

Richmond rate rise runs gauntlet



Forums, survey

Community forums and a community telephone survey are starting in the Richmond Valley Council area to discuss a general rate rise.

The telephone survey, undertaken by Sydney-based company Micromex Research, begins today and meetings will be held the following week at the Casino Community and Cultural Centre on Monday, December 9 and the Evans Head Surf Club, Tuesday, December 10, both starting 7pm. Council's general manager John Walker (pictured) said the council had decided to apply for an increase of 12.5 per cent in the 2014-2015 financial year, followed by an estimated 5.5 per cent for each of the following four years on ordinary rates only.



Mr Walker said the variation would not apply to water, sewerage or garbage rates.

He said the council determined the extra funds were needed to keep Council's services running, deal with the infrastructure backlog in roads, bridges, parks, buildings and drainage and fund high priority community projects.

"The extra money will increase council's capacity to continue delivering services, as well as placing Council on a path to long-term financial sustainability," Mr Walker said.

Mr Walker said the burden of addressing the funding shortfall was not just being addressed through a rate increase.

He said over the past 18 months council had also initiated a program of reviews across all departments to ensure council services were delivering good value for money.

"We've paid close scrutiny to our operational costs, achieving around \$2 million in productivity and efficiency savings," Mr Walker said.

"Further reviews will ensure council is delivering the desired services in the most cost effective way."

The council is encouraging all residents to come along to a community meeting.

"The meetings are important, therefore, your participation would be most appreciated," Mr Walker said.

For residents who are not telephoned as part of the survey, an opportunity to complete the questionnaire will be provided on Council's website from December 23.

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