



Media Release

Liverpool Plains Shire Council – 6746 1755

Liverpool Plains Shire Council - COMMUNITY MEETINGS – Proposed 19% Rate Increase (27-11-13)

Liverpool Plains Shire Council is currently proposing to submit a special rate variation application to IPART for a 19% rate increase from July 2014.

This increase is made up of an existing 6.5% currently included in rates which expires in June 2014, a 10% increase plus the usual 2.5% rate pegging increase.

LPSC will be holding two meetings for community members. One in Werris Creek at 6pm on Monday 2nd December 2013 at the Werris Creek Bowling and Tennis Club and one at 6pm Tuesday 3rd December 2013 in the Quirindi Council Chambers.

Members of the community are encouraged to attend these meetings to discuss the reasoning behind the proposed variation and the specific manner in which it is proposed the extra funding will be invested.

For further details please contact Council's General Manager, Mr Robert Hunt or the Director Corporate Services, Mr Mike Urquhart on 6746 1755.

End Release.



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Council takes on board all issues raised through community meetings and social media

(06-12-13)

Mayor of Liverpool Plains Shire Council (LPSC), Councillor Ian Lobsey OAM, has thanked those residents who attended Council's Community meetings in Werris Creek and Quirindi for discussion on Council's proposal to seek a 19% rate variation from the 2014/15 financial year. LPSC is seeking a rates variation following recommendations from the State Government's NSW Treasury Corporation (T-Corp) to address issues of long term financial sustainability. Councillor Lobsey said approximately 70 people attended the Werris Creek meeting and about 80 at the meeting in Quirindi. He said that while it is understandable that nobody wants a rate rise Councillors are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that LPSC has a long-term sustainable future.

"Questions raised at the meetings and comments on social media clearly show that there is still some misunderstanding in the community about the proposal. The overall increase of 19% foreshadowed is made up of the retention of a 6.5% variation that ratepayers have already been paying for five years, a 2.3% increase under State Government rate pegging for 2014/15, meaning the actual impact of Council's application is an additional 10.2%. The proposal only applies to the land-rate component of Council charges and on average amounts to \$1.79 per week in Werris Creek and \$1.69 per week in the villages and \$2.28 per week in Quirindi on residential rates. The average weekly increase on farmland rates would be \$13, on Quirindi business rates \$4.05, Werris Creek business rates \$2.70, Village business rates \$2.33 and on coal mining land \$1,024.

All additional monies raised will be spent on road and kerb and guttering projects, projects that Council's community surveys indicate are a top priority to residents. Dialogue on the proposals will continue over coming weeks and individual residents who would like further information are invited to discuss the issue with the General Manager or Corporate Services Director by calling 6746 1755," he said.

Councillor Lobsey said that many of the issues raised at the Community Meetings had not been directly tied to the rates proposal and that Council had taken on board these individual issues most of which could be dealt with by the Directors.

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"Whilst Council was aware of and dealing with an issue regarding the water supply in Werris Creek, involving discoloured water, the meeting provided more valuable information that Council officers weren't aware of. The treatment plant for Werris Creek water was built in 1931 and has been updated twice in intervening years. When running at high demand the system requires a balance between water colour parameters and other treatment processes. This resulted in part of the treatment process running too long at a higher than desirable colour output which then accumulated in the reservoir. This water was then distributed via the reticulation and the differing locations of consumers within the system resulted in different levels of dirty water based on the flow characteristics i.e. the areas of high demand received the discoloured water earlier than the extremes of the system. Apart from closing down the whole system and flushing it, which would have inconvenienced the whole community and cost more money, we basically have to wait for the system to come clean. I can assure residents that whilst the water hasn't been aesthetically acceptable health was not put at risk due to our ability to maintain adequate disinfection rates during the incident. A new water treatment plant for Werris Creek is part of LPSC's \$24 million Water Supply Strategy to help drought proof Werris Creek, Quirindi and Willow Tree. Council has just received notification that \$400,000 of Federal funding has been made available for further planning and design of this project," he said.

"Other individual issues that were raised at the two meetings have also been noted by Directors for action. It does appear that some matters were raised that Council could have dealt with if we were aware of the issue. LPSC strives to be an open, transparent organisation and encourages residents to bring forward matters of concern which can often be dealt with through a simple phone call," he continued.

"Local Government is the poor relation of our three tiered system of Government yet is expected to provide the grass root services demanded by the community plus maintaining an extensive road network on a very limited budget. Making it even harder is the fact of cost shifting from Federal and State Governments to Local Government. Two years ago Council estimated this cost shifting from State to Local Government cost LPSC \$427,000 per annum. This has increased significantly in the intervening period.

"Reality is the Australian economy is now based on the user-pays philosophy. To meet the expectations of the State Government to catch up with a back-log in infrastructure maintenance projects, particularly roads, and to maintain current service levels action has to be taken now to achieve financial sustainability into the future. The alternative is massive cuts to services and in the medium to long term the actual maintenance of standalone local government for the region," Councillor Lobsey concluded.

Media contact – Ian Lobsey 0429 907 777.