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To Whom It May Concern

**Special Rate Variation - Liverpool Plains Shire Council**

I was in two minds as to whether or not to put my concerns in writing. I thought there would be enough disgruntled Ratepayers (which include me) in the Shire to not need my submission and I thought at the end of the day it wouldn't make any difference because it would be a done deal. I received a phone call regarding the survey and I looked on the Liverpool Plains Shire (LPSC) Web Page and I believe it didn't cover what I wanted to say. So here goes.

After attending a rather disgruntled rate payers Information Night at Werris Creek, I believe that the Consultants were nothing but spin doctors. They were there to sing the praises of LPSC (it felt like listening to a car salesman), go through the motions and tick the box to say, yes we consulted with the public. I believe that if this Special Rate Variation (SRV) was to go through, the extra money that LPSC receive will be wasted like in previous years. The only way to fix this problem is for LPSC to be spilt up into other Local Government Areas and be a thing of the past. It is clear to see that LPSC is not "Fit for the Future", as they have suggested over the years.

Werris Creek - my home town - have had a number of meetings with LPSC over the years promising the same thing. We are going to do this for you and that for you, but the money always seems to run out. We are still waiting to find out what happened to the money after a prime sporting piece of land on the outskirts of town was sold by Council and the full amount was promised to stay in Werris Creek. The local park had a makeover and some new play equipment installed and the local football oval got a small grandstand. This was certainly nowhere near the money that was received from the land sale, so where did it go? The Council have also hired many consultants over the years to tell us what a good job the Council is doing, we are yet to see that. Maybe if the overpaid Executive staff would do their job properly in the first place there would be no need for Consultants, hence saving some money.

For a start why pay "Consultants" an exorbitant amount of money to tell them that their finances were in trouble. Isn't that what their Finance Department could tell them in their Annual Financial Reports. Surely, they could work out for themselves based on the Profit and Loss Statement what they need to do. The LPSC talk of job losses if they don't receive the SRV, why not start with the top heavy office staff, that should save some money. As for general maintenance in the towns and villages, this has been a non event for a number of years, where I live. Werris Creek has the benefit of a number of wonderful Volunteers that work tirelessly around the park areas mowing, cleaning the Public Toilets, cleaning the public Bar-b-ques and maintaining the cemetery, which is a credit to them. Yes, they have the benefit of council mowers and fuel but at the end of the day you would be lucky to see council staff do this every 5 months, if they had to. But if you drive down the main street of Quirindi you will see the LPSC staff pruning the roses, sweeping the street and footpaths, emptying the rubbish bins, maintaining the local pool, mowing the football field and the race course, every week. My town would be lucky to see a street sweeper once every 6 months.

Werris Creek also has a War Memorial Pool (over 50 years old) that has not been maintained for a number years, at least. It did receive a grant for a new filtration plant which helps the water, but that isn't very good when the pool leaks. A grant was also received for a grandstand and solar panels to heat the pool but, the solar panels may work but the grandstand consists of a large colour bond car port (to hold the solar panels) with not seats. The LPSC replied - the money ran out - when asked why it was like this. If it was a ratepayer looking at getting this work done, we would check the cost first by getting a quote for what we wanted, so the figures wouldn't blow out. The LPSC couldn't even mow the lawns around the pool. In some places the grass was knee high, gardens overgrown and for those that suffer allergies it is a nightmare. You could argue that it was because of the drought, but it has been like this for years.

At the start of the meeting one of the Consultants said that the rise was trying not to impact on the community by implementing it over three years. How this is not going to impact us is beyond me. How will those that are on a low income or pension be able to afford the SRV? With the cost of living continually rising (not just land rates) why isn't the Pension Rebate, keeping pace with the economy and rising as well. With LPSC land rates one of the dearest in NSW and rising, along with the services they supply each year, why has the Pension Rebate not changed since 2005? At the meeting we were given a spiel to say that this isn't what the meeting was about and some other Government Department needed to look into that. Correct me if I am wrong but shouldn't this be taken into consideration in the total scheme. I believe that you had to have a Degree in Accountancy to understand what the Consultants were talking about. The graphs they supplied to compare us with other Councils were too hard to see, let alone understand. With some of the questions asked by those present, the consultants referred the person back to the Council as they didn't have the information in front of them to supply an answer, isn't that what they were paid for? And as all at the meeting knew, if you rang or emailed (or post, for those not on the internet) looking for answers, you would be very unlikely to get a reply.

Well I have added my contribution to this matter, call me cynical from past experiences, but I believe it is a waste of time. The only way to solve this matter is to look closely into how the LPSC conduct their business and not continuously throw hard earned rate payer's money at an organisation that can't manage a chook raffle.

Cheers

