Hawkesbury City Council has been forced into the position of requiring a Special Rate Variation but the process has been drawn out by avoidance over the last 10 years due to political control of the elected Council. In 2016, this control was removed by the electorate voting in 5 independent candidates, who are solely responsible to the community, and together with the 2 Labor Party members and the Greens party councillor, they have endeavoured to overcome many of the bad management practices entrenched ██████████████████████████████████████
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In 2015, the then Liberal Mayor even stated that the required SRV should be left to the "new council" after the upcoming election to deal with. That is exactly what they have done – together with removing the subsidisation of the rural residential sub-category by the residential ratepayers in the process so that all residential rates are determined on the same basis.

To determine what the majority of ratepayers in the Hawkesbury wanted, the council has undertaken a program of consultation on a level never seen beofre. It is noted in the agenda for the January 30, 2018 meeting that the consultation included:

- a mail out information package and reply paid survey
- regular updates on community newsletters
- facts sheets
- media releases
- online survey
- two statistically valid telephone surveys
- information in Mayoral Columns
- Facebook posts on the 'Hawkesbury Events' Facebook page
- 26 town meetings
- PowerPoint presentations at town meetings
- 25 listening and information kiosks at shopping centres and markets
- targeted engagement with young people
- drop in information sessions
- public exhibition of key documents and calls for submissions
- website updates on Council's online engagement portal
- information in rates notices
- displays at Library, Council Offices and community centres.

The proposal for a SRV has also been regularly featured in the Hawkesbury Gazette in its print version as well as the paper's Facebook page.

Having attended several of the town meetings and read the documentation thoroughly, I can only commend the council and staff for the work they have done in not only trying to improve efficiencies, but to inform the public of the options available, what the increased revenue is to be spent on, and the reasons behind the need to apply for the SRV. From my experience, the overwhelming majority of residents wish to at least maintain the current levels of service but support the investment in infrastructure, including addressing the existing backlog. In general, the preference of those I spoke with was to increase spending on roads, pathways and parks to bring these assets up to a modern level. None of this is possible without an SRV due to the size of the geographic area to be maintained as compared to the limited ratepayer base.

Nobody wants to pay more than they need to, but with the limited base we have to pay more in order to get what the community wants.

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████████████████████████████████████ Not surprisingly, the main beneficiaries of this method

are the property owners in Oakville which had their properties revalued by upwards of 300% in the 2016 valuation. The losers under his proposal are the far greater majority of Hawkesbury residents with average or below average property values, who would be forced to pay substantially more to subsidise the reduction in rates calculated on the high value properties. ████████████████████ ██ ██ ████████████

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Council has done everything in its power to implement measures to achieve the Fit For The Future benchmarks, but can not achieve this in the required timeframe without the SRV. The detailed Capital Works Programs for each district specify where the money is required to be spent, the community consultation indicated that the preferred option was to Improve our assets and services, and the final piece of the puzzle is to obtain the SRV to allow this to happen.

I fully support the application of the Council for the SRV and hope that the Tribunal will agree that this is the only viable option and approve the application in full.