

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 10 March 2017 12:58 PM
To: Local Government Mailbox
Subject: Fwd: Special Rate Variation. Ballina Shire Council

As outlined below in our submission to Ballina Shire Council we are opposed to this request for a Special Rate Variation by Ballina Shire Council.

Ballina Shire Council were required to undertake a public consultation process and they advise that 90% of submissions were opposed to this rate rise which exceeds the cost of living rise/rate of inflation etc used to determine wages and pensions.

The Council has totally ignored its ratepayers and the consultation process was simply an exercise in "lip service". 90% of submissions were opposed to this, but the Council is determined to proceed.

The Council is already in receipt of a Special Rate Variation valid for two years for swimming pool construction and it is reported that the cost of this has blown out from \$8 million to \$14 million. Council is now seeking a further three years of increased rate rises above CPI. This is a total of five years of increased burden on ratepayers who are expected to live within their means.

The Council rather than budget and plan for infrastructure, is simply telling its community that they must fund these works by paying additional rates. To add insult to injury, not all these works are a local government responsibility.

Ballina is a growth area and the Council will benefit from additional residential lots and an increase in its rate base. In addition, developers are providing additional infrastructure and contributions which will benefit Council. Council collects its General Rate based on the State Government Unimproved Value of land. These valuations generally do not decrease. As an aside, we purchased our residential allotment in October 2013 for \$360,000 and the July 2014 valuation was \$321,000 which we considered reasonable. Our July 2016 valuation is \$419,000 which is an increase of \$98,000 in two years. No doubt, Council will benefit from this increase when it comes time to set their General Rate and this will be in addition to the Special Rate Variation they are seeking.

Families are already under pressure with increased medical co-payment costs and health insurance which has increased above CPI. The cost of electricity and general living costs are forcing a greater reliance on community aid groups for food and finance.

We draw your attention to our comments below which were forwarded to Council. We again state that Council should live within its means and not impose an additional hardship on those who can least afford it. We believe that it is time that Ballina Shire Council engage with its Community and listen to their concerns.

Best Regards

Heather and Allen Edwards
[REDACTED]

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]

To: srvproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au

Sent: Saturday, 28 Jan, 2017 At 2:05 PM

Subject: Special Rate Variation.

We wish to lodge our opposition to the proposed Special Rate Variation as outlined by the Ballina Shire Council.

Our opposition is based on the following grounds.

1. The Council is seeking support for a Special Rate Variation for a period of three years. This will be in addition to the two years of Special Rate Variation which is in place for the upgrading of swimming pools. This amounts to five years of rate increases well in excess of the cost of living rises applicable to pensioners. In addition, self funded retirees have seen a significant decrease in interest rates and returns on investments.

As a consequence many people are struggling to exist and Council should consult with some of the welfare groups in the area to determine the impact of rising medical costs, electricity costs etc.

It would seem that all levels of Government are too quick to roll out the mantra of "The Age Of Entitlement Is Over" and pass on costs to those who can least afford it. Ballina Shire Council should manage it's budget in a more efficient manner and live within its means and not impose added financial hardship on its ratepayers.

2. Ballina Shire Council already benefits as a result of its rate base increases associated with residential land development. Increases to the number of residential lots has resulted in increased rate revenue. Developer contributions to roads, sewerage and water and other infrastructure are a saving to Council.

Ballina Shire Council argues that its rates are very competitive with other similar Councils and that this is one of the main reasons for the proposed variation. Interestingly, Byron Shire Council is also seeking a Special Variation and it uses the same argument to support its case.

It would appear that Council's rather than plan for the future and live within their means have adopted the attitude that it is easier to pass that responsibility straight on to those who can ill afford it.

This is the second rate variation and there is no guarantee that it will not be further extended into the future.

3. Council indicates that the proposed increase will apply only to the General Rate (no argument with this statement), however the General Rate is levied based on the State Government valuation which generally does not decrease. Therefore, the amount of General Rate increase stated by Council is possibly not correct and Council will argue that any discrepancy is due to State Government action. This is also not technically correct as Council sets the rate in the dollar for its General Rate.

In conclusion, we do not support the proposal for the reasons outlined above.

Heather and Allen Edwards

