

**From:** geoffleslie  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 27 February 2013 5:01 PM  
**To:** Bega Valley Shire Council; Department of Premier and Cabinet (Local Government); Merimbula News Weekly  
**Subject:** Bega Valley Shire Council Rate Rise

We have been residents of Merimbula for 10 years and our rates have continued to climb increasing from just over \$2,000 in the year to 30/06/2004 to just under \$3,200 in the current year.

This is an increase of over 50%. The sale value of our house has not increased by 50%. Recent local sales confirm this and in fact have gone backwards.

In this period, Council services have not increased by 50% but have clearly declined, evidenced by shoddy Council mowing of reserves and general maintenance in the area. In fact we have to put up with rabbits and african lovegrass coming from a Council reserve and these pests will not be controlled by Council despite numerous requests. There is clearly no firm supervision.

Of course our roads are poorly maintained and rough as well.

The problem with our roads is that they have not been built with proper foundations and they break down whenever it rains, meaning that the road patcher is used to just patch and patch regularly. An eyesore with faded un-roadworthy white lines and patch work!

We have driven on the roads and in the towns from North Queensland around to South Australia and without doubt our roads are clearly the worst. This is a disgraceful situation.

Now we are being asked to give more to fund improvements to the Merimbula Airport costing \$6m. and up to \$9m allowing for on-costs, and finance other follies which should be covered within general revenue.

Well, we are self-funded retirees having to exist on a reduced income from our investments, and we do not receive a pension or the side benefits that pensioners get including reduced Council rates.

The Council needs to understand that there is a breaking point, and we can not be expected to just keep on giving more and more money just to make up the shortfall created by wasteful use of rate-payers money, and grandiose plans for spending on projects which the majority of rate-payers do not use or want including Council Office renewal and Town Halls etc.

The Airport is such a case. The Council has a responsibility to look after roads, water, sewerage, rubbish collection, libraries and child care etc..

It should not be the responsibility of ratepayers to pay for the upgrade of the airport. This is a commercial undertaking and it should be self supporting. If it can not be self supporting then the Council should get rid of it. Other airports have been privatised and local councils are free of funding obligations. Failing that the State and Federal Governments should be approached for funding. It is a weak response from the Mayor to say that Federal funds were gained for the Eden Port and not sought for the airport. When is the next release of Federal funds? Could not State and Federal politicians be pushed for their support in this Federal Election year?

Privatisation of many of the Council activities should also be closely examined as many other Councils have done this to good effect.

We have to live within our means and should not be expected to continue funding a Council which can not live within it's means.

It is time for the highly paid executives on Council staff to start earning their salaries! ..... or take a pay cut!

Geoff & Elizabeth Leslie  
Merimbula.