

LG Submission Form 2020-2021

Submission date: 1 March 2020, 3:01PM

Receipt number: 143

Related form version: 10

Question	Response
IPART Special Variation Submission Form	
Industry	Local Government
Review	(LG) Special Variations & Minimum Rates 2020-2021
Document Reference	
Select Council	Lismore City Council
If you have any general feedback regarding your council's proposed SV, please leave your comments in the comment box below.	I believe the Special Rate Variation is unnecessary and that Council has not adequately made the community aware of the basis of their plans. They have also not demonstrated the need for higher increases to charges and that the impact on ratepayers will be reasonable. They have not prepared nor communicated to the community a sustainable financing strategy or a history of well-documented council productivity improvements. In my opinion I do not believe that the Council is competent to manage its financial affairs. As a rural landholder I am already paying rates and charges for services I do not receive and believe it is unfair that I be required to fund CBD and riverbank restoration and subsidise CBD business rental of 'for profit' businesses. I oppose the Special Rate Variation and also want to point out that the proposal to increase rates comes at a time when we can least afford it on the back of drought, fire and flood.

Your comments on Criterion 1:	<p>Council's IP&R documents do not reflect criteria 1. In addition, no information has been communicated to the community about alternate options to the Special Rate Variation. As it is, levels and standard of service have dropped without consultation with the community. A heavy reliance is on outsourced service providers and consultants. This approach is expensive and depends on proper and effective internal controls, management and accountability to ensure value for money and guarantee quality of workmanship and service. The quality of service is inconsistent. Council has to be aware that ratepayers in the local government area vary dramatically in age and financial position. I feel like Council is responding to the wishes of the vocal minority in terms of its decision making and investment. The governing body of Councillors is dysfunctional and driven entirely by self interest and political party influence. This is not what local government is about. The decision for a Special Rate Variation is not representative of community need. The Council completely ignored the feedback from the community survey worth upwards of \$100K. As far as I am aware no information or advertising has been provided in relation to alternative resourcing options.</p>
Your comments on Criterion 2:	<p>I do not believe that Council has actively or effectively communicated the need and extent of the rate rise. For example, although the rise is 24% cumulative over four years, CPI has not been factored in for those four years (adding CPI across four years would be an addition 12% or thereabouts). Furthermore, there has been no transparency around the fact that ordinary fees and charges, like the waste minimisation levy, will increase on top of the Special Rate Variation. Furthermore, as a rural landholder we are also subject to the biodiversity management strategy levy - which not all ratepayers must pay. So Council absolutely has not made clear the full extent of the impact of rate rise having regard to the broader cost to individual ratepayers.</p> <p>Council should have advised individual ratepayers of the precise impact for each of them - not in general terms.</p>

Your comments on Criterion 3:	<p>Council has not adequately explained and made clear the impact on affected ratepayers. The impact is unreasonable, having regard to both the current rate levels, existing ratepayer base and the proposed purpose of the variation. The impact of the drought has been devastating and as a ratepayer I am confronted by little income for at least 12months. Council may have performed a desktop calculation to determine across general categories what the impact of the Special Rate Variation may be, but no consideration has been given to the social and human impact of affordability and capacity to pay. Also, it is unclear what assumptions Council used when it calculated the anticipated \$ impact on the various categories of ratepayers. Did they consider and factor in the socio-economic position of the local government area and its ratepayers? Overall, I believe that the information provided that the cost will be 25c/week is misleading - I do not believe this will be the impact for rural landholders.</p>
Your comments on Criterion 4:	<p>The information that I am aware of was in the form of an addendum to the IP&R. I understand that some information was made available to view at the Council Chambers but I live 30minutes away. If genuine public consultation was intended then more options should have been available to ensure accessibility to information.</p>

Your comments on Criterion 5:	<p>Council has not adequately explained the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies realised in past years, and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Interesting that amidst the Special Rate Variation proposal Councillors vote to provide themselves with a pay rise.</p> <p>It is inconceivable that only a few years ago Lismore City Council was assessed by the State Government as Fit for the Future - and now ratepayers are confronted with the proposition of a 24%+ rate increase. The State Government should intervene and appoint an administrator. Lismore is already the most expensive local government area on the North Coast - just look at the price of water (by comparison to Ballina, Byron, Richmond Valley) - ratepayers can not sustain any further cost pressures, particularly when there is no evidence of effective change and cost saving occurring by management and Council.</p> <p>I feel like I am being unfairly discriminated against financially and I do not believe that I should have to subsidise 'for profit' businesses in the CBD and also bear the impact of Council's incompetent management and Councillor decision making.</p>
If you have attachments you would like to include with your feedback, please attach them below.	
Your Details	
Are you an individual or organisation?	Individual
If you would like your submission or your name to remain confidential please indicate below.	Anonymous - my submission can be published but my name should remain anonymous
First Name	
Last Name	
Organisation Name	
Position	
Email	
IPART's Submission Policy	I have read & accept IPART's Submission Policy