

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.	The Council has a history of making poor decisions with regards to financial decisions and not listening to feedback from the community. Consequently, the Council has only just staved off being declared bankrupt, despite years and years of top of the range rate increases. Increasing the rates by a huge 24% over the next 4 years, way over the rate of inflation, is only going to further stress a community already hard hit by bushfires and floods. The community has relayed this back to the council via community surveys, but this feedback was totally ignored. The first survey gave the Council a resounding, 'No,' as to whether the community thought this plan for a rate rise was what they wanted. This result was ignored, as the Council continued with its plan for the increase. A second survey was commissioned and carried out. Unfortunately the results of this survey was never made public. If nothing else this action demonstrates how the Council wastes money. Why commission a survey, let alone two, if you have no intention of listening to the results?

Your comments on Criterion 1:	<p>In order to fulfil part of this requirement the Council commissioned a survey to ascertain the level of support an increase of this level would receive. The results showed unequivocally that the community did not support such an increase, to the contrary the majority of those surveyed did not think that the community could withstand such an increase without many ratepayers suffering substantial financial hardship. Instead of listening to this feedback, which was published, the Council ignored it and commissioned a second survey. The results of which have never been published.</p> <p>This is a rural area where many businesses are only just managing to keep their heads above water. A rise of this amount would increase the already high rate of businesses foreclosing. Higher rates means higher rents, which means more businesses, who were previously just managing, go under. The truth of this statement can be seen by a simple walk around the CBD. Yes, a lot of businesses went under because of a recent flood. However, even at that time there were many empty shops. The current financial situation has only exacerbated this. A huge rate hike will make business in the CBD unaffordable by all but the banks!</p> <p>Many families in this area are also struggling financially. When businesses close more jobs are lost to an area which already has a high level of unemployment.</p>
Your comments on Criterion 2:	<p>The full cumulative increase of the proposed SV was only fully made clear by a very committed Ratepayers Association. The Council was very careful about what parts of the SV was published. It was very good at pushing all the wonderful things this money would allow the Council to do and very reticent about clarifying exactly what this meant in real dollar terms to the individual rate payer. The total percentage of increase was very much downplayed and well hidden amongst all the wonderful things the Council was going to do with this increase.</p>

Your comments on Criterion 3:	Ratepayers within the Lismore City Council area have put up with years of top of the range rate increases. Many above the rate of inflation. This has already had a negative impact on the community, which as previously stated is not a wealthy cohort. Lismore rates are already one of the highest in NSW, given that this is one of the poorest regions in the state, a huge increase as proposed, seems anything but reasonable.
Your comments on Criterion 4:	This may have been done, but given that the first community survey about the SV showed that the majority of responders to the survey were not in favour of the increase the real question is should they have gone ahead anyway? The bottom line is in all probability, because the Council narrowly avoided being declared bankrupt, they felt they had no other option. Given this information, the question then should probably be, as the council has one of the highest rates in NSW and still managed to only just avoid bankruptcy should not a full audit and financial guidance on how to manage the money they already have, be a more fiscally responsible response to this request? Maybe instead of spending money on two community surveys on this issue and ignoring the results, the Council should have spent the money on obtaining assistance on how to responsibly manage a council budget?
Your comments on Criterion 5:	I have seen these sort of facts, statistics and proposals for many years from this Council and it has always resulted in a large increase in rates the following year and a further increase in the amount of debt the Council is in. Why would this year be any different? Why would the Council abide by these documents this year when they haven't before?
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