

LG Submission Form 2020-2021

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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.	There is no need to increase the Lismore Rates. Better resource planning and decisions can resolve majority of issues.
Your comments on Criterion 1:	<p>Council may require additional funding to cover the rising costs of infrastructure maintenance and staff wages, etc, however this seems to be a direct result of many poor decisions over an extended period of time.</p> <p>Inherited financial deficits have caused issues, however poor planning has put added pressure on the budget. The addition of two more Executive Managers has increased the wage bill again. Staffing seems to be at a much higher level than neighbouring councils, which have similar sized regions to manage.</p> <p>The introduction of the Goonellabah Sports & Aquatic Centre, despite already having the poorly maintained Lismore Memorial Baths was a poor decision. The income generated by the GSAC was overstated and it has become a financial burden on rate payers, with most families hesitant to pay the entry fees.</p> <p>Similarly the construction of the Lismore Regional Art Gallery was at great expense, and again the income generated has been overstated. Although the gallery does provide a good community service, it does not generating the influx of visitors to the area</p>

that was forecast. The sale of the old art gallery building was also meant to generate funds, however the council has not followed through with the sale and instead ratepayer funds are still being used to maintain both buildings.

I know a few people who have worked in sub-contract roles for the council on projects such as footpaths, road maintenance, plumbing, etc. They have conveyed their sheer astonishment at the complete waste of resources and poor planning, which led to more expense. Often the works were not constructed for longevity and consequently a number of months later the projects would have to be repaired or demolished and rebuilt.

First-hand I have witnessed an underground water pipe which was repaired on many many occasions last year. Every few months water would spurt from the ground and rapidly flood nearby houses. Emergency contractors would be deployed to try to fix the pipe. Traffic controllers, backhoe drivers, plumbers, road repairers, etc would all turn up on each occasion and they would joke to the residents that they are just doing another 'band aid repair', and that they would likely be back next month. The loss of water during a time of drought and with water restrictions in place was not taken lightly by the local residents. The cost to replace that section of pipe would have been much less than the expense of continued repairs.

There are so many examples of mis-management of funds.

Properly managed, the current rates are more than adequate for our region. Residents should not have to bear the financial burden of waste and poor plans of our local council.

Your comments on Criterion 2:	<p>Initially the community was not very aware of the potential rate increases. The methods used to convey the message was not effective enough to register amongst the general population. Later, after some complaints, a broader awareness seemed to be achieved. Polls run by the council and by local news organisations eventually generated some feedback. Overwhelmingly the results showed that the community did NOT want this rate increase. In fact, many people have expressed their discontentment with the current council and their proposed rate rise to me... Consequently it has caused me to write this submission.</p> <p>Despite councils supposed need for increased rates, it seems most are not convinced. The past has shown that previous rate increases were wasted and not effectively distributed to key maintenance projects.</p> <p>The proposed rate increases have been published however the full cumulative increase has not been clearly explained to the average ratepayer. Some creative wording around 'average rates' does not seem to reflect the typical ratepayers housing block. Also trickery around whether councils examples include or exclude the standard rate peg leads to some obscurity. The new NSW land valuation also adds to the complexity and this has not been clearly taken into account.</p>
Your comments on Criterion 3:	<p>The rate increases being requested in the current application are well and truly excessive.</p> <p>Wage growth in the Lismore area has stifled and costs of living have increased. On top of these increasing pressures, Lismore rate payers are still dealing with the huge impact of the devastating 2017 floods. Rebuilding, major cleanups, replacing water damaged possessions, while sustaining huge job losses due to business closures... The recent bush fires have affected our region and many residents are barely surviving.</p> <p>The impact of any rate increase, especially such a significant increase as outlined in the SRV application, would be the final straw for many many ratepayers.</p>

Your comments on Criterion 4:	Conjecture surrounds the timing of the council meetings which voted on the SRV. It appears that key councillors who seemed to express a certain view were not present. Later the decision was objected and a repeal motion raised. Even this week, the local media was not convinced that due process was followed, which led to the SRV application.
Your comments on Criterion 5:	-
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
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IPART's Submission Policy	I have read & accept IPART's Submission Policy