

From: Andavine House Bed & Breakfast
To: [Local Government Mailbox](#)
Subject: Re: Ratepayer's objection to Clarence Valley Council Submission for Special Rate Variation 2018
Date: Monday, 12 March 2018 10:11:46 AM

Hello at IPART,

I am writing to you to request that you take this, my submission, into account when making a decision with regard to our Clarence Valley Council's application/submission for a Special Rate Variation for inclusive years 2018 – 2021. They, as you now know, wish to raise our rates in the Clarence Valley by 25.8% (rate peg included) every year for the next three years.

We, my husband and I, and many thousands of Ratepayers in the Valley, do not agree with Clarence Valley Council's submission on the following grounds:

1. Prior to our last Council election, the majority of our Valley's successful candidates promised voters that they WOULD NOT support an SRV. They have reneged on this. Hence their current application for an SRV for 8% per annum for 3 years to 2021, and then to install the accumulated total of 25.8% (including rate peg) into the base rate.

2. The majority of the Clarence Valley's population cannot financially support this rate rise, for the following reasons:

A much higher than average unemployment situation

A very high proportion of Centrelink recipients, and Age Pensioners, who struggle financially on a daily basis.

3. Over 5,400 signatures have been gathered via a Community submission to IPART. This was received by IPART JUST OVER A WEEK AGO. There were more than this number collected, but pages of signatures were 'stolen' from various businesses around the Valley, as reported by these business owners!!

4. Council claims to have reached out to all the residents of the Valley via 'Community consultation' to gain insight into our thoughts about the proposed SRV. In actual fact, Our Lord Mayor [REDACTED] was asked at a Chamber of Commerce breakfast if Council would take into consideration, the 'voices' of the Valleys residents. He replied, with a point-blank "No". (Reported in numerous media). We residents feel that the Community consultations were performed just to satisfy IPART's requirements for Council to do so.

5. The Valley's perceived waste of Ratepayers rates. This money could have been put to much better use e.g. the road network in the Clarence Valley.

In an effort to consolidate current Works depots in the Valley, Clarence Valley Council has built a "Super" Depot in South Grafton, on the ex-site of the Sewage Treatment works. The cost of this Depot has blown out from the original budget of \$13,000,000 and has been reported at \$22 to 24,000,000!! Council advertised widely that it would save Council \$1,000,000 per annum. (My estimate is that the Depot would need to operate for at least 22 years to break even, not even taking inflation and depreciation? into account). **Clarence Valley Council and Ratepayers could not afford this Depot!! Now CVC want us to carry the financial burden of their**

This site, which is located beside the South Grafton High School, needed massive remediation. We, the residents and the school were told that there was no asbestos on the site, only to be told later that there was (Council had been dumping there for decades). Council even held a meeting in the Council chambers, for residents to explain the levels of asbestos contained on the site, and their plans for remediation. Numerous safety concerns arose throughout the construction.

Uncovered trucks (1800 trucks, many of which were double-trailers).

Mistruths about asbestos-contaminated waste.

Budget over-runs

Lack of response to residents concerns re asbestos dust which blew out over neighbourhood, and escaped into our fields during heavy rains. Fined by the EPA!

We residents had to pay for soil and dust testing through Community fundraising!

6. Clarence Valley Council has ejected the Valley's Pensioner groups and other Community groups from our Community Centre. It has now leased the space to 'Headspace'.

7. Clarence Valley Council has closed down our much-needed Visitor Information Centres in Grafton and Maclean, both were on the Pacific Highway so that the funds can be re-directed to the "Super" depot. The auction will be held next month. This land was previously zoned "Tourism" by the State Government.

(As the highway already bypasses our town, our Tourism businesses will ultimately suffer, as Council has moved the Information screen into their foyer in the middle of town. The Pacific highway upgrade, (12 kms east of Grafton) which will open in 18 months to two years, will limit even more, the traffic that we can attract to our lovely town).

And finally... No. 8. Any resident who finds that they cannot pay their annual Rates, and who needs to apply for Hardship consideration to Council, will find the process so demeaning, that they would re-consider taking this option, e.g. the gathering of private financial information at the front foyer desk within earshot of other staff and the public at the counter, a public notification of the applicant's details, the gathering of all documents showing their total financial situation etc. Then, IF their application is successful, the full Rates bill still needs to be paid except for any fines and interest which have accrued.

Thank you for taking the time to read and dissect my submission. This is my first, and hopefully the last, submission to IPART, and I wish all the residents of the Clarence Valley, good luck with our efforts in trying to bring some levity to Council over their application for the SRV 2018 – 2019.

Yours respectfully,

Mrs. Margaret Anne Barton

'Andavine' House Bed & Breakfast

