

Submission to IPART
'Fit For The Future' Application
Richmond Valley Council

1. Evans Head Residents for Sustainable Development Incorporated (EHRSDI) was formed by the community to ensure that development in the Richmond Valley Council local government area was sustainable, economically, socially and environmentally, and obliged the principles set out in Section 8 "council's charter" under the *Local Government Act 1993* (as amended)¹.
2. EHRSDI has included as members of its executive a solicitor, an accountant, a consultant ecologist, a former MBA Director and specialist in environmental management. All have extensive experience in both the public and private sectors.
3. EHRSDI notes the very narrow remit given to IPART by the State government to determine whether a council is 'Fit For The Future' (FFTF). In the event that a local government area fails to meet the hastily-assembled criteria for FFTF set by the State government in June 2015, the council would appear to be forced into a default option, in our case amalgamation with another local government area, Kyogle, which is also weak financially. Such a forced amalgamation begs the question: where is the hard evidence which supports the notion that putting two financially weak councils together will lead to a better outcome for both the State government and local residents and ratepayers? As far as we can determine there is no valid evidence to show that such a marriage will provide a robust future for residents or ratepayers particularly given the reducing financial support provided by the State government for infrastructure to 2025. The two-thirds reduction in funding to Richmond Valley Council is noted in their long term financial plans.
4. EHRSDI notes that the State government has failed to include any requirement to examine the social, environmental and economic impact of the FFTF on the community in its remit to councils and IPART.
5. Moreover it is noted that the State government had no requirement to bring any FFTF application prepared by council to the community for comment before it was submitted to IPART for assessment. This is a very serious problem particularly given that the current councillors were not elected on an amalgamation platform². We do not support the State government's clear attempt to avoid appropriate consultation with the community about the criteria set for determination of a council's fitness or the application prepared by a council. We have seen no evidence supporting the validity of the criteria to be used by IPART in its assessment of a council's 'fitness for the future'. How does the State government know that the criteria being used will produce viable councils into the future? In our view this is crystal ball gazing at best or a cynical political process to shift costs for all local infrastructure to local government areas regardless of socioeconomic standing or impact at worst. No account is

¹ http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/lga1993182/s8.html

² It is noted that the recently re-elected State government may force amalgamations:
<http://www.governmentnews.com.au/2014/09/forced-amalgamation-spectre-returns-nsw-councils/>

taken of the Australian or world economic context in IPART assessment and we see no evidence whatsoever of any attempt to examine ‘worst’ and ‘best case’ economic circumstances. Ten year economic predictions are notoriously problematic³. In that regard we note that in the course of just a few short years the demand for infrastructure spending for Richmond Valley Council has gone from over \$100 million to approximately \$30 million. How are figures for 10 years ahead to be believed with such dramatic changes?

6. Is IPART making assessments of ‘fitness for the future’ which take account of aging populations and capacity to pay? It would seem not. EHRSDI notes that virtually all of Richmond Valley postcodes fall in the bottom 20% for social disadvantage in NSW⁴ based on 21 variables (see Figure 1). This is not new information. Previous postcode studies by Vinson⁵ and by other agencies demonstrate the same disadvantage which is not improving with time. Social disadvantage is entrenched⁶ in the Richmond Valley Council local government area yet this is not dealt with in Richmond Valley Council’s application or included in the assessment to be made by IPART.

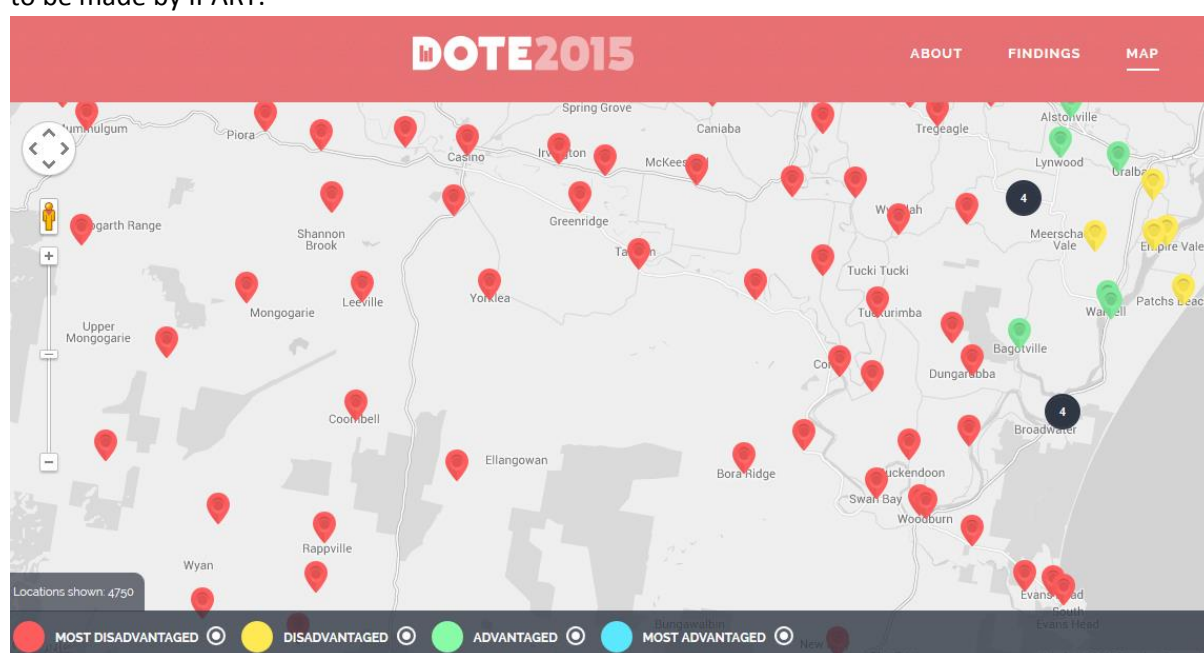


Figure 1 Map of Disadvantage for Richmond Valley Council area with some adjacent council areas included. Reference Prof. Tony Vinson’s **Dropping off the Edge**, July 2015⁷. Note that the Richmond Valley Council local government area falls in the “Most Disadvantaged” postcodes

7. In our view the fact that Richmond Valley Council suffers such significant disadvantage has special importance with regard to the capacity of residents and ratepayers to be able to access and assess the complex information presented in the FFTF process. Our SES disadvantaged status puts residents at disadvantage with regard to representation and critical assessment of materials which form part of the application process. There were more than 700 pages of RVC information pertinent to the FFTF. For many, this was an insurmountable amount of information to tackle in a short time, 28 days, for purposes of forming an independent opinion. But more than that there is the problem of lack of critical skills to analyze what is often opaque

³ <http://www.macleans.ca/economy/economicanalysis/why-economists-cant-predict-the-future/>

⁴ Professor Tony Vinson’s **Dropping Off the Edge** report released this month

⁵ Tony Vinson 2007 **Dropping off the Edge** Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia

⁶ <http://www.dote.org.au/recommendations/>

⁷ <http://www.dote.org.au/map/>

material written in a jargon incomprehensible to many and demanding significant technical background for understanding. In light of this disadvantage we would have thought that Richmond Valley Council would have stepped up to the mark and had public meetings to make clear what they were being asked to do, what the State government had said about the reform process and what council had said to make clear what the impact of being declared FFTF would mean for local residents and ratepayers. **BUT THIS DID NOT HAPPEN.**

Council FAILED to inform residents and it would seem to have gone out of its way to not bring critical information to the attention of local people. There are many examples which demonstrate Council's failure to communicate but here is a good example, Council's 12 page coloured July-August Newsletter delivered to all ratepayers (see Appendix A).

We expected that the Mayor might have raised the issue of FFTF and the possibility of being forced into amalgamation with Kyogle where he lives. He does not reside in Richmond Valley local government area. His column for the newsletter is shown in Figure 2. Note that there is no mention of the FFTF application or potential of amalgamation, the biggest ticket issue facing council.

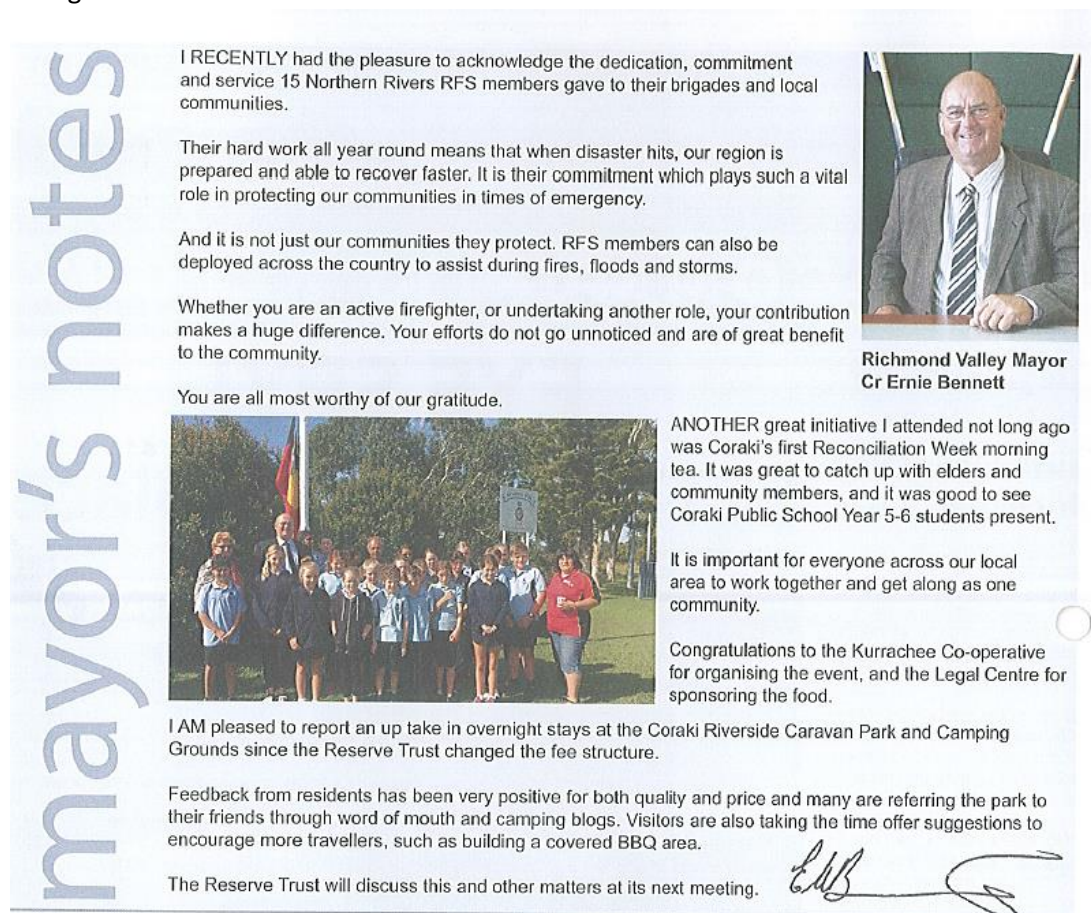



Figure 2 Mayoral column from the July-August newsletter. No mention of FFTF or amalgamation

In Council's *Community Engagement Strategy 2015-016*, Council's "Promise to the Public" is: "We will keep you informed" (page 13). In our view this is patently untrue. What's more in the same document council claims that "stakeholders have a right to be informed about Richmond Valley Council decisions which affect them" and "....will involve the community to participate in decisions in a way which is **proportionate** [emphasis ours] to the significance or impact of an activity on them" (see page 4 *Principles*). This has not been the case with the FFTF process. The

impact of the FFTF process will have major impact on our community. Failure to tell the community about the proposed above peg rate hikes to 2025 is hardly a proportionate response unless of course it is an inverse relationship where the larger the impact the smaller the response from council.

The column from the General Manager also gives little attention to the details of the FFTF (see Figure 3) process or amalgamation default option or “The Benefits” the State government will be giving to those councils which are declared as FFTF (see page 15)⁸. Instead the column deals in generalities and spin with focus on the General Manager, his appointment for another four years and the upgrade in his title! There is nothing about the proposed above peg rate increases every year until 2025⁹, nothing about the reduction if funding from the State government¹⁰, nothing about devolved planning powers¹¹, nothing about fast tracking for above-peg rates¹² and nothing about the increased rates burden being planned for ratepayers at 82% to 2025¹³. Rather, council talks about all the wonderful projects it has planned and nowhere is there any attention given to how ratepayers will be funding them (see Appendix A for the full 12 page report).



Challenges of change

IN past editions I have spoken about the future of Richmond Valley Council through the eyes of the Fit for the Future program. This seems to have taken centre stage, however, Richmond Valley Council started on the journey of rejuvenation and change well before the term was thought of.

In the three and a half years since I have been General Manager, I have, with the total support of the elected Council, been able to make many changes which have been necessary and have made a positive contribution to Council's financial sustainability and ability to deliver more of what the community wants and needs. I believe these changes have helped secure our future.

Change was absolutely necessary, and more change is necessary as we move forward. Council has to build on its capacity as an organisation to be flexible, better at what it does, more productive and competitive and stay true to its public service role.

As a progressive Council, we have to think and act more cooperatively and regionally. We need to be more innovative.


Our challenge is to focus on productive and positive change which delivers for our community.

Council needs to succeed in its broader economic development tasks, be well placed to contribute to the growth and prosperity of the Northern Rivers region, while being an effective partner for the State and Federal governments.

Because there is so much more to do the Council has offered me a new four-year contract from 1 July to lead the journey. This will provide stability, and allow the Council's plans to be delivered. It will also allow me to work with the entire organisation on succession and performance.

Council also changed my title from General Manager to Chief Executive Officer to reflect more accurately the role.

I am excited about the challenges ahead and hope the community will be too. Change is always with us and an organisation which doesn't change will die. I want Richmond Valley to be leaders of our patch and continue to advance.



from the ceo

Figure 3 The General Manager's column in the July-August newsletter. Nothing about the impact of what is planned for the future.

⁸ OLG 2014 *Fit For The Future A roadmap for stronger smarter councils*

⁹ Richmond Valley Council 2015 Appendix H Long Term Financial Plan 2015-2025

¹⁰ Richmond Valley Council 2015 Appendix H Long Term Financial Plan 2015-2025

¹¹ Office of Local Government 2014 *Fit for the Future: A Roadmap For Stronger, Smarter Councils*.

¹² Office of Local Government 2014 *Fit for the Future: A Roadmap For Stronger, Smarter Councils*.

¹³ <http://www.echo.net.au/2015/07/richmond-valley-rates-to-rise-by-82-by-2025/>

We also expected that Council might have given some space to the FFTF process and impacts of potential outcomes on ratepayers and residents on its website but there is no mention of this matter on Council's Home Page as at 30 July 2015 (<http://www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au> Figure 4).

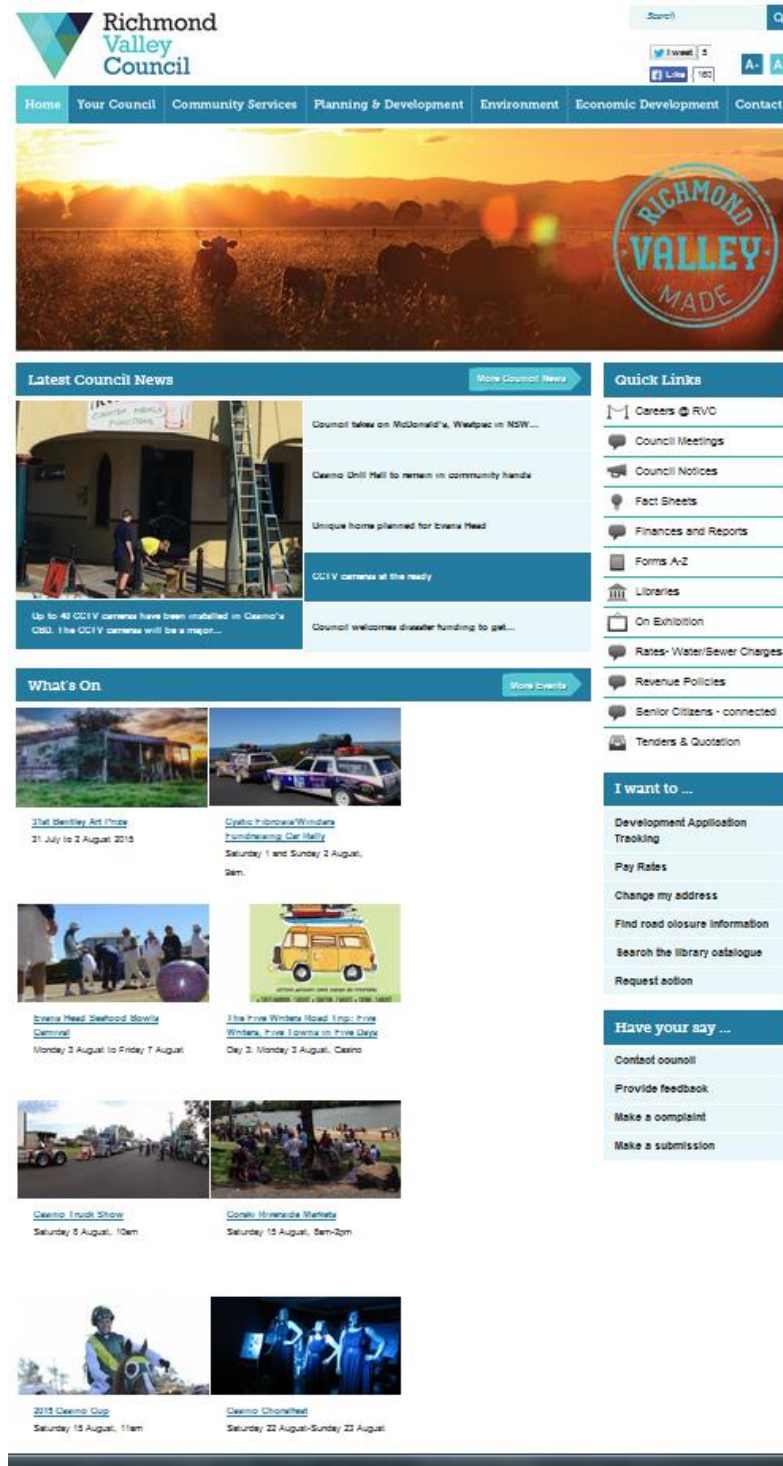


Figure 4: Home Page Richmond Valley Council as at 30 July 2015. No mention is made of the Fit for the Future application to IPART to stand alone as a local government area

EHRSDI also used Council's search engine with the tag "Fit for the Future" and the following information was provided by council's website (See Figure 5).

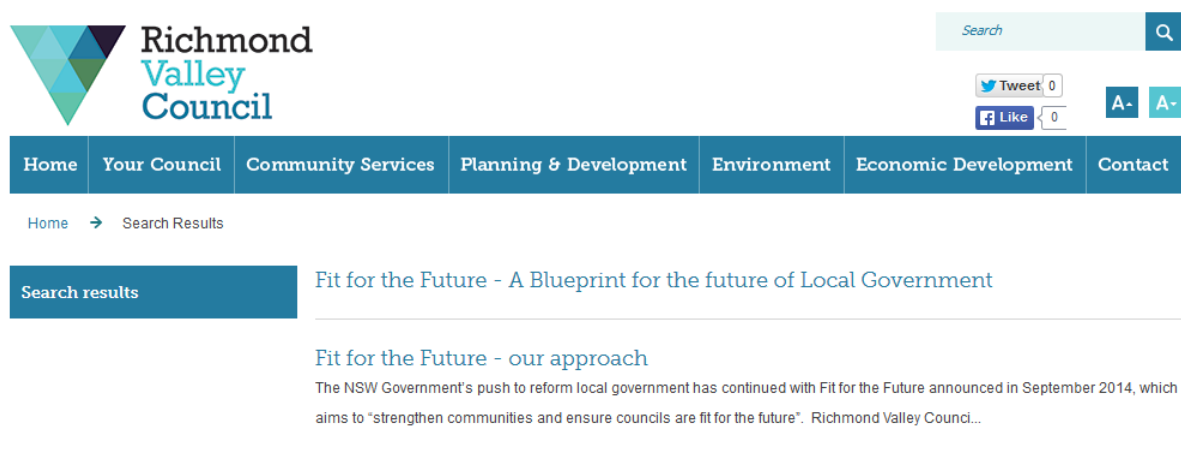


Figure 5: Fit for the Future search took the reader to the information shown above on Council's website

A click on the "Fit for the Future" takes the reader to a State government document (see Figure 6) with the following URL:

http://www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au/icms_docs/209158_Fit_for_the_Future_-_A_Blueprint_for_the_future_of_Local_Government.pdf



Figure 6: A search of Council's website takes the reader to a State government document. Nothing about Council's FFTF application to IPART

There is nothing other than the State government document at this page.

A click on the item “Fit for the Future – our approach” takes the reader to council’s comments about the matter and to the supporting documentation (see Figure 7). See URL: http://www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au/page/Your_Council/Fit_for_the_Future/

Fit for the Future - our approach

The NSW Government’s push to reform local government has continued with Fit for the Future announced in September 2014, which aims to “strengthen communities and ensure councils are fit for the future”.

Richmond Valley Council continues to respond positively to the local government reform agenda. In April 2013, the NSW Treasury Corporation (TCorp) assessed Council’s finances as “weak with an outlook of negative” because of ongoing operating deficits and an inability to fund asset renewals. Without corrective action Council’s rating was on a path to a “very weak” rating. However, Council embraced change and the Fit for the Future initiative has provided further impetus for Council to continue on its journey of transformation. TCorp undertook a second sustainability review in April 2015, which recognised the many steps taken by Council to place its finances on a stronger base and has now assessed Council as being in a “moderate sustainability position with a neutral outlook”.

Change has been implemented with urgency in many areas including:

- ▶ Renewed engagement with the community to build trust with a new [Community Strategic Plan Richmond Valley Towards 2025](#) prepared;
- ▶ Successful special rate variation which is providing Council with a 39% cumulative rate increase over five years, providing an additional \$7.6 million to invest in upgrading infrastructure;
- ▶ Restructure and modernisation of the organisation with ongoing service reviews; and
- ▶ Delivering a significant Capital Works Program to deliver our commitment to the community under the special rate variation.

Council continues to focus on improvements to its efficiency and productivity to meet the needs of the Richmond Valley community. Council is well positioned to be sustainable in the longer term and, as an organisation, has the capacity to continue contributing to the growth and prosperity of the Northern Rivers.

Richmond Valley Council has completed a Fit for the Future improvement proposal, based on the path to sustainability set out in this revised 2013-2017 Delivery Program and 2015-2016 Operational Plan and Revenue Policy. A 10-year Long Term Financial Plan has also been prepared, which sets the path for Richmond Valley Council being ‘fit for the future’. To view these documents, please visit http://www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au/page/Your_Council/Governance/Integrated_Planning_and_Reporting/Delivery_Program_2013-2017_revised/

We are providing the opportunity for people to comment on our Fit for the Future approach.

If you would like to know more, please use the website the NSW Government has setup for its Fit for the Future roadmap – www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au This website has information on the reform package, as well as the [blueprint document](#) of the strategy.

Figure 7: Copy of the page on Council’s approach to FTF. Note that while council makes note of the 39% cumulative increase in rates already delivered to it by IPART from 2014/5 for five years, no mention is made of the additional above peg rates every year which brings the cumulative increase to 82% to 2025. Certainly reference is made to the Long Term Financial Plan but the key feature of this complex document is not mentioned (see Figure 8).

While Council mentions “renewed engagement with the community to build trust with a new Community Strategic Plan.....” crucially this “renewed engagement” has not been included to date in any dialogue with the community to tell it that it is up for an overall 82%

rates increase or to tell it what will happen should it be granted a pass mark for 'Fit for the Future' by IPART. **This critical part of the story has been left out of the summary explanation provided by council, and is, in our view, a major error of omission.** Moreover Council has not made the effort to tell a disadvantaged electorate about these important 'details'. There were NO public meetings to explain the future costs to the public. Council avoided public meetings and served up glossy newsletters which distracted ratepayers from the real issue, that is, what the price of FFTF would cost them. But worse, council failed to review the impact of these cumulative rate increases in terms of the social and economic impact on a disadvantaged community, a clear breach of its responsibility under Section 8 of the *Local Government Act 1993* and a clear breach of trust with ratepayers which it had promised to engage in a trust building process.

Rates and Annual Charges

General Rates

Council has had a special variation approved from 2014/15 to 2018/19 under section 508A of the Local Government Act 1993. This included an increase of 12.3% (inclusive of rate peg) for 2014/15, followed by four successive annual variations of 5.5% (inclusive of rate peg). From 2019/20 onwards, a rate peg of 3.0% has been assumed, in line with TCorp benchmarks, with an additional 1.6% above rate peg assumed to further address asset renewals.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
General Rates	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	4.60%	4.60%	4.60%	4.60%	4.60%	4.60%
Waste Management Annual Charges	6.60%	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
Sewerage Annual Charges	2.40%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
Water Annual Charges	4.90%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%

Figure 8: The 'fine detail' of the long term planning document which shows above peg rate increases every year to 2025. This was buried in more than 700 pages of documentation which go to make up supporting documentation for council's application for FFTF.

Overall it is our view that Council has failed miserably to meet the "Principles" it set out in its *Community Engagement Strategy*. The community was not informed in a proportionate, balanced and appropriately detailed way about what the cost of being declared FFTF would be. Furthermore council failed to consider what the impact of its proposals would be on a significantly disadvantaged community, Richmond Valley. The 82% cumulative rate increase to 2025 is more than twice an estimated cumulative CPI increase of 2.8% (35%). Given that so many of our local people are on fixed incomes and many have rent stress and many other problems we would have thought it imperative that the impact of the 82% increase would have taken priority in a communications strategy. It is our view that if Council had presented the full, balanced picture of the cost of many of the projects it is proposing, the community would have had much more to say and most likely rejected council's long term plan to 2025.

In our view it was not up to the community to try and discover what council was saying in its more than 700 pages of documentation for FFTF. Rather Council should have presented the case to the community.

8. Communications about FFTF and Amalgamation have been kept from the public. There have been various meetings between Richmond Valley Council and Kyogle and others and ratepayers and residents have been kept from these meetings. Such 'secret' meetings have created mistrust in the FFTF and amalgamation process but more than that they have taken away a fundamental opportunity for the public to see what information is being served up in discussion and, to be blunt, to 'keep the bastards honest'. How can the public keep its council to account when it is kept away from discussions which will affect them? And where is the transparency in the process? If councils and public servants are unable to speak

frankly about matters in a public setting then they should not be holding office. The public has been left out of important discussions concerning their futures. The public has no way of knowing how honest and frank these discussions have been. The current process is a clear breach of Section 8 of the Local Government Act 1993 and reminiscent of the behind-closed-doors meetings held during the forced amalgamation process between Richmond River Shire Council and Casino Council between 1997 and 2000 where ratepayers were deliberately excluded.

9. EHRSDI has major concerns about the validity of the financial information on which Richmond Valley Council bases its argument that it is FFTF. On two occasions council invited TCorp to make assessments of council's long term financial viability. We note with alarm the disclaimer from TCorp about the information it has obtained from council (see Figure) in its April 2015 Report (see Figure 9).



Disclaimer

This report has been prepared by New South Wales Treasury Corporation (TCorp) in accordance with the appointment of TCorp by Richmond Valley Council (the Council) as detailed in TCorp's letter of 12 February 2015.

The report has been prepared based on information provided to TCorp. TCorp has relied on this information and has not verified or audited the accuracy, reliability or currency of the information provided to it for the purpose of preparation of the report. TCorp and its directors, officers and employees make no representation as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of the information contained in the report.

In addition, TCorp does not warrant or guarantee the outcomes or projections contained in this report. The projections and outcomes contained in the report do not necessarily take into consideration the commercial risks, various external factors or the possibility of poor performance by the Council all of which may negatively impact the financial capability and sustainability of the Council. The TCorp report focuses on Council's future Sustainability, within prudent risk parameters and the limits of its financial projections.

Figure 9: Copy of Disclaimer from TCorp April 2015.

TCorp makes it clear that it has relied entirely on information provided by council and "...has not verified or audited the accuracy, reliability or currency of the information provided to it....." nor does it "...warrant or guarantee the outcomes or projection contained in the report.." or consider "...the commercial risks, various external factors or the possibility of poor performance.....". In view of this disclaimer we have serious concerns about the validity of the conclusions reached by TCorp. Why was there no assessment of the validity of the information provided, standard practice in the financial assessment of any organisation? For EHRSDI this is a critical issue for many reasons and should be for the government in its haste to reinvent local government. There is a great deal at stake here.

We have raised this matter because we believe it is critical to an evaluation of Richmond Valley Council's FFTF.

Richmond Valley Council has engaged in large projects for which there has been no appropriate strategic planning. For example Council is currently engaged in building a

sports stadium in Casino. Initially we were told that the project would cost \$1.2 million¹⁴ but within five months that grew by 25% to \$1.5 million¹⁵. We were told that it would be funded by the sale of council property¹⁶ but then council went on to borrow a large amount of money to pay for the project¹⁷. The General Manager and Mayor agreed to waive Section 64 requirements for the project behind closed doors (see Figure 10).

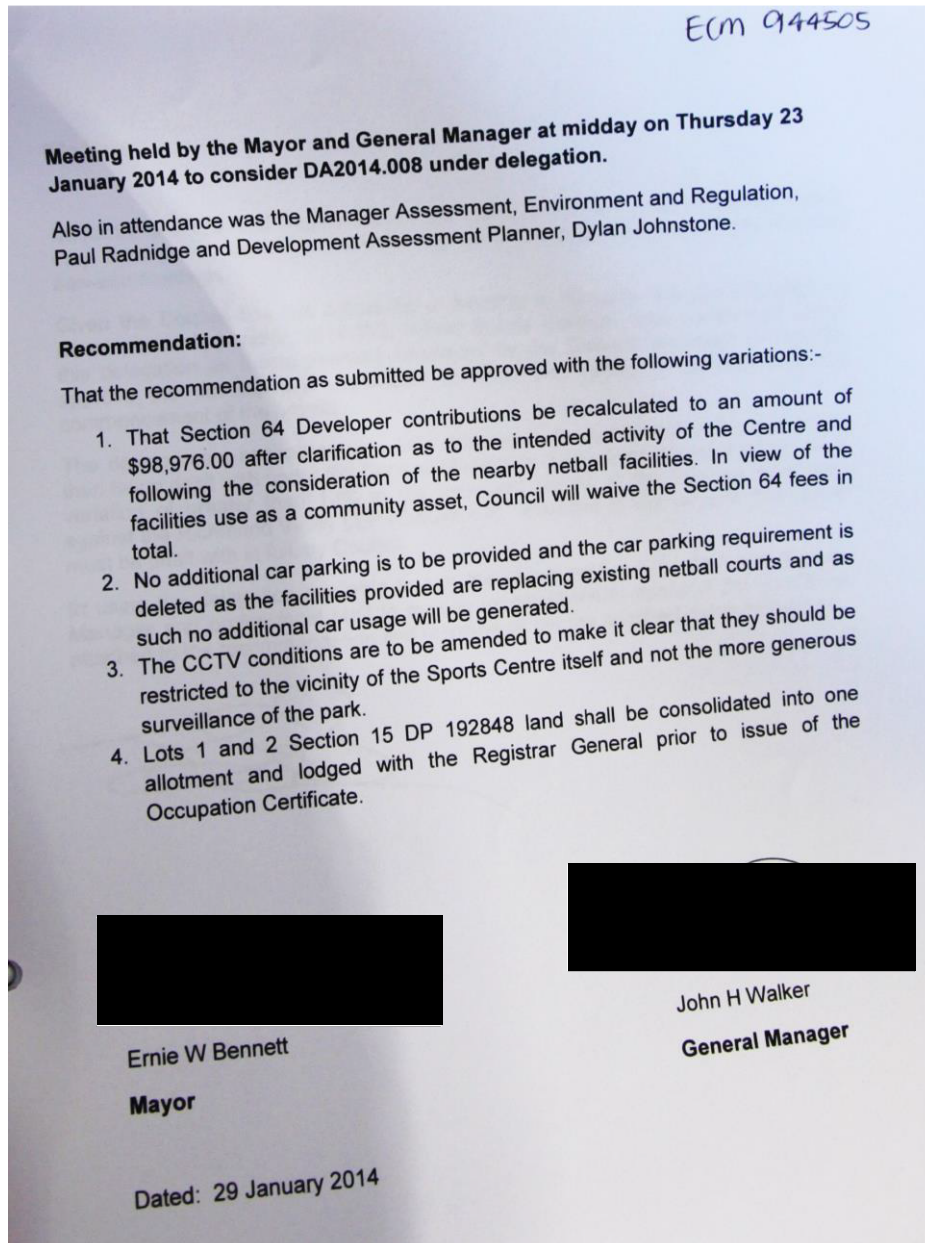


Figure 10: Waiver of Section 64 requirements for the Casino Sports Stadium in January 2014

As far as we can determine this waiver was not reported to Council yet it involved a significant amount of money. Water and sewer are part of the project and someone eventually has to pay for them yet the real costs were expunged from the costs of the project by waiver. But more than that the DA file for the project showed that the waiver

¹⁴ 24 June 2013

¹⁵ 19 Nove 2013

¹⁶ 25 June 2013

¹⁷ 19 Nov 2013 Item 13.5 GM authorised to borrow up to \$1.5 million

was not for \$98,976 but \$552,345 a large difference (see Figure 11). Questions have been asked about this at Council but the July 2015 Minutes of Council's meeting show that the General Manager has not yet responded to this matter.

30. Payment to Richmond Valley Council of contributions levied under Section 64 of the Local Government Act and Richmond Valley Council's Revenue Policy and Development Servicing Plans is required generally in accordance with the attached current schedule, and shall be payable at the rates applicable at the date of payment.

Water – amenities – 0.01 ET per m² 1725m² x 0.01 = 17.25 ET
Sewer – amenities – 0.03 ET per m² 1725m² x 0.03 = 51.75 ET

All contributions shall be paid prior to the issue of any Construction Certificate.

Reason: To provide funds for the provision of services and facilities identified in Richmond Valley Council's Water and Sewer Development Servicing Plans.

2.1.4 Waiver
Richmond Valley Council may waive developer contributions where the proponent demonstrates to Council's satisfaction that it is a non-profit and charitable organisation, which by virtue of carrying out such development, is considered to be making a significant and positive contribution to the community and is unable to recover the charge from the end user.

Section 64 Local Govt Act & Water Management Act 2000 Levy Area - Casino	Job No/ Receipt Code	No. of ET's	Cost per ET (\$)	Amount Payable (\$)
RVC Water Headworks (payment 1/7/2013 to 30/6/2014)	408/ PLD73	17.25	\$ 8,020.00	\$ 138,345.00
RVC Sewerage Headworks (payment 1/7/2013 to 30/6/2014)	233/ PLD86	51.75	\$8,000.00	\$ 414,000.00
Total Section 64 contributions	(1/7/2013 to 30/6/2014)			\$ 552,345.00

Figure 11: Waiver of \$552,345 for Section 64 requirements for the Sports Stadium project

In June 2015 Council commenced discussions on how the Stadium was to be managed and the pricing regime, all matters that should have been considered in a business plan for the building.

In view of the fact that Council appears to have no business plan for the Stadium and in view of the fact that there is a moveable financial landscape which seems to characterise this project, EHRSDI has serious concerns about the actual cost and long term viability of this project. But more than that we have formed the view that such apparent poor planning does not sit well with the concept that Council is a good manager of its business. Furthermore we believe this project raises serious questions about the validity of the information provided to TCorp in its assessment of council. It is our view that an independent evidence-based assessment of council's financial position is warranted. There are other examples.

Final Remarks

Overall EHRSDI has concerns about the validity of information on which Richmond Valley Council has built its case to be FFTF. But more than that we believe that council has failed to take the community into its confidence in putting the case for independence by not disclosing the real cost to the community should it be declared Fit for the Future, and by not taking account of the disadvantaged status of the local government area now and into the future.

In our view the whole local government reform process does not stand close scrutiny because of the failure to test the data on which decisions are to be made. There have been no validity checks of important financial information critical to decision-making, and the remit for

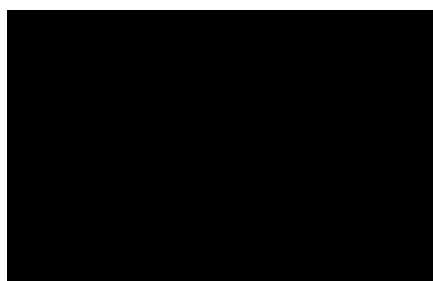
amalgamation or FFTF would appear to be political and cost-shifting rather than a genuine attempt at long overdue reform in this area.

There is little doubt that the State government wants to pass on costs of infrastructure to local communities with little or no regard to the social or economic consequences to those communities, and is clearly keen to divest itself of various planning powers without telling us what those changes might be. Again social and environmental consequences of what the State government is planning to do in local government receive scant consideration.

The State government has put the community on the 'horns of a dilemma'. If we support our local council to be FFTF we are setting ourselves up to be punished with above-peg rates, more borrowings and potentially an unsound planning devolution with serious consequences for those less well off. If we don't support council's FFTF application we set ourselves up for amalgamation with another financially weak council. In the case of amalgamation there is no evidence to support the notion that we will be better off or that such an amalgamation will improve the financial position of council. As Dollery¹⁸ and others have shown, it's not size that counts!

We do not support either proposal and suggest that the State government look to more appropriate ways to improve the performance of local government which take account of the community and its capacity and preparedness to pay. In our view the community wants genuine, evidence-based reform of local government which takes the people with it and creates genuine sustainable employment and services and takes care of the environment which we depend on for a range of critical services. This has not happened.

We would be happy to discuss our views with the State government and will be doing so with our local State Member.



Dr Richard Gates

Vice-President

for

Evans Head Residents For Sustainable Development Inc.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

¹⁸ Professor Brian Dollery, University of New England. Various papers.

YOUR COMMUNITY REPORT

**Registering for
notifications
just got a whole
lot easier**

TO better serve our communities, we have introduced a Council-specific QR code to make it a whole lot easier to register to receive alerts, updates, and other newsworthy articles.

If you're not yet familiar with QR codes, they're similar to the barcodes used by retailers to track inventory and price products at the point of sale

When you scan or read our QR code with your iPhone, Android or other camera-enabled smartphone, you will go to www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au/page/Community_Services/Subscriptions_Email_SMS/Subscriptions/ and then subscribe to receive communications in a variety of formats so you can stay up to date with all of the latest events and activities in the Richmond Valley.

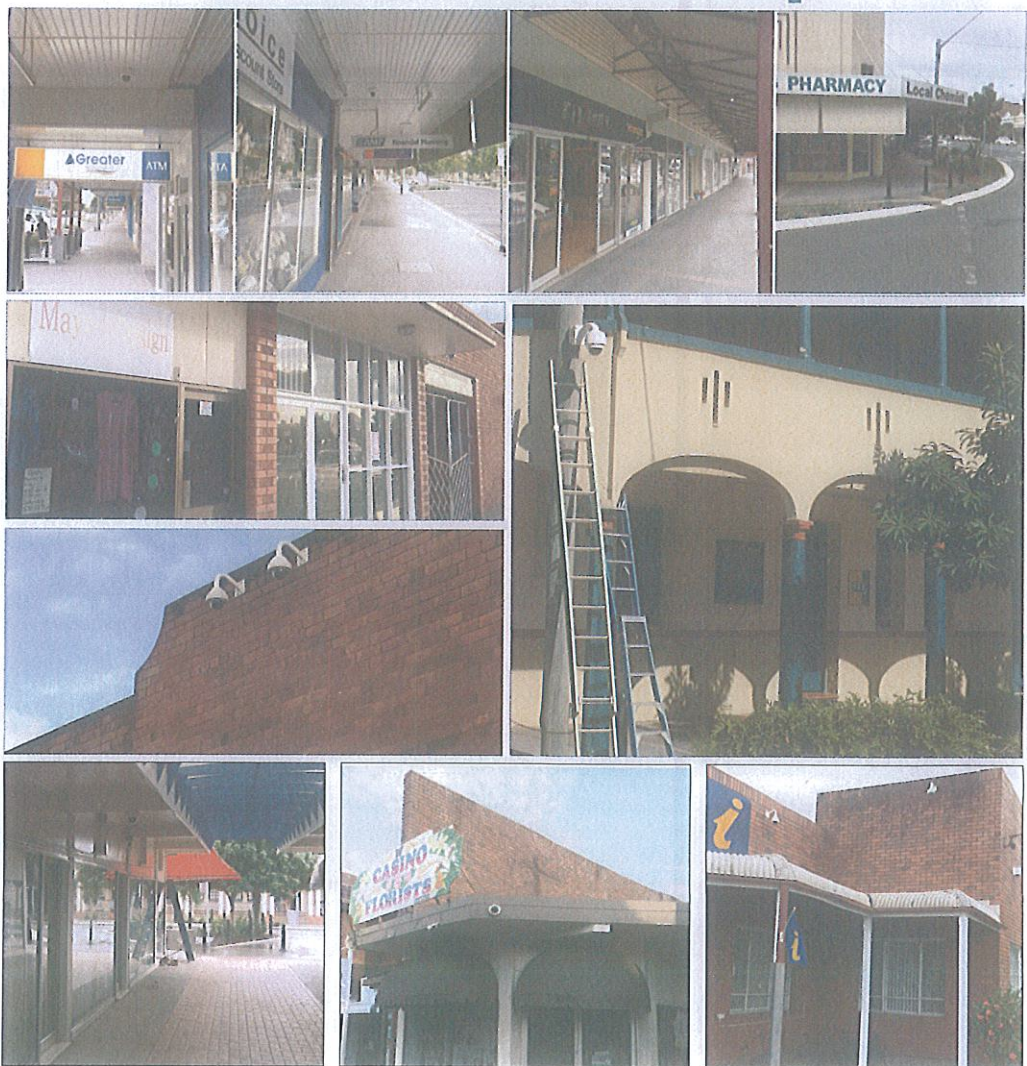
Simply download a free QR code scanner for smartphones from your Apps store and scan the below QR code. You can sign up to these e-newsletters:

- Community
- Economy, events and tourism industry
- Developer news
- Have your say opportunities



EYE SPY!

CCTV cameras in place



WORKERS have been busy installing CCTV cameras in Casino's CBD. The CCTV cameras will be a major tool in solving and deterring break-ins, assaults, graffiti and other anti-social behaviour, keeping our streets safer for law-abiding citizens.

About 40 cameras have now been installed throughout the town's retail area to assist Casino Police in the management of crime. The cameras will operate 24 hours, with footage streamed live to local Police.

Richmond Valley Mayor Ernie Bennett said the installation of the CCTV system was a positive step towards improved community safety. "Council has worked with local police, retailers and the community, and through extensive efforts I am delighted the system is now operational and will assist in the management of crime by Police," Cr Bennett said.

I RECENTLY had the pleasure to acknowledge the dedication, commitment and service 15 Northern Rivers RFS members gave to their brigades and local communities.

Their hard work all year round means that when disaster hits, our region is prepared and able to recover faster. It is their commitment which plays such a vital role in protecting our communities in times of emergency.

And it is not just our communities they protect. RFS members can also be deployed across the country to assist during fires, floods and storms.

Whether you are an active firefighter, or undertaking another role, your contribution makes a huge difference. Your efforts do not go unnoticed and are of great benefit to the community.

You are all most worthy of our gratitude.



ANOTHER great initiative I attended not long ago was Coraki's first Reconciliation Week morning tea. It was great to catch up with elders and community members, and it was good to see Coraki Public School Year 5-6 students present.

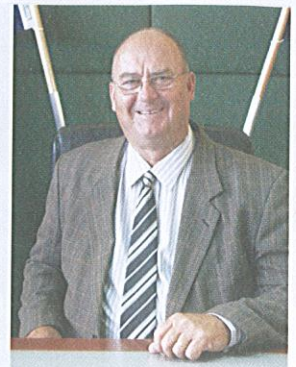
It is important for everyone across our local area to work together and get along as one community.

Congratulations to the Kurrachee Co-operative for organising the event, and the Legal Centre for sponsoring the food.

I AM pleased to report an up take in overnight stays at the Coraki Riverside Caravan Park and Camping Grounds since the Reserve Trust changed the fee structure.

Feedback from residents has been very positive for both quality and price and many are referring the park to their friends through word of mouth and camping blogs. Visitors are also taking the time offer suggestions to encourage more travellers, such as building a covered BBQ area.

The Reserve Trust will discuss this and other matters at its next meeting.



**Richmond Valley Mayor
Cr Ernie Bennett**



Looking for a career with Council?	Page 3
Bypass group ready for action	Page 4
From the CEO's desk Council meeting dates	Page 5
A glimpse of new major projects for our region	Page 6
A glimpse of new major projects for our region	Page 7
Council crews 'best in the business'	Page 8
Casino Indoor Sports Centre progressing well	Page 9
Staff profiles	Page 10
Your elected representatives	Page 11
Feedback sough on waste services	Page 12



**Richmond
Valley
Council**

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCIES
6660 0300

Email
council@rvc.nsw.gov.au

Website
richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

Facebook
[RichmondValleyCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/RichmondValleyCouncil)

Casino Customer Service Centre
Corner Walker St & Graham Place

Phone: 6660 0300
Office hours: 8.30am to 5pm
Monday to Friday,
excluding public
holidays

Evans Head Customer Service Centre
Corner Walker St & Graham Place

Phone: 6660 0365
Office hours: 9am to 5pm Monday
to Friday, 9am-12
noon Saturday,
excluding public
holidays

Council careers night back by popular demand

Wednesday 24 August
3.30pm-5.30pm
Casino Community & Cultural Centre



FOLLOWING the success of last year's dedicated careers information evening, Council will be holding a second one on Wednesday 24 August in the Casino Community & Cultural Centre for Years 10, 11 and 12 students.

Council is encouraging local high school students to kick start their careers with on-the-job training at Council, and will again be offering a number of professional scholarships and full-time apprenticeships and traineeships, as well as school-based apprenticeships.

There will be representatives from Council, TAFE and VERTO Apprenticeship Centre on hand to explain any questions students and parents may have.

Students seeking more information about the careers evening, or about scholarships, traineeships and apprenticeship opportunities, should contact Council's Training & Development Officer Sue Franey on 6660 0351.

Story time at community pre schools

THE Casino Baptist Community Pre School has joined the Kookaburra Early Learning Centre by welcoming into its programming stories, songs and rhymes prepared by the Richmond-Upper Clarence Regional Library. Library staff deliver weekly story time on a Monday and Friday to a group of 30 Casino Baptist children, and fortnightly to Kookaburra children.

This is a wonderful opportunity to promote reading and literacy outside of the Library, while at the same time developing a rapport with both pre school children and staff.



New look Customer Service team



VISITORS to Council's Customer Service Centres in Casino and Evans Head will see frontline staff wearing new, professional uniforms.

CEO John Walker said it was important staff had an identity which reflected Council's corporate image: "The uniforms project a positive professional image and now staff can be easily recognised. Customers can be reassured that they are receiving a first class service from fully-trained professionals."

Revenue & Customer Service Coordinator Kelly Moroney said feedback from staff had been really positive: "Staff have been involved at every stage, including design and selection of fabrics, some were hesitant at first but they are all happy with the new look."

New citizens call Richmond Valley home



SEVEN women, two girls and four men celebrated with friends and family after recently receiving certificates proclaiming their nationality from Richmond Valley Mayor Ernie Bennett. Our newest Aussies originally hailed from Ireland, Malaysia, Morocco, Philippines, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Mayor Bennett said it was heartening to see the number of people wanting to become Australian citizens and make the Richmond Valley their home.

Bypass action group looks at road ahead

WITH Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) plans well underway for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway, the communities of Broadwater, Coraki, Evans Head, New Italy, Riley's Hill and Woodburn are getting on the front foot with an action group being formed to prepare the towns for before, during and after the project is completed.

The group will work together with RMS and Council to build a vision for the future of the lower river towns and a strategy for implementation.

You can contact the group via President Brian Hall at bypassactiongroup@gmail.com

Smokers, businesses face hefty fines under new State law

FROM this week, smokers are no longer allowed to light up while seated at an outdoor eatery.

The new restriction, which falls under the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000, sees a blanket ban on smoking in seated outdoor dining areas where food is being served.

NSW Health authorised inspectors will be able to issue on-the-spot fines of \$300 for individuals and penalties of up to \$5500 for occupiers who ignore the ban.

The legislation will apply to all ignited smoking products, including cigarettes, cigars, pipes and water pipes.

Smoking will still be allowed in designated outdoor smoking areas, but that area could be moved if it falls within four metres of a dining area.

Know the rules outside schools



THE safety of our children is a priority for the entire community and this is why Council rangers regularly patrol school zones.

Children are vulnerable because of their unpredictability, their size and their inability to judge speed and distance. In fact, it is recommended a parent or adult hold the hand of children under the age of eight when crossing the road, in the carpark, or when walking on a footpath.

Parking offences in school zones carry heavy fines and the loss of demerit points. Remember, it is against the law to:

- stop and park in bus zones and 'No Stopping' zones
- double park
- stop longer than two minutes in a 'No Parking' zone
- stop on or within 20 metres of a pedestrian crossing or children's crossing

Our rangers do a great job trying to keep school zones safe but unfortunately some people can be unkind when they realise they have been caught doing the wrong thing. If you don't want to be fined, do the right thing!



John Walker
Chief Executive Officer

Challenges of change

IN past editions I have spoken about the future of Richmond Valley Council through the eyes of the Fit for the Future program. This seems to have taken centre stage, however, Richmond Valley Council started on the journey of rejuvenation and change well before the term was thought of.

In the three and a half years since I have been General Manager, I have, with the total support of the elected Council, been able to make many changes which have been necessary and have made a positive contribution to Council's financial sustainability and ability to deliver more of what the community wants and needs. I believe these changes have helped secure our future.

Change was absolutely necessary, and more change is necessary as we move forward. Council has to build on its capacity as an organisation to be flexible, better at what it does, more productive and competitive and stay true to its public service role.

As a progressive Council, we have to think and act more cooperatively and regionally. We need to be more innovative.

Our challenge is to focus on productive and positive change which delivers for our community.

Council needs to succeed in its broader economic development tasks, be well placed to contribute to the growth and prosperity of the Northern Rivers region, while being an effective partner for the State and Federal governments.

Because there is so much more to do the Council has offered me a new four-year contract from 1 July to lead the journey. This will provide stability, and allow the Council's plans to be delivered. It will also allow me to work with the entire organisation on succession and performance.

Council also changed my title from General Manager to Chief Executive Officer to reflect more accurately the role.

I am excited about the challenges ahead and hope the community will be too. Change is always with us and an organisation which doesn't change will die. I want Richmond Valley to be leaders of our patch and continue to advance.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON RICHMOND VALLEY'S FUTURE

BE involved in shaping the Richmond Valley by attending Council meetings. Business papers for all meetings are available from the Meetings page of www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au on Friday prior to the meeting.

Council's policy is to be inclusive; discussing issues together helps build trust and mutual respect, as well as offering the opportunity for differences to be aired directly.

Those who wish to address the Council on any listed matter, or ask a question, will be able to do so by submitting a request before 9.30am on the Monday prior to the meeting. The public sessions will be conducted at the start of the meeting. A time limit of five minutes per address will apply.



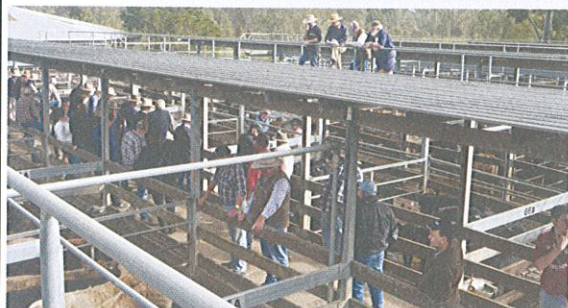
Next meeting dates:

Tuesday 21 July 5pm	Ordinary Council Meeting Chambers, Casino Administration Centre
Tuesday 18 August 5pm	Members of the public may apply to address Council on agenda items and/or ask questions. Please notify Council by 9.30am on the Monday prior to the meeting.
Tuesday 15 September 5pm	Email council@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au or call 6660 0300 to apply. All members of the public are welcome to observe proceedings during the meeting.

IN reviewing the 2013-2017 Delivery Program, a number of key initiatives have been identified which will en exciting projects including:

- ✓ construction of an indoor sports pavilion, a multi-sports venue which will become the hub for many and varied sporting and
 - ✓ the creation of a community amphitheatre between Queen Elizabeth Park and the riverbank to facilitate community events a
- It is sensible that we plan and invest now for the future of the Richmond Valley area. The amenities, infrastructure and project initi

Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange



Project value \$7 million

To develop and expand this regional facility, an \$7 million expenditure boost is required to roof part of the complex, address Workplace Health and Safety issues, improve environmental issues and animal welfare aspects and improve the operational efficiencies to ensure competitiveness and viability of this facility.

Nammoona Waste Management Facility & impound shelter improvements



Project value \$645,000

Ongoing improvements at the Nammoona facility include final capping of the existing landfill cells, improved equipment for managing leachate, and purchase of landfill lids which are used to cover areas of the landfill working face to meet EPA requirements.

Shade structure at Stan Payne Oval, Evans Head



Project value \$30,000

This project involves the construction of a shade structure over the existing children's playground adjacent to the Stan Payne Oval clubhouse.

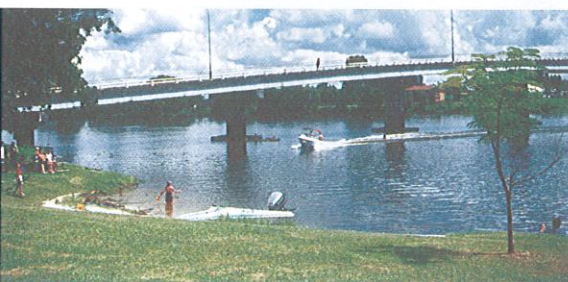
Casino Skate Park



Project value \$240,000

In response to requests from Casino's youth, Council is installing a skate park with bowl to extend the existing skating facility in Crawford Square. This is a significant project to support our young people.

Woodburn Riverfront



Project value \$500,000

Upgrade of the Woodburn riverside in conjunction with the highway bypass construction to create an attractive main street integrated with adjoining parkland.

ce the Richmond Valley area for all of our residents, existing and future. Among these are a number of

ation activities; ✓ the revitalisation of the Coraki and Woodburn foreshores;

ultural activities; ✓ the development of tourism, especially in the lower river area.

es included in the Delivery Program, as revised, will do just that, leaving a strong legacy for our community.

Coraki Riverfront Project



Project value \$355,000

Similar to the Woodburn Riverfront Project, Council and the community are looking at revitalising the Coraki foreshore with a major improvement program. The work involves the construction of pathways, playground equipment, foreshore and jetty improvements, biodiversity management projects and other amenities.

Casino Showground



Project value \$375,000

Council is working with users of the Casino Showground in undertaking maintenance and improvements to ensure its ongoing viability. Improvements are needed to fencing, toilet facilities, grandstand and canteen areas. A purpose-build Men's Shed will be constructed.

Rehabilitation/Reconstruction of Urban Roads



Project value \$2,236,088

Ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction of urban road network and completion of the implementation of Council's off-street car parking strategy with the construction of Little Walker Street, Simpson Parade, and Tattersals Hotel car parks.

Stan Payne Oval Tennis Courts Complex, Evans Head



Project value \$600,000

A four-court complex and club house will be constructed at the Stan Payne Oval to meet the needs of the tennis community.

Queen Elizabeth Park Rugby League Sports Pavilion



Project value \$150,000

Upgrading of the existing facilities at Queen Elizabeth Park comprising of the construction of a sports pavilion for rugby league.

Road crew 'best in the business'



RECENT evidence suggests Richmond Valley Council has bragging rights to being the best patching crew on the Northern Rivers by completing a small heavy patch in around two and a half hours. Work involved:

- Cutting the shoulder off; Hand spreading cement;
- Dry mix and compacting; Grading and watering;
- Wet mix and compacting; Grading and rolling; and Emulsion seal.

The result - a super smooth ride. With your eyes closed, you wouldn't even know you had driven over it. Lismore - eat your heart out!

THE first of many unsealed lane has now been sealed as part of the special rate variation. Council has committed to sealing at least one unsealed lane every year for the next 10 years, with Raphael Parade-Centre Street to Mortimer Lane the first one to be resealed. Work included:

- Cleaning out and reshaping all roadside table drains;
- Installation of a new concrete entrance crossing into the lane way;
- Overlaying the existing road surface with gravel to improve the shape;
- Strengthening the pavement by the addition of slag and lime; and
- Providing a two-coat hot bitumen seal.

Crew tackles vital UV reactor chamber

EVANS Head treatment plant operators recently conducted a strip-down and service of the ultra violet disinfection reactor chamber.

This unit is stripped down twice a year for inspection, cleaning and replacement of worn components.

The ultra violet reactor is essential for treatment of effluent before discharge to the environment.

Ultra violet light is effective in sterilising microbiological contaminants through disruption of DNA. In fact, no micro organisms are known to be immune to ultra violet light. It is effective against bacteria, mould, fungal spores, viruses and yeasts.

In the past, this would cost Council up to \$7000 per service. However, as part of Council's strategy to reduce reliance on contractors by directly employing more local people and building up plant and equipment stock, all servicing is now conducted in-house by our treatment plant operators.



A Council's work is never done!

CONSTRUCTION of the Casino Indoor Sports Centre is progressing well. Framing is now up and looking very impressive.

Due to the recent wet weather events, several days construction were lost, however, we are confident the contractors will be able to deliver the completed project on schedule.



CASINO Lawn Cemetery's front boundary fence was recently given a much-needed pressure clean as part of Council's Parks and Gardens scheduled maintenance.

The past few months of rain caused a build-up of moss which needed to be removed.



FOLLOWING feedback from the Evans Head school community and local residents, Council workers undertook the construction of the pedestrian refuge on Woodburn and Booyong streets. This refuge will alleviate safety concerns for those wishing to access Stan Payne Oval. This project forms part of the safety initiatives for the area, with further improvements planned over the coming months.



THE Woodburn Riverside Park toilet facility has undergone a refurbishment.

The facility had numerous graffiti attacks in the past and was well overdue for a face lift.

Riverside Park is a popular stop off point for travellers, and locals take advantage of the picnic facilities, beach and children's playground.



your services

Volunteering with a smile



Bev Davis is just one of the long standing volunteers who assist the Library each week. Bev delivers books to house-bound community members and to aged homes. If you know someone who would benefit from the Housebound Service because they are unable to visit the Library due to age, ill-health, accident, or loss of mobility, please contact the Library. This service can be utilised on a temporary or permanent basis as required. Items for loan include books, magazines, audio books, large print books, DVDs and music CDs.

Calling all snappers

DIGITAL PHOTO COMPETITION - The theme for our digital photo competition for the month of July is "The blue between sky and water". August theme is "Books light up our world".

To find out more about the competition rules and how to enter, email rurcrl@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au, send a private message on Facebook or call 6660 0250.

BOOKWORMS - Do you have a child who loves stories and craft? Then come to Bookworms! Story time sessions are held fortnightly and are available to children 3 to 5 years of age, and are free of charge.

Staff introduce children to the joys of literature and language through stories, poetry, puppets, songs and craft.

Bookings are essential so please either call in to the Library or phone staff to make a reservation. Places are limited so please call 6660 0250 to book.

New managers to help deliver outcomes

COUNCIL recently appointed two replacement managers in the Infrastructure and Environment directorate.

Andrew Leach is our new Manager Asset Planning and David Timms is Manager Infrastructure Services.

Andrew has extensive professional experience, having worked for 30 years in the Victorian local government sector, starting his career as an assistant surveyor. For more than 10 years he held senior management roles, his last being Director Asset and Development Services. Andrew's expertise and experience in asset management, infrastructure planning, long-term financial planning and project delivery will hold Andrew in high stead for his new role as these functions form the key focus areas of delivery for the position.

David comes to us from Central Queensland. He has more than 20 years experience in both the public and private sector, with six years local government experience as Director of Engineering. David is well qualified with degrees in engineering and spatial science, along with Masters in Project Management and Business Administration. David's practical approach, qualifications and experience are well suited to the position and will be extremely beneficial to the delivery of Council's capital and maintenance programs.

Name:	Andrew Leach
Position:	Manager Asset Planning
Responsibilities:	Capital works planning, asset information, facility management relationships



Name:	David Timms
Position:	Manager Infrastructure Services
Responsibilities:	Roadworks, water & sewer, open spaces, waste



What was your first impression of Council?	Friendly, intelligent, dedicated staff. People who are sure of their roles, and working well in them.	What was your first impression of Council?	Very positive. I formed the impression from examining Council's website and documentation that it was a progressive local government, engaging with its community.
What has surprised you most about working with Council?	The youth in workplace - a fantastic initiative which has multiple benefits, both short and long term.	What has surprised you most about working with Council?	The diversity of the people who work here and their commitment to their roles and achieving the goals of Council. There's a real passion exhibited by most staff to achieve.
What do you find most challenging about your job?	At present, learning who does what role and who is associated with what project. In the immediate future, settling the staff structure.	What do you find most challenging about your job?	Having come from a Queensland council, trying to get my head around how local governments operate in NSW and how it affects the role I fulfill.
What's the best/worst thing to happen since you started working here?	The willing assistance I have received from anybody I have asked. It's been really appreciated. The worst? - I'm still in the honeymoon period, so it's all been good.	What's the best/worst thing to happen since you started working here?	Being welcomed so warmly to the organisation and then hearing about all the 'problems' which need solving (but I love a challenge - so bring it on).
What do you wish other people knew about Council?	Just how much effort and detail goes on "behind the scenes" to ensure we meet our statutory responsibilities. Some people are quick to judge without knowing the full story.	What do you wish other people knew about Council?	How committed the majority of the staff are to making a real difference to the community they serve.
Tell me about some of the people you've met while working here?	There are a great mix of people within the staff - many different characters which creates a really interesting mix to work with.	Tell me about some of the people you've met while working here?	I'm working with a great bunch of people in the Infrastructure & Environment Department and they're all characters in one way or another!
What would you tell someone who is thinking about applying for a position with Council?	That it has great potential to take you anywhere - either within the organization or in broader local government. If you are keen to study and learn skills, RVC can offer you a rewarding career.	What would you tell someone who is thinking about applying for a position with Council?	Just do it! If you're looking for a change and appreciate contributing to a progressive Council then sign up.
How would someone describe you?	Good humored, not taking myself too seriously, a team player. But a really bad fisherman.	How would someone describe you?	Loyal, hardworking, honest, tough but fair.

YOUR Councillors work with community committees, community groups and individuals, as well as with their fellow Councillors, to represent the interests of the broader community, as well as assist the community with issues affecting them.

Councillors welcome enquiries into issues affecting Richmond Valley residents and ratepayers.

If you think a Councillor can be of assistance to you with Council matters, please do not hesitate to call or email.

	<p>Cr Ernie Bennett (Mayor)</p> <p>Phone: 0412 679 294</p> <p>Email: ernie.bennett@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au</p>
	<p>Cr Daniel Simpson (Deputy Mayor)</p> <p>Phone: 0406 420 020</p> <p>Email: daniel.simpson@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au</p>
	<p>Cr Robert Hayes</p> <p>Phone: 0415 620 220</p> <p>Email: robert.hayes@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au</p>
	<p>Cr Sandra Humphrys</p> <p>Phone: 0401 473 489</p> <p>Email: sandra.humphrys@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au</p>
	<p>Cr Stephen Morrissey</p> <p>Phone: 0412 491 981</p> <p>Email: stephen.morrissey@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au</p>
	<p>Cr Robert Mustow</p> <p>Phone: 0407 624 224</p> <p>Email: robert.mustow@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au</p>
	<p>Cr Col Sullivan OAM</p> <p>Phone: 0418 660 276</p> <p>Email: col.sullivan@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au</p>

your councillors

Richmond
Valley
Council



SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWSLETTERS

If you would like to stay up to date with all of the latest events and activities in the Richmond Valley, simply download a free QR code scanner for smart phones from your Apps store and scan the below QR code, or visit the Email Subscriptions page of www.richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au/page/Community_Services/Subscriptions_Email_SMS/Subscriptions/



You can sign up to these e-newsletters:

- Community
- Economy, events and tourism industry
- Developer news
- Have your say opportunities

Each month, you'll receive an email from us packed full of information on upcoming events, activities, Council services you might not know about, ways you can get involved and much more.

You can also find us on Facebook:

- /RichmondValleyCouncil
- /RichmondValleyAustraliaDay
- /Richmond-Upper-Clarence-Regional-Library

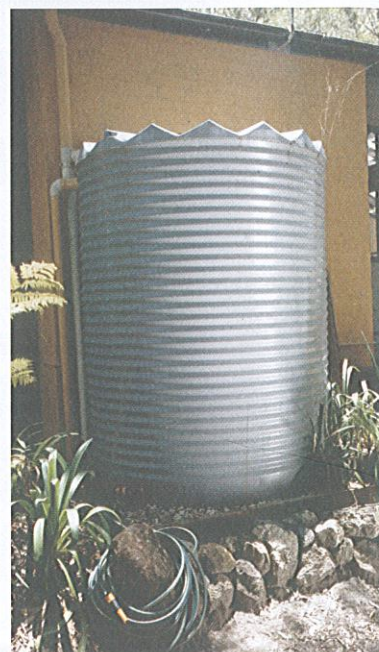
Increase to rainwater tank rebate

ELIGIBLE households may receive up to \$2170 for the purchase and installation of a rainwater tank, thanks to an increase in Rous Water's Residential Rainwater Tank Rebate Program.

New rebates for tanks purchased and installed from 1 April 2015 include up to \$1000 for a rainwater tank, depending on volume, with an additional \$620 rebate if the tank is internally connected to toilets, and \$550 if the tank is connected to the laundry.

The rebates are available to homeowners or managing agents with property currently connected to the town water supply in the Richmond Valley local government areas. Tanks installed to comply with BASIX are not eligible for a rebate.

For more information about the Rous Water Rebate Program, including terms and conditions, visit www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au or call 6621 8055.



Residents' feedback sought on new waste strategy

RESIDENTS are invited to participate in a short survey on waste management and waste services in the Richmond Valley.

The information you provide will be valuable in the development of a new Waste Strategy.

We want to progress to being a leader in local government waste management and set the standard for the region. This can be achieved with a vision shaped by community feedback and Council's desire to challenge the status quo of waste management practices.

Please tell us what you think by going to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PJ7K5K6>



THREE new retractable tarp covers were recently fitted to Council's skip bins. The retractable tarps are hand operated by chain drive and had an instant impact by reducing litter blow and loss in transport. Materials are kept dry, reducing leachate flows from wet products, and will assist in reducing rusting and corrosion. Our operators are happy with the new implementation and advise the retractable covers are easy to operate.

Specialist alarms available for residents who are deaf, hard of hearing

IS your home smoke alarm enough to wake you up in the event of a house fire? Did you know specialist alarms that include a strobe light and pillow shaker are available for those who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing? A joint initiative between the Deaf Society of NSW and Fire & Rescue NSW lowers the cost of one of these alarms from \$500 to a much more affordable \$20. Check out their video for more information on how to apply: <http://bit.ly/1wzOhLy> If you live in NSW and experience severe to profound hearing loss or know someone who does, apply to receive a subsidised alarm by contacting the Deaf Society of NSW at www.deafsocietynsw.org.au.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact the Deaf Society of NSW at:
(ph) 8833 3600
(TTY) 8833 3691
(email) smokealarms@deafsociety.com

Richmond
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