

Have Your Say Special Rate Variation 2012/13

Community Forms

These community forums are a chance for community members to ask questions about the special rate variation, what it means and the benefits to their community. Councillors and senior staff will be available to answer your questions and concerns.

A facilitator will be present to ensure that the forum is conducted with respect for all views and perspectives. All members of the community are welcome.

Tuesday, 31 January - Administration Centre Scone

Thursday, 2 February - Aberdeen Community Centre

Tuesday, 7 February - Murrurundi RSL Hall

Thursday, 9 February - Merriwa Branch Office UHSC

All meetings commence at 6pm.

Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder groups may wish to discuss particular aspects of the special rate variation. Upper Hunter Shire Council will accommodate these requests where ever possible.

To discuss a stakeholder meeting please contact Ruth Neave on 6540 1119 or rneave@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au

Telephone Survey

Between 10 and 15 January Micromex Research will conduct a telephone survey of 400 residents to gauge community responses to the special rate variation. The results of this survey will assist in determining the community's priorities and level of community support for the special rate variation

Letters and Submissions

Upper Hunter Shire Council welcome written responses from community members, organisations, businesses and stakeholders groups. Written responses may be forwarded as emails, letters or submissions.

Please forward your written comments before 13 February to:

Email: council@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au

Fax: 6545 2671

Post: PO Box 208 Scone, NSW 2337

Online Survey

On council's website you will find a short on line survey. The survey takes two minutes to complete and responses are anonymous.

You can find a link to the survey on council's homepage – look for *Have your say special rate variation*. Survey closes 13 February.

www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au

Comments

You can leave a comment on council's website. You can find the link to the survey on council's homepage – look for **Have your say special rate variation**. Comments close 13 February.

www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au

Road Maintenance

If you would like to know more about the challenges of maintaining rural roads, copies of the review into rural road maintenance are available on council's website. You can find a link to the report on council's homepage – look for **Have your say special rate variation**. Comments close 13 February.

www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au



To The Householder

A Quality Rural Lifestyle in a Caring and Thriving Community

All correspondence to:
General Manager
Upper Hunter Shire Council
PO Box 208, Scone NSW 2337

Telephone:
Administration Centre, Scone – 6540 1100
Merriwa Branch Office – 6548 2109
Murrurundi Branch Office – 6546 6205

Email:
council@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au
Website:
www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



Dear Resident

Upper Hunter Shire Council's Application for a Special Rate Variation

In 2009, Upper Hunter Shire Council's community survey identified road maintenance as the highest ranking service or facility. Since that time, community members have expressed concerns that local road and bridge infrastructure no longer meet community expectations. In order to maintain and improve the road and bridge infrastructure *and* deliver on the 10-year community strategic plan Upper Hunter Shire Council needs additional funds. Council is looking at a range of funding sources, including asset sales, grants, increased borrowings and a special rate variation. Council has also introduced a range of productivity improvements, and will capitalise on efficiency gains as it implements the Development Program and Operational Plan.

In February council will lodge an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a special rate variation in 2012/13. The proposal is for a one-off permanent 6.4% rates increase in your rates above the allowable 3.6% rate cap, a total of 10 % in the first year. If this is approved by the community and the State Government, the average residential ratepayer will pay an additional \$52.83 per year or \$1.02 a week for 2012-2013. The average business will pay an additional \$93.40 per year or \$1.80 per week for 2012 – 2013.

If approved the rate variation, beginning in 2012, will generate approximately \$5 million over the first ten years. These funds will enable council to allocate an additional

- \$2 million to maintaining the shire's rural unsealed road network
- \$2 million to maintaining rural and urban sealed local roads
- \$1 million to the bridge replacement program

Council has not taken this decision lightly and is mindful of the impact upon residents. Council has made the decision to request a modest increase and to allocate the additional funds to the community's highest priority and the largest portion of council's expenditure that is, maintaining the road network and infrastructure; that includes 1,140kms of unsealed road, 350kms of sealed local road, 300kms of regional road, 32 timber bridges and 93 concrete bridges.

Council is writing at this time to inform you of the proposed special rate variation and to ask you to take part in the community engagement activities council is running. There are several ways you can have your say on the special rate variation. On the back of this page, you will find details of our community forums, an independent telephone survey, the on line survey and comments sections on our website, the opportunity for stakeholder meetings and details for contributing letters and written submissions.

This is an important issue for our community and council and I encourage you to join us in making the best decision we can for our community's future. If you would like to discuss this matter in detail, please contact Director Corporate Services Steve Pryor on 6540 1123.



Cr Lee Watts
Mayor

