

Author name: P. Newton

Date of submission: Friday, 5 May 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Given the SRV represents just a little over 1% of Council's general income budget, then surely some indication and commitment by Council to an internal review of costs and efficiencies in order to manage this short-fall internally, before placing an additional impost on ratepayers, is the least that the community could expect. Council however have not yet provided any indication to the community as to what they have done in relation to reviewing, reducing their operating costs, productivity and efficiencies prior to landing on the SRV. Nor is there any indication they have considered other revenue streams or indeed are pushing the State Gov. for a review of fees and charges and a return of the 'Environmental Enforcement Levy'. The manner in which the proposed SRV has been put to the community is also of great concern, particularly the ultimatum tone of the proposition, where the formal feedback process puts only two options - say yes to the SRV or say no and be prepared to lose services (followed by a list of services which can best be construed as those which push the community's 'buttons'). Please find attached, for your info, the Association's submission to Council when the SRV was first put to the community in February this year. This generated a positive dialogue with Council on the matters raised, particularly in relation to the pressing need for an urgent review of State Gov. regulated fees and charges which hadn't been indexed for many years and a return of the 'Environmental Enforcement Levy' - both areas with significant impact on Council revenue and ultimately ratepayers. The Association continues to lobby the State Gov. on these matters. We also note at time of this submission that the State Gov. is now intending to impose an unplanned, unbudgeted emergency services levy on Councils, which will significantly impact income and ultimately ratepayers.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

While Council has illustrated and explained the shortfall in funds in order to deliver services and meet certain obligations, they clearly have not established, nor proven that an SRV is the only means to achieve the required revenue. It appears they have 'landed-on' the SRV from the very beginning and then set about trying to prove this.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No - this is not evident at all in the documentation provided, nor in the messaging to community. Again all info revolves around the need for an SRV, with no indication or reference to or consideration of alternatives i.e. strategies for increasing revenue, reviewing operating costs, efficiencies....

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

From the Kingscliff Ratepayers and Progress Association Inc perspective, Council have engaged directly with us on the issues we have raised to date in feedback. A key matter though, which is evident across community feedback, is that there has been no indication publicly of what Council has done in respect to what alternatives (revenue increase strategies, reviews of operations, costs and expenditure etc) have been considered prior to landing on the SRV.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

In the current climate, and particularly in light of the events in this community over the past 3 years, any additional impost on rate-payers is not reasonable at all. It may ultimately be necessary but certainly not reasonable, particularly for those ratepayers who have experienced significant increases in their valuations. There needs to be no doubt that all alternatives have been considered before moving to an SRV.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. This has been considered, however questionable as to whether the impact of the SRV is fully understood (as per Q1 response above).

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Council does not have a 'hardship plan', other than it's normal processes for dealing with cases where people are facing difficulty with rates.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council have referred to 'last few years' productivity improvements and cost containment strategies - these total 340k (125k annual, 215k (one-off?)). In respect to 2023/24 rates, Council have indicated they will 'further review the budget' with no indication of specifics. Nor is there (or can be given this response) any known financial impact of the 'further review'. The community would expect that Council take a serious look at specific productivity improvements and cost-containment strategies for the current budget and 2023/24 rates than simply say they will conduct a 'further review' before landing ratepayers with the additional impost of a 2.35% SRV.



**KINGSCLIFF RATEPAYERS AND PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.**  
Established 1933

██████████, Kingscliff NSW 2487

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The Kingscliff Ratepayers and Progress Association Inc met and discussed the proposed TSC Special Rate Variation (SRV) at its general meeting on Monday 6 February.

While there was a mixed reaction to the question of an SRV, and there was a general understanding of the need for an SRV to obtain budget relief and maintain services, the meeting did agree that the community required and would benefit in relation to additional information prior to the approval of any increase.

Questions that the members posed included:

- What consideration has been given to reducing expenditure (eg minimal budget cuts across entire departments) vs an SRV which impacts residents who are already feeling the pressure of cost of living rises?
- Will the revised land valuations provide additional funds for TSC due to rates rising due to new valuations?
- What other avenues could be considered for increasing/raising revenue streams eg increased compliance, increased user pay fees (eg DA fees)?
- What steps were taken to forecast and budget previously to meet the cost of updating IT systems?
- What projects, if any, could be scaled back in part, or put on hold, to reduce overall expenditure?

While the meeting acknowledged the great work that TSC has done previously in relation to budget performance, and in no way would we want our Council to become a 'shoe-string Council', the proposed SRV added to the already determined 4% increase is going to create additional pressure to many of the residents of our community. In this way, Council's clear communication to the community in relation to the matters raised above and ultimately how the 2.35% was determined would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

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(on behalf of) Kingscliff Ratepayers and Progress Association Inc.

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Author name: G. Coughlan

Date of submission: Saturday, 22 April 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

My Reasons: \* The number of dogs and cats being surrendered for various reasons including the rental crisis. \* The new pound will have provision for emergency fostering facilities. I am a Red Cross volunteer who, under the Telecross banner, phones many elderly and frail people in the shire daily in the morning to ensure they are O.K.. If they are not and have fallen, procedures are in place to support them. I have been doing this for 20 years and I can vouch for the fact that the main reason all of our clients went to hospital if an ambulance, if called, is that they believe that the four legged pets can't be looked after. (Birds are much easier to transfer) Animal Welfare League Queensland: Animal Welfare League's Golden Hearts Seniors Pet Support Program is a unique program to support people 65 and older with pet ownership. Golden Hearts supports its members with emergency foster care of their pet if they have to go into hospital. (this is located at Coombabah.) Surely Tweed can match this service for its elderly residents G.Coughlan

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: M. Osburg

Date of submission: Sunday, 16 April 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.  
We all need to live within our means. Councils should be no different. Work with the 4% increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. I understand prices have gone up, but wages have not gone up by 6.35%. Saying that a computer upgrade is required doesn't justify this extra increase.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?  
Apparently not, they are still looking into it.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I haven't seen it. However, there is no mention that the additional increase will be removed next year. Therefore compounding.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes. The increases were raised in the local paper

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Ignored. I believe over 90% of respondents were against the additional increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Unknown at the moment as council has voted to apply for the rise, they haven't said it would be set.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.  
Unknown

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I haven't seen it

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unknown

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They are still looking into this. No plan yet provided.