

## From our files ...

### Lower Macleay distress

SAD tales are being related of the distress and destitution prevalent on the Lower Macleay.

Some families whose credit is stopped are, it is stated, suffering actual want.

### Weather

MONDAY and yesterday mornings were the coldest experienced so far, the thermometer registering 32.5 and 31.6 respectively.

During June there were six wet days and 159 points of rain were registered. The average temperature was 55.5 during the daytime and 39.4 during the night.

### Mr Vivian's campaign

MR W. H. Vivian, the freetrade candidate for the Hastings and Macleay, arrived by the Burrawong on Friday evening last, and immediately opened his campaign by a meeting in the School of Arts, Frederickton.

There was a good attendance.

The candidate spoke for about three quarters of an hour and received an attentive hearing.

The Kempsey meeting held by Mr Vivian on Saturday evening was the largest held in the Alexandria hall.

The attendance was much larger than at Mr Lyne's meeting a few weeks ago.

- The Macleay Argus  
July 4, 1894



□ This is one of two photos found in an abandoned house at Clybucca about 40 years ago. The photographic envelope has the name of Mrs B. MacKenzie on it, and the writing on the back indicates they were taken outside the Trial Bay Gaol at South West Rocks in 1958.  
□ Anyone with any information on the pictures is asked to contact the Macleay River Historical Society on 6562 7572

## Attendance at council meetings

OVER the past several months we have had many people attend our council meetings.

It is good to see people are willing to come and express their point of view.

At the most recent meeting there were several speakers for and against items coming before council.

Councillors recognise that not everyone is comfortable speaking in public, and we appreciate the time speakers put into presenting their view through courteous, respectful and factual information for our consideration.

## Local government reform

MANY of you may be aware that local government as an industry is undergoing reform.

The NSW government appointed a panel of people to review the current model of local government and to provide recommendations to the government on how local government can be improved.

As you know our council, like many other councils, faces an infrastructure backlog of millions of dollars.

The panel has highlighted that indeed many councils are financially stressed in their attempts to meet residents' needs and wants for services.

Most regional and rural councils are in the same position, particularly within the Mid North Coast region.

Some of the factors highlighted that impact on our council area included varying combinations of retiree-driven growth, dispersed populations, difficult terrain, frequent flooding and extensive floodplains, numerous timber bridges, coastal erosion and the demands of tourism.

The review panel in its latest report to the government has highlighted 20 Steps that they feel may improve outcomes for councils.

One such option proposed is a county council model, where councils share some services, such as strategic planning, corporate services, waste and major infrastructure planning projects, while maintaining local representation, that is the councillors and other services.

This county council model is one that has been sug-



## From the Mayor's Desk

Liz Campbell

Mayor - Kempsey Shire



gested for Kempsey, with us being in a county council with Port Macquarie.

The panel has called it Hasting Macleay County Council.

The panel has yet to provide details or supporting documentation on how these new models proposed will realise efficiencies or indeed improve services to communities they serve.

Current discussions with the panel members and NSW government officials have indicated that they are open to alternative models of delivering services to communities, and acknowledge there are other options to achieve efficiencies and different models of councils working together.

What has been suggested is not the only model that council should be considering.

Our council is already working across the region with the Mid North Coast Regional Organisation of Councils (MIDROC) which comprises eight member councils from Great Lakes to Coffs Harbour.

There are groups of technical experts from these councils already working on ways we can better deliver services and streamline processes amongst the group.

We accept that we cannot continue to do things we way we always have done, and internally and regionally we have been looking at ways to change to give the best benefit for the community at a local and regional level.

Council will be making a submission to the panel and government representatives to support the continued collaborative approach taken at MIDROC and that a regional approach to service delivery is a more suited model for our region than a county council model.

The panel's final report is due in September 2013.

## Your Letters

### No car park for Horseshoe Bay

JUST adding my support to Isobel Hermann's letter of June 18.

I do not wish to see any of Horseshoe Bay turned into a car park. Brighton Park and Back Creek headland car park can be used as overflow.

The 2013 Draft Plan has not dealt with any of the concerns of the locals.

The way I see it we don't get our shelter back, the cabins are going in, you will be entering your reserve via a car park and nobody will be able to drive to the Back Creek headland as we do now, for the sake of three campsites.

Peter Nelson  
South West Rocks

### Bemused by drag racing support

IN 2005 council commissioned an aviation auditor to assess the Kempsey Airport.

The report found our airport was an impressive asset, but risked remaining underused in the future by factors that included a "do-nothing council".

Council's failure to aggressively market the airport to potential air carriers has resulted in us missing out on revenue and employment, especially in light of the abundance of fly-in, fly-out workers employed on the Kempsey bypass and Frederickton to Eungai upgrade.

Allowing our airport to be used for the purposes of drag racing is not likely to impress potential air carriers who may be considering setting up in our town.

It is therefore disappointing that Cr Patterson has campaigned on behalf of the Four Aces Drag Racing Club.

I am bemused as to why council has bent over backwards to accommodate the organisers when there appears to be overwhelming opposition to our airport being used for such purposes.

Ryan Mainey  
West Kempsey

### Keeping racing off our streets

KEMPSEY has its fair share of stolen vehicles and police chases, and I've read previous comments that "the public roads are not the place for speeding or racing".

Yet, when a local club wants to provide a venue for legalised racing, the locals won't support it.

And, it's interesting to note that almost everyone in the public gallery appears to be over 60 years of age.

Are they opposed to drag racing in particular, or just don't like young people having a good time?

I bet a few of them have illegally raced motor vehicles at some time in their life.

Posted by 'Lone Ranger' at  
macleayargus.com.au

□ Letters to the Editor are welcome on any subject. All letters must carry the writer's name, address and daytime telephone or contact number for verification purposes. The editor reserves the right to edit or reject any letter. Email: editor.macleayargus@ruralpress.com

**THE STORY OF US:** The Macleay Argus has been the advocate for the Kempsey Shire for over 127 years. It reaches more than 10,875 readers every Tuesday and Friday and has been the document of record for not only residents but for the political decision makers of NSW and Federal Parliaments and local civic and business leaders.

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**Sale the Kempsey RSPCA**  
will be having a giant clearance sale on Friday and Saturday, July 5 and 6, from 8am to noon.  
There will be fill-a-bag deals for \$1.50 per bag, and no unreasonable offer on furniture or bigger items will be refused.  
Come along to our garage sale site in Eden St, Kempsey.

**Book for bazaar**  
BOOK your stall and book the date for the annual bazaar at Collombatti hall.

Sunday, July 14 is the day for everyone to come to Collombatti to help make the annual bazaar a fabulous event.

There will be entertainment by the SWR singers, the Kempsey Line Dancers and hopefully the Kempsey Pipe Band.

There will be the usual delectable barbecue and cafe running, and lots of stalls to peruse.

So drive on out to Collombatti on Sunday, July 14 from 9.30am to have fun.

For stall bookings, phone Clive or Lynn on 6566 8394.

See you there.

## From our files ...

### Next week's issue

AS is well known the general election takes place all over the colony on Tuesday next.

The proprietors of The Macleay Argus have made arrangements to have the central Kempsey Post Office kept open for telegraph purposes all night, and hope to be able to give the results of every contest throughout NSW in Wednesday's issue.

It is expected that most of the results will be known by 2am, and that the paper will be published by 4am.

### Hastings and Macleay

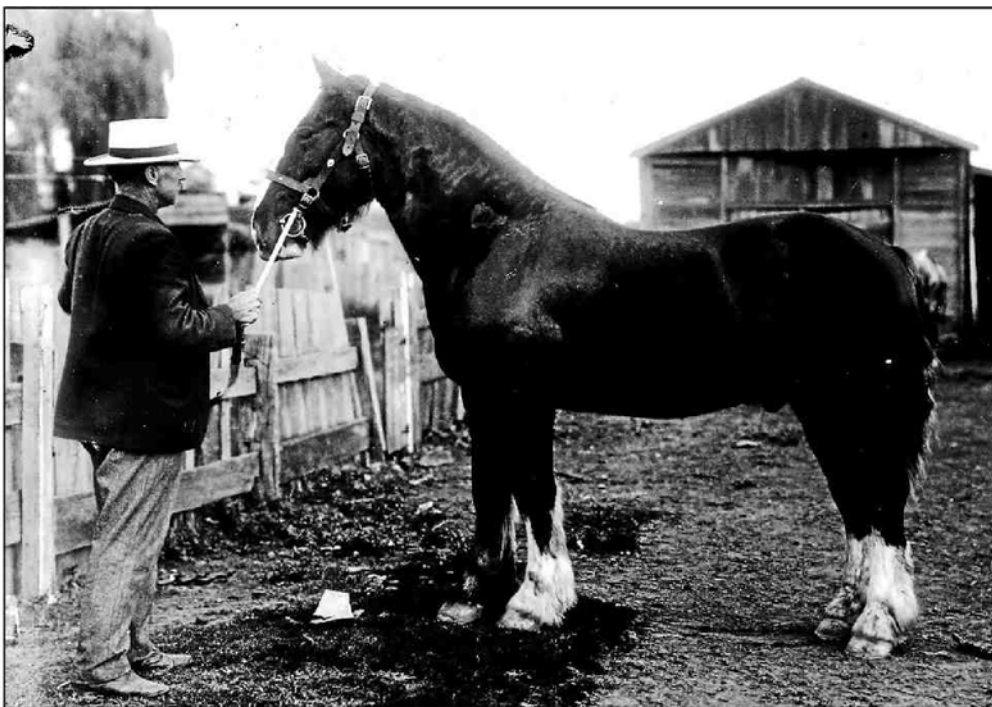
THE following are the numbers on the roll:

Bellbrook division 126, Kempsey 1315, Port Macquarie 493, Wauchope 455, total 2389.

THE Sydney Bulletin says: "Frank Clarke, MP, who defeated O. O. Dangar at a by-election for the Macleay, looks like a certainty in an electorate where everyone is from a first cousin to a 31st cousin, or else married to everyone's sister, cousin or aunt."

The Bulletin professes to know about all the world and part of France, but this gives vent to very gross ignorance.

- The Macleay Argus  
July 11, 1894



□ A draught horse owned by George Ramsay. Picture by Angus McNeil taken in the 1910s

## Email your submissions on council agenda items

RECENTLY we have had a number of issues the community wanted to have a say on, including council's Community, Delivery and Operating plans, as well as development applications.

The best way to do this is by emailing council direct: ksc@kempsey.nsw.gov.au

The reason for this is that all submissions lodged directly with council are reviewed, and a summary of the issues and concerns are included in the council meeting business papers.

I realise people want to make sure that their councillors know what they think, however, if submissions are not sent directly to council they can easily be overlooked.

Sometimes, this results in your submissions not getting into the business paper where they need to be read and considered, along with all other submissions received by council.

When councillors are reading their business papers, this is what they will be focusing on, not their emails. So, if you want your view to get the most impact, send it into council at ksc@kempsey.nsw.gov.au

That way it will be given the fullest consideration. All submissions have to be given equal consideration by councillors, so emails, including those directly to councillors, do not get a higher value than any other submission.

Email is a great communication tool but it is how we use emails that determines whether it improves how we communicate.

## Library services

THERE have been many inquiries and concerns about our library services.

In considering our budget and operating plan, council had to identify savings.

It was proposed that library services could be reduced to realise some of the budget shortfall.

Following community feedback on the services our libraries provide, councillors considered an alternative approach.

The Stuarts Point and Hat Head libraries will remain open with current hours of operation, and staff will investigate how services can be streamlined.



## From the Mayor's Desk

Liz Campbell

Mayor - Kempsey Shire



There will be minor changes to the operations of the Kempsey Library which, from July 15, will close at 5.30pm on weekdays and noon on Saturdays.

A review of the Kempsey Library visitation numbers between 5.30pm and 6pm on weekdays and between noon and 1pm on Saturdays indicates that this slight modification to library hours will not disadvantage the community and will realise some savings.

The Toy Library will be retained, with a reduction in hours only.

Council has to review operations to ensure we can deliver services within the budgets that we have.

With community feedback, we have been able to make changes to the budgets and operating plans, resulting in smaller changes to library services than first indicated.

## Operating Plan adopted

COUNCIL, at an extraordinary meeting on June 25, adopted our plans for the next 12 months and into the future.

We have a busy time with the scheduled projects and services.

Via the media and our website, we will continue to keep everyone informed on progress of road works, bridge maintenance and major projects.

By adopting these plans, it now means any changes that may be proposed, such as new projects, will require changes to these plans.

We cannot add new services or projects without having an impact on what we have already reviewed and agreed to.

This doesn't mean we cannot take advantage of things that come our way, or consideration for changes can't be made, we just need to be mindful that if we want to make a change, something else will have to change too.

## Your Letters

### Planes are noisy, so are the birds ...

I WAS disappointed to read in today's Argus (June 25) that the Four Aces Drag Racing Club has been forced to look for another venue to hold a drag racing event.

We have a race track already here in Kempsey, on a public road. Namely, Sherwood Rd.

Our airport is going to 'rack and ruin' because it is not being used. If you don't use it, you lose it.

Whoever asks for a \$250,000 bond? This club is a little 'non-for-profit' club and would never see this much money.

Give them a trial go at least.

Good on you Cr Patterson for campaigning on behalf of the club.

Cr Patterson is the modern generation family man. He has a successful business in town and does a lot of charity work. Also he has great foresight.

As for a couple of 'whingers', if you don't like the noise, go out for the day.

The gun club on Armidale Rd make a lot of noise. The planes that use the airport make a lot of noise. The birds make a lot of noise, I could go on ...

The runway is very long and I believe the club only wants to use the far end, away from houses.

The revenue this event could bring into Kempsey would be massive. So are we going to knock back a great opportunity, for a few weak excuses?

I challenge the council to ask ratepayers to vote and see what the general public want.

They could put a flyer in the annual rate notice which is due out soon. Or The Argus could put out a notice in the paper to get the public to reply and give the people's view.

Do we want to have a mean, disgruntled view or have a vision to try something to benefit the community of Kempsey?

Fay Reckless  
Euroka

## Counting the costs of a growing population

IN his June 7 letter, John Bowell asks: "What are we doing about it?" "It" is a high population prediction for Australia of 62.2 million by 2101.

His letter makes it clear that, for him and some other big thinkers, this near tripling of our population would be an unreservedly good thing.

It's hard to imagine a clearer example of the political mindset - more is better. From local through to federal government, the answer to all problems is more of everything, especially people.

Issues such as the carrying capacity of the continent and the effect of rapid growth on communities do not concern these leaders. Well, they concern me.

And while the issues are complex, they're not beyond comprehension.

The availability of fresh water bedevils councils across the continent.

In a land of droughts and flooding rains, the issue appears to come and go.

But add climate change and 40 million more people, and it will become a problem beyond a solution.

Meanwhile, our soils are losing nutrients, gaining salt, eroding and blowing away. (Whether we're using them to grow food for export or for our own use makes no difference.)

We have lost more plants and mammals to extinction than any other country.

□ Continued Page 7

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## Did you know ... ?

### What does the council do?

KEMPSEY Shire Council provides community services and facilities using the money it raises.

It is also responsible for making and enforcing local laws.

Look around and you'll see your council at work everywhere:

- Council workers repair roads, footpaths and street lights, and replace signs.

- Garbage trucks remove rubbish from outside houses and businesses every week.

- Parking officers make sure people obey parking restrictions so that car park spaces are available for as many people as possible.

- Open space staff keep the plants in our parks, gardens and public places attractive and colourful.

- Lifeguards work to keep our beaches safe.

- Libraries make sure you have access to the information that you need.

- THE council's Customer Services team fielded 40,054 phone calls in 2012-13.

- The number of customers who attended Customer Services in the same time period was 13,910.

# Services for you at library

## Part of national initiatives to promote reading

THE Get Reading campaign is Australia's largest annual celebration of books and reading.

It encourages all Australians to pick up a book, put up their feet and get reading.

Each year Kempsey Library participates in this campaign by distributing copies of the 50 Great Reads booklet, and acquiring borrowing copies of each of the promoted titles.

The library also hosts visits from touring authors as part of the campaign, and this year the visiting author will be Australian story teller Nicole Alexander.

Nicole has written several rural sagas set in historical and modern settings.

She will be visiting Kempsey Library on Tuesday, September 10 at 2pm to talk about her soon to be released novel 'Sunset Ridge'.

## Learning to read is fun

WE all know how important it is for books and reading to be part of our kids' lives.

Kempsey Library runs two programs designed to encourage reading, and to give parents and carers practical assistance to develop a love of reading and books in their child.

The Baby Bounce program is for young children aged 0 to 2 years and their parents or carers, and includes songs, rhyme and movement as well as some short story telling time.

Parents are encouraged to join in, enabling socialising



□ Above: Sonya Reid is an avid reader, and enjoys having the latest best sellers available

□ Below: Desley Polmear (second from left) is one of the many writers supported by Kempsey Library



for both babe and mum, dad or carer, as an important part of the Baby Bounce experience.

Baby Bounce is held on the second Friday of each month during term time, at 10.30am.

The second program is a little more structured, and is

aimed at pre-school aged children who are generally able to sit for a longer period, and who can also participate in simple craft activities.

Story Time is held on the last Friday of each month during term time, from 10.30am.



□ Popular: Tech Savvy Seniors classes will start again in October. Bookings are required

## Supporting local authors

SOUTH West Rocks-based author Desley Polmear is just one of the many writers supported by Kempsey Library in the past year.

Desley's first work of fiction, 'Unlocked Secrets', received its Kempsey debut at a book launch last November.

Other local writers who launched their work at Kempsey Library in the past year included Sue Johnson from the Upper Macleay, whose memoir, 'Talk of Many Things', was the culmination of many years of hard work; and established author Greg Barron from Eungai Creek who promoted his latest thriller, 'Savage Tide'.

The library has also hosted memorable talks by travelling writers this year.

The library is always interested in hearing from writers who are looking for a venue to launch or promote their writing.

## Tech classes for seniors

IN 2012 Kempsey Library was fortunate to obtain funding through Telstra to run a series of workshops aimed at improving the technology skills of older adults.

The classes covered basic mobile phone use, as well as accessing the internet and setting up an email account.

More than 120 participants attended a total of 20 classes, over a 10 month period.

Beginning in October 2013, the library will again be offering technology training for seniors.

The 'Tech Savvy Seniors' classes will be held each week on Wednesday mornings for 10 weeks and cover different topics each week.

Cost is \$50 for the 10 weeks, and bookings and pre-payment are required.

□ For details on these programs and more, visit the library or call 6566 3210.



## MAYOR'S Message

Welcome to Local Government Week, a week where we celebrate our community and the services that council provides in serving our people.

My time as Mayor has given me a much better understanding of what services are provided and just how complex it is to provide things that we take for granted. There is a lot that happens in the background to ensure that when you turn on the tap to start making a cup of tea, the water comes out - getting the water there and safe to drink; having roads to deliver the tea and sugar; and for you to go and buy it from the shops. Many things are needed to support our everyday lives.

Planning for future needs and meeting current needs takes considerable effort, knowledge and skills to get right. In many ways this is no different to our personal lives. Individually, we have to decide what is valuable to us and what we are willing to invest in. The decisions we make impact on how we can enjoy life in the future. And local government is just the same. The choices we make now will impact on our lifestyle into the future. The past year has been a big one for councillors, with a number of new people joining our board through the main election and the by-election. Councillors have faced the huge task of looking at the future picture that we want for the community and deciding over their term just how we will be allocating our resources towards achieving that vision.

We have identified that the community values being healthy, wealthy, sociable and safe. This year we have been setting out how we measure that and what we are going to do about it. This will involve things done directly by local government, such as upgrading water and sewer facilities and providing roads. But we also will be looking at lobbying others to assist in providing services that add to our values, such as the process that has resulted in the hospital upgrades being funded.

Local government has a lot to provide to the community. This last year has been heavily focused on making sure we have a good direction.

During Local Government Week, I encourage you to look at what our Community Strategic Plan includes. I encourage you to look around at the things that are taking place in our valley, particularly those delivered by local government. At the end of the day, local government is about providing for the community's needs and investment for our community's future.

## GENERAL MANAGER'S Message

Local Government Week is an opportunity for Council to show some of the things we have been doing and part of the range of services that we provide.

What we provide is important to the community and we work hard at providing the services that our community needs.

Providing services 365 days per year is challenging and we continuously work to ensure our community is served as best we can.

We monitor our drinking water on a daily basis to ensure it is safe for our community, we maintain our transport links and provide planning and strategic direction on our future. We inspect food premises for their hygiene and safety and we inspect buildings for their construction and fire requirements.

There are many things we do that you may not notice but are important to our community functioning every day.

We are changing how we do things, like investing in remote monitoring of water treatment equipment, which will bring our costs down. We are looking at how we can try and be financially sustainable, for example we did not increase any of our discretionary budgets this year, trying to absorb the cost of inflation into doing things more efficiently and cutting costs by over \$400,000.

The changes that we have made over the last few years to how we manage our infrastructure are starting to show through.

Having a longer term strategy for dealing with roads that need to be maintained and focusing on the most heavily trafficked roads, where most people will benefit first, is seeing steady progress. Working in larger sections rather than small jobs is seeing noticeably more improvement.

Similarly, under the ground in our water and sewer assets targeting failing pipelines has led to lower water main breaks and sewerage chokes. While you may not see the mains pipe, having the water running relies on those pipes not breaking.

For local government these are challenging times, but we are changing and adapting to try and ensure that we can continue to provide the services that provide value to the community in their everyday lives.



**Stunning home on the river in town**  
**Domain.com.au** Domain starts on Page 9

**Coach Kevin a life member**  
- See Sport

# Council backs new rates rise

## Freedom to roam, but Bruce and Joan do have a home

JOAN Christensen and Bruce Bell don't have a regular home.

"Australia is our home," Joan told The Argus on Tuesday.

But the couple does have a place to call home, at least for the next week and a half - the Kempsey Showground.

They are in the Macleay for the Slim Dusty Country Music Memories Week, for the second year in a row.

"We met (organiser) Bruce (Woods) at the Urban Country Festival last year

Continued Page 2



Great time: Joan Christensen and Bruce Bell enjoyed the Slim Dusty Country Music Memories Week so much in 2012 that they are back again this year. Picture by Shellie Morrison



More money, better management: Kempsey Shire Council general manager David Rawlings says rates increases are necessary to maintain the level of services and assets the community expects

By Thom Klein

THE average Macleay household rates bill will increase by a third in three years, if Kempsey Shire Council gains approval for a series of rises.

Councillors have passed a recommendation from council directors to seek a special rate variation amounting to 7 per cent above the rate pegging limit (RPL) for three consecutive years from July 2014.

This would be followed by a 1 per cent rise above the RPL in the 2017-18 financial year.

If the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) grants approval, the average household rates bill would increase from \$834 this year, to \$1154 by July 2017.

Continued Page 2

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# Council backs new rates rise

□ From Page 1

The council was granted a permanent rate rise of 11 per cent, effective from July 2012, with the right to apply for further special variations.

The director of Corporate Management Daryl Hagger prepared an extensive report for the October council meeting, with input from general manager David Rawlings.

It has highlighted the need to maintain ageing infrastructure, the increased costs of regulations and service provision, and the failure of the current level of rates to keep pace as the key factors behind the proposed hike.

The report summary states ongoing reviews into council operations indicate there are insufficient resources available to provide current services on a long-term sustainable basis.

"A decision has been made now on how to deal with the situation; balancing the financial impact on residents against the services and standards of services the community desires," the summary concludes.

Cr Sue McGinn outlined her support for the recommendation.

"We need to invest in our community and its assets," she said.

And mayor Liz Campbell spoke in favour of the rates increase.

"We're future-proofing our shire," she said.

Cr Bruce Morris put forward an amendment to spread the overall increase evenly across the four-year period, which was supported by Cr Betty Green but opposed by the remaining seven councillors.

Councillors Campbell, Green and McGinn were joined by Crs Lou Kesby, Anthony Patterson, Dean Saul, Anna Shields and Ashley Williams in voting for the recommendation.

Cr Morris's was the only vote against.

Mr Rawlings said the council was able to look at individual situations, where there were issues relating to hardship.

□ Have your say:

editor.macleayargus@ruralpress.com

□ A straighter bridge: Page 5

## Investing in the future, says mayor

DAVID Rawlings says he wants to ensure ratepayers get the best value for money for the services they expect.

Kempsey Shire Council's general manager acknowledged the difficulty of convincing the community of the need for further significant rates rise.

"It will definitely be a hard sell," he said.

"I hope (with the previous increase) we've shown we're moving towards better management.

"Results are what will matter. People want services and assets, and if you want those, you do have to pay.

"No one likes extra costs,

but the community will see council is working towards getting our lifestyle where we want it to be."

Community support for a rates rise forms part of the criteria for IPART submissions.

The council failed to secure the full rise it had sought from IPART in its previous submission, but had set up a series of contingencies for possible outcomes.

Increased revenue from the rise had been ploughed into the council's roads network, as it had been identified as the immediate priority.

Any further rises would be more focused on other infrastructure and services.

Rates increases would allow the council to give more priority to community buildings, swimming pools, flood mitigation and all other council assets.

Mayor Cr Liz Campbell said it was essential to replace ageing infrastructure to maintain the great lifestyle the Macleay offered.

"We cannot expect others to come to the area, invest, set up factories and industry to provide jobs," she said.

"It will not be possible to have a healthy, wealthy, safe and sociable environment if we are not willing ourselves to invest in our own community."



□ Call for action: Kelly Clarke says tree branches overhanging power lines along Armidale Rd in the Yarravel area are a threat to public safety

## Man, 96, saved as fire nears

By Todd Connaughton

QUICK thinking by a next door neighbour saved a 96-year-old man from potentially serious injury when a fire caused by fallen power lines burned within metres of his home on Wednesday.

The fire at Yarravel was caused by a large branch which had fallen from a tree overhanging the power lines.

This is at least the second incident of tree branches falling on power lines in the area in the past month.

A blackout on Sunday, September 29 was caused by a branch which brought down lines just metres from the latest incident.

Jenny Clarke was returning to her home on Armidale Rd from a trip into town when she saw a large fire sweeping across her property toward her neighbour's house.

When she went into her home to call the fire brigade her phone was dead because the power was off.

"My mum was going to run across the road to Australian Solar Timbers to use their phone but there wasn't time so we raced up to the neighbour's house," Ms Clarke said.

"The man is my neighbour's elderly father

and we saw her car there but she wasn't around, so my partner Robbie, a lady called Tammy who stopped her car to help and I went inside and found him and got him out of the house.

"By this time the smoke was pretty thick and the man was having trouble breathing."

The fire brigade and ambulance arrived soon after and the fire was brought under control.

Ms Clarke and the neighbour were transported to hospital for treatment for smoke inhalation.

Ms Clarke was released after an hour but the man remains hospitalised.

She says the fire highlighted the danger of falling tree branches, several of which still overhang power lines in the immediate area around her property.

"You can see that the branch that fell is riddled with ants," she said.

"I'm no tree surgeon but I would think there are other branches on the same tree in similar condition.

"The branch that caused the blackout a few weeks ago is still there, although now burnt to a crisp. Next time it happens maybe we won't be so lucky."

## Country couple home at showground

□ From Page 1

and he asked us to come," Bruce said.

"It was our first visit to the area last year and we had a great time.

"It is a lovely drive here and we enjoy seeing the different acts and meeting new people."

Performers themselves, using the name Country All The Way, Joan and Bruce believe country music is the only kind of music.

They have nine albums between them, including four completed together.

They have been on the road for the past six years and plan to continue to live the same travelling life well into the future.

"All we do is play music around Australia," Joan said.

"We haven't been to the south-west of Western Australia, because there was a whooping cough epidemic, but we plan to go back.

"We haven't been to Tassie because we haven't taught the bus to swim."

The bus, named 'Freedom', took six months to fit out, with the majority of the work done by Joan and Bruce.

"The freedom you have out there, it is just wonderful," Joan said.

Country All The Way will be organising performances in the showground hall every afternoon and night until the official festival program starts on Monday.

Copies of their CDs will be for sale.

The festival will start with The Macleay Hillbillies band performing live at the showground from 6.30pm.

Live acts will be on Every night of the week and a seven-day pass, including showground entertainment, is \$70 per person.

Invited artists will perform on the main stage from 9am to 5pm on Saturday while the concert will begin at 6pm.

Tickets for all day Saturday are \$35 each.

Musical highlights will include performances by Slim's son and daughter David and Anne Kirkpatrick.

Powered sites are sold out at the showground, while unpowered sites are available.

For more information about the festival visit slimdustycentre.com.au



# Slim Dusty

## COUNTRY MUSIC MEMORIES WEEK

Proudly supported by



**OCTOBER 21ST TO 27TH 2013**

**PHONE: 02 6562 4795**






## From our files ...

**A.J.S. Bank at Frederickton**  
PURSUING its policy of retrenchment, the A.J.S. directors have decided to close the branch at Frederickton from tomorrow.

Kempsey business fold will not object to this decision, which will throw more trade into their hands.

Having to come to Kempsey to bank, down-the-river people will naturally spend their money in town.

Mr Sedgwick's departure from the Macleay, however, will be heard of with regret.

The retiring manager has made many friends on the river.

### Light railway lines

MR Young, Minister for Works, has called for information with reference to two or three proposed lines of light railway, with a view to having them submitted to the Public Works committee.

A most badly wanted line is one running between Armidale and Trial Bay. This has been surveyed.

TO let: At Commandant Hill, a cottage of seven rooms, orchard of one acre, choice vines, fruit trees, pineapples. Also quarter acre vegetables.

- The Macleay Argus  
October 31, 1894



□ Alan and Peg Marriott outside their travel agency in Clyde St, Kempsey following the 1949 flood. The business had been open for six weeks

## Investing in our future

SETTING up the Macleay Valley so that future generations can benefit from the same services and infrastructure as we enjoy was one of the top items for consideration at this month's council meeting.

Council previously applied for a four-year rates increase but had only one year of that approved.

Additional information was required, including developing a new Community Strategic Plan, and that work has been done.

The council's infrastructure has been deteriorating and not being replaced and council believes this has to stop if we want to keep people here and attract more people to the area.

We pride ourselves on being an area with a great lifestyle.

The wonderful lifestyle we enjoy also relies on good public infrastructure and facilities.

We have to start looking at this as investing in our future.

We cannot expect others to come to the area, invest, set up businesses and industry to provide jobs if our towns and roads are rundown and not pleasant to use.

It will not be possible to have a healthy, wealthy, safe and sociable environment if we are not willing ourselves to invest in our own community.

The focus of the rate increase in the immediate term will be to continue to ramp up the investment into roads, and the increase is designed to allow council to then move onto community buildings, swimming pools, flood mitigation and all the other assets the council provides.

This business on the works already undertaken, such as bridge replacements, bridge works, priority road maintenance works on roads such as Second Lane, South West Rocks Rd, Bissett St, and Eden St to name a few.

## Book for Truck Show

THE North Coast Trucking Social Club will hold its annual fundraiser for local charities, the Kempsey Truck Show, on Saturday, November 16.

The event will begin with the ever popular street procession.

Trucks will assemble in South St, South Kempsey at 9.30am and will proceed through to the Greenhill Speedway, where a family fun day is planned.

Entry at the gate is just \$2 per person or \$5 per family.

There will be motorbike racing, activities for children, raffles, a

charity auction and plenty of food and drink.

Bookings are being taken from market stall-holders and business houses wishing to have a sales site on the day.

To book a site contact club president Blue Slocombe on 0428 652 764.



## From the Mayor's Desk

Liz Campbell

Mayor - Kempsey Shire



In order to continue maintenance works on our most trafficked roads additional funds are needed.

It is a long term solution, but we have to solve it and we have to start solving it now.

We cannot ignore the situation hoping someone else will look after our assets. We use these every day and they are our responsibility.

## Grandparents Day

LAST Sunday was Grandparents Day.

When doing our consultations on what was needed for the future we received a strong representation from grandparents. Often their concern was that we were ensuring that the future for their grandchildren included jobs and a good lifestyle.

They are looking at things from their years of experience, but are focused on the future of their family.

So this day is fitting to recognise and celebrate the unique role that grandparents play in families and the wider community.

While we quietly appreciate how important grandparents are every day it provides an opportunity to recognise how they contribute not only to their families, they also are involved in community groups, volunteering and sharing their experiences.

I hope all grandparents enjoyed the day. We always admire their contributions to our community.

## Your Letters

### Golf club paying for past rates policies

I WAS appalled to read the article in The Macleay Argus, October 22, in relation to the Kempsey Golf Club's water account.

My first reaction was to think the newly elected councillors appeared to have acted like ostriches, and need to pull their heads out of the sand.

Reason being, a few years ago Kempsey Council went through a period where they appeared to be poor money managers. Example: the over budget spending on Plomer Rd by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Council also went through a period when it applied for a rate increase for the Shire, but was knocked back by the department of local government.

As a result, council appeared to go through the back door and increased various other rates, including water rates, to make up the shortfall of rate income.

At the same time, council introduced a draconian obstacle on the progress of business, called an access charge.

An access charge at the time was for the size of the water service connected to a property.

This new charge delivered an instant 'gold mine' revenue to the council.

The cost of water has increased by about 200 per cent over the past six or seven years.

Any wonder why Kempsey Golf Club has a problem with its water account?

Why should the golf club have to pay for what appears to be past inefficiencies of Kempsey Shire Council?

John Moore  
Aldavilla

### Council must live within our means

SO Kempsey Shire Council wants to increase rates by 21 per cent in the next three years (The Macleay Argus, October 18).

This equals 7 per cent a year.

Can you remember when the average worker last got a rise in his or her pay of 7 per cent a year?

Inflation is now running at a national rate of a little more than 2 per cent.

If inflation stays that low it means council will be gouging a further 5 per cent.

It is admirable of council to want to "provide services on a long-term sustainable basis".

But this cannot be done by massive rate increases because they will only drive people, development and investment away from the Shire.

Have you noticed how the Kempsey Shire has virtually stagnated for the past eight years?

Surely some of the highest council rates on the NSW North Coast have brought that about.

Council has already punished rate payers with very large past rates.

Now it wants to put its hands into our back pockets again.

It is time for councillors to realise that they have to settle for a rise in line with the community's capacity to pay.

Ratepayers and renters must send a strong message to council: live within your means, because we have to.

Christopher Beck  
South West Rocks and Brisbane

□ Please send your letters via email to editor.macleayargus@ruralpress.com

**THE STORY OF US:** The Macleay Argus has been the advocate for the Kempsey Shire for over 127 years. It reaches more than 10,875 readers every Tuesday and Friday and has been the document of record for not only residents but for the political decision makers of NSW and Federal Parliaments and local civic and business leaders.

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## Arrest stops busy traffic

□ Right: A man was arrested after a scuffle with police following a routine stop for a traffic offence in West Kempsey on Wednesday. The driver was allegedly detected speeding in Elbow St and was stopped by police near the Tozer St roundabout. The man allegedly argued with police before a struggle developed and he was placed under arrest, ending up handcuffed and face down on the road. A spokesman said yesterday that the man was released pending further investigations. Police were awaiting the results of blood and urine tests before determining if the man would be charged.



## Strong support for rates petition

A FINANCIAL overview of Kempsey Shire Council's four-year delivery plan will go on public exhibition.

Councillors voted unanimously on Tuesday to approve the move.

The report contains statistics and graphs of council income and revenue for rates and water supply.

It also contains comparable data for other local government areas, and includes commentary on the impact of rates rises.

Meanwhile, former councillor Brian Sowter said the petition he drafted opposing the extent of the council's special rate variation submission had attracted a lot of support.

Kempsey Shire Council wants to increase rates by 7 per cent above the pegged rate for three consecutive years, from July 2014, and by 1 per cent in July 2017.

"There's been an enormous response to the petition," Mr Sowter said.

"I think it's in the hundreds (the number of signatures collected).

"The petition is in many shops and business houses around Kempsey, at South West Rocks and Crescent Head, upriver at Willawarrin and Bellbrook, and I've heard from the store at Smithtown asking for a copy.

"The amount the council is asking for is too high."

Mr Sowter said the council's view the community could afford a special rate variation - as reported in Tuesday's edition of The Argus - had prompted increased support for the petition.

He said the petition would be collected by the end of the second week of December and it would be sent, with a letter, to IPART (the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal).

IPART is the body which will decide whether to approve Kempsey Shire Council's submission.

The council has not specified a date for the public exhibition period.

## See the Rats do their best

THE Kempsey-Macleay Dragon Boat Club will host its fifth Dragon Boat Regatta on Sunday, December 8.

Racing will start at 8am with the finals at 2pm.

The course is on the Macleay River in front of the Kempsey-Macleay RSL Club.

The club hopes the community will support the free event.

Teams from across the Mid North Coast will compete, so come on down and watch the Rats do what they do best.

# Christopher hurt in crash

□ From Page 1  
last Saturday when he rounded the corner from Elbow St into River St.

A car travelling in the opposite direction allegedly failed to take the turn and in an instant Christopher was flying through the air, over the bonnet of the car, before landing heavily on the road.

"I was going to Greenhill for a delivery and I had just left the 40km/h zone and was leaning into the corner for River St when I saw the car coming," Christopher said.

"It had smoke coming from

the tyres and he didn't appear to brake or try to turn the corner, he just went straight on and 'bang' that was it.

"I got up and limped off the road and started yelling at the driver and he just accelerated away.

"A couple of people who had been following behind me stopped to help and people came out of their houses as well."

Christopher said the fact that he is a keen dirt bike rider probably helped him avoid more serious injury.

"I knew how to tuck and roll

from coming off my own bike on trails in the bush," he said.

"I was also using my own helmet which is a full face design where you can flip the front up; I had just put the front down seconds before because it was getting a bit cold.

"I'm lucky I did."

Before long a crowd of local residents had gathered, alerted by the sound of the crash.

The man's car reportedly had two flat tyres and several smashed windows.

Christopher said the accident had made him appreciate how lucky he was and how

many good people there were in Kempsey.

"The care I had at the hospital has made me feel a lot better mentally about the crash and has helped me recover, no doubt about it," he said.

"And the people from work have been great.

"The crash really shook them up and one of the guys from work came running down as soon as he heard about it."

Christopher has replayed the night of the accident over and over in his mind, wondering if things could have turned out differently.

"I think 'what if' I had stayed just 30 seconds longer at work," he said.

"When the order came in they were going to send the car but it changed to the bike.

"Or what if I had gone a different way - or all sorts of things - but this is how it turned out."

Police said the driver was issued with a field court attendance notice for driving while disqualified.

They are awaiting results of blood and urine tests before determining if further charges are laid.

## Thieves smash hole in wall



□ Fixed: thieves cut a hole in a wall at Southside Cellars

THE Southside Cellars liquor store in South Kempsey was broken into in the early hours of Tuesday morning and cash, cigarettes and alcohol were stolen, police said.

The store has a long history of being targeted by thieves including an incident in 2007 when a man had a bottle smashed over his head, an armed hold-up in September 2010, another attempted armed hold-up in 2011 when employees struggled with sword-wielding bandits, and two separate break-ins in July 2012.

The store owners have progressively increased security and installed stronger doors in the wake of these incidents.

Mid North Coast Police say the thieves gained entry in the latest robbery by removing panels from the rear of the building and smashing through a wall.

Police are reviewing CCTV footage from a nearby business as part of their investigations.

If you have any information about this crime please call Kempsey Police on 6561 6199 or Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000.

## Man 'threw bottle of juice at police car'

A MAN has been charged with malicious damage after allegedly throwing a full bottle of orange juice at a police car, causing a dent and scratches in the rear guard.

Police said the man had been inside the police station on another matter and threw the bottle as he left the station.

He was arrested 30m from the station, taken back inside and charged with malicious damage.

He was granted conditional bail to appear in Kempsey Local Court on January 20, 2014.

## More officers for Coast

THE Mid North Coast will be among six police local area commands in northern NSW to share 90 new officers.

The 90 officers will be assigned to the North Coast region, covering the area from Port Stephens to the Queensland border.

Oxley MP Andrew Stoner welcomed Wednesday's announcement.

# St Joseph's P & F & Fete Committee

would like to say

# THANK YOU

to

- ⊙ All the local businesses who showed their support
- ⊙ The many people who dropped off donations
- ⊙ And the helpers who donated their time & energy

**You were all a part of making the Fete such a great success.**



# We can afford rate rise: report

THE community can afford to pay Kempsey Shire Council's proposed rates increases, a report prepared for today's monthly meeting concludes.

It says the council's financial sustainability and the services it provides would suffer without the extra income.

Councillors approved last month a recommendation to apply for a four-year special rate variation - three annual rises of 7 per cent, beginning in July 2014, followed by a 1 per cent rise in 2017-18.

The Community Engagement department has prepared a report, the financial overview section of the council's delivery plan for 2013 to 2017.

It says the average residential rates bill will rise by \$4.15 a week over the four-year period.

"The demographic and rating profile for Kempsey Shire suggests that our community has the capacity to pay the proposed rate increase," the report states.

It goes on to acknowledge that while the Macleay has the second-lowest weekly household income of Mid North Coast council areas, the percentage of income required to pay rates is significantly lower than that of neighbouring councils.

"Compared to neighbouring councils (Port Macquarie-Hastings, Nambucca, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Greater Taree), Kempsey has lower average residential rates," the report says.

"Kempsey also has lower average farmland rates, other than Taree, and lower average business rates, other than Bellingen."

It also states Kempsey, as a

Group 4 council, has a relatively low rate of unpaid rates and annual charges, below the NSW average.

The average rates per assessment are \$648.53 for residents, compared to \$831.42 for Armidale Dumaresq (also a Group 4 council) and \$811.52 for NSW as a whole.

Farmland rates in Kempsey average \$1268.31, compared to \$2272.22 for Armidale Dumaresq and \$1968.76 for NSW.

Businesses pay an average \$1435.64, compared to \$2848.86 in Armidale Dumaresq and \$4305.09 in NSW.

The report begins:

"Kempsey Shire Council has a significant operating deficit, which means that it cannot sustainably continue to provide the services it does."

It outlines the council's policy of removing the use of debt to pay for ongoing asset replenishment and paying off regular loans.

This will lead to an additional \$3.2 million being available annually for reinvestment into the council's assets.

Based on current services, \$32.22 million is needed in general revenue to maintain services and to service debt.

At present, rates generate \$12.7 million in revenue, and untied grants \$5.73 million.

"The shortfall in funding therefore is \$14.79 million per annum and increasing," the report states.

Councillors will vote today on a recommendation to place the report on public exhibition for at least 28 days.



□ **Holiday hope:** the Kempsey Show

## Councillor training on agenda today

THE agenda for today's monthly meeting of Kempsey Shire Council includes recommendations on a proposed two-storey development at Hat Head, a development program for councillors, and the gazetting of two major local events.

Councillors will also listen to a presentation on the council's audited financial states for the year ending June 30.

A recommendation to approve the development application of a dwelling on Kinchela St, Hat Head includes 40 strict conditions.

A one-day councillor training program on November 29 will include sessions on community leadership, dealing with objectors, effective meeting skills and decision making, understanding

financial reporting and financial issues in local government, and understanding sustainability.

Councillors will discuss a recommendation on the provision of further training and development opportunities within the current budget.

They will also vote on whether or not to approve a public half-day holiday application for the 2014 Kempsey Show, and a local event day application for next year's Kempsey Cup race meeting.

Also on the agenda are the draft comprehensive Kempsey Development Control Plan, appointments to council and non-council committees and working parties, and a request for reduced water access charges from the owner of the old butter factory at Frederickton.

## Business of the Week

# Your new way to prosperity

THERE'S no place like home for Leigh Johnston and Aya Dennis.

As longstanding close friends and business colleagues, they hope to bring much of the Macleay community along the Yellow Brick Road to financial security and prosperity.

The Yellow Brick Road (YBR) wealth management company has more than 130 branches nationwide, with each one focusing strongly on their surrounding communities.

It was formed by entrepreneur Mark Bouris, who is the hirer and firer on television's The Apprentice and Celebrity Apprentice reality shows.

In fact, it was a two-day seminar hosted by former winner of The Apprentice, Andrew Morello - whom Mr Bouris hired as a business development manager - that resulted in the Kempsey branch.

"We were blown away by the passion and commitment they all had for Yellow Brick Road," Leigh said.

"We came back to Kempsey and saw the opportunity to offer people better alternatives than the big banks.

"Aya and I are family and community-orientated, and passionate about operating at a grass roots level."

Many people might have the perception that wealth management is something exclusively for the well-off.

But Leigh and Aya are keen to dispel that myth and help pro-



□ **Financial faith:** Yellow Brick Road Wealth Management Kempsey principal Leigh Johnston and colleague Aya Dennis want clients in the Macleay to make the most of their money

mote smarter use of one's finances.

"We're all investors," Aya said.

"Anyone who has superannuation is an investor, as is anyone who has bought a home.

"Financially, most people stick with what they know and what makes them comfortable.

"But, with access to Australian and international markets, we can help clients find more competitive deals."

YBR Kempsey can assist with all your financial needs from lending, including refinancing and debt consolidation or for residential, investment, business and commercial purposes; to insurances, investments, leasing and superannuation.

Leigh, with 12 years' experience in the banking and financial services industry, is the principal of the YBR Kempsey office.

Leigh and Aya are industry-accredited to assist with your

lending needs. Leigh is also qualified to assist with your financial planning needs.

"It doesn't matter whether you're 21 or 61, or a business owner, we can help you to manage and plan your finances to get the most from your money," Leigh said.

Appointments within or outside business hours can be arranged by calling the YBR Kempsey office in Belgrave St on 6562 6006.

- Home Loans
- Financial Planning
- Insurance
- Commercial Loans
- Plant & Equipment
- Superannuation



**YellowBrickRoad**  
Wealth Management

**73 Belgrave Street Kempsey Ph. 6562 6006**

## Short movies tell of mining impacts

TWO documentaries depicting stories of Australians whose lives have been changed by coal and gas mining will screen in Kempsey on Saturday, November 30.

The screening is sponsored by the Lock the Gate Alliance, a community group that is opposed to current mining practices, particularly in relation to coal seam gas.

The two 35-minute films are Fractured Country: An Unconventional Invasion and Undermining Australia: Coal vs. Communities.

They examine the impacts coal and gas mining have on water resources, catchments, farm water supplies, and the Great Artesian Basin.

Local environmental campaigner Christa Schwoebel said the films were inspiring.

"These films are inspiring because they tell the courageous stories of everyday Australians who have decided to take a stand to protect the country they love," she said. "Nothing is sacred and nowhere is safe from this industry."

The films are to screen on Saturday, November 30 at the Oddfellows Hall from 7pm. Live music, supper and a raffle will complete this community event.

Tickets are \$5 and are available at the door. Please RSVP to ballyhero@gmail.com

### GORDON ROSSITER'S SUMMER EXHIBITION

Macleay Valley Community Art Gallery ~ Gladstone

21 Nov- 1 Dec (10am-4.30pm) - closed Mondays & Tuesdays



[www.rossiterspaintings.com.au](http://www.rossiterspaintings.com.au)

TA1246419



## From our files ...

### Bridge over the Macleay

IT seems likely that the Kempsey people will get their bridge over the Macleay after all.

By the Burrawong last week arrived Mr C. W. King, bridge surveyor, who has been despatched from Sydney on behalf of the Public Works Committee to make a thorough survey of the surroundings of the river, prior to submitting a report.

When a work reaches the committee, proof is given that the government is taking steps to carry out the wishes of the people.

Mr King has pitched his camp on the Commandant Hill side of the river and has already started work.

### Death in prison

ON the 17th of last month, James Roach, a prisoner at Trial Bay, was severely kicked by a horse.

He was driving a trolley of stone when he flicked the horse with his whip.

The horse resented and flung up his heels, which caught Roach in the side.

The unfortunate fellow was admitted to the prison hospital and dies last Saturday morning.

Roach was 22 years of age.

- The Macleay Argus  
December 5, 1894



□ William Thurgood's horse team carrying men, women and children at the Kempsey Show. Date unknown

## Do you want to invest in our shire's future?

THERE are petitions asking if people want to pay more rates.

Well, nobody wants an increase in rates. Let's face it, no one wants an increase in their costs.

But do we really want the alternative, where things are going downhill because we don't want to invest in what we need?

### How do we compare?

AT the moment, of the 30 comparable councils across NSW, only two have lower rates per person than Kempsey.

These areas have a range of people and incomes just like us, and by being willing to invest in their community, mostly the communities with the higher level of investment thrive, while ours does not.

### How much are we contributing now?

CURRENTLY the rates allow for only 40 per cent of the community's assets to be replaced.

The level of maintenance we pay for is less than half of what is recommended internationally.

Do we let our own personal assets get run down and uncared for?

We have to face the same question with our public spaces. Repeatedly we have been shown that we are going backwards.

We are not replacing things as they wear out. This is good for a while as you don't have to pay much and seem to get by. But after a while, somebody has to pay.

### Where are we going with a low cost approach?

WE don't maintain things properly. While most of us know that spending the money to get our car serviced saves us from having to spend much more money when the car breaks down, we don't seem to see the same for public facilities, such as swimming pools and playgrounds.

We can choose what we want for the future. Do we want to be the community that runs things into the ground, or are we a community that sees we need to have good things to attract good people to come here and stay here?

If we keep underinvesting no one will want to live here, let alone come here.

It is not about having fancy things, it is now about



## From the Mayor's Desk

Liz Campbell

Mayor - Kempsey Shire



keeping up the things we have and maintaining our community. Because that is what your rates are, you are putting towards all those things we collectively use.

### What choice are we making?

IF we want well looked after public places and a beautiful valley, we need to either do it ourselves or pay to get the jobs done.

If we want good roads, good parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, libraries, beaches and employment districts, we need to pay to rebuild them.

For many years the decisions that have been made have been pushing our area backwards.

A desire to be low cost and rely on debt has resulted in the costs being deferred to us.

There is no doubt we are facing a higher burden now because of the backlog this approach has created.

The previous council started work on trying to make a positive future for the community, and this council is working to continue it.

So when reading the petition, think about whether you want to take the easy cheap option and let things continue to go downhill.

Or are you willing to pay what it costs for us to have a good place to live that we can be proud of?

Paying more money does hurt, but living in a great place is of great value.

What we invest in with rates will give us a better Macleay Valley to live in now and into the future.

The return will come with our valley becoming a place that can keep and look after its public assets.

Be informed before you sign.

Becoming a councillor has shown me that there is a lot of misinformation and perception about council and how it operates.

This is about the future you want for your community.

Make sure you decide your future based on solid factual information, not from opinions based around fiction, folklore and what happened years ago.

## Life is easier with your local library

LIBRARIES aren't just about information and stories, although they do these well.

There is also a range of services offered that can make your life easier:

Need to scan a document or a photograph to keep or email? All Kempsey library branches provide this service.

Need a colour photocopy of a recipe or page from a magazine?

Photocopying is available at all branches, and staff will help you reproduce your images at varying scales and quality if required.

Want to start looking into your family history? All branches provide free access to the website Ancestry.com, using the public access computers at each library.

Doing some renovation at home and want to check on the Australian Standards?

This information is available in the library, simply ask us for the standard you need to access.

Keen to watch a movie? The library holds many current movies for all ages, as well as lots of the old favourites.

The Kempsey Library is increasing its online content constantly. It already has Mango languages, allowing you to learn a language at your own pace and track your progress.

Spanish, French, Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese, German, Mandarin Chinese, Greek, Italian, Russian and more are all available to learn.

Why not try something different with the very popular course of 'Pirate' - learning colourful expressions needed on the high seas such as "Belay yer carousin" and "haul wind smartly!" (Translation: "Stop your messing around" and "quickly align the ship with the wind!").

Another recent addition is the Zinio

online magazine service, which gives library members free online access to many popular magazine titles covering technology, lifestyle, cooking, fashion, hobbies, wellbeing, music, science, finance and so many more.

Everyone knows there is an excellent toy library for our younger borrowers, but did you know there is a large collection of jigsaws for adults available for borrowing?

So why not pay your local library a visit?

## Story time

KEMPSEY Library's November story time will be held at 10.30am this Friday.

Angie will be the story teller for the morning, reading stories about rainforests and the beautiful creatures that live there. This session will include a craft activity.

If you are looking for some Christmas cheer, join library staff for the December story time session at 10.30am on Friday the 6th.

Alison will read 'Santa's Aussie Mix-Up' by Colin Buchanan and Simon Swinger.

The session will include Christmas craft activities.

Story time sessions at Kempsey Library are free, and are suitable for kids aged two to six years.

No need to book, just come along and enjoy the fun.

## Monthly book sale

MEMBERS of Friends of the Library, Kempsey (FOLK) will be holding their next book sale this Friday, November 29 from 10.30am.

As always, there will be loads and loads of pre-loved books and magazines, as well as a selection of audio books, CDs, videos and other items no longer required by the library.

**THE STORY OF US:** The Macleay Argus has been the advocate for the Kempsey Shire for over 128 years. It reaches more than 10,875 readers every Tuesday and Friday and has been the document of record for not only residents but for the political decision makers of NSW and Federal Parliaments and local civic and business leaders.

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# Argus

Friday, November 29, 2013

\$1.60 GST INCL.



## Off to play in the States

- See Sport



## Hotter, wet summer starts on Sunday

- See Page 3



**Surprise:** Ross Millen with the skin from a snake found at the back door of his house off Crescent Head Rd. The skin measures 2.7m

ROSS and Cheryl Millen found a 2.7m-long snake skin at their back door this week.

## One long snake has been here ...

**Report:** Page 2

# Seeking answers on rates rise plan

By Thom Klein

KEMPSEY Shire Council will start the consultation process for its proposed rates rise at South West Rocks this morning.

Members of the Community Engagement Department will be at the SWR Shopping Complex from 9am to answer questions and take feedback on the council's application for a special rate variation (SRV).

Councillors have voted to support a rise of 7 per cent above the pegged rate for three years, followed by a 1 per cent rise above the pegged rate for the 2017-18 financial year.

Director of Community Engagement

Kathy Oliver said the council would use the feedback to determine how best to inform the wider community.

"No one wants to pay more," she acknowledged.

"We'll ask (anyone expressing opposition to the rates rise) why they would not want to see improvements made to roads in the shire."

The council employees at the shopping complex would be able to calculate the level of rates households would pay if the rate rise were accepted.

They will be able to determine rate-payers' new bills by entering their address details into computers.

A second community consultation

**Continued Page 2**



**Roads and more:** David Rawlings



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## Free lessons in broadband

THE Men's Shed has vacancies in their Broadband for Seniors classes, held at the shed on Tuesday mornings.

Lessons are free. If you would like to learn a new skill, come and join the class.

To book a lesson or for more information phone Lorraine on Tuesday mornings on 6563 1766.

□ The shed is always looking for donations of saleable goods.

Donations can be left at their premises in Eden St on Monday mornings, or at the shed on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The shed is in the ten pin bowling complex in South St, South Kempsey.

There is a limited pickup service. Phone Peter on 6563 1362 or the shed on 6563 1766.



□ **New look:** work began yesterday to remove a section of median strip at the north end of Smith St. Kempsey Shire Council sanctioned the work ahead of the summer holiday period following requests from business owners along that section of the old Pacific Hwy. The median strip had been scheduled for removal mid-2014. Work is likely to be completed by the end of today

## Drowning death an 'unfortunate event'

A POLICE pursuit which ended with the drowning of a young man near Kempsey was an unfortunate tragedy, a Coroner's Court has heard.

An inquest has found police officers from Port Macquarie and Kempsey were at no fault for the death of 25-year-old Jonathan Issac Taofitau.

The North Brisbane man and three other Queenslanders were involved in two high-speed pursuits on September 21 last year.

Taofitau was a passenger in a stolen car that had been driven along the coast from Queensland.

After a failed pursuit near Nambucca, the car was again tracked down by two highway patrol vehicles from the Local Area Command.

Police lost sight of the car, soon before it became bogged in bushland off the Pacific Hwy, near Kundabung.

Taofitau and the male driver ran from the vehicle and tried to swim across a waterway to evade police.

But fisherman would come across Taofitau's body in Pipers Creek, nine days later.

Soon after the incident a critical incident investigation team was launched, headed by Detective Sergeant David Frith from the Manning Great Lakes Local Area Command.

"The investigation went for several months," Detective Sergeant Frith said.

"The coroner made no recommendations, it was just a very unfortunate event."

The inquest was heard over the course of five days at the Port Macquarie Local Court last week, before the deputy state coroner Paul MacMahon.

Taofitau's family was present for the proceedings, and his mother made a heartfelt statement to the court about her son.

## Rossiter's latest at Gladstone

GORDON Rossiter's annual art exhibition at the Macleay Valley Community Gallery will end this Sunday afternoon.

The local artist's exhibition features paintings of the valley, from Comara to Crescent Head and in particular the Macleay River.

The gallery at Gladstone is open from 10am to 4pm.

□ **Letters:** Page 6

# Talks on rates plans

### □ From Page 1

session will be held at the Kempsey Central shopping centre from 9am on Thursday, December 5.

The rates application will be made to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

The council's general manager David Rawlings has outlined how a successful submission to IPART would contribute to improving the roads network.

Of the approximately 750km of council-maintained roads in the Macleay, less than half are categorised currently as 'very good' or better.

About 30 per cent are 'good' to 'fair', while 23 per cent are 'poor' or worse - including roads deemed to be 'failed'.

With the extra money generated by increased revenue from rates, more than three-quarters of roads would be very good or better; 30 per cent would be good-

to-fair; and the level of poor-or-worse roads would fall to just 4 per cent.

Nearly 175km of roads are currently in poor condition or worse.

The rates increase would herald a reduction to 30km.

"Roads are by far the biggest outlay on an individual asset," Mr Rawlings said.

"That's our starting point, and we're moving likely into crisis point if we don't address that."

Allowing the roads network to deteriorate further would increase costs, he said.

"Roads are just the starting point," he stressed.

"We've got lots of areas to work on - swimming pools, halls, flood mitigation to move on to."

"We need to get to the right level of cash and manage it well."

□ **Have your say:**  
editor.macleayargus@  
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# MACLEAY VALLEY FESTIVE FRENZY

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# Mixed views on rate rise target



It's good to talk: shoppers offered varying viewpoints on the way the council operates



Reasonable: South West Rocks resident Jose Leite is keeping an open mind on rates increases

By Thom Klein

SHOPPERS at South West Rocks on Friday were keen to let Kempsey Shire Council know what they thought of the proposed rates increase.

Staff from the Community Engagement department fielded inquiries from ratepayers at a stand in the South West Rocks shopping complex.

Public opinion varied among those who spoke to The Argus after having given their feedback to the council employees.

Norm and Carol Jones oppose the council's plan to seek three consecutive increases of 7 per cent above the NSW pegged rate.

"We're against it," Mr Jones said.

"We're paying enough already. Rates keep going up and up and up, but our pensions aren't going up."

Continued: Page 2

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# Marching towards the future

THE Macleay Valley Australian Air Force Cadet 312 Squadron passing out parade was held at St. Paul's College last month.

A total of 28 cadets and four staff took part in the parade, to the delight of the many parents and onlookers who turned out to watch the ceremony.

Special guest review officer was Lieutenant Colonel Robert Jopling (retired).

The squadron's commanding officer, Flying Officer (AAFC) Michelle Fisher, said the cadet unit played an important part in the lives of its young members.

"The Air Force Cadets are such a great organisation to be part of and a really valuable part of community life here in Kempsey," she said.

"The change in the young people from when they start cadets is one of things you notice the most.

"I always have parents tell me about the difference it has made to their children and how much more confident and engaged they are because of the experience of being in the cadets."

The unit is based on a model of peer learning and mentoring, where the cadets learn from the more experienced members of the unit, and in turn pass that knowledge on to the more junior members.

The Macleay Valley Australian Air Force Cadet 312 Squadron meets every Thursday from 5.15pm to 9.15pm, except during school holidays when there are cadet camps and excursions.

The next intake is in the new year, but places are limited.

If you are interested in finding out more about the cadet unit you can phone 0408 291 777.



□ **Confident and engaged:** Macleay Valley Australian Air Force Cadet 312 Squadron members march past review officer Lieutenant Colonel Robert Jopling (retired) at their passing out parade on November 17. Photo by Allan J Mamo Photography

## Business of the Week

# Find the best travel deal

MACLEAY Valley Travel has a new home.

Principal Bryn Davies and his team of 10 agents have taken up residence at 33 Smith St, having operated previously at Clyde St Mall.

Bryn has been at the helm since July 2011, having taken over from his dad Alan, who set up the business as a one-man operation in 1992.

The surroundings might have changed, but the business remains the same.

With a more prominent location, the travel agency can expect even more requests from clients to arrange dream holidays overseas.

"We specialise in overseas conducted tours and cruises," Bryn said.

"Our most popular destination by far is Vietnam.

"Thailand, China, South Africa and Russia are also favourites.

"There are also plenty of tours over to Europe and North America, and we even organised one to Iran this year.

"We also specialise in trans-Atlantic cruises."

Macleay Valley Travel can cover all aspects of travel requirements, taking care of arranging flights and accommodation, as well as the tours themselves.



□ **Family venture:** Macleay Valley Travel principal Bryn Davies took over the business his dad Alan set up in 1992. The company's focus is on the best value for you

The local service can meet clients' tailored requests for all kinds of holidays, from lounging on the beach to high-thrill adventures.

"What you get from Macleay Valley Travel is hassle-free planning and the reliability that everything will go as planned, or

as close as anyone could guarantee," Bryn said.

"Our tour prices are very, very good - from about \$2000 right up to \$10,000.

"Our focus is on the best value, and that applies whether it's at the budget end or the luxury end of the market.

"Our motto is: 'We try harder to find you the best travel deal'."

To find out more about the world that awaits you overseas, call Macleay Valley Travel toll-free on 180 810 809, email [info@macleaytravel.com](mailto:info@macleaytravel.com) or visit the website at [macleayvalleytravel.com](http://macleayvalleytravel.com)

## Mixed views on rate rise target

□ **From Page 1**

Mrs Jones said:

"I suppose there can be some good to come from it (a rates increase), but I'm against it."

Her husband suggested the council should cut its costs.

"They can cut down by getting people (council staff) to use private cars.

"They haven't got the faintest idea how to save money."

Another SWR resident, John Gralton feels differently.

"I told (the council) girls I support the proposal because we desperately need improvement to roads, services and every aspect of council activity," he said.

"You can't avoid the fact that costs rise every year.

"(The average rate rise) is something in the area of \$1 to \$2 a week.

"As a pensioner, I feel the impact, but I'm prepared to accommodate it."

Mr Gralton added he would like to see the introduction of a free kerbside collection service for unwanted bulky items, similar to that offered by other councils (generally on an annual basis) for households.

He said higher rates would further erode the

pensioners' rebate, which had stayed at a fixed rate for a long period.

Jose Leite remained open-minded about the prospect of higher rates.

"It's hard to say, I don't know the state of the council's finances," he said.

"Where I live here, it's OK, but out in the bush they depend more on the roads.

"I depend more on the highway.

"I think the council does a reasonable job with the roads here."

Director of Community Engagement Kathy Oliver said she and her staff were happy to hear a range of views.

"That's what we're here for today," she said.

"This is the beginning of a conversation.

"We've encouraged people to take our rates survey and have been pushing out the rate calculator.

"They'll be available on the council website.

"If people don't have access to the information, they can call the council and we can arrange to provide it."

A second consultation session will take place at the Kempsey Central shopping centre on Thursday from 9am.

## Pegged rate rise just 2.3 per cent

NSW ratepayers will face an increase in their bills of up to 2.3 per cent from next July.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) announced the new pegged rate yesterday for the 152 councils across the State.

Kempsey Shire Council will be among those applying for a special rate variation above the 2.3 per cent pegging.

Last year's pegged rate was 3.4 per cent, which included a component to compensate for the introduction of the fixed carbon price.

The average residential ratepayer in NSW will pay \$910 from July 2014.

If IPART does not grant an SRV to Kempsey Shire Council, the average Macleay residential rates bill will be about \$853, an increase of about \$19 on the current rate.

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# Council faces \$100,000 short fall

KEMPSEY Shire Council will have to find almost \$100,000 in savings, following IPART's (Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal) announcement last week of the new pegged rate for NSW.

The council's general manager David Rawlings said the 2.3 per cent cap on rates meant there would be an extra \$323,899 raised in the 2014-15 financial year, instead of the antici-

pated \$422,478 that a 3 per cent increase would have brought.

"We will have to make extra efficiency savings," David Rawlings said.

"That means finding ways to do things cheaper."

The extra 7 per cent the council wants from a special rate variation will, if successful, generate a further \$985,781.

Mr Rawlings said there would be no change to the program of road improvements the council hopes to implement if it succeeded in achieving a special rate variation.

He welcomed the rate pegging system, but said there was room for improvement.

IPART determines the level of increase in rates based on the average expenditure of all NSW local govern-

ment bodies across all aspects of their operations.

Mr Rawlings said there were some wins and losses from the current determination.

The proportion of revenue council spends on capital reconstruction (rebuilding roads) and purchasing plant equipment is lower than the state average.

But the council spends 53 per cent

of revenue on wages, compared to the average of 42 per cent.

Mr Rawlings said IPART considered wages using the state government award structure, which did not apply at Council.

"I think (rate pegging) is a much better system, but we need to see more smarts," he said.

"Real world costs aren't being captured."

## Community supports first Riverside Market

□ From Page 1

The Riverside Market has been developed by the Kempsey Chamber of Commerce in partnership with North Coast TAFE, Midwaste and Kempsey Shire Council with the idea of exploiting the beautiful riverside location on the banks of the Macleay River.

It is hoped the increase in visitors to the Kempsey CDB will also have a flow on effect for local Kempsey businesses.

One of the aims of the market was to work closely with its partner organisations to ensure a high standard of waste management with recycling, organic waste collection and reusable bags available on site, with the eventual aim of being plastic bag free.

Kempsey Shire Council Waste Strategy and Education Officer Gavin Hughes said the markets had put a lot of effort into achieving their aim.

"The Riverside Market committee have done an amazing job leading the way in the Valley in making their event waste-wise," Mr Hughes said.

"Council and Midwaste have supported this effort with waste stations providing recycling and organics bins to enable visitors to 'recycle right' and play a role in educating the wider community."

Kempsey Shire Council Waste Officer Adam Cooney was also out and about at the market day assisting visitors with recycling and stallholders played their part by providing 100 percent compostable cups and plates.

The market will be held on the first Saturday of the month and further information is available on 0456 658 979 or visit [kempseyriversidemarkets.org.au](http://kempseyriversidemarkets.org.au).



### Man killed after bike accident

A MAN was killed on Sunday afternoon after a motorcycle accident at Dondingalong Rd.

About 4.50pm on Sunday, December 8 a 67-year-old male was riding a Suzuki motorcycle along Dondingalong Rd.

It is believed the man lost control of the bike on a bend, crossed the roadway and was thrown off.

Emergency services were called, but the man died at the scene.

Officers from Mid North Coast Local Area Command attended and a crime scene was established. Police will prepare a report for the coroner.

### Changes to Hat Head park entry

FOLLOWING ongoing discussions with the Police Local Area Command, Kempsey Shire Council will be closing entry to the Hat Head Caravan Park and day visitor area from 6pm on Boxing Day to 7am on Friday, December 27.

This is to promote a safe and happy environment for all during this very busy period. Council apologises for any inconvenience.

### Festive Frenzy

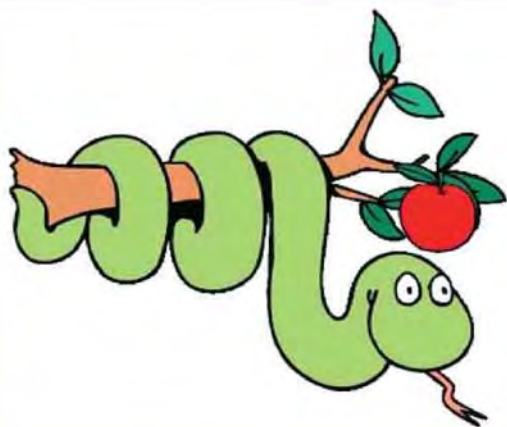
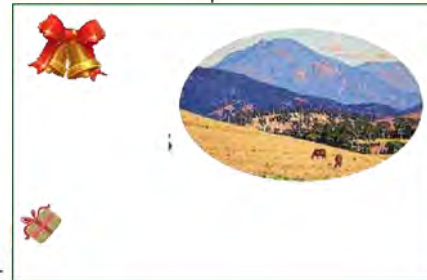
THE draw has been made for the second group of winners in the Festive Frenzy promotion. Visit [macleayargus.com.au](http://macleayargus.com.au) for the full list of winners.

□ Above: Riverside Market committee members Anna Shields and Jodie Clarke with Adam Cooney from Waste Wise Practise

□ Right: Ava and Linc McCarthy having a great time at the markets on Saturday morning



□ Above: Ari Abigall from Euroka. Pictures by Penny Tamblyn



# The Garden of O

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## From our files ...

### The river still rising

FROM noon till 2 o'clock no news was received from Bellbrook, and the hope grew in many breasts that no danger need be expected. Shortly after 2 o'clock however, a wire arrived: "River 9ft. 6in., creek 10ft., rising and raining."

Kempsey sits at once prepared for the worst, and began to look for accommodation beyond the reach of flood waters.

Store and hotel keepers set their hands to work securing goods and stacking them in safe places etc.

Cattle-owners, those who had hoped against hope, speedily had their stock removed to the highlands.

Householders laid in big stocks of firewood.

On the top of the Bellbrook telegram came the news that Brisbane was flooded and that Mr Wragge predicted continued rain from the dangerous quarter.

This was the last straw! "God help us" came the prayer from nearly every heart. The position is certainly serious.

Should the now-expected flood come, ruination must follow to hundreds of families - farmers and store-keepers both.

The district had been too heavily burdened in past years to bear any further strain.

The river at Kempsey was up over 10ft and still rising. The up-river waters were just commencing to have effects. The flood-boats were being put in readiness for any emergency.

The swamp lands between East Kempsey and Crescent Head were boundless lakes.

- The Macleay Argus  
January 23, 1895



□ The steamer Tamban at Frederickton Wharf in 1914. The name of the vessel was later changed to Kinchela. She was owned by the Macleay River Co-operative Shipping Company which was taken over by the North Coast Seam and Navigation Company.

## Welcome to the New Year

I HOPE that everyone had a great start to 2014. This is a time when we traditionally think about starting new things or changing our ways.

In reality, we are on a continuing journey and what most people are doing is fine tuning their plans and reflecting on whether the direction they are taking is one that is still relevant.

For me, this includes looking at the council's directions and plans.

## What Assets Do We Have?

I WAS recently surprised by just how many assets the community has. Council's staff have just finished developing asset management plans, which set out what we have and how we should be looking after them. Added all up, they would cost more than \$1 billion to recreate. In anyone's terms, that is a large amount of cost.

Like me, I doubt many people really think of the investment that has gone into the infrastructure we use.

We have 62km of footpaths to get around if you are not driving on the 1167km of roads and across any of the 168 bridges.

Along the 98km of stormwater pipes we have 3657 stormwater pits. There are 364 buildings to manage and 175 floodgates that need to be kept operational.

Then there are the 35 bus shelters, 14 car parks and 17km of guardrail to go with our roads and bridges.

Council also operates four plants to treat water for drinking, which goes through 17 reservoirs, 21 pumping stations and 605km of pipes to get to the households.

For the waste that goes down the sewer, it comes back through 239km of mains and 78 pumping stations into one of eight treatment plants.

Our community also has nine cemeteries maintained



## From the Mayor's Desk

Liz Campbell

Mayor - Kempsey Shire



in the area and 128 hectares of parks and sporting grounds to enjoy.

Council has developed the asset management plan to look at how all these things should be managed.

The plan also shows how the assets we have are used in providing the outcomes of being a healthy, wealthy, safe and sociable community. For example, sporting activity makes us healthier and more sociable.

Having roads lets us produce and sell things, making us wealthier. Clean water and removing waste makes us healthier.

Often we don't think about what these assets are doing for us, we do not look past what the asset is. But they are all there because in some way or another they assist us in our day-to-day lives.

The reason council provides them is because there is no way that they can be provided for on an individual basis.

Being mayor has shown me just how many things our Council provides that we simply accept.

The Asset Management Plan is currently out on public exhibition.

While it may not sound glamorous New Year reading, if you really want to know whether there is a need for us to look carefully at how we can provide these things, including driving efficiencies and increased rates, you need to be informed and this is the place to get that information.

## Three community events planned for Australia Day

By Thom Klein

THIS year's Australia Day celebrations in the Macleay will feature three community events in the run-up to a major gala of living Aboriginal culture.

The Saltwater Freshwater Festival will be the backdrop for Kempsey Shire Council's official Australia Day Awards ceremony.

A citizenship ceremony and presentation of the 2014 awards for categories including Citizen of the Year, Community Group of the Year, and Young Citizen of the Year Achievement Award, will get underway from 8.30am at Kempsey Showground.

The award winners have been chosen by the council's Australia Day Committee.

This year's Australia Day ambassador is Dr Clio Creswell, an academic at the University of Sydney, social commentator and author.

She will deliver an address at the showground ceremony.

The Saltwater Freshwater Festival, featuring live music - including headliner Troy Cassar-Daley and Macleay

musician Amos Morris - will run from 10am until 4.30pm.

Other attractions at the festival include food, dance, conversations and children's activities.

Entry to this smoke and alcohol-free event is by gold coin donation.

Elsewhere in the Macleay, the South West Rocks Lions Club will host a free sausage sizzle, with cup of tea or coffee, under a marquee at the Horseshoe Bay Reserve shelter shed.

This will run between 7am and 11am, with locals and holidaymakers encouraged to join in.

The Crescent Head Lions Club will host its Australia Day breakfast at the village's rotunda, from 8.30am.

The event will feature the announcement of the Crescent Head Citizen of the Year, Young Achiever and Sportsman of the Year Awards, games and other activities.

□ The Macleay Argus will publish a special Australia Day feature on Friday, January 24  
A list of local Australia Day award winners be included

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# More talks on rates plan

By Thom Klein

EMPLOYEES from Kempsey Shire Council's Community Engagement Department gathered more feedback yesterday on the proposed rates increase.

Shoppers at the Kempsey Central mall had the opportunity to share their opinions and find out more about plans to lift their bills well above the pegged rate for NSW.

A similar session at South West Rocks last Friday had attracted input from dozens of ratepayers. Community Engagement director Kathy Oliver said.

"What we're finding is it's good to talk to the community and inform them of what the rate increase will involve," she said.

"It sounds big, but when we've shown (participants) what it means and where the money will be spent they've generally been more supportive."

Just as at SWR, there were contrasting opinions offered yesterday.

Ratepayer Helen Morn was broadly opposed to higher rates.

"I don't like the increase, it's hard on pensioners, and others think the same," she told The Argus.



□ **Some concerns:** Allan Carpenter, from Frederickton, supports higher rates, provided the money is not diverted to lower priority projects

"I don't knock spending money on roads."

Allan Carpenter, from Frederickton, gave his guarded support for a special rate variation.

"I'm in favour of it, provided the money is channelled into what the council said it is going to do," he said.

"There's always a good argument for a rate increase, but in the end the money is often funnelled off to projects that, at the time, are seen as more important - and the rise is eroded."

John Kolosque, a bus driver from Kempsey, was among a group of four ratepayers that does not believe the council operates effectively.



□ **Big ask:** ratepayer Helen Morn says an increase would hit pensioners hard

"We don't agree with the rise," he said.

"The majority of the town doesn't and the general feeling around the shire is that people don't want it."

"\$6 a week doesn't sound much, but the rise adds up for people that are struggling."

"The council is wasting thousands of dollars and we believe there should be an administrator in charge."

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) capped rates increases at 2.3 per cent for the 2013-14 financial year.

Kempsey Shire Council intends to submit an application to add a further 7 per cent to the pegged rate for three consecutive years, and 1 per cent in the following year.

□ **Have your say:** email [thom.klein@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:thom.klein@fairfaxmedia.com.au)

## \$500,000 park project upgrade

□ From Page 1

to review any RDAF projects for which contracts had not been signed.

But Luke Hartsuyker expressed his support for the upgraded parklands project on the day he was confirmed as the member for Cowper, following this year's federal election.

Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development Warren Truss confirmed on Wednesday that funding for all successful projects from RDAF rounds three and four would be honoured, regardless of their contract status.

In our region, they are the South Kempsey park project, the Taree Northern Gateway Transport Hub (\$10,000,000 in Round 4), and the Surf Life Saving Operations and Training Centre in Port Macquarie (\$1,051,243 in Round 4).

"The upgrade of the South Kempsey parkland area is an important community infrastructure project which aims to rejuvenate that part of the town," Mr Hartsuyker said on Wednesday.

"I am delighted the Deputy Prime Minister has agreed to provide the funding."

"I would like to acknowledge the good work of Kempsey Shire Council and the wider community and look forward to working with them to get this project underway as quickly as possible."

Peter Treigilgas, executive officer of Regional Development Australia Mid North Coast welcomed the funding announcement.

"The parklands project will improve the liveability for South Kempsey residents," he said.

"And, importantly, (it will) build community capacity through the provision of construction skills and potential pathways to employment."

The new program will be administered by the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.

Funding recipients will be contacted soon and asked to provide updated project information, including outcomes and benefits, planning, total cost and delivery timeframes.

□ **Achievements:** P6

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KEMPSEY HOUSE & GARDEN

## Christmas car gone

A CAR left parked on Belgrave St since September was moved on Wednesday.

As reported in Tuesday's edition of The Argus, the Hyundai saloon had been draped in tinsel and a printed notice placed under the rear windscreen.

The note made reference to the failure of council and police to remove the vehicle for several weeks.

It had been parked in a two-hour zone.

Police and council officials said on Monday neither had the authority to remove cars parked legally.

A Kempsey Shire Council spokesperson said the council had not been involved in moving the car on Wednesday.

The council was unable to provide clarification yesterday on what constitutes 'illegal parking'.

## Work on old highway

WORK on a stretch of the Macleay Valley Way through Kempsey to improve the road surface may cause minor traffic delays next week.

Kempsey Shire Council will begin heavy patching next work on what was formerly called Lord St.

Workers will dig out the existing surface on parts of the road that are failing and replace it with new asphalt.

Infrastructure Services director Robert Scott said the road was effectively now a local road for which council was automatically the road authority.

"It is classified as a regional road, so there is still some joint responsibility with RMS (Roads and Maritime Service)," he said.

"The annual block grant that RMS gives to (the) council to assist with maintaining regional roads has gone up to reflect the increased length of regional roads we now have."

Negotiations on the final handover package to the council for the highway were expected to conclude early in 2014, Mr Scott said.

## Milestone at Rocks

THE end of this week will signify a major milestone in the progress for upgrading of the South West Rocks CBD.

The last of the concrete work will be almost finished today, and the CBD will be reopened to traffic with most of the barricades being removed.

The final clean-up, landscaping and restoration will be complete by next Friday, December 13, council's Infrastructure Services director Robert Scott said.

The council appreciates feedback it received on disruption caused by the works.

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## From our files ...

### Brush your hair at night

NO woman need expect to have her hair looking beautiful who goes to bed without taking it down and giving it its night dressing.

A woman who has wonderfully beautiful hair says: "I take out all the pins, brush my hair well, and then plait it carefully but loosely, so in the morning it is not in a snarl. "I usually try to brush it 10 minutes, but when I get somebody else to do it for me the sensation is so delicious I almost wish they could keep on forever."

"Of course, I sit down to brush it because standing taxes the strength too much."

### Mining accident

ONE of those accidents so common in mining communities happened the other day to Mr P. O'Neill.

He was engaged in mining some distance above Bowraville, using dynamite.

He had charged a hole, placed the fuse and lighted it when the mine exploded, blowing his right hand off, and otherwise injuring him severely.

He was at once conveyed to Mr Lowe's Bowraville Hotel, where all was done that could be done to dress the wounds and ease the pain, and Mr Lowe then set out to take the injured man to Kempsey Hospital.

Dr Casement, having been communicated with by wire, met the party at Mrs Anderson's hotel, Clybucca, and did what he could.

Mr O'Neill was then taken on to Kempsey, where he is under the experienced care of Dr Casement. He is progressing now as well as can be expected.

- The Macleay Argus  
January 30, 1895



□ Staff at the Nestle factory at Smithtown in the 1930s. Back: C. Davey, J. Creswick, T. Rowe, L. Durrant, S. Wallis, A. Durham, K. Telfer, J. Watson, L. McKenzie and H. Raison. Seated: Unknown, Ivy Mohr, Percy Stahel, Miss Lobbin and C. Clarke

## Community assets and how they relate to rates

ALL the community assets I talked about in last week's column are important to us.

They help create our Macleay Valley quality of life. Also, as I mentioned last week, if you want to get an indication of why council is continuing with the rate increase it started asking for a couple of years ago, have a look at the information in the Asset Management Plan.

For the roads, what we will invest over the next 10 years (even with the increase) is still only one third of what is required to fund them properly.

If we don't put the money back into the roads they will only get worse.

Many are at, or past, the end of their life and are deteriorating faster as they age.

The plans show the condition of the roads as measured in 2008 and again in 2012.

This data needs to be fully assessed, but the indication is that the condition is continuing to deteriorate as our previous research work indicated it would.

Stormwater drains and pipes need to have \$760,000 per annum spent on them and we have nothing planned to spend in the next 10 years.

If these systems are not working properly, we will get more people who find their homes flooded in storm events and more people will be impacted by water lying around.

Our 364 buildings should have \$1.67 million per annum spent on them, and we have allocated \$7250 per annum.

Our halls, toilet blocks, kiosks and grandstands need to be regularly refurbished and updated.

Things are better for the flood mitigation infrastructure, where we are spending more than is required over the longer term.

With a large backlog of works, we have to try to deal with some critical problems and then keep catching up on the backlog work.



## From the Mayor's Desk

Liz Campbell

Mayor - Kempsey Shire



We will have another flood at some stage, although not this year I hope.

On top of this are our kerbs and gutters, sporting fields and facilities, swimming pools, playgrounds, parks, airport, etc.

We went around to a large number of communities several times to hold public meetings and explain the problem we faced and the solution that was needed, which combined finding efficiencies, reducing the reliance on debt and increasing revenue.

Following from this we applied to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a 43.67 per cent rate increase over three years.

Only a one year increase of 11.37 per cent was approved and, as our delivery and operational plans show, it was always council's intention to continue to seek the rest.

IPART did not say the increase was not needed. Council needed to do more work on planning and documentation to meet the legislative criteria.

We have addressed that and now are going back to seek the remaining increase that was asked for.

The problem is still there, it has not gone away. All those assets listed above still need looking after.

IPART recognised our need and gave us part of what we asked for.

The updated comprehensive Asset Management Plan is an important part of continuing and progressing our future sustainable funding model with IPART.

More importantly, we need to invest in these assets for the future. We have to decide if we see these as important assets to retain.

## Your Letters

### We were not asked about bus stop move

I AM writing in response to the motion presented at council's meeting of December 17 for the removal of the Smith St bus stop.

Alarm bells rang after reading an article in The Macleay Argus (December 31, 2013) regarding council's unanimous decision to remove the bus stop from its central position in the Kempsey CBD and relocate it to an undisclosed location.

This was made without appropriate consultation with the community, and in particular key stake holders.

As the major provider of local public transport servicing the Kempsey community, we at Cavanagh's would have expected to be included in the consultation.

This is a clear breach of the Local Government Act regarding consultation with the community over significant issues that will affect those members of the community.

Council's actions also contradict its own 'Corporate image, communication and customer service strategy' that clearly states council must consult with the community over significant issues that will affect the community.

Indeed, it would appear that there has not been consultation even with council's own Access Committee, which exists to make a knowledgeable contribution to council and the community.

The report accompanying the mayor's motion appears to be biased and not based on fact.

Our patronage traditionally consists of four main groups: the elderly; indigenous and socio-economically disadvantaged; mothers with strollers and prams; and disabled members of the community often in wheelchairs or with walking aids.

To require these passengers to simply "walk a little further" to an undisclosed location is against the intent of the Passenger Transport Act 1990 and the long term Transport Master Plan, which seeks to increase public transport patronage.

The quote "moving the bus stop will only increase the walking distance of patrons of the service by a small amount" further questions the integrity of the report put to council.

How can this be stated when no alternate location and therefore no specified walking distance have been determined?

The report fails to recognise the importance of public transport to these vulnerable members of our community and if this bus stop is moved, it will neglect the impact on passengers who are aged, frail and with often limited mobility.

For these passengers, public transport services provide their connection to their community and promotes their inclusion in society.

Cavanagh's Bus service provides for

□ Continued: Page 7

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## From our files ...

**The wreck of the Margaret Jane**  
THE Marine Board on Monday week last, delivered their reserved decision regarding the abandonment and wreck of the schooner Margaret Jane in Trial Bay.

They found that the vessel was cast ashore and broken up in Trial Bay during a heavy easterly weather; and although they were not satisfied with the conduct of the master, John Smith, in abandoning the vessel without striking his topmast, or doing otherwise than mooring her before the heavy weather developed, they did not think it necessary to bring a charge of default against him.

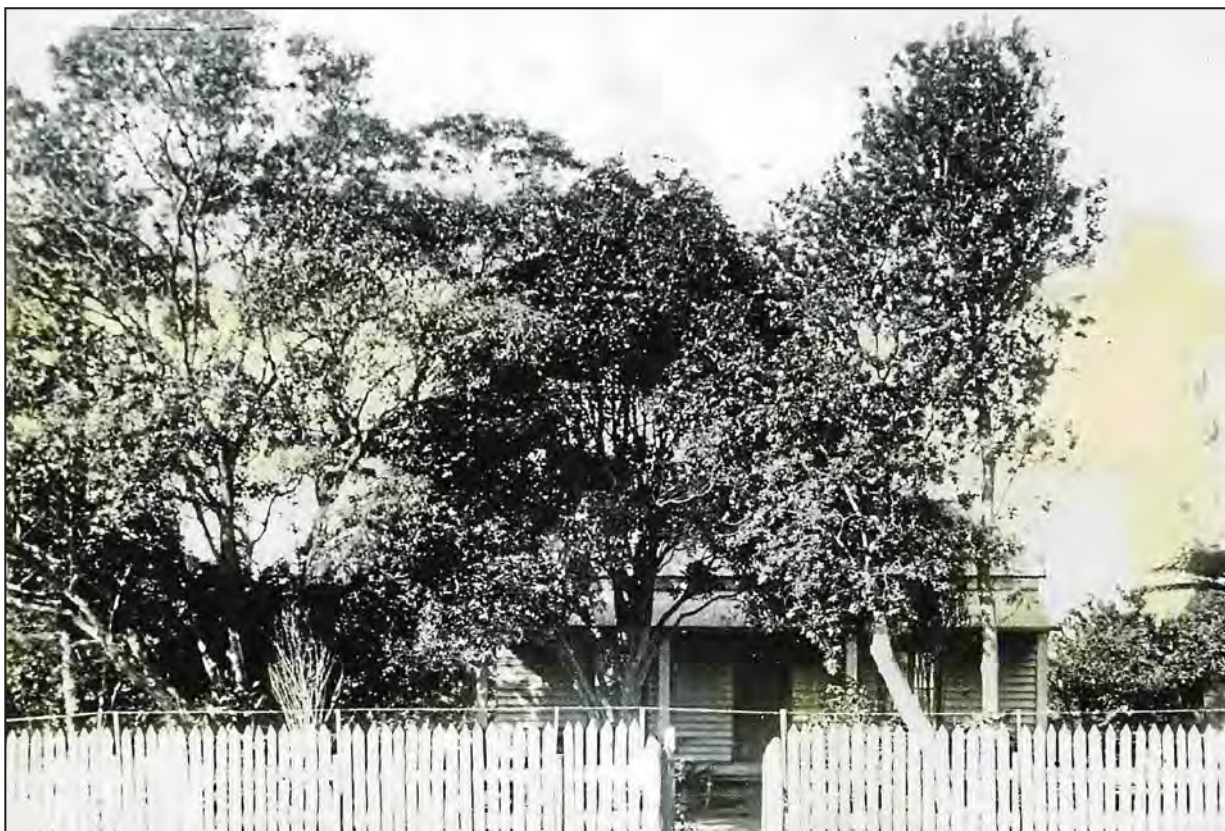
### Sensational coach accident

The mails arriving in Kempsey from Sydney, via Port, Have been very erratic as to time the last few days. Last Wednesday there was a good excuse for this. The Gloucester-Taree mail coach met with a singular accident outside Taree.

One of the polers was stung by a march fly and started kicking, with the result that it got the reins under its tail, and plunged all the more, when the whole team suddenly slewed around, chocking the wheels, breaking the pole and capsizing the coach.

The driver fortunately escaping unhurt. The horses then cleared away with the broken pole dangling after them. One horse had a very ugly and dangerous wound to the chest. A fresh horse having been secured another start was made, and the coach arrived only two hours late at Taree.

- The Macleay Argus  
February 27, 1895



□ Small weatherboard house, home of Alfred and Sarah Evans in 1910, at Gladstone near the Smithtown punt, although altered, house still standing in 1968 and occupied by Mr Banjo Patterson.

## What about efficiency?

A regular point raised by people against increasing rates is that council needs to look at its own operations. Council has been looking and continues to do so.

So, let's look at the situation.

All our assets have lifespans and well-known costs to replace. These can be calculated to show how much it costs to keep replacing those assets over time.

The calculation of what is needed to fund this for our council is based on figures that are checked and have been audited against other councils.

Equally, internationally it has been determined that you need to spend between 2 per cent and 4 per cent of the value of your assets on maintenance each year.

Currently, we are only investing 39.5 per cent (less than half) of what is required for asset replacement; we are only spending 1.85 per cent of the asset value on maintenance and we know our assets are run-down.

If we, as a community, are not putting in anywhere near what is known to be needed to replace the assets and are not putting in as much money as is needed to maintain the assets, is the problem staffing numbers or how much we are investing into our community?

Another way of thinking this through is, of the councils in the same grouping as ours, we have the third lowest average residential rates of 30 councils. This does not seem to indicate we are paying well above what other people are paying in other areas.

Despite already being seriously underfunded to do the job expected, through identifying changes to operations and not increasing budgets to reflect inflation, over the last four years our staff have put in place changes that have led to \$2.4million per annum in savings. This work is ongoing.

Also, the changed approach to not take out loan borrowings for ongoing replacements means that this year we are paying \$125,000 less in interest in the last year than four years ago.

When you look at the available comparative information of our grouping, we spend the highest on main-



## From the Mayor's Desk

Liz Campbell

Mayor - Kempsey Shire



tenance of assets within the group. The percentage of our budget that goes into administration and governance is below the average for the group and there is only one council in the group that puts a larger percentage into roads and bridges.

Perhaps we need to consider some facts around our staff. The last comparative data showing the staffing costs indicates that our cost per employee is 13 per cent lower than the average for NSW.

Council recently participated in a survey across NSW which included an assessment of the percentage of management to staff. Our management to staff ratio was 6 per cent.

Our regional council average was 11.4 per cent. Based on the available information, our council has lower staff costs and our management to staff ratio is well below what is seen as reasonable in other councils.

The facts are showing me that there is a certain amount of rates required to efficiently provide services.

Trying to increase efficiencies on its own won't do it. It comes to the point where the decision is do we want to keep what we have or not. If you want it you have to pay the cost.

What council is seeking is the efficient cost of providing services. The General Manager has to provide the services within those resources. So far the General Manager and staff have delivered over \$7m towards doing this.

We also have to play our part.

## Your Letters

### RMS could decide our state's name

I READ recently that former PM Bob Hawke has joined my campaign to abolish state governments, thereby eliminating much public service duplicity and a lot of second rate politicians.

However, this won't happen any time soon.

I have been reliably informed that in spite of unstinting effort in my community and almost unparalleled generosity to the underdog, on the Queen's birthday I will have again missed out on a gong.

This being so has strengthened my resolve to have Australia move towards a republic, the most pressing need being to get rid of references to the British crown, starting with our state names.

For my new atlas Western Australia will retain it's current name as it is indeed western Australia. Similarly the Northern Territory has the correct handle.

After careful thought I have also decided not to alter Tasmania's name as it is an economic basket case and a name change won't make any difference.

People who have spawned the three worst performing politicians in Australian history in Harradine, Brown and Wilkie don't deserve consideration.

Also that great Dutch sailor Abel Tasman does deserve some solid support.

Queensland obviously has to go and I

believe Ruddland is a suitable alternative, given the Dad and Dave mentality of the inhabitants.

Just like the empire she forged Victoria is out, and South Australia, being more central than south, needs to change.

Given the parlous nature of their economies and the gradual disintegration of their manufacturing industries I believe these two states should be joined, renamed Rustland and the capital moved to Mildura as they will make more money out of hooch than from industry over the next 20 years.

This then leaves NSW.

Certainly, as those who have visited south Wales can vouch, to be named after such wastelands as Swansea, Port Talbot and Cardiff is a slap in the face for present NSW residents.

However, I can't for the life of me think of an embracing alternative so I'm suggesting putting the renaming in the hands of the RMS in the knowledge those good folk will make a decision before 2017.

Ross Holborow  
Smithtown

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## Tests on samples from old mine



□ **Pollution fears:** Save Our Macleay River believes sediment (in the cracked dirt beyond the dam) from an abandoned mine at Halls Peak is contaminated with heavy metals. Picture by Christa Schoebel (SOMR)

AN environmental group believes sediment from a disused mine in the Upper Macleay catchment will prove to be contaminated sludge.

The NSW Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has taken samples from the Gibson's open cut after representations by the Save Our Macleay River (SOMR) group.

The abandoned mine is at Halls Peak, on the Chandler River, which flows into the Macleay.

SOMR members met representatives from the EPA and the Derelict Mines Office (DMO) at the site to address concerns raised by the group over "desludging" of containment dams.

The site is ranked among the top 50 derelict mines causing environmental concern in NSW.

Chairman Arthur Bain said the group had seen newly built dams with brightly coloured water when it had visited the site in November.

It appeared some dams designed to catch sediment had been cleaned out.

In December, SOMR sent a video and photographs of the mine site to the EPA's New England office at Armidale.

The EPA arranged a site inspection in conjunction with DMO for last week and offered to meet SOMR members afterwards.

Soil and water samples were taken and SOMR members were assured a full investigation would take place.

"It shows we cannot afford to take our eyes off any work in the Macleay catchment which could impact on our river system," Mr Bain said.

"This is a significant success for SOMR - it proves the importance of community vigilance."

Mr Bain said EPA testing of the samples was expected to take up to four weeks.

An EPA spokesperson confirmed the authority was working closely with DMO officials to investigate and to ensure sediment removed from on-site dams was returned to the mine's controlled drainage area.

# Shire boss makes case for rates rise

By Thom Klein

MEMBERS of the Macleay's peak business association understand Kempsey Shire Council's push for a substantial increase in rates, its president says.

Gary Scott, president of the Kempsey and District Chamber of Commerce, welcomed David Rawlings' appearance at a meeting held last week.

The council's general manager delivered a presentation on the proposed special rate variation to more than two dozen Chamber members, which he followed up with a question-and-answer session.

Mr Scott said it had been a good meeting, with members better informed of how rates for Kempsey Shire's residential, rural and business communities compare with those of similar local government areas.

"I would say Chamber members understand the reasons to go down this path," he said.

"There's no broad disagreement, no mass opposition, to this rate rise."

"David Rawlings explained if rises can't be achieved, services can't be maintained."

"(Chamber members) know they've got to spend money on their businesses to keep them running."

Mr Rawlings followed up on further questions submitted in writing at the meeting.



□ **Understanding:** Gary Scott



□ **Answers:** David Rawlings

In response to a query on how the council would communicate the full impact of the rises, the general manager said letters would be sent soon to all residences setting out details and information, as well as providing further media releases.

Mr Rawlings was asked for a breakdown of the proportion of the last rate increase that was spent directly on roads and bridges.

"The rate increase has provided \$980,000," his reply stated.

"In the last year, we spent \$2.2 million more on the road network than the previous year - so it would seem 224 per cent of the rate increase went on roads."

"Of course, most of it is from the savings and changes we have made, which has been pouring more money into the roads for a number of years."

"Of interest, the increase between 2008-09 and now is \$4.5 million, or an increase of 150 per cent."

Mr Scott said other Chamber matters raised at last week's meeting included Kempsey CBD trade on the Saturdays that coincide with the Riverside Markets.

The markets are a Chamber initiative.

He said it was difficult to gauge the impact of the first two markets, which were held on the first Saturdays of December and January, because of the seasonal aspect.

"The aim of the markets is to promote the riverbank and businesses in the CBD," Mr Scott said.

Another idea floated had been to form a CBD retailers' representative group within the Chamber, he said.

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## Workshop on kids' safety

A KIDSAFE workshop will be held in South Kempsey on Tuesday, 18 February 2014.

Parents and educators will be discussing ways to keep your family safe in and around the home.

The talks will include home and water safety, child restraints in your car, driveway safety, riding your bike safely, the dangers of children in hot cars, and walking in the community safely.

Kidsafe NSW, in partnership with the Kempsey Family Community Centre and Kempsey Shire Council, will host the information session at the Kempsey Family Community Centre, corner of Queen and Yarravel Sts, South Kempsey from 11am to 1pm.

A barbecue will follow.

If you are interested in attending and would like more information or to book a seat on a courtesy bus, please contact Mavis Symonds on 6562 1911 by Tuesday, February 11.

## Drama classes with Singers

ARE you interested in acting?

Would you like to improve your skills?

Maybe you have no experience but would like to learn?

Whatever your motivation, the Kempsey Singers are interested in you.

The drama classes will be held on Tuesday evenings from 7pm to 9pm at the Bandbox Theatre in Sea St, Kempsey.

The first will be on Tuesday, February 18.

Cost is current membership of the Kempsey Singers plus \$5 per session.

The classes are designed for adults and students over the age of 15 and there will be a limited number of places, so get in quick.

For more information contact Chris Austin on 6566 8353 or chrislyn@harcourtsat.com.au

# Petition reaction: rates rise or cuts to services



□ **Opposition:** Brian Sowter has written a second letter to Kempsey Shire Council, following the collection of 4255 signatures to a petition opposing a series of rates increases

Reports by Thom Klein

DAVID Rawlings is keen to find out which council services more than 4000 rates rise opponents would like to see axed.

Kempsey Shire Council's general manager said community feedback for the special rate variation (SRV) submission had indicated many ratepayers had found the proposed increases would not have as heavy an impact on their finances as they had feared.

Mr Rawlings' comments came as he awaited receipt of a letter from Brian Sowter expressing strong opposition in the community to the extent of the rise.

The former councillor has written a letter to the current elected representatives and the general manager outlining widespread "severe concern" at people's ability to afford another series of rates rises so soon after the last rise.

Mr Sowter will forward Mr Rawlings a copy of a petition with 4255 signatures (as of Tuesday), with the original being sent to IPART (the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal).

In his letter - a copy of which has been given to The Argus - Mr Sowter states:

"Council was advised the demographic and rating profile for Kempsey Shire suggests our community has the

capacity to pay the proposed rate increase, which was estimated to increase the average residential rate (four-year average) by \$4.15 per week.

"But has it?"

And Mr Sowter criticises the council for how it has gone about publicising the rates increase.

"There is no logic that the general manager and indeed the elected councillors can undertake the essential community consultation prior to council's next meeting (February 18) and make the intended application to IPART by February 24," the letter states.

Responding to The Argus on the letter's main points, Mr Rawlings alluded to the need to cut council services if the rates rise submission was unsuccessful.

"It is easy to say you don't want to pay for services," he said.

"But if you don't want to pay you have to decide what you don't want."

Mr Rawlings referred to a letter from Mr Sowter in December calling on the council to address all avenues of funding sources.

"Well, we have been," the general manager said.

"That is how we have come up with \$2.5 million per year in efficiency savings so far. We have cut our discretionary expenses by 10 per cent. We have looked at everything and continue to look for efficiencies where we can."

## Sowter happy with signatures

BRIAN Sowter says he has been amazed by the support for the petition he drafted opposing a series of rates increases.

"The petition exceeds what I thought it would have got," the former councillor said.

"I thought if we had got half that we would have been doing well.

"Folks are not real happy with the lack of consultation.

"(Before the last IPART submission in 2012) there were meetings at South West Rocks, Smithtown, Frederickton and Gladstone.

"This time we've had a couple of shopping centre displays - who can get there if they work during the day?"

Mr Sowter said even if councillors failed to rescind the rates rise submission, he hoped the council would decide not to implement the rise in full.

Mr Rawlings defended the council's community consultation process.

He said the council had been talking about the need for a rates increase since 2010 and there had been public meetings, media coverage, flyers, discussions and a letter that most ratepayers should have received by now.

"The people we have shown the calculations to during our shopping centre sessions commented about how the increases were smaller than they expected," Mr Rawlings said.

"I hope all the people who signed the petition have had a look to see exactly what the impact will be. Often the percentages make people think the increases are larger than you see."

# Water restrictions likely next week

□ **From Page 1**

The low river flows have resulted in pumping from the Sherwood borefield to the Stuart McIntyre dam being suspended last month.

Supplies have relied on the storage of water in the dam since.

The council will have to implement restrictions so it can address the algae-affected water supply.

"The combination of environmental factors we are seeing at the moment has left us without a real option other than to implement restrictions on the use of water," Mr Scott said.

"This will then allow pumping from the river to recommence and we will be able to alleviate the problems we have with taste and odour in the water coming from the dam."

Level 3 restrictions are in place already in the Port Macquarie-Hastings, Greater Taree, and Great Lakes council areas.

Restrictions were last in place briefly in 2004.



□ **More common:** debris on the Sherwood bridge after one of the floods last year

The restrictions will affect the use of the water supply system for lawns and gardens; sporting fields; nurseries and bowling greens.

There will be rules on washing vehicles, homes and boats; driveways and paths; and commercial, industrial and construction use.

Major breaches can trigger an investigation with the possibility of court action and a fine of up to \$2200.

Mr Scott said the council was reviewing the situation regularly and the situation could change very quickly.

"We'd need to see rainfall of

up to four inches (100mm) across the catchment," Mr Scott said.

"We're monitoring things closely all the time.

"The intricacies of our river system mean it doesn't take much for (water flow) levels to rise significantly again."



Transport  
Roads & Maritime  
Services

## Frederickton to Eungai Pacific Highway upgrade

### Community information session

Roads and Maritime Services has engaged Thiess Pty Ltd to design and build the 26.5 kilometre Frederickton to Eungai upgrade.

You are invited to a community information session:

**Where:** Frederickton Primary School Hall  
Great North Road, Frederickton NSW 2440

**When:** Thursday 13 February 2014, 5.30pm to 7.30pm, with a formal presentation at 6pm.

We will provide information on construction progress to date and answer your questions.

Please call the project information line on 1800 668 240 (toll free) by **5pm on Monday 10 February, to register your attendance.**

For more information please contact  
The toll free information line on 1800 668 240,  
email: [community-enquiries@F2E.incite.com.au](mailto:community-enquiries@F2E.incite.com.au),  
or visit [rms.nsw.gov.au/pacific](http://rms.nsw.gov.au/pacific)  
(see Frederickton to Eungai section)



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**Truck's trailer  
 left hanging  
 over river**



- See Page 2

**Your country  
 beauty close  
 to town**



- Property Guide starts on Page 9

# Mayor defends rates rise plan



☐ **Think again:** mayor Cr Liz Campbell believes rates increases are essential to maintain the quality of life in the Macleay



☐ **Seeking support:** the mayor argues a rates rise is needed to maintain council services such as libraries and the Kempsey pool (above)

**By Thom Klein**

MAYOR Liz Campbell has urged ratepayers to support Kempsey Shire Council's proposed rates rise so the Macleay can stand on a firmer financial footing in the long term.

Cr Campbell spelled out arguments in favour of a series of substantial rises to what householders, farmers and business owners pay for public infrastructure and services.

"If people understand the value of investing, they will know the return on our investment will come," she told The Argus.

☐ **Continued:** Page 2  
☐ **Letters:** Page 6



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# Dog trailer left hanging after coming off truck



AN operation to move a trailer that became detached from its truck closed South West Rocks Rd to traffic near Jerseyville yesterday morning.

The large trailer took out a significant length of guard rail along the riverbank heading towards South West Rocks, before coming to a halt over the edge of the Macleay River.

Nearby resident Maureen Dodds heard the incident from her home.

"I thought the truck had gone into the water and I rushed out," she said.

"But the truck had continued along the road for a bit before the driver stopped."

A crew of volunteers from the SWR Rural Fire Service assisted police with the closure of the road.

One bystander - a truck owner himself - said there were no skid marks on the road near where the trailer left it.

**Up it goes:** RFS volunteers, police and a crane contractor were involved in hoisting a trailer from the edge of the riverbank on South West Rocks Rd yesterday. Picture by Thom Klein

A Community of Care **South West Rocks**  
NURSING CENTRE



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**Interested community members are welcome**

You are invited to join the residents and staff at the South West Rocks Nursing Centre for our forthcoming open day.

The open day provides you the opportunity to meet some of our friendly residents, inspect our facilities on a guided tour and discuss your individual needs with our attentive nursing staff.

See for yourself the secure and comfortable living on offer at South West Rocks Nursing Centre.

**WHERE** South West Rocks Nursing Centre  
110 Gregory Street, South West Rocks

**WHEN** Thursday 20th February

**TIME** 11.00am to 2.00pm

**RSVP** Please phone Mrs Maryanne Walton our Director of Nursing on 02 6566 5872 or just come along on the day.

[www.pacg.com.au](http://www.pacg.com.au)

## Seeking support for rates rise bid

**From Page 1**

"Property values will hold, the Macleay will be a place people will want to visit or move to.

"How can we get people to come and stay here and do business here if we're not prepared to invest in ourselves?"

Cr Campbell said higher rates would improve roads and ageing facilities and allow a good level of services, including libraries and swimming pools.

The mayor said she understood people's reluctance to face bigger bills, but questioned whether affordability was as big a counter-argument as opponents of the special rate variation had made out.

"Fixed-income pensioners (here) have the same living expenses as those in local government areas (LGA) where the rates are higher," Cr Campbell said.

"Farmers have the same costs and expenses as others with much higher rates.

"Businesses have the same costs and outgoings as those in LGAs with higher rates.

"We (in the Macleay) have lower income, but also lower costs.

"Our relative household income has improved in low-income bands from 2006 to 2011."

Cr Campbell said the percentage of unpaid rates in Kempsey Shire was 4.86 per cent.

"That's the lowest around," she said.

"If rates were too high, many more would not be able to pay."

The mayor said council officials had determined the rates rise appli-



**Opposed:** former councillor Brian Sowter

cation level after a long and thorough process.

"We've made efficiencies and will continue to do so," she said.

"We now have an asset manager whose role it is to find the best way to make use of our resources.

"All we can do is put in an application for what we believe will put us in a sustainable position, so we're not left in this (financial) mess.

"There's no guarantee we'll get what we ask for."

**Make your voices heard, says mayor**

LIZ Campbell has encouraged ratepayers in favour of investing in the Shire's future to make their voices heard.

The mayor said she, her fellow councillors and council officials took on board all shades of opinion on the rates increases.

She said the only significant feedback they had received was the 4000-strong petition drafted by former councillor Brian Sowter, which opposed the level of the rises.

The petition had offered no solution to addressing the shire's financial difficulties.

"If people understand the arguments why it is so important, they need to stand up and put their point of view across to support this increase," Cr Campbell said.

"Go online, write a letter, email or call the Customer First centre.

"We need it in writing if we want to see the valley prosper and grow for us, our children and grandkids."

The mayor said - in the event of failing to secure the special rise - further cost saving measures would impact negatively on the shire.

Cr Campbell said library services, swimming pools, playground maintenance, crime prevention and public toilet upgrades were traditionally hardest hit by budget restraints.

"These sorts of things have to be delivered collectively," she said.

"If you live in the community, even if you don't use them, it adds to the value of what we are as a shire.

"It all has a bearing on why we live here."

Cr Campbell said the public backlash last year to proposed cuts to libraries had indicated how much the community valued council services.

**Have your say: email to**  
[david.coren@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:david.coren@fairfaxmedia.com.au)



**Kempsey Shire Council  
From the Mayor's Desk  
Week Commencing 24/2/14**

**Embargoed until 12 noon Monday 24/2/14**

**Smith Street Bus Stop**

The process of reviewing where best a bus stop should be to allow people to access the Kempsey CBD was clarified at the last Council meeting.

Should the bus stop be relocated, it is now stated that a new bus stop be in place before the old one is removed and any considered alternative locations needs to be subject to consultation.

These are things that would have been undertaken or are already in progress but hopefully, by having a more specific resolution in place, the community now has a greater feeling of certainty about the process.

**Tough Decisions**

As readers would be aware, last Tuesday councillors had to consider what direction to take for the future of our local government area. Do we continue to pass the cost of our lifestyle into the future, as we have for so many years, or do we do something to change the status quo?

All councillors agreed there is a need to increase the rate revenue base as part of the solution. The only question raised was over what timeframe that should occur.

Filling a \$10 million hole is not easy and will take a multi-prong approach including assessing everything we do – can we do it better, do we need to do it at all, working in partnership with government and community, paying down debt and increasing the general rate base to at least average.

We know the road network is deteriorating faster than we can repair it. We know there are lots of issues with the floodgates and structures. We know community facilities are starting to fall apart.

Because the problem has been left for so long without the hard decisions being taken, our area is not in a great position and has a long way to go to be back to where it needs to be. As many of our assets are in a poor state, the longer we wait the more costly the process will be. Yes, you may save some money now, but over the longer term it will cost much more.

From our road condition data we have identified 223 road sections that have technically failed. That is 46km of road, or around \$30 million of reconstruction. To fix up all the very poor or worse quality roads would take around \$50 million. The extra revenue will give us about \$4.6 million per year.

Our worst area is West Kempsey, with 24% of the failed roads. Next is South West Rocks, with 8.4% and then Austral Eden, with 7.93% and Frederickton with 7.1%. There are none of our localities that do not contain at least one failed bit of road.

We know that the amount of funds that we currently have cannot fix everyone's road that needs fixing immediately. Our management plans clearly show that if we don't address these things it will only get worse. Instead of eventually fixing everything up, everything will eventually fail. Not everyone can be first, but we need to start.



24 January 2014

Dear Ratepayer

**Information on why Council is seeking increased rate funding**

The community is not investing enough money to cover the cost of maintaining the community's assets and providing the services it is using.

In the past, this has been hidden by not replacing or maintaining assets properly and the use of debt. This can only continue for so long before that approach is no longer sustainable, much like continuing to apply for new credit cards. One day you have to pay the bill.

Back in 2011, Council identified that the shortfall in funding was around \$8 million per annum. We applied for an increase in rates and were only allowed a partial increase as Council needed to update plans. The balance of the shortfall still needs to be addressed as the community has indicated that they want to retain the current levels of services.

The shortfall is not only coming from seeking more rates. Since starting the process we have made efficiency savings in our costs of \$2.5 million per annum and have reduced our loan repayment costs by \$260,000 per annum. The 2011 general rate increase provided \$940,834 and over the past 12 months this has allowed us start to address road problems. Works have included, Stuarts Point Road, rehabilitation works to Barnard Street Gladstone, South West Rocks Road, Eden Street, Turners Flat Bridge and Crescent Head Road. These works cost in excess of \$3.2 million to complete.

Data from a recent survey across NSW indicates that Kempsey Shire Council's cost per employee is 13% lower than the average for comparable NSW councils. The survey data also showed that Council's management to staff ratio was 6% compared to the regional council average of 11.4%. Our administrative costs, as a percentage of total costs, are also at the generally accepted level for local government.

Based on the available information, Council has lower staff costs and our management to staff ratio is well below what is seen as reasonable in other councils.

To ensure that Council is looking at being efficient the main costs have been developed around rates that are comparable to other organisations. For example, worldwide standards as to how much should be spent on maintaining assets, is between 2% and 4% of the assets' value. So, in our budgets we should be able to provide suitable maintenance (if we are replacing our assets when we should) for 3% of the assets' value. Currently we only invest 1.8% each year.

We calculated lifespans of roads and worked out the most efficient replacement schedule. We checked our costs of road building against information publicly available to ensure our costs were not high. Again, not enough is being spent to maintain and replace the roads and bridges. Overall, we put in around one third of what is needed. Spending money when it is needed stops potholes and more costs to repair roads after they have failed.



The community has over \$1 billion in assets. In addition to the road and bridge network, Council provides many services such as libraries, swimming pools, sporting fields, footpaths cycle-ways, flood mitigation, cemeteries, parks, street sweeping, and stormwater management. These also need funding.

The net cost of providing services and facilities each year is around \$33.2 million. The main sources of funds available are rates, which provide 31% of this (\$12.70 million) and untied grants which provide 14% (\$5.73 million). This leaves a shortfall in funding of \$14.79 million per annum. Our level of grant funding is slightly above average compared to similar local government areas.

Council will be applying for the following multiple year rate increase to continue addressing the maintenance needs of our roads and bridges. This increase, if approved, will be over a four year period and will be permanent.

- 2014/2015 – 9.3%
- 2015/2016 – 10%
- 2016/2017 – 10%
- 2017/2018 – 4%

The attached information provides further details as to the impact on rates and what priority projects will be undertaken with the proceeds.

Council's website also has an online survey and rate calculator. Have a look at the site and calculate the increases for your situation. Would you invest that to slow and eventually stop things going backwards? Your feedback via the online survey or email at [ksc@kempsey.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ksc@kempsey.nsw.gov.au) would be appreciated.

Feedback will be provided to the February 2014 Council meeting.

Economic development, service delivery and community well-being all depend on adequate infrastructure. If our community values these assets and services, we need to make sure that we invest in their upkeep and replacement.

Yours faithfully

David Rawlings  
GENERAL MANAGER

Encl.



On the good news front, the General Manager provided a comparison of the sealed road works that were being done in 2013/14 compared to the level of work undertaken in 2009/10. Back then Council restored 11km of the road network. In this year, we have 36km that will be fixed up. While that is still far short of the 73km per year we should be doing, it is a massive step in the right direction.

### **Ongoing Performance Report at Council**

Before the start of the financial year, Council decides the services and projects that are to be undertaken during the year.

After six months, a report is done to show the progress achieved.

There are 438 projects or activities contained within Council's Operating Plan and 95.4% are either completed or on schedule. This is a positive result, showing Council is providing what is expected from the resources allocated.

**END**





□ **Lanes closed:** the crash scene on the roundabout near Frederickton yesterday. Picture by Todd Connaughton

## Highway shut after crash on roundabout

MOTORISTS on the Pacific Hwy at Frederickton faced significant delays following a truck accident yesterday morning.

A truck transporting cars failed to negotiate the Kempsey bypass off-ramp roundabout about midnight.

The driver and a passenger travelling in the truck were uninjured.

All northbound lanes were closed and motorists were forced to use one lane in each direction in the southbound lanes to pass the incident.

Workers trying to get into Kempsey and Frederickton yesterday morning had to travel down the bypass to South Kempsey, then turn north into town.

At one point traffic was queued for 1km north and south of the roundabout.

Traffic control and recovery crews worked through the morning to reopen the road.

# Rates rise bid will go ahead



## 'We are here as a result of hard decisions that have not been made in the past ...'

By Thom Klein

COUNCILLORS have voted overwhelmingly to approve an application for a special rates rise.

The special rate variation application will be sent by next week to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

□ **Support for rise:** mayor Liz Campbell

If successful, it would herald an increase on residential, business and farmland rates of 37.54 per cent over a four-year period from July.

An extensive presentation by general manager David Rawlings was made at Tuesday's council meeting.

It underlined the importance of Kempsey Shire Council addressing the

shortfall in its funding for the maintenance and replacement of infrastructure.

Mayor Liz Campbell, deputy mayor Betty Green, councillor Dean Saul, Anthony Patterson and Sue McGinn explained their support for the application, with Cr Bruce Morris the sole voice opposing the extent of the rates rise.

Cr Patterson was passionate in outlin-

ing his reasons for approving the submission.

"I have learnt that to build something first you must invest in it," he said.

□ **Continued:** Page 3

□ **Reaction:** Page 3

□ **Letters:** Pages 6, 8

□ **Have your say:** email to [thom.klein@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:thom.klein@fairfaxmedia.com.au)

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# Council backs rates bid



□ Brian Sowter

## Letter fails to change vote

AN eleventh hour bid to persuade councillors to rethink the scale of the special rate variation proved unsuccessful.

Former councillor Brian Sowter wrote to his successors in the wake of a letter sent to ratepayers.

In his letter to councillors, Mr Sowter said it was "strongly asserted" that Kempsey Shire Council had failed to meet the standards of communication and consultation required by IPART.

He accused the council of failing to allow enough time for consultation.

Mr Sowter said, from a ratepayer's perspective, it was considered efficiencies in service standards, levels of performance measures and the resultant review of the council's organisational structure, and the financial benefits of resource-sharing with other councils should be identified before finalising the rate rise application.

Responding to the councillors' vote to approve the IPART submission, Mr Sowter told The Argus the argument against the application had centred on how much rates would rise over a relatively short space of time.

"If they'd (the council) gone for half the amount everyone would've been happy," he said.

"People realise all councils are strapped for cash, or at least not financially sustainable."

Mr Sowter had organised a petition against the rate rise application, which attracted 4255 signatures.

### □ From Page 1

"As an elected councillor, with the skills my life so far has taught me, I see that we need to invest in our future."

"I'm not happy to sit idle and let the next generation pay for our shortcomings."

"Our valley is in need of maintenance on its roads and bridges, investment in its infrastructure, and long-term certainty to provide the level of services we require."

Cr Patterson said councillors had been elected to be progressive and to make the Macleay Valley a better place.

"I do understand it is an extra cost to the household - I am a ratepayer, homeowner and business owner," he said.

"The cost to me is a sacrifice and an investment as well, but the cost to us in the future is much larger - if we do nothing."

Cr Green said the council had withdrawn two SRVs since she had been first elected in 2004, while the third (in 2012) had not been granted in full.

"This is the result," she said. "We need to progress this as a matter of urgency."

Cr Morris said while the issue of underfunding went back as far as 15 years, he could



□ **Passionate:** Cr Anthony Patterson in Eden St, Kempsey. He is keen to see the council do more work on local roads, as it has in Eden St

not support the percentages determined in the submission.

Cr Anna Shields asked how often IPART approved such substantial increases.

Mr Rawlings replied he believed while double-digit rates rises had been "taboo" in the past, there had been a change in IPART's attitude, and

they were now more likely to be approved.

Closing the debate, Cr Campbell said the statistics presented by the general manager demonstrated the SRV was justified.

"We'd be doing a huge disservice if we didn't put in for what we need," she said.

## We're investing in the future: mayor

THE mayor and council's general manager have welcomed the outcome of the rate rise application vote.

Mayor Liz Campbell said her colleagues had voted to invest in the Macleay.

It would help secure the community's lifestyles and its future.

"We have reviewed the alternatives, including going backwards, and that's not what we want for our community," she said.

"We are here as a result of hard decisions that have not been made in the past, which means we have not been looking after our community assets."

"We cannot keep borrowing money to pay for maintenance of roads and bridges, and we cannot reduce costs to the extent needed without reducing services."

General manager David Rawlings said he had looked at external benchmarks when determining the level of increases required.

"Roads cost much the same, irrespective of whether the community that uses them has higher or lower income," he said.

"The fact is, certain costs have to be funded if you want a road, sports ground or park."

"We are simply looking to move our available funds to the level needed to provide the level of services the community tells us they want."

# We're \$1 million ahead on cost-saving, says Rawlings

DAVID Rawlings told those attending Tuesday's monthly meeting that the council was ahead of planning on cost-saving measures.

Delivering a presentation he made last month at a Kempsey Chamber of Commerce meeting, the general manager said he had implemented annual savings of \$2.4 million, which was \$1 million more per annum than had been envisaged.

The presentation spelled out to councillors the financial status quo, how that had come about, and how Kempsey Shire compared to other regional NSW local government areas.

Mr Rawlings said \$7 million had been ploughed back into roads and infrastructure and there would be an extra \$1 million in the next financial year from savings arising from loan repayments.

"The future increase would bring in \$3.6 million dollars," he said.

"Dollar for dollar, we should be able to match what ratepayers would pay."

When he first assumed his role, in July 2009, Mr Rawlings had to find \$800,000 in savings, which he achieved



□ **Can be done:** new work in Barnard St, Gladstone. Council says it is an example of the type of projects which can be undertaken with adequate funding

through measures including reducing councillors' expenses, freezing budgets and efficiency savings such as cutting superfluous internal reporting, and reducing the level of high-quality printing.

The general manager said factors which had affected council finances

included the doubling of electricity prices in the past four years (with an annual bill of \$1 million); the change to Financial Assistance Grants, reducing it to \$500,000 a year; reduced interest rates, generating only \$383,000 a year on investments; the doubling of election expenses (as a result of last year's

by-election); and the revaluation of road assets.

Between 2008-09 and 2012-13, income has increased by 5 per cent, while expenditure has increased by 12 per cent. The nett result is a 217 per cent increase in loss.

Mr Rawlings said he had researched what should be spent on maintenance, with the generally accepted range internationally between 2 and 4 per cent of the value of assets.

Kempsey Shire Council spends just 1.8 per cent and requires an additional \$6.7 million to reach a level of 3 per cent.

Mr Rawlings produced tables illustrating average residential rates bills of 34 non-metropolitan local government areas (LGA) in NSW.

Of the 34 councils, Kempsey had the 29th lowest rates.

The three lowest are in areas where residential rates are effectively subsidised by income from mining rates.

The data he had produced in his presentation reinforced his view the council was not overfunded, Mr Rawlings said.

- By Thom Klein

# Concerned onlookers question costs and advice

A RELATIVELY small public gallery watched proceedings as the vote for a series of rates increases played out in the council chamber on Tuesday.

The Argus spoke to four ratepayers to gauge their opinions on the debate.

Claude Yarnold, from East Kempsey, is a regular at meetings.

He said: "I was surprised the vote was almost unanimous, because of the opposition to the

rise. Mr Rawlings has been driving the rate rise and his presentation was only about how it would be if we had this rise."

Lew Wilcox was unimpressed with Mr Rawlings' use of tables and graphs.

He equated the use of statistics with the method of former American FBI chief J Edgar Hoover, who he said would bury a salient point in the midst of confusing lectures.

Mr Wilcox agreed with the stance taken by the sole councillor voting against the rise.

"I think I'd go with Cr Morris' position," he said.

"He made a case for a rate rise, but not at that level."

"The mayor is in lockstep with the GM (general manager). Crs Bruce Morris - and Betty Green, I suppose - ask the difficult questions."

Another regular attendee, Brian Morrow, from East

Kempsey, remained an opponent of the rates rise after the debate.

He was sceptical of councillors and Mr Rawlings.

"Yesterday's meeting reinforced my growing concerns that councillors appear to forget their responsibilities lie first with the ratepayers that elected them," Mr Morrow said.

"The GM made a long, complex and voluble address to councillors - such that, not

understanding the details, councillors deferred to his superior advice and recommended the rate increase."

Tom Welsh, from West Kempsey, believes there are other ways to cut council costs.

"I think we're overstaffed and need to cut a few heads," he said.

Mr Welsh also suggested outsourcing some council services to private contractors as a way to cut overheads.

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