

I am opposed to the special purpose rate variation due to the following reasons:

Firstly it is in my opinion that the material which was sent out was misleading and confusing for the majority of rate payers. Hence the 2.5% return rate on the survey. Also this document was supposed to have been sent to all rate payers in the shire and a large majority of them didn't receive a copy. In the document there was no reference that after the 3 year period the extra money raised would not necessarily be spent on roads moving forward and in fact it will go into the general pool to be spent on anything that the management decides to spend it on. It also gave the feeling that the rate increase would in fact be removed at the end of the three years which we know is not the case. Further to that I feel that the disparity in the rate costs between GHSC and neighbouring shires would be so large that it would discourage any investment and population growth in the shire. I believe that the only sustainable way to fix a lack of money is to grow the rate base and therefore set up the council for the future rather than to rape and pillage the current rate payers of the shire.

Secondly the way in which the variation is going to be applied throughout the shire is not going to be fair and it will see many rate payers carrying the burden for areas where the property values are less and the money will be spent on the roads in those areas with no benefit to the shire as a whole. In an email response to the council I suggested that they should have looked at a levy of the same monetary value being applied to all rate payers therefore sharing the burden evenly. This was howled down as something that couldn't be done!

Thirdly the council has ended up in the position that it is through mismanagement and frivolous expenditure in areas that I believe have been unnecessary. This leads into the point that allowing the shire to obtain more money through rate payers without the ability to use it wisely would not be advantageous and therefore rate payers would not receive any more value. What it would do is sustain a failing council that is already haemorrhaging money and in the long run there would be no significant change to the shires dilapidated road network. If the council was a private enterprise it would have been in the hands of the receivers a long time ago. Also when private enterprise has monetary problems they stop spending on areas that are considered non essential. The council has forged ahead with works that could have waited or they could have spent the money on some of the worst roads in the shire first.

The bottom line is that in my opinion and the opinion of a large number of shire residents is that the current management of the council is not capable of running a tight ship and therefore cannot be allowed to have any more money to squander. I feel that there needs to be a thorough review of the councils operations and its ability to sustain itself into the future prior to allowing them to increase the rates beyond the standard rate peg which they have been doing over the last few years anyway. Further to that we are planning on having a partition organised and submitted in April in support of the SRV not going ahead and that the council should not be allowed to increase rates above the standard rate peg.