

**Submission:** IPART re- Bellinger Shire council Special rate variation 2018/19.

I am forwarding this submission as a rate payer of the Bellinger shire, I would like to object in the strongest terms to Bellinger Shire Councils application for a "Special rate variation" (SRV) 2018/19.

**The following concerns outline the considerations in my objection: Date: 13/2/2018**

- **Affordability**

If Bellinger shire councils application for a SRV-2018-19 is approved and applied in full and, extends over the proposed 3 year period, the shires ratepayers will face an overall increase in excess of 40% in special variations along with 2 increases in land valuations (VG) over a 5 year period up to and including 2021. This prospect is very daunting and unsustainable for many residents of the shire.

- **Council communication and transparency on the SRV application**

This councils methodology on communication and transparency is grossly inadequate, they certainly pay lip service to the concept, however, in reality the facilities and strategies they have incorporated to assist the community understand their decision making process are poorly used and ineffective. They adopt the strategy that if not many complain then the majority must agree with their plan, They will not engage in discussion with a concerned community and this situation is now starting to boil over with a council meeting disrupted by residents on the 7/2/18 involving a closure of the meeting and the necessitated involvement of police.

- **Councils efficiency gains, Fiscal skills and management of allocated funds**

Bellingen council has distributed to the ratepayers a glossy brochure in which, among other things they include an attempt to outline recent efficiency gains in order reduce overheads and costs generally (consistent with requirements of the application). Without exception the information provided by council is nothing more than a series of "Motherhood" statements without detail and specificity, they quite simply do not understand/undertake the concept of outcomes reporting and is consistent with their failure to address poor use of allocated funds through over staffing and over runs on budget with such projects as the new council "works" depot, in this regard I am led to believe council saw fit to re allocate hundreds of thousands of dollars from the roads & infrastructure budget to cater for the overrun, disturbingly, this facility is not a purpose built work depot, rather, a multi purposed gold plated facility designed to cater for an event where councils administrative staff "may" need an alternative building , subsequently, yet again they are now trying to gouge ratepayers to top up the Roads & infrastructure budget, in the interim, our roads and infrastructure have been left in a state of disrepair.

Most of the roads and infrastructure money that council has used has resulted in poor outcomes with roads being "painted" with tar and gravel while potholes are still evident under these new works. These roads will now require further allocation of funds in the not too distant future. This local government body in my opinion should never have been considered "Fit for the Future" based on their performance, I request that IPART refuse the application for the 2018/19 SRV by Bellingen Shire Council to ensure council does "its bit" to improve efficiency gains in areas of its day to day operations.

Regards,

Joe Pearce-