

16/3/15

I am writing in support of the Special Rate Variation sought by Ashfield Municipal Council.

I believe that the rate increase is modest, very much justified, and generally supported by most residents. I believe that prior to Council making the decision to ask for a special rate variation, Council undertook conducted quite an extensive information campaign. I remember receiving a leaflet in my letterbox, saw notices in the local paper, and reading newspaper comments. I also saw signs and banners erected throughout the municipality, indicating where people could get more information. There was plenty of time for people to become informed of the matter, and plenty of time and opportunity for people to express their view.

By chance, I also happened to be at Council when the issue of the rate variation was discussed. I listened with great interest to the views being put forward, both by residents and Councillors. I did not speak on the matter. I wish I had. At that Council meeting, I learnt a lot about the reasons for why a special rate variation was being requested. I heard discussed why extensive repair of the Ashfield pool was required. Why special funds were required to better provide the infrastructure needed in our local area. I learnt a lot about Council finances and how they are managed. I also heard some residents express their fears about the need for this special rate variation. I was quite impressed by the information provided to residents by Council at this meeting; and the patience of Councillors and Officers to listen and respond to residents' fears and concerns. Many residents had been clearly misinformed prior to the meeting. I noted that many resident opposed to the rate increase, seemed to do so on the basis of alarmist, and completely unauthorised leaflets and posters, which appeared literally overnight in my letterbox and street. In fact, when I first saw these, I was also worried about what Council might be up to. So it was good, to have been at the Council meeting when the matter was actually discussed. I got to hear community concerns, but then also got to hear the facts of what was proposed.

I came away from that Council meeting feeling confident Council had made a reasonable decision to apply for a special rate variation. I understood that measures were being taken to ensure that those residents who may experience some financial hardship had avenues for exemption. I had no concerns that Council was being financially mismanaged.

I believe that whilst rate increases are not always liked, that sometimes they are reluctantly needed in order remedy ageing facilities, and to ensure the good provision of local services and facilities. (For many years I lived in a company titled residential building. There was always an issue of how to financially maintain our building's upkeep. There were always residents who did not want to pay and provide for the current and future maintenance of our building. And when maintenance funds were not topped up, and our building was actually in disrepair, these were often the same people who would object to the special levies now needed to remedy the disrepair. I think that what we are facing in Ashfield is a similar situation.) I think there are some Ashfield residents who want services and facilities, but aren't willing to pay for them. Or rather, want others to pay for them, as they need them. There may be hardship for some with a special rate variation, but it seems that Council has made provision for

that by staggering and making special provisions. I want my local area to be well managed financially, and for there to be the funds available to make good the pool repairs and upgrade, and for there to be sufficient money available for other infrastructure requirements. I support Ashfield Councils request for a special rate variation.

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