

From: Bernadette Trela [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 11 March 2016 12:43 PM
To: IPART Mailbox
Subject: Clarence Valley Council proposed rate increase!

To IPART

I am one of many very concerned residents of Grafton NSW.

The Clarence Valley Council proposed rate increases are disproportionate and simply impossible for many people already struggling in this low socio economic area!

Unemployment is high, the population is ageing and people are generally feeling very despondent and frustrated with the CVC! I am new to the area and very concerned by the plight of rate payers in the area.

There is also a very obvious lack of open communication and transparency in the CVC culture which needs to be opened up and addressed by CVC and its community!

I am emailing you to express my genuine concerns and the need for intervention and a more constructive informed approach to improve the state of a council already deemed unfit!

I have also emailed this submission from John Hagger to stress other points.

The community of Grafton would appreciate your support in addressing and considering this urgent matter

Warm Regards Bernadette Trela

Submission to IPART with regard to Clarence Valley Council's SRV

Council's SRV is way too high. Even over 5 years, a 37% increase represents a crippling blow to a small rural area with a very low SEIFA index who already are in the 1/3rd highest of All NSW Councils when it comes to Average Residential Rates.

Most of the people pushing this huge SRV increase have annual incomes in excess of \$100,000.00 per year. In fact the Council Directors and General Manager All have incomes in excess of \$200,000.00 per year.

From their personal point of view, this probably does represent an affordable and acceptable means for balancing Council's books.

What they have little understanding of, are the difficulties of life faced by People on 15 to 30 thousand dollars a year which is the everyday reality for approximately half of the local population.

Council could have sold unused assets to make up far more money than the SRV will provide. The former Deputy Mayor, Andrew Baker, researched such a proposal for \$40,000,000.00 of such assets late last year. Only 4 Councillors voted for it. There was Not even an adoption of an intent to further investigate the proposal.

What Council have proposed instead is the 37% Rates Rise Plus a 53.7% Increase in their Revenue from User Charges and Fees over the next 5 years, Plus a reduction in services (which they have yet to advise which ones), Plus increases in efficiencies (to quote from the GM at that Council Meeting: “Council have not previously had efficiency savings because Council has Not asked for them!!!”), Plus, at least, 5 Million Dollars in Asset Sales (with No upper limit imposed) where ALL the Proceeds will go to Council’s proposed new Depot construction.

To claim that Our Council appear to have taken the easiest route and have not sufficiently explored alternatives is an understatement.

Such lazy thinking probably underscores Councils extreme \$150,000,000.00 debt and their decision to adopt ‘generational’ and ‘interest only payment’ loans.

It should also be noted that even with Council’s adoption of the SRV, they would still NOT be fit for the future. This is admitted in Councils own documents and has been mentioned at Council Meetings.

Our Council needs to learn to live within its means.

Slugging local residents with ever higher taxes is ruining our local economy and encouraging Our Council to build ever more monuments that We, the People who live here, neither want or need.

Only IPART now have the ability to stop this terrible imposition on Our Local People. Please do so.

John Hagger

From: Bernadette Trela [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 11 March 2016 12:56 PM
To: IPART Mailbox
Subject: Important Points regarding our concerns for the Community in the hands of Clarence Valley Council!

I am concerned with the financial impacts this mismanaged Council will have on a low socio economic community !

Councils ongoing mismanagement and recent submission of a 37% SRV will bring further poverty to families and children. The social ramifications of increased poverty bring community increases in crime and other social problems as people endeavour to survive on very little.

I understand that Council is a business that is run for the betterment of the community and are supposed to listen to their constituents. This is not happening, and it would appear that they operate as a law unto themselves, with little regard with whom they are serving.

The debt that this Council has incurred and the relevant backlash to residents insofar as increased costs and debts, will have a detrimental impact on a good majority of the people who live here.

Prior to amalgamation with Grafton City Council, Maclean Council was in a very healthy financial situation and should have been left as a stand alone Council. This, however, is my own personal opinion.

Council documents and minutes of their meetings can be accessed online at their website.

I list below my understanding of the Clarence Valley Councils workings over the last 10 years.

1. Lead us into \$70M dollars debt, and owe the now failed European Bank, Dexia Clarence Valley Councils total debt is in the vicinity of \$150M.

2. Ignored public requests in regard to McLachlan Park in Maclean and wasted \$250K.

3. Council wants to build an industrial depot in a residential area and processed the Development Application during the school holidays when a good majority of the local ratepayers were away. There has been little, if any, public consultation for this depot with residents in the same street, not aware of the project, let alone the traffic increase, lack of parking, noise, nocturnal lighting etc. Council is also proposing to approve its own D. A. this proposition is opposite an already busy State Public School. It has also come to light, that this proposed site is also on an asbestos dump site which is currently under investigation.

4. There is uncertainty with the cost of this 'Super Depot'.

5. Council dismantled the Award Winning Tourism Association in favour of the contentious hand picked one by councillors. This area thrives on Tourism, and it would seem (to the writer) suicidal to axe this program.

6. Attempted to silence the public with an unjust petition policy.

7. Has so many "commercial in confidence" (secret) deals, including where advertising monies are being spent; Council legal fees; and the mismanagement of our drinking water.

8. Misleading the public into believing that the proposed SRV, was the price of a cup of coffee. The fact now being that Clarence Valley has just passed a resolution to go ahead with a 37% increase. Nominated by the Mayor, Richard Williamson. Craig Howe seconded the motion. For: Williamson: Howe: Lysaught: Hughes: Kingsley: Against: Baker: McKenna: Simmons: Toms:

9. Attempting to sell off assets in a fire sale in an attempt to recoup their finances to cover the huge debt this Council has incurred.

10. Completing invalid surveys and making decision based on them.

11. Attempting to process an unprecedented and exponential rate rise. This rate rise will bring further disparity between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' . It will rise further poverty in the area and cause undue stress to those that can least afford it.

Thank you for taking time to read this application.

Yours truly,