

Media release

Mayor: Jim Simmons
A/General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 19, 2017

Making the Clarence Valley Council financially sustainable

CLARENCE Valley Council has voted to introduce a range of measures to improve its long-term financial position and help it meet the NSW Government's Fit for the Future benchmarks.

The measures include applying for a special rates variation of 8% each year for three years, including an estimated rate pegged limit of 2%. The cumulative impact would be a rise in the general rate of 25.9%, which would be retained permanently in council's rate base. Council will also implement a host of savings measures totalling more than \$8 million over four years.

Acting general manager, Ashley Lindsay, said a special rates variation, if approved, would raise an additional \$7.08 million over three years.

"These measures will improve our financial position by more than \$15 million over four years," he said.

"None of this will be easy. No-one wants to pay more rates and we don't want to charge them, but the harsh reality is the only alternative to a special rates variation is deep cuts to, or the elimination of, many of the services council provides and the community expects.

"We have been told by the Office of Local Government we need to have a balanced operating result by 2021.

"The cost-cutting measures we will introduce result in the loss of the equivalent of 24.5 full time staff positions, cuts to a range of services and better cost recovery on others. We have done everything possible to keep rate rises to a minimum."

At the council meeting on Tuesday night, Cr Andrew Baker said that in 2012 the NSW Government's TCorp identified the need for council to make efficiency savings and introduce a special rates variation.

He said that since then he and fellow councillors had tried to find ways to make the council financially sustainable without the need for a rates variation.

"I'm certain that each councillor that is here today was elected with an ambition to not increase the rates, to not cut services, to not cut employment, to not reduce facilities and amenities, to not increase debt and to provide responsible governance," he said.

“Council has individually and collectively examined, debated, challenged and examined again every suggestion in every possible way to deliver on those noble aspirations of no rates increases, no service cuts, no employment reductions, no reduced facilities and amenities, and no more debt.

“While I can’t see how we can avoid a rates increase, I can say we have all made a big attempt to do just that.

“We’ve exhausted the discovery of all options and examined the possibilities and variations; we’ve called for and listened to expert advice, numerous reports and finance models. Some advice we have accepted and some we haven’t.

“We’ve looked for the best outcomes and least pain for our residents and ratepayers.”

Cr Peter Ellem said councillors had no choice but to put their hard hats on and make unpopular decisions to meet the State Government's Fit for The Future benchmarks to become financially sustainable by the end of the current four-year term, and indeed, for the decade thereafter.

“It is the shared responsibility of the nine duly-elected councillors, and not that of a financial controller or administrator, to adopt a draft package of job cuts, to be made in full consultation with the United Services Union, efficiency savings, and regrettably rate increases, to be put up for community consultation,” he said.

Mr Lindsay said council would seek the views of the community before reaching a final decision on a special rates variation application and some of the efficiency measures, and would consider a report at its May meeting on a schedule for community engagement.

Release ends.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.

Media release

Mayor: Jim Simmons
A/General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 3, 2017

Councillors announce listening session locations, dates

CLARENCE Valley councillors have announced dates for their current round of listening sessions across the council area.

Councillors have already conducted listening sessions at Grafton Shoppingworld and in the Yamba CBD, and will continue their tour when they set up a stall outside Farmer Lou's in Skinner Street, South Grafton, from noon-2pm on Friday (May 5).

The following Friday (May 12) they will be outside the Iluka Post Office, on May 19 outside Maclean Variety Meats, on May 26 they will be back in Grafton Shoppingworld and the final session for this round will be at Yamba Shopping Fair on June 2. All sessions will be from noon-2pm, but will be extended if there is sufficient interest at the time.

Mayor, Jim Simmons, said there had been a good response to the sessions held so far and the councillors who had attended said it had been a valuable exercise.

"This is the level of government that is closest to the people and we feel it is important to get out and listen face-to-face to what people have to say," he said.

"We are happy to talk to people about any council-related issue."

Listening tour details

- May 5, noon-2pm, outside Farmer Lou's, Skinner Street, South Grafton
- May 12, noon-2pm, outside Iluka Post Office
- May 19, noon-2pm, outside Maclean Variety Meats
- May 26, noon-2pm, Grafton Shoppingworld
- June 2, noon-2pm, Yamba Shopping Fair

Release ends.



Councillors Greg Clancy and Jason Kingsley listen to residents at the first listening session at Grafton Shoppingworld on April 21, 2017.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.

Media release

Mayor: Jim Simmons
A/General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2017

Clarence councillors continue listening tour

AVAILABLE Clarence Valley councillors will continue their listening tour of the area tomorrow when they set up a small stall in the Yamba CBD.

From noon until about 2pm a number of councillors will take questions and speak with members of the public from a site near the Soul Pattinson Chemists, 17 Yamba Street, Yamba.

Mayor, Jim Simmons, said people could speak with councillors about any council-related activity.

“We had a good response to our first session at Grafton Shoppingworld last week and hope the people of Yamba also take the opportunity to speak with their elected representatives,” he said.

“The feedback we get from the community helps us make better decisions.”

Release ends.



Copmanhurst resident Rob Giggins meets, from left, councillors Andrew Baker, Karen Toms and Mayor Jim Simmons during a councillor listening session at Grafton Shoppingworld on April 21, 2017.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.

Media release

Mayor: Jim Simmons
A/General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2017

Councillor listening tour continues

CLARENCE Valley councillors will be out and about again on Friday as they continue their listening tour of the area.

Mayor, Jim Simmons, said available councillors would be at Grafton Shoppingworld from noon-2pm on Friday and would be available to speak with people about any council-related issues.

He said people might be interested in talking about some of the tough financial decisions council would soon have to make or might have suggestions about how to improve finances or facilities that would benefit the community.

“The more we can get the community involved in decision making and the more they understand the way council operates the better,” he said.

Release ends.



Caption: From left, former Maclean Shire Council president, John Harvey, Clarence Valley Council acting general manager, Ashley Lindsay, Cr Karen Toms, Cr Andrew Baker, Cr Greg Clancy and Mayor Cr Jim Simmons, at a councillor meet and greet in Maclean on May 19, 2017.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.

Media release

Mayor: Jim Simmons
A/General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 17, 2017

Tough decisions to be Fit for the Future

A RANGE of savings and revenue measures with a combined value of about \$15.5million over four years have been adopted by the Clarence Valley Council and will go out for public consultation.

At its meeting last night, council voted to adopt savings measures of about \$8million over four years and to consider a special rates variation (SRV) application that would provide additional revenue of about \$7.1million over the three years from 2018/19 to 2020/21.

The proposed SRV would be for an 8% increase in the general rate each year for three years (including an estimated rate pegged limit of 2%), with a cumulative impact of 25.9%. If adopted, this would be retained permanently in council's rate base.

Mayor, Jim Simmons, said the time had come for tough decisions.

"We've been living beyond our means since the councils of the Clarence Valley were amalgamated in 2004," he said.

"We need to have a balanced operating result by 2020/21 to meet the NSW Government's Fit for the Future financial benchmarks and we believe the best way to get there is through a combination of efficiency savings and a rate increase.

"We believe we have struck the right balance. We have examined every conceivable cost reduction measure and have already started implementing them. But we don't believe we can reduce costs further without making a significant impact on the facilities and services people expect council to provide.

"If we were to make further cuts we would need to look at ending our involvement with such things as the Grafton and Maclean sports centres, the aquatic facilities in Grafton, Maclean and Yamba, the South Grafton saleyards, regional art gallery, youth services, cemetery services and a host of other things we feel people want us to retain.

"But we will listen. We have already made commitments to not close the Iluka Library after receiving plenty of objections from the Iluka community. The \$60,000 in savings will now be found within other areas of the library service.

"If people don't want to pay more in rates or they want to restrict the SRV increases, they will need to tell us which of the services we provide that they feel should go.

"We can't have it both ways. We cannot continue to provide these services without additional revenue."

Cr Simmons said people should remember council already met the Fit for the Future efficiency benchmarks.

"We have not reached this point because we are an inefficient organisation, or because we don't provide our services efficiently," he said.

"We have reached it simply because we are trying to provide more services to the community than we can afford and are at the point where that cannot continue.

"Something has to give."

Council general manager, Ashley Lindsay, said council would soon announce details of a public consultation program that would provide all residents and ratepayers with the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

"The suite of integrated planning documents (includes Community Strategic Plan, 10 Year Long Term Financial Plan, 4 year 2017-2021 Delivery Program and Operational Plan, Budget and Revenue Policy for 2017/18) adopted at last night's Council meeting will all be available on Council's website and at our branch libraries (Grafton, Maclean, Yamba and Iluka) and customer service centres at Grafton and Maclean from Friday (May 19)," he said.

"The community have until Friday, June 16, to provide their comment and feedback to council.

"Council will consider the feedback from the community at its meeting on June 27."

Release ends.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.

Media release

Mayor: Jim Simmons
A/General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 26, 2017

Consultation dates for council's financial and planning documents announced

RESIDENTS throughout the Clarence Valley will have the opportunity to discuss the council's suite of draft planning and financial documents with councillors and staff over five days next week.

Those opportunities kick off next Wednesday with drop-in centres at Iluka and Maclean and continue until Sunday, June 4, with roundtable discussions at Yamba.

Council general manager, Ashley Lindsay, said the face-to-face consultations would take two forms; drop-in centres where people could turn up at the various venues and discuss the planning and financial documents currently on exhibition and get help on how to make a submission, or people could sign up to participate in one of the series of roundtables where ideas and issues could be discussed with councillors and staff.

"To keep the discussion at the roundtables focused, we've decided they should concentrate on a possible application for a special rates variation as we believe that is the area that is likely to attract the most interest," he said.

"People will still be required to make submissions by the usual formal means, but these roundtable forums will give them the opportunity to work through some of the planned efficiency measures and service reductions currently before councillors."

Drop-in centres (no bookings required)

| Location | Date | Time |
|---|-------------------|----------|
| Maclean (Council Chambers) and Iluka (Library) | Wednesday, May 31 | 10am-2pm |
| Grafton (Community and Function Centre), South Grafton (New School of Arts) | Thursday, June 1 | 10am-2pm |
| Yamba (Yamba Shopping Fair) | Friday, June 2 | Noon-3pm |

Roundtables (bookings required – RSVP to Karlie on 6643 0212)

| Location | Date | Time |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Iluka (Library) | Thursday, June 1 | 5:30-7:30pm |
| Maclean (Council Chambers) | Friday, June 2 | 5:30-7:30pm |
| South Grafton (New School of Arts) | Saturday, June 3 | 4-6pm |
| Yamba | Sunday, June 4 | 11am-1pm |

Release ends.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.



Media release

Attachment 10e - Media Release - Rates roundtables kick off on Thursday.

Mayor: Jim Simmons
A/General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 30, 2017

Rates roundtables kick off on Thursday

THE first of a series of “roundtables” where people can discuss a possible application by the Clarence Valley Council for a special rates variation is to be held in Iluka on Thursday (June 1).

Council is considering making an application for an 8% rate rise each year for three years (cumulative impact of 25.9%) but is keen to consult with the community to see if there are other proposals that would help it meet the NSW Government’s Fit for the Future financial benchmarks. If adopted, the rate increase would apply only to a portion of people’s total rates notice.

The first of the roundtables is to be held at the Iluka Library from 5:30-7:30pm on Thursday.

Further roundtables will be held at the Maclean Council Chambers from 5.30-7.30pm on Friday, the New School of Arts Neighbourhood House South Grafton from 4-6pm on Saturday and the Treelands Drive Community Centre Yamba from 11am-1pm on Sunday (June 4).

To help council with staffing arrangements, RSVPs are required. For Iluka, RSVPs will be required by 3pm Thursday. All other RSVPs will need to be submitted by 3pm Friday. Contact Karlie on 6643 0200 to register.

People with questions about a possible special rates variation or who cannot make a written submission can call 6643 0230.

Release ends.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.

Media release

Mayor: Jim Simmons
A/General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 5, 2017

Still time to have your say on council plans

CLARENCE Valley residents now have less than two weeks to make submissions on a suite of council planning documents, including a possible application for a special rates variation application.

Clarence Valley Council acting general manager, Ashley Lindsay, said the documents included drafts of council's community strategic plan (The Clarence 2027), the delivery program 2017/18-2020/21, the annual operating plan for 2017/18, and resourcing strategy (which includes the workforce management strategy, asset management plan and long-term financial plan), the 2017/18 budget and the 2017/18 fees and charges.

They also include council's consideration of a special rates variation application for a rise in the general rate of 8% each year for three years (cumulative impact of 25.97%) which would be retained permanently in council's rate base. The 8% figure would include any rate-pegging limit set by the NSW Government.

Copies of the draft documents are available at council's customer service centres, Clarence Valley libraries or can be viewed at www.clarence.nsw.gov.au.

Mr Lindsay said comment was welcome on each or all of the documents. Comments must be made in writing and delivered to customer service centres, emailed to council@clarence.nsw.gov.au or posted to Locked Bag 23, Grafton, 2460. Submissions close 4pm, June 16, 2017.

He said councillors and staff had completed a round of face-to-face community consultation, with much of it focusing on a possible application for a special rates variation application.

"Councillors have told me they found this very beneficial," he said.

"Most of them have taken the time to man pop-up stalls in shopping centres and in main streets, and have attended community roundtables in Iluka, Maclean, Yamba and South Grafton.

"It has been helpful all round. It has helped those community members who attended understand council's financial position and helped councillors understand community sentiment.

"These sessions have now finished, but people can still comment on these important planning and financial documents and I encourage them to do so."

Release ends.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.



Media release

Attachment 10g - Media Release - New tool to help people estimate impact of proposed rate rise

Mayor: Jim Simmons
General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 4, 2017

New tool to help people estimate impact of proposed rate rise

A NEW tool has been developed to help people estimate the impact of a proposed Clarence Valley Council rate rise on their property.

Council is considering applying to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to increase rates above the State Government's pegged limit. The proposal is to increase rates by 8% each year (inclusive of the rate-pegged limit) for three years from 2018-19, with the cumulative 25.97% increase to be retained permanently in council's rate base.

Council General Manager, Ashley Lindsay, said the simple tool offered an effective way for people to work out what a proposed Special Rates Variation (SRV) would mean on individual properties.

"All people need is their property number and access to the internet," he said.

"People can visit www.clarence.nsw.gov.au/ratesestimator and, in a couple of clicks, work out how much the proposed rise would cost them.

"If people don't have internet access, we have facilities available at all Clarence Valley libraries.

"We hope people take advantage of it."

Submissions on the proposal can be emailed to council@clarence.nsw.gov.au or made in writing to Locked Bag 23, Grafton, 2460. Submissions close 4pm, November 3.

Release ends.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.

Media release

Mayor: Jim Simmons
General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 29, 2017

Ratepayers asked to respond to survey on sustainability

CLARENCE Valley residents should soon start receiving information regarding a special rates variation application proposed by the Clarence Valley Council.

General manager, Ashley Lindsay, said residents should receive a letter, pamphlet and survey card next week regarding a proposal to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to increase rates above the State Government's pegged limit.

He said the proposal was to increase rates by 8% each year (inclusive of the rate-pegged limit) for three years from 2018-19, with the cumulative 25.97% increase to be retained permanently in council's rate base.

"Background information about the proposal and a reply-paid survey card will be included in the mail-out, which Australia Post has guaranteed will be delivered next week," he said.

"It should go to every resident and business in the Clarence Valley local government area.

"We encourage people to have their say about the proposal by returning the survey form or by making a written submission via email to Council@clarence.nsw.gov.au, or by writing to Locked Bag 23, Grafton, 2460.

"But before they put pen to paper we strongly encourage them to read the background information and, if they have questions, to give council a call.

"We need people to understand what the application is about and what measures council has undertaken to cut costs before replying."

Submissions close 4pm, November 3.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.

Media release

Mayor: Jim Simmons
General Manager: Ashley Lindsay

LOCKED BAG 23 GRAFTON NSW 2460
Telephone: (02) 6643 0200
Fax: (02) 6642 7647

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2017

Time running out for special rates variation submissions

CLARENCE Valley residents who want to comment on a proposed special rates variation application have only until the end of the week to lodge their submissions.

Clarence Valley Council is considering applying to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to increase rates by 8% a year for three years from 2018/19. With the compounding effect of the proposed rises, this would result in a 25.97% increase in the general rate in the three years. The increase, if adopted, would be permanent.

Council's acting general manager, Troy Anderson, said there had been good attendance at each of the four public meetings held this week to discuss the proposal but there was confusion about what it meant for individual ratepayers.

"A lot of people feel the proposed increase is on the entire rates bill," he said.

"It's not.

"A special rates variation only applies to the general rate which, for most residential properties, is made up of the ordinary residential rate and base charge.

"Things like water and sewer charges and domestic waste collection charges are not included.

"The easiest way for ratepayers to work out what the proposal could mean for them is to use our rates estimator. It's available at www.clarence.nsw.gov.au/ratesestimator.

"All people need is a copy of their rates assessment. They simply put in their property number and the estimator will do the rest.

"It will estimate rates with or without the proposed special rates variation in place, so people can compare the two."

Submissions on the proposal close at 4pm Friday (November 3). Submissions can be emailed to council@clarence.nsw.gov.au, posted to Clarence Valley Council, Locked Bag 23, Grafton 2460 or dropped into council's customer service centres in Grafton and Maclean.

Mr Anderson said there had been a big response to a special rates variation survey sent to all Clarence Valley residents earlier this month.

“Close to 3000 have been returned, which is a pretty impressive result,” he said.

Release ends.

For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.