

**Main media coverage of infrastructure asset renewal and funding strategy including proposed special variation during 2013 and 2014.**

- 46 newspaper articles
- 10 newspaper advertisements
- 3 media enquiries
- 4 broadcast media

**Readership figures:**

- Blacktown Advocate: 75,000
- Blacktown Sun: 59,000
- Mount Druitt - St Marys Standard: 54,000
- Rouse Hill Times: 77,000
- Rouse Hill - Stanhope Garden News: 11,260
- St Marys - Mt Druitt Star: 44,000



## Mayor says city revamp needs some funding help

**Ben McClellan**

BLACKTOWN Council has bold plans to reshape the city but without business and government investment they will remain on the drawing board, Mayor Len Robinson has warned.

On the eve of handing down his, and the Liberals', first budget, Cr Robinson spoke about the state of the council's finances, the 2030 vision for the city and how reshaping the CBD will be the catalyst for making Blacktown a "regional city".

He blamed chronic under investment by the previous Labor administration for leaving an asset renewal backlog that has increased from \$5 million to \$8 million a year over the past 10 years and a capital works backlog of more than \$300 million.

He said it had been easy for the ALP to deliver balanced budgets because they weren't prepared to bite the bullet on long-term investment.

The Liberals promised to drastically reduce the capital works backlog, but Cr Robinson admitted only a "minor impact" would be made in the four-year budget as it was "like turning the *Titanic* around".

"The only way to reduce that is to actually go out and borrow money," he said.

The updated 2030 vision lists eight trigger projects to make Blacktown a city of excellence with asset renewal, Blacktown's CBD and better promotion of the city added to a raft of already completed projects.



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PAGE 1 of 1

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# Robinson sets sights on future

INVESTMENT NEEDED TO TURN AREA INTO A 'REGIONAL CITY'

**Ben McClellan**

BLACKTOWN Council has bold plans to reshape the city but without business and government investment the plans will remain on the drawing board, Mayor Len Robinson has warned.

On the eve of handing down his – and the Liberals' – first budget, Cr Robinson gave an in-depth interview to the *Advocate* about the state of the council's finances, the 2030 vision for the city and how reshaping the CBD will be the catalyst for making Blacktown a "regional city".

Cr Robinson blamed chronic under investment by the previous Labor administration for leaving an asset renewal backlog that has increased from \$5 million to \$8 million a year over the past 10 years and a

capital works backlog of more than \$300 million.

The Liberals promised to "drastically" reduce the backlog, but Cr Robinson admitted only a "minor impact" would be made in the four-year budget because it was "like turning the Titanic around".

"Anyone walking around here knew we were heading for financial problems," he said.

A major development of the council-owned 3.5ha Warwick Lane site was crucial to bringing Blacktown's CBD into the 21st century, Cr Robinson said.

"We've got this fantastic parcel of land, whether we end up with 600 apartments and a commercial centre, whether council ends up as

a part owner and we are relocated from here," Cr Robinson said.

Cr Robinson agreed with last week's report into local government that smaller councils should amalgamate and mayors should be popularly elected.

The review recommended Blacktown take in areas of Vineyard and Box Hill

"We are not charities, we shouldn't be seeing ourselves as having this social obligation to look after these various groups," he said.

"You're supposed to be using ratepayer's money on behalf of ratepayers."

**How can Blacktown improve?**  
Tell us at  
[blacktownadvocate.com.au](http://blacktownadvocate.com.au)

## VISION FOR BLACKTOWN

- Three new trigger projects added to 2030 vision; asset renewal, the Blacktown CBD and promoting the city
- Mayor Len Robinson says tough decisions need to be made on long-term investment
- Labor delivered balanced budgets by under investing, according to the mayor





## Blacktown goes back to the basics

Last week Blacktown Council's vision for the future of the city to 2030 went on public display. Phyllis Macgraw looks at the first of eight trigger projects detailed in the plan.

PLAYGROUNDS and other infrastructure are in Len Robinson's sights.

The Blacktown mayor is determined that the maintenance and renewal of the city's assets will take top priority — starting now.

Cr Robinson said asset management and renewal was the most important of the eight trigger projects in the council's draft Community Strategic Plan.

"It has become increasingly evident across Australia that there is a serious shortfall in the resources available to maintain local assets

such as roads, buildings and parks to a suitable standard," he said.

"Our infrastructure will deteriorate without serious attention.

"This council is determined to tackle this issue and not leave a negative legacy for future generations."

Cr Robinson said there was an \$8.15 million backlog in asset maintenance and renewal.

"If we don't do something about this now, we're not going to be able to get on top of it," he said.

"Council's got to get back to the basics.

"If you don't look after the roads, if you don't maintain the amenities buildings and the libraries, you're failing in your basic function."

### ASSET RENEWAL

- \$80 million will be committed to asset renewal between now and 2016
- The council plans to secure state government funding to maintain existing infrastructure and provide new facilities
- It will pursue improved state government social housing
- Existing infrastructure will be managed sustainably

**Playgrounds in view:** Ken Huynh with Mya Le and Andrew Le at Nurragingy Reserve, Doonside.  
Picture: Carlos Furtado

- Next week the *Sun* will examine the council's plans for Blacktown city centre
- Your voice: [rhsgnews.com.au](http://rhsgnews.com.au).







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Cr Robinson said there was an \$8.15 million backlog in asset maintenance and renewal.

"If we don't do something about this now, we're not going to be able to get on top of it," he said.

"Council's got to get back to the basics of providing roads and parks and providing facilities for people.

"That's basically what local government is about — roads, rates and rubbish as they used to say.

"If you don't look after the roads, if you don't maintain the amenities buildings and the libraries, you're failing in your basic function."

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[blacktownsun.com.au](http://blacktownsun.com.au).



## Blacktown goes back to the basics

 Northern News (Rouse Hill), Sydney, General News

07 May 2013

Page 3 - 284 words - ASR AUD 477

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"If you don't look after the roads, if you don't maintain the amenities buildings and the libraries, you're failing in your basic function." It is estimated that \$80 million will be committed to asset renewal between now and 2016. The council plans to secure state government funding to maintain existing infrastructure and provide new facilities. It will pursue improved state government social housing. Existing infrastructure will be managed sustainably. Playgrounds in view: Ken Huynh with Mya Le and Andrew Le at Narraginy Reserve, Doonside.

Picture: Carlos Furtado NextweektheSun will examine the council's plans for Blacktown city centre Your voice: rnsnews.com.au.

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# Council spending battle

## LABOR OPPOSES PENSIONER REBATE CUT PLAN

Ben McClellan

BLACKTOWN Mayor Len Robinson accused his Labor opponents of conducting a "terrorist" campaign against the new Liberal council – and that was before the ALP tried to reverse the budget for the first time in the council's history last week.

The council can't start rolling out its \$376 million spending program – \$20 million more than last financial year – until the recession motion is defeated at a meeting tonight.

Labor is opposed to reducing the voluntary pensioner rebate, which will cost 80 per cent of more than 11,000 pensioners \$50 a year, and a rise in waste-service costs, like garbage collection, to increase by 14.7 per cent.

"It's stupid, we have never mounted campaigns against them. If you've got the numbers, you've got the numbers and you should be able to introduce your policies," Cr Robinson said.

Cr Robinson said the \$1 million a year savings from cutting the rates' rebate would be funnelled into the \$8 million asset renewal and works improvement programs.

He warned if the voluntary rebate of \$150 wasn't cut, the council would be spending \$4 million a year on it in 10 years.

Independent Russ Dickens holds the balance of power and said while he wasn't comfortable with the pensioner rate rebate cut, he had to be practical and wouldn't support Labor's attempts to derail the budget.

Blacktown has more than \$260 million invested in term deposits, but revenue from lowering rates are dropping, while extra energy costs, such as \$570,000 on street lighting, have been making it tougher to deliver services and maintain infrastructure without debt.

Labor councillor Stephen Bali accused the Liberals of spending less than its Labor predecessors, and said the attack on pensioners would save just 0.005 per cent of the total council budget, while the backlog of infrastructure in unfunded works would blow out from \$370 million to \$404 million.

Cr Robinson said Cr Bali's accusations were "rubbish", he was selective with his figures and the council looked after its pensioners.

### BLACKTOWN COUNCIL BUDGET 2013-14

- Total expenditure \$376.9 million, up \$20 million from 2012-13
- Revenue of \$249.3 million in general income and \$127.6 million in rates (increased by 3.4 per cent to a minimum \$830 a year)
- Capital works \$41.1 million, includes roadworks totalling \$15.8 million (\$1.1 million upgrading Narraginy Reserve entrance)
- Pensioner rebate cut by \$1 a week to save \$1 million a year. All councils must provide a \$250 rebate; Blacktown is reducing its additional \$150 rebate by \$45 for 80 per cent and \$207 for richest 20 per cent of 11,230 eligible pensioners



 back

# Pensioners to pay more

## LABOR OPPOSES LIBERALS' 'RESPONSIBLE' REBATE CUTBACK

Nigel Gladstone

THE Liberals' first council budget was delayed by the ALP, who last week put in the first ever recession motion against a budget.

The council will spend \$20 million more than last year, but 11,230 eligible pensioners will pay more rates after an additional council rebate is cut in July.

Liberal Mayor Len Robinson said the rebate is costing the council \$1 million a year and if unchanged will blow out to \$4 million over

10 years. He said that money cut from the rates rebate would be funnelled into asset renewal and works improvement programs.

"I don't want to leave my time as mayor with a future legacy of deteriorating assets," he said.

Labor councillors delayed adopting the budget because they oppose the pensioner rebate cuts and a rise in waste service costs.

Garbage collection rates will increase by 14.7 per

cent, partly because of the carbon tax (\$1.2 million) and increased garbage charges (about \$2 million).

The council will spend \$41.1 million on roads, parks and facilities in 2013-14.

Rates revenue is predicted to increase by about \$5 million to \$127 million and general income by \$14 million to \$250 million.

Independent Deputy Mayor Russ Dickens described the budget as "responsible".

**What should the budget**

focus on? Email editor@  
rousehilltimes.com.au

### BUDGET

- Blacktown and Sydney City councils offer additional discounted rebates on pensioner rates
- Pensioners who got a rebate of \$400 will now get \$355
- The average cut is \$45 a year but 20 per cent of pensioners will pay about \$207 more





## Budget allows for \$377m spending

By Phyllis Macgraw

BLACKTOWN Council has delivered its largest-ever budget — and its first in 23 years without former general manager Ron Moore at the helm. It's also the first budget of the new Liberal-controlled chamber headed by mayor Len Robinson.

The draft budget, which will be on public exhibition until June 6, is a companion piece to the draft Community Strategic Plan, which is already on display for public comment.

While the strategic plan details the council's vision for the city to 2030, this year's budget sets the stage for the financial requirements needed to be put into action during the coming 17 years.

Blacktown has the second-largest local government budget in Sydney (outside the City of Sydney).

This year it will spend \$377 million but stay debt-free.

Cr Robinson said there would be no service cuts and that \$41.1 million would be spent on capital works and improvements.

There will be a rate increase of 3.4 per cent.

Pensioners will lose part of their rate rebate from July 1, resulting in an annual increase of about \$46.50 a year. They will still receive the mandatory \$250 a year rebate required by state legislation, as well as an extra rebate of \$105 a year.

Cr Robinson said the \$105 rebate had been reduced from \$155 to help fund the cost of the asset management and renewal program.

"While there is a reduction in the voluntary rebate made by the council, Blacktown's addition rebate will still be higher/more generous than any other western Sydney council," he said.

"If no change is made to the council's current pensioner rebate policy, the total cost to the council will continue to increase and the council will need to consider service cuts to maintain a balanced budget."

He said most NSW councils gave pensioners only the mandatory \$250 rebate.



# Re-elected mayor says he will deliver

By Kylie Stevens

THE first of a series of mega parks, Blacktown's Warrick Lane, and upgraded netball courts at International Peace Park are some of things on Blacktown mayor Len Robinson's agenda.

He was re-elected for a second consecutive term last Wednesday night.

"My commitment was that I would work to ensure that the council provides value for money to the community, and our long-term financial position is protected," he said.

Councillor Robinson wants the community to know he is committed to delivering the best that council can.

"I would like to be remembered for placing the council in a sound financial position and to function on a business basis, catering for the community while making decisions based on benefiting the majority of people throughout the city," he said.

The construction of the first mega park in each of the five wards is one of his priorities.

The mayor noted the council's \$377 million

budget, the largest ever for Blacktown.

"The first year as mayor has been frustrating in terms of getting agenda items over the line," he said.

"When I became mayor I arrived with an agenda and it has been a battle, but in this second year our program will be delivered.

"More needs to be done in the area of asset renewal, with forecasts showing we need to spend more so that council's infrastructure remains at an acceptable standard and so that we do not leave an unmanageable burden for future generations.

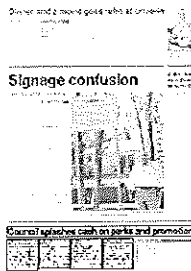
"This council in the past 12 months has made a commitment to be the one which walks up to this challenge and addresses it."

Independent Russ Dickens vowed to serve both sides of the chamber equally after he was re-elected deputy mayor.

"I'll do whatever I can for the benefit of Blacktown regardless of which side it's on," he said.



**In charge:** Blacktown mayor Len Robinson hopes to deliver positive changes to the city in the next 12 months: "I am proud of what we have achieved in this area so far," he said. (Inset: Veteran councillor Russ Dickens).  
Picture: Mike Sea



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## Council splashes cash on parks and promotion

BLACKTOWN Council decided last week to spend the bulk of its budget surplus on future asset renewal works.

The council recorded a \$3.9 million budget surplus.

New major parks were the big winner, being allocated \$1 million. The money is to be spent on designing and building neighbourhood

playgrounds and parks across the area.

Establishing a marketing fund to help promote the area received \$75,000.

Revenue from rates and annual charges rose from \$144 million in 2012 to \$152 million this year.

Income from residential rates also climbed – from

\$80 million in 2012 to \$82 million in 2013.

This comes as the annual report for 2012-2013 revealed council's greenhouse gas emissions increased by 4 per cent to 38,463 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. However, the council's recycling services diverted 61 per cent of municipal waste away from landfill.

Report figures also revealed visitors to council's five libraries increased by more than 100,000 people to about 1.3 million.

New meeting rules were also approved, including the removal of the acknowledgment of traditional owners of the land and replacing it with a Christian prayer.

### BUDGET SNAPSHOT

- 2013 budget: \$358 million
- Surplus result: \$3.88 million
- Rates and annual charges: \$152 million
- Residential rates: \$82 million
- Business rates: \$34 million
- Farmland rates: \$884,000
- Purchase of Infrastructure, property, plant and equipment \$66 million





## Council considers raising the rates

By Kylie Stevens

BLACKTOWN Councillors will debate next week whether to apply for a Special Rate Variation to fund council's asset renewal projects in the future.

A council report recommends it notify IPART by December 13 of plans to apply to increase rates above the rate pegging limit in 2014-15.

If approved, ratepayers will see a rate increase of up to eight per cent from mid-next year.

Around 73 per cent of residential ratepayers are on the minimum rate of \$830.

"This means that for 73 per cent of residential ratepayers, an increase of eight per cent above the assumed pegging rate of 2.75 per cent in the 2014-5 financial year would equate to an annual increase of \$89.23 in their rates or an additional \$1.72 per week in rates," the report said.

Council's outstanding asset renewal backlog was \$68 million as of June 30.

If current funding levels for asset renewal was sustained, the backlog is forecast to be \$139 million in 10 years and \$758 million in 20 years.

The report recommends an annual \$10 million funding increase for asset renewal to reduce future backlogs to a more manageable level.

Council has not exceeded the rate variation limit since pegging was introduced in 1977.

It was initially determined by the state government but has been IPART's responsibility since 2011-12.

An extensive community engagement plan will be implemented to consult the public if the report is endorsed next week.

■ Comment: [blacktownsun.com.au](http://blacktownsun.com.au).



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## Rate rise talks

NEXT week Blacktown councillors will debate a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to fund asset renewal projects in the future.

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# Medikidz superheroes explain blood disorder



By Jessica Aquilina

**YOUNG** hero Ryan Morales, 9, is busting the myth about haemophilia.

Ryan, who is a keen soccer player, has inherited the genetic disorder which won't let blood clot properly.

With the condition the Quakers Hill resident has battled bloody joints, bleeds, had numerous visits to The Children's Hospital at Westmead and had more than a thousand needles to manage his incurable condition which often sparks assumptions of uncontrollable bleeds and a secluded lifestyle.

However, Ryan wants to show his friends, family members and others with the disorder that they can live a normal life, to run and play like any other child of his age.

He will do this through a comic book called *Medikidz Explain Haemophilia*.

It will take the illustrated lookalike of Ryan on an adventure with the Medikidz superheroes, and will teach children and their families about haemophilia.

Ryan was diagnosed at three days old and is now starting to learn how to give himself injections and manage his own treatment.

Ryan said he will be able to read the comic

to his little brother, Thomas, who has been recently diagnosed with the blood disorder.

"I'm excited because I get to teach Thomas about haemophilia as well as my friends," he said.

"They don't know what haemophilia is and they keep asking me."

"I can teach them about it with the comic book."

Ryan's mum Alison Morales said she was proud of her son.

"Having the comic book it will show the boys there is nothing to be embarrassed about," Mrs Morales said.

## IN GOOD COMPANY

There are more than 2800 Australians living with haemophilia. They are mostly male.

Famous people with haemophilia include:

- British cyclist Alex Dowsett;
- Actor, comedian and writer Alexandra Borstein (carrier);
- Professional baseball player Jesse Schrader;
- Prince Leopold;
- Queen Victoria (carrier);
- Ryan Wayne White;
- Tsarevitch Alexei Nikolaevich.

**Super powers:** Ryan Morales will make a starring appearance in the comic book series, *Medikidz Explain Haemophilia* — a comic book to teach kids such as Ryan and his little brother Thomas (pictured) about haemophilia.

## Greater rates rise high on the agenda

By Kyle Stevens

**BLACKTOWN** mayor Len Robinson makes no apologies for plans to increase council rates 8 per cent above the rate pegging next year.

Councillors will vote on the report tomorrow night, which recommends the council apply to IPART for a special variation rate to pay for the \$68 million infrastructure backlog.

The backlog is forecast to be \$139 million in 10 years' time and \$758 million in 20 years if current funding levels for asset renewal were sustained.

"We need to bite the bullet and work out how to fix this up," Cr Robinson said.

"In the last 30 years, Blacktown City has boomed, which is fantastic."

"The problem is we have to look after the assets and infrastructure."

"Somebody has to replace the guttering and resurface the netball courts."

"For us to get on top of the problem, we need to find \$10 million every year for the next 10 years."

General manager Kerry Robinson said the problem was similar to cracked tiles in the roof.

"It's important to spend money at the right time or the problem continues to grow over time," he said.

Around 75 per cent of residents will have their council rates increase by \$89.23 next year or \$1.72 a week.

Blacktown and Bankstown are the only councils from Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) that haven't applied for a SRV in recent years.

"Our rates on average are less than most of the WSROC councils," Mr Robinson said.

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**Kevin Conolly MP**  
Member for Riverstone

Can I help you?

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Mail: PO Box 65, Stanhope Gardens NSW 2763  
Email: riverstone@parliament.nsw.gov.au

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It will cover key aspects of the recovery process for insured property owners including:

- claims handling and management
- claims assessment
- settlement options
- site clean up and rebuilding
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The forum is for policyholders only. Registration is essential. To register and for venue details, please phone 1800 734 621.

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back

# Rates rise on the cards

By Kylie Stevens

BLACKTOWN mayor Len Robinson makes no apologies for plans to increase rates by 8 per cent above the rate peg next year.

Councillors will vote on the report tomorrow night. It recommends that the council apply to IPART for a special variation rate to pay for the \$68 million infrastructure backlog.

The backlog is forecast to be \$139 million in 10 years' time and \$758 million in 20 years if current funding levels for asset renewal are sustained.

"We need to bite the bullet and work out how to fix this," Cr Robinson said.

"Over the past 30 years, Blacktown has boomed, which is fantastic.

"The problem is we have to look after the assets and infrastructure.

"Somebody has to replace the guttering and resurface the netball courts.

"To get on top of the problem, we need to find \$10 million every year for the next 10 years.

"When I first sat in the chair 12

months ago, I was aware we had a problem because I'd heard the cries from engineers. I don't intend to leave the mess to my successor."

General manager Kerry Robinson said the problem was similar to cracked tiles in a roof.

"It's important to spend money at the right time or the problem continues to grow," he said.

Around 75 per cent of ratepayers will see their rates increase by \$89.23 next year or \$1.72 a week.

Blacktown and Bankstown are the only councils from Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) that haven't applied for a SRV in recent years.

"Our rates on average are less than most of the WSROC councils," the general manager said.

Council staff looking at the state of assets have identified Carlisle Avenue as a road that needs urgent upgrading.

Blacktown International Sports-park is another example.

"We're proud to have a venue to host international and national

competitions," Councillor Robinson said.

"If we want to maintain that important brand for Blacktown, maintenance is needed.

The council has considered other options but decided a rate increase was the best solution.

"If we start borrowing money for assets, it will be a never-ending circle," Cr Robinson said.

"We haven't been spending money we need to spend.

"If we spend money now, we can keep assets in a satisfactory condition and costs will be less further down the track."

The council will consult the community once the report is endorsed.

"If we keep doing nothing, we'll end up in a nightmare of deteriorating roads," Cr Robinson said.

"We've got an obligation to the community to maintain these assets.

"I know we won't win the popularity stakes but we've got to start turning things around."

**'We've got an obligation to the community to maintain these assets'**

— Len Robinson



ST MARYS, OAKHURST AND MT DRUITT

## Trick or Treat Trail tees off feast of fun and frightening events



Now in its third year, the St Marys Trick or Treat Trail is one of the best in Sydney. Youngsters spent Saturday collecting goodies from stores in the area. The event kicked off a string of Halloween events in the region, including pumpkin carving at Westfield Mt Drutt all day on Thursday, near Woolworths, with donations raised from the event going to Lifesart. Also on Thursday, Linda Connolly, who has been handing out lollies to trick or treaters on Halloween for 30 years from her Milsud Cres, Oakhurst, home, will do so again.

MT DRUITT REGION

## Rates could rise by 8 per cent as deficit blows out

COUNCIL REPORT SAYS BLACKTOWN HAS A \$63.8M SHORTFALL

Chris Georgakopoulos

BLACKTOWN Council is considering an 8 per cent rate rise to pay for asset maintenance.

A report into asset management revealed a \$63.8 million deficit hanging over council with several maintenance jobs to be undertaken now and well into the future.

A council spokeswoman said if no action was taken on the issue, the deficit would blow out to \$758 million in 20 years time.

The increase will cost 75 per cent of ratepayers an extra \$1.72 per week.

Mayor Len Robinson said the council was left with no choice but to look at raising rates which will bring in an extra \$10 million a year.

"The last 30 years Blacktown has just absolutely boomed and it's fantastic," Cr Robinson said.

"The developers build these new facilities and they hand them over - problem is we have to look after them."

"We've got about \$2.8 billion worth of assets. We are

adding to that at about the rate of \$50 million a year.

"The bottom line is if we keep doing nothing about it, we're just going to end up with an absolute nightmare and serious ramifications."

The forecast increase will still see Blacktown Council rates at comparable levels to other Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils members.

Council general manager Kerry Robinson said he understood an increase would upset residents but action needed to be taken.

### COUNCIL RATES

- Currently \$68 million deficit on asset renewal and maintenance
- Could blow out to \$758 million if no action is taken
- The council intends to increase rates by 8 per cent starting next financial year
- Increase equates to \$1.72 per week extra for 75 per cent of rate payers
- The council will undergo community consultation throughout the process of a Special Rate Variation to adequately address any community concerns

ROOTY HILL

## Council decision puts marathon in jeopardy

THE future of the M7 Cities Marathon, which finishes at Blacktown International Sportspark, Rooty Hill, is still uncertain.

At a Blacktown Council meeting last month, three councillors moved a resolution motion in a bid to save the event.

Cr Stephen Bali said he wanted the marathon to run next year. He also proposed combining it with Blacktown Fun Run and Sports-Fest, creating a running festival and save costs.

However, the motion was rejected and the council up-

held its decision to not fund the event.

But throwing the event a lifeline, independent Cr Russ Dickens has called for a report examining the proposals and sponsorship. It is expected later this year but Cr Bali said it may be too late to run the event next year.

"I'm not saying it's dead but it's on life support."

Cr Bali said the marathon entry fee had not been included in council's expense budget and estimated it to be up to \$17,000.

Blacktown Council did not provide comment.

MT DRUITT-ST MARYS REGION

## Big boost for little kids

NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli has announced new funding for preschools across the state.

Community preschools will see an increase of 20 per cent in funding.

In total, \$160 million will be available, with 95 per cent of preschools

seeing the increase in their base funding.

The model will include loadings for Aboriginal children and those in remote areas.

The increases come after Professor Deborah Brennan's review of early childhood education funding.

HEBERSHAM

## People power wins reversal of reserve proposal

Ryan Lipman

HELENA Ave residents have won the fight to make sure Reserve 345, in Hebersham, is not rezoned and used for residential development.

Residents campaigned against Blacktown Council's proposal to consider the

reserve for redevelopment after a sign was erected on site in September revealing the proposal.

Deanne McDonald and a second resident presented the council with a petition signed by more than 180 peo-

ple during a public forum at a council meeting on October 9. Mrs McDonald said councillor Charlie Lowles informed her it could take three weeks for the council to make a decision but the sign came down on

October 15. "I couldn't believe it when they took it down. I was absolutely ecstatic," she said.

Last Thursday Mrs McDonald was officially told by Cr Lowles the park was no longer being considered

by the council for rezoning. "It was a godsend. We're more than happy with nothing on it, we just want an open space," she said.

The council had proposed to use the sale of land to fund mega parks.

### A BIG WIN

- Reserve 345, in Hebersham, is no longer being considered for rezoning to residential following a community campaign
- A 180-signature petition was presented to Blacktown councillors opposing the move



BLACKTOWN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

# Rate increase looming

Chris Georgakopoulos

## COUNCIL MOVES TO ADDRESS BIG DEFICIT ON ASSET RENEWAL

### THE PROBLEM

■ \$63.8 million deficit on asset renewal, maintenance  
■ Could blow out to \$75.8 million if no action is taken  
■ Council intends to increase rates by 8 per cent starting next financial year  
■ Council will undergo community consultation throughout the process to address concerns

BLACKTOWN Council is considering an 8 per cent rate increase to cover asset renewal and maintenance. A report into asset management has revealed a \$63.8 million deficit hanging over council, with several maintenance jobs to be undertaken now and in the future. The council believes if

no action is taken the deficit will blow out to \$75.8 million in 20 years. The rise would cost 75 per cent of ratepayers an extra \$1.72 per week. Mayor Len Robinson said council had no choice but to look at increasing rates to bring in the required extra \$10 million a year.

"The last 30 years Blacktown has just absolutely boomed and it's fantastic," Cr Robinson said. "The developers build these new facilities and they hand them over - problem is, we have to look after them. We've got about \$2.8 billion worth of assets. We are

adding to that at about the rate of \$50 million a year. The bottom line is if we keep doing nothing about it, we're just going to end up with an absolute nightmare and serious ramifications." Blacktown Council general manager Kerry Robinson said he knew an increase

would upset residents, but maintained action was required. "As the management of the council we have to provide the right advice to the councillors on what the options are and what the consequences are of not making the right decisions," he said.

### SEVEN HILLS

## Year 12 girls face more than HSC

Peter Bodkin

FOR triplets Regan, Brittany and Jordana Grant, their frantic final school terms were always going to be among the hardest months they had faced in their 17 years together. But around August, with their HSC trial exams looming, the trio of Year 12 students' study plans were thrown into disarray as mum Linda was hospitalised for 18 days when the life-threatening cancer she had been fighting for two years worsened.

"My first focus was getting them through their HSC, I wanted things to be as normal as possible this year, although that didn't quite work out to plan," Linda Grant said. "That was a big distraction, it was very hard for them to stay focused after that. I know it was confronting for them seeing all of the tubes sticking out of me." With her bowel cancer having spread to her lungs and treatment entering the palliative stage, the triplets from Blacktown's Nagle College admit there have been a few schoolyard "breakdowns" in past months. As they join more than 75,000 students across NSW sitting their HSC exams, the



Regan, Brittany, Linda and Jordana Grant are getting through their HSC and health challenges.

Picture: JOHN APPELEYARD

girls are determined to focus on the next few weeks rather than dwelling on what the future may hold for their tight-knit Seven Hills family. "It's not something I really like to think about," Regan said. "When she went into hospital for 18 days, that was... challenging. She's actually the one who tells us to

study." Brittany agreed she and her siblings had "sort of shut down" when their mother went into hospital, and since then they had just tried to "concentrate on the present". "We have each other; you can talk to someone else but they can't really understand what you're going through," she said.

"I think it's affected our studies a lot just knowing that your mum is sick." But despite all the distractions, Linda said she had tried to teach her daughters not to stress too much over their HSC and their school had been supportive throughout the demanding period. "It's not the be-all and end-all for them - I've tried to in-

still in them that when you go in to your exams you should do the best you can, but there are always different paths you can take," she said. Though none of the girls are set on their post-school directions, Regan is considering a career in sports science, while Brittany favoured an environmental field and Jordana a job working with animals.

### BLACKTOWN

## ALDI to open in November

GERMAN supermarket chain ALDI will open a store in Blacktown Westpoint next month. ALDI Blacktown will be more than 1500 square metres in size, taking over the space previously occupied by Franklins on Level 1. An ALDI spokeswoman said 15 to 20 staff members had been recruited and were being trained ahead of the supermarket opening in late November. "The arrival of ALDI Blacktown has provided highly rewarding career opportunities to local residents and will have a positive impact on the local community," she said. ALDI, which now has more than 300 stores on Australia's east coast, has been named Supermarket Of The Year at the Roy Morgan Customer Satisfaction Awards for the past two years.

### PARRAMATTA/PROSPECT

## Shuttle service for water park

WET'N'WILD Sydney is finalising the details of a free shuttle bus service to operate between Parramatta train station and the Prospect water park. Wet'n'Wild Sydney chief executive Chris Warhurst is negotiating with local bus operators and will finalise a schedule in early November, ahead of the park opening in December. More Wild news: Page 15

### GREENWAY

## Anzac celebration needs ideas

ANZAC Day in 2015 will be a momentous occasion, recognising 100 years since troops stormed the beaches of Gallipoli. The Greenway Centenary of ANZAC Committee, consisting of 12 local community leaders, was established to plan and prepare ceremonies and celebrations.

Now they need your help. The committee has put the call out for suggestions on how Greenway should mark the occasion, pay tribute to the fallen and celebrate the ANZAC legacy. As part of the Centenary of Anzac, the Federal Government has set aside \$125,000 for every electorate in the

country to spend on local ceremonies and celebrations. "The Greenway Centenary of ANZAC Committee is calling on anyone in the local community with any ideas of how to celebrate this historic occasion to come forward with their suggestions," Ms Rowland said.

"The Anzac Centenary is a milestone of special significance to all Australians, and this is a great opportunity to celebrate and reflect." The Greenway Centenary of ANZAC Committee has until May 30 next year to finalise its plans and apply for the funding. To get involved, call 9671 4780.



Committee members Rosemary Phyllis, Robin Young, Leonie Gendie, Peter Matthey, Angela Humphries, Chris Gammage, Michelle Rowland and Alan Holloway.



THE PONDS



THIS seven-bedroom house on Vanilla St, The Ponds broke a record for the suburb – selling for \$1.065 million. The property, a 543sq m block, is the first to break the million-dollar mark at The Ponds. "It is not your average home," Sasha Szymon, from Century 21 Rouse Hill, said. For more details about this house and other properties in the area, read the 95-page Real Estate liftout, in today's Rouse Hill Times.

BLACKTOWN LGA

# Rate rise is on cards

THE PROBLEM

- There is a \$63 million deficit on asset renewal and maintenance
- This could blow out to \$759 million if no action is taken
- Council intends to increase rates by eight per cent starting next financial year
- The increase equates to \$1.72 per week extra for 75 per cent of ratepayers
- Council will undergo community consultation throughout the process of a Special Rate Variation to address concerns and community feedback
- Council rejected reinstating the pensioner rebate for council rates for the 2014-2015 financial year

## COUNCIL LOOKS AT 8 PER CENT INCREASE TO COVER DEFICIT

Chris Georgakopoulos

BLACKTOWN City Council is considering an 8 per cent rate increase to cover asset maintenance.

A report into asset management revealed a \$63.8 million deficit hanging over the council, with several maintenance jobs to be undertaken now and in the future.

The council believes if no action is taken, the deficit will blow out to \$759 million in 20 years.

The increase will cost 75 per cent of ratepayers an additional \$1.72 per week.

Mayor Len Robinson said the council was left with no choice but to look at increasing rates, which will bring in the required extra \$10 million a year.

"The last 30 years Blacktown has just absolutely boomed and it's fantastic," Cr Robinson said.

"The developers build these new facilities and they hand them over – problem is we have to look after them."

"We've got about \$2.8 billion worth of assets. We are adding to that at about the rate of \$50 million a year."

"The bottom line is if we keep doing nothing about it,

we're just going to end up with an absolute nightmare and serious ramifications."

The forecast increase will see Blacktown Council rates at comparable levels to other Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils.

Council general manager Kerry Robinson said he understood an increase would upset residents but action needed to be taken.

"We are all ratepayers and we know none of us want to put our hand in our pocket and pay more rates," he said.

"But as the management of the council we have to provide the right advice to the

councillors on what the options are and what the consequences are of not making the right decisions are."

Earlier this month, the Council rejected the return of the pensioner discount for the next financial year.

Pensioners previously received a 50 per cent discount on rates but it was cut to save \$1 million a year.

Labor councillors brought the issue to last week's council meeting but could not reinstate it for 2014-15.

Tell us what you think about the proposed increase at [editor@rousehiltimes.com.au](mailto:editor@rousehiltimes.com.au)

STANHOPE GARDENS

## Green thumbs win two in row

PERENNIAL green thumbs John and Judy Collier have claimed Blacktown Council's garden competition for the second consecutive year.

The Stanhope Gardens couple were voted the ward one winners, as well as being named the Champion of Champions, at a presentation on Friday.

Other winners included Castlebrook Memorial Park Rouse Hill for best commercial garden and St John's Primary, Riverstone, for school/community garden.

MCCRATHS HILL

## Man in hospital after 4m fall

A MAN is recovering at Westmead Hospital after falling 4m from the balcony of his McGraths Hill home on Sunday afternoon.

The 47-year-old is being treated for a mild traumatic brain injury after falling head first when the balcony railing gave way.

A CareFlight spokesman said when they arrived with paramedics and police, the man was unconscious.

He was taken to hospital in a serious but stable condition.

KELLYVILLE

## Priority plan for station zones

KELLYVILLE, Bella Vista and Showground station precincts have been nominated for the second round of the NSW Government's Urban Activation Program.

The Hills Shire Council nominated the three North West Rail Link precincts last week following the finalisation of the North West Rail Link Corridor Strategy on October 3.

The program is designed to help accommodate future population growth.

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13 19 13

**Media Enquiry**

Kylie | St Marys Star

Thursday 31 October 2013

**Enquiry**

I have some questions as to what happens now after the special rate variation was defeated at last night's council meeting. My deadline is 1pm Friday.

Thanks

**Q 1 What is the next step?**

Refer question 2

**Q2 Is a rescission motion likely?**

A rescission motion has been received.

**Q3 When is the deadline to apply to IPART for a SRV?**

Council is required to notify IPART by 13 December 2013 of its intention to submit a Special Rate Variation (SRV) application. Applications are to then be submitted by 24 February 2014 following a Council resolution endorsing the SRV application.

**Q4 What are the implications if Council misses the deadline for a SRV?**

Council would be unable to consider increasing rates above the rate pegging limit in 2014/15.



**Media Enquiry**

Evan | Blacktown Advocate

Thursday 31 October 2013

**Rates Clarification****Enquiry**

I was just hoping to clarify something from last night's meeting. The mayor has previously been quoted as wanting to increase rates by 8 per cent in the next financial year. However last night I thought I heard the mayor indicate he is actually asking for a 3 per cent increase in rates for residents and 10 per cent increase in rates for commercial. Could I please get some clarification on this?

Either way, could I also please confirm when these rate rises need to be submitted to IPART for approval? I recall the mayor mentioning last night that without receiving approval at the meeting, the process to get the rises through for next financial year could be problematic?

**Response**

The original report by Council officers provided general information regarding the overall level of rates increase needed in order to achieve the funding target of an additional \$10 million per annum per year for asset renewal.

During Council's ordinary meeting 30 October the Mayor commented Council could consider that if it did resolve to increase rates, a higher proportion of the rate increase could be allocated to business industrial properties so that a lesser increase could be applied to the residential category.

Council is required to notify IPART by 13 December 2013 of its intention to submit a Special Rate Variation (SRV) application. Applications are to then be submitted by 24 February 2014 following a Council resolution endorsing the SRV application.



# RATE RISE IS ON THE CARDS

## COUNCIL NEWS

**CHRIS GEORGAKOPOULOS**

BLACKTOWN City Council is considering an 8 per cent rate increase to cover asset renewal and maintenance.

An asset management report revealed a \$63.8 million deficit hanging over council, with several maintenance jobs to be undertaken now and in the future. The council

believes if no action is taken the deficit will blow out to \$758 million in 20 years.

The rise would cost 75 per cent of ratepayers an extra \$1.72 a week.

Mayor Len Robinson said council had no choice but to look at increasing rates to bring in the required extra \$10 million a year.

"The last 30 years Blacktown has just absolutely

boomed and it's fantastic," Cr Robinson said.

"The developers build these new facilities and they hand them over - problem is, we have to look after them.

"We've got about \$2.8 billion worth of assets. We are adding to that at about the rate of \$50 million a year.

"The bottom line is, if we keep doing nothing about it, we're just going to end up with

an absolute nightmare and serious ramifications."

Council general manager Kerry Robinson said he knew a rise would upset residents, but action was required.

"As the management of the council we have to provide the right advice to the councillors on what the options are, and what the consequences are of not making the right decisions," he said.



Blacktown City Council is considering a rate rise to ensure asset protection now and into the future



## Increase in rates back on agenda

By Kylie Stevens

A PROPOSED rate increase for Blacktown ratepayers is back on the agenda for tomorrow night's council meeting.

Mayor Len Robinson called for an extraordinary meeting after the Liberals didn't have the numbers at last week's ordinary meeting to pass recommended motions.

There are nine motions and rescission motions on the agenda, including the proposal to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a Special Rate Variation (SRV).

A council spokeswoman said there's a limited window for the council to apply for a rate increase 8 per cent above the pegged 2014-15 rate to fund the council's infrastructure backlog.

The council also needs to consult the community before applying to IPART.

"Council is required to notify IPART by December, 2013, of its intention to submit a SRV application. Applications are to then be submitted by February 24 following a council resolution endorsing the SRV."

A Lethbridge Park resident, who asked not to be named, contacted the *Sun* after last week's story.

He has lived there since 1969, and his side of the street has never been connected to stormwater.

"We pay the same rates as everyone else but don't get anything for it," he said. "Every time we get some decent rain, it floods under my house. Surely, after all these years, council would have the funds to do it."

Doonside resident John Mattock said: "These ridiculous decisions aren't in the interests of the community."

Comment at [blacktownsun.com.au](http://blacktownsun.com.au).



BLACKTOWN

# Rollout of NBN in west ceases

## COALITION UPDATES SITE MAP

Evan Sieff

THE speed of Labor's National Broadband Network will remain a distant dream for most western Sydney residents with the network rollout grinding to a halt.

Last week the official NBN rollout map was updated for the first time since the Coalition took office.

The updated map shows only a handful of streets in the Blacktown region are still slated to receive the fibre-to-the-home service.

While no official announcements have been made, it is assumed the rest will have to settle for the Coalition's cheaper, slower fibre-to-the-node network.

Chifley MP Ed Husic slammed the move, declaring residents in Woodcroft and Doonside had been misled by the Liberal Party.

"I'm simply outraged that the Abbott Government has shoved these suburbs back into the broadband dark ages, after suggesting before the election they would con-

tinue the rollout," he said. "It's not good enough for (Communications Minister) Malcolm Turnbull to slink back to Bondi after snaring western Sydney votes and then deny our area the type of broadband access that he enjoys in eastern Sydney."

Greenway federal Labor MP Michelle Rowland said many local residents would now be left with a choice between using "outdated" copper technology or paying up to \$5000 to have fibre cables installed.

"Our community was looking forward to the benefits... that affordable, high-speed fibre broadband would bring," she said.

So far more than 342,000 Australian premises have been given access to Labor's NBN but the future of the network will rely on the results of a 60-day strategic review into the project.

Results are expected in December.

View the current NBN rollout map at [nbnco.com.au/when-do-i-get-it.html](http://nbnco.com.au/when-do-i-get-it.html)



Colleen Fricker, of Fricker Shoes, enjoys shopping in the CBD.

Picture: EVAN SIEFF

## Spend locally for more variety

Chris Georgakopoulos

SHOPPING in the streets of Blacktown gives you much more variety, according to Colleen Fricker.

Ms Fricker, whose family has run Fricker Shoes at Flushcombe Rd for 60 years, said moving away from shopping centres gave people a different experience.

"I find that in shopping centres there are all the same stores," she said.

"In Blacktown, because,

there are so many different cultures, there are just so many great shops on the streets in the CBD.

"I know there are quite a few little African stores and there are also stores around that are quite cheap."

New research into the attitudes of small business owners and their customers found more than two-thirds of shop owners felt forgotten by their local communities and one in four felt no connection to the communi-

ties where they operated. This was despite most Australians having a great sense of affinity with small businesses.

NewsLocal joins a nationwide Shop Small campaign to reconnect the community with small businesses and breathe life into the local small business economy throughout November.

Founded by American Express, the Shop Small campaign has been successful in the US, Canada and the UK.

## Mayor hopes for support to push through rate rises

Evan Sieff

BLACKTOWN Mayor Len Robinson will hope all his fellow Liberal councillors attend tonight's extraordinary council meeting to push through his proposed rate increases.

Cr Robinson wants to increase residents' rates by 3 per cent and slug local businesses an additional 20 per cent over the next two financial years.

At last week's meeting, with Cr Jess Diaz and Cr Mark Holmes absent, Labor councillors made the most of their numbers to vote against any increases.

Cr Robinson indicated the delay could prove troublesome, with the council required to notify the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal by December 13 of any intention to increase rates.

With only two more council meetings scheduled before that date, Cr Robinson took the step of ordering an extraordinary meeting to put the issue straight back on the table.

Last week, Cr Robinson told the *Blacktown Advocate* the council had no choice but to increase rates to cover at least \$10 million of asset renewal and maintenance.

"The bottom line is if we keep doing nothing about it, we're just going to end up with an absolute nightmare and serious ramifications," he said.

Labor councillors claim the proposed rate increase will put too much financial pressure on local pensioners.

DOONSIDE

## Appeal for robbery information

BLACKTOWN Police have released a CCTV image of a man they wish to speak to about a robbery in Doonside.

About 5.30pm on Sunday, October 27, a man allegedly entered a shop on Doonside Rd and demanded money from an attendant. After allegedly stealing cash, the man ran from the area. Any-



one with information should call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or Blacktown Police on 9671 9199.

BLACKTOWN

# Hospital sets sights on improving mental health

THE mental health unit under construction at Blacktown Hospital is recognition that a healthy mind is as important as a healthy body.

To open next year, the unit will be one of the first parts of the \$324 million hospital redevelopment to be completed. The residential-style

facility, known as the Melaleuca Unit, will cater for subacute patients and include 20 inpatient beds, activity rooms and family rooms.

A special kitchen will help patients work on everyday living skills such as food preparation. Patients will be able to transfer directly from

the acute mental health facility Bungarribee House.

Last week, Minister for Mental Health Kevin Andrews visited the construction site to be updated on project progress.

"When this unit is complete the people of Blacktown will have a modern

mental health facility to be proud of, and I am extremely pleased to see how well it is progressing," he said. "(It) is designed to promote independence in recovery and help people with day-to-day living skills, regain their confidence and successfully return to their homes."



Mental health director Senthil Muthuswamy, minister Kevin Humphries, Blacktown Health Service's Sumithira Joseph and Blacktown Hospital general manager Andrew Newton.

BLACKTOWN ADVOCATE, Wednesday, November 6, 2013 03



QUAKERS HILL

# Nursing home to reopen in March

TWO YEARS SINCE FATAL FIRE



The nursing home under construction.

Picture: PHIL ROGERS

Even Sieff

THE new Quakers Hill Nursing Home is set to open in March, with construction now on schedule.

The roof, exterior cladding, windows, joinery and electrical systems are close to completion.

External works and landscaping will begin in the next few weeks.

When completed, the \$20 million facility will include 79 single rooms, 24 companion rooms and a purpose-built dementia wing, allowing for up to 127 residents.

Fire destroyed the original Quakers Hill Nursing Home on November 18, 2011.

Nurse Roger Dean, who worked at the facility, was sentenced to life in prison in August for intentionally lighting the blaze, which claimed the lives of 11 elderly residents.

Gary Barnier, managing director of Domain Principal Group, which owns the nursing home, acknowl-

edged the significance of the upcoming anniversary of the fire.

"We remember all residents, families, friends, community members and emergency services impacted by the fire," he said.

"We will never forget the tragedy that occurred, but we were resolute in our promise to rebuild and as we near completion, we look towards the future."

The new nursing home will include a memorial garden.

More than 50 people have already placed their names on a waiting list to be the home's first residents.

## TIMELINE

**NOVEMBER 18, 2011:** Fire engulfs the Quakers Hill Nursing Home. Three residents died at the scene, eight more died in hospital

**OCTOBER 2012:** Construction of new nursing home at the same site begins

**AUGUST 1, 2013:** Nurse Roger Dean is sentenced to life in prison without parole

SHOP SMALL



Josslyn Kaawi shopping at Riverstone, with her daughter Alexia. Inset, Prime Minister Tony Abbott at the Shop Small launch in Victoria last week.

Main picture: CARMELA ROCHE

## PM backs our local shops push

PRIME Minister Tony Abbott has backed NewsLocal's Shop Small campaign, saying small businesses are the heart of communities.

Mr Abbott has made helping small business a priority for his new government.

He said Shop Small was a great way to recognise the importance of local shops.

"We want to see these businesses flourish and we want to create the economic conditions that make it eas-

ier for small business to start, to grow, to expand, to employ and to invest," he said.

"Small business is not just at the heart of economy but it's also at the heart of communities."

Mr Abbott said small businesses were a significant part of Australian society.

Founded by American Express, the Shop Small campaign has been successful in the US, Canada and the UK.

Riverstone resident Josslyn Kaawi supports her local businesses.

"Riverstone is great for shopping," she said.

"Everything's close and convenient to get to and the people are really friendly."

"It's a nice feeling to support the local community and it's been great to get to know them."

"It's good to be able to walk everywhere with nice footpaths for the pram too."

fast lane

## Register pools

The deadline to register your backyard pool has been extended until Tuesday, November 19. New legislation affecting backyard swimming pools and spa pools has been introduced in NSW to enhance the safety of children around private (backyard) swimming pools and spas. Owners will have to pay a \$220 penalty if they fail to register their pool. Phone 1300 922 310 or visit [swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au](http://swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au).

## Graffiti blitz

The Rotary Club of Windsor and their volunteers helped clean up graffiti from eight sites in McGraths Hill and Bligh Park during the recent Anti-Graffiti Day. They co-ordinated with other Rotary clubs and the Hawkesbury Church, Windsor in the clean up. Hawkesbury Mayor Kim Ford thanked the volunteers from Scouts Australia, Girl Guides NSW and Australian Men's Shed Association (NSW Branch) for their help.

## McHappy Day

Ronald McDonald House Charities are requesting residents, businesses and organisations in The Hills to help achieve a target of \$3.4 million by joining in fundraising activities on Saturday for McHappy Day. Ronald McDonald House provides support for seriously ill children and their families. Buy a Big Mac or give a donation at your local McDonald's, including the Kellyville store. Details: [mchappyday.com.au](http://mchappyday.com.au).

## take a number

133

garage sales were registered in The Hills District at the national Garage Sale Trail. This was the third highest total in NSW, behind Waverley and City of Sydney. "Rather than throwing out our possessions, we can sell them to those who may appreciate them more," Mayor Michelle Byrne said.

BLACKTOWN LGA

## Robinson faces rate rise battle

BLACKTOWN Mayor Len Robinson will hope all his fellow Liberal councillors attend tonight's extraordinary council meeting to push through his proposed rate increases.

Cr Robinson wants to increase residents' rates by 3 per cent and slug local busi-

nesses an additional 20 per cent over the next two financial years.

At last week's meeting, with Cr Jess Diaz and Cr Mark Holmes absent, Labor councillors made the most of their numbers to vote against any increases.

Cr Robinson indicated the

delay could prove troublesome, with the council required to notify the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal by December 13 of any intention to increase rates.

With only two more council meetings scheduled before that date, Cr Robinson

took the step of ordering an extraordinary meeting to put the issue straight back on the table.

Last week, Cr Robinson said the council had no choice but to increase rates to cover at least \$10 million of asset renewal and maintenance.

ROUSE HILL

## Drive-by shooting spree

A HOUSE in Rouse Hill was peppered with bullets in a drive-by shooting on Monday.

The Hills police were called to McGuirk Way just before 4am after reports of shots being fired.

Two brothers were in the house at the time of the incident and were spoken to by police after the shooting.

Officers found a number of bullet holes in the two-storey home, with bullet casings found at the scene taken for forensic examination.

The State Crime Command's Gang Squad is also investigating, with officers trying to determine if there was a link with a shooting at Winston Hills on Sunday night.

ROUSE HILL TIMES, Wednesday, November 6, 2013





## Mayor hopes for support to push through rate rises

**Evan Sieff**

BLACKTOWN Mayor Len Robinson will hope all his fellow Liberal councillors attend tonight's extraordinary council meeting to push through his proposed rate increases.

Cr Robinson wants to increase residents' rates by 3 per cent and slug local businesses an additional 20 per cent over the next two financial years.

At last week's meeting, with Cr Jess Diaz and Cr Mark Holmes absent, Labor councillors made the most of

their numbers to vote against any increases.

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With only two more council meetings scheduled before that date, Cr Robinson took the step of ordering an extraordinary meeting to put the issue straight back on the table.

Last week, Cr Robinson told the *Blacktown Advocate* the council had no choice but to increase rates to cover at least \$10 million of asset renewal and maintenance.

"The bottom line is if we keep doing nothing about it, we're just going to end up with an absolute nightmare and serious ramifications," he said.

Labor councillors claim the proposed rate increase will put too much financial pressure on local pensioners.





Rouse Hill Times, Sydney  
06 Nov 2013

Letters, page 29 - 61.61 cm<sup>2</sup>  
Suburban - circulation 21,074 (--W----

ID 221727493

## No money tree here

WOULD Len Robinson or his cronies have any knowledge at all what the old age pension is today?

Pensioners are appalled at having their measly rate allowance taken. Now this heartless mob of councillors wish to increase the rates by 8 per cent.

First let's use the \$3 million stashed away in council bank accounts. Reduce council members, like any business if money is tight reduce staff.

Ratepayers do not have a money tree in the garden and bills and costs in every direction are going up. With the growth rate inside Blacktown, there can be room for a decrease in rates not an increase.

Imaginary costs 20 years hence is a nonsense argument for an increase and nothing more than a con job or revealing incompetence to manage.

If the job is too big then get out. Let some one else take over.

Our last mayor tried to keep rates down and so eased the pain for low income workers and pensioners who are not able to get a second job. An 8% increase on a mayoral salary may be no worries but try it on the age pension.

**CYRIL ROSE, Schofields**



# New burden on business

## PRIVATE ENTERPRISE TO BEAR RATE RISE BRUNT

**Evan Sieff**

BLACKTOWN Council has decided local businesses should bear the brunt of its proposed rate rises while residents will also feel the sting.

Last week the council's Liberal contingent pushed through a motion to increase business rates by 20 per cent over the next two financial years, while residents will incur a 3 per cent increase in 2014-15.

These increases will be in addition to the regulated annual increase, expected to be about 2.75 per cent next year.

Earlier this year Blacktown Council took the step of reducing the pensioner rebate to increase overall rev-

enue.

The council will now seek final approval for the rate increases from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

Blacktown Mayor Len Robinson said he believed rate rises were necessary to help chip away at a \$63.8 million deficit in local asset renewal.

He previously told the *Blacktown Advocate* the deficit could blow out to \$758 million over the next 20 years if no action was taken.

He was not available for further comment following last week's decision.

Liberal councillor Mark Holmes joined the mayor in supporting the rate rises at

last week's meeting.

"If anybody takes a rate increase lightly, they are humouring themselves," he said. "But if we don't actually start to be serious about our asset renewal scheme, this council will stop functioning overnight. "We must all share the burden."

Labor councillor Tony Bleasdale questioned why businesses were being targeted most.

"What kind of a message are we sending to the business community?" he asked.

"They are doing it tough and we need to be very cautious (with) what we are doing here. They will turn around and take their business elsewhere."





## Councillors forget

ENOUGH is enough.

It has become most obvious over recent months that our elected representatives on (Blacktown) council have forgotten the reason for which the councils exists.

Simply put, to provide services to the residents.

In recent months, despite having no debt, the council has removed the pensioner rebate on rates, impacting heavily upon those who can least afford it.

Attempted to privatise childcare centres, which no doubt would have made childcare unaffordable to young struggling families, seeks to close public reserves, and now wishes to increase rates.

If the article in the *Mt Druitt-St Marys Standard* (November 6) is correct, the vote to retain council

ownership of childcare centres was only narrowly won seven votes to six, after two Liberal councillors failed to attend, and the motion by which that situation came about will be overturned at the next council meeting.

Councillors must understand that the reason for being elected is to ensure that services to the residents of Blacktown are maintained, not privatised, closed altogether or rezoned and the land sold to developers.

If the councillors fail to understand this, then perhaps, the *Mt Druitt-St Marys Standard* might provide the conduit by which the State Government could be asked to dismiss the council on the grounds of failing to meet community needs and expectations.

**IAN MITCHELL, Whalan**



**Rouse Hill Times, Sydney**  
13 Nov 2013, by Evan Sieff

General News, page 7 - 124.61 cm<sup>2</sup>  
Suburban - circulation 21,074 (--W----

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ID 222556335

PAGE 1 of 1

 back

# Rate rise will hit businesses

## LIBERAL PUSH WILL LEAD TRADERS TO BEAR BRUNT OF INCREASE

Evan Sieff

BLACKTOWN Council has decided local businesses should bear the brunt of its proposed rate rises.

The council's Liberal contingent last week pushed through a motion to increase business rates by 20 per cent over the next two financial years.

These increases will be in addition to the regulated annual increase, expected to be 2.75 per cent next year.

The council will seek final approval for the increases from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

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lion over the next 20 years if no action is taken.


He was not available for further comment following last week's decision.

Liberal councillor Mark Holmes joined the mayor in supporting the rate rises at last week's meeting.

"If we don't actually start to be serious about our asset renewal scheme, this council will stop functioning overnight," he said.

But Labor councillor Tony Bleasdale questioned why businesses were being targeted.

"They are doing it tough and we need to be very cautious (with) what we are doing here," Cr Bleasdale said.

 **How will the rate rise affect you? Tell us at**  
[editor@rousehilltimes.com.au](mailto:editor@rousehilltimes.com.au)





# Big sell-off of small parks

## COUNCIL TO MAKE WAY FOR FIVE 'MEGAPARKS'

**Evan Sieff**

BLACKTOWN Council has begun preparing the paperwork to sell off an initial grouping of the region's small reserves.

At last week's extraordinary meeting, the council voted for a planning proposal for 27 reserves to be sent to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure for a determination.

If that decision favours the council, the reserves will be rezoned for residential or commercial use and sold to the highest bidder.

Blacktown mayor Len Robinson, with the support of his fellow Liberal councillors, hopes to sell dozens of small reserves over the coming months to fund the creation of five "megaparks".

It is proposed the first of these will be installed in the public plaza at Mt Druitt

Town Square, with construction starting early 2015.

At the next council meeting, on November 20, the council will vote to allocate \$1 million towards the first megapark's planning and construction.

Images supplied in a council report indicate it will be geared toward play equipment and water fountains instead of open grass areas.

Residents are planning to rally on the Village Green from 5pm on November 20.

They will protest against this plan, rate increases, the closure of Mt Druitt Pool and the draft Blacktown Local Environment Plan.

**Are these small reserves worth saving? Email**  
[editor@blacktownadvocate.com.au](mailto:editor@blacktownadvocate.com.au)

### ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK

The first 27 small reserves to be put up for sale include:

- Blacktown – Killarney Ave, Valentine St, Valda St, Lock St, Leslie St, Joseph St, Ross St, Tallawong Ave, Ajax Pl (Ajax Park)
- Doonside – Criterion Circuit, Tallawong Ave
- Kings Langley – Shadwell Cres, Dunk Pl (Friendship Park)
- Marayong – Colac Pl
- Quakers Hill – Warrimoo Drive, Cumming Cres, Douglas Rd
- Seven Hills – Abercrombie Ave
- Riverstone – Piccadilly St
- Tregear – Nella Dan Ave
- Lethbridge Park – Palmyra Ave
- Blackett – Carlisle Ave (Clune Reserve)
- Whalan – Bulolo Pl
- Plumpton – Edwina Pl



thetelegraph.com.au

## A third protest planned for Blacktown Council meeting

- 
- A large crowd of people, mostly women and children, are gathered outdoors for a protest or demonstration. They are holding numerous handmade signs with messages such as "Save Our Schools", "I need my job to support my family!", "Will we have to go to a school?", "Ensure child care is accessible & affordable & flexible!!", "LALOR PARK", "Save Lalor Park!", "Service of...", "MARRIA HOWEY", "FOR S...", "WOODARD", "Support the...", "Save our school!!!", and "SAVE". The signs are colorful and feature many handprints. In the background, there are blue banners with white text, one of which says "noisy". The overall atmosphere appears to be one of organized public expression.

Source: Supplied

This Wednesday will be no different with another public demonstration planned for the Village Green from 5pm.

While the United Services Union organised the past two protests against the mooted privatisation of council childcare services, this time local residents will lead the charge.

Known as Blacktown Residents Voice, the group was originally founded by Indira Devi in opposition to the draft Blacktown Local Environment Plan.

The plan includes rezoning 448 homes from residential to open space or infrastructure, in the idea the council could then potentially acquire the properties and build high-density housing.



But the list of complaints has grown since the group was founded and they will also be protesting against rate increases, the sale of small reserves and the closure of Mt Druitt Pool.

"We want to show we are united, standing together as a group and fighting what is right for the community," Mrs Devi said.

The United Services Union has also organised a community forum to be held at Bowman Hall on - December 2.

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## Top Stories

### Ambassador jets home in wake of spying scandal



INDONESIA'S Ambassador is pictured today leaving Canberra for Jakarta, recalled amid claims Aussie spies hacked the phone of the country's President four years ago.

### Hornsby cleans up after mini tornado



A MASSIVE clean-up continues and some businesses are closed in Hornsby as the weather bureau confirms a tornado ripped through the CBD.

- Visit our homepage for all today's news



BLACKTOWN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

# Residents rally against council plans

THE chants and shouts of angry residents rallying outside Blacktown Council chambers are becoming a regular prelude to the heated debate that takes place inside.

Today will be no different with another public demonstration planned for the Village Green from 5pm.

While the United Services Union organised the past two protests against the mooted privatisation of council childcare services, this time local residents will lead the charge.

## COMMUNITY FORUM

- All residents are invited to a community forum, to be held at Bowman Hall, Blacktown, at 6.30pm on December 2
- All Blacktown councillors, including Mayor Len Robinson, have been invited to attend and answer questions
- Representatives from several of community action groups will also be attending
- For more information please contact Sandie Morthen on 0419 761 326 or smorthen@usu.org.au

Known as Blacktown Residents Voice, the group was originally founded by Indira Devi in opposition to the draft Blacktown Local Environment Plan.

The plan includes

rezoning 448 homes from residential to open space or infrastructure, in the idea the council could then potentially acquire the properties and build high-density housing.

But the list of complaints has grown since the group was founded and today they will also be protesting against rate increases, the sale of small reserves and the closure of Mt Druitt Pool.

"We want to show we are united, standing together as a group and fighting what is right for the community," Mrs Devi said.

The United Services Union has also organised a community forum to be held at Bowman Hall on December 2.





## Voters not ignorant

ARE liberals councillors taking (the) business community for total fools? (New burden on business – Private enterprise to bear rate rise brunt", the *Advocate*, November 13).

I heard them saying they (are) better economic managers.

Business people stay in business because they can use calculators and many of them are on (the) borderline and adjustment in costs or leasing and outgoings could prove fatal.

Anyone could raise tax, because rates are a form of tax, but that flows into higher costs of goods and services for end users.

Any developer will think twice if to build in Blacktown, or move his venture and lower their risks in other councils.

(The) mayor (is), so far, coming (out) with all (sorts of) ideas.

Not so voters.

They're waiting to elect back people who they could trust.

**TED KASIEWICZ, via online**



**Blacktown Advocate, Sydney**  
20 Nov 2013

Letters, page 32 - 23.53 cm<sup>2</sup>  
Suburban - circulation 49,774 (--W----

ID 223793772

## Don't put up the rates

WHY does Blacktown Council need to balance the books?

I thought they had a lot of money.

I read a report last month saying they had just made a profit of \$3 million dollars.

They need to understand a lot of people are struggling right now and we cannot afford to pay more money in rates.

**SUSAN MCGUIRE, Seven Hills**





Photo provided for build-to-suit + add-on construction

Shop until you drop with  
non-stop opening hours



**Mt Druitt St Marys Standard, Sydney**  
04 Dec 2013

General News, page 5 - 45.80 cm<sup>2</sup>  
Suburban - circulation 43,803 (--W----

ID 226307957

## Council rate rises on way

THE Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has announced that increases in local council general income is to be capped at 2.3 per cent in 2014/15.

The main component of general income is rates revenue and also some annual user charges. It excludes stormwater, waste collec-

tion, water and sewerage charges.

If councils increase residential rates in line with the rate, it would mean an additional \$20 a year. Councils can apply to IPART for an increase above the capped rate. Blacktown Council will apply for a rate increase of 3 per cent on top of the 2.3 per cent cap.

All Community Regions

thetelegraph.com.au

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West

## Blacktown Council considers increasing rates by 5.3 per cent in the 2014-15 financial year

- by:Staff writer
- From:Blacktown Advocate
- December 12, 2013 1:43PM



Blacktown Council could increase its rates.

Source: News Limited

**BLACKTOWN** City ratepayers could have to pay an extra 5.3 per cent on rates from the 2014-15 financial year.

The council will ask the State Government for the right to raise business and residential rates, a move the council said would help it in "investing vital funds into the renewal of the city's infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, bridges, drainage and stormwater assets, parks and playing fields, as well as the council buildings such as libraries and community centres".

Mayor Len Robinson said the council would have to act now or the cost would increase.

"No mayor wants to impose a rate increase, but we have reached the conclusion that it would be both unfair and more costly to ignore this challenge, leaving it for future



generations to deal with," he said.

Under the proposal, residential rates will increase by 5.3 per cent for the 2014/15 financial year.

This represents an extra 3 per cent over the announced rate rise allowed for all councils of 2.3 per cent.

For business rates, the council proposes to create two rating categories for business from 2014/15 onwards. These will be determined by location.

The two business categories will be:

☐ Business General

☐ Business Sub-Category (This applies to businesses located in Arndell Park, Blacktown, Eastern Creek, Glendenning, Huntingwood, Kings Park, Marsden Park, Minchinbury, Mt Druitt, Prospect, Riverstone, Rooty Hill, Seven Hills).

The council is proposing a 5.3 per cent increase in the 2014/15 financial year for businesses in the Business General category. This includes the 2.3 per cent rate pegging limit set by the State Government. This category will have an extra increase above the rate pegging limit for the 2014/15 financial year only.

The proposed increase for businesses in the Business Sub-Category is 12.3 per cent in 2014/15 and 10 per cent in addition to the generally allowed Independent Pricing and Regulatory (IPART) limit in 2015/16.

This represents an additional 10 per cent over the rate pegging limit set by the State Government in each of the next two years. As noted above, this category applies to businesses located in Arndell Park, Blacktown, Eastern Creek, Glendenning, Huntingwood, Kings Park, Marsden Park, Minchinbury, Mount Druitt, Prospect, Riverstone, Rooty Hill, Seven Hills.

## **COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS**

(Register by calling 9839 6000)

Tuesday 14 January 2014

4pm - 8pm

The Mount Druitt Hub, Ayres Grove, Mount Druitt

Tuesday 14 January 2014

4pm - 8pm

Max Webber Library, corner Flushcombe Road and Alpha Street, Blacktown

Thursday 16 January 2014

10am - 2pm

Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre, corner Park and Market Street, Riverstone

Saturday 18 January 2014

10am - 2pm

Jim Southee Community Centre, 117 James Cook Drive, Kings Langley

Monday 20 January 2014

10am - 2pm

Emerton Leisure Centre, 27 - 51 Jersey Road, Emerton

The council's long term financial plan and delivery program, which includes information on the proposed rate increase for infrastructure renewal, will be on public exhibition between December 16 and February 3. These documents can be viewed at the council's Civic Centre, all libraries and at [www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au](http://www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au).

Ratepayers can make comment on the documents and the proposed rate increase by February 3 2014. Council will consider all submissions before making a formal application for a rate increase.

To find out more and provide feedback:

Website: [www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au](http://www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au)

Email: [yoursay@blacktown.nsw.gov.au](mailto:yoursay@blacktown.nsw.gov.au)

Phone: 02 9839 6000

Post: PO Box 63, Blacktown NSW 2148

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## Top Stories

### Labor ministers \$2 million farewell world tour



LABOR ministers plundered about \$2 million on farewell tours in the dying months of the Gillard and Rudd governments.

### 2DayFM names the replacements



THE Sydney breakfast radio shake-up continues as 2DayFM announce Kyle & Jackie O's replacements for 2014. Find out who they are here.

• Visit our homepage for all today's news





**Daily Telegraph, Sydney**  
14 Dec 2013, by Ian Cleland

Letters, page 50 - 37.00 cm<sup>2</sup>  
Capital City Daily - circulation 304,254 (MTWTFS-)

ID00228016405

### **Thanks for the brochure but cut the rates**

I have just received a lovely coloured brochure from Blacktown Council that states, "Council is currently in a responsible financial position," and it goes on to also say that "Blacktown City is one of a handful of NSW councils that are debt free!"

Then, on the following page, the council wants to increase rates to 5 per cent — more than double the 2.3 per cent which is permitted for all councils.

Is this the typical attitude of a Liberal dominated council — robbing Peter to pay Paul and slugging the ratepayers who actually got them into a very credible financial standing.

**Ian Cleland** Blackett



# Rate rises being sought

## HOUSEHOLDS CAN EXPECT TO PAY AN EXTRA \$46 PER YEAR

Evan Sieff

THE average resident will pay Blacktown Council an additional \$46 next financial year with rates set to increase by 5.3 per cent.

The council is awaiting final approval from the state government for its proposed scheme of rate rises for the 2014-15 financial year.

While residents will feel the sting, businesses will be the hardest hit.

The council plans to impose a 12.3 per cent rate rise on businesses in Blacktown, Seven Hills, Arndell Park, Eastern Creek, Glendenning, Huntingwood, Kings Park, Marsden Park, Minchinbury, Mt Druitt, Prospect, Riverstone and Rooty Hill.

This will be followed by another increase of more than 10 per cent in 2015/16.

Businesses in other suburbs will pay an extra 5.3 per

cent in rates next year.

Blacktown Mayor Len Robinson said the rate rises were necessary to deal with the council's \$60 million asset renewal backlog.

"In Blacktown we have reached the point where we need to invest more right now," he said.

"No mayor wants to impose a rate increase but we have reached the conclusion that it would be both unfair and more costly to ignore this challenge, leaving it for future generations."

Councillor Stephen Bali indicated on the *Blacktown Advocate's* Facebook page the council's Labor contingent would fight the rate rises, claiming "businesses are doing it tough".

The council will hold a number of community information sessions in January,

giving residents the opportunity to speak with council officers about the proposed rate rises.

A session will be held at Max Webber Library, Blacktown, from 4pm-8pm on Thursday, January 16.

Another session will be held at Jim Southee Community Centre, Kings Langley, from 10am-2pm on Saturday, January 18.

All residents wishing to attend a community information session are encouraged to register by calling 9839 6000.

For more information please visit [yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au](http://yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au).

**Will rate rises have a negative impact on your home or business? Email [editor@blacktownadvocate.com.au](mailto:editor@blacktownadvocate.com.au)**

### FACTS & FIGURES

- Residential rates to increase 5.3 per cent in 2014/15
- Business subcategory rates to rise 12.3 per cent in 2014/15 and at least another 10 per cent in 2015/16
- Other business rates to increase 5.3 per cent in 2014/15
- Five community information sessions held next month, including Max Webber Library on January 16 and Jim Southee Community Centre on January 18





**Mt Druitt St Marys Standard, Sydney**  
18 Dec 2013

General News, page 3 - 36.67 cm<sup>2</sup>  
Suburban - circulation 43,803 (--W----

ID 228591877

## Council requests rate hike

BLACKTOWN Council will ask the NSW Government for the right to raise business and residential rates from the 2014/15 financial year.

The proposed increase is to help fund renewing infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, bridges, drainage and stormwater assets.

parks and playing fields, and council buildings such as libraries and community centres.

Under the proposal, residential rates will increase by 5.3 per cent for the 2014/15 financial year, an additional 3 per cent more than the announced rate rise allowed of 2.3 per cent.



## Residents and businesses will feel pinch with council increasing rates

THE average resident will pay Blacktown Council an additional \$46 next financial year with rates set to increase by 5.3 per cent.

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While residents will feel the sting, local businesses will be the hardest hit.

Council plans to impose a 12.3 per cent rate rise on businesses located in Riverstone, Marsden Park, Black-

town, Seven Hills, Arndell Park, Eastern Creek, Glendenning, Huntingwood, Kings Park, Minchinbury, Mt Druitt, Prospect and Rooty Hill.

This will be followed by another increase of more than 10 per cent in 2015-16.

Businesses in all other suburbs will have their rates rise by 5.3 per cent.

Blacktown mayor Len Robinson said the rate rises are necessary to deal with the Council's \$60 million asset renewal backlog.

"We have reached the

point where we need to invest more right now," Cr Robinson said.

"No mayor wants to impose a rate increase but we have reached the conclusion that it would be both unfair and more costly to ignore this challenge, leaving it for future generations to deal with. We have to act now or this cost will grow."

Council will hold information sessions in January, giving residents the opportunity to speak with Council officers about the proposed rate rises.



# Conversations.

TALK WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Your say

**"I do not agree that I would have to buy food from the park."**

- Ruth Zeledon-Torres

**"I must say thank you to the Advocate. You are our saviours."**

- Blacktown Residents' Voice

write to us

ONLINE: blacktownadvocate.com.au

EMAIL: letters@blacktownadvocate.com.au FAX: 9622 1212

POST OR DELIVER: Level 1, 3-9 Terminus St, Unit 24 & 25, Castle Hill, NSW, 2154  
 Letters should be no longer than 250 words. They must include the writer's full address (only the suburb is published) and a daytime phone number for verification. Letters should be concise and relevant to the local community. Letters are submitted on the condition that NewsLocal, as publisher of the Blacktown Advocate, may edit and has the right to license third parties to reproduce them in electronic form. Responsibility for all election comment in this issue is taken by Bob Osburn, 142 Macquarie St, Parramatta, 2150.

FACEBOOK:  
facebook.com/  
blacktownadvocate

TWITTER:  
twitter.com/  
BlacktownNews

## Invaluable support

ON BEHALF of all residents I must thank the Advocate for their continued support (Facebook, December 10: "Residents are celebrating after Blacktown Council last night voted to save another 66 homes from compulsory acquisition under the Blacktown local environment plan").

You are our saviours. Stephen (Ball) and Edmund (Atalla) and all you councillors, and, most of all good old Russy (Dickens) you are a diamond - thank you.

BLACKTOWN RESIDENTS' VOICE

## Meeting mayhem

REGARDING "Mayor labels council antics dysfunctional" (Blacktown Advocate, December 4).

As residents of Blacktown for the past 53 years on hearing about the rezoning of our property from "residential 2" to recreation land,

we made a submission to Blacktown Council for our property to be left as Residential 2.

Because of this submission we were invited to attend the council meeting at Bowman Hall, Blacktown, on December 9. After attending this meeting I can observe why the mayor would write to the Local Government stating that the council is dysfunctional.

This is also our council and I believe that he should publish the letter he wrote to the Local Government Department.

I have never witnessed such rude behaviour and lack of parliamentary procedure displayed by two Liberal councillors.

One young female councillor was up and down all during the meeting and whispering in councillor Dickens' ear. When the Labor councillor requested the mayor to use some parliamentary procedure, he was totally ignored.

After 30 years learning parliamentary procedure and being wit-

ness to meetings running smoothly, because strict parliamentary was observed, I can see why the mayor said the council was dysfunctional, but he has the power as chairman to make this a well functioning council.

Councillor Jacqueline Donaldson was reported in your newspaper as saying: "When you define dysfunctional as a council, it's when things are brought back repeatedly wasting council's time."

I thought we were governed by a democratic council who would listen to debate and also the wishes of the community.

RHONDA &amp; DON McKECHNIE, Blacktown

## Rate rise rankles

WHAT have they done apart from raise rates?! (Facebook, December 13: "Blacktown Council wants to increase its residential and business rates for the 2014-5 financial year.")

Bloody nothing! Where is this money going to?

People can hardly live as it is. Are they so angry about not selling off assets that they are trying to put everyone into bankruptcy to get what they want?

ALLECIA ELEKANA KLIMO, Facebook

## Food 'option' not cool

WE WERE happy to buy the gold pass season tickets to take our children this summer to Wet'n'Wild and they went to a preview session during the week which they thoroughly enjoyed.

However, I am not too happy reading in the information email which I received about the food options that I cannot take my own food, only bottled water.

Wet'n'Wild on the Gold Coast allows you to take a picnic lunch to enjoy with your family so I do not agree with the Sydney park that I

would have to buy the food from the park.

This is not a "food option" for myself and my family.

This is seen as being the biggest and coolest water themed park but there is nothing cool about a family having to spend over \$100 a day just on food because I cannot take my own picnic lunch.

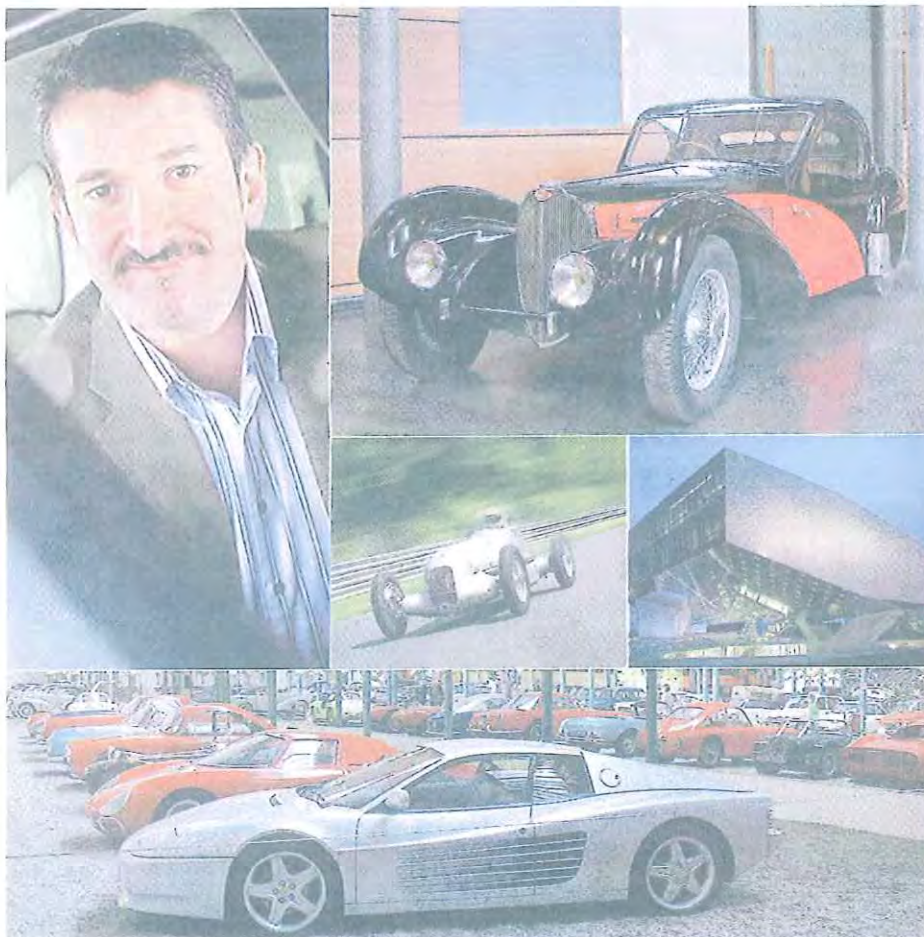
I am sure other families like ours would appreciate more "food options" than what the park offers.

Not happy with food options.

RUTH ZELEDON-TORRES

## FOR THE RECORD

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36 BLACKTOWN ADVOCATE, Wednesday, December 18, 2013

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**Mt Druitt St Marys Standard, Sydney**  
08 Jan 2014

General News, page 13 - 25.34 cm<sup>2</sup>  
Suburban - circulation 43,803 (--W----

ID 231160706

## Chance to hear about rate rise

AN INFORMATION session on Blacktown Council's special rate variation will be held at Mt Druitt Hub on Tuesday, January 14, at 4pm.

The session is a chance to speak one-on-one with council officers about how the proposed rate rise will affect residents. It is not a public meeting.

Attendees are encouraged to register by calling 9839 6000.





## Talks about rates

➡ Blacktown Council will hold several community information sessions on its proposed 5.3 per cent rate rises for 2014/15 next week. One of the sessions will be at Max Webber Library, **Blacktown**, on January 16 from 4-8pm. For more details or to register for the information sessions call 9839 6000.



## Lack of scrutiny

IT IS highly concerning that council is going to ram through a rate rise without any public mandate, particularly in light of the allegations of dysfunction (Rate rises being sought, December 18).

Frankly, the news that Labor councillors voted to redirect \$30,000 from asset renewal to a partisan political campaign against the airport is offensive considering the extra funds are supposed to be for asset renewal!

All households and businesses would look to cut costs to meet a shortfall and state and federal governments would need a mandate to increase their taxes, yet neither dare do it – the council clearly has far too much power and not enough electoral scrutiny.


This is a cash grab, pure and simple, and these councillors must be held to account.

**RICHARD MORRIS,**  
Kings Langley





## Rate rise information sessions

 BLACKTOWN City rate-payers are encouraged to attend information sessions about rate rises.

Blacktown Council plans to increase residents' rates by 5.3 per cent for the 2014-15 financial year.

The council also plans to impose a 12.3 per cent rate rise on businesses in suburbs including Arndell Park, Blacktown, Eastern Creek, Seven Hills, Huntingwood, Riverstone and Rooty Hill.

Information sessions will be held at Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre, at the corner of Park and Market streets, tomorrow and at Jim Southee Community Centre, 117 James Cook Drive, Kings Langley on Saturday.

The sessions will allow residents to speak to council officers about the proposed rate rises one-on-one and will run from 10am to 2pm.

Register by calling 9839 600.



## Councillor calls rates sessions into question

BLACKTOWN councillor Stephen Bali has gone on the attack over the council's rate rise community information sessions being held this week.

Cr Bali said the one-on-one format of the five sessions was inadequate and had been used to avoid full community consultation.

"It is a complete joke and shows utter contempt ... for the public," he said.

"The Robinson Liberal Council is fleeing from real consultation because they cannot handle public debate on the rate rise."

Cr Bali said the issue of rate rises should be discussed in open forums where the public can be presented to by council officers, the mayor and councillors, before having an opportunity to ask their questions.

A council spokeswoman defended the format of the sessions, claiming they were part of a broader community consultation effort.

"Council intends that these one-on-one sessions will provide an environment where individual ratepayers can raise questions based on their own personal circumstances and be comfortable seeking clarification ... as required," she said.

Residents are encouraged to provide feedback on the rate rises at [yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au](http://yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au).

**Information sessions: Page 11**



# Conversations.

TALK WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

**our say** **“**There is often a very big problem there from a shortage of car parking places.  
- Susan McGuire, Seven Hills

**Your say** **“**We pensioners have already suffered a decrease in our city rate discount entitlement.  
- Sajana Nand

**write to us** ONLINE: blacktownadvocate.com.au  
EMAIL: letters@blacktownadvocate.com.au FAX: 9622 1212  
POST OR DELIVER: Level 1, 3-9 Terminus St, Unit 24 & 25, Castle Hill, NSW, 2154  
Letters should be no longer than 250 words. They must include the writer's full address (only the suburb is published) and a daytime phone number for verification. Letters should be concise and relevant to the local community. Letters are submitted on the condition that NewsLocal, as publisher of the Blacktown Advocate, may edit and has the right to license third parties to reproduce them in electronic form. Responsibility for all election comment in this issue is taken by Bob Osburn, 142 Macquarie St, Parramatta, 2150.

**FACEBOOK:**  
facebook.com/blacktownadvocate

**TWITTER:**  
twitter.com/BlacktownNews

## Get rid of junk stores

LESS junk stores at Seven Hills Plaza! ("Centres set for multi-stage upgrade", January 8).

Seriously, there are at least three permanent ones and then the pop-up stalls that appear.

Bring some of the good stores back, like the music, book and camera stores!

ALYSSA TEPANIA, Facebook

Keep all the banks and the three supermarkets.

Something needs to be done about more parking.

More varied shops would also be good - a book store, music store, JB Hi-Fi.

How about a Big W, Kmart or Target store?

SHIRLEY STEPHENSON, Facebook

## Upgrade the facilities

THEY need to upgrade both parents rooms and add extra disabled toilets at Seven Hills.

Plus a play area for the kids would be wonderful.

LIZ BERTENSHAW, Facebook

## Make sure it's clean

DECENT cleaners at Seven Hills are needed; the toilets are always disgusting and using the same cloth over and over again on the



Readers have offered plenty of suggestions on how they would like to upgrade Seven Hills and Woodcroft shopping centres.

food court tables actually leaves them smelling horrible.

Up and down escalators would be good too.

MARA, Facebook

## Put deli in the centre

WE need a deli at Sevo!  
DORIS MICALFE, Seven Hills

## Renovate carefully

WOODCROFT parking is not great.

I like Seven Hills; it's on one level, easy to find everything, good shops, lots of parking.

There's always room for improvement but I hope it doesn't get "improved" to the point where it's no longer as good!

CHRISTINE, Facebook

## Urgent work required

THE carpark at Woodcroft is a problem.

It's starting to fall apart out the front.

Tiles are lifting and it needs a lot of work.

CECEILIA MIZZI, Seven Hills

## More spots at shops

MORE parking at Woodcroft would be good.

LES BOUNDS, Facebook

## Unjustified rate rise

WE pensioners have already suffered a decrease in our city rate discount entitlement ("Rate rises being sought", December 18).

Now another move to increase the city rate by 5.3 per cent.

I believe the council has a substantial amount of savings, it should use some of this money.

I strongly object to City Council's move to increase the rate by 5.3 per cent, which is unjustified.

SAJANA NAND, Facebook

## FOR THE RECORD

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## Planning your weekend?

Our What's On calendar is packed with local events and things to do.

NEWS LOCAL

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# Anger over Blacktown's plans to rebrand

## COUNCIL NEWS

**EVAN SIEFF**

BLACKTOWN Council is considering spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on a new logo and new slogan to improve the marketability of the region.

At a recent briefing session, Blacktown councillors met to discuss a project under the community strategy plan called Promoting the City: Marketing, Branding and Community Engagement.

According to Labor

councillor Edmond Atalla, it was suggested by a marketing consultant at the briefing that it would cost \$250,000 to devise new logos and slogans for Blacktown Council and Blacktown City.

If they were adopted, additional costs would be incurred in replacing signage, street signs and stationery bearing the old designs.

"Essentially they are asking for \$250,000 to conduct a brainstorming session and come up with a three-word slogan," Cr Atalla said.

"We as Labor councillors

will oppose any expenditure that is not justified and there is absolutely no justification for this rebranding exercise."

A council spokeswoman acknowledged that the project briefing took place but said that the exact details discussed in the brainstorming session were confidential.

She stated any decisions on rebranding would be debated and decided by the council.

Cr Atalla said he was "amazed" council would even consider spending the money given the \$63.8 million asset renewal backlog.

Blacktown Mayor Len Robinson recently used the backlog to justify his plans to increase residential rates by 5.3 per cent and business rates by up to 12.3 per cent next financial year.

In November, he warned councillors: "The bottom line is if we keep doing nothing about it (the asset renewal backlog), we're just going to end up with an absolute nightmare."

Cr Len previously said that the deficit could blow out to \$758 million in the next 20 years if no action was taken.



Councillor Edmond Atalla (inset) has slammed an idea to spend \$250,000 for a Blacktown City Council rebrand.



## **Media Enquiry**

James | SMH

Wednesday 19 February 2014

Council officers responsible: Ross Kingsley, Wayne Rogers, Scott Douglass

## **Enquiry**

I am a reporter for the SMH.

We are collecting information about Sydney councils and rates.

Could you please advise if you have plans for the following:

1. Have you applied for a special variation for next financial year's rates?
2. Are you considering applying for a special variation in the future? If so, please specify.
3. Please provide the reason for any such variation, such as increased demand for services, financial pressure or other.
4. How much are rates at present? How much do you expect this to increase over coming financial years?

My absolute deadline is for a response is 10am Thursday morning. Please call on numbers below if this is an issue.

## **Response**

Blacktown City Council is the largest government area in NSW by population with a current population of 318,000, expected to reach 500,000 people over the next 25 years. The result of this is an increasing pressure on existing public infrastructure.

At 30 June 2013, Blacktown City Council's infrastructure was valued at \$2.8 billion, and this will grow by around \$500 million in the next 10 years. Nearly \$1.6 billion worth of these assets is transport infrastructure (including roads and kerb and guttering, bridges, traffic facilities and path paving). At 30 June 2013 Council's estimate of the cost to bring the City's assets to satisfactory standard was \$68 million. This estimate relates to existing infrastructure value without improvements or upgrade.

Council has reached the point where it needs to invest more to renew the City's infrastructure. If it does not do this now, Council will need to spend much more in the future, as the infrastructure will have a reduced useful life and need to be replaced earlier. Council's objective is to maximise the life of the infrastructure it maintains on behalf of the community, at the lowest cost over the long term.

If Council does not address this issue now, it is projected that in 10 years its backlog will increase to \$139 million and in 20 years further increase to \$758 million.

In NSW it is estimated that the backlog of total council infrastructure renewal works is approximately \$7.2 billion. Councils throughout Australia are being urged by Government to treat infrastructure renewal as a critical priority.

Council has carefully considered the options available to address the infrastructure renewal challenge and established that the most viable, long-term solution is to fund the works through a rate rise, as well as through further efficiency savings and the reallocation of some of its capital works spending.

Council has notified the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of its intention to submit an application for a Special Rate Variation of 5.3% for residential rates for the 2014/15 financial year.

Council has resolved to increase residential and general business rates by 3% above the Rate Pegging limit in 2014/2015, and to increase business rates for all businesses identified

within a Business Sub Category by 10% above the Rate Pegging limit in 2014/2015 and in 2015/16.

Council endorsed the Special Rate Variation on 19 February, 2014 and is in the process of submitting its application to IPART.

This increase will mean the current year average residential rate of \$865.61 will increase by 88 cents per week, or \$46 per year, to an annual total of \$911.49.

A community engagement program was carried out from November 2013 to February 2014, in accordance with the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Division of Local Government and Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) Special Rate Variation Guidelines and Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

Council's funding strategy means an additional \$8.5 million will be allocated to infrastructure renewal works in the next financial year, and in the following years an additional \$11.5 million will be allocated to these works.



## **Newspaper Advertisement**

**Newspaper advertisement in the following newspapers and dates**

- 1. Rouse Hill - Stanhope Garden News - 10 December 2013**
- 2. Rouse Hill Times - 11 December 2013**
- 3. Mt Druitt - St Marys Standard - 11 December 2013**
- 4. Blacktown Advocate - 11 December 2013**
- 5. Blacktown Sun - 14 January 2014**
- 6. Blacktown Sun - 14 January 2014**
- 7. Rouse Hill - Stanhope Garden News - 14 January 2014**
- 8. Blacktown Advocate - 15 January 2014**
- 9. Rouse Hill Times - 15 January 2014**
- 10. Mt Druitt - St Marys Standard - 15 January 2014**

# Building a stronger future

## Important information about your rates

Blacktown City Council is proposing to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory (IPART) for a special rate variation of 5.3% for residential rates for the 2014/15 financial year.

Rates for businesses located in the major business activity centres of the City are proposed to be increased by 12.3% in 2014/15 and a further 13% in 2015/16. This will affect approximately two-thirds of businesses. Other businesses will have an increase of 5.3% in rates for 2014/15, with no further additional special rate increases in subsequent years.

Every additional dollar from the special rate increase will go to funding renewal works for infrastructure, such as roads, footpaths, bridges, drainage and stormwater assets, and parks, as well as buildings such as libraries and community centres.

Council wants to work with the community to address the infrastructure funding issue. Information brochures will be sent to every ratepayer in the next week, and there will be a range of community information sessions in January.

### What a special rate variation would mean for you

Current year average Residential rates:	\$865.61
Residential	Next year
How much will average rates be without the proposed increase? *	\$885.52
How much will average rates be with a 5.3% increase in 2014/2015?	\$911.49
What is the average one-off annual increase?	\$45.88
What is the average weekly increase?	\$0.88

\* Based on the average residential rate and announced Rate Pegging limit of 2.3% in 2014/2015.

Information on business rates and their associated changes will be provided directly to all Blacktown City businesses and available at [www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au](http://www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au)

### Your City, Your Say

Council's Long Term Financial Plan and Delivery Program, which includes information on the proposed rate increase for infrastructure renewal, is on public exhibition until 3 February 2014.

These documents can be viewed at Council's Civic Centre, all Libraries and at [www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au](http://www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au).

We need your feedback to help build a stronger future. You are invited to make comment on these documents and Council's proposal for a rate increase by 3 February 2014. Council will consider all submissions before making a formal application for a rate increase.

To find out more and provide feedback:

**Website:** [Community Consultation website](http://www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au)  
[www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au](http://www.yoursay.blacktown.nsw.gov.au)

**Email:** [yoursay@blacktown.nsw.gov.au](mailto:yoursay@blacktown.nsw.gov.au)

**Phone:** 02 9839 6000

**Post:** PO Box 63, Blacktown NSW 2148

### Come to our Community Information Sessions

*Attendees to the Community Information Sessions are encouraged to register by calling 9839 6000.*

#### Tuesday 14 January 2014

4pm - 8pm

The Mount Druitt Hub  
Ayres Grove, Mount Druitt

#### Thursday 16 January 2014

4pm - 8pm

Max Webber Library  
corner Flushcombe Road  
and Alpha Street, Blacktown

#### Thursday 16 January 2014

10am - 2pm

Riverstone  
Neighbourhood Centre,  
corner Park and Market  
Street, Riverstone

#### Saturday 18 January 2014

10am - 2pm

Jim Southee  
Community Centre  
117 James Cook Drive,  
Kings Langley

#### Monday 20 January 2014

10am - 2pm

Emerton Leisure Centre  
27-51 Jersey Road,  
Emerton

Note: Community Information Sessions are not public meetings, they are an opportunity to speak one-on-one with Council Officers about the rate rise proposal.



## Glow west for the Christmas spirit


 Herald Sun, [www.heraldsun.com.au](http://www.heraldsun.com.au)  
337 words - ASR AUD 557 - ID: 226869604

07 Dec 2013 1:14 AM

[Read on source website](#)

 75,164 UNIQUE DAILY VISITORS  
620 AV. STORY AUDIENCE


## Caller Robert says that the Blacktown Council also surveyed residents to determine a ...

 2UE, Sydney, The George and Paul Show, George Moore & Paul B Kidd  
Duration: 0 min 51 secs - ASR AUD 1,071 - NSW - Australia - ID: W00055533788

08 Dec 2013 11:15 AM



Caller Robert says that the Blacktown Council also surveyed residents to determine a rates increase, like the Liverpool City Council, but that the councillors did not know about it.

 60,000 ALL  
22,000 MALE 16+  
38,000 FEMALE 16+

## Stanley gives details of a story in the Blacktown Advocate this morning about Blacktown...

2UE, Sydney, Breakfast, John Stanley and Garry Linnell

13 Feb 2014 7:19 AM

Duration: 5 mins 1 sec - ASR AUD 3,793 - NSW - Australia - ID: W00056201877



Stanley gives details of a story in the Blacktown Advocate this morning about Blacktown Council considering spending up to \$250,000 on consultants to devise a new logo and slogan for the city. Linnell notes that the council is closing local pools and Stanley says they want to increase rates. Interview with Evan Sieff, Reporter, Blacktown Advocate. Sieff says that councillors were 'gagged' but Councillor Edmond Atalla was so outraged he posted about it on Facebook. He says that the current slogan for Blacktown is 'growing with pride', something he did not know before he wrote the story. He points out that no decisions have been made by the council on this matter. Linnell notes that the council has closed Mount Druitt's public pool and will likely sell this land to developers. He gives details of the council's budget and investments around the state. Sieff says a lot of councillors say all this is

off-set by the asset renewal backlog. He explains what asset renewal is. Linnell says something must be done about the Mount Druitt pool. Sieff says it was decided last year to send the issue of the pool to a group of students at the University of Western Sydney and they are working on a project to find a way to make the pool more financially sustainable.

### Interviewees

Evan Sieff, Reporter, Blacktown Advocate

36,000 ALL  
15,000 MALE 16+  
20,000 FEMALE 16+

## Caller Colleen says at least the Blacktown Council is not corrupt and they have money in...

2UE, Sydney, Breakfast, John Stanley and Garry Linnell

13 Feb 2014 7:24 AM

Duration: 1 min 46 secs - ASR AUD 1,336 - NSW - Australia - ID: W00056202033



Caller Colleen says at least the Blacktown Council is not corrupt and they have money in the bank. She says she was in another council in the north for 40 years and they did nothing. She says they are keeping the roads well and she is 'very happy' with them. She says she feels a bit sad about the closure of the Mount Druitt pool but hopefully it will re-open. Stanley suggests that it is 'not a good look' for the council to spend so much on consultants to come up with a slogan. Colleen says she does not mind the rate rises because the rates need to go up. Linnell says Australia is 'over-governed'.

36,000 ALL  
15,000 MALE 16+  
20,000 FEMALE 16+

## Caller David rings in relation to his dissatisfaction with Blacktown Council. He say his wi...

2UE, Sydney, Breakfast, John Stanley and Garry Linnell

13 Feb 2014 7:29 AM

Duration: 0 min 39 secs - ASR AUD 491 - NSW - Australia - ID: W00056202132



Caller David rings in relation to his dissatisfaction with Blacktown Council. He say his wife is on Bushcare and has been asking for a tap for two years for water. She says she has sent emails about it. He says the athletic track was closed for a film production and it has been ripped apart. He says they will not spend any money.

36,000 ALL  
15,000 MALE 16+  
20,000 FEMALE 16+



## Smith says The Telegraph last month reported the second Sydney airport at Badgerys ...


 **2GB, Sydney, Breakfast, Chris Smith**

13 Feb 2014 7:39 AM

Duration: 1 min 9 secs - ASR AUD 1,859 - NSW - Australia - ID: W00056202311



Smith says The Telegraph last month reported the second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek was a done deal, but is today reporting that PM Tony Abbott has delayed a decision on approving it until at least next month due to concerns about potential backlash from Western Sydney Liberal MPs. Smith says Abbott will convene a special Western Sydney committee comprising Western Sydney Liberals, which means they are stepping slowly in case of an electoral backlash. Smith says they need to get on with it.

 188,000 ALL  
85,000 MALE 16+  
100,000 FEMALE 16+

## Gosford's grand plan in the can

 Daily Telegraph Australia, [www.dailytelegraph.com.au](http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au)

13 Feb 2014 7:52 AM

343 words - ASR AUD 283 - ID: 236928170

[Read on source website](#)

 33,479 UNIQUE DAILY VISITORS  
521 AV. STORY AUDIENCE


## PM Tony Abbott has delayed a decision on a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek ...

 **Smooth FM 95.3, Sydney, 08:00 News, Newsreader**

13 Feb 2014 8:02 AM

Duration: 0 min 17 secs - ASR AUD 405 - NSW - Australia - ID: W00056203196

PM Tony Abbott has delayed a decision on a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek due to government concern about a potential backlash against Western Sydney Liberal MPs.

 53,000 ALL  
16,000 MALE 16+  
35,000 FEMALE 16+

## Approval of Sydney's second airport at Badgerys Creek has been put on hold, with Prim...

 **Triple M, Sydney, 08:00 News, Newsreader**

13 Feb 2014 8:09 AM

Duration: 0 min 10 secs - ASR AUD 401 - NSW - Australia - ID: W00056203093



Approval of Sydney's second airport at Badgerys Creek has been put on hold, with Prime Minister Tony Abbott fearing a potential backlash from local Liberal MPs.

 62,000 ALL  
51,000 MALE 16+  
9,000 FEMALE 16+

## Interview with Stephen Bali, Councillor, Blacktown City Council. Stanley notes they have ...

 **2UE, Sydney, Breakfast, John Stanley and Garry Linnell**

13 Feb 2014 8:24 AM


Duration: 3 mins 41 secs - ASR AUD 2,785 - NSW - Australia - ID: W00056203418



Interview with Stephen Bali, Councillor, Blacktown City Council. Stanley notes they have received a lot of calls on Blacktown Council, who are reportedly spending \$250,000 on consultants to find a new slogan. Caller Maria says a children's sports club was kicked off sports grounds because it has become part of an International Sportspark for elite sports. She notes their training has been delayed. Bali says there has been a lack of consultation regarding the sports ground, and the shut down of the Mount Druitt Swimming Pool. He questions why Blacktown would look at rebranding, and notes they want to massively increase rates. Stanley says he will try and speak with the Mayor.

### Interviewees

Stephen Bali, Councillor, Blacktown City Council

 36,000 ALL  
13,000 MALE 16+  
19,000 FEMALE 16+