

**From:** Christine Martin  
**To:** [Local Government Mailbox](#)  
**Subject:** Clarence Valley Council: application for Minimum Rate Increase  
**Date:** Friday, 6 April 2018 9:55:08 PM

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Submission to IPART

With reference to the Clarence Valley Council's application for a permanent increase in Minimum Rates,

I do not support the application for permanent increase in the Minimum Rates for the following reasons,

1. I believe that there has been a lot of confusion between SRV and Minimum Rates Variation, Council did minimal amount of consultation on the SRV but an application for an increase Minimum Rates was not mentioned during the consultation process. I believe the ratepayers thought they were one and the same.
2. We are one of the lowest socioeconomic areas in NSW, 30.6% have a weekly wage of less than \$650.00, NSW average was 19.7% and Australia 20%. 5.2% of local ratepayers have a weekly income of more than \$3000.00, NSW average 18.7%, Australia 16.4% according to the latest statistics provided by the ABS 2016 census. 1 in 3 households in the Valley exist on a average weekly wage of less than \$650.00, and only 1 in 20 households in the Valley on more than \$3000.00 per week. As is obvious the Clarence Valley is one of the most disadvantage in Australia.
3. We have one of the highest unemployment rates in the state. People cannot sustain further rate rises. This is also seen in the number of houses that are in arrears in rates and are now going to auction. This increase will impact on some of the poorest household in the Valley. We have disproportionately a high number of aged resident approximately 1 in 5 households are older retired people largely dependent on the pension to survive.
4. We have the 6<sup>th</sup> highest and 2<sup>nd</sup> highest growing youth unemployment in Australia. (Brotherhood of St Laurence)
5. Council has applied to increase in the minimum rates for Residential Rural and Residential A Coastal Villages. With a total of 26,176 rateable properties in the Valley, Council intend to increase the rates on 10,018 properties, or 38.27% of rateable properties. These are properties located outside a 25Klm radius of residential urban areas of Grafton, South Grafton, Maclean, Yamba and Townsend. Council has attacked the services supplied to the more rural areas of the Valley, the closure of the Ulmarra pool and other regional pools, threatened closure of mobile libraries, once again servicing outer regions of the Valley, people in these outside areas have a right to these services, for their mental and physical health, many live on a government subsidised income and the cost of fuel to get to Grafton is very prohibitive. These increases and or closure in facilities and reduction in services all point to a local economy in crisis. It is an interesting fact that majority of Councillors live in Residential Urban areas.
6. Council has increased service availability costs over this last year, and reduced services to the more rural areas of the Valley, these areas do not have sewerage, storm water,

effective safe street lighting, clean drinking water, yet will if this is granted pay more for less or no services that Residential Urban ratepayers take for granted. I am sure council will continue to implement increases each year, as these increases are not subject to IPART approval.

7. Council has not taken note of their spending in areas like the super-depot, Council was told prior to signing contracts that the area was a council dump area including the disposal of asbestos, they made a cursory attempt at testing, then used those findings to sign contracts, now we have a \$7M plus blow out in costs and the backup contingency funding is almost exhausted. They have failed to take advantage of Government subsidies to upgrade the local Maclean Showground, due to the failure to submit paperwork on time. These failures point to a council that has little knowledge of priorities.
8. Council has failed to address cost savings that were noted in their last failed submission for a SRV, in the areas of FTE, we still employ approximately 600 people, Council boasts reductions but the next week we see more positions advertised, in effect cancelling the staff reductions. Councillor expenses have increased over the last 12 months. Council cannot show that they have made any reasonable attempt to save money.
9. This increase in minimum rates and the associated SRV submission will have the greatest impact on those that can least afford it.

SO, NO I DO NOT SUPPORT COUNCILS APPLICATION FOR A MINIMUM RATES VARIATION, UNTIL COUNCIL DEMONSTRATES ITS COMMITMENT TO MAKING US FIT FOR THE FUTURE BY EXHIBITING ESSENTIAL SAVINGS AT COUNCIL LEVEL. AND A COMMITMENT TO US, THE RATEPAYERS, THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO BE AWARE OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE FINANCIAL SECURITY AND GROWTH OF OUR BEAUTIFUL AREA,

Yours sincerely

Christine Martin

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