

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Local Government Mailbox](#)
Subject: TRIM: Tenterfield Council's Special Rates Variation 2014
Date: Thursday, 20 March 2014 11:44:08 AM

IPART

ID Walker

20/03/2014

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
REFERENCE: TENTERFIELD'S SPECIAL RATES VARIATION APPLICATION PART B 2014

Dear Sir/ Madam,

This letter is sent to that council has not curbed its spending. In fact i believe the opposite is the case. Cutting costs or raising rates are the 2 means council can use to balance their budget. I do not believe they are capable to self analyse their business structure and achieve efficient outcomes.

I have read the Councils's application for the SRV. Most of the "Performance Indicators" are exactly that - possibilities. If the council is efficient and productive these figures may be true. However at the moment the decisions by this council give me much concern that this council is not productive or efficient.

Page 21.

The distribution of the SRV income is presented. Over 30% of the SRV is being spent on other than core needs. Where is the 20% (\$2,505,000) being spent?

The street renewal is the "main street master plan" (\$1,533,000 or 15% of the SRV). The street was not broken. Money from grants, over \$600,000 at this stage, is also being used on the renewal. (Dennis Gascoinge SRV meetings 2013).

It seems that the original plan (prior to SRV meetings) with spending, including loans is occurring. This is after the vast majority at the SRV meetings in late 2013 were against the "main street master plan". There was no money for current needs why increase debt?

Page 29 to 36.

Over 80% of respondents to the SRV were against it. The submissions to council were also modified in the SRV application. This point is not revealed in the SRV. Is it legal to alter a submission without the writer's permission?

There was no circular sent to obtain the feelings of the community or to ask for feedback.

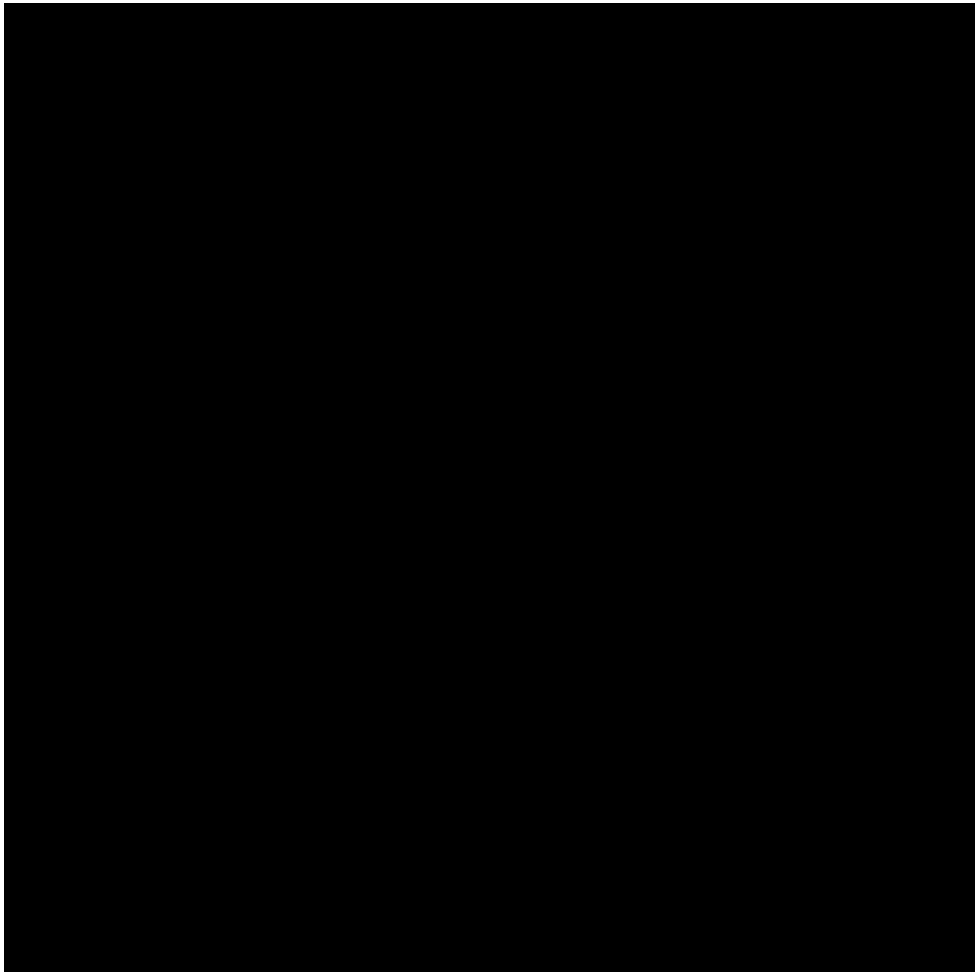
Is the remuneration to the "new management team" (employed by the GM) the same as the outgoing team.

How much was paid in redundancy to the outgoing, obviously, highly paid staff? There is now a tourism manager and another tourism person. These appear to be new positions. Other management positions have also been filled.

It would seem if wages are the same or reduced, then, it must be in the areas of service ie. roads, parks, waste etc.

The Tenterfield Progress Association is an incorporated body and has many more than 3 members. These figures were given to council [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (Page 29)

The association [REDACTED] is only acting to ensure that this council uses best business practice in all council areas and dealings.



More waste of rate payers money.

This council needs outside examination of it's operating methods.

Thanks for reading my letter

Yours faithfully

Ian Walker

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Local Government Mailbox](#)
Subject: TRIM: Tenterfield Council's Special Rates Variation 2014
Date: Tuesday, 18 March 2014 10:36:16 AM

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
ID Walker
18/03/2014
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Objection to Tenterfield Council's SRV Application.
[REDACTED]

Council Submission PART B
Page 4.

"Council conducted extensive community consultation..."
"comfortable" that the community has been well informed and consulted.
"Increases..are accepted as reasonable,necessary and affordable."
"..relief for those.. in a position of genuine hardship."
"..developed comprehensive.. plans in consultation with community that reflect community ideals"
..proposes to use debt

I and many others disagree with the above comments. The reasons for my negative response are noted below from SRV Part B.

1. Page 9 to 15:

These meetings were held in November/ December 2012. I cannot recall these meetings so I will assume they were held. There is no mention of a rates rise in any of the documentation. There is plenty of "feel good" type questions but no disclosure that this may lead to an SRV. There is mention of a mail out in 2012 but there was none in 2013.

This type of consultation would be a normal procedure with a new general manager and new councillors. The first mention of an SRV was in July 2013. This would have been a beneficial time for a mail out to inform all Tenterfield residents of the SRV.

2. Page 17. "User fees /Charges represent 9% (2012).. Group 10 Average 18% (2010/11 data).

This is only the general rates not sewerage, water, waste etc. The total rates for Tenterfield are higher than some of these councils. Our land values have decreased by over 20% in the past 4 years. Other councils in around Tenterfield have land values around 50% or higher than Tenterfield. This surely reflects on poor council management.

Why are these rate figures out of date? Surely the rate figures for 2012-2013 are available.

The council does not mention commercial/industrial costs for such items as waste,water etc. Some of their items have risen by more than 60% in 1 year. This does not seem a good way to attract business to Tenterfield. Business breeds prosperity.

3. P17 ..proposes to use debt funding.."

If the shire has monetary deficits surely borrowing is not the answer. This just removes money via interest from the totals each year for the term of the loan.

4. Tenterfield is a very low socio-economic area. It is depressing to witness people losing value on their homes. The scale can be witnessed in the non payment of rates which is one of the highest if not the highest in NSW. Does this suggest relief for those with genuine hardship?

5. Page 21

At the "road shows" in November 2013 the Director of Engineering (DE) said that money to do the "Street scape" in Rouse Street came from grants and inferred that the entire project could come from grants. Grants are finite each council would have a ceiling figure for grant money. Consequently other areas of the Shire are missing out on grant money. See page 21 of the SRV application part b: 15% of the SRV will be used to pay for the street scape. We have already lost 15% of the SRV.

The council only allowed 1 question at a time. If rate payers needed to prelude their question they were told to get to the point. The answer from the council was long and usually was from the GM and at least 1 of her directors. Their answers were often not about the question. The GM would move on to the next participant often without the previous question being answered fully or clearly. The mayor was very vocal in moving the meeting along. I would suggest he was at least rude if not bullying. Apart from this, he and his fellow councillors said very little.

Our General Manager (GM) said in about July/August 2013 that Tenterfield was on the "financial abyss". see Tenterfield Star and Free Press newspapers. Within a month or 2 of this statement an architect from Sydney was appointed to design the "Main Street Master Plan". It is nearly impossible to get the figures however a figure of well over \$100,000 has been paid for his advise and the master plan document at this stage. The original figure given by the GM, post "abyss" for the landscape was over \$2,000,000. Much of this was to be borrowed. Which means less rate money after loan payments.

At the road shows in late 2013 the DE, because of rate payer anger, suggested that a few trees will be planted in the main street. Is a figure of \$1,553,000 (page 21) and grant money of over \$500,000 just planting some trees and putting in a few plants? This statement was made because the rate payers felt council should not go ahead with the master plan and consequently reduce spending. The GM ignored rate payer sentiment and continued with the Rouse Street project. There was very little support for the rate rise. At no time at any of these 2013 meetings was a survey taken in regard to the SRV or the streetscape. Stage 5 of the Master Plan has just been passed by council.

Since the "abyss" statement by our GM many executive positions have been filled- The GM's "Management Team". Again this is post "abyss" Maybe the services that council provides have decreased by retrenchments of council workers. The GM speaks of cutting costs however the wages bill exceeds rates revenue.

Tenders have been called (Tenterfield Star) for over 30 vehicles. These vehicles include SUVs, 4 wheel drive vehicles, including a 7 seater SUV and utilities. Are over 30 passenger vehicles required for around 4,400 rate payers or around 7,000 residents?

This council is not open or transparent.

This is a very depressed area (Government statistics).

There are too many executive positions.

The non-elected GM and her personally selected management team control the councillors.

A private audit (not audit by government peers) of the council is required.

This audit would incorporate time and motion to analyse all output and techniques used.

Thank you for reading my submission.

Yours faithfully

Ian Walker