

Attachment I



**Council Report
and Resolution
- to engage
in community
engagement -
August 2013**

Director City Planning Report No. CP67/13



Subject: Proposal and process for continuing Council's environmental levy program on a permanent basis

Folder No: F2004/08357

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Council to engage with the community on the proposed continuation of the existing special variation to the rates for environmental and sustainability programs. The current variation is due to expire on June 30, 2014. The continuation of this environmental levy program forms an important element in achieving Council's longterm environmental sustainability outcomes.

The results of this community consultation will be brought back to Council for their final decision on seeking the continuation of the special rates variation in November 2013. A comprehensive submission incorporating the community consultation, its results and Council's decision will be presented to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for final approval early in 2014.

Issues

In 2004, Randwick's 'Sustaining our City' environmental levy program commenced through a special 6 percent rate variation for a period of 5 years. This was subsequently approved to continue for a second 5 year timeframe from 2009.

Randwick's environmental levy program has provided significant resources contributing to measurable and positive environmental outcomes and cost savings for Council and its community, for example:

- Over 2011 and 2012, almost 20,000 residents and students participated in sustainability activities and events, including our comprehensive program of sustainable living workshops and courses;
- Total annual water savings, primarily from large scale, stormwater treatment and re-use systems are saving around 500 million litres of potable water per year and approximately \$1 million in financial costs. In addition this stormwater re-use is contributing to significant water quality improvements at our beaches through the process of storage and treatment of water run-off that would otherwise enter our waterways directly from our roads or gross pollutant traps;
- Over the past few months Council has doubled its renewable energy generation from solar panel installations at Council and community locations;
- Council's environmental levy has been provided the leverage to attract approximately \$1 million per year over the past few years from external grants programs to carry out additional environmental improvements and sustainability initiatives for Randwick residents.

The importance of the environmental levy program to Council and its ratepayers cannot be overstated. After almost ten years the annual levy has contributed significantly to the way in which Council has been able to accelerate or augment environmental improvements and sustainable initiatives as part of existing capital works or community based projects.

In light of Councillors' in principle support provided following the recent briefing on the results of Randwick's 10-year Sustaining our City initiative, Council has commenced addressing the specific assessment criteria set by IPART for the continuation of a special rate variation. This includes:

- Establishing the evidence on the need for and purpose of the special rate variation;
- Planning a comprehensive community consultation and engagement process relating to the special rates variation to ensure the community's full understanding of the basis and application of an environmental levy across the City;
- Demonstrating evidence of the financial sustainability of Council and reasonable justification of the levy and potential impacts on our ratepayers;
- Demonstrating productivity improvements and other cost containment strategies achieved by Council over recent years.

Given that ratepayers are currently paying the existing environmental levy there would be generally no new level of financial impact if the application to continue the existing special rate variation is submitted and approved by IPART. IPART however requires the community engagement process to clearly demonstrate:

- That Council has clearly communicated the impact of the proposed increase occurring from the proposed special rate variation to ratepayers; and
- That Council clearly communicates what works, programs and services the special rate variation would be funding.
- Council would also need to communicate the impact on the community if it was not to continue the existing special rate variation.

In terms of community engagement, the assessment criteria clearly expects that engagement must be broad across the full spectrum of the community and is not just involving special interest groups. In order to achieve this coverage and demonstrate very clearly Council's effort to communicate with the widest representation of the community possible, it is anticipated that all forms of print and electronic media will be used to inform and gauge residents views on the proposal to continue this special rate variation.

An outline of the proposed community engagement strategy includes:

Information and engagement via:	Timeframe
Environmental levy briefing to Councillors	July
Council's Community Newsletter (special insert to be included)	August
Your say, Randwick website	August
Background documentation and support material	August
All Stops to Randwick (Council staff living in Randwick)	August
E-news, social media	August and September

Information and engagement via:	Timeframe
Posters / bus shelters and libraries	September
Community survey	September
Eco Living Fair stall and information	September
Reply paid postcard with information and survey	September
Community engagement workshop (trial of deliberative engagement / democracy forum)	September
Public place consultations / stalls	September / October
Combined Precincts and Chambers briefings	October

From the process outlined above, the community will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed continuation of the special rate variation during September and October.

In addition to the potential responses of this proposed engagement, the outcomes of the recent engagement around the 2013-17 Delivery Program and the 2012 Community Satisfaction survey will be included as the environmental levy was a part of the community consultation for these programs.

A report summarising the outcomes of this community engagement will be brought back to Council in November 2013.

Relationship to City Plan

The relationship with the City Plan is as follows:

- Outcome 1: Leadership in sustainability.
- Direction 1(a): Council has a long term vision on sustainability.
- Outcome 3: An informed and engaged community
- Direction 3(c): The community has increased opportunities to participate in decision making processes.

Financial impact statement

Randwick's environmental levy program provides significant and important resources that has extended Council's environmental and economic reputation and most importantly has greatly added to the on-ground achievements and results for our community. In terms of revenue collected the environmental levy has provided:

5 year program	Average annual total levy	Average annual \$ per household
2004 – 2009	\$2,434,806	\$51.10 (approx \$0.14 / day)
2009 – 2014	\$3,273,560	\$65.70 (approx \$0.16 / day)
2014 – 2019 (estimated)	\$4,073,798	\$ 80.30(approx \$0.22 / day)

Conclusion

The importance of the environmental levy program to Council and its ratepayers cannot be overstated. After almost ten years the annual levy has contributed significantly to the way in which Council has been able to accelerate or augment environmental improvements and sustainable initiatives with existing capital works or community based projects.

Recommendation

That Council:

- a) Approves the proposed community engagement process for the continuation of the special rates variation for the Sustaining our City environmental levy program;
- b) Endorses the community engagement outline provided above; and
- c) Notes a report will be brought back to Council with recommendations for resolution in respect of a continuation of a special rate variation for environmental programs in November 2013.

Attachment/s:

Nil

FOR ACTION

ORDINARY COUNCIL

27/08/2013

TO: Director City Planning (Sima Truvert)

Subject: Proposal and process for continuing Council's environmental levy program on a permanent basis
Target Date: 10/09/2013
Notes: Please action or reassign the Council resolution
Document No.: D01848554
Report Type: Report
Item Number: CP67/13

RESOLUTION: (Moore/Stavrinos) that Council:

- a) approves the proposed community engagement process for the continuation of the special rates variation for the Sustaining our City environmental levy program;
- b) endorses the community engagement outline provided above;
- c) notes a report will be brought back to Council with recommendations for resolution in respect of a continuation of a special rate variation for environmental programs in November 2013; and
- d) resolves that the Environmental Levy Program be a five year program.

MOTION: (Moore/Stavrinos) CARRIED – SEE RESOLUTION.

The **DIVISION** was taken and the names of the Councillors voting FOR and AGAINST were as follows:

FOR	AGAINST
Councillor Andrews	Councillor Stevenson
Councillor Belleli	
Councillor Bowen	
Councillor D'Souza	
Councillor Garcia	
Councillor Matson	
Councillor Moore	
Councillor Nash	
Councillor Neilson	
Councillor Roberts	
Councillor Seng	
Councillor Smith	
Councillor Stavrinos	
Total (13)	Total (1)

AMENDMENT: (Matson/Andrews) that Council:

- a) approves the proposed community engagement process for the continuation of the special rates variation for the Sustaining our City environmental levy program;
- b) endorses the community engagement outline provided above; and

c) notes a report will be brought back to Council with recommendations for resolution in respect of a continuation of a special rate variation for environmental programs in November 2013. **LOST.**

The **DIVISION** was taken and the names of the Councillors voting FOR and AGAINST were as follows:

FOR	AGAINST
Councillor Andrews	Councillor Belleli
Councillor Matson	Councillor Bowen
Councillor Neilson	Councillor D'Souza
Councillor Smith	Councillor Garcia
	Councillor Moore
	Councillor Nash
	Councillor Roberts
	Councillor Seng
	Councillor Stavrinou
	Councillor Stevenson
Total (4)	Total (10)

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