

I wish to make the following submission to the Greater Hume Shire Council application for a Rate Variation.

Introduction

Greater Hume Council is a geographically a large area with a relatively small rate base with many kilometres of roads, many unmade, to maintain.

With the Federal and State Governments withdrawing funding for roads and the fact that Greater Hume Council still need funds to maintain roads within the Shire I begrudgingly and reluctantly agreed to a rate variation.

However I have issues with some of the consultative processes and in particular the Community Engagement Materials Guide (Attachment 5a). I found the guide to be an emotive, obscure and confusing document.

Following an initial read I was left with the impression that the variation would be about 3%, that was until I spoke to Council Officials at Jindera when I realised that the variation would be about 7% on top of the normal rate rise.

I am concerned that if I found issues with the document, did other residents experience a similar problem, and if so, did they make a proper and informed decision to support the Rate Variation.

I made sure my views on the quality of Community Engagement Guide were made known to the Council officials when they came to Jindera for a Rate Variation meet and greet.

Rate Variation

Council documents indicate that if approved, the Rate Variation will cause an average rise of \$50.00 per rateable property.

Council documents have also clearly show that there is a wide disparity in land valuations across the various towns and villages and a few years ago Council moved from a differential rating structure to an Ad Valorum rate structure.

This wide disparity in land values combined with an Ad Valorum rating policy has led to inequitable and wide variations in total rate charges between towns and villages in the Shire.

Due to this disparity, a percentage rise will affect each town differently, so that even though an average \$50.00 increase sounds reasonable, the overall effect will be discriminatory as some towns will be paying a higher amount while other less.

Council has assessed that the percentage rise will increase rates by an average of \$50.00, to make the rate variation fair to all ratepayers, I believe a flat rate should be

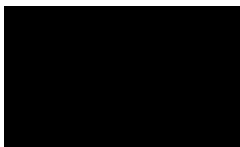
applied to all rateable properties. Based on the Shire's \$50.00 average analogy, a \$50.00 flat rate should have the same overall take as the percentage increase.

The consultative documents emphasise an average \$50.00 increase, I find it hard to believe that this average will remain constant over the three years and it may be that somewhere in the consultative documents there is detail on any increase. As I found the consultative document difficult to comprehend I gave up looking, but It would be logical to construe the \$50.00 amount would be for the first year only and that there would be an incremental average increase in subsequent years.

To allow for any subsequent yearly increase I believe the flat rate could be increased by say an extra \$5.00 or \$10.00 in each of the second and third year of the variation, so that in the third year the flat rate would be a maximum of \$70.00.

I believe that a percentage increase would be inequitable and discriminatory, I request that IPART reject the percentage rate increase and determine that, a flat rate increase \$50.00 in the first year with a subsequent small increase in each of the next two years, is the fairer and most equitable way of raising the funds requested by Greater Hume Shire.

Yours sincerely



Greg Finster
Jindera
Rate Payer and Resident
Greater Hume Shire
15 March 2015