

In response to Bellingen Shire Council's current Application for a Rate Variation Increase of 6%, I would implore you to consider that 55% of our residents are on fixed incomes, comprising young families, the elderly, the disabled and the unemployed. I myself am a pensioner and already finding it difficult to pay our Council rates, which have already be increased several times over the past couple of years.

A couple of years ago our Council deliberately redirected the F A G component of their budget away from fixing roads and bridges to pay for the unnecessary Raleigh Works Depot upgrade (2010/11 to 2013/14 financial plan). At this time there were also expensive Council Chamber upgrades which left a huge backlog on road and bridge infrastructure work, projected to have a 20 year impact. This backlog has now been unfairly passed on to the ratepayers through Special Rate Variations.

At the time the Bellingen Shire Council was deemed UNFIT and their solution was to impose unfair rate rises onto our community. It would have been sensible to reduce the size of council administration staff and increase the numbers of outside staff who work on our roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

My fear also, now and into the future, is that our land will also increase in value, owing to the ever increasing cost of living and increasing prices of homes and land in our Shire, which of course will mean the proposed rate increases will be even higher. What happens to an entire community who will not be able to afford to pay these rates?

Meanwhile we have our General Manager and her two Assistant General Managers, who deplete our Council's budget by being paid \$600,000 between them per year. Is this fair when our neighbouring Councils of Coffs Harbour and Nambucca Shire have a General Manager who does not need two deputies even though they each have far more ratepayers than Bellingen Shire.

Apparently, if this new set of rate variation increases goes ahead the 6%, compounding over three years will become 19.1 %. This would be absolutely impossible for our community to deal with. There will be a lot more homeless people in our Shire if this goes ahead.

I implore you, please do not allow this to go through.

Yours Sincerely

