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Neville King

1st MARCH, 2016

To the
Chairperson and Board
I.P.A.R.T.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Sir - Dr. Peter J. Boxall,

I encourage you to read my submission
against Lismore Council's Application for
a 1.8% S.R.V.

Our Councillors had voted 6/5 to
proceed to I.P.A.R.T. with a majority of 1.
My approach to this is to support the
406 Ratepayers who sent in written
submissions from the "Ratepayers' Embassy".
In retrospect I believe the vote
could be classed as 6-ALL!

Unfortunately many Ratepayers are
really struggling. It's evident that the
Lismore L.G.A. has a high lack of
employment and a struggle for residents
with the cost of living. Many ratepayers
on farms are actually "asset rich" but
cash-flow poor.

In Council's recent S.R.V. Submission
they actually acknowledged that
Lismore L.G.A. is disadvantaged from a
Socio-Economic perspective. From the
information now provided your I.P.A.R.T.
Board has the decision if in fact this is
appropriate in consideration of the above....

Figure 7: Letter to ratepayers

IN THE BEGINNING.



Our Ref ED14/29454

8 December 2014

Dear Lismore Property Owner

Proposed Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and proposed Special Rate Variation

Lismore City Council has developed a Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) aimed at enhancing Lismore's unique natural environment. This includes improving the health of our creeks and waterways, increasing habitat for native wildlife, and improving access and amenity in our parks and bushland reserves. The strategy also aims to build strong partnerships, in particular with rural landholders.

It is proposed to largely fund the actions in the strategy with a Special Rate Variation (additional rates for the specific purpose of enhancing biodiversity). The reason I'm writing to you is to advise that we are now seeking community feedback on both the Draft BMS and the proposed Special Rate Variation.

The Draft BMS has been on the Council's work program for some time and the importance of the natural environment was a key priority coming out of the extensive consultation undertaken as part of the development of Council's Community Strategic Plan (called 'Imagine Lismore').

Following a detailed investigation into a range of funding mechanisms to implement the Draft BMS, it was concluded that the only effective way to reliably fund implementation of the strategy without substantially impacting upon Council's existing services is through a Special Rate Variation. Council is now consulting with the community on a proposed ongoing rate variation of \$500,000 per annum to implement the BMS commencing 1 July 2016. This variation equates to an average 1.9% increase of Council's current annual rates revenue. The rate variation would apply to three rating categories: Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Villages.

Please find enclosed a fact sheet containing detailed information on the proposed rate variation, the Draft BMS, and details of the consultation process. Submissions regarding the Draft BMS and the proposed Special Rate Variation close on **24 February 2015**.

After the consultation period is over, Council will make a decision in April 2015 whether to adopt the BMS and to make an application for the Special Rate Variation to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), which is the NSW Government agency that determines if proposed rate variations proceed.

Council encourages your involvement in this public submission process.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted signature]

Executive Director Sustainable Development

Enclosed: Fact Sheet

www.lismore.nsw.gov.au

43 Olive Avenue, Goonendarr NSW 2480 • PO Box 204, Lismore NSW 2480 • T: 1300 81 81 81 • E: info@lismore.nsw.gov.au • ABN: 60050932837
Lismore City Council acknowledges the people of the Bundjalung Nation, traditional custodians of the land on which we work.



Please read the enclosed information on the Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and proposed Special Rate Variation carefully.

We are seeking your feedback. Your input will help us understand what the community wants.

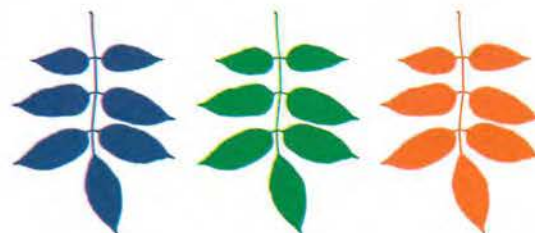
Feedback and submissions are due by 24 February 2015.



Feedback and submissions are due by 24 February 2015.

Written submissions should be addressed to the General Manager, PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480 or emailed to council@lismore.nsw.gov.au.

To make an online submission go to our website www.lismore.nsw.gov.au and find the Draft BMS in our 'On Public Exhibition' section.



43 Oliver Avenue
Goonellabah NSW 2480
1300 87 83 87
www.lismore.nsw.gov.au



Biodiversity Management Strategy

Community consultation on Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and proposed Special Rate Variation.



The Draft BMS sets out 63 actions to achieve this over the next 20 years. Many of these actions will be implemented with Council's existing resources, however 28 require funding. The Draft BMS includes a 10-year budget that provides a view on what the rate increase would pay for.



Partnering with the community

- Support the community to improve biodiversity values in the Lismore LGA and celebrate landholder and community achievements around biodiversity.
- Provide a variety of educational resources and programs tailored to different levels of experience, exposure and interest, such as the general community, schools or industry groups. These actions focus on involving and supporting the community.

and building partnerships with community and industry groups to enhance Lismore's biodiversity values.

Urban (working within the urban environment)

- Build and protect biodiversity values in Lismore's urban environment by linking and enhancing existing bushland and riparian areas. This will include weed management and bushland regeneration.
- Promote biodiversity values and increase opportunities for the community to interact with biodiversity through a range of initiatives, such as the development of bushland walking tracks.
- Implement actions in the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management to benefit Lismore's koala populations.

► The consultation process

Between 26 November 2014 and 24 February 2015 you have the chance to provide Council with a clear indication of support, or otherwise, for the Draft BMS and proposed SRV.

The Draft BMS and details on the proposed SRV can be viewed at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au or in hardcopy at Council's Corporate Centre, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah, during normal business hours Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Community feedback is vital for Council to understand:

- If the Draft BMS meets your expectations and if you have any comments and suggestions.
- If you would be willing and able to support a rate increase to implement the BMS.

Council will reach as many people as possible to spread the word and seek the community's feedback. Every mailbox in the Lismore LGA will receive information in Local Matters. Council will also send out media releases, hold market stalls, use its social media forums, put information on the website and ask key stakeholders to distribute information through their networks.

All residents and ratepayers in the Lismore LGA

Written submissions

All residents and ratepayers in the Lismore LGA can make a written submission to Council. Written submissions should be addressed to the General Manager, PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480 or emailed to council@lismore.nsw.gov.au by 24 February 2015.

Online submissions

All residents and ratepayers in the Lismore LGA can make an online submission. Simply go to our website www.lismore.nsw.gov.au and find the Draft BMS in our 'On Public Exhibition' section.

The three ratepaying categories

Mail out

All ratepayers that would pay the increase (Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Villages) will receive an explanatory letter and this fact sheet. Ratepayers are encouraged to have a say regarding Council's proposal.

Community Forum

Council will invite 40 participants from the three rating categories to attend a Community Forum and lunch on Saturday afternoon, 21 February 2015. Participants invited will be randomly selected through an external automated process to ensure there is no bias in the selection process.

Workshop participants will be a wholly representative sample of the ratepayers from the three categories and will be selected from across the whole Lismore LGA.

If you receive this opportunity Council encourages you to participate as your views and ultimately your submission will play an important role in Council's decision-making processes.

Independent consultation

Council has engaged the independent Hunter Research Foundation to undertake independent community consultation on the Draft BMS and supporting SRV. The Hunter Research Foundation will randomly select around 200 ratepayers in the relevant three rating categories to conduct short telephone interviews.

If you receive this opportunity Council encourages you to participate as it will play an important role in Council's decision-making processes.

If you would like further information on the Draft BMS, proposed SRV and the consultation process, please phone 1300 87 83 87.



PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

From the start this fact sheet was designed to mislead the Ratepayer by not showing the facts and the cumulative impact over 4 years as per the "Guidelines".

Council went to great lengths TABLE 1. to explain the averages i.e. Land value in the various categories and average increase per year - which has no relevance to the true cost to Farmers, Residential Urban/Villages in TABLE 2.

As shown in Lismore City Council "WORK SHEET 5b" "Impact on Rates by Land Value" —

- ① Ordinary Farmland Rates with proposed S.R.V.
- ② Ordinary Residential Rates with proposed S.R.V.

The sheets show the number of Property assessments in the Value Range, the land value (for calculation of Rates) and the cumulative impact in dollars and percentage over 4 years. Why wasn't this shown on the Fact Sheet?

Council in its Fact Sheet, Hunter Research Foundation in its phone survey focused on the averages. With Councillors 6 of the 11 siding with Council and choosing to ignore the submissions from Ratepayers.

Council would have received a considerable increase in submissions from the Residents had they known of this.

Council needed to tell the "TRUE" facts to the Ratepayers.

WORKSHEET 5b

IMPACT ON RATES BY LAND VALUE

Ordinary Residential Rates - with proposed special variation

Annual and Cumulative Increases

Number of property assessments in this valuation range as per Worksheet 3	Land value (for calculation of rates)	Increases Year 1		Increases Year 4			
		Annual	%	Annual	%	Cumulative	%
4,181	\$50,000	23.90	3.60%	18.09	2.50%	76.85	11.56%
9,077	\$150,000	51.70	4.12%	34.31	2.50%	152.13	12.13%
1,686	\$250,000	79.50	4.31%	50.52	2.50%	227.40	12.33%
283	\$350,000	107.30	4.41%	66.74	2.50%	302.67	12.44%
47	\$450,000	135.10	4.47%	82.95	2.50%	377.94	12.50%
21	\$550,000	162.90	4.51%	99.17	2.50%	453.22	12.54%
6	\$650,000	190.70	4.54%	115.39	2.50%	528.49	12.58%
1	\$750,000	218.50	4.56%	131.60	2.50%	603.76	12.60%
2	\$850,000	246.30	4.58%	147.82	2.50%	679.03	12.62%
2	\$950,000	274.10	4.59%	164.04	2.50%	754.31	12.63%
3	\$1,250,000	357.50	4.62%	212.69	2.50%	980.12	12.66%

* Ordinary Farmland Rates - with proposed special variation

Annual and Cumulative Increases

Number of property assessments in this valuation range as per Worksheet 3	Land value (for calculation of rates)	Increases Year 1		Increases Year 4			
		Annual	%	Annual	%	Cumulative	%
16.00	\$50,000	20.35	3.34%	16.54	2.50%	68.78	11.28%
194	\$150,000	41.05	3.77%	29.67	2.50%	127.90	11.75%
558	\$250,000	61.75	3.94%	42.79	2.50%	187.02	11.93%
476	\$350,000	82.45	4.03%	55.92	2.50%	246.15	12.03%
268	\$450,000	103.15	4.08%	69.04	2.50%	305.27	12.09%
173	\$550,000	123.85	4.12%	82.17	2.50%	364.39	12.13%
112	\$650,000	144.55	4.15%	95.29	2.50%	423.51	12.16%
47	\$750,000	165.25	4.17%	108.42	2.50%	482.64	12.18%
28	\$850,000	185.95	4.19%	121.54	2.50%	541.76	12.20%
15	\$950,000	206.65	4.20%	134.67	2.50%	600.88	12.21%
26	\$1,250,000	268.75	4.23%	174.04	2.50%	778.25	12.24%
6	\$1,750,000	372.25	4.25%	239.67	2.50%	1,073.86	12.27%
2	\$2,500,000	527.50	4.27%	338.10	2.50%	1,517.27	12.29%
1	\$3,000,000	631.00	4.28%	403.73	2.50%	1,812.89	12.30%

► The proposal

When would it start?

At the earliest, the rate increase could start on 1 July 2016. However this would only happen if the community supports the rate increase, Council decides to apply to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) and IPART approves the application.

Whose rates would increase?

There are seven ratepaying categories in the Lismore LGA, of which only three would pay the rate: Farmland, Residential Rural, and Residential Urban/Villages. The business rating categories would be excluded from the SRV.

How much would the increase be?

To fully implement the BMS, the proposed SRV would seek to raise an ongoing \$500,000 per annum which equates to a 1.9% increase in Council's current annual rates revenue.

Council has also prepared two other possible options for consideration. The option detailed in this fact sheet is the proposal and the other options are for comment. For further information visit www.lismore.nsw.gov.au and go to our 'On Public Exhibition' section.

The proposed SRV does not qualify for a fixed amount per property increase, meaning the cost would vary for each ratepayer depending on which rating category they are in and the NSW Valuer General's land value (not including buildings and other assets).

Table 1 below shows the average cost for each rating category which has been calculated on the average land value in each of the three rating categories. The average land values for each rating category are: Farmland = \$375,000; Residential Rural = \$192,000; and Residential Urban/Villages = \$113,000. Note that the average cost for Farmland is higher due to higher average land values.

Rating Category	Average Increase (per year)	Average Increase (per week)
Farmland (1,920 ratepayers)	\$50.63	97c
Residential Rural (2,852 ratepayers)	\$31.68	61c
Residential Urban/Villages (12,356 ratepayers)	\$25.43	49c

Table 2 below shows examples of land values and the corresponding cost for each rating category.

Rating Category	NSW Valuer General Land Value		
	100,000	250,000	500,000
Farmland	\$13.50	\$33.75	\$67.50
Residential Rural	\$16.50	\$41.25	\$82.50
Residential Urban/Villages	\$22.50	\$56.25	\$112.50

How does the rate increase relate to Council's Long Term Financial Plan?

An SRV for the implementation of the BMS has been considered in the context of Council's Long Term Financial Plan, a key element of the *Imagine Lismore 10 Year Plan*. The Long Term Financial Plan sets out a 'Road to financial sustainability' by using existing resources more wisely and potentially seeking a rate increase above current rating caps. The current Long Term Financial Plan proposes a separate SRV of \$2 million per year from 2018/19 for renewal of infrastructure, predominantly roads.

Any future SRV would be outside of this Council term, meaning this elected Council would not be able to deliver on the community's vision of developing and implementing a BMS. However, Council has decided to ask you, the community, if you would be willing to financially support and secure the implementation of the BMS within this Council term. If the community supports this SRV and it is approved by IPART, this would be incorporated into Council's Long Term Financial Plan and considered in any future application to IPART.



► What will the BMS and rate increase do?

The Draft BMS is designed to protect and enhance biodiversity right across the LGA. This includes improving the health of our creeks and waterways through riverbank restoration, increasing habitat for native birds and animals on public and private land, enhancing walking tracks and opportunities to enjoy parks and

BMS actions are roughly divided into three categories:

Internal (Council keeping its house in order)

- Review, update and development of Council processes, procedures and associated staff training to ensure best-practice environmental management. For example, review the Operational Plan for Roadside Vegetation Management and invest in implementing staged management of roadside weeds.
- Develop a Biodiversity Development Assessment

Rural (working with the rural community)

- A Rural Landholder Initiative is being developed in partnership with Southern Cross University and Lismore's agricultural community. This initiative is based on creating incentives and resources to assist and encourage landholders to manage biodiversity and ecosystem services on their properties. The initiative focuses on the benefits to both biodiversity and a healthy environment for agricultural production (ecosystem services).

Council is seeking your feedback

Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and supporting Special Rate Variation

Lismore City Council has drafted a Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) for the Lismore Local Government Area (LGA).

The Draft BMS is designed to improve the health of our waterways, increase habitat and biodiversity for our native flora and fauna, improve parks and bushland reserves, and ensure new development is ecologically sustainable. The strategy also aims to build strong partnerships with rural landholders and community groups to increase biodiversity.

The Draft BMS is on public exhibition for three months between 26 November 2014 and 24 February 2015. During this time, Council is also consulting with the community on a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to enable implementation of the BMS.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the Draft BMS and the proposed SRV (*who would pay, how much it would cost and what it would pay for*). It also provides the various ways you can provide Council with feedback.

Setting the Scene

Background to the Biodiversity Management Strategy

Development of the BMS was a requirement from Council's previous and current Community Strategic Plan (*Imagine Lismore 10 Year Plan*) as well as the subsequent Delivery Plan (*Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan*). It is also a response to the *Imagine Lismore* community consultation process where the environment emerged as the community's number one priority and the community said it wanted Council to provide environmental leadership.

Development of the Draft BMS has been guided by regional biodiversity management plans as well as consultation with: the public; stakeholders through a Stakeholder Reference Group made up of representatives from key industry, landholder and environment groups; and a Councillor Feedback Group. It also took into consideration mapping studies of vegetation and key wildlife habitats and corridors.

The BMS can be viewed at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au

or in hardcopy at Council's Corporate Centre, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah, during normal business hours Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Background to the Special Rate Variation proposal

As a matter of good practice, strategies should include a funded implementation program. Council's current *Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan* proposed that the BMS could be funded and implemented via grant funding from the former Commonwealth Government's Biodiversity Fund. However, this funding no longer exists. Consequently, Council investigated alternative funding mechanisms including: Council's existing general purpose revenues, an SRV, rate rebates, Section 94 contributions, and grant funding. Most of these options were rejected based on their inability to deliver reliable, long-term funding.

It has been concluded that the only effective way to reliably fund implementation of the BMS in the long term, that does not substantially impact Council's existing services, is through an SRV.

Council is now asking the community if it is willing and able to support this rate increase to enable implementation of the BMS.

How do we compare?

Comparative to other NSW councils, Lismore City Council is a poor spender on the environment. The NSW Government Comparative Information on NSW Local Government Report compares the performance of local governments across NSW. In 2012/13 this report stated that Lismore City Council spends about 23% less on the environment (including waste) compared to the average NSW council.



I INTRODUCTION

MY RESPONSE

Neville KING
[REDACTED]

Mr Gary Murphy
General Manager
Lismore City Council
PO Box 23A
LISMORE 2480

Dear Sir

**RE: BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & PROPOSED
SPECIAL RATE VARIATION**

For me this all started with a letter written by Mr Brent McAlister, Executive Director, Sustainable Development, arriving mid December 2014 with a fact sheet containing details on the proposed rate variation and the draft BMS plus details of the consultation process with submissions closing on the 24th February 2015.

As a ratepayer, I consider the timing to send this out with the Christmas Festive Season fast approaching, school holidays about to commence and ratepayers travelling away for holidays makes me believe that Council is attempting to 'steam roll' this important draft onto ratepayers at an inappropriate time.

As my wife has been going through chemotherapy for cancer, our family and grandchildren arrived from Sydney on 21/12/14 & returned on the 5/1/2015 resulting in me only looking at 'the draft' not long after.

After reading such I rang Council only to find out that most of Council Management had taken leave.

I have no trouble with this as we all deserve holidays.

I did finally manage to speak with [REDACTED] on the 12th January 2015 and expressed my feelings and mentioned that I was considering going to the Northern Star newspaper, [REDACTED] in fact had been on holidays as well.

Two days later on 14th January 2015 I appeared on the front page of the Northern Star and on 15th January 2015 I contacted [REDACTED] again and our conversation included the views I expressed in the newspaper concerning the ability for many pensioners, low income families & farmers to have a proposed ongoing 1.9% (or is it really 2.61% at time of implementation) SRV and I stand by these views.

I also quoted to [REDACTED] comments from Local Matters dated 7/1/2015, "we discussed our Community Panels Project in the last edition but we figure prawns, family & holidays may have wrested peoples attention away, we are including this information again" with this only confirming my earlier remarks.

For me to achieve front page of the local newspaper signalled the credence placed on this important matter and considering the amount of phone calls I then received, I had a 'Eureka' moment and decided to open an embassy for ratepayers and residents with such giving me the opportunity to listen to ratepaying residents and farmers with their concerns about the ability to pay and the direction that this Council is taking.

I encourage ratepayers to write a submission with their own feelings to Council & Councillors regarding the BMS & SRV.

The letter sent to ratepayers by [REDACTED] stating "Dear Lismore Property Owner" and then refers to the community instead of ratepayers, whereas after all the ratepayers are the ones to pay the proposed 1.9% (or is it really 2.61% at time of implementation) increase (and ongoing).

The Draft I call 'Jacobs Coat' as it is colourful, yet extremely hard to read especially considering the age of many ratepayers.

Note: The blue with black writing, the staff responsible for this clearly disguise the 'use of words as 'Community' is mentioned 16 times, 'Residents' twice and 'Ratepayers' five times, just to mislead the Ratepayer & Farmer with averages quoted many times by [REDACTED], instead of the facts in Table 2 to propose a \$2 million SRV in 2018/2019 considering 'if you would be willing and able to support a rate increase to implement a BMS !

I question, has Council established this from the Ratepayers/Farmers when 3,691 of the 12,356 residential ratepayers are pensioners, not to mention that many farmers struggle as they get older.

As indeed Council, and Councillors, moved in November 2014 to place the Draft BMS on public exhibition and proposed a \$500,000 (or is it really 2.61% at time of implementation) SRV on the three rating categories and now 9th December 2014 proposing a further 7.65% to commence 1st July 2018 to raise a further \$2 million.

I noticed with interest that the same 6 Councillors voted for the motion, on both proposals.

Further commentary that 'any future SRV would be outside this Council's term, meaning this elected Council would not be able to deliver on the Community Vision and implementing a BMS'. Are we talking about Council or Councillors ?

Seems to me that the Council & Councillors have made the 'Life Rafts' and the rest of us are 'Going Down on the Titanic'.

Regarding 'Working with the Rural Community', I have spoken with many farmers re: Southern Cross University & Council to manage Bio-Diversity and Eco-System services on their properties, and many farmers have for generations managed their properties and feel that small acreage and residential land holders need to manage weeds & riparian areas in order to keep up with farmers.

With regard to 'Independent :

The 21st February 2015 'Community Forum' with its 40 randomly selected participants representing only about .2% of the 17,178 ratepayers.

The further 200 Ratepayers randomly selected for short phone interviews, representing 1.16% of the 17,178 ratepayers.

These 'samples' represent a very small selection of effected ratepayers and if this is considered to be adequate community consultation I would want my \$25,000 back from the consultant.

By the way, what about a consultant for the ratepayers, after all we are paying for yours !!!

With regard to the comment 'Council Keeping Its House In Order' I am surprised this would appear. Gary, I would have thought that you as GM, the house should already be 'In Order'.

As for Roadside Vegetation Management and implementing Staged Management of Roadside Weeds, should this already be standard practice or part of a normal Council program ?

I have a copy of the Draft BMS for LLG Areas 2015-2035 and have read it from front to back.

To the Council Staff who have contributed to the development of this strategy, the Councillor Feedback Group & the Stakeholder Members, I ask is it fact that half of the Stakeholder Members have resigned ?, however I am not sure of the reasons.

~~THE~~ thing I believe is that Council is duplicating and that there was no need to go down the path that they have in preparing this BMS as this exercise has cost ratepayers \$94,000.

Farmers already pay rates or levies to Local Land Council, Land Care and Total Catchment through LCC as well as Far North Coats Weeds and Flood Mitigation.

4

I conclude by saying that Council needs to sitck to the old saying of the 3R's, ROADS
RATES & RUBBISH & LIVE WITHIN YOUR MEANS just as the rest of us ratepayers
have to do.

As I said in 1999, **CAN WE AFFORD THIS COUNCIL.**

Concerned Rate Payer

Neville KING

9

**PS: NO TO THE SRV,
NO TO FURTHER
REGULATIONS ON
FARMERS**

9

Newspaper Articles included in submission:

(1) The Northern Star

January 14 2015

'Robin Hood' over rate rise

(2) The Northern Star

February 2 2015

Rates anger at Lismore – see how your council compares

(3) The Northern Star

Councils spend big on staff

(4) The Northern Star

14 January 2015

Self proclaimed 'Robin Hood' leads rebellion over rate hike

CONCLUSION I:

Case study 2- Implementation of a Rural Landholder Initiative

1.1 The BMS sets out for the implementation of a Rural Landholder Initiative (RLI) with funding raised from the proposed SV. The RLI is a specific project set out in Council's Delivery Plan - *Imagine Lismore Partnering Strategy*. The aim of the RLI

In 2014 the Lismore City Council partnered with the Southern Cross University to undertake a survey of rural landholders in the Lismore LGA to design an effective RLI program. This project contributed to the design of the Council's RLI

14 | IPART Special Variation Application Form – Part B

1.2 The HRF developed their survey questions in discussion and interviews with members of Council's staff and Councillors to identify key issues and themes

I question the partnership with:

1. Southern Cross University (SCU) and
2. Hunter Research Foundation (HRF)

1.1 This explains why Council was so focussed on the BMS and not the submission lodged by ratepayers saying "No to SRV". Council invited ratepayers to make a submission and when the results showed a record number of ratepayers took the time to express their concerns (for the 1st time opening "The Embassy" gave Ratepayers the opportunity to have SRV explained).

1.2 This partnership surfaced in Round 2. Consultation 24th October – 21st November, 2015 (p. 40). Council received 42 submissions: 19 supportive, 21 objections; 2 indecisive.

Of the 19 supportive, 2 people submitted twice:

- For themselves and'
- For a Land-care Group, that they support.

The 2 Councillors submitted and then voted.

There were 5 emails from SCU. Council received a petition with 299 names, addresses, from anywhere but Lismore. This subtotal was included in the total of 598 to support the proposed SRV.

899 objecting

"598 - 299 = 299 899 - 46 = 853"

Note Cr. Greg Bennett raised this issue at a Council meeting (I was in attendance).

The recent Fluoride debate either 50 or 500 was to be counted as one vote.

"RULES FOR SOME. : RULES FOR OTHERS" !

"Rules for some: Rules for others"?

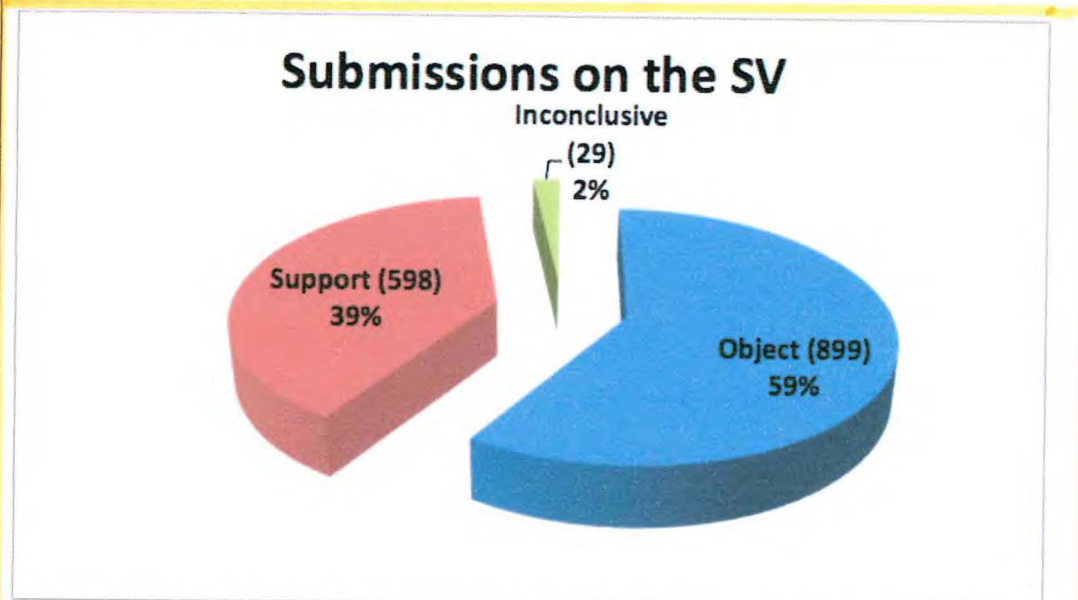


Figure 3 – Number and proportion of submissions supporting, opposing and inconclusive on the SV.

Submissions to the proposed Special Rate Variation

Table 1: Types of submissions to the proposed Special Rate Variation

	Object	Support	Inconclusive	Total
Individual submissions	688	281	29	998
Petitions	46	299		345
Form letters	165	18		183
Total:	899	598	29	1526

NOTE: Table 1. Form Letters – 165 objections
- 18 supporting

Council was desperate to try and counter-balance the submissions from Ratepayers and included in the supportive 299 count.

However, with the opening of the Embassy 28th January to 24th February, 2015, a total of 1526 submissions from ratepayers is a record.

The issue received coverage in:

- TV News
- Articles in Northern Star and Lismore Echo
- Opening outdoor Embassy for farmers at Sales Yards (twice)
- Addressing self-retirees at their AGM

This all shows that one person can make a difference!

Council's methods failed. It:

- Shows up in the numbers responding to their BMS/SRV approach.
- Sending out of letters and Factsheets prior to Christmas and during school holidays, when people are less likely to take action as it is the busiest time of the year
- This was an obvious attempt to "steamroll" this submission to be accepted and catch the ratepayers off-guard.

Written submissions

Merits

- This method attracts those with strong interest on the topic
- Captures a wide audience and a wide range of views
- Provides easy and varied ways for people of different capacities to provide a submission (e.g. online, walk-in, email, letter).

Challenges

- This method does not provide quantitative and representative views within the community as it does not provide a random sampling method, tends not to tap into those who are relatively happy and attracts those with strong views.
- There is no way for Council to determine the proportion of ratepayers in each category that provided submissions, meaning it does not provide a quantitative breakdown of views in each of the categories and does not consider the proportion of ratepayers in each category.
- It is difficult to identify duplicated submissions (e.g. emails provide an avenue for making a submission without providing an address).
- Council is unable to verify the identity of each submitter and thereby validate the submission.

Community Forum

Merits

- Participants can make independent, informed recommendations to Council
- It is not possible for particular interest groups to skew representation
- The broadest possible cross section of opinion is accessed to assist Council's decision making.

Challenges

- A low response rate (in this case 4% of those invited to attend) lowered the merits of this method as it undermines the random sampling method and means there is underrepresentation of the 'silent majority' (those less engaged members of the community).
- If the invitees do not show on the day there may be a skewed cross-section of the three ratepayer categories on the day. This could compromise the representativeness of the participants.

1.3 Survey Questions

- Part 1 set the guidelines for Council and Hunter Research Foundation "to follow".
 - 200 phoned instead of 400
 - There were a number of double-barrelled questions (BMS/SRV), which are inadmissible in survey construction, in the random phone survey. Council chose this method because

“the survey captured the views of those most likely to be paying”.

The following demographics clearly show HR did not follow the Census 2012.

3.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample

The demographic characteristics of the sample are provided in Table 3., together with the comparative data for Lismore LGA from 2011 Census of Population and Housing. The sample provides a good fit against the Census data, allowing for the older age profile, higher level of participation in the workforce, and higher overall level of household income to be expected among ratepayers compared to the community as a whole.

Table 3 Demographic characteristics of survey sample and Census comparators

Demographic Characteristics	Sample	Census 2011
Gender		
Male	49%	48%
Female	51%	52%
Age group		
18-49	25%	52%
50-64	42%	29%
65 and over	32%	19%
Employment status		
Employed	61%	56%
Unemployed	4%	5%
Not in labour force	36%	39%
Household income		
\$20,000 and under	16%	16%
\$20,001-\$60,000	33%	44%
\$60,001-\$100,000	20%	18%
\$100,001 and over	15%	13%
Not Stated	16%	9%
TOTAL	100%	100%

SOURCE: Lismore BMS rate rise survey; ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2011

Demographic differences between the ratepayer categories are reflected in some of the survey results discussed in later sections. While most of these demographic differences were not sufficient to be statistically significant, they provide a useful context in interpreting the results,

Demographics

Age Group	Sample	Census
18-49	25%	52%
HR “Good Fit” Census (2012) is “way off the mark”.		

Household Income	Sample	Census
Under \$20000- \$60000	49%	60%
\$60001 - \$100001 +	51%	40%
TOTAL	100%	100%

HR is Council’s “Achilles’ Heel”

Council based on “higher level” of confidence by HR’s phone survey of 200 ratepayers (61% said it was affordable; but this is a sample only and may not be truly represent the population of 17128 ratepayers- confounding variable of ratepayers with phones. **61% = 125 RATEPAYERS.**

NOTE : 200 RATEPAYERS IN THEIR SUBMISSION INDICATED THAT THEY COULD NOT AFFORD THE S.R.V.

Council based on "higher level of confidence by HR Phone Survey of 200 ratepayers. What *confidence interval* is this based on? 61% said it was affordable 125 ratepayers out of population of 17128. RATEPAYERS.

The HRF compared the demographic characteristics of those surveyed with the 2011 Census of Population and Housing to assess whether the survey was a representative sample of ratepayers in the Lismore LGA, and results could be used as a quantitative representation of ratepayer views, including the silent majority. HRF's analysis showed that *the sample provides a good fit against the Census data, allowing for the older age profile, higher level of participation in the workforce, and higher overall level of household income to be expected among ratepayers compared to the community as a whole.*

3.2 Did ratepayers know about the Biodiversity Management Strategy? (Section 3.2.2 of the HRF Report)

The HRF asked interviewees *How aware are you of Council's Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy?* and how important nine key activities in the BMS was to them on a scale where 5 is very important and 1 is very unimportant. These questions aimed to assess ratepayer's awareness and view's on what funding raised through the proposed SV would achieve through implementing the BMS. Figure 6 below shows how aware interviewees were of the BMS and Figure 7 below shows which of nine key actions they were in most favour of.

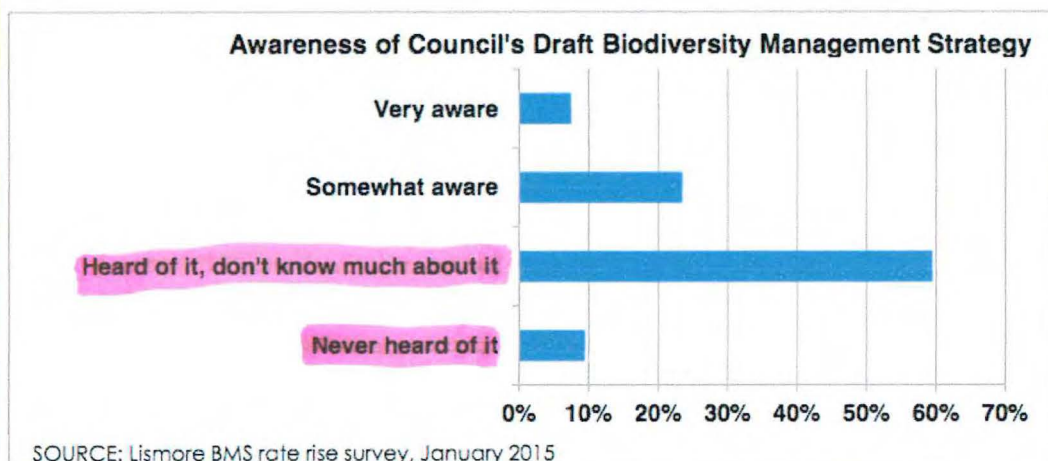


Figure 6 Importance of Draft BMS activities to ratepayers – mean scores

Reasonable Price to Pay

HR Phone Survey

Proposed rate increase respondents were asked the *average rate increase* for each rating category in the *first year.*

Table 1. Average cost for each rating categories

Table 2. Land values and cost for each rating categories.

Table 1 below shows the average cost for each rating category which has been calculated on the average land value in each of the three rating categories. The average land values for each rating category are: Farmland = \$375,000; Residential Rural = \$192,000; and Residential Urban/Villages = \$113,000. Note that the average cost for Farmland is higher due to higher average land values.

Rating Category	Average Increase (per year)	Average Increase (per week)
Farmland (1,920 ratepayers)	\$50.63	97c
Residential Rural (2,852 ratepayers)	\$31.68	61c
Residential Urban/Villages (12,356 ratepayers)	\$25.43	49c

Table 2 below shows examples of land values and the corresponding cost for each rating category.

Rating Category	NSW Valuer General Land Value			
	100,000	250,000	500,000	\$1000,000
Farmland	\$13.50	\$33.75	\$67.50	\$135.00
Residential Rural	\$16.50	\$41.25	\$82.50	
Residential Urban/Villages	\$22.50	\$56.25	\$112.50	

Respondents were not given cumulative increase over 4 years "as per Ipsos guidelines"

Figure 8 Ratepayer rating of how well BMS activities meet their expectations

3.4 Did ratepayers think the rate rise was a reasonable price to pay for BMS activities? (Section 3.3.1 of the HRF Report)

The HRF provided interviewees with information regarding the proposed rate increase in terms of the average rate increase for each rating category. They were also offered an idea of what the rate increase would be for their property in the first year (only 8% of respondents opted for this option). Interviewees were then asked:

Do you agree or disagree that the amount I just gave you would be a reasonable price to pay for undertaking the activities in the Biodiversity Management Strategy?

The HRF found that just over half the affected ratepayers as a whole (61%) 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the estimated amount of rate rise that would apply to their property was a reasonable price to pay. However, almost four in ten (37%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Further to this, as shown in Figure 6 below, HRF also found that those who disagreed tended to express their views in stronger terms than those who agreed. As a result the average rating on this question for the affected ratepayer community as a whole was just on the positive side of neutral.

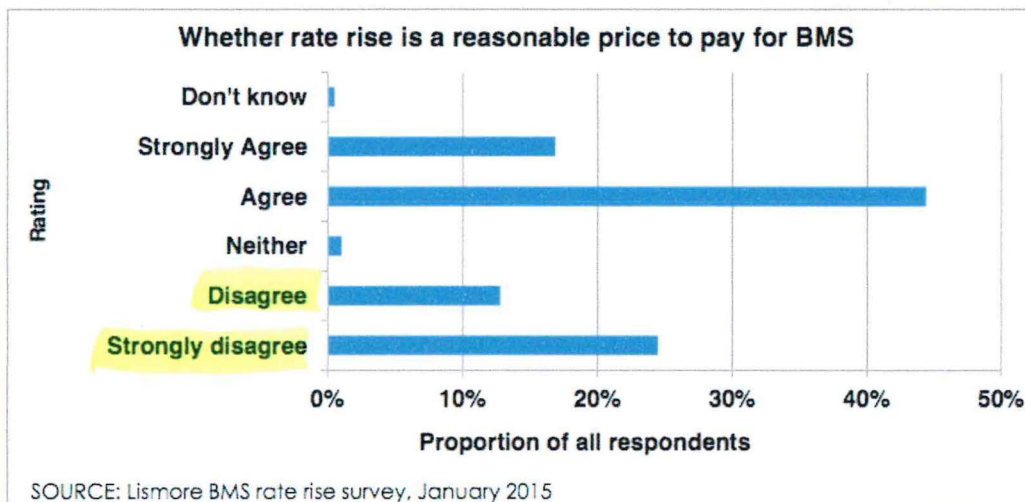


Figure 9 Whether rate rise is a reasonable price to pay for BMS activities

The HRF Report analyses these results further in terms of which rating categories differed in their ratings for the question posed above. They found that the rate rise issue also resulted in the strongest differentiation between ratepayer categories of any question in the survey, with half the farmland ratepayers (49%) 'disagreeing' that the rate rise is a reasonable price to pay while more than half the residential (58%) and urban ratepayers (64%) 'agreed'. Further, the farmland respondents expressed their views more strongly than did the rural residential and urban respondents. The average scores for each group were thus close to neutral, but on opposite sides, as shown in Figure 11 below.

The rate rise issue resulted in the strongest differentiation between ratepayer categories:

- Farmland 49% disagreeing. Clearly council is not listening to farmers.
- Ratepayers on a pension/social security.

1920 farmers

5000 pensioners 3991 receive rebate

15000 Social security support

My 3 weeks at the Embassy, face-to-face contact with ratepayers, the message was loud and clear "No to the SRV; No to further regulations on farmers.

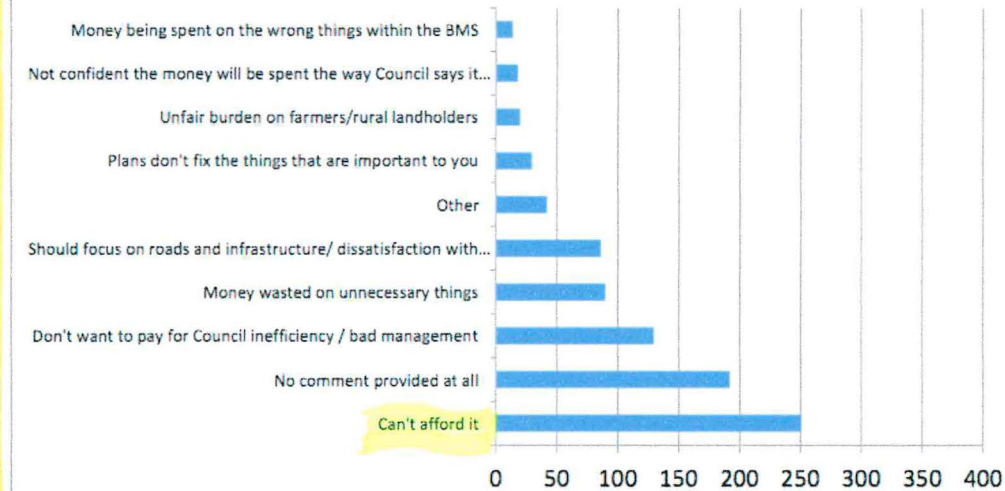


Figure 4 – Broad reasons for opposing the proposed SV that were identified in written submissions.

Note: HR phone survey 125 ratepayers out of 200 said it was affordable.

Council's Round 1: Submission by ratepayers 250 opposing the proposed SRV.
Reason: "Can't afford it".

ROUND 2: Consultation between 24 October 2015 and 21 November 2015

During Council's initial community consultation on the SV, between November 2014 and February 2015, Council did not include sufficient detail on rate-pegging impacts on ratepayers associated with the proposed SV and proposed expenditure of the BMS. Therefore during community consultation conducted between 24 Oct 2015 and 21 Nov 2015, this information was provided Council. This consultation ran concurrently with proposed amendments to Council's *Imagine Lismore* 4 Year Plan and Long Term Financial Plan.

Summary of key issues raised in written submissions on the proposed SV

Each submission on the proposed SV was allocated a broad reason for its support or opposition to the proposed SV. This provided Council with a broad-brush quantitative insight into the community's views'. *Figure 4* below identifies the broad reasons for opposing the proposed SV and *Figure 5* below identifies the broad reasons for supporting the proposed SV. Also, **Attachment 7** provides a summary of detailed issues raised in written submissions.

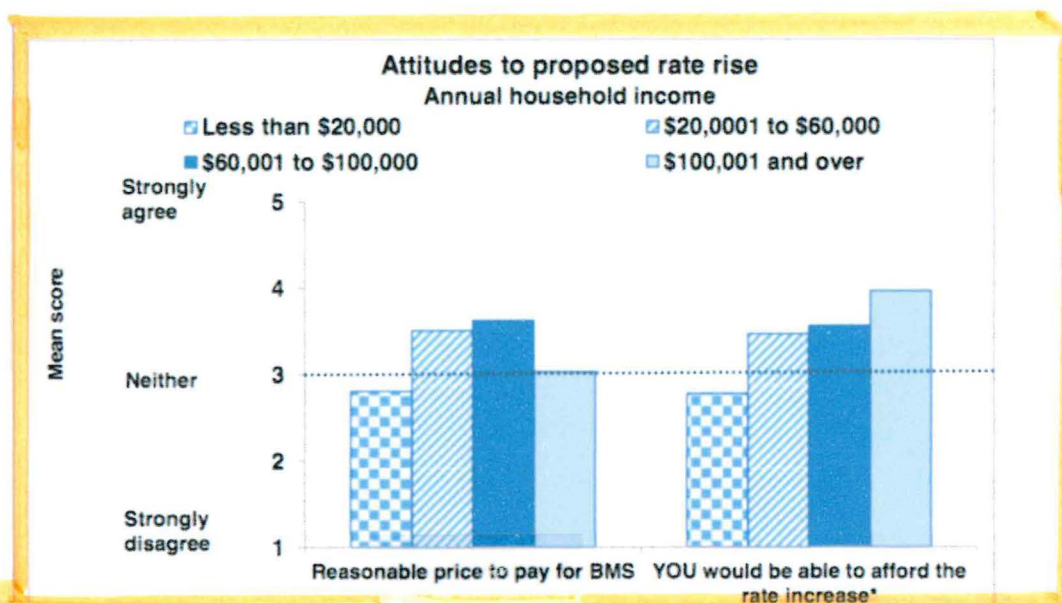
3. Assessment Criterion

Community Awareness and Engagement – Council Briefing 5th August 2015

I went to this briefing. Council was informed it was critical. Council staff followed the guidelines issued by the Office of Local Government (OLG). *In Action Required* Council choose not to show the cumulative impact over 4 years to ratepayers. *Why was this so?*

Council advertised in the local papers for 28 days (not every ratepayer necessarily reads or receives the material). Council makes a statement of the mail-out of the *The Local Matters* to contact every ratepayer.

NOTE: It arrived 11 days before submissions were closing. This is "Not good enough"



At the meeting staff said that they did indeed followed IPART guidelines and consequently the report was passed 6 for and 5 against (myself one of the 5).

A rescission motion was then lodged after the meeting and the issue was again debated at the Extraordinary meeting on the 5.5.2015.

At that meeting staff said to me that they have been in contact with IPART and they were told that a similar table as the one above could have been placed in the upcoming envelopes with the rates notice.

I argued that it was too late as a decision was made on the night whether to proceed with the SRV levy application or not but they were pretty sure that this could be done after.

I have some serious problem with this rationale and would like to know from you how a piece of information such as this could be considered be part of the consultation after the Council had already made the decision.

I am sure this must be a misunderstanding but I would also like to know if this guidelines and the word **MUST** used in the same are considered (strongly or not) by IPART in approving or not a SRV levy application.

DISCUSSION WITH IPART

- ▶ 24 June and 3 August 2015 Teleconference [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], IPART.
- ▶ Feedback highlighted need for additional information to be provided to ratepayers as part of consultation, changes to 4 Year Plan and LTFP.
- ▶ Council must comply with SRV Guidelines issued by OLG.
- ▶ 2016/17 Guidelines to be issued in September/October 2015. No significant changes to consultation anticipated (FftF?), but prudent to assess before consultation.

BACKGROUND

- ▶ Council resolved 14 April 2015:
 - ▶ To adopt the attached Biodiversity Management Strategy 2015-2035 with proposed amendments.
 - ▶ To apply for an ongoing Special Rate Variation of \$500,000 per year to fund implementation of the Biodiversity Management Strategy commencing in 2016/17 and to be levied on Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential rating categories.
 - ▶ To amend all relevant strategic documents to reflect Council's resolution in Item 2 above.
 - ▶ That staff report back to Council on the results of the IPART application.



ACTIONS REQUIRED

- ▶ Delivery Plan to be amended to include the need, purpose, impacts and alternatives to the SRV
 - ▶ include a 4-year budget for the life of the DP
 - ▶ plan to be publicly exhibited for 28 days and community to be provided opportunity to provide feedback.

- ▶ Long Term Financial Plan to be amended
 - ▶ plan to be publicly exhibited for 28 days and community to be provided opportunity to provide feedback
 - ▶ Include scenarios a) with the SRV and b) without SRV.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

- ▶ Assume rate peg to increase in future by 2.5% pa
- ▶ Communication of proposed SRV to include the rate peg
 - ▶ clearly state the first year increase is to be retained permanently
 - * ▶ provide a table that shows the impact on rates over a 4 year period
 - ▶ application to provide evidence that the community is aware of the need, purpose and impact of the SRV
 - ▶ application to include the % and \$ increases for each rating category.

* COUNCIL FAILED TO DELIVER TO THE RATEPAYERS "ACTIONS REQUIRED"
ON 3 OUT OF 4 - COUNCIL'S APPLICATION SHOULD BE DISMISSED

3.6 Key findings in the HCF Report

The HRF made the following key findings through their study:

- The final sample provided a good fit against 2011 Census data, allowing for the older age profile, higher level of workforce participation, and higher overall level of household income to be expected among ratepayers compared to the community as a whole.
- The results highlighted differences in attitudes between ratepayer categories, particularly farmland and urban ratepayers, with farmland ratepayers consistently less supportive of the Draft BMS, Council, and in particular the proposed rate rise than were urban ratepayers. Demographic differences existed between the ratepayer categories, and were reflected in the survey results.
- Over 90 per cent of affected ratepayers had at least heard of the Draft BMS, although the majority indicated they did not know much about it. About one-third were at least somewhat aware.
- All of the nominated Draft BMS activities were rated as at least important by the majority of affected ratepayers in the LGA as a whole. The activity rated the most important by affected ratepayers as a whole was improved management of roadside weeds in the Lismore Council area, followed by managing threats to koalas and their habitat, and developing clear Council guidelines for sustainable development in the Lismore Council area.
- Affected ratepayers gave the activities a moderate endorsement in terms of how well the activities met their expectations for how Council should be managing biodiversity in the Lismore area. The most frequent rating (by 41% of all respondents) was that the activities met their expectations quite well. The second most frequent response was a little bit (34% of all respondents), while the proportion who said the activities did not meet their expectations at all (12%) more than balanced those who said their expectations were met very well (9%).
- The most contentious issue of any canvassed in the survey was whether the proposed rate rise would be a reasonable price to pay for the BMS activities. Just over half the affected ratepayers as a whole (61%) agreed or strongly agreed that the estimated amount of rate rise that would apply to their property was a reasonable price to pay. However, almost four in ten (37%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Further, those who disagreed tended to express their views in stronger terms than those who agreed. As a result the average rating on this question for the affected ratepayer community as a whole was just on the positive side of neutral.
- The average score for farmland ratepayers was on the negative side of neutral, rural residential ratepayers were polarised, and urban ratepayers were on the positive side of neutral and significantly more supportive of the BMS rate rise than farmland ratepayers.
- Nevertheless, the majority of all ratepayer categories and demographic groups, except those with the lowest level of household income, agreed that the proposed BMS rate rise

would be affordable for them. Inability to afford the rate rise was the main objection to it most frequently cited by respondents who opposed it. Negative perceptions of Council's efficiency and spending priorities accounted for the rest. The majority of ratepayers who objected to the rate rise, equating to about one-quarter of the affected ratepayer community, would not support it under any circumstances.

- While only a small minority (11%) of respondents indicated it would affect their views, the possibility of a SV in 2018/19 to fund infrastructure renewal has the potential to impact the overall level of support for the proposed BMS rate rise by polarising the affected ratepayer community.

The proposed SV is for a single year rate increase in 2016/17 to be retained permanently in the rates base. The percentage increase is 3.6% of Council's Total Rating Income, which includes the annual rate-peg increase of 1.8% and 1.8% to fund the BMS. In the first year (2016/17), the BMS component of the proposed SV would raise \$500,000 and in subsequent years this amount would increase by the annual rate-peg.

Rating Category	Average Increase (2.5% assumed rate peg) in Consultation	Updated Average Increase based on revised valuations
Farmland	4.7%	3.7%
Residential-Rural	4.7%	3.9%
Residential-Urban/Village	4.7%	3.6%

There are no other planned changes to the rating structure for 2016/17.

Ratepayers in the Farmland, Residential - Rural and Residential - Urban/Villages rating categories would incur both the rate-peg and BMS components of the SV to be applied to rates from 2016/17. For ratepayers in the Business rating categories, only the annual rate-peg component of the SV is to be applied to rates from 2016/17. Council considers business rates are already too high and business ratepayers would not receive sufficient benefits from implementation of the BMS to warrant paying the increase.

Only the annual rate-peg component of the SV would be applied to ratepayers in the Business rating categories. Meaning Farmland, Residential - Rural and Residential - Urban/Village rating categories will pay slightly more to make up the 3.6% of the total SV.

Council has recently received a new general valuation with a base date of 01/07/2015 which will take affect for rating purposes from 01 July 2016. This is also the proposed start date for the proposed SV.

The implementation of the new valuation, with differing valuation increases across various rating categories, plus the setting of 1.8% rate pegging limit, compared to the estimated 2.5%, means that the average increase for the relevant BMS categories has changed since the consultation. The table below sets the estimated impact on the effected rated categories: **PAGE 11**

Council was asking the community with many diverse views their vision.

Council was able to assess the community's capacity and willingness to pay the proposed SV by firstly consulting with the community widely in the *Imagine Lismore* consultation process to identify their visions.

Identifying what the community wanted and might be willing to pay for

1. Council used local markets and stalls to inform the community.
2. To suggest the average of \$25 per residential/farmland was misleading. Many ratepayers came to the Embassy confused and wanted to find out the facts.
3. The Mayor had been on ABC Radio and a fellow councillor in the local papers assuring the community that it would cost 50 cents a week or \$25 average per year.
4. The Embassy obtained a copy of Council's draft and displayed it on the wall highlighting sections for residents to view and form their own opinion.

5. The SRV cost is to be based on land values subject to ongoing rate-pegging increases for 25 years. As per Table 2 as reported in newspapers and on radio was the average.
6. Table 1 as reported on radio and in newspapers was the average.
7. This reflected in HR's phone survey – 61% said it was affordable. The Mayor and some of our Councillors were misguiding ratepayers.

In 2012 Council conducted the largest community consultation process that Lismore has ever seen, the *Imagine Lismore* community consultation process, as detailed in Section 3.1. This process identified that the community wanted Council to provide *environmental leadership*, which lead to the development of Council's *Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan* that set out for the development of a BMS to deliver on this community vision.

Further to this Council investigated options to fund implementation of the BMS. Through this analysis Council decided an SV would provide the only viable option to reliably fund the BMS in the long term.

Council's consultation process (see below) provided Council with an opportunity to identify the community's willingness and capacity to pay for an SV to implement the BMS and deliver on their vision.

Community consultation on the proposed SV

Council conducted specific consultation with the community on the proposed SV (this consultation process has been detailed in Section 4.1).

Council conducted a wide variety of consultation methods to reach as many ratepayers and residents as possible. These included inviting written submission through actively engaging the community, holding a Community Forum and engaging the Hunter Research Foundation to provide a representative view into ratepayer views. The outcomes from these fundamentally different methods resulted in contradictory results:

- ✦ Written submissions received over the initial 3 month consultation period indicated broad support for the BMS (Support – 44%, Oppose – 26%, Inconclusive – 39% and broad opposition to the proposed SV (Support – 39%, Oppose – 59%, Inconclusive – 2%),
- ✦ Written submissions received over the second consultation period of 28 days indicated broad opposition to the proposed SV (Support - 45%/19 submissions, Oppose 50%/21 submissions, Inconclusive – 5%/2 Submission),
- ✦ Community Forum ratepayers voted 9-6 against Council applying for a the proposed SV, and
- ✦ HRF survey found that 61% of affected ratepayers agreed/strongly agreed that the estimated amount of rate rise was a reasonable price to pay and 66% of ratepayers agreed/strongly agreed that the proposed rate rise was affordable.

[REDACTED]

Gary Murphy
General Manager
Lismore City Council

13th November 2015

Dear Sir,

I'm writing in response to Lismore Council's proposed *Special Rate Variation* (SRV) published in the Northern Star/Echo 29th October 2015: "However, in line with IPART requirements, Council is providing you with additional details on the SRV proposal."

I consider the ratepayers of Lismore have already made a submission in February 2015 with their response to the proposed BMS/SRV, with 169 form letters and 690 submissions, totalling 859 saying "No" to the SRV". Council responded by posting a letter to all concerned ratepayers acknowledging receipt of their submission. Seeking feedback from the community is **wrong**.

Mr. Brent McAlister sent a letter to all landholders, in December 2014, to seek support of 1.9% increase to fund the proposed BMS (Biodiversity Management Scheme). This letter was also accompanied with a *Factsheet* that clearly stated: "All ratepayers, that would pay the increase (**farmland, residential rural and residential urban/villages**)."

Council also conducted a community forum: Hunter Research a phone survey. Randomly they were selected ratepayers from the three rating categories.

I feel the information on the proposed SRV, dated October 24th to November 21st, should clearly refer to the ratepayers from "the three rating categories" and not "What will the community get for its money?"

The impact to ratepayers, showing the increases from 2016/17 to 2019/20, and the cumulative increase over those 4 years in percentage and dollars as a requirement of IPART should have been shown in the Northern Star/Echo 29th October 2014.¹

The Ecologist, Staff, and Councillors recommended to Council on HR's phone survey and chose to overlook submissions from the ratepayers, who overwhelmingly said "No to the SRV".

Hunter Research phone survey is biased towards Council in the BMS/SRV. The demographics on page 9, awareness on page 10 and affordability on page 17

¹ *Local Matters* arrived 11th November. Some ratepayers would not be aware of the changes unless they read the paper. IPART's requirements are 28 days but *Local Matters* has only given ratepayers 10 days to respond.

of HR's phone survey asked ratepayers double-barreled questions. (Only one was a stand-alone question).

IPART clearly states phone surveys not to use double-barreled questions to ratepayers.

Our elected Councillors on the vote to proceed to IPART were 6 for and 5 against. A Decision motion was lodged to be decided at next Council meeting. At the following meeting the Decision motion was lost 6-5, which is hardly a vote of confidence in the BMS/SRV.

Councillor Simon Clough, in his address to fellow Councillors chose to support HR on the phone survey of 61% saying it was affordable (61% of 209 ratepayers = 125). However, 220 in their submission to Council said: "They could not afford it." This appeared in the demographics on page 9.

HR made a point of trying to match the 2011 ABS Census. Clearly they did not, regarding:

- Age group
- Employment status
- Household income

I addressed Council during that meeting in response to Council's recommendations and said: "HR is Council's Achilles Heel".

In Council's *Fit for the Future*, template 2 sent to IPART under the heading as *Weaknesses for Communities*:

- Limited capacity to pay more rates
- Current low residential growth rates
- Current low industrial growth
- Aging demographics
- High unemployment and socioeconomic situation
- High number of residence dependent on Social Security payments.

Council and Councillors failed to address in their recommendations and deliberations on this proposed SRV rate increase to go to IPART in 2016.

Whatever the outcome when Council submits in February 16th, 2016, I intend to open *The Embassy* in February/March 2016. Ratepayers will be able to have their say directly to IPART. I will be forwarding all relevant information direct to IPART re- the proposed SRV.

Yours faithfully,

Neville King
Concerned Ratepayer

PS. No to the SRV.

9 April 2015

Mr N. King

Dear Neville,

Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) & Special Rate Variation (SRV)

I refer to our recent telephone conversation where you requested specific information on the impact on the general rates on your property for 2016/17 should Council adopt the BMS and SRV, and the NSW Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) subsequently approve Council's SRV application.

The following information is provided in response to your questions. Please note assumptions have been applied to variables that affect the amount of general rates levied in the future. As such, the information below should be treated as only a guide.

Summary

1. Property: [REDACTED]
2. Rate Assessment: [REDACTED]
3. Land Value: [REDACTED]
4. General Rates Calculations:

Year	General Rates – Urban Residential	BMS Included
2014/15	\$2,152.28	\$0.00
2015/16	\$2,203.93*	\$0.00
2016/17	\$2,316.85**	\$60.02***

INCLUDES \$370 BASE AMOUNT

103 1.8% *Estimate based on 2.4% Rate Pegging increase for 2015/16. Other factors such as subdivisions, amalgamations, valuation objection etc. in that rating category will influence the final figure.

**Estimate based on 2.4% Rate Pegging increase for 2016/17 plus SRV for BMS. Other factors such as subdivisions, amalgamations, valuation objection etc. in that rating category will influence the final figure.

***Estimate reflects amount for a \$500,000 BMS.

Should you require any further information, please contact me on 1300 87 83 87.

Yours faithfully

Rino Santin
Manager - Finance

16 January 2015

Mr N King
[Redacted Address]

Dear Sir,

RE: BMS – Rates information

Council's Customer Contact Co-Ordinator asked me to supply you with the following Rating Information that relates to the proposed Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) Special Rate Variation.

Valuation Averages

The averages used in the recent brochure were calculated based on the total land value and number of rateable assessments, for the relevant rating categories, as at 1 July 2014. For example:

	Valuation	Assessments
Residential Urban	1,253,201,499	11,314
Residential Village	147,594,700	1,042
Combined	1,400,796,199	12,356

The average equal 113,000 (rounded to the nearest 1,000).

Number of Pensioner Assessments

Council currently has 3,691 rates assessments that receive a pension rebate. This number fluctuates during the year due to new pensioners, property purchases/sales etc. Approximately 95% of these assessments receive the maximum general fund rebate of \$250 per annum.

Should you have any further enquires please do not hesitate to contact Council's Corporate Centre, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah on telephone: 1300 87 83 87.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted Signature]

Rating Officer

www.lismore.nsw.gov.au

43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah NSW 2480 • PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480 • T: 1300 87 83 87 • E: council@lismore.nsw.gov.au • ABN: 60080932837

Lismore City Council acknowledges the people of the Bundjalung Nation, traditional custodians of the land on which we work.

These mixed results presented Council with the challenge of identifying the community's true capacity and willingness to pay the proposed SV. Therefore Council weighted up the merits of each consultation method in its capacity to accurately assess the Lismore community's (as a whole) willingness and capacity to pay for the proposed SV. See this analysis of consultation methods below (LCC IPART submission page 44).'

3.1 Community Forum

Council invited 40 ratepayers to a lunch. At the end of the forum, a vote was taken 9/6, (60%) said 'NO'. Only 15 from the 40 invitees turned up. Having read the agenda, no wonder that ratepayers didn't turn up. It was biased.

NOTE: No farmer groups from the stakeholder reference group were invited to speak.

Council claimed that the low response (4%) was an under-representation of the community and lower the merit of the silent majority.

Council staff chose this method not the ratepayers and notwithstanding the biased agenda 60% of the people present on the day said NO.

Agenda

Community Forum:

Biodiversity Management Strategy / Special Rate Variation

Date/Time: Saturday 21 February 2015 – 12noon to around 4pm
Venue: Council Chambers, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah NSW
Facilitator: [REDACTED], Manager Integrated Planning, Lismore City Council

Background

The Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) originated from development of the previous and current *Imagine Lismore* community strategic plans (CSP), which involved significant public consultation. This consultation highlighted the environment as the community's number one priority. In response to this Council drafted a BMS for implementation, which is currently on public exhibition.

The Draft BMS aims to enhance Lismore's unique natural environment. This includes improving the health of our creeks and waterways, increasing habitat for native wildlife, and improving our bushland reserves. The BMS is made up of 63 diverse actions, many of which provide opportunities for landholders, community groups and industry groups to partner with Council to manage biodiversity throughout the Lismore Local Government Area.

Originally it was proposed in the CSP that the BMS would be funded with grant funding from the former Commonwealth Government's Biodiversity Fund. This was a competitive grant program that no longer exists with the new government. Consequently Council investigated alternative funding mechanisms most of which were rejected based on their inability to deliver reliable and long-term funding.

It was concluded that a Special Rate Variation (SRV) was the only way to reliably fund the BMS in the long term, without significantly impacting on Council's existing services. This is why council is proposing a rate increase and asking you, the community, if you are willing and able (or otherwise) to support a rate increase to look after Lismore's environment.

Workshop Outcome

Council requires workshop participants:

"To make recommendations to the Council on the proposed Special Rate Variation to reliably implement the Biodiversity Management Strategy in the long term to improve biodiversity in the Lismore Local Government Area".

Workshop Format

A Community Forum is a decision and recommendation making process that is primarily used for involving members of the public in decisions about strategic planning, service prioritisation or technological choices.

PTD.



Workshop participants will be made up of 40 randomly selected from a mixture of farmland, residential rural and residential urban/village ratepayers as well as representatives from the Lismore Aboriginal Advisory Group and the Ngulingah Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Workshop participants will hear information about proposals and makes recommendations based on the information given. The aim is to enable a small sample of the Lismore population to hear information, deliberate on issues and to then contribute to making recommendations which inform Council's decisions.

This Community Forum will involve:

1. a series of short presentations from a Panel of Experts on BMS initiatives and the proposed SRV.
2. direct questioning of the Panel of Experts by workshop participants.
3. a structured facilitated process to allow each participant to record their recommendation regarding the proposal. This will involve individual voting for, or against the initiative and the reasoning behind that vote. A report will be compiled including all recommendations and views.

Attached is the detailed agenda for the workshop.









Executive Director Sustainable Development

Agenda - Community Forum: Biodiversity Management Strategy/Special Rate Variation

Saturday 21 February 2015 – Council Chambers

Time		Duration
12 noon - 12.30pm	Lunch	30 mins
12.30pm – 12.40pm	Welcome Acknowledgement of Country Why are we here? How you were selected? Council's community engagement (methodology & <i>Imagine Lismore</i> process) [REDACTED]	10 mins
12.40pm – 12.45pm	Introductions and housekeeping [REDACTED] – Manager, Integrated Planning	5 mins
12.45pm – 1.00pm	Council Resolution Workshop Outcome IPART Assessment Criteria [REDACTED] – Environment Strategies Coordinator Origins of the BMS - <i>Imagine Lismore</i> Process Origins of the Rates increase proposal & the future Annie McWilliam – Manager, Integrated Planning	15 mins
	Technical Briefing Presentations	
1.00pm – 1.20pm	1. Development and Consultation process for the BMS 2. BMS Program Explained I. Internal – Council getting its house in order II. Urban – Working in the urban environment III. Rural – working with rural landholders Theresa Adams – Environment Strategies Officer	5 mins
1.20pm – 1.40pm	IV. Rural Landholder Initiative Associate Professor Caroline Sullivan, SCU	10 mins
1.40pm – 1.50pm	3. Special Rate Variation proposal [REDACTED] – Environment Strategies Officer	10 mins
1.50pm – 2.05pm	4. Community Consultation by the Hunter Research Foundation [REDACTED] [REDACTED] – Senior Research Fellow, Hunter Research Foundation	15 mins
2.05pm – 2.25 pm	5. Question time to the Panel of Experts Facilitated by [REDACTED] – Manager, Integrated Planning	20 mins
2.25pm – 2.55pm	Table Group Discussions	30 mins
2.55pm – 3.10pm	Vote – Yes/No (Reasoning record) Facilitated by [REDACTED] – Manager, Integrated Planning	15 mins
3.10pm – 3.25pm	Where to from here? [REDACTED] – Manager, Integrated Planning	15 mins
3.25pm – 3.40pm	END – Fill in survey	15 mins

Figure 1: List of representative participants from the Stakeholder Reference Group for the Biodiversity Management Strategy.

Member	Representation
 Mr Andrew Gordon	Ratepayers Association of Lismore Inc.
Dr David Newell	Southern Cross University (SCU)
Mrs Emma Stone	Richmond Landcare Inc. and Whian Whian Landcare Inc.
 Mr Jeffrey Zanette	Richmond River Banana Growers
 Mr Jolyon Burnett	Australian Macadamia Society
 Mrs Kath Robb	NSW Farmers
 Mr Kel Graham	Coo-eeEE Property Rights Inc.
Ms Leigh Shearman	Norco Co-operative Ltd
Mr Michael Delaney	EnvITE Inc.
 Mr Paul Cheeseman	Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers Inc.
Ms Donna Graham then Dr Roslyn Irwin	Friends of the Koala (Fotk)
Ms Sharon McGrigor	WIRES Northern Rivers

* 5 REPRESENTATIVES RESIGNED THE
STAKE HOLDERS GROUP. (REPRESENTING
FARMERS)?
WHY!



LOCAL PEOPLE, LOCAL PROJECTS

WHAT IS THE GREEN ARMY?

The Green Army is a six-month programme for 17-24 year olds to train and work in the environment.

Green Army projects include restoring native vegetation, heritage restoration, protecting animal habitats and regenerating wetlands in urban, rural and remote areas.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The programme provides opportunities for young Australians aged 17-24 years to gain training and experience in environmental and heritage conservation fields and explore careers in conservation management, while participating in projects that generate real benefits for the environment.

Green Army teams of 10 (up to nine participants and one team supervisor) will be deployed to projects lasting 20-26 weeks across Australia to help communities deliver local conservation outcomes.



LOCAL PEOPLE, LOCAL PROJECTS



 www.australia.gov.au/greenarmy
 1800 780 730
 greenarmy@environment.gov.au

   GreenArmyGov



Australian Government

WHO IS INVOLVED?

PARTICIPANTS

The Green Army is for young Australians aged 17–24 years who want to participate in environmental projects in their local communities. It is open to school leavers, gap year students, graduates and job seekers.

Young people should get involved in the Green Army because:

- ✓ **You will be paid an allowance**
- ✓ **You will gain practical skills, training and contacts**
 - ✓ You will be trained in first aid and work health and safety before starting a project.
 - ✓ You have the opportunity to do accredited training modules to help you prepare for the workforce or improve your career opportunities.
- ✓ **You will help deliver real benefits for the environment**
- ✓ **You will be supported in a safe environment**
 - ✓ You will be given appropriate clothing and safety gear, including boots, trousers, hat, gloves and shirts.

PROJECT HOSTS

Community organisations, Landcare groups, environment groups, Indigenous organisations, natural resource management organisations, local councils and others can apply to host a Green Army project.

Applications are sought for projects that have a clear environment or heritage conservation focus. Activities can include revegetation, habitat protection, weed control, cultural heritage conservation and land and sea management.

Each project is allocated a team of up to nine Green Army participants and a qualified team supervisor will support your project for up to 30 hours each week. In remote areas, smaller teams may be approved if necessary. This may supplement volunteer work already underway.

The Green Army Programme covers costs associated with the team including:

- ✓ participant allowances
- ✓ supervisor wages
- ✓ safety clothing and basic equipment
- ✓ participant training
- ✓ local transport costs
- ✓ participant insurances
- ✓ items such as seeds, chemicals, fencing materials and equipment (with an average value of \$10,000 per project).



SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Australian Government has engaged five Service Providers to help deliver the programme. They are responsible for recruiting participants and team supervisors, managing work health and safety, providing training, paying allowances, and overseeing project management.

The Service Providers are:

- ✓ Campbell Page Limited together with Skillset Limited.
ACT, NSW and QLD
- ✓ CoAct.
ACT, NSW, NT, Vic and WA
- ✓ Conservation Volunteers Australia.
ACT, NSW, NT, QLD, SA, Tas, Vic and WA
- ✓ Manpower together with Landcare Australia Limited.
ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, Tas, Vic, WA
- ✓ Workskil Australia Incorporated.
SA

CAMPBELL PAGE



Service Providers work with Project Hosts to ensure projects meet community environmental plans and needs.



Landholders have a legal obligation

Landholders have a legal obligation under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* (the Act) to manage weeds on their property, and it is part of being a good neighbour and land custodian.

Far North Coast Weeds is the local control authority responsible for controlling weeds on public roads, advising landholders on weed control, and for regulating the Act.

To prioritise where funding and control efforts should be focussed, weed species are categorised as Noxious Weeds, National Environmental Alert Weeds, and Weeds of National Significance (WoNS). These listings may vary from State to State, and from one local control authority to another.

There is also some overlap, with several species being on more than one list.

To be classified as a noxious weed and come under the control of the Act, a plant has to have the potential to cause more harm than benefit to the environment and the community.

Its management and control have to be economically viable. That is, the cost of its control measures is less than its potential damage bill. The weed also has to be physically possible.

Noxious weeds are classified into five groups.



Alligator Weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*), a class 2 noxious weed.

Class 1 and **class 2** weeds are a potential serious threat to agriculture or the environment. These species are prohibited.

They are considered eradicable because, at this point, they only exist in pockets.

These classes include Alligator Weed and Hymenachne. If you have, or think you may have, these weeds, Far North Coast Weeds will help.

Weeds in **class 3** and **class 4** are serious threats and may already



Giant Rat's Tail Grass (*Sporobolus pyramidalis*), a class 3 noxious weed.

be widely distributed in an area or not, but are likely to spread farther afield.

Class 3 is regionally controlled, while class 4 is locally controlled. These classes include familiar plants such as Privet, Camphor Laurel and Lantana.

Class 5 weeds, which are restricted plants, have the potential to spread beyond the State, as well as within.

Willow is an example of a class 5 weed.

Weeds in classes 1, 2, and 5 are 'notifiable' to the local weed control authorities.

National Environmental Alert Weeds (NEAW) are those that have been identified as being in the early stages of becoming a problem. With already established populations in bushland areas, they are a future threat to biodiversity.

Golden Rain Tree (*Koelreuteria elegans* subsp. *Formosa*) and Rosewood (*Tipuana tipu*) are on this list.

If managed now, hopefully these species and others on the NEAW list will not become as ubiquitous as Camphor Laurel and Privet are today.

Some species are a serious problem over a large area of Australia. These plants have been designated WoNS.

The plants on this list were chosen for their invasive abilities, impact, potential for spread, and social-economic and environmental values. WoNS include Lantana and Blackberry.

Weed management and minimising the threat to biodiversity needs a community effort.

Far North Coast Weeds and local Landcare groups can help with identification and advice on removal and containment strategies.



Far North Coast Weeds, PO Box 230, Lismore NSW 2480

P: (02) 6623 3833 • F: (02) 6622 1181 • E: fncw@fncw.nsw.gov.au • W: www.fncw.nsw.gov.au

BUYERS BEWARE

Far North Coast Weeds
Far North Coast County Council

Advice on weeds for intending property purchasers

FNCW March 2012

The purchase of land, be it a suburban building block or multi-hectare property, is a major decision and can be emotive.

Noxious weeds are often forgotten among the myriad considerations involved.

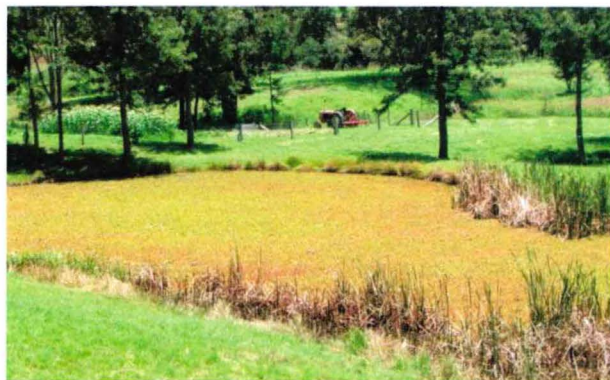
Before signing a contract, prospective purchasers should take the following considerations into account:

- Are there noxious weeds on the land?
- Are noxious weed infestations being managed?
- What are the costs of weed control?
- If the land is to be used for farming, will weed infestations lead to production losses?

Privacy laws prevent Council from disclosing weed infestation information to prospective buyers without the owner's consent.

What should I do before purchase?

1. Before buying land you should arrange for someone who knows about weeds to inspect the property with you. If weeds are found on the property, a weed control operator can provide an estimate of how much control work will cost. Council does not provide information on such costs, but can provide contact details of suitable experienced weed control contractors.



Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*), a class 3 noxious weed, covers the dam of otherwise pristine farmland.

2. Your solicitor should request a Section 64 Certificate from Council. A Section 64 Certificate will provide information on current notices over the property or money payable to Council in relation to noxious weeds. These debts and outstanding notices remain with the property on sale and become the responsibility of the buyer.

The small cost of an independent inspection and the certificates may save you thousands of dollars in weed control.

If you need more information, contact Far North Coast Weeds on (02) 6623 3833.

Considerations before you choose your rural property

Is it a high maintenance piece of land? Think about what time you are willing to commit to the maintenance. Do you like to mow and garden all weekend, or do you want a low maintenance bush block that has a low carrying capacity? After the initial purchase, can you afford the equipment you will need to look after the property? That is: a tractor, slasher, and spray gear.

Are the properties in the area cared for in a manner you will accept? What is growing in the area? If it is a lantana-infested valley and you intend to be a weed-free property.

How much do you really know about the area? Does it flood and if so, what weeds will be brought on to the property from upstream? What is above you in the catchment is a factor, as that will be shared with you.

Can you live next door to the current activity? If there are weeds over the fence line, odds are there always will be. Do not think that when you move there it will change, it will not. What you buy today is what you live in.

Do you know the weeds on the property, and can they be eradicated? Buy a Giant Rat's Tail Grass infested property because it is cheap and you will live to regret it. It will cost more in time, labour, chemical, and loss of productivity than the property is worth. Privet in the valley may cause you an allergy that makes living there unbearable.

Have you had a weed inspector advise you prior to purchase?

What is the aspect? South facing blocks will always have Crofton Weed.

Are there water weeds on nearby dams that can be brought in by ducks or floods?

Are there any easements through the property? If there are, will weeds be transported on to your property by vehicle traffic or stock movement?

The weeds that are there now tell the story of the property, so before you commit to buying have a chat with the local weed inspector.

Far North Coast Weeds, PO Box 230, Lismore NSW 2480

P: (02) 6623 3833 • F: (02) 6622 1181 • E: fncw@fncw.nsw.gov.au • W: www.fncw.nsw.gov.au

Newspaper Articles included in submission:

(1) Article Title: 'We need a new council'

(2) Northern River Echo

August 27 2015

Council told to talk to public

4. Assessment Criterion.

Council	Financial Year	Farmland	Residential	Business
Lismore	2014/15	\$2,166	\$1,136	\$4,582
	2015/16	\$2,221	\$1,163	\$4,678
Ballina	2014/15	\$1,316	\$860	\$2,926
	2015/16	\$1,384	\$901	\$3,045
Byron	2014/15	\$1,787	\$1,077	\$2,668
	2015/16	\$1,827	\$1,101	\$2,686
Clarence Valley	2014/15	\$1,249	\$918	\$2,469
	2015/16	\$1,306	\$939	\$2,503
Kyogle	2014/15	\$1,328	\$785	\$993
	2015/16	\$1,472	\$864	\$969
Richmond Valley	2014/15	\$1,270	\$785	\$2,219
	2015/16	\$1,334	\$808	\$2,359

This graph highlights the plight of many ratepayers.
11% (\$4.7 million) owed to council in Rates and Charges.

For Council to decide on the 14th April 2015, the community had the willingness and the capacity to pay the SRV.

Clearly Council is not listening to the ratepayers and treating us with contempt.
Council is duplicating by introducing a BMS on to ratepayers/farmers.

- I. Far North Coast Weeds (County Council)
- II. Flood Mitigation (Richmond River County Council)

Farmers already have to pay to these councils and to ask for more is unfair.

- * Look at the rates above!
 - a. Green Army (Local People, Local Projects)
 - b. Work for the Dole.

These need to be used by Council.

Written submissions

Merits

- This method attracts those with strong interest on the topic
- Captures a wide audience and a wide range of views
- Provides easy and varied ways for people of different capacities to provide a submission (e.g. online, walk-in, email, letter).

Challenges

- This method does not provide quantitative and representative views within the community as it does not provide a random sampling method, tends not to tap into those who are relatively happy and attracts those with strong views.
- There is no way for Council to determine the proportion of ratepayers in each category that provided submissions, meaning it does not provide a quantitative breakdown of views in each of the categories and does not consider the proportion of ratepayers in each category.
- It is difficult to identify duplicated submissions (e.g. emails provide an avenue for making a submission without providing an address).
- Council is unable to verify the identity of each submitter and thereby validate the submission.

Community Forum

Merits

- Participants can make independent, informed recommendations to Council
- It is not possible for particular interest groups to skew representation
- The broadest possible cross section of opinion is accessed to assist Council's decision making.

Challenges

- A low response rate (in this case 4% of those invited to attend) lowered the merits of this method as it undermines the random sampling method and means there is underrepresentation of the 'silent majority' (those less engaged members of the community).
- If the invitees do not show on the day there may be a skewed cross-section of the three ratepayer categories on the day. This could compromise the representativeness of the participants.

Independent, stratified random survey of ratepayers by Hunter Research Foundation

Merits

- Ratepayers were randomly selected from the White Pages and matched against property addresses in the rating database

Council is justifying their Environment Department. (3 Ecologists) by applying for an SRV of \$500000.

Budget

	2016/17	2019/20
Extension Officer	\$86000	\$92600
Project Implementation	\$33400	\$116500
Other Implementations	\$63600	\$85800
Total	\$183000	\$294900

In the first year \$183000 subtracted from \$500000, leaves very little for the BMS.

Council stated that "that the community had the capacity to pay" on the pretext for the BMS to raise rates.

4.2 Written Submissions

- a. Council invited ratepayers to make a submission, but they chose the method e.g. letter or email. But Council concluded, that "Council is unable to identify each submitter and validate their submission." They chose to:
 - Combine the BMS with the SRV.
 - Involve the community and residents to promote the BMS over the strong farmer voice saying No to further regulations.
 - NOTE: It would have been easier to ask all ratepayers to quote their Rate Assessment Number. Talk about move the goalposts.

2. Hunter Research Foundation

- Did not match the Census count 2012.
- Not achieve a representative sample of the community by phone as many residents were on holidays. In the age bracket 18-49, 50-60% no longer have a landline (communication with Telstra in Lismore's LGA).
- Surveyed more respondents in the higher wage bracket 51%, but low-income respondents 33%. This confirmed that HR did not follow the 2012 census as close as possible.

For Council to proceed for an SRV based on the phone survey, shows that they are not listening to the ratepayer.

- Multiple contact attempts yielded a high response rate (88%), with very few people refusing to take part
- Small ratepayer categories (i.e. Farmland and Residential – Rural) were oversampled
- The sample was designed to give each affected ratepayer category a ‘voice’ (since ratepayers were targeted, there was high confidence that the survey captured the views of those most likely to be paying).

Challenges

- The sample size able to be achieved depends on the amount of funding available to contribute to the costly exercise of engaging an independent consultant. However sample size and true representation can be tested for its accuracy by comparing survey results from larger surveys such as the Australian census survey (e.g. the HRF survey demographics results are comparable with that of the last census count in 2011, meaning it is likely the survey achieved a representative sample of the community in the Lismore LGA).

In assessing the merits and challenges of each method, above, Council decided on 14 April 2015 that the community had the willingness and capacity to pay for the proposed SV, and apply to IPART for the proposed SV.

This decision was partly based on the higher level of confidence that was offered by the independent stratified random survey of ratepayers conducted by the HRF (Section 4.2). This level of confidence was fostered by the sample being considered representative of all impacted ratepayers in the Local Government Area (LGA) and it captured the silent majority.

Another supportive factor was the amount of the SV. Based on the approved rate peg of 1.8%, the SV would have the following impact on the average farmland property rates in 2016/17 - \$88 (\$48 for the BMS), average residential - rural property rates - \$55 (\$30 for the BMS) and average residential - urban/village property rates - \$44 (\$24 for the BMS). This is considered affordable.

At the same time, the Council acknowledges that the Lismore Local Government Area is disadvantaged from a socio-economic perspective. Based on the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) published by the Australian Bureau of Statistic.

1. The Lismore LGA is ranked 66 out of the 152 LGAs within NSW
2. The Lismore LGA is ranked 216 out of the 563 LGAs with Australia.

The lower the ranking is an indication of an LGAs relative disadvantaged compared to other areas.

The Council was also mindful that Lismore average rates are high by comparison to other local councils as presented below:

	<i>Subtotal</i>		\$145,000	\$77,000	\$78,800	\$86,200
Working with rural landholders						
Implementation						
Rural landholder capacity building - project implementation	44	2016/17	33,400	107,200	105,200	2019/20 116,500
Rural landholder capacity building - extension officer	45		86,000	88,200	90,400	92,600
Rural and rural residential collaborative information pack	46		5,000	5,100	5,300	5,400
Coastal Zone Management Plan implementation - riparian restoration in rural areas	48		38,600	48,400	44,700	48,100
Community and industry group partnerships	47		20,000	30,800	36,800	32,300
Rate rebate program	38			10,300	10,500	10,800
	<i>Subtotal</i>		\$183,000	\$290,000	\$292,900	\$305,700
Working in the urban environment						
Implement components of the Sport and Recreation Plan	54		20,000	21,500	26,300	26,900
Wellbeing and tourism initiatives	54		5,000	5,100	5,300	5,400
Weed management in urban bushland	52		25,000	30,800	31,500	32,300
Weed management in priority urban riparian areas	53		25,000	25,600	26,300	21,500
Road and traffic management for wildlife	13		26,000	25,600	26,300	10,800
Koala Plan of Management Implementation						
Advisory Group	14		1,000	1,000	1,100	1,100
Training program for development assessment	36		10,000			
Koala habitat restoration program	14		30,000	35,900	36,800	32,300
Study: koala density and population in koala planning area	14		30,000			16,200
	<i>Subtotal</i>		\$172,000	\$145,500	\$153,600	\$146,500
	Total per year		\$500,000	\$512,500	\$525,300	\$538,400

When would the proposed rate increase start?

Council will submit an application for an SRV to IPART in February 2016. It is expected that IPART will make its decision by May 2016. Should the application be approved by IPART, the proposed increase could commence from 1 July 2016.

Financial Models

Two financial models have been developed to demonstrate the impact of the special rate variation on the General Fund. They are:-

Model 4 – Includes Special Rate Variation for Biodiversity Management Strategy

Model 5 – Excludes Special Rate Variation for Biodiversity Management Strategy

For each of the models, the following reporting has been provided and is attached:-

1. Income Statement
2. Balance Sheet
3. Cash Flow Statement
4. Dashboard (Key Performance Indicators)

Long term financial plan goals

The LTFP is simply a financial assessment of the activities and projects that Council proposes to undertake in the short, medium and long term.

The following fundamental objectives have been applied in the LTFP:

- Progressively achieve long term financial sustainability by generating at least a balanced annual result before capital grants and contributions by 2023
- Maintain a balanced annual budget from a "cash perspective" - that is, operations are fully funded
- Progressive increases to asset maintenance and renewal funding in order to maintain current asset service levels and conditions
- Committed to identifying and implementing initiatives which reduces expenditure and/or increases income and therefore improves Council's bottom line and/or its capacity to deliver services
- Eliminate borrowings as a funding source for asset renewals, as opposed to major new projects where inter-generational equity issues justify borrowing
- Maintains debt service ratio within accepted industry benchmarks



I read with interest Council's Resolution – "Do better financially" (Echo Jan. 14th, 2016), from Lismore Council's G.M. Gary Murphy.

Considering Council's submission to the Independent pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of Councils' "Fit for the Future" proposal.

At what stage does Council consider ratepayers to do better financially when in Council's Report, they have addressed key challenges:

- Communities' limited capacity to pay more rates
- Communities declining ability to pay
- Current low Residential Growth rates
- Current low Industrial growth
- Ageing population.

Mr Murphy said tough decisions would need to be made

Re:

- financial sustainability
- zero-based budgeting and
- a service level review.

Many ratepayers **now** have tough decisions to make in their capacity and willingness to pay more rates. Affordable housing needs affordable rates.

Lismore Business Chamber took aim at the Council's overtly "Left" stance (driven by a 6-5 Councillor majority) and resulting decisions making poor financial management and high Business Rates. The ratepayers also have high Farmland, Residential/Rural, Residential/Urban and Village Rates.

To allow Council to impose the proposed Special Rate Variation to go to IPART this year and a further SRV in 2018/19, **when Council is owed 4.65 million in Rates and Charges**. And, considering the **Ratepayers in their submissions to Council said "NO"** to the *Biodiversity Management Strategy* to be funded by the ratepayers of Lismore is another burden to ratepayers.

To G.M. Gary Murphy,

You identify Council's need to govern well and respectfully engage with the community. **Six of your Councillors clearly did not, in their decision to go to IPART, and to further propose an SRV of 7.2% in 2018/2019. This is not taking responsible action!**

Are the Ratepayers "Fit for the Future"?

As I wrote in the Northern Star in 1999 – "Can we Afford this Council?"

Yours sincerely

Neville King
Richmond Hill

ATTACHMENT 1 - COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ACTIVITY REGISTER FOR LISMORE CITY COUNCIL'S PROPOSED S.R.V.

Date	Description
<u>24TH</u> <u>SEPT.</u> <u>2014</u>	- STAKE HOLDER REFERENCE GROUP PRESENTATION ON PROPOSED BMS/SRV (NOTE: 5 FARMER GROUPS RESIGN)
<u>20TH</u> <u>DEC</u> <u>2014</u>	- RATEPAYERS/ FARMER RECEIVE FACT SHEET FROM COUNCIL (NOTE: CHRISTMAS SCHOOL HOLIDAYS FOR 6 WEEKS) COUNCIL STAFF ALSO ON HOLIDAYS "APPROX. 17,000 RATEPAYERS" "SUBMISSION TO CLOSE 24TH FEBRUARY."
<u>15TH</u> <u>JAN</u> <u>2015</u>	- HUNTER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 200 RATEPAYERS/ FARMERS SURVEYED BY PHONE <u>NOTE</u> : D.L.G. GUIDELINES 400 RATEPAYERS
<u>28TH</u> <u>JAN</u> <u>2015</u>	- COMMUNITY AND RATEPAYERS "EMBASSY" OPENS FARMERS/ RATEPAYERS EXPLAINED THE FACTS AS PRINTED IN COUNCILS DRAFT ON PROPOSED BMS/SRV
<u>3RD</u> <u>FEB</u> <u>2015</u>	- MEDIA - T.V. PRIME AND NBN - EMBASSY FEATURED ON LOCAL NEWS.

Date	Description
<u>8TH FEB</u> TO <u>15TH FEB</u> 2015	- SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STAFF PROMOTE BMS/SRV AT LOCAL MARKETS <u>NOTE</u> : MANY ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE, MULTIABLE OCCUPANCY (M.O.) ATTEND THESE EVENTS.
<u>24TH FEB</u> 2015	- "EMBASSY" CLOSES SUBMISSIONS CLOSE DURING 28TH JAN TO 24TH FEB - TWO OUTDOOR TENT EMBASSYS WERE OPENED AT THE CATTLE-SALE YARDS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO FARMERS
<u>C O N T.</u>	- SELF-FUNDED RETIREES ADDRESSED AT THEIR A.G.M. RECORD NUMBER SUBMISSIONS SENT TO COUNCIL.
<u>14TH APRIL</u> 2015	- COUNCIL AND H.R.F. RECOMMENDATION WAS PRESENTED TO COUNCILLORS - 6 FOR / 5 AGAINST TO PROCEED TO. IPART RECISSION MOTION LODGED - LOST 6/5
<u>8TH SEPT</u>	- COUNCIL MEETING STAFF WERE INFORMED THAT COUNCIL WAS NOT FOLLOWING GUIDELINES OF O.L.G AND WAS CRITICAL THEY IN FACT FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES!

Date	Description
<u>24th</u> <u>OCT</u> 2015	LISMORE CITY COUNCIL "ROUND 2" FOR 28 DAYS WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IN SATURDAY'S "NORTHERN STAR" AND "ECHO" NEWSPAPERS AND "LOCAL MATTERS" NEWSLETTER - FARMERS AND RATEPAYERS RECEIVED 11TH NOV — 10 DAYS BEFORE SUBMISSIONS CLOSED! ?
<u>8th</u> <u>DEC</u> 2015	COUNCIL MEETING - COUNCIL STAFF RECOMMENDED TO COUNCILLORS H.R.F. PHONE SURVEY WAS CONSIDERED REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF ALL IMPACTED RATEPAYERS IN LISMORE'S L.G.A. COUNCILLORS VOTED 6 FOR — 5 AGAINST
	<u>NOTE</u> : THIS DECISION WAS TAKEN ON 61% SAID IT WAS AFFORDABLE ON THE PHONE SURVEY (61% = 125 RATEPAYERS FROM 209) 899 SUBMISSIONS FROM RATEPAYER/FARMERS SAID LOUD AND CLEAR " <u>NO</u> " TO S.R.V.
	<u>FOOTNOTE</u> : THE 6 COUNCILLORS (6 PACK) MOVED TO HAVE THE B.M.S./SRV TABLED TO PROCEED TO IPART. A RESCIND MOTION LODGED BY 5 COUNCILLORS WAS LOST 6-5
	THE MOTION TO PROCEED TO IPART BY 16TH FEBRUARY, 2016 WAS CARRIED. CLEARLY THE 6 COUNCILLORS ARE NOT LISTENING TO FARMERS/RATEPAYERS.

H.R.F. SURVEY HAS BEEN PROVED TO HAVE MISLED RATEPAYERS/
FARMERS

Summary

by Neville King.

1. The implementation of the B.M.S has been considered in the context of Council's long term Financial Plan (L.T.F.P.) a key element of the "Imagine Lismore 10 Year Plan".

The L.T.F.P. set out a road of financial sustainability by using existing resources more wisely and potentially seeking a Rate increase above current rating caps, the current LTFP proposes a separate S.R.V. of \$2 million per year from 2018/19 for renewal of infrastructure predominantly roads.

2. The "Imagine Lismore" community consultation process.

The Environment emerged as the number "1" priority (in Council's eyes.)

The 10 YEAR Plan included Infrastructure, Council Management and the promoting of Lismore's C.B.D, etc.. Environment B.M.S. is but one of the many issues.

3. Council's Staff in the "Environment Strategies and Integrated Planning" Office within Council came to the conclusion for the B.M.S to work they proposed an S.R.V. to seek to raise an ongoing \$500,000 per annum from Farmland, Residential Urban ratepayers.

Staff selected Christmas and the School holiday period to post out their Fact Sheet to all the Ratepayers. Consequently it was

inappropriate to say the least!

In light of this, the "Embassy opened on the 28th January, 2015 to inform the Ratepayers and Community. Local papers and T.V Channels picked up on the story, and as a result the Farmers and Residents had a voice.

Council invited Ratepayers to make a written submission asking if they would be willing and able to support a rate increase, the answer loud and clear was "NO" to a S.R.V. A record number of Ratepayers made submissions to the Council by the 24th February, 2015

Council chose three methods - ① Written submissions ② Community Forum and ③ Independent Consultation by Hunter Research phone survey.

The Office of Local Government (O.L.G) issued guidelines for council to follow. They were clear and precise. Council chose not to, and as a result at an ordinary Council meeting was informed that in fact it was critical that they follow the guidelines.

Council had to Re-Advertise in local papers etc in October 2015

"Round 2" Ratepayers had to re-submit their submission on the proposed BMS/SRV Ratepayers said "NO" to SRV.

Council chose not to show Ratepayers the cumulative effect R.E: Dollars and Percentage over 4 years. Ratepayers deserve better. Council got it wrong in recommending to our Councillors ignoring the submissions from Ratepayers over the H.R.F Phone survey.

4. At this stage I would like to raise the question of our eleven Councillors (who are voted in by the Residents to act on our behalf)

From the start of the BMS/SRV six Councillors moved to adopt Council's proposed staff recommendation and H.R.F. summary and moved to proceed to IPART. the vote was 6 FOR - 5 AGAINST. Clearly the 6 Councillor (6 PACK) 4 Labour + 2 Greens were not listening or accepting the written Ratepayers submissions from the Farmers and Residents. They chose to support Council and not the residents of Lisimore.

Our Mayor Jenny Dowell who has worked tirelessly for the Community has failed the Ratepayers in this one.

5. In assessing the merits and challenges of each method, Council decided on the 14th April, 2015 that the Community had the willingness and capacity to pay for the proposed SRV (on H.R.F phone survey 125 from 200 Ratepayers) - At the same time the Council acknowledges that the Lisimore local Government area is disadvantaged from a Socio-Economic perspective. Six of our Councillors failed us! Come September new Councillor Elections happen, meaning this elected Council would not be able to deliver on the Community vision. Farmers/Ratepayers clearly said "NO" to the SRV - The six will move on,

the 11% of Ratepayers unable to meet their rates and charges will grow.

The graph below showing Lismore as the highest Rates of the 5 Neighbouring Councils!
 "WE WILL STILL MAINTAIN THIS MANTEL"!

Council	Financial Year	Farmland	Residential	Business
Lismore	2014/15	\$2,166	\$1,136	\$4,582
	2015/16	\$2,221	\$1,163	\$4,678
Ballina	2014/15	\$1,316	\$860	\$2,926
	2015/16	\$1,384	\$901	\$3,045
Byron	2014/15	\$1,787	\$1,077	\$2,668
	2015/16	\$1,827	\$1,101	\$2,686
Clarence Valley	2014/15	\$1,249	\$918	\$2,469
	2015/16	\$1,306	\$939	\$2,503
Kyogle	2014/15	\$1,328	\$785	\$993
	2015/16	\$1,472	\$864	\$969
Richmond Valley	2014/15	\$1,270	\$785	\$2,219
	2015/16	\$1,334	\$808	\$2,359

To the Chairman, Dr. Peter J. Boxall and Board,

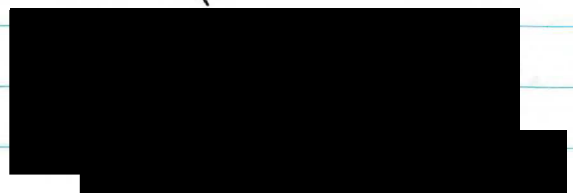
You have the opportunity to consider the Residents of Lismore their aspirations and future with only 0.3% growth.

Raising rates beyond the Rate peg when this Council is unable to "Fix the Roads" even with the highest rates.

With more staff than any Council in the Northern Rivers similar to the numbers of Ratepayers and Residents as Ballina, who pay less rates as shown in graph.

In anticipation,

Steve King



5. Council Decides – 14th April 2015

The ratepayer had the willingness and the capacity to pay the SRV.

Council invited ratepayers to make a submission:

- Round 1: Ratepayers said No
- Community Forum: Ratepayers said No
- Round 2: Ratepayers said No.

We spoke loud and clear and were definitely ahead of those supporting the BMS.

HR was not a representative of all in its phone survey. The impact on ratepayers was not proven. 200 out of 17128 ratepayers = 1.2%. This is not a representative sample.

The impact is not reflected in the average farmland, residential rural, residential urban. Ratepayers are being misled.

Council acknowledges: "that the Lismore Local Government Area is disadvantaged from socio-economic perspective". Council is planning for affordable housing. Affordable housing needs affordable rates.

Lismore Council's decisions and assumptions do not add up to being responsible, and I'm afraid the reality is that our City of Lismore cannot afford this Council on its present path.

In anticipation of your response,



Neville King

4th MARCH 2016

5TH JULY 1999

HAVING made a submission to council on the proposed 1999/2000 management plans for Lismore ratepayers, I urge council and councillors to reconsider.

I believe this council needs a change of direction and as I pointed out in my submission, one has to understand the market place we live in and not to burden ratepayers with a increase above the 2.4 per cent allowed by the Local Government Minister, Harry Woods.

The grandiose schemes proposed by this council and councillors are beyond the capacity of many ratepayers in this economic climate on the North Coast.

All things being equal, with full employment and growth in the city, the proposed joint venture swimming pool and airport new terminal and carpark, could be justified.

In fact, this is far from reality and to expect ratepayers to pick up the tab is beyond expectations with many ratepayers having to make cuts in their home budgets just to survive, let alone face any increase in rates.

These facts are known in your own publication 'community profile' and 1996 census.

I believe this council is empire build-

ing. It needs to be informed by the elected representatives of the ratepayers, you the councillors, that this community can no longer afford this council on its present course.

It needs to rein in its spendings and identify areas where cuts can be made in the management levels and group functions that this council has created over its term of office and which the 12 councillors have presided over.

I believe a number of the departments this council have created cannot be justified in this economic climate. Use the money saved to spend on the roads and city works and allow Lismore to develop to its potential as the capital of the Northern Rivers.

I urge this council to listen to the ratepayers drop its grandiose schemes, concentrate on the road infrastructure without increasing rates above the allowable increase, consider ways to raise extra revenue from all the community and not expect just a few to fund the roads and city works.

As I pointed out in my submission, if this council expects growth, it will have to look at ways to bring our rates to be competitive with our neighbouring shires. I am still waiting for a reply to the justi-

fication of our rates being on average of \$194.50, higher than our four neighbouring councils.

I question the appointment of a debt collection officer. In the 1998 financial year council was owed \$1 million in general rates and charges and this year, 1999, anticipated to be \$1 million still owing to council.

This issue needs to be addressed and a full explanation to ratepayers as to the reasons why.

Many ratepayers are in financial trouble. The fact is no longer can Lismore

council pass on rate increases without a major in-house staffing and department review.

The question is: It is not what the ratepayers can afford but can the ratepayers afford Lismore City Council?

I urge councillors to reconsider the 4.71 per cent above the allowable increase. Also for council to reconsider its management plan and present a workable and fundable solution that ratepayers can afford.

Make the rates affordable. Get your priorities right to work with the ratepayers.

D Day 16th February 2016

Decision Day: Council has submitted its application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (Ipart), suggesting increases for ratepayers.

Ratepayers need to send an email or a letter to Ipart by mid-March stating your views. I suggest you make it clear that ratepayers' "No means No" is exactly what we mean. This, ratepayers have already expressed to the Special Rate Variation.

Council failed to show the cumulative effect to ratepayers as per the Ipart guidelines. Your rates will increase in ^{years} four (2019/~~2020~~) by 12.8%.

Budget Summary: This includes an Extension Officer - \$86000 in 2016/~~2017~~ and \$92600 in 2019/~~2020~~.

Project Implementation: \$33000 for 2016/~~2017~~ and \$116500 for 2019/~~2020~~.

BMS (Biodiversity Management Scheme) -\$500000

Nett. Increase: \$500000 - \$(33000 + 116500) = \$380600

Councillors voted 6/5 to proceed to Ipart. (Dowell, Houston, Richie, Smith, Clough and Ekins). In the upcoming Council Election, remember the "6-pack" and they voted and moved at a Council Meeting for a further \$2 million in 2018/~~2019~~ to fund infrastructure. Note that, 11% of ratepayers are behind in their rates and charges.

Contact Lismore City Council for a copy of their submission application to Ipart (Part B) for further information.

Forward your letters or emails to:

Mailing Address:

Ipart PO Box K35

Haymarket Post Shop 1240

Email:

localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au

Can we afford this Council?

Neville King

[Redacted signature]

Letters and emails

1. A concerned ratepayer submitted to Council his view against the BMS but he is still waiting for a replay from staff.
2. Copy of my inquiry to Council re: estimate of rates 2016/17 with inclusion of SRV based on my land evaluation.
3. Copy of letters sent to GM Gary Murphy.
4. Copy of my address to Councillors before business meeting addressing report on SRV.
5. Emails I received after interview on PRIME and NBN news stations.
6. Other correspondence.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear General Manager,

RE: Submission on LCC draft Biodiversity Management Strategy

Thank you for allowing comment on Lismore City Council's draft Biodiversity Management Strategy. Please note my comments are highlighted below with an underline. Sections directly reproduced from the draft strategy are *italicised* with the major headings and topics in **bold**. Note that this is my personal submission as a rate payer in the Lismore local government area.

The objectives of Lismore City Council's Biodiversity Management Strategy:

1. *To maintain or increase biodiversity and sustain ecological processes by developing greater understanding of the flora and fauna, habitats and ecological processes of the Lismore LGA and improving community awareness of biodiversity through education.*

Response: This objective statement is flawed: Simply *developing greater understanding of the flora and fauna, habitats and ecological processes of the Lismore LGA* is not going to maintain or increase biodiversity. That is, the ecology of an area still exists whether we understand it or not! To fully understand the ecology of various areas proper scientific studies need to be carried out. These studies are best managed by research institutions such as universities or the CSIRO etc.

Additionally, the community has been made aware of ecological issues for quite some time. The engagement of the community needs to be seen as achieving close to maximum awareness already. Those that are motivated will engage in ecological restoration and protection. Those that are not interested will not. Those not interested include people that have limitations on time, finances, or even ideological reasons. This may be due to work, family commitments, or commitments to other social/philanthropic organisations or other commitments.

2. *To foster partnerships with, and develop opportunity for, rural landholders, industry, indigenous and community groups to improve the management of biodiversity across the Lismore LGA.*

Response: LCC already has the opportunity to engage in partnerships in the LGA through its many existing programmes and the programmes of other organisations. Leveraging and renewing these partnerships will not require additional financial resources compared with redeveloping completely new relationships.

3. *To promote a landscape connectivity approach as the basis for biodiversity management*

Response: The concept of landscape connectivity to ensure good biodiversity outcomes is not in doubt but can be obtained by a variety of measures.

4. *To contribute to the identification and mitigation of the pressures on biodiversity values.*

Response: Where gaining further knowledge is desirable it is possible to take action on ecological matters with our current level of understanding. In particular, the known threats to biodiversity are already set out in sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 of the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy. Where there is a presently known real and evident problem this should be tackled first. Furthering understanding should be conducted side by side with on ground works. The on-ground workers have the best feel for what is necessary and the additional development of additional paper studies and strategies just becomes a (sub-standard) academic exercise.

5. *To provide a framework of targeted management priorities to maintain and improve biodiversity in the Lismore LGA.*

Response: A guiding document summarises existing issues, activities and responsibility. It does not need to be an onerous and expensive task. Indeed, much of this has been identified in the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy already.

6. *To build capacity and increase opportunities for landholders and community groups to enhance and manage biodiversity values on the land across all tenures in the LGA.*

Response: The introduction of additional rates will reduce the capacity for landholders to enhance and manage biodiversity on their land. The 'Nationalisation' of community opportunities for private land management is a concern as it removes responsibility and connection by the landholders and community. Instead it will often lead to the idea "that is

council's job, not mine". Renters will also be hit with increased rents as landlords pass on the additional rates further reducing the capacity of every part of the community.

7. To provide for ecologically sustainable development

Response: LCC already has planning powers to establish conditions that have positive ecological benefits on developments in the region. Additionally, LCC have recently reduced funding for many of their environmentally related programmes (parks and open spaces, rangers, etc). Ecologically sustainable development must occur side by side with economic and socially sustainable principles. For example, economically it is difficult to justify such actions as installing wind and solar powered lighting, solar systems, solar rechargeable cars and the like while ignoring the economic cost of these things (when compared to the unmeasurable effect these measures will have on climate change). The sentiment that rate payers must pay for councillors "good ideas" without a triple bottom line approach is something that needs to be discouraged. Therefore, allowing a special rate variation for this and the many other reasons outlined in this submission is not supported.

Specific comments on the application and scope of the strategy

7.2.1 Clearing and fragmentation of native vegetation

Comment: This section refers mostly to historical clearing that took place at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. The now fragmented native vegetation communities are generally protected from clearing under law (e.g. Native Vegetation Act 2003, parts remaining of the Native Vegetation Protection Act 1997, Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995, Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, and their associated regulations).

The community is generally aware of the 19th and 20th century environmental history of the area because it is actively taught in schools and there are various public education resources and programmes produced by many local organisations including LCC. Because of this the community has been proactive in protecting and enhancing remnant vegetation in both rural and urban areas.

7.2.2 Weeds

Comment: Weeds are the biggest threat to biodiversity in our region. This is the first point of call for managing biodiversity and the one with the most obvious and measurable outcome. However, further specific reference to the draft plan dot points on weeds is made below.

- *Noxious weeds, as listed under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 (NSW).*

Comment: Noxious weeds are supposed to be managed by Far North Coast Weeds County Council. Either LCC needs to assume complete control for noxious weed management in its LGA and incorporate this into its biodiversity strategy or FNCW needs to be better supported engaged to undertake the works specifically required by LCC.

- *Weeds of national significance as listed under the National Weeds Management Strategy (National Resource Management Ministerial Council 2006).*
- *National Environmental Alert List weeds as listed under the National Weeds Strategy.*
- *Environmental Weeds, which are weeds that affect the structure and function of land and aquatic ecosystems and have a negative impact on native flora and fauna.*

Comment: Separated from Noxious Weeds, the first two of these points can somewhat fall under the scope of the third (Environmental Weeds). Environmental weeds are a major problem and do not fall under the jurisdiction of any government organisation. Where possible existing instruments should be utilised for environmental weeds that pose threats to biodiversity, particularly the Noxious Weeds Act 1993. However, where environmental weeds threaten species or ecological communities under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) is the relevant authority. This authority is crossed over by Local Land Services (LLS) which are required to manage the state's natural resources. For LCC to entangle itself through funding programmes that are outside of its jurisdiction is potentially problematic.

- *Agricultural weeds, which are weeds that reduce the quantity and quality of agricultural production and that affect both industry and consumers.*

Comment: Agricultural weeds are within the purview of FNCW under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993. Agricultural weeds by their definition impact upon agricultural productivity and do not necessarily impact upon biodiversity. If they pose a major threat either to agronomic practice or to the environment they should be declared as noxious (Noxious Weeds Act 1993).

Peri-urban, lifestyle and poorly managed 'organic' properties are often the worst for harbouring Noxious Weeds with the greatest threat to ecosystems. So where this is the case enforcement needs to be undertaken. See above comments in regard to FNCW for further details.

7.2.3 Pest Animals

Comment: Pest animals can be declared Noxious under the Rural Lands Protection Act. May of those listed in this section are already declared. Therefore, the managing authority in these cases is LLS. Keeping of native animals and registration is the responsibility of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Local councils through delegation have responsibility for

most animal registration, dangerous animals and noise as well as pest animal management for its owned land.

Rural landholders are already subject to fees for pest animal management which are paid to LLS. Increasing rates to duplicate this system is not warranted. Peri-urban and lifestyle properties are some of the worst for harbouring pest animals – where this is the case enforcement needs to be undertaken. However, coordination with the community (e.g. examples of already active projects are cited in the draft plan) would greatly assist this control especially in urban areas. Proper funding of Ranger services (which have in recent years been partly defunded by LCC) covers the LCC responsibilities.

7.2.4 Water quality and hydrology

Comment: The working nature of the water catchments in this region is recognised as problematic for maintaining healthy ecosystems. However, the specific points in the plan need further comment.

➤ Alteration to natural flow regimes

Comment: Flood plain management has been divested to Richmond River County Council. As such LCC should assume complete control for flood plain management and incorporate this into its activities or RRCC needs to be supported and engaged to undertake the works specifically required by LCC.

Additionally the NSW Department of Trade and Investment (T&I) through the Fisheries Management Act 1994 have authority for development that may affect natural flows in waterways. Extraction of water which has the potential to impact on stream flow is governed by the Water Management Act 2000 and is managed directly through the Office of Water (NOW) through its water sharing plans. Otherwise LCC does have planning controls to manage major flood plain works.

➤ Alteration of groundwater hydrology

Comment: In part this is covered by my comments under the (activation of acid sulfate soils) point below. Alteration of groundwater hydrology is mainly impacted by development which should be managed by LCC under its planning provisions.

Springs are particularly vulnerable to land use change, however, most groundwater systems in our region (especially those with surface-groundwater interaction) are very localised and must be dealt with on a property by property basis and do not necessarily support many Ground Water Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs). Most identified GDEs in our region are only partly dependent on groundwater as a means of maintaining base flow conditions in streams or springs. It is not evident how any of the actions listed in the draft biodiversity strategy will have any impact upon managing stream base flow.

Otherwise, groundwater hydrology is managed and through the NOW via the Water Management Act 2000 and Water Act 1912 (amongst others). This includes excavations that expose groundwater or groundwater extraction and use.

➤ *Increased nutrient load and turbidity of run-off*

Comment: The degraded nature of streams and land through historical land use practice as caused a large change to the ecology of our region. Present land use continues to be a source of suspended sediment and nutrients into the local waterways. The management of stream channels falls under the jurisdiction of LLS and T&I (Fisheries, NOW) having control over development in stream channels. LLS is the lead natural resources agency in this regard. However, contributions of contaminants from overland flow is best managed by land use practice for which T&I (Agriculture) have historically been involved or more recently by peak industry groups. Discharges of waste and storm water is already a responsibility of LCC with OEH requiring LGAs like LCC to apply for the discharge of waste loads into waterways or on land.

➤ *Activation of acid sulphate soils*

Comment: Activation of acid sulfate soils occurs only in areas where naturally generated sulfidic material is present. This is not an issue in the upper reaches of the Richmond River catchment or on higher ground. It is more of an issue with the lower flood plain where agricultural practices alter the groundwater hydrology. This matter should be the focus for RRCC. As such LCC should either assume complete control for flood plain management or RRCC needs to be supported and engaged to undertake the works specifically required of LCC.

7.2.5 Urbanisation

Comment: The indirect issues identified here should be considered separate and are already within the scope of actions expected of any local government. The general matter of urbanisation is already supposed to be managed by LCC under its Local Environment Plan, Protection Order and Development Control Plan provisions.

Well managed development including urbanisation can actually have positive environmental outcomes where development occurs on already degraded land resources including rates or development consent conditions can be applied to undertake on-ground environmental works. This is surprisingly evident in the Gold Coast hinterland where natural waterways near new developments as well as many roadside areas are in excellent condition with quality native vegetation and rare exotic weeds. Although some of these actions are partly funded by special rates, GCCC has definite on-ground objectives in its plans which are being achieved. Definite and practical objectives are not clear in the LCC draft Strategy.

- *The effects of road and traffic (i.e. road kills or injuries)*

Comment: LCC has the responsibility for ensuring that local roads are properly maintained. Additionally, the planning of new or upgrading local roads is also an existing responsibility of all local governments. If there is identified need in specific targeted areas to establish wildlife crossings or undertake fencing this should be covered under Council's road design criteria.

- *Predation on native animals by domestic pets.*

Comment: LCC already has the responsibility to manage dangerous animals (although LCC partly defunded this programme recently). Otherwise registration is the only other legal avenue available. Community education is beneficial but I would suggest this is already extensively covered (in schools, free public information etc).

- *Illegal dumping of rubbish and green waste in urban and peri-urban bushland creating habitat for pest animals and facilitating the spread of weeds.*

Comment: Proper enforcement of illegal activities is the best management strategy, not cleaning up the waste left over.

The effective provision of waste disposal options to reduce the motivation for illegal dumping in the community needs to be considered under councils existing access to sites for waste management and charges.

- *Inappropriate fire regimes (i.e. too frequent or too infrequent) altering the species composition and structure of vegetation*

Comment: In balance the problem with fire regimes is that they are no too infrequent with regard to open woodland areas. The indigenous population managed open woodland intensively over many tens of thousands of years creating an ecosystem that required continual maintenance by fire. In the last century this has been replaced by a 'do-nothing' approach creating ecosystems that are at risk of large fire events.

Fire management for pastures is a specific agronomic goal and this long term strategy has already altered the species composition in many areas.

In our region I've never heard of a fire in a closed forest (rainforest) environment that was carried out intentionally for land management purposes. Only bushfires that have spread from poorly managed open forest environments and arson have caused major structural changes to these systems.

The Rural Fire Service are responsible for issuing permits and there should be more emphasis placed on allowing landholders to use fire to adequately manage their natural resources. Other than consideration of Asset Protection Zones this would be something that would be difficult for LCC to be proactive in as it is outside the normal scope of local government.

- *Unmanaged recreational activities in urban and peri-urban bushland (e.g. trail bikes and off road vehicles) compacting soils, degrading vegetation and facilitating the spread of weeds.*

Comment: Again, like the above point on illegal dumping, LCC should be already implementing its regulatory authority in this regard or referring matters on to the NSW Police.

Overall Comment: It should be evident from my comments above that very few initiatives of the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy are new activities. Where the activities are under the purview of local government they are already programmes which were/are already funded under general rate revenue.

Since LCC has already undertaken funding reductions (reallocation of rate revenue) to sections of Council which previously implemented some of the actions, the raising of a special rate levy is of concern. It sets a precedent that actions should be undertaken as part of everyday council programmes and therefore funded by general rate revenue can be defunded and a special new rate introduced.

For example, LCC has recently invested quantities of rate payer money and council officer time into minimising its carbon footprint. While this is a worthy philosophical goal, spending rate payers' money on actions that are unmeasurable to a problem that is on a world-wide scale is wasteful. This waste of assets that will have no measurable practical impact upon the global environment let alone the LGA. Instead the limited number of proactive and measurable LCC specific objectives in the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy need to be funded another way.

It should also be evident that many of the activities listed in the strategy are often not matters for Local Government and therefore providing programmes on these matters will unnecessarily duplicate existing state and federal government actions and blur the area of accountability for these actions.

Finally, the information provided to residents and ratepayers of the LGA outlining the benefits of the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy was not easily aligned with the criteria and actions listed in the draft strategy itself. I.e. the information brochures and accompanying letter was misleading as to the actions specifically listed in the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy.

In Summary: I feel the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and accompanying rate variation is not reasonable as it:

- In part is outside the scope of NSW local governments;
- Is in part already under the usual business of council which is funded by general rates;
- Will raise special rate income for activities that were/are funded by general rates but were (mis)allocated by LCC to other environmental 'priorities' such as Anthropogenic Climate Change;
- Places an additional burden on rural rate payers who already pay LSS rates which is responsible for some of the actions in the draft strategy;
- Raises rates to a level that is becoming onerous to pay for landholders in this already socio-economically impoverished LGA.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

NOTE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR . DID NOT
RESPOND TO MR HOLLANDS LETTER . ?

my Reply to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] – simply tell the facts to the ratepayers of Lismore.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
NOT SO!

I prefer to quote the real facts and not the 'so-called' averages as you referred to.

My figures are from the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy for Lismore LGA 2015-35 not of my own invention as you put it!

For the benefit of ratepayers the following is reported in the document for a SRV of 1.9%:

NSW Valuer General Land Value				
Rating Category	\$100,000	\$250,000	\$500,000	\$1000,000
Farmland	\$ 13.50	\$ 33.75	\$ 67.50	\$ 135.00
Residential/Rural	\$ 16.50	\$ 41.25	\$ 82.50	\$ 165.00
Residential	\$ 22.50	\$ 56.25	\$ 112.50	\$ 225.00

Hunter Research made a point of trying to match their survey to the percentage of demographics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics – Census 2011.

Hunter Research's survey clearly shows that in fact they did not follow the ABS Census.

They surveyed more ratepayers in the higher income bracket of \$60,000 to \$100,000 and over than under \$20,000 to \$60,000 bracket.

Also ratepayers aged between 18-49 years old were considerably less surveyed than the 50-65 years and over segment.

It's interesting also to note that Telstra commented to me that the residents between 18-49 years of age no longer have a phone connected to a landline in the Lismore LGA therefore confirming the fact that Hunter Research could not reach the 18-49 during their PHONE survey.

Ratepayers of Lismore will have an opportunity to write a submission to the IPART before the end of October if they disagree with the Special Rate Variation of 1.9% that Lismore is applying for.

They should also remember that Lismore is planning, and Simon voted for, to apply for another increase of 7.2% in 2018.

Lismore has already one of the highest Residential, Rural, Farmland and Business Rates and Charges in the region well ahead of Ballina, Byron, Casino and Kyogle and if Simon thinks an extra 1.9+7.2 % is affordable maybe he need to tells ratepayers how. Affordable housing needs affordable rates!

Neville King – Richmond Hill

Latest Comments

31 OF 31 COMMENTS

Join The Discussion

• [REDACTED]



At last 'the worm turns' over Lismore City Council's blatant excesses and it's Green Labor-ite management. Can we hope Nev stands for a Council seat at the next election?

[Reply](#)

• [REDACTED]



It is a very green orientated statement...; 'Designed to protect and increase habitat for native wildlife in bush reserves and along waterways.; who do they think they are kidding? I manage my property quite well, I certainly do not want nor need the council to take some extra money off me so they can do it. That ridiculous boat thing is an example of their stupidity. How about some core strategies. I am sick and tired of driving into town and almost having my wheels fall off on the potholed roads. Get rid of the stupid pavement patcher. It is as useful as an ashtray on a motorbike. [REDACTED], I second your motion Nev can you kindly stand for council?

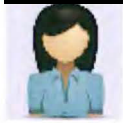
[Reply](#)

• [REDACTED]



Forgot to mention , the prices stated for farmland which is what I have, do not attract any more attention from the council than the urban dwellers, I have to pay for the privilege of having a septic, have my own water, cut my own verges, but I do get a garbage service and own one of the two bins. And if I am lucky I get the revenue raiser rangers out to fine me for having my pets outside the boundary.

[Reply](#)



[Reply](#)

- [REDACTED]



The man has a point - and full marks to him for doing something about it.

[Reply](#)

- [REDACTED]



Top marks for Mr King.

[Reply](#)

- [REDACTED]

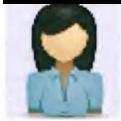


"The proposed rate rises for a property valued at \$500,000 are as follows:
Farmland: \$67.50"

How many working farms have a value at this little? Farmers are already struggling and just because they are "asset rich" (own land) does not mean they have the extra cash just lying around.

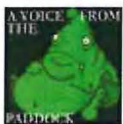
In the first place they are the ones working unpaid on their land to control weeds and erosion. Farmers will contribute more by NOT paying for a silly "biodiversity strategy".

[Reply](#)



Its ok... its just rate payers money. There is plenty more where that came from.

[Reply](#)



Come to Qld you'll pay double those listed rates. all councils should be capped by law to increase rates only with wage increases. IF thus isnt done we are heading to a baron and serf type showdown again. Ratepayers cannot be bled dry forever.

[Reply](#)



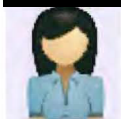
I don't thing the figures are right. I'm in a very average part of the town and pay \$2200. That is more than twice the amount quoted by LCC. The only thing unusual about my place is the small block but not being in a flood area.

[Reply](#)



Those rates quoted are nothing compared to the Gold Coast.

[Reply](#)



They are nothing like what most people in the areas quoted are paying either.

[Reply](#)



I think Mr King has some decent points directed at our council .

Good on him

I object to the BMS strongly .

Council is broke and also owes money and now they ask us ratepayers for a special rate rise!!!

Grants for these types have been pull in BUT its not to say they wont come about again so they should wait.

Asking a Councillor of roads and why the maintainence of our fields, local parks, airport & sides of roads grass cutting has been less frequent as normal the answerno money..... Council broke and this was before the letter I received came out of the BMS council are asking of the ratepayers.

I was also told due to the fact our council is broke as a barn mouse our local council maintain roads are to suffer due to that so we have more pot holes dangerous high grass vergies to come out of our driveways on roads outside of town onto a main road due to this.

Council need to tighten its belt on postions within council such as job sharing , work cars petrol consumption to be for only work related use age not for holidays (employees pay for fuel out of their pockets)when a council car is part of their package.

Look at contract work to be done instead of council staff in some areas. To have contractor in (which is a fixed rate) would save council paying out for ie 1 hr wk to a contractor(who is on this fixed rate) compared to paying the min 4 hrs rate to a council worker for only an hours work needed.

Hence money saved !!!!

• [REDACTED]



This is an outrage especially for Pensioners who's Rate Rebate has not increased in over 20 years.

While Pensioners have to struggle with the thought of a Rate Increase ever year and try to budget the Lismore City Council wants to increase Pensioner's Rates even further with a Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS).

How is this going to benefit the average Rate Payer?

With the cost of living increasing how are Pensioner's suppose to budget to cover additional Land Rate Increases while struggling to make ends meet?

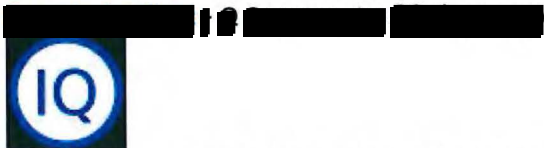
[Reply](#)

• [REDACTED]



Hope Lismore Council listens to what ratepayers say. Ballina doesn't. They chose to ignore submissions which were overwhelmingly against the special rate rise and actually stated that people wanted it.

[Reply](#)



Most councils dont listen to their ratepayers they only care about the \$\$ they provide to fund their existence.

[Reply](#)

• [REDACTED]

