

Community Engagement Strategy - Application to IPART for a Special Rate Variation.

IPART's guidelines outline the requirements of applicants in regards to community consultation. Upper Hunter Shire Council's (UHSC) application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a special rate variation constitutes a high impact whole of shire activity. Based on IPART's guidelines, UHSC's community interaction activities must encompass, informing, involving and partnering activities. UHSC's Community Interaction Policy mandates the minimum requirements for community interaction. This proposal lists community consultation activities to date and those proposed to prepare for the final application to ensure that both IPART and UHSC's standards for community consultation are met.

To date UHSC has

- June 2011 - noted its intention to apply for a special rate variation within the General Manager's Overview in the 2012/13 DPOP
- 10th October – media release announcing intention to apply for special variation
- 20th October - noted the intention of an application in "Shire Notes"
- 25th October – launched an online survey on the UHSC website – to gauge community response to the proposal
- November – written advice to all staff of intention to apply for a special rate variation
- 26th October - media release informing the community of UHSC's proposed application to IPART
- 29th November – media release advising community of nominal special variation of 10 percent

UHSC's ongoing Community Engagement activities will include

December

- distribution of media release calling for written responses from residents to the proposal and providing details on community engagement activities prior to lodgement of the final application
- Inclusion of a "have your say" facility on the UHSC website
- Shire notes – call for written responses from residents to the proposed rate variation and providing details on community engagement activities.
- Preparation of briefing notes for councillors and senior staff

January 2012

- Distribution of a letter to all households and non-resident ratepayers outlining the impact of the proposed rate variation and how UHSC will utilise the increased income, notice of pending telephone survey and dates and venues for community meetings
- Media Release promoting community meetings at four major townships and opportunity for stakeholder groups to request individual meetings
- Inclusion of material presented at community meetings on UHSC website
- 11th – 16th telephone survey of a minimum 400 responses conducted by Micromex Research
- 25th - Micromex Research presentation of final report to UHSC of telephone survey
- Preparation of briefing notes for councillors and senior staff

February

- 1st – 14th Community meetings to be held in four major townships seeking feedback from community members on proposed special rate variation and advising on the work that will be funded by the additional income raised.
- 13th – on line community survey closes
- Preparation of briefing notes for councillors and senior staff
- 1st – 14th Special meetings as requested
- Preparation of briefing notes for councillors and senior staff.
- Lodgement of application to IPART