

Submission against Mid Coast Council Special Rate Rise

Its on again, a Clayton's rate rise which is a rate rise when your not having a rate rise.

The recently forced amalgamated Mid Coast Council is applying for a special rate variation. This is a time when the previous Premier Mike Baird who was the architect of forced amalgamation promised no rate rise for 4 years. With currently on the NSW Government web site on forced amalgamation it still states no rate rise for 4 years. But through an MP at MCC insistence who was elected to look after the interests of the people that elected and pay his wages a bill was placed to Parliament to get a rate rises for MCC. So it appears that a politicians word isn't worth any thing let alone the Premier of the state word.

MCC have for about a year been trying to talk up a rate rise to the community and to date it's gone down like a lead balloon. No one wants it and to impose this on an area with the high unemployment/pensioner base and a low socio-economic population. Who can ill afford this rate rise on top of the upward cost of living with no increase in pensions or unemployment benefits.

The need for a rate rise is been blamed on the poor state and backlog of roads and bridges repairs across three old Shire Councils. But always think of who was in charge of those roads and bridge assets of ours that were let to fall into disrepair. Mr Glenn Handford (Interim General Manager MCC) who recently achieved 20 years of service to the former Great Lakes Shire Council was one of those who was in-charge of those assets. Yet now the call goes out for another special rate rise, but I would like to know what makes it so special. Is it the fact that once the special rate rise is in, it forms the new base of all future rates rises and never goes back. Or is it just a rate rise when your not really having a rate rise at all. But wait is it just a one off never to be seen again rise as the roads are all fixed and the bridges sparkle and the fairies live in the dell, I'm afraid not. I have attended many Community up date meetings and Councils members (Glenn Handford) have told us that the current road/ bridges backlog with out any extras will take generations to achieve a fix. So it won't be the current generation paying through a special rate rise that will see the benefit. But in about 30+ years maybe if nothing else happens the roads will indeed sparkle and bridges gleam but sadly all the fairies will have passed on waiting in vain for a pot hole or two to be fixed in their area.

We can all recall on the news recently a huge sink hole developed in a town in one of China's main streets. It was projected to take 5 days to fix but

went 6 days due to inclement weather. The Mayor apologised to the town and offered his resignation for failing to fix the problem in the promised time. In our area we also have a sink hole its called Local Government, we keep on throwing money at it with little hope of a return and definitely no apologies for bad service. While on the China subject last year an Australian Company won a major contract to construct, form and grade local roads to drive able condition. The Company had to guaranty 1 km of roadway per day. Yet in my home town of Wingham half a km of base stabilisation and re-asphalting road works in front of the skate park on Dennse St is projected to take 4 months. Our rate dollars in **fast and furious** action coming to a street near you god knows when.

Currently MCC is still in the throws of amalgamation and at 3 recent Community up date meeting we have been told of the struggle to bring it all together with computer integration issues, staffing levels and in-antiquate office space for that staff. So while all this is happening MCC have decided to apply for and take over Mid Coast Water and all its staff and assets which currently is a world class operation on its own. To integrate the two facilities of MCC with Mid Coast Water will be another daunting task when one isn't even finalised yet. The interim general manager Mr Glenn Handford has also broached the idea of bring the two utilities under one roof and he has indicated the old Taree Masters site as his preferred area. This is a site that cost 13.5 million to build and I guess the current owner would want a good return on his investment, so tell me where was that special rate rise for roads going again? But I'm not all negative to Council and would like to apply for a special job at Masters site which had only 4 toilets in it and with 700+ staff coming I would like to be the seller of Lottery tickets for who's next, I could make a good quid out of that.

It could be seen as it's all about Empire building on the part of MCC with a Special Rate rise to Councils coffers and Councillors profiles. Rates and cost of living go up each year with no end in sight yet the pension and wages do not increase for the forgotten people. The call of wages restraint and tighten your belts is the common call to us all. Yet I have no doubt that once the rate rise plus integration of MCW is granted to a new council. They will vote themselves a wage rise for being astute financial managers and of course lets not forget the extra work load. I say No to a special rate rise for amalgamation was supposed to bring real benefits to us all, not make life harder.