

**From:** [IPART Mailbox](#)  
**To:** [Local Government Mailbox](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Special Rate Variation: Bellingen Council 2018/19.  
**Date:** Monday, March 12, 2018 3:06:16 PM

---

**From:** David Smith [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 12 March 2018 2:51 PM  
**To:** IPART Mailbox <ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Special Rate Variation: Bellingen Council 2018/19.

Dear Sirs/Madams,

I have today learned that I am able to protest an application for additional rate increases.

I wish to strongly disagree with the application from Bellingen Shire Council for 6% extra monies to be levied as rates over and above the existing varied rate, for each of the next three years.

**It is unreasonable for the following reasons:**

There are many grounds upon which to resist such an application. The major ones naturally include the socio- economic status of the residents of the area. Whilst it can be said the we, the ratepayers live in a beautiful area with masses of trees helping to keep us in clean air, the great majority of residents are not imported from the big cities, and are in fact in the local people of the lower socio-economic grouping. As such, each and every additional charge put upon them is just hurting them even more. I have read their application for the rate raise, and am not impressed simply because the whole document is laid out in complex jargon that the base ratepayer doesn't have a ghost of a chance to evaluate and adjudicate in his/her own right. It is an impossible situation.

Somewhat unreasonable I believe.

My main reasoning for the extra monies for the shire from the ratepayers is based upon personal perception. I am not privileged to have access to council actions and monies spent, and therefore cannot provide proven support. I think that I am most amazed by the fact that the Bellingen Shire council often achieve grant aid and IPART type increases, but their fiscal management is so poor that many of the supported tasks rarely are completed. We currently have such a case with the town beautification scheme, which we are told was totally funded by a grant. The state of this project is under three quarters completed, leaving one very huge mess, and dangerous situation for the public with its non-completion. Asking the council why brings no answers, however talking to one of gardeners attending the re-construction informs me that they have paid in excess of \$500.00 for each tree about 1.2mtrs high, which I know for fact should be enough money to cover six such trees. Why because they come from afar???

The safety lighting remains un-finished and by their record probably will be so for a very long time.

Some years ago, the council declared that the Council depot at Raleigh was inadequate and very unsafe. I was invited on a tour of inspection, and had to agree with these statements. I then set too and developed a submission myself which took many days to complete, but basically could have the satisfactory conclusion of being near financially neutral, being sited

on other council grounds and nearer to the main town. My submission was **ignored, without even the courtesy of a response, let alone being looked at.** Instead, the ratepayers have been saddled with \$10M loan to pay for the new gold plated council works buildings and site, still at Raleigh. The site was extremely difficult, being on collapsing ground, causing massive additional expenditure. **So in one easy step we went from financial neutrality (or near) to a \$10M overload for the ratepayers.**

Grossly unreasonable and unfair.

Another serious act of what can only be described as council abuse and including massive expenditure, was the matter of fluoridation of the water supplies in each of three areas.

Basically, **a referendum was held resulting in a 72% No factor** to fluoridation. The people were shunned and ignored, and the systems went ahead very rapidly post referendum. I believe it was a “fait de complis” before the referendum, because of the speed at which it was constructed.!!

This is not the behaviour one expects from good council acting responsibly to its shires needs.

As a businessman, this is intolerable, and basically sums up the council attitude to expenditure being a bottomless pit of money. Another example is to ask why does this small shire require a General Manager and two under managers??? Most ratepayers think this is intolerable and it causes wonderment. Is it true that the General Manager’s salary, as high as it is, is proportional to the number of employees, which incidentally over the years seems to be to the benefit of the administration rather than the outdoor working team.? If so, can we expect more and more employees.?

Why, when to cut the grass on the highway does it need five very expensive traffic controllers to be applied to the job. Shires north and south of us don’t use this amount of labour input. I ask simply “ am I missing something here”. To me there is an unhealthy aroma about some of the things the council do. These are but a small number of incidents that I see happening. It is regrettable that it is impossible to access “council goings on” to assess all that is going. I have felt for years that there ought to be some form of Ombudsman for the ratepayers to vet council projects and have the ability to act where the expenditure is unreasonable.

Another area of failing is works to prevent accidents. Vitrally important accident saving works they ignore. It is beyond my comprehension.

This “We and Thee” attitude does exist and doesn’t do them any justice.

My complaint is that it is my belief that this council is lacking in financial responsibility, and the only possible way out is to ask you to examine deeply their financial affairs, before approving any additional rate rise on top of the previous special variation, and assuring the ratepayers of the shire that any extra monies they achieve through your offices is spent correctly.

Yours truly.

David L Smith. [REDACTED]

David Smith