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Submission: I wish to support the application by Blue Mountains City Council for a special variation. My wife and I have lived at Mount Riverview in Blue Mountains LGA for 50 years and for some years have been retired and living partly on self-funded superannuation and a partial Commonwealth Age Pension. We would no doubt be regarded as a low-income household but, since we own our home and have rather modest tastes, we feel quite satisfied and comfortable with our life-style. Council rates (albeit with a 'pensioner' discount) currently represent somewhat less than 6% of what we annually spend on fixed commitments plus food and fuel for the car. If I was to include vehicle maintenance, chemist bills etc in our non-discretionary spending, the percentage attributable to Council rates would be closer to 5% of our outgoings. If the BMCC request for a special variation is approved, Council Rates for us will still be less than 6½ % of our bills/food/fuel costs. The difference is trifling – especially when compared to spiralling fuel and health insurance costs for example. In this context I think it would have been scandalous for Council to continue to preside over the on-going deterioration of community assets by doing nothing to address the shortfall in its revenue. To deliberately allow these assets to be destroyed betrays the efforts of earlier generations who built up the network for our benefit. Equally, allowing the system to decline is an example of inter-generational theft as it will leave future generations with the task of picking up the bill for our 'free ride'. Some have argued that the root cause of the problem is that BMCC is inefficient and it should first put its house in order. Based on long experience of living in Blue Mountains LGA I cannot believe that BMCC is conspicuously worse than any other Councils. It does however have to contend with geographic, demographic and other factors that make service delivery here rather more expensive per household than is the case in Penrith, for example. I think that if people cannot accept this reality then maybe they should move to Penrith or another area where service delivery is not so attenuated. If there is a root cause of 'the problem' it is to be found in the long-running artificial suppression of reasonable year-by-year increases through imposition for populist reasons of an arbitrary ceiling on adjustments. I think BMCC is to be congratulated for finding the courage to recognize that 'the bill collector cometh' and proposing a realistic solution. I notice from your website that BMCC is not alone and that many other councils find themselves in a similar predicament. TOM FOX 11th March 2015