

From: Keith JOHNSON [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 11 March 2017 10:50 AM
To: Local Government Mailbox
Subject: Ballina Council's Special Rate Variation.(SRV)

Dear Ipart,

I ask you to take careful note of the way Ballina Council conducted its community survey on the SRV.

Both the online version and the Micromex survey posed the key questions in such a way that people opposed to the SRV but who saw some merit in the case for fixing the river or improving infrastructure assets were “guided “ into a choice in the 5 choice responses that counted as support. Please take particular note of the wording of the 5 responses

- Very supportive 1
- Supportive 2
- Somewhat supportive 3
- Not very supportive 4
- Not at all supportive. 5

5 is an absolute statement ie it says “ not at all” and calls for the responder to have a very strong position on the matter. 1 however only requires the responder to have an above average position. 3 is the “gotcha” --what does “somewhat” really mean ? It allows the responder to answer without having any clarity about their position. 3 is counted as being support in the final tally of both the Micromex survey and the Ballina Council online survey. Thus 60% of the choices are supportive, and loads the dice.

This 5 way split should be contrasted with the tried and true technique of 1-Strongly support, 2- Support, 3- Neutral, 4- Opposed, 5- Strongly Opposed. Note also that the Micromex 5 choices makes no provision for those people who neither support nor oppose , and these people do exist. Instead , they are offered a 3 that whilst not clearly saying “for” or “ against” gives those of a neutral view their only way to avoid saying directly “for” or “against”.

This loaded 5 way choice was used in both the Micromex phone survey and the Council on line survey. Did any of the councillors get the chance to vet either /both these surveys – other than the Mayor of course ? I think not.

It is worth noting that 118 written submissions were received with the overwhelming majority 90%&87% opposed to the SRV . The online survey in which the responder gets to read and think about their answer had 501 responders, compared to 403 for the Micromex phone survey. The online survey used the same 5choice as Micromex. Question 9 of the online survey covered the main issue , it asked “ how supportive are you of Council applying for both the Healthy Waterways and Asset Renewal Programs ? “. The result was 26% for, 73% against including having choice3 counted as “for” and comprising 7%.

By any reasonable and mathematically sound analysis the only conclusion possible is the community does not support the SRV and the margin against is substantial despite the use of a biased 5 choice answer set in both surveys.

In summary I submit that approval by IPart of the SRV would be directly counter to the wishes of the community and would undermine confidence in the community concerning the State Government's regard for fair and equitable process. Rejection by Ipart of Ballina's SRV is strongly recommended.

KEITH H JOHNSON

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