowed).

Thank you for your consideration of these issues, and I look forward to seeing how sincerely Councillors take up the issues I have mentioned, to avoid the need for a SRV.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

18/1/23

Resident Ratepayer's View point

Councils exist so as to deliver two primary objectives: Liveability and Lifestyle

- | | |
|--|---|
| ⇓ | ⇓ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Base' services • Essential Maint^{ce} • Facilities • Support - Crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medical - Palliative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractions/Interests • Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entertainment - Educational - Co-operatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Community Gardens * Landcare * Environmental Enhancements |

All at reasonable (Rate) Cost

Lessons from Co-vid

- Hi density living is not ideal !!
- 'Escapees' permanent and tourist highlight need and opportunity
 - Tourism \$'s and (moderate) pop^u growth.
- Attractions vital pre-requisite

Objective - make our region a great place to live and to visit.

But - constrained population growth so that it remains a desirable place

And Tourism attractions facilities should be State or Nationally funded given non-ratepayers derive majority benefit but also enhance ratepayers lifestyle

- win/win

Net: Additional/increasing rates seem unavoidable, but they must represent value for money.

Expenditure of around 50% of Rate \$'s on roads and bridges seems disproportionate ratepayer burden - they also serve tourism through traffic and infrastructure material delivery needs. Hence, these are State and National essential services AND should be majority funded by State and National Government.

Only 2.4% Environment/Sustainability funds could be (dramatically) boosted if around 25-30% of road/bridge funding could be re-allocated to Sustainability/Environmental initiatives - benefit to local community as well as tourism (and our planet!)

Community Services at 10% seems quite inadequate. This is a first rank priority! And vital to liveability and Lifestyle imperative!

So, better funding for "A sustainable future, built together"

