



POSSIBLE BALLINA AND ALSTONVILLE POOL UPGRADES – HAVE YOUR SAY

The Ballina and Alstonville swimming pools are two of our most popular community assets, attracting more than 155,000 visits last season. The pools, which were built in the early 1970s, are showing their age and Council is now looking at refurbishing the existing facilities. In undertaking this refurbishment there is an opportunity to upgrade both pool complexes and provide an expanded range of services.

Improvements that have been identified by users of the facilities include:

- Heating of the Ballina pool and improved heating of the Alstonville pool
- Contemporary children's wet play areas
- Dedicated training or lap pools
- Improve picnic and BBQ facilities
- Covered spectator seating and increased shade structures
- Improve disabled access and amenities
- Additional lanes to ensure the 50m pools meet competitive swimming standards

The estimated cost for this upgrade program is approximately \$8million (\$4m per pool). Based on our current revenue base we cannot fund this scope of works without reductions in other services. Therefore we are now seeking community feedback to see if there is support for Council to fund these improvements by an additional rate increase of 2.5% for two years. This, combined with the typical annual rate increase set by the NSW Government of around 3%, would see rates increase by a total of 5.5% in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

If this funding was approved, the Ballina pool upgrade would be completed in 2015/16 and Alstonville in the following year.

As part of our consultation process we will be writing to all ratepayers providing detailed information on the impact of the proposed rate increases on current property rates.

If you are interested in obtaining further information on this proposal, an overview of the swimming pool redevelopment program and the special rate variation process is available on our website ballina.nsw.gov.au/poolsproposal.

We want your feedback

This is an important consultation project and we encourage feedback from all residents and property owners.

• PUBLIC MEETINGS

Tuesday 7 October – 7 pm

Lennox Head Cultural and Community Centre
Meeting Rooms 1 and 2

Wednesday 8 October – 7 pm

Alstonville Leisure and Entertainment Centre

Thursday 9 October – 7 pm

Ballina Shire Council Chambers

• EMAIL poolsproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au

• To complete the online **SURVEY** visit the homepage of ballina.nsw.gov.au/poolsproposal

• Make a **WRITTEN SUBMISSION** to:

The General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
PO Box 450
BALLINA NSW 2478

• **VISIT THE WEBSITE** for further details, reference documents and regular updates at ballina.nsw.gov.au/poolsproposal

• **SUBMISSIONS CLOSE** Friday 31 October 2014

The Fair had its biggest day ever on the Saturday and there were crowds streaming in on Sunday. The Quota Club uses this function as its main fundraiser for the year and distributes the proceeds to local charities and schools.

I then attended a formal wreath laying at the Ballina RSL Memorial where Legacy Week and the widows and children of ex-servicemen were honoured. This solemn ceremony reflects the caring, volunteer work performed by many to help these families who had their loved ones fight to protect all we hold dear.

Next I headed up to Victoria Park to collect 'Gas Field Free' scrolls reflecting the opinions on gas mining by residents on the southern section of the Alstonville Plateau. The average response was a 95% 'NO' to any disturbance of the plateau's farm land and aquifers. I thank all the volunteers for their survey work.

I then drove down to East Ballina. The area near the surf club was packed with many enjoying the great day. I was lucky to be asked to present the trophies to the teams competing in the Dragon Boat racing

in Shaws Bay. Teams from Queensland to Port Macquarie enjoyed great camaraderie while paddling their huge craft, raising funds and awareness for breast cancer. So many great people volunteered to ensure the event was a success.

I later attended the amphitheatre at Missingham Park to witness 'People power' in action. It was great to hear passionate people share their concerns for our planet. While I didn't participate in the political debate, it was pleasing to welcome such a diverse crowd. It is wonderful that people from our Shire and surrounding shires had the opportunity to express their feelings.

Finally, with so many people walking and cycling around the Shire, the current works along the Coast Road will add to the diversity of scenarios for route selection.

Please keep healthy and safe.



swimming pools upgrade *possible special rate variation*

background

The Ballina and Alstonville swimming pools were built in the early 1970s. The existing infrastructure is now starting to age, operating costs are rapidly increasing and major components of the existing plant and equipment need replacing.

Ballina Shire Council is in the process of planning for the renewal of the existing infrastructure and we are considering whether the range of facilities available at the swimming pools should be expanded.

It is estimated that the upgrades will cost approximately \$8 million. It is Council's preference to fund the upgrades from a special variation in rate income. If this extra rate income is approved by the NSW State Government we would plan to undertake the redevelopment of the Ballina pool in 2015/16 and the Alstonville pool in 2016/17.

Both pools are very popular with locals and visitors. As our population continues to grow Council expects the swimming pools to increase in popularity, providing recreation, social and health opportunities for all members of the community.

options under consideration

- heating of the Ballina pool and improved heating at the Alstonville pool
- children's wet play areas
- dedicated training pools
- improved picnic and BBQ facilities
- covered spectator seating and more shade structures
- improved disabled access and amenities
- additional lanes to ensure 50m pools meet competitive swimming standards
- possible enclosure of training pools.



Why is Council considering an increase in rates?

The cost to redevelop the pools is estimated to be \$8 million. This is a significant amount and Council will need to take out a loan to fund the works. Loan repayments on \$8 million are calculated to be approximately \$830,000 per year (based on a 15 year loan at an interest rate of 6%).

Council is not in a position to finance these loan repayments from existing revenue sources, without reducing other services. As the swimming pool improvements represent an increase in existing service levels, raising additional income from rates is our preferred financial option.

When we talk about rates we do not mean increases to your water, wastewater (sewer) and domestic waste charges. These items are separate charges and apply only to properties that receive or can receive these services. Also, revenue from these charges must, by legislation, be spent on the provision of the services (i.e. waste charges must be spent on waste collection and disposal).

Rate income is a critical part of any council's budget and this money is spent on a wide range of community services including roads and bridges, footpaths, maintenance of our beach and river foreshores, the South Ballina ferry, street lighting, community buildings, parks, playground equipment, libraries, sporting fields, public amenities, surf lifesaving, environmental projects, tourism and public swimming pools.

Why doesn't Council look at other funding options?

We have examined other options such as reducing Council services to save expenses and raising extra income through asset sales. Unfortunately the cost of the pool upgrades is of such a scale that a reduction in other services to offset the loan repayments would have a significant negative impact on existing service levels.

Asset sales can provide one-off benefits but as swimming pools are a core component of the services that Council provides it is important that we have continuing rate income to fund these immediate works and any future upgrades.

Why should I pay more in rates if I don't use the swimming pools?

Rates finance all types of activities and community assets. Different people use different council services. For example some use our libraries, others use the community centres, or like to swim on patrolled beaches during the week. Many swimmers and families use the pools. It is Council's job to provide a range of services to try to satisfy the diverse needs of an entire community.

The proposed rate rise will not only pay for the upgrade of the swimming pools, it will mean there will be more money available for other community services.

What happens if this proposal does not proceed?

Because Council has a commitment to providing a wide range of community services we cannot afford a major redevelopment of the pools without additional funding. If this proposal is not supported by the community only essential maintenance will be undertaken at the swimming pools.

Essential maintenance will focus on the replacement of plant and equipment that is nearing the end of its useful life. There will be no change to the existing service levels at the pools.

What percentage rate increase are we talking about?

Councils in NSW are subject to rate pegging. This means that the NSW Government only allows councils to increase rates by a set percentage every year. This is determined by the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) on behalf of the State Government. If a council wants to increase rates by more than the set percentage it must apply to IPART. IPART then determines whether an application should be approved.

IPART has advised that the standard rate increase for all councils each year is around 3%. This generally covers the rising cost of goods and services and makes it difficult for Council to fund new projects. We are therefore considering a proposal to apply a 2.5% increase on top of the standard 3% over two years to fund the swimming pool redevelopment program. This represents a total rate increase of 5.5% for 2015/16 and 5.5% for 2016/17.

From 2017/18 onwards normal rate increases would then apply to our total increased rate income.



What dollar increase in my rates are we talking about?

For rating purposes, properties are classified as residential, farmland or business. This classification is based on the dominant use of the property.

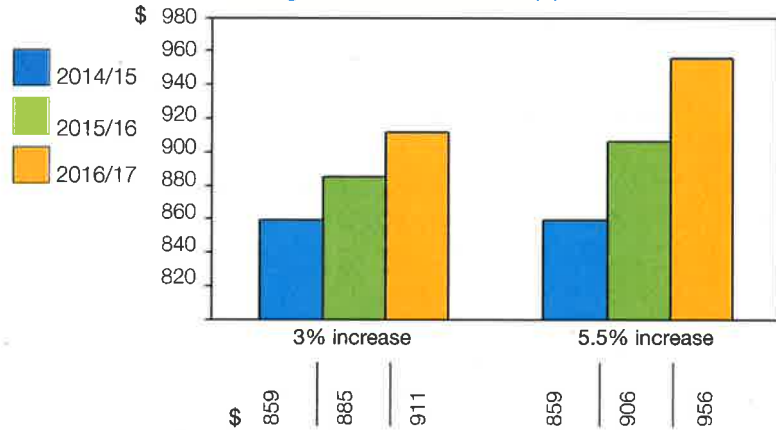
The charts opposite provide the average rates payable in the Ballina Shire for the three property categories for 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17. These figures are based on the standard 3% increase and the proposed 2.5% additional increase (i.e. 5.5% each year) for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

These charts represent averages only and you will need to check your own rate bill to determine the estimated increase for your property. Remember, this increase only applies to your rates and not to other charges such as water, wastewater, stormwater and waste.

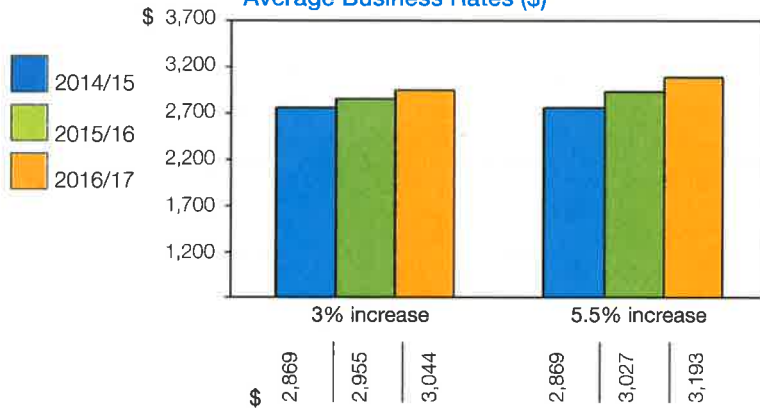
The first chart highlights that the additional rates payable with the 5.5% increase, for an average residential property, as compared to the 3% increase, will be \$21 in 2015/16 and \$45 in 2016/17.

For the average residential property this represents an increase of 40 cents per week in 2015/16 and 86 cents per week in 2016/17, as compared to the 3% increase.

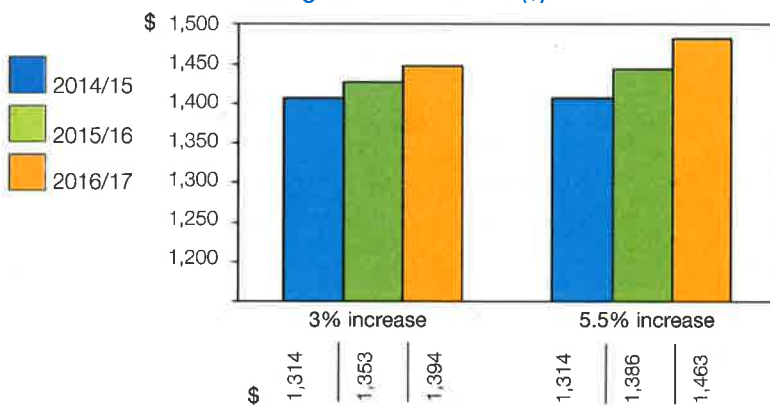
Average Residential Rates (\$)



Average Business Rates (\$)



Average Farmland Rates (\$)





But my rates are \$2,000 per year not the average \$800 shown in the graphs?

As mentioned, when we talk about rates we do not mean increases to your water, wastewater (sewer) and domestic waste charges. These items are separate charges and apply only to properties that receive or can receive those services. This revenue must, by legislation, be spent on the provision of those services. See below for an example of a rates notice and the charge that will be affected if the increase is approved.

proposed increase affects these two amounts



rates & charges notice

40 cherry street, p.o. box 450, ballina nsw 2478
rating team ph - 02 6686 1299
 ph - 02 6686 4444 fax - 02 6686 7035
 email - council@ballina.nsw.gov.au abn 53 929 887 369
 website - www.ballina.nsw.gov.au

Notice is given that the below mentioned instalment due and payable as shown hereunder is in terms of Section 33 of the Local Government Act 1995.

Mr & Mrs CP Citizen
 120 Peters Street
 BALLINA NSW 2478

assessment number	106018
issue date	15/07/14
rating Category	Residential Urban
valuation amount	\$260,000
DUE DATE	31/08/14
first instalment amount due	\$586.90

property details	
120 Peters Street BALLINA NSW 2478 Lot 2 DP 884666	area 485.100 Square Metres

Instalments 2, 3 & 4 do NOT include future water based charges

messages	billing details		
Interest at 8.5% pa on arrears (if listed calculated up to 30/06/14) or any future overdue amounts. Deduct payments since 04/07/2014	Rateable Value	Rates in \$ or charge	Amount
	Residential Rate	260000	0.00165306
	Residential Base Amount	1.00	429.00
	Waste Operations Charge	1.00	70.00
	Domestic Waste Collection Charge Urban	1.00	352.00
	Water Consumption Charges	0.00	45.84
	Stormwater Charge Residential	1.00	25.00
	Water Access Residential 20mm	1.00	189.00
	Wastewater Charge Residential	1.00	807.00
			\$429.80

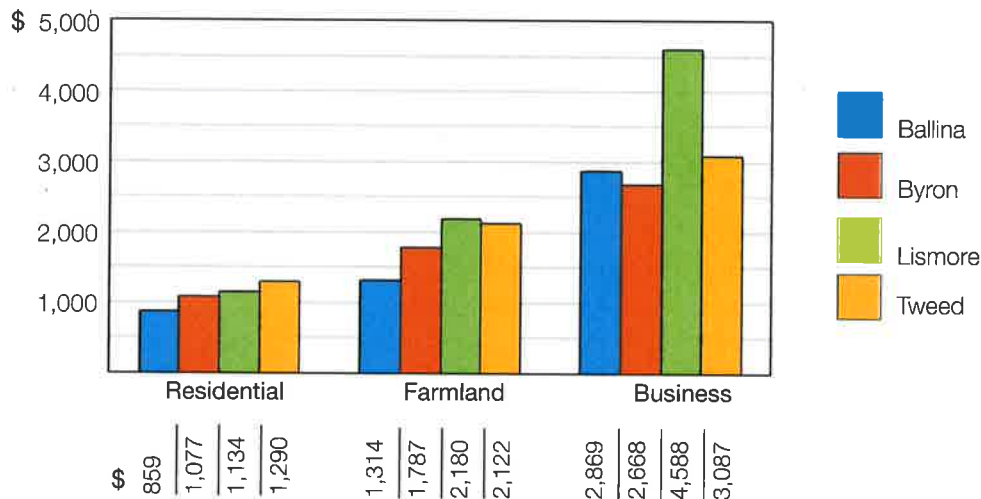


Are our rates too high if this increase is approved?

One of the main reasons we are considering a rate increase for this proposal is that on a comparative basis, the average rates in Ballina Shire on the whole, remain competitive when compared to similar councils in this region.

The following chart outlines the **average 2014/15 rates** payable per category of property for the Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Tweed local government areas (LGAs).

Average Rates per Category of Property (\$) 2014/15



Again, these are averages only and your personal circumstances will depend on your current rate bill.

Importantly, even if the increase of 5.5% is approved for 2015/16 and 2016/17, the average rates payable per property in Ballina Shire, for residential and farmland properties, will still remain lower than the 2014/15 rates of neighbouring councils.

What are the times and the actual process for the consideration of this special rate variation?

There are six key steps in this process:

action	comment	date
Council resolves to consult with the community	This decision was made at the July 2014 Ordinary Council meeting	24 July 2014
Consultation process	Actions taken include writing to all ratepayers, insert in Council's Community Connect magazine, 500 person telephone survey undertaken by an independent organisation, and public meetings.	1 September to 31 October 2014
Report on consultation feedback	All the feedback received through the consultation process is reported to the elected Council at the November 2014 Ordinary Council meeting – Council then determines whether it will make a formal application to IPART	27 November 2014
IPART notification	Council advises IPART whether it will be making an application for a special rate variation	December 2014
IPART application	If Council has resolved to apply for a special rate variation a comprehensive application must then be submitted to IPART	February 2015
IPART determination	IPART undertakes its formal assessment of the application with a decision being made prior to 30 June.	June 2015



Possible works program per pool

location	description	estimate
Existing 50 metre pools	Improved access	90,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Additional lanes	150,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Heating or improved heating	180,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Concourse improvements	110,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Coping and relining	900,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Seating and shade structures	120,000
Site	Improved fencing	100,000
Plant and Equipment	Replacement and upgrading	550,000
Toddlers pool areas	Children's wet play areas	250,000
Training Pool	Expansion of existing small pools	500,000
Training Pool	Heating	100,000
Training Pool	Plant and equipment	300,000
Training Pool	Concourse improvements	30,000
Training Pool	Coping and relining	150,000
Various	BBQ / Picnic Facilities	80,000
Other	Amenities, Kiosk, Contingencies	390,000
Total		\$4,000,000

This is to be used as a guide only and the actual works program, if it proceeds, will be subject to further consultation with the community and specialist pool designers. Any construction works will be subject to Council calling tenders, to ensure that we receive best value for the community.

How to provide feedback?

This is an important consultation project and we encourage feedback from all property owners and residents:

- **ATTEND A PUBLIC MEETING:**

Tuesday 7 October – 7 pm

Lennox Head Cultural and Community Centre
(Meeting Rooms 1 and 2)

Wednesday 8 October – 7 pm

Alstonville Leisure and Entertainment Centre

Thursday 9 October – 7 pm

Ballina Shire Council Chambers

- **EMAIL** poolsproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au

- Complete the online **SURVEY** at ballina.nsw.gov.au/poolsproposal

- Make a **WRITTEN SUBMISSION** to Ballina Shire Council, PO Box 450, Ballina NSW 2478

- **FOR MORE INFORMATION** telephone Council's Customer Service Centre on 6686 4444 or visit ballina.nsw.gov.au/poolsproposal

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE Friday 31 October 2014.



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Swimming Pools Proposal - Special Rate Variation



The following information provides an overview of Council's consultation with respect to the special rate variation for the swimming pools proposal.

- Brochure - Pools Proposal and Special Rate Variation Overview
- Letter distributed to all property owners (September 2014)

Online Survey

This survey seeks to obtain your feedback on the proposal. It will take less than 5 minutes to complete.

- Survey Pools Proposal and Special Rate Variation

Feedback

Other opportunities to provide feedback include:

Public Meetings

<p>Tuesday 7 October</p> <p>Wednesday 8 October</p> <p>Thursday 9 October</p> <p>All meetings will commence at 7pm</p>	<p>Lennox Head Cultural and Community Centre Meeting Rooms 1 and 2</p> <p>Alstonville Leisure and Entertainment Centre</p> <p>Ballina Shire Council Chambers</p>
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Written Submissions

Ballina Shire Council
 PO Box 450
 Ballina NSW 2478
 email: poolsproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au

Submissions close: Friday 31 October 2014

Council to consider submissions at the November 2014 Council meeting.

Pool Attendance Figures

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Ballina	62,089	60,051	72,263	75,167
Alstonville	70,614	67,143	78,590	81,889
Total Attendance	132,713	127,194	150,853	157,056

Further Information

General Manager's Office, Ph 02 6886 4444 or email: poolsproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au

Related Pages

- Ballina Shire Swimming Pools**
provides general information and links to the Shire's swimming pools at Alstonville and Ballina
- Alstonville Heated Olympic Pool**
provides general information on the Alstonville Heated Olympic Swimming Pool.
- Ballina Memorial Olympic Pool & Waterslide**
provides information on the Ballina Memorial Olympic Swimming Pool & Waterslide.



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Swimming Pools Proposal - Special Rate Variation



Council is currently consulting with the community to determine whether we should apply to the State Government for an increase in our general rate income, to finance improvements to the Ballina and Alstonville swimming pools.

These two swimming pools were built in the early 1970s. The existing infrastructure is ageing and the operating costs are rapidly increasing, with large parts of the existing plant and equipment in need of replacement. Council is now planning to renew the existing infrastructure and we are considering whether the range of facilities available at the swimming pools should be enhanced.

It is estimated that these improvements will cost around \$4 million per pool or \$8 million in total.

As many of these items represent an upgrade to the existing facilities, we are now seeking community feedback as to whether we should apply for a special variation to the rate income we receive each year.

If the proposal proceeds, there would be two years of increases at 5.5% for 2015/16 and 2016/17 and then in the following year (i.e. 2017/18) your revised total rate would increase by the normal rate pegging percentage (estimated at 3%). This means that the 5.5% for 2015/16 and 2016/17 remains as a permanent increase to your rates. Based on this, the cumulative percentage increase to your rates over the two years will be 11.3%, whereas without the additional 2.5% it would be 6.1%.

The primary reason the increase remains is so Council can finance the pool upgrades, which are estimated at around \$8 million, from loan funds. Typically Council would borrow loan funds over a period of 15 years for this type of project and the additional rate income generated each year is required to finance these loan repayments over the 15 year term. At the end of the 15 years Council would then apply the revenue still being generated to other community infrastructure projects desired by the community.

If this extra rate income is approved we would plan to undertake the Ballina pool redevelopment in 2015/16 and the Alstonville pool redevelopment in 2016/17.

The following information provides an overview of Council's consultation with respect to the special rate variation for the swimming pools proposal.

- [Brochure - Pools Proposal and Special Rate Variation Overview](#)
- [Letter distributed to all property owners \(September 2014\)](#)
- [Letter distributed to all property owners \(October 2014\)](#)

Online Survey

This survey has now closed.

Feedback

Council to consider submissions at the 27 November 2014 Council meeting.

Pool Attendance Figures

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Ballina	62,099	60,051	72,263	75,167
Alstonville	70,614	67,143	78,590	81,889
Total Attendance	132,713	127,194	150,853	157,056

Further Information

General Manager's Office, Ph 02 6886 4444 or email: poolsproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au

Related Pages

- [Ballina Shire Swimming Pools](#)
provides general information and links to the Shire's swimming pools at Alstonville and Ballina.
- [Alstonville Heated Olympic Pool](#)
provides general information on the Alstonville Heated Olympic Swimming Pool.
- [Ballina Memorial Olympic Pool & Waterslide](#)
provides information on the Ballina Memorial Olympic Swimming Pool & Waterslide.



Swimming Pool Redevelopment - Consultation

Page 1 of 1

1. Do you feel you have a reasonable understanding of this proposal based on the information provided by Council, including the information sheet on Council's website ballina.nsw.gov.au?

-- None --

2. If you have any suggestions on how the information could be improved, please provide your comments below.

3. To better understand the interest in this proposal across the Ballina Shire please nominate your usual place of residence.

- Ballina
- Alstonville
- Wollongbar
- Lennox Head
- Wardell
- Other (eg. rural)

4. Do you consider yourself a user (no matter how frequent) or potential user of the Ballina or Alstonville swimming pools?

-- None --

5. Council is examining a number of improvements to the swimming pools. What type of improvements would you would like to see.

Please rank each item from one to five, with one being the lowest priority and five the highest.

	1	2	3	4	5
Additional lanes to meet competition standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved disabled access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Heating for the Ballina pool	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's wet play areas	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dedicated training pools	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved picnic and BBQ facilities	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Covered spectator seating and shade structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enclosed facility to provide all weather access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Replace fencing at Ballina to improve river views	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved amenities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expanded kiosk and refreshment facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Other (please provide details in the next text box)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. If you wish to provide comments on your ideas for improvements to the swimming pools please provide your comments in the following text box.
For example you may have suggestions for additional works or comments particular to either the Alstonville Pool or Ballina Pool.

7. Are you supportive of Council's proposal to apply to the NSW State Government for a 2.5% increase above the estimated rate increase of 3% for 2015/16 and 2016/17 (5.5% each year)?
- Yes - I am supportive
- Conditional Support - You may prefer a lower increase with a reduced works program
- No - I am not supportive of any rate increase

8. Do you have any other comments in respect to the proposed special rate variation?
For example you may have a different rating structure or increase that you would like Council to consider.

9. Can you please confirm whether you are a property or business owner who would be required to pay any increase in the Council rates?
- Yes (Property or business owner - Individually or in joint ownership)
- No (Resident)

10. If you answered yes to question nine can you please clarify what type of property rates you are required to pay. The category of your rateable property is based on the dominant use of that property. The three categories of property for rating purposes are residential, business and farmland.

- Residential (both urban and rural residential properties)
- Business
- Farmland
- Combination of Properties (eg Residential and Business)

11. Do you have any other feedback in respect to this consultation process?

12. Your name and address (email or post) (this information is optional)

Only provide your contact details if you wish to receive a written response on the outcomes from Council's consultation. Council will be notifying all residents of our decision to proceed or not proceed, with an application to the NSW State Government, through our normal communication channels such as the Ballina Shire Advocate and our Community Connect magazine.

Thank you for your feedback. Please click 'Done' to submit your comments.

Note: the survey can only be completed once per device (i.e. personal computer, notebook, smart phone or tablet).

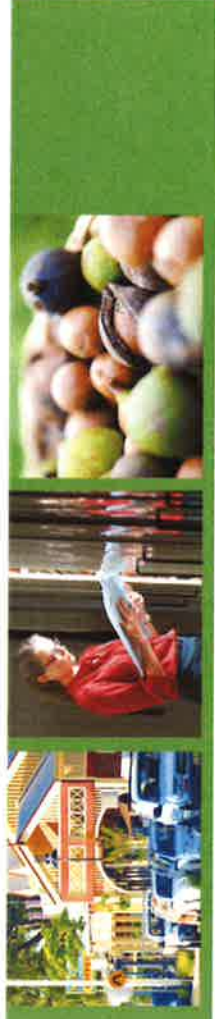
Done

Cancel



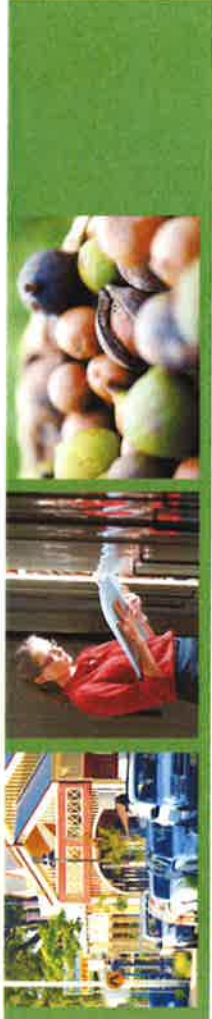
Swimming Pools – Special Rate Consultation





Tonight

- Swimming Pools – Overview
- Works Program
- Funding Options
- Process and Feedback



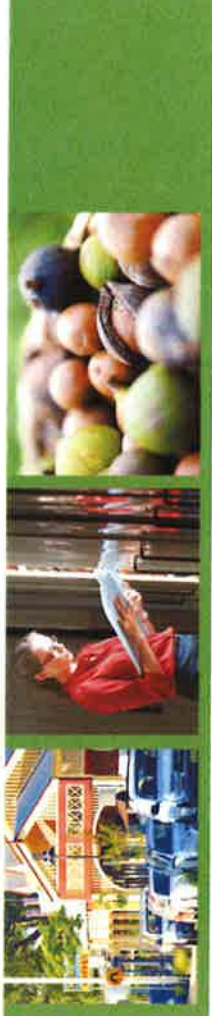
Ballina Swimming Pool

- Opened in 1975
- Crown Land
- Contract management
- Water slide owned and operated as a separate business – Land leased
- 50 metre pool, 12 x 9 metre training pool, hexagonal toddler pool



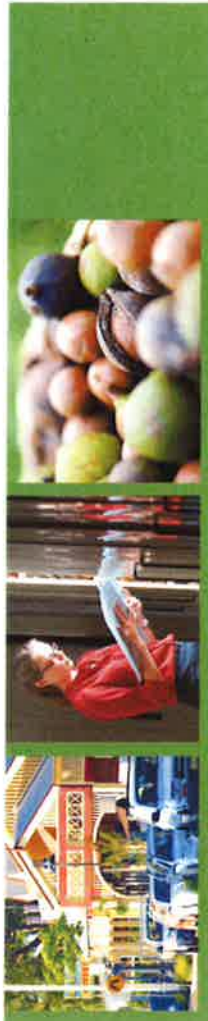
Alstonville Swimming Pool

- Opened in 1975
- Council owned land
- Contract management
- 50 metre pool, 12 x 9 metre training pool, hexagonal toddler pool
- LPG Heating 1996



Attendance Numbers

Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Alstonville	70,614	67,143	78,590	81,889
Ballina	62,099	60,051	72,263	75,167
Total	132,713	127,194	150,853	157,056



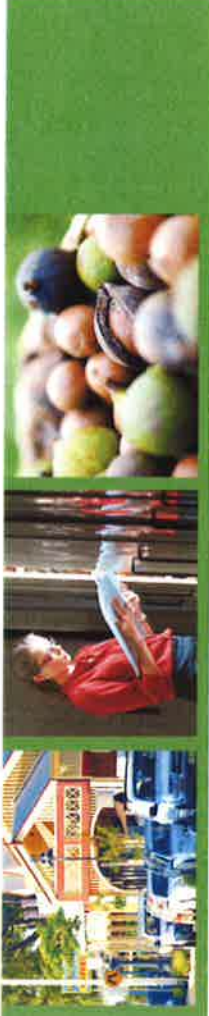
Operating Result - Ballina

Item	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Actual	2013/14 Actual
Operating Revenues	145,000	178,000	194,000
Less Operating Expenses			
Contractor	182,000	199,000	200,000
Rates and Charges	35,000	62,000	86,000
Chemicals, Electricity	33,000	35,000	35,000
Maintenance	55,000	48,000	66,000
Other	5,000	6,000	6,000
Total Operating Expenses	310,000	350,000	393,000
Net Cash Loss	(165,000)	(172,000)	(199,000)



Operating Result - Alstonville

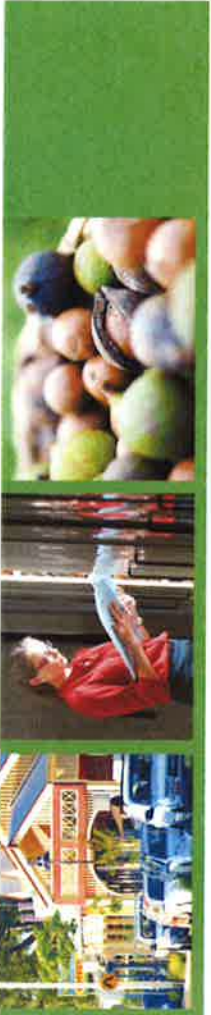
Item	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Actual	2013/14 Actual
Operating Revenues	136,000	143,000	155,000
Less Operating Expenses			
Contractor	187,000	196,000	198,000
Rates and Charges	37,000	52,000	66,000
Chemicals, Gas, Electricity	76,000	82,000	87,000
Maintenance	51,000	57,000	71,000
Other	2,000	18,000	3,000
Total Operating Expenses	353,000	405,000	425,000
Net Cash Loss	(217,000)	(262,000)	(270,000)



Operating Result - Combined

Item	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Actual	2013/14 Actual
Operating Revenues	281,000	321,000	349,000
Less Operating Expenses			
Contractor	369,000	395,000	398,000
Rates and Charges	72,000	114,000	152,000
Chemicals, Gas, Electricity	109,000	117,000	122,000
Maintenance	106,000	105,000	137,000
Other	7,000	24,000	9,000
Total Operating Expenses	663,000	755,000	818,000
Net Cash Loss	(382,000)	(434,000)	(469,000)
Depreciation	125,000	125,000	130,000

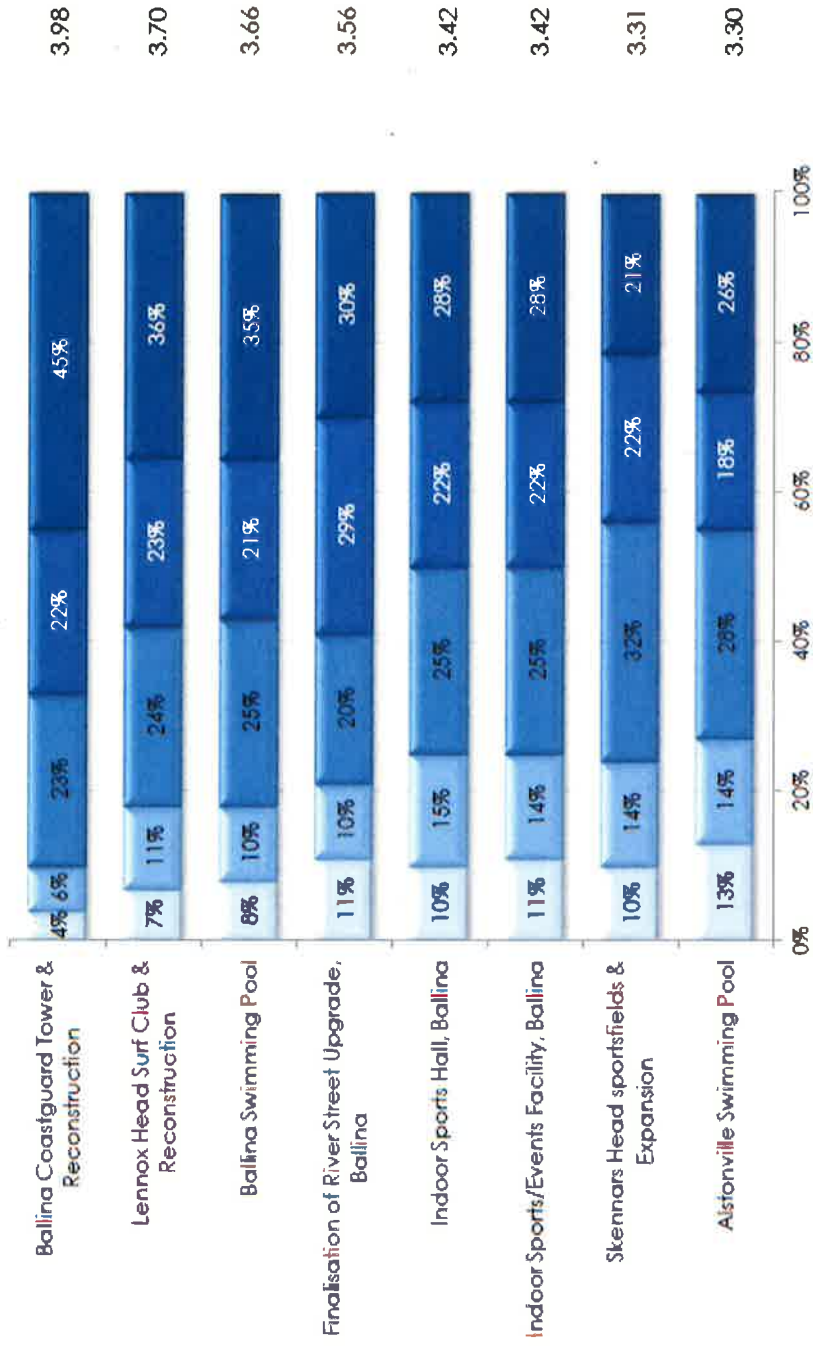






Priorities – Community Survey

Mean ratings



■ Not at all supportive
 ■ Not very supportive
 ■ Somewhat supportive
 ■ Supportive
 ■ Very supportive





Possible works program per pool

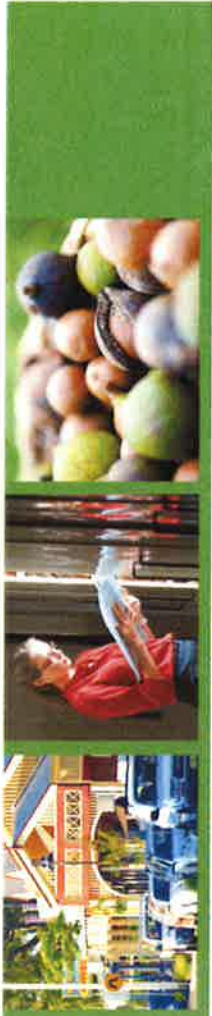
location	description	estimate
Existing 50 metre pools	Improved access	90,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Additional lanes	150,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Heating or improved heating	180,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Concourse improvements	110,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Coping and relining	900,000
Existing 50 metre pools	Seating and shade structures	120,000
Site	Improved fencing	100,000
Plant and Equipment	Replacement and upgrading	550,000
Toddlers pool areas	Children's wet play areas	250,000
Training Pool	Expansion of existing small pools	500,000
Training Pool	Heating	100,000
Training Pool	Plant and equipment	300,000
Training Pool	Concourse improvements	30,000
Training Pool	Coping and relining	150,000
Various	BBQ / Picnic Facilities	80,000
Other	Amenities, Kiosk, Contingencies	390,000
Total		\$4,000,000

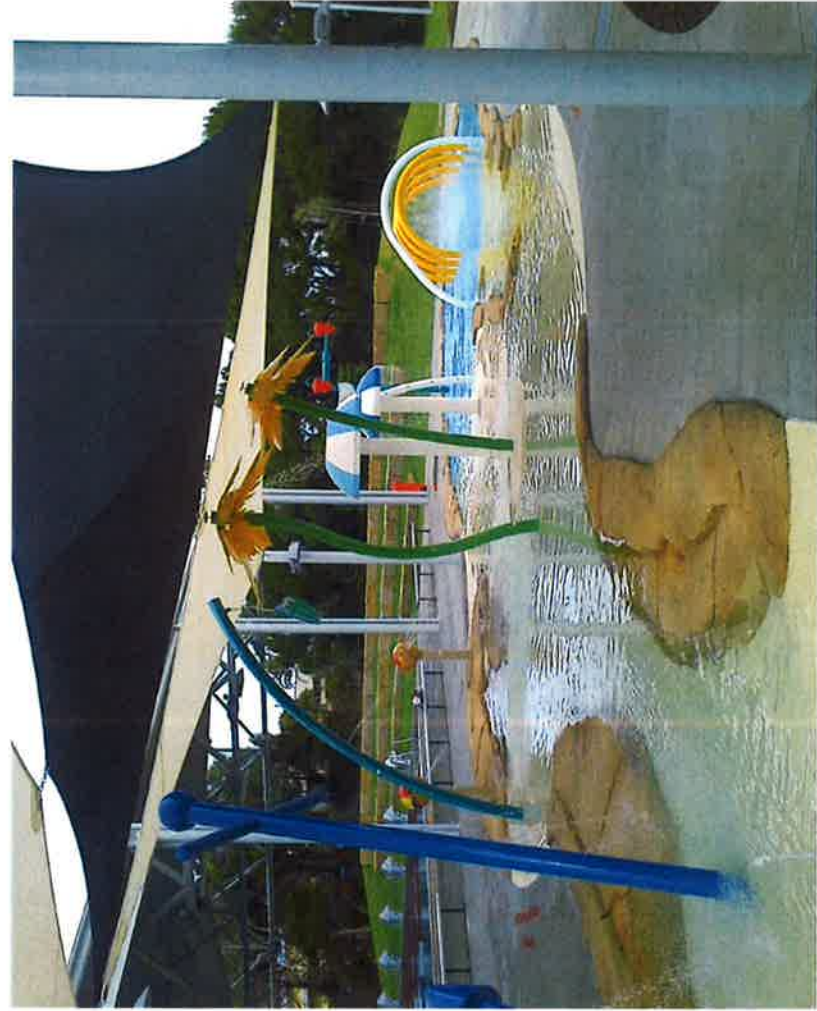
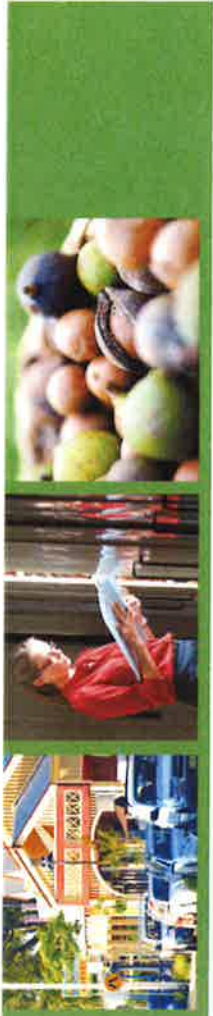


Alternative Works Program

Description	Alstonville	Ballina
Access Ramps and Disabled Access	100,000	100,000
Additional Lanes	150,000	0
Children's Wet Play Area	250,000	250,000
Spectator Stands	250,000	250,000
BBQs and Associated Facilities	100,000	100,000
25 Metre Facility plus Enclosure	0	1,000,000
Heating and Equipment	250,000	300,000
Hydrotherapy Pool	0	350,000
Fencing	50,000	100,000
Coping and Relining	1,100,000	1,100,000
Plant and Equipment	500,000	300,000
Contingency (20%)	550,000	750,000
Total	3,300,000	4,600,000



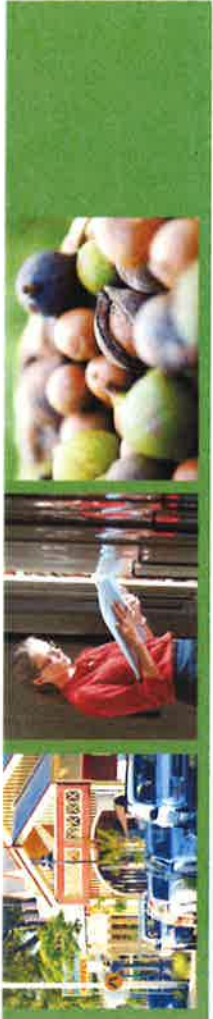






Funding Options

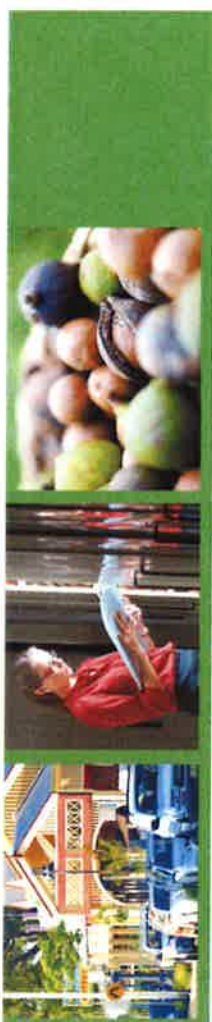
- Loan funds
- Increase fees
- From existing budget and budget savings
- Asset sales
- Rate increase
- Combination of the above



Loan Funds

Item	2015/16	2016/17
Loan Funds Borrowed	4,000,000	4,100,000
Term – 15 years	440,000	450,000
Interest Rate – 7%		
Annual Repayment	440,000	450,000
Accumulated Repayment PA		890,000
Term – 15 Years – 6%	411,000	834,000
Term – 15 Years – 4%	360,000	728,000
Term – 20 Years – 7%	378,000	764,000





Increase Fees

Family		
Family season ticket (4 persons)		\$330
Family season ticket cost per additional adult		\$90
Family season ticket cost per additional child		\$75
Family half season ticket		\$200
Family half season cost per additional adult		\$60
Family half season cost per additional child		\$50
Adult		
Adult season ticket		\$185
Adult half season ticket		\$120
Adult single entry		\$4
Adult 10 entry ticket		\$34
Children		
Child season ticket		\$155
Child half season ticket		\$100
Child single entry ticket		\$3
Child with school		\$2.50
Child 10 entry ticket		\$25
Seniors		
Seniors season ticket		\$165
Seniors half season ticket		\$105
Seniors ten entry ticket		\$28
Spectator		
Spectator single entry		\$2.50

Current Revenue - \$350,000

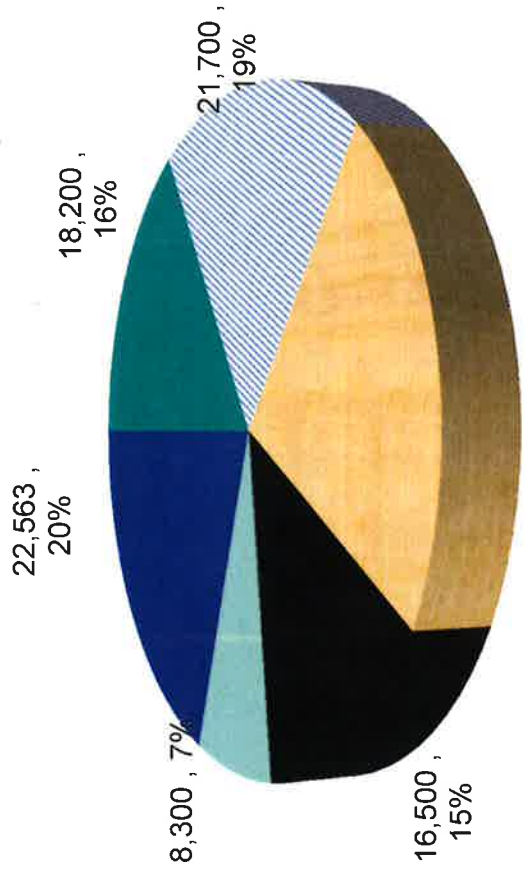
Visitations – 160,000





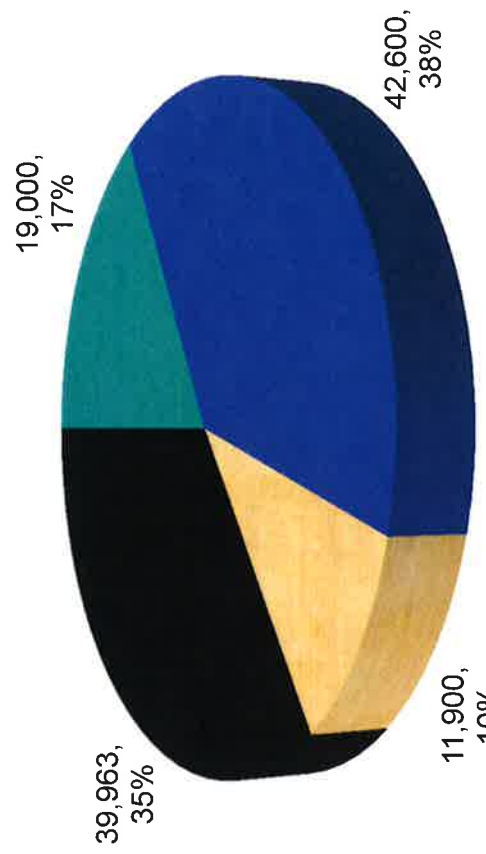
Existing Budget

Sources of Revenue (\$'000)



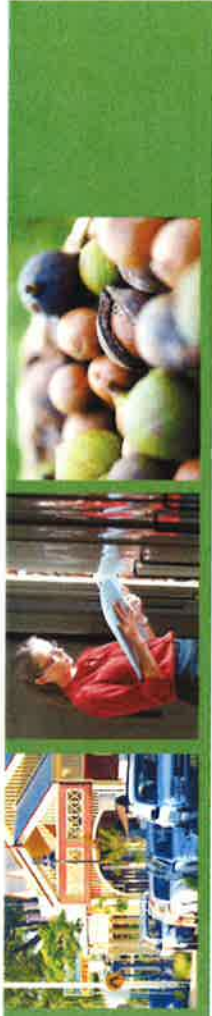
- Rates
- User Charges
- Other
- ▨ Annual Charges
- Grants and Contributions
- Reserves

Expenditure (\$'000)

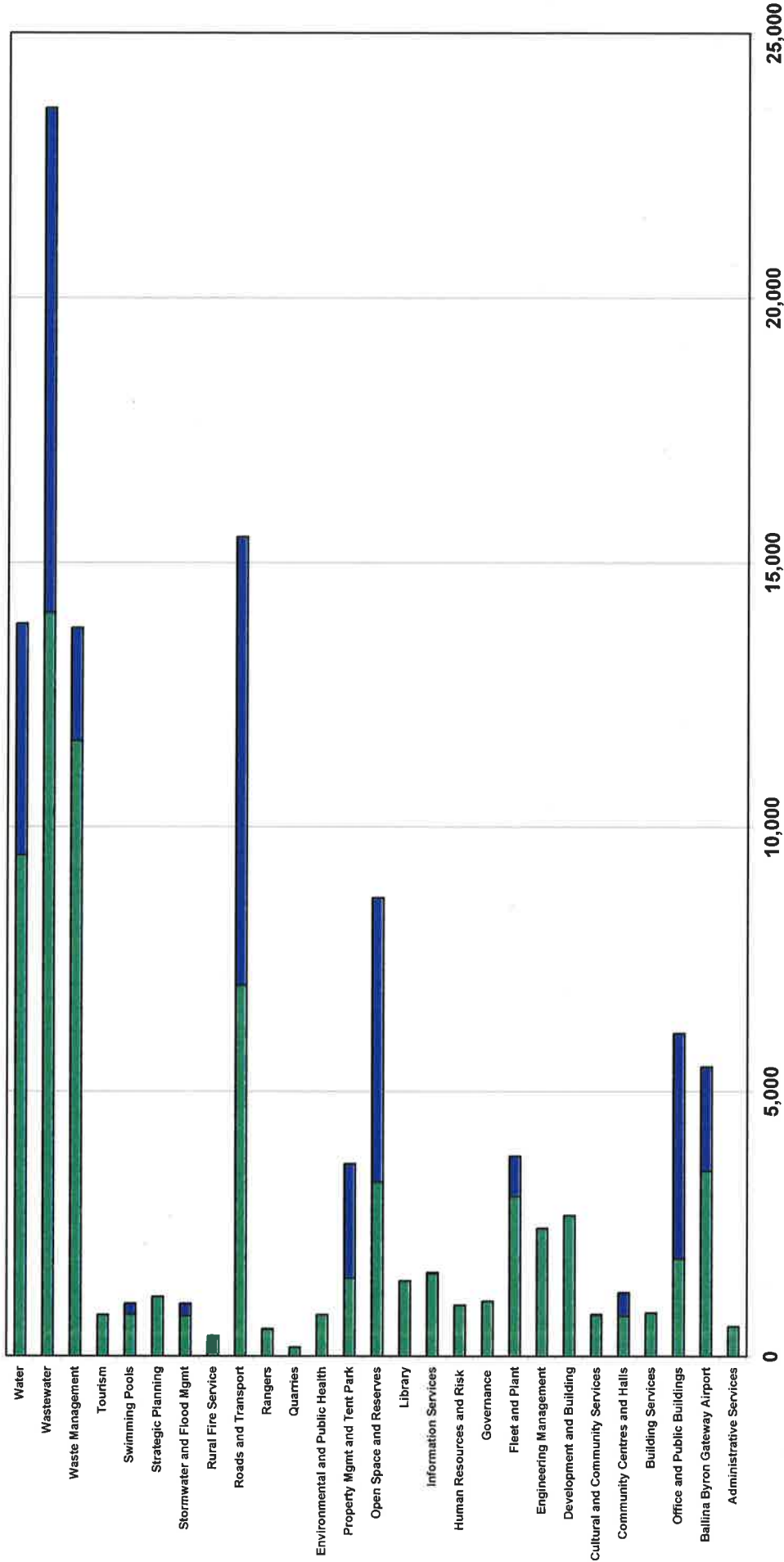


- Employee Costs
- Materials and Contracts
- Borrowing
- Capital Works

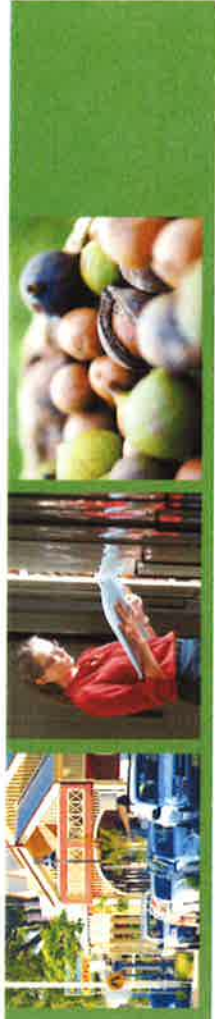




Total Expenditure Budget 2014/15 (\$'000)



Swimming Pool Consultation

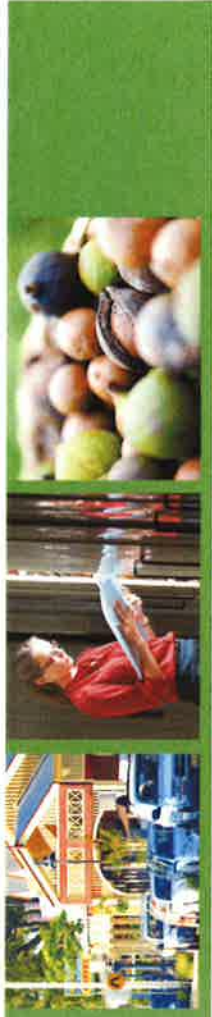


Operating Savings

- Staff – 2014/15 five positions not replaced
- Financial Assistance Grant – No indexation until 2017/18
- Limited discretionary programs

Indicator 2012/13	Ballina	Byron	Coffs Harbour	Lismore	Richmond Valley	Tweed	Group Average
Equivalent Full Time Staff	265	247	521	401	191	672	312
Roads Expend Per Capita (\$)	495	434	265	507	565	333	266
Governance and Admin (\$)	114	118	381	93	80	214	349
Water and Wastewater (\$)	631	784	710	504	550	539	540
Community Services (\$)	105	236	50	96	132	152	178
Recreation and Culture (\$)	179	266	208	415	196	213	253
Infrastructure Backlog Ratio	1.5%	19.2%	6.0%	3.2%	6.1%	3.1%	10.6%



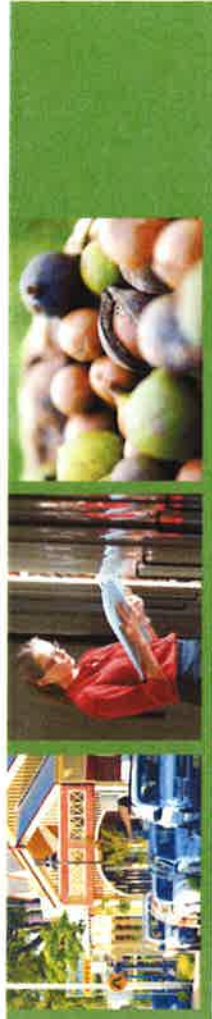


Asset Sales and Property Income

Item	Recent Years (\$'000)	2014 - 2016 (\$'000)
Wollongbar Sports Fields	1,700	2,100
Lennox Head Community Centre	6,500	0
Kentwell Centre	1,200	0
Community Gallery	600	0
Ballina Surf Club	3,600	400
Ballina Animal Shelter	650	0
Ballina Sports / Events Centre	80	280
Main Street Upgrades plus Loan Repayments	8,000	1,000
Coastal Shared Path	550	850
Marine Rescue Tower	80	920
Skennars Head Sports Fields	1,500	1,200
Swimming Pools	0	200

- Other notable examples include Lennox Head Bypass – Angels Beach Drive
- 88% of commercial property rental reinvested into Council service delivery or community infrastructure

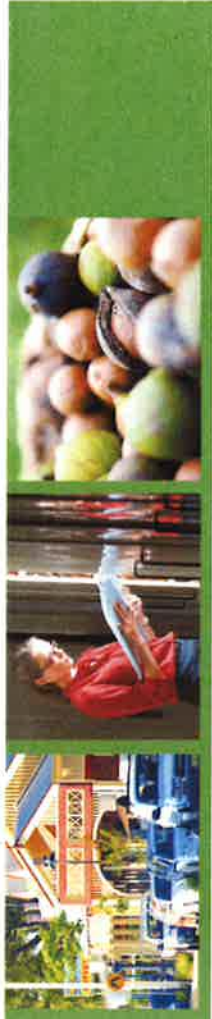




Proposed Rate Increase

Category	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2018/19
Estimated Rate Pegging		3%	3%	3%
Average Residential Rate	859	885	911	938
Average Business Rate	2,869	2,955	3,044	3,135
Average Farmland Rate	1,314	1,353	1,394	1,436
Additional Percentage		2.5%	2.5%	0%
Average Residential Rate	859	906	956	985
Average Business Rate	2,869	3,027	3,193	3,289
Average Farmland Rate	1,314	1,386	1,463	1,507
Residential Extra	0	21	45	46
Business Extra	0	72	149	153
Farmland Extra	0	33	69	71





Benchmarking – 2014/15 Total Bill

Residential Property	Ballina (\$)	Byron (\$)	Coffs Harbour (\$)	Lismore (\$)	Richmond Valley (\$) (1)	Tweed (\$)
Ordinary Rate	859	1,077	1,006	1,134	785	1,277
Stormwater	25	25	25	25	25	25
Water Access Charge	194	155	143	203	127	148
Water Consumption (200kl)	416	464	526	598	388	490
Waste Water	807	1,126	803	772	896	732
Waste (DWM) (including waste levy)	422	397	566	460	380	405
Total	2,723	3,244	3,069	3,192	2,601	3,077

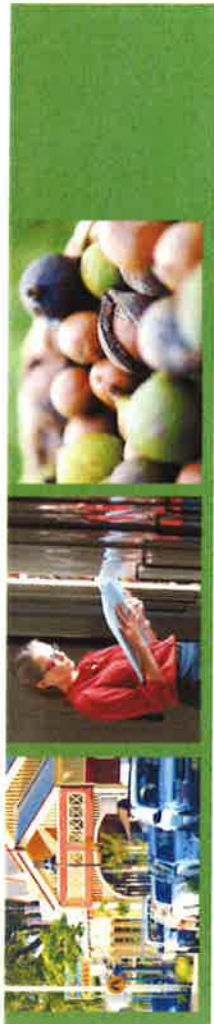
(1) IPART approved 12.5% rate increase for 2014/15 and 5.5% for the following four years



Benchmarking – 2014/15 Rate Yield

Property Category	Ballina (\$)	Byron (\$)	Coffs Harbour (\$)	Lismore (\$)	Richmond Valley (\$)	Tweed (\$)
Residential	859	1,077	1,006	1,134	785	1,290
Business	2,869	2,668	3,585	4,588	2,219	3,087
Farmland	1,314	1,787	1,846	2,180	1,270	2,122
Ballina – No. of Assessments						
Residential	15,355					
Business	1,271					
Farmland	1,057					
Total Rate Yield	18,225,000	21,817,000	21,955,000	25,548,000	16,217,000	25,974,000
Annual Difference to Ballina		3,592,000	3,730,000	7,323,000	(2,008,000)	7,749,000

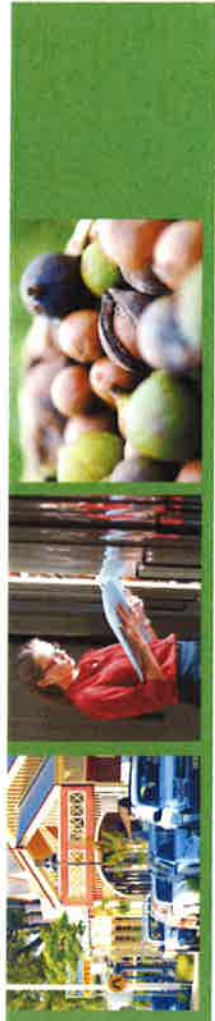




Process

Key Steps

- State Government through IPART sets % income increase
- To increase above this % must make application to IPART
- Community consultation one component
- Council must then consider consultation
- Provide preliminary notice to IPART by 31 December 2014
- Formal application to IPART – February 2015
- IPART determination – June 2015



Feedback: Friday 31 October

poolsproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au

On-line survey

PO Box 450

Report to 27 November meeting





I have read your letter and some relevant internet documents. I am not convinced of the need to undertake these pool renovations, vis -a- vis the other responsibilities of Council. If council cannot undertake these works, within its normal program of maintenance under the established 3% increase, then it should not proceed with them. I am not in favour of the suggested additional 2.5% increase in rates in 2015/16 and 2016/17

I'm 84 and my wife is a little younger and after discussing the contents of your letter we formed the view that we should support the proposed improvements to our swimming pools.

Many years ago we enjoyed the sporting amenities that were available in Ballina and paid for by ratepayers both current and those of an earlier generation, They may not have been lavish by today standards but never-the-less served the purpose well.

Whilst we are in favour of the facilities, these facilities are for the use of a minority of ratepayers and residents of the shire. We have not been provided with numbers but would be fairly confident in saying that a large number of users are multiple users and schools.

The point we wish to make is the facilities were provided in lots of cases by those ratepayers who came before us and hence we feel we can do our little bit to provide for the next generation.

Our society must rely upon the user pays principle when it comes to these types of assets. We have used and do use the pool in summer, the entrance fees are very modest and should be adjusted and if the adjustment does not fund the facility then one must question the value of the upgrade proposed. We are against the special rate

There is an urgent need to upgrade these facilities and trust Council will receive sufficient support to allow the project to proceed and be completed within the proposed time frame.



Thank You



enquiries refer
Paul Hickey
in reply please quote
480 - 03



22 September 2014

Dear Ratepayer

Re: Community Consultation – Possible Special Rate Variation

Council is currently consulting with the community to determine whether we should apply to the State Government for an increase in our general rate income, to finance improvements to the Ballina and Alstonville swimming pools.

These two swimming pools were built in the early 1970s. The existing infrastructure is ageing and the operating costs are rapidly increasing, with large parts of the existing plant and equipment in need of replacement. Council is now planning to renew the existing infrastructure and we are considering whether the range of facilities available at the swimming pools should be enhanced.

Possible improvements that have been identified include, but are not limited to:

- Heating of the Ballina pool and improved heating at the Alstonville pool
- Children's wet play areas
- Dedicated training pools
- Improved picnic and BBQ facilities
- Covered spectator seating and increased shade structures
- Improved disabled access and amenities
- Additional lanes to ensure 50m pools meet competition swimming standards.

It is estimated that these improvements will cost around \$4 million per pool or \$8 million in total.

As many of these items represent an upgrade to the existing facilities, we are now seeking community feedback as to whether we should apply for a special variation to the rate income we receive each year.

On average, Council rates increase around 3% per annum. We are interested to know if the community supports increased rates of 5.5% in 2015/16 and 5.5% in 2016/17 to fund these improvements (i.e. an additional 2.5% for these two years).

Under this proposal the works program for the pools would be funded by loans. The extra 2.5% each year in rate income (i.e. above the 3% annual rate increase) would then finance the loan repayments. If this extra rate income is approved we would plan to undertake the Ballina pool redevelopment in 2015/16 and the Alstonville pool redevelopment in 2016/17.

Please note that when we talk about rates we do not mean increases to your water, wastewater (sewer) and domestic waste collection charges. These items are separate charges and apply only to properties that receive, or can receive those services. Revenue collected from water, wastewater and domestic waste collection charges must be spent on the provision of those services.

Rates revenue is spent on the many other Council services such as roads and bridges, footpaths, foreshore and canal maintenance, street signage, street lighting, parks and playground equipment, stormwater drainage, swimming pools, libraries, sporting fields, public amenities, surf lifesaving, environmental projects, tourism, economic development and strategic planning. Rate revenue is a critical part of any council's income.

For Council to increase rates by 5.5% in 2015/16 and 5.5% in 2016/17 we will need to apply to the NSW Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). The current consultation process will allow Council to decide, based on community feedback, whether or not we should apply to IPART for a special rate variation.

Prior to making this decision, which will be made at the 27 November 2014 Council meeting, we are seeking feedback from residents and ratepayers. This letter has been sent to all ratepayers so that the people who are liable for any rate increase are aware of the consultation process and have a chance to provide their feedback.

If you are interested in this proposal we encourage you to visit Council's website at ballina.nsw.gov.au/poolsproposal, for further details and supporting documents.

Ideally we would like to see as much feedback as possible and this can be provided in the following ways:

- Complete the online **SURVEY** at our website ballina.nsw.gov.au/poolsproposal – This is the easiest and quickest way to provide feedback.
- Make a **WRITTEN SUBMISSION** and post to Ballina Shire Council, PO Box 450, Ballina NSW 2478 or email poolsproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au
- Attend a **PUBLIC MEETING:**

Tuesday 7 October – 7 pm
Lennox Head Cultural and Community Centre (Meeting Rooms 1 and 2)

Wednesday 8 October – 7 pm
Alstonville Leisure and Entertainment Centre

Thursday 9 October – 7 pm
Ballina Shire Council Chambers

Submissions close Friday 31 October 2014.

Please take the time to provide your feedback. If you wish to discuss this further you can contact Council staff on 6686 4444 or your local Councillor. Councillor contact details can be found at ballina.nsw.gov.au/councillors.

Yours sincerely



Cr David Wright
Mayor

Dear Ratepayer

Re: Community Consultation – Possible Special Rate Variation

In September 2014 Council wrote to all ratepayers regarding our proposal for a 5.5% rate increase in 2015/16 and 5.5% again in 2016/17. Typically rates increase around 3% per annum, however for these two years we are proposing to increase the rates by an extra 2.5% per annum, with that additional revenue then being used to finance upgrades to the Alstonville and Ballina swimming pools.

Part of the feedback we have received is that some ratepayers are uncertain as to whether the proposed rate increase will remain after 2016/17. To clarify this point, if the proposal proceeds, there would be two years of increases at 5.5% for 2015/16 and 2016/17 and then in the following year (i.e. 2017/18) your revised total rate would increase by the normal rate pegging percentage (estimated at 3%). This means that the 5.5% for 2015/16 and 2016/17 remains as a permanent increase to your rates. Based on this, the cumulative percentage increase to your rates over the two years will be 11.3%, whereas without the additional 2.5% it would be 6.1%.

The primary reason the increase remains is so Council can finance the pool upgrades, which are estimated at around \$8 million, from loan funds. Typically Council would borrow loan funds over a period of 15 years for this type of project and the additional rate income generated each year is required to finance these loan repayments over the 15 year term. At the end of the 15 years Council would then apply the revenue still being generated to other community infrastructure projects desired by the community.

The impact of this proposal on your rates is shown in the following two tables. They highlight how the average residential, business or farmland rate would vary between the standard 3% increase and the proposed 5.5% increase.

Table One – Standard rate increase based on an estimate of 3% per annum

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Rate Pegging Increase Per Annum		3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Average Residential Rate	859	885	911	938
Average Business Rate	2,869	2,955	3,044	3,135
Average Farmland Rate	1,314	1,353	1,394	1,436

Table Two – Revised rate increase based on 5.5% in 2015/16 and 2016/17

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Revised Rate Increase Per Annum		5.5%	5.5%	3.0%
Revised Average Residential Rate	859	906	956	985
Revised Average Business Rate	2,869	3,027	3,193	3,289
Revised Average Farmland Rate	1,314	1,386	1,463	1,507

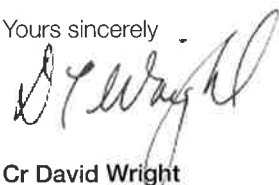
There is more information on this proposal and options as to how you can provide feedback on the following page and on Council's website ballina.nsw.gov.au/poolsproposal

It is important that all ratepayers understand this proposal and if you have previously supported the proposed rate increase based on the assumption that your rates would reduce again after 2016/17, and now wish to change your response, then contact us through one of the feedback options listed.

The on-line survey can only be completed once per technology platform. If you wish to amend your previous on-line survey response, please contact us by email, or mail, or telephone Paul Hickey, Caroline Klose or Tracy Lister on 6686 4444 and we can record your amended submission. If you have previously objected to this proposal then there is no need to lodge a further objection.

Hopefully this correspondence clarifies this matter for everyone and please note we have also extended the consultation period for another two weeks until Friday 14 November 2014.

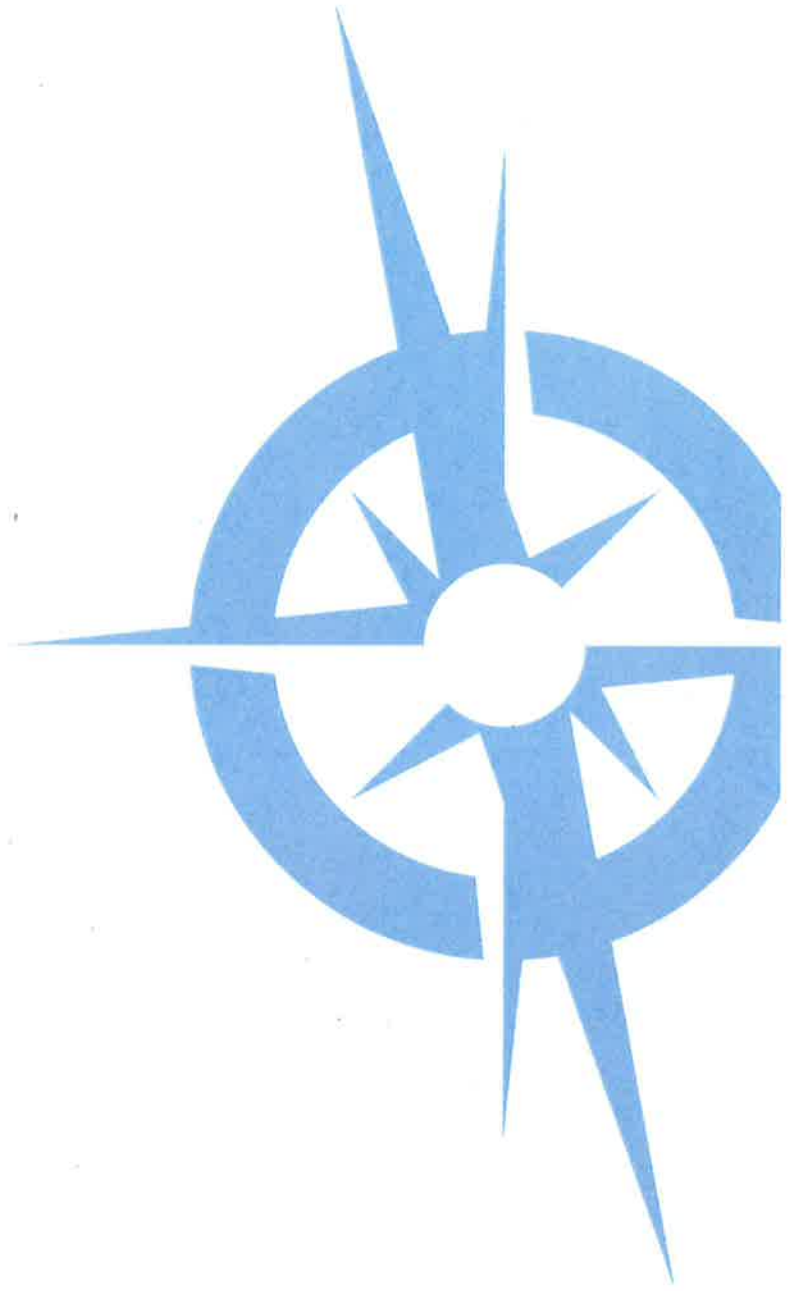
Yours sincerely



Cr David Wright
Mayor

Appendix B

Questionnaire



**Ballina Shire Council
Community Satisfaction Survey 2014**

Q1 In the first part could you please give your opinion of the importance of the following services/facilities to you, and in the second part, the level of satisfaction with the performance of that service. The scale is from 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high

Part A

Community facilities

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low		3	High		Low		3	High	
	1	2		4	5	1	2		4	5
Parks and sporting facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Libraries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Centres and Public Halls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of town centre and public spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Swimming pools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dog exercise areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public toilets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beaches and foreshores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boating Facilities (Recreation/Professional)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Infrastructure

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low		3	High		Low		3	High	
	1	2		4	5	1	2		4	5
Roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General garbage collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recycling options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sewerage management and treated effluent reuse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cycleways and bicycle facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water supply	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drainage/flood management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ballina Byron Gateway Airport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall health of the Richmond River	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Human services

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low		3	High		Low		3	High	
	1	2		4	5	1	2		4	5
Child care services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aged services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationship with indigenous residents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support for volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disability access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affordable housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crime prevention and law and order Initiatives*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Corporate services and management

	Importance					Satisfaction				
	Low		3	High		Low		3	High	
	1	2		4	5	1	2		4	5
Council's customer service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management of development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vegetation management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tourism management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coastline management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Festival and event management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environmental and sustainability initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Long term planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heritage conservation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Part B

Q2. Have you contacted Ballina Shire Council in the last 12 months?

- Yes No **(If no, go to 5a)**

Q3. When you made contact with the Council staff was it by:

- Phone Mail Email In person

Q4a. How satisfied were you with the way your contact was handled? Prompt

- Very satisfied
 Satisfied
 Somewhat satisfied
 Not very satisfied
 Not at all satisfied

Q4b. (If not very or not at all satisfied), how could the way this contact was handled have been improved?

.....

Q5a. How satisfied are you currently with the level of communication Council has with the community? Prompt

- Very satisfied
 Satisfied
 Somewhat satisfied
 Not very satisfied
 Not at all satisfied

Q5b. (If not very or not at all satisfied), how do you think Council could improve its communication?

.....

Q6. How would you like to be informed of Council news and activities? Prompt

- Radio
 Council website
 Community meetings
 Public notice boards
 Local TV
 Leaflets/newsletter in the mail (e.g. Council Community Connect publication)
 Ballina Shire Advocate
 Northern Star
 Northern Rivers Echo
 Byron Shire Echo
 Social Media
 Other (please specify).....

Q7a. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues, but across all responsibility areas? Prompt

- Very satisfied
 Satisfied
 Somewhat satisfied
 Not very satisfied
 Not at all satisfied



Q7. (If not very or not at all satisfied), what is your main reason for feeling that way?

.....

Q8. What do you value most about living in the Ballina Shire Local Government area? Why do you say that?

.....

Q9. Thinking of the next 10 years, what do you believe will be the most important goal for the Ballina Shire community to achieve? Why do you say that?

.....

Q10. Which of the following local pools have you visited in the last 12 months? Prompt

- The Ballina Swimming Pool
- The Alstonville swimming Pool
- Neither of these

Background

The Ballina and Alstonville swimming pools were constructed in the early 1970s. As the existing infrastructure is ageing the operating costs for items such as electricity, water usage and on-going maintenance and repairs is rapidly increasing.

Council is now at the stage where we are required to renew a significant amount of the existing infrastructure. In undertaking this renewal Council is considering whether the community would like to see an improvement of the facilities available at the swimming pools.

Q11a. How supportive are you of Council upgrading the facilities at the Ballina and Alstonville Swimming Pools.

- Very supportive
- Supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Not very supportive
- Not at all supportive

Q11b. Which of the following facilities do you think the community would like to see offered at these swimming pools?

Can be multi

- Expanding the existing small pools at both facilities to provide dedicated training pools
- Improved picnic and BBQ facilities
- Covered spectator seating
- Children's wet play areas
- Additional lanes to meet competition standards
- Possible enclosure of elements of the pools to increase their availability
- Replacement of the fence at the Ballina pool to provide improved views of the Richmond River
- Heating for the Ballina pool
- NONE OF THESE

As a number of these items represent an upgrade to the existing facilities. Council is only in the position to fund these extra works from a special rate variation in the rate income we receive each year.



Typically Council rates increase annually, on average, by around 3%. Therefore for the 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years, we are interested in seeing if the community would support an additional increase of 2.5% per annum (i.e. 5.5% for 2015/16 and 2016/17) to generate extra monies to finance these works.

The average residential rate bill in Ballina Shire for this current year (2014/15) is \$861. This means with the normal 3% increase the average residential rate bill would increase to \$913 in 2016/17. If Council receives approval for a 5.5% increase, the average residential bill would increase to \$ \$958 in 2016/17. This rate variation represents an extra \$45 over the 2 years.

The extra monies raised would then finance the loan repayments for the loans that Council would take out to undertake these additional works. If the extra income is approved Council is looking to undertake the Ballina Pool redevelopment in 2015/16 and the Alstonville redevelopment in 2016/17.

Q11c. How supportive are you of an additional 2.5% rate increase above the 3% standard rate increase to fund these pool redevelopments.

- Very supportive
- Supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Not very supportive
- Not at all supportive

Q11d. Why do you say that?

.....

Part D. Demographic information

Q12. Please stop me when I read out your age bracket: Prompt

- 18–34
- 35–49
- 50–64
- 65+

Q13. In which of the following areas do you live? Prompt

- Alstonville
- Ballina
- Lennox Head
- Skennars Head
- Wardell
- Wollongbar
- Rural/Other

Gender (determine by voice):

- Male
- Female



Have your say on rates increase

BALLINA Shire Council is proposing to increase rates by an additional 2.5% in 2015/16 and 2016/17 to fund upgrades to the Ballina and Alstonville swimming pools.

Public meetings will be held at the Lennox Head Cultural and Community Centre, October 7 at 7pm; the Alstonville Leisure and Entertainment Centre, October 8 at 7pm; and Ballina Shire Council Chambers, October 9 at 7pm.

Northern Star
23/9/14

Re: Rate rise could pay for Ballina, Alstonville swimming pools

If people want governments at all levels to provide public infrastructure and services then they need to be prepared to pay in terms of taxes, rates and levies. The problem with this country is we all want something for nothing. We do not pay enough tax!
Coco50, Ballina.

Northern Star
24/9/14

Levy for pools cops more flak

I WAS one of the frustrated ratepayers who received the letter in regard to Ballina Shire Council's 2.5% levy to fund upgrades to Alstonville and Ballina swimming pools.

I've seen some out-of-touch political administrators in my time but this an open and shut case of how the council's priorities are completely out of touch with reality.

Here are a couple of obvious issues that I thought would be of more of a concern to the council than an expensive consultation process designed to tax everyone in the shire.

Ballina, as a town, is stagnant. It's struggling to attract new industries and the local Ballina economy is going nowhere fast.

Unemployment is high, under-employment is high and youth unemployment is rising at a rapid rate.

It's a key issue for Ballina and the shire in general.

Ballina council's focus? Spending resources on a consultation process for a levy to slug ratepayers on upgrades to municipal pools!

Let's imagine for a moment that an investor looking to open a new business looks at the shires in the area.

Do you think Ballina is a stable investment environment when the council arbitrarily proposes to slug ratepayers when they need to raise revenue for a marginal cause?

I'd like to know how many local jobs will be generated out of the pool refurbishments.

I looked very closely at the council website and found nothing, hang on, isn't this a consultation process?

Shouldn't the ratepayers who are being asked to foot the levy be told how much total revenue from the levy will be put back into the community and create employment?

My advice: sell some of the millions you have tied up in commercial property and install a little confidence in the ratepayers.

Stop wasting our money!
LEE-ANNE TOMKINS, Ballina.

Northern Star
3/10/14

Rates increase?

BALLINA Shire Council is proposing to increase rates by an additional 2.5% in 2015-16 and 2016-17 to fund renovations to the Ballina and Alstonville swimming pools.

To discuss the proposal, public meetings will be held at the Lennox Head Cultural and Community Centre on October 7 at 7pm; the Alstonville Leisure and Entertainment Centre on October 8 at 7pm; and the Ballina Shire Council Chambers on October 9 at 7pm.

Submissions will close on October 31 and can be made by emailing poolsproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au.

Northern Star
3/10/14

Ratepayers hit by wasteful schemes

IT WAS disturbing to read the letter sent to all ratepayers of the proposal to request a special levy to fund upgrades to Ballina and Alstonville swimming pools.

Ballina Shire Council has a habit of wasting significant resources on schemes that lead only to conclusions of mismanagement.

Remember the proposal to pump treated effluent into Emigrant Creek?

That's one of many resource-sapping ideas that led to a waste of ratepayers' money because someone stubbornly couldn't let go.

Ballina council needs to spend a little more time attracting job-producing industries and a little less on slugging long-suffering ratepayers to compensate for poor decision-making and financial mismanagement.

Ballina Shire rates are high compared with similar local government areas.

Shortly the Ballina council will potentially generate significant revenue from either leasing or selling Ballina-Byron Airport.

Any financial manager worth their salt would use this revenue to upgrade facilities or even repay a dividend (through one-off levy reductions) to ratepayers, who are essentially shareholders in the shire.

The council could even get creative for once and introduce a user pays levy on the people who will benefit from the upgrade.

Ballina Shire Council, stop slugging ratepayers and generate revenue from other sources.
YALE KNUDSON, Ballina.

Northern Star
1/10/14

Re: Ballina proposes rate rises to pay for pool renovations

The council has a facility on its website for citizens of Ballina to voice their opinion and vote on the proposal. Who is vetting the result of the website vote?

Would that be the council or an independent body? What's the bet the council will advise that the vote was positive for a rise in rates?

Forgodsake, Lismore

Northern Star
4/10/14

Ratepayers rate council performance

HERE we are at the halfway point of this council, which is a good time to take stock of what this council has delivered and what the council candidates (many of whom were elected) said prior to the election.

I note with interest Eva Ramsey's letter (Advocate, 24/9) concerning the lack of progress on the Indoor Sports Centre.

Before the last council election, I chaired a meet-the-candidates forum where many of the current councillors made it quite clear that fixing up our public pools and delivering the long-awaited indoor sports centre was a priority for them.

It appears that nothing has changed with the current crop and the delivery of the sports centre appears to have slipped off the agenda.

On top of that, now they are telling the ratepayers that if we want our pools upgraded, we will have to pay more rates.

As a long-time ratepayer, I've noticed the rates and other charges have more than doubled in the last 5-10 years.

However, council still tells

the public it has no money.

Cr Jeff Johnson is spot on when he asks the question 'what is more important to our community, a steel factory or an indoor sports centre' (Advocate, 24/9).

Cr Johnson has consistently advocated for a reallocation of council's property portfolio to deliver community facilities but is unable to convince the deal makers who control council's agenda.

As a ratepayer and president of the Ballina Ratepayers Association, I agree it's time the council got back to basics and focused on delivering infrastructure rather than treating ratepayers' money like their own private superfund.

The way we are going, many in our community won't be around long enough to watch their children or grandchildren benefiting from these facilities.

Ross Pickering, President, Ballina Ratepayers Association

Poor pool planning

I SUPPORT maintaining and upgrading the pool, however I do not support being stung a rates increase for the work. The pool has been in

Ballina since the early 1970s.

Did the council believe the pool would never age?

The council should have developed a realistic improvement plan with appropriate timeframes and budget to carry out improvements years ago.

Many of the proposed improvements could have already been implemented individually over time and within existing budgets from existing ratepayer and pool-user fees.

This appears to be another example where the council's failure to plan and budget will generate yet another rates increase for the residents.

Rai Kains, Ballina

Advocate
1/10/14

Pool upgrade

LIKE the Federal Government, Ballina council suffers a revenue problem.

People in Ballina Shire have paid consistently less rates over decades than neighbouring Northern Rivers councils, and are miles behind rates in the city.

If the community want new and improved facilities for all to enjoy, they must be paid for. We are happy to cough up the additional \$20 a year that renovated pools would cost. That's 38c a week - hardly a fortune.

As parents of little ones, we travel to Evans Head in the summer just to enjoy their little water park. Ballina should be attracting a whole new lot of visitors by making the pool really family friendly and sunsafe.

Jo and Ed Smythe

RE: Ballina proposes rate rises to pay for pool renovations

"If they're going to upgrade, but more shade over pool area, put some fun things in for the kids."

Kelli Wilson-Vandenberg

An indoor pool would be better. Upgrade the swim n gym so the pools can be used all year round.

Alana Waples

Northern Star
4/10/14



POOL UPGRADE: The existing Ballina Memorial Olympic Pool and waterslide. A rates rise is mooted to help pay for its upgrade. PHOTO: REBECCA LOLLBACK

UNDER WATER: Residents' concern over \$8m costings

Rates levy for pool upgrades

LEAH WHITE

leah.white@northemstar.com.au

RESIDENTS concerned about the proposed 2.5% rate levy to fund upgrades to the Ballina and Alstonville pools are being urged to take part in upcoming community consultations.

Ballina Shire Council mayor David Wright said the decision to upgrade the pools rested entirely on community input.

"Council doesn't have a set position," he said. "We're asking people what they want."

"If it comes back the overwhelming majority don't want it, we won't do it."

"The meetings are designed to find out a) if people want the pools upgraded and b) to find out what they actually want (done)."

Cr Wright said the idea to upgrade both facilities came from years of surveys that found heated pools were the community's number one priority.

"We've been doing community surveys for a number of years and heated pools have come out on top."

Ballina resident Yale Knudson raised questions about where the \$8 million cost figure came from,

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Tuesday, October 7, at the Lennox Head Cultural and Community Centre, meeting rooms 1 and 2 from 7pm.

Wednesday, October 8, at the Alstonville Leisure and Entertainment Centre from 7pm.

Thursday, October 9, at the Ballina Shire Council Chambers from 7pm.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Ballina Shire Council PO Box 450, Ballina NSW 2478.

Email: poolproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au

ONLINE SURVEY

Visit council's website at www.ballina.nsw.gov.au click on 'Swimming Pools Proposal - Special Rate Variation' and follow the link to the online survey.

whether or not the number of people using the facilities justified their upgrade and why one-off asset sales were not an option.

"There appears to be little if no scrutiny on the cost and various other items that support this council proposal,"

he said.

"A number of questions have not been answered by council and their information brochure on the website is extremely low on detail and high on hyperbole."

Cr Wright said the \$8 million estimate to upgrade was an approximate figure given to council after consultants were engaged to examine the pools.

He said an exact figure would come after community consultation determined what facilities the community wanted and tenders went out to contractors.

Last year, the two pools clocked 187,056 visitors with the heated Alstonville pool recording 6,722 more visitors than Ballina.

"When you consider the number of individual entrances, that's a lot of people," Mr Wright said. Cr Wright said other funding options had been considered but a sale of council-owned assets would reduce the amount of council income, limiting future projects, works and upgrades.

The amount needed to pay for the upgrades is also too much to fund through a reduction in council services.

LETTERS P18

WE ASKED OUR FACEBOOK READERS

Would you be prepared to pay higher rates to have the Ballina and Alstonville pools upgraded?

PATRICIA LOCKREY: I like the price and exactly how it is. It is clean. Beautifully kept and (it being) outside makes following that black line bliss.

JOSH CLEARY: Didn't they say \$30 million between the two pools ... 2.5% sounds better.

JAYBOY SMITH: I just swim at the lake and many beaches we have in the

area. Stay away from that chlorine/urine and swim for free. (More comments on Letters, page 18.)

ONLINE POLL

We asked: Are you prepared to pay higher rates to pay for pool renovations?

Yes - 6%
No, pool fees should cover

maintenance - 72%
I would be happy to pay through a temporary levy, not a rates increase - 20%
This is not an official poll. The results reflect only the opinions of those who chose to participate.

HAVE YOUR SAY

northemstar.com.au

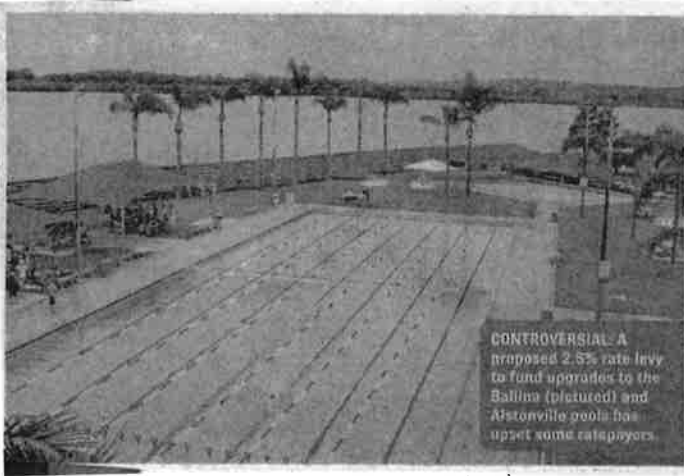


PHOTO: REBECCA LOILBACK

CONTROVERSIAL: A proposed 2.5% rate levy to fund upgrades to the Ballina (pictured) and Alstonville pools has upset some ratepayers.

Northern Star 4/10/14

Happy to pay

LIKE the Federal Government, Ballina council suffers a revenue problem.

People in Ballina Shire have paid consistently less rates over decades than neighbouring Northern Rivers councils, and compared with the rates in the city, they are miles behind.

If the community want new and improved facilities for all to enjoy, they must be paid for.

We are happy to cough up the additional \$20 a year that renovated pools would cost.

That is 38 cents a week! Hardly a fortune.

As parents of little ones, we travel to Evans Head in the summer just to enjoy their little water park.

Ballina should be attracting a whole new lot of visitors by making the pool really family-friendly and sun-safe.

Jo and Ed Smythe, Ballina

Advocate 8/10/14

Pooling resources

IN relation to the proposed rate increase to pay for the upgrade of Ballina and Alstonville pools, councillors can be accused of being, at best, unfair and, at worst, total hypocrites.

We live at South Ballina, so have to pay to use the Burns Point Ferry.

When fees were savagely

increased some years ago, protests were held, but we were told that council employs a user-pays policy and no help could be given.

So now when we go to pay our annual rates, we also pay \$250 per car for a ferry pass as well.

That's right. An extra \$500 for our two cars on top of the general rates bill.

We use the ferry, we pay.

I don't use the pools, but will still be required to pay for the upgrade through a rate increase.

Seems like selective application of the policy to me.

Could it be the old politician's play which goes: "There's only a few hundred voters at South Ballina, so make them pay, whereas there are many thousands

of voters in Ballina and Alstonville, so tread carefully and share the cost there."

So councillors, how about we support your rate increase and you use a tiny part of the millions raised to reduce ferry charges to residential ratepayers.

That way you could sleep easy all night and we would get a fair go. I'll keep an eye out for the flying pigs.

B O'Keefe, Empire Vale

Advocate 8/10/14

Share sport funds

FOR all of those living in the Ballina Shire who would have received a notice from council requesting your input to raise rates to fund an \$8m swimming pool upgrade, this is your chance to make it clear to them in no uncertain terms that you understand that there are limited funds and the use of those funds needs to be prioritised so NOW is the time to recognise the multipurpose sports centre (which will house a minimum of four basketball courts suitable for tournament play) needs to be given priority over the pool upgrades.

From both a social and economic benefit perspective the sports centre is far more important to the shire. If we

can ask the ratepayers to approve \$8m for pool upgrades we certainly should be able to request the far more beneficial sports centre to be approved for about the same cost. With no disrespect intended to the pool users they have facilities that are far more accommodating to them than the Shire sports participants have.

Let's get the priorities right with this, over 578 basketballers around 500 netballers 320 Futsal players life ball, volleyball, badminton and many other indoor sports that are not yet catered for.

All of which are played on an all year round basis. The usage far outweighs the usage of swimming pools for five/six months of the year.

Not to mention the sports tourism multi sporting facilities would bring to Ballina. Let the councillors know how you feel.

**Eva Ramsey,
Lennox Head.**

38 cents a week

LIKE the Federal Government Ballina Council suffers a revenue problem.

People in Ballina Shire have paid consistently less rates over decades than neighbouring Northern Rivers councils, and compared to the rates in the city they are miles behind.

If the community want new and improved facilities for all to enjoy, they must be paid for. We are happy to cough up the additional \$20 a year that renovated pools would cost, that is 38 cents a week

— hardly a fortune.

As parents of little ones we travel to Evans Head in the summer just to enjoy their little water park. Ballina should be attracting a whole new lot of visitors by making the pool really family friendly and sun-safe.

**Jo and Ed Smythe,
Ballina.**

Pool issues

I DO not agree more money should be spent on the existing swimming pool. It is not open all year for schools and residents to use, not heated, it is open to all the elements, has no gym, exercise classes, childminding or aqua. A physiologist or qualified instructors are not available

as they are at the Ballina Fair pool. Ballina should have a complex that includes these amenities. Most towns have one and I think Ballina should too.

**Monica Vomiero
Empire Vale**

Advocate
22/10/14

LETTERS | have your say

Survey shock

I RECENTLY sat in at one of the ratepayers' meetings held at the Ballina Council Chambers and was shocked to find that this council has based the spending of \$8 million on a one-off survey of only 500 residents.

I was extremely surprised to find that Ballina Shire rates are on average \$899 per residence (figures presented by the council). I personally do not know of anyone who pays that little for rates here in Ballina Shire.

The general manager openly stated that a survey of 500 people was taken. This is not a solid representation of the Ballina population, which is approximately 45,000 (and as such this is not seen as a real indication in the eyes of many).

I am sure that 500 people

do not give any true indication of a cross section of our shire or where they would like these fund distributions placed.

Based on the findings of this survey, it is expected that council will spend \$4 million on the Ballina Swimming Pool, which apparently rated highest over the 500 surveyed, and \$4 million on Alstonville Pool, which was shown to rate as the very lowest.

Now I have every concern for the swimmers of our community and I believe strongly that the Ballina pool required maintenance (this has to be done), but this should have been budgeted for within the council's maintenance plan.

It should have been set in place long ago, as that is how most managed businesses operate. It

prolongs and looks after the life of their valuable assets.

I would like to ask why Alstonville Pool is budgeted to have \$4 million spent on it, when it rated as the lowest on the survey, and the council openly states there are no great concerns with the Alstonville pool just needing a revamp with shade shelters and play areas etc.

We have no indoor sports centre in the shire and this council thus far has not made any major attempt to provide one, after 18 years of lobbying.

I ask why is \$4 million of this rate rise being earmarked for Alstonville Pool at all? This \$4 million should be earmarked towards helping to provide a indoor sports centre for the community, not the upgrade of Alstonville Pool.

Ballina Shire Council, come on, consider the wider community and the greater numbers who would benefit from an indoor sporting facility. This rate rise should be divided equally between Ballina pool and the provision of the indoor sports centre.

It is time this council took a real look at what this shire lacks. The CEO and the mayor also openly admit that our council rates in the lowest percentile in NSW in the delivery of community infrastructure.

Believe it or not, we will not stop this rate rise as council are just ticking the boxes, but we can give it equity between two major, much-needed community essentials.

**EVA RAMSEY,
Lennox Head**

substantial amounts can be saved.

**Jim Pike,
Ballina**

Pooling our money

BEFORE the council starts imposing rate increases to finance renovations to their swimming pools, why don't they look in their own backyard?

Why don't they prune some of the superfluous people from their ivory tower and reduce the use of highly-paid consultants?

I am quite sure

Advocate
21/10/14

Northern Star 23/10/14

Upgrade the pool

IN RESPONSE to Monica Vomiero's comments made regarding the pool, the whole purpose of more money being spent on upgrading the pool is so that they have the ability to remedy all those issues you mentioned. With upgrades,

the pool can be heated and therefore open all year, which would greatly benefit the community.

There does not need to be a gym at the pool, as Ballina is saturated with them at present. To include a gym at the pool would only be to the detriment of small local gym businesses.

Also, for your information, as you are clearly misinformed, the pool does have qualified

instructors and aqua classes held four days a week.

I fully support, and cannot wait for, the long overdue upgrade of our local pool.

**Courtney Fitzgerald,
Ballina**

Advocate
29/10/14

Rate hike comment has been extended

BALLINA Shire Council has extended the deadline for comment on the proposed rate increase to fund upgrades to the shire's pools to November 14.

Ballina's mayor Cr David Wright said the Alstonville and Ballina pools were built in the early 1970s and "the existing infrastructure is ageing and the operating costs are rapidly increasing, with large parts of the existing plant and equipment in need of replacement".

"It is estimated that the proposed improvements will cost around \$8 million in total, and we are seeking community feedback on whether to apply for a special variation to the rate income received each year," he said.

"The proposal sets out to increase rates by 5.5% for 2015/16 and 2016/17 and then in the following year, 2017/18, the total rate would increase by the usual estimated rate pegging percentage of 3%.

"We have recently forwarded a second letter to all ratepayers with our second rates instalment notice to make it clear that the 5.5% for 2015/16 and 2016/17 will remain as a permanent rate increase and that rates will not revert back to their pre-2015/16 level after 2017/18.

"Based on these two years of rate increases, the cumulative effect on general rates will be 11.3%, whereas without the additional 2.5% it would be 6.1%.

"The reason the increase remains is so council can finance the pool upgrades from loan funds."

You can email poolsproposal@ballina.nsw.gov.au; complete the online survey at ballina.nsw.gov.au or write to PO Box 450, Ballina NSW 2478

Advocate 29/11/14

Rate figures

IN relation to increase in rates, we should all be

aware that two 5.5% increases over two years followed by three increases of 2.5% is in fact an increase of 19.86% over five years.

If the rates were increased by 3% following the two intended rises for a following three years, this would mean an increase of 21.62% over the next five years.

Ratepayers should be aware that this is the effect of compound rises.

Undoubtedly there would be water and sewage and other rises to add on.

Pat Carney
Wardell

Advocate
5/11/14

Say something!

THE Ballina council has extended an invitation to all ratepayers (property owners) for feedback and their opinion on a 'Special' the Ballina council.

There are many developers in the area, and a lot more trying to get into this area.

Could the council not get a contribution just from them, or pursue options

along these lines?

Why just target the rest of us, a large number of us being low income earners?

If rates go up as the result of not enough persons voicing their opinion, then we cannot complain afterwards if we have not previously voiced our objections.

Pretty much like complaining about a government if one didn't bother to vote.

A Clark,
Cumbalum

Advocate 5/11/14

Increase fees

AS a ratepayer who doesn't swim, I fail to see why I, and many others like me, are to be burdened with further rates rises to pay for a swimming pool at Alstonville which we don't use.

Alstonville is a small town with a large ageing population who have enough problems keeping up with day-to-day price increases in all the things that matter for a comfortable life. Swimming is not a priority for most of us.

I suggest that if improvements are necessary for Alstonville

swimming pool, then the time-honoured fashion is to raise entrance fees, not milk the poor ratepayer.

G.MacNiven,
Alstonville

Advocate
5/11/14

Pool precedent

RE: The pool upgrade Ballina Shire. As the pools are council-owned they should have been budgeted for upgrade and improvement as any other business would have to do.

Is this rate increase to set a precedent for any other council project that is neglected in the budget?

Ron Baird,
Alstonville.

Northern Star
6/11/14

Facility for all

THANK you Courtney for your comments on my letter (Advocate, 29/10).

If it gave the impression I was being critical of the instructors at the pool, I'm deeply sorry.

I don't think that is what I said because I know they do a great job.

It's just that a lot of us like to exercise all year round and because I have had a melanoma, exercising in the sun isn't an option for me.

I know there are gyms, but I don't think any have child-minding.

All I was suggesting was a complex run by the council that provided all the facilities for all the people in Ballina.

I was only using Ballina Fair Swim and Gym as a comparison.

We are fearful of losing it

and the facilities it provides.
Monica Vomiero,
Empire Vale

Advocate
5/11/14

'Lazy' solution

I LOVE our pools.

Both Alstonville and Ballina pools provide a great service, and they're run by some really lovely people.

I don't think there would be many in the shire that wouldn't like to see our pools improved.

Unfortunately our brains trust seems to have forgotten a few things though.

Firstly, we're not a bottomless bucket of money that you can run to every

time you run out of ideas.

Increasing our rates is the laziest and most unimaginative way that council could possibly come up with to raise capital.

They also seem to have forgotten that just three years ago they already hit us with a 7.4% increased "Special Rates Variation" which was slapped on top of our already increasing rates.

That year they also bumped up our water, sewerage and waste charges.

Now it seems they want an additional 11.3% over and above the original "Special Variation".

Does that make this latest rates increase a "Very Special Variation, a Super Special Variation, or just a massive 17.7% slug"?

Nevertheless, we have to pay for these improvements to our pools somehow, so I would like to offer a few suggestions.

Perhaps we could have a salary review of the top band of council executives?

Those guys get paid heaps. Maybe we could have a few less luxury cars masquerading as council vehicles in the parking lot?

Or here's a suggestion: Perhaps council could sell off a few of the shop fronts it mismanages in the main street?

I'm sure in the right hands these properties would have tenants in them

in no time.

Hey, even a few less Iced Vo-Vo's at the council meetings would save a few bob.

Given another 15 minutes or so, I'm sure we could come up with a dozen suggestions.

So come on Brains Trust, put your thinking caps on and come back to us with something sensible.

You're being lazy.

Stephen Bocking,
Alstonville.

Advocate
5/11/14

Say something!

THE Ballina council has extended an invitation to all ratepayers (property owners) for feedback and their opinion on a 'Special Rate Variation' increase of 5.5% (total) over the next two financial years to facilitate the upgrades of the Ballina and Alstonville pools.

Thankfully, the council has gracefully extended its closing date for submissions until November 14.

As a ratepayer/resident, I strongly object to this increase, particularly after the council's revelation that the increase will remain as a permanent increase to our rates after the two years.

Regardless as to whether we use the pools or not.

This means an increase in cost of accommodation for all residents in the shire; home owners as well as tenants, as no doubt landlords will only pass this increase on to them.

With last week's news of a price increase in the cost of petrol effective in just two weeks, and the current talk

and concern of the GST going up as well, this means a general increase in the cost of living altogether, with price increases in food (transport), clothing, furniture, utilities - an overall cost increase in everything.

In my opinion this will not be reflected in the usual CPI or any wage increase in the near future.

We have little or no say in the cost of petrol going up (many times we have complained to deaf ears).

We have little or no say in the possible increase of the GST (it's a long time until the next election).

We have a say in this occasion in relation to our rates and the cost of housing.

Let's make our voices heard.

As home owners or tenants, we need to voice our opinion.

We cannot afford to add this increase on top of the ones out of our hands.

We have until November 14 to tender submissions to the Ballina council.

There are many developers in the area, and a lot more trying to get into this area.

Could the council not get a contribution just from them, or pursue options

along these lines?

Why just target the rest of us, a large number of us being low income earners?

If rates go up as the result of not enough persons voicing their opinion, then we cannot complain afterwards if we have not previously voiced our objections.

Pretty much like complaining about a government if one didn't bother to vote.

A Clark,
Cumbalum

Advocate 5/11/14

No-to-rate-rise

THE only thing Ballina Shire lacks is a Town Crier with a big bell and an even bigger voice yelling out "Oyez! Oyez! Rate rise imminent! Open your wallets to upgrade pools!" Eva Ramsey is right. It is going to happen.

There is even a tender on the council's website which closes October 30 and says: "Tender 781. Provision for Swimming Pool Redevelopment Advisory Services, Consultancy - Public Swimming Pools."

This is a classic case of putting the cart before the horse.

Let me take you back to a conversation I had with the Ballina council general manager in his office some years ago.

He and I were having a discussion about property development when I was a councillor.

A couple of council

meetings later there was an agenda item to hire another Manager and set up the Commercial Services Department, and away it went from there.

The property development balloon was rising!

Does this property development agenda suit you and me, the shire's ratepayers?

My rates (without water and sewage) are already \$3900 a year, and quite frankly I have had enough of rate rises.

With Mayor Wright proclaiming we are in for an 11% rate hike, this means my rates will increase by \$429 a year.

This 2.5% rate rise over two years for the swimming pools is really only a rofl. The swimming pools upgrade can easily be achieved by savings on other things.

What about the proposed new road to the airport which passes a shopping precinct? Why does the council need to spend \$5 million on a new road when the existing road is quite adequate?

Why do ratepayers have to be financially squeezed?

The 2.5% a year for two years doesn't look much, but remember what the carbon tax did to your petrol and electricity bills?

Mine went through the roof.

And what about the old age pensioners and young couples who pay rent, not rates?

You can bet their landlords will use the rate rise as an excuse to put the rent up.

So I say no, no, no to any more rate rises.

We don't need them.

It is time to get rid of all this development.

If the pools have to be upgraded, then do it by culling staff, not by rate rises.

Margaret Howes,
Empire Vale

Advocate 5/11/14

Show compassion

DEAR Ballina council, for God's sake have some humility and compassion for your fellow human beings.

We do not all earn average salaries, in fact many of us are pensioners

trying to live on \$425 a week or less if you are on Newstart due to lack of employment opportunities.

If you have a chronic illness, there are many hundreds of dollars to pay for specialists' fees all throughout the year.

Not only do we struggle to pay council rates but many of us live in strata plans that require about \$2400 a year or more in levies that we also struggle with.

We are already struggling with:

■ Mortgages: Good luck for those just starting out.

■ Council rates: I do not even have kerbing in my street. Shameful.

■ Strata levies: Every quarter, almost \$800. Try finding that.

■ Power bills: Many sit in darkness of an evening and only run the washing machine once a week. We all know the many hundreds of dollars people

are trying to find to keep from having their power cut - in winter the old and frail sit with a blanket over their knees so as to not run a heater.

■ Telephone bills: Tipped to rise again (if it's a 1300 number, forget it, I need that 35 cents).

■ Internet costs: A must, not a choice.

■ Car maintenance:

Always hundreds of dollars.

■ Car rego: Green slip = many hundreds.

■ Petrol: Going up again and now only used for necessary outings.

■ Groceries: Bare basics. Gone are the days of perusing the deli section

items such as olives, sun-dried tomatoes, cheeses etc as these are hygone luxuries - coffee is now prohibitive as are many items.

■ Pet costs: Meat, biscuits, litter, forget about a flea pip, that's a luxury never to be bought again.

■ Vet costs: Just hope your animal doesn't get sick.

■ Home maintenance: DIY if you feel able to still get up a ladder safely.

■ Garden care: DIY if you can.

The list goes on. No wonder people are suffering from depression and/or anxiety.

Life is hard: life is really tough.

This just shows the council is right out of touch with the average person.

Let's hope pensioners are considered in this proposed rate increase because they, quite simply, cannot do it.

I am reading *The Hunger Games* at the moment - life imitating art?

We are but corporate prisoners in a world where we feel powerless to the

Come on council - show us some humility and compassion.

D O'Connell,
Alstonville

Advocate 12/11/14

Listen, councillors

I HOPE Ballina Shire councillors and management have read last week's (November 5) Advocate letters.

A few good letters objecting to any rate rise. Please, Ballina council, listen to the people and forget about slugging the ratepayers further for something you did not make provision for in years gone past.

D Saines,
Ballina

Sports centre needed

I AM writing about the proposed indoor sports centre.

Our population is 42,000 and we have no indoor courts, yet Yamba with a population of 3500 has two indoor courts, Lismore with 44,500 people has four indoor courts and Casino with 10,500 people has one court and is ready to add two more.

A multi-sport facility could also be used for other events such as the Food and Wine and Country Music Festival.

Youth in our town deserve this facility, which could host competitions up to an international standard.

If the State Government would step in and assist Ballina council to build an indoor sports centre, on

council land, for example at the depot site, it could become a reality.

Ballina council has allocated money for the design and development application process but seems to have stalled.

Our Greens councillor and state candidate both support this important improvement to Ballina's sporting infrastructure.

Robyn Sparks,
Ballina

Patience needed

I SUPPORT Eva Ramsey's call for action on the indoor sports centre for Ballina.

This is an urgent need and a reasonable expectation for our community.

However as a mere councillor, I have to play by the rules.

The rules in this case being set by the State Government.

The State Government's new "Fit for the Future" financial rules for councils place a clear emphasis on investing in asset maintenance as opposed to new infrastructure.

Loan funds raised for an indoor sport centre will be treated differently in the audit reports for the council than funds spent on extending the operating life and maintaining the value of the existing swimming pools.

Unless, of course, substantial funding (at least

50%) for the centre can be achieved from state or federal sources.

The risk of being rated as "unfit" for the future is the forced amalgamation of the council with an adjoining shire.

Not something I and I would think any other councillor wishes to risk.

To me, asset management is one of the primary "must do" functions of local government.

I have consistently questioned the council's progress and supported allocation of resources to this vital area of work.

It's correct to say this should've been done in the past.

But "should've" doesn't change the reality of today. We are playing catch-up.

Many of the emails I've received say the pools should be totally user pays. I do not agree.

The council has a responsibility to ensure the provision of much-needed community infrastructure for both sport and therapeutic needs.

I will not support charging our aged or infirm residents full price to access a heated indoor pool for therapy.

I also haven't heard anybody suggesting we should give up our swag of medals come time for the Olympic or Commonwealth Games.

Maybe a medallist at Gold

Coast 2018 is training in our pool right now.

I did not support approving the DA that will allow Ballina Fair to close its indoor pool.

Provision of the pool was a community obligation placed on the developers when the shopping centre was originally approved.

In my view, that obligation was not time limited. However the majority disagreed and the pool will eventually close.

This brings an urgency to undertaking the pool upgrades now.

Why both Ballina and Alstonville, asks Eva?

Economies of scale and reduction of overheads.

Both are in need of work and overall costs reduced if they are undertaken as a joint, though staged, project.

We do need an indoor sports centre but the rules require that we must invest in maintaining our current assets and only build new assets if there is a substantial state or federal contribution.

Consequently we must be patient but ready to seize our opportunity when it arises.

Cr Keith Williams,
Ballina

Advocate
12/11/14

Share rate rise

I WOULD just like to thank Cr Keith Williams for his support and call for action on the Indoor Sports Centre for Ballina.

As Keith so accurately quotes, this is an urgent need and reasonable expectation for our community.

"Patience needed" was the topic for his writing. My thoughts: nearly 20 years, is that not patience enough, I ask?

However, as a mere councillor, playing by the rules is just what our councillors need to do.

Most of the current councillors went to the last election promising without doubt that they would provide indoor sporting facilities to Ballina shire.

For the councillors who were not one of those making that promise, most certainly, willing and maybe opportunistically took the ride on the back of someone that made that promise.

For our community to have a strong future, we need a strong council that provides the services and infrastructure our community needs.

Our council has a vital role in shaping our community and helping it grow, and to grow, you require new infrastructure as well as to maintain a suitable maintenance programs for all current infrastructure - in your words, a "must-do" function of any local government.

Where may I ask does the council legislation state that revenue generated by a rate rise can only be channelled into maintenance of existing infrastructure?

Maintenance of existing infrastructure does not mean the building of extra facilities to enhance and existing facility, such as new shade shelters, play areas and so on.

Maintenance means just that: maintenance.

I stand by my convictions and say again: if this rate rise goes ahead it should be shared equally between Ballina pool and indoor sporting facilities.

There are some people who do not want a rate rise for any purpose.

You are right, this council has a responsibility to ensure the provisions of this

much-needed community infrastructure for sport and our shire's residents' needs.

As stated before, this council rates in the bottom 3% of councils in NSW with the delivery of community infrastructure.

Historically Ballina has produced many elite athletes from various sporting codes and succeeded at Olympic and Commonwealth levels, bringing medals home to Ballina.

Maybe if we build indoor sporting facilities, our future gold medallists or even the entire team could be training here in Ballina alongside future gold medallists in our pools.

For those who do not know, "Fit for the Future" has nothing to do with indoor sporting facilities and the equal sharing of funds between two community infrastructures.

Fit for the Future is this council demonstrating to the NSW Government that they have the ability to sustain this shire without amalgamation with another adjoining council.

It certainly should not be used to mislead the community that Ballina council is prevented from its ballot box-mandated infrastructure delivery responsibilities.

Eva Ramsey,
Lennox Head

Advocate
26/11/14

Rating diverse views

I HAVE been interested to read some recent letters to The Advocate regarding the possible rate variation to support the upgrading of the public swimming pools in the Ballina Shire.

I acknowledge the folk who have made constructive and considered comment on the proposal.

But I am disappointed that some people make the selfish argument 'I don't use it, I don't want it'.

In any community it is important to acknowledge there will always be a variety of needs and wants for the differing citizens that make up that community.

Some may say 'I don't play cricket or soccer, so I don't want my rates spent on provision of fields or ground maintenance' or 'I don't like country music, I don't want my rates contributing to that weekend event' or 'I don't travel on Ross Lane, I want my road upgraded'.

While council does have fees and charges to ensure some degree of 'user pays',

societies everywhere would be much the poorer without diversity and acceptance of the variety of interests and activities enjoyed by people.

Variety ensures that at any time our children, grandchildren, elderly parents or friends may decide to make use of and enjoy different engaging activities for a range of demographics, be they cultural or sporting.

The facts are:

■ Our pools have ageing equipment and use old technology.

■ We have an indoor facility which is not owned by the community and could be closed or changed with little influence by us.

■ We have a large aged population in a lower socio-economic area, in need of rehabilitation opportunities.

In 2014, families and children choose to interact in safe supervised water environments in a very different way (see Evans Head Aquatic Centre or Southport Waterpark).

As the Chairperson of Rous Water, I understand the significant water loss Ballina experiences.

The leaking pools contribute to this in a

substantial way.

This aspect alone means some remediation is not a choice but a necessity.

There are still options and modifications that could be made to the proposal as it stands that could improve the final costings but taking into account Ballina Shire has the lowest rates in the Northern Rivers (bar Richmond Valley), the 'Special Rate Variation', as proposed of \$21 per annum in the first year rising to \$45 per annum by 2017/18, does seem worthy of careful consideration.

Cr Susan Meehan,
Ballina

Advocate
19/11/14

Rates slug to pay for pool upgrades

LEAH WHITE

leah.white@northernstar.com.au

THE Ballina Shire Council will apply for a rate rise to fund much-needed upgrades to the Ballina and Alstonville pools following a decision at last week's Ballina Shire Council meeting.

The rate variation is for a 2.5% increase for 2015/16 and 2016/17 on top of an estimated standard rate pegging increase of 3%.

Under the rate increase, residential properties will pay, on average, an extra \$21 in 2015/16, which will increase to \$45 in 2016/17 and \$46 in 2017/18.

Despite the increase, Ballina Shire Council will have the lowest residential rates out of the six Northern Rivers councils following the Richmond Valley Council's application for a 12.5% rate increase for 2014/16 and a 5.3% increase for the following years.

Even if the rate increase wasn't voted in by councillors, residents would still be forced to fork out \$400,000 per year in operating losses for both pools from inefficient and outdated technology, increasing maintenance and water loss.

A Micromex survey found 83% of people in the

Ballina Shire were supportive of the upgrades, however that number reduced to 60% when the special rate variation was tied to the upgrades.

Of the 367 written submissions to council regarding the upgrades, 45 were in support and 300 were against - the most common response citing the increase would make rates unaffordable.

An online poll found 70% of the 1,739 respondents were against the rate increase, 11% gave conditional support and 19% were supportive.

Cr David Wright, Cr Keith Williams and Cr Sharon Cadwallader spoke about the need for heated, disability accessible and affordable pools to cater for a wide demographic, including poorer residents, who rely on the pools for recreation and exercise.

Ballina resident Anna Marchmont, who lobbied for the pools to be upgraded, said the facilities were considered modern when they were built 40 years ago, but will deteriorate further if not upgraded, costing ratepayers more.

"How many lives have been saved over the past 40 years because of swimming lessons," she said.

Rate rise covers pools



NOVEMBER'S council meeting proved to be a long one with many important decisions made.

After a great deal of discussion, council again supported an application by the Ballina Jockey Club to have a quarter-day public holiday for the Ballina Cup on Thursday, September 10, 2015.

This decision will be forwarded onto the State Government to see whether they will give final approval. A deferred-commencement approval was given to the developers of the Henderson Farm at Lennox Head.

This parcel of land has been landlocked since the purchase from council in 2002.

As the access depended on the development of the Pacific Pines Estate's road infrastructure, the new estate, of approximately 160 blocks, was held up with Pacific Pines being bought and sold a number of times.

Some of the deferred conditions will revolve around access, storm water and endangered plant

species. Approval was given to the planning proposal for the change in the open space area on the corner of Rifle Range Road and Plateau Drive, Wollongbar (the old Summerland Drive-in site).

As council is in the midst of constructing a \$7-million sporting field complex for rugby, netball, tennis and cricket, with associated clubhouses, the new, smaller proposal will have space for a passive area that could include barbecues, shelters, play equipment and walking tracks.

A skate park that was tentatively planned for the area did not receive support due to anticipated sound problems, safety with it being right on a busy road and taking up too much of the new area.

Council accepted a community satisfaction survey recently conducted by Micromex, an independent company who conducts surveys for over 50 councils across Australia.

The survey sourced residents' responses to 39 questions covering such things as libraries, roads, parks and gardens and heating facilities.

Five hundred households were phoned and the

questions were asked to a range of age groups covering all parts of the Shire. This survey was also done in 2006 and 2012.

The 2014 results reflected that most areas had improved in satisfaction levels when compared to the previous surveys and State data.

Micromex also asked further questions on the proposal to seek a rate rise in 2015/16 for the Ballina Pool upgrade and 2016/17 for the Alstonville Pool. The funds raised would be used to repay loans taken by council to complete the works tentatively valued at \$8 million.

The survey came back with an 83% support for the need to upgrade and a 60% response for people being supportive, or somewhat supportive, to using a rate rise to help pay for the upgrades.

Copies of this survey are available on our website (refer to Quick Links - Our Community - Our Future).

Councillors then had considerable discussion comparing the Micromex results with the over 2000 online and written submissions, which mainly opposed a rate rise to cover

the upgrades.

Some of the topics discussed included the need for upgrades due to the age (40 years) of both pools, Ballina Shire's low rate base (we collect over \$7 million a year less than Lismore City Council as their rates are over \$300 higher than Ballina's for a residential property), along with both pools not meeting current disabled standards.

The councillors took into account the requests for a new sports and entertainment complex instead of the upgrades to the pools.

Requests from seniors, schools, swimming clubs and individuals in the Shire to support the upgrades (which would include heating, better access, an extended number of lanes and an indoor heated pool at Ballina) were also considered.

Finally, a 7-2 vote by councillors gave approval for council to send the request for the rate rise to be forwarded onto the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for their decision.

If the rate rise is not supported by IPART then Council will have to prune its overall budget.

Northern Star 1/12/14

Advocate 3/12/14

Pool no help to farmers

IN response to Cr Meehan's comments in the Advocate (19/11) regarding the proposed rate increase to upgrade the council pools: Councillor Meehan quoted the extra costs to ratepayers in residential Ballina.

That is \$21 per annum (2015/16) and increasing exponentially the following year.

However, Cr Meehan has forgotten to mention the farmers and business owners who are charged at a higher rate.

As a farmer with acreage, my calculator tells me I will have to pay nearly four times the amount that Cr Meehan proposed.

The fact that I have not been near the Ballina or Alstonville pools in 25 years is not my point.

I would like to hear how a percentage increase is fair for farmers and business operators.

Perhaps some businesses near the pool may benefit from passing trade, but farmers on the outskirts of town have no such advantage.

To be fair to all, all should pay the same!

Joanne Boyton,
Keith Hall

Advocate 3/12/14

Rating credibility

WELL, as if you didn't already know, your illustrious council has flown in the face of public opinion and voted 7-2 to approach IPART for a rate increase.

A rate increase that 87% of people surveyed did not want.

The council's own survey on their website is the only one that should be considered, as the other survey (paid for by council) was conducted by telephone and the details of that survey have been tallied in a skewed manner to give a false "yes" vote.

In any case, the phone survey only surveyed 500 people whereas the council's website polled over 1700 people.

Even the council's website survey was "orchestrated" in such a manner as to give council the answer they wanted.

If you want to see how this was done, have a look at the results of this survey by Micromex, and note how council has lumped together the small Yes vote, with the "yes, with certain conditions", and the maybe vote, all together to make 60% for, and 40% against.

It's a rate increase that 87% of people surveyed did not want.

This is wrong, wrong, wrong!
Even if you take both surveys into account, the total number of people for this rate increase is far outnumbered by the against vote.

How can this council maintain any credibility with its constituents if it continues to pull stunts like this?

Anyway, we will see what IPART and the Department of Local Government have to say about it.

R Pickering,
President,
Ballina and District
Citizens and Ratepayers
Association

Advocate 3/12/14

Public outcry

RE: The 7-2 vote (one councillor absent) for Ballina Shire Council to seek to raise a rate to pay for upgrading Ballina and Alstonville pools. Why won't all Ballina Shire Councillors listen to the people they were elected to serve?

There was a public outcry, not against the upgrades, but against a rate rise to pay for the work.

Of course, people recognise the need for those pools to be modernised and made safe. But the pools deterioration has gone on for a long while.

Why weren't general funds put aside each year? Or why couldn't some of council's property assets be sold for revenue, as happened with other projects?

One councillor, during a disappointing debate, claimed the objections to the rates rise was from "a noisy minority". That is an insult to legitimately concerned people.

Generally, Lennox Head residents have paid considerably more to buy land, and considerably more in rates than Ballina or Alstonville, because of higher valuations.

The \$1.3 million to improve much needed infrastructure around Lake Ainsworth was raised by selling off what was zoned in the 1922 Lennox Head Estate Plan as public recreation, I understand.

There were strong objections to the sale of that much used public land to the NSW Government, to provide extensions to Lake Ainsworth Holiday Park. Children especially have been deprived of play space.

The park manager was reported as saying there were 1,500 occupants of the

park last Christmas. The extension will attract even bigger crowds.

Have councillors seen the peak holiday crowds around the lake lately? The so-called "jewel in the crown" of Ballina Shire urgently needs re-setting.

As frequently happens during Ballina Council debates, one councillor went on about how Ballina rates were low compared with those of Lismore City Council.

Having reported Lismore City Council meetings for a total 20 years, often there until I am, I am aware of how conscious Lismore Council then was of its regional responsibilities.

It built Lismore City Hall, and recently upgraded it. For decades that hall has provided musical, dramatic, and other performances for the benefit of the region.

The extensive sporting facilities, the Richmond River Historical Society's Regional Museum, which saved so much valuable material for posterity, the Lismore Art Gallery, the Regional Library Service, are just a few brought to mind in a hurry.

Lismore's largesse did not just extend to Ballina. For instance, before Casino had its pool, I was among the many Casino children who learned to swim at the Lismore War Memorial Baths, which had to be modernised and repaired a decade ago.

From way back, Lismore Council contributed to Ballina Lighthouse/Lismore Surf Lifesaving Club. The showground, football codes, bowls clubs and other sporting facilities were hosts to people from around the region and beyond.

Lismore City amalgamated with Terania and Gundurimba Shires when Ballina

Municipal Council amalgamated with the wealthier Timbarbar Shire. Possibly the amalgamations contributed more to Lismore Council's financial burdens.

I have overlooked many arguments which show how Lismore contributed to Ballina's comparatively low rates.

Wouldn't it be better for Ballina councillors to acknowledge Lismore Council's past help to its citizens, and work together, putting aside funds for essential infrastructure projects?

MARELLE LEE,
Lennox Head.

Northern Star
3/12/14

Savings on expenses

IN the spirit of Ballina council, I recently held a survey of the three people in my lounge room and

discovered that 100% of the Ballina community think that surveys orchestrated by our council are bogus.

A further 25% (A guy I was talking to down the pub) can't understand why they pretend to ask for our opinions when they fully intend to ignore us anyway.

But seriously, the way our council has gone about justifying increasing our rates is at least shifty and at best arrogant.

The simple fact of the matter is that all those involved in pushing this increase across the line are doing quite well, living off our rates, thank you very much.

A quick glance at council's 2013 annual report shows that our elected Brains Trust racked up over half a million dollars worth of councillor "expenses" in just one year, with one councillor in particular claiming a massive \$10,354 in interstate travel alone.

The top three senior executives of our council took home \$606,124 of your rates between them last year.

Our Brains Trust took home a very comfortable \$515,747 of your rates money just in expenses just last year.

That's a total in excess of \$1.1 million of your rates money shared quite comfortably between the handful of folk that think

it's quite fine to pump your rates through the roof.

Remember these numbers and those that proposed it at the next local election.

If we really do want to make a few savings to pay for some luxuries in this shire, I think I know where we should start.

Stephen Boeking,
Alstonville

Advocate
10/12/14

Last chance...

REGARDING Ballina council's decision to apply for rate increases above the rate pegging limit to fund loans to refurbish the swimming pools at Alstonville and Ballina.

I have to say that in my 40 years working in the finance area of local government, I have never yet seen the final completed cost of a capital works project be within a bull's roar of the preliminary estimated cost.

The estimate of \$4m for each of the two swimming pools is based on very sketchy data with the proviso that the extent of the work will be tailored to that amount.

In addition, one of the pools is located next to the Richmond River which immediately indicates that any work will encounter a high water table with associated costs.

For the large number of people who registered their objection to Ballina council's proposal, there is a further avenue to lodge your objection.

IPART will accept and consider submissions from interested groups or individual ratepayers for up to four weeks after the deadline for council applications.

The closing date for submissions is March 16, 2015.

IPART's website is: www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

Unfortunately, it is a sad fact of life that many ratepayers will only raise their objections when they receive their rate notices in the mail.

Norm Headford
Ballina

Advocate
10/12/14

Against the majority

WELL, congratulation to Anne Marchment and the Ballina council for going against the wishes of ratepayers, pensioners and landlords.

As quoted in the Northern Star (1/12), of the 367 submissions, 300 were against.

Now unless my maths is failing me, that would suggest that most people wanted this to not be approved, or at least looked at to see what was really necessary and have a smaller budget.

These council members need the sack, and so do the (mystery) staff that recommended that they ignore what was requested by the people of Ballina.

They are the residents' "employees" - they get paid by us to do what the majority of the population want.

Like numerous letter

writers, we already have enough pools to cover all people with all different types of financial situations, but to sting everyone annually for years to come is just wrong.

How many lives have been saved over the past 40 years because of swimming lessons?

Anne asks in the story, well who actually knows because there are a lot of residents choosing to pay for lessons at Ballina Swim and Gym, Lennox Aquatic and private backyard pools, which have nothing to do with the Ballina public pool.

Can someone please name the councillors who voted for this to be approved so that next time an election comes around I know who not to vote for?

Andrea Lems,
Ballina

Advocate
10/12/14

Pool upgrade needed

THE number of entries to Ballina pool last year was 75,000.

No other sporting facility can boast of those entry numbers for a year.

Last week (Advocate, 10/12) Andrea Lems "congratulated" me for my involvement in lobbying for the Alstonville and Ballina pool upgrades via the rate rise.

I am proud of my involvement over the past five years to upgrade the pools.

I spoke at the council meeting for those 75,000 entries and the 42,000 Ballina Shire residents of which only a small proportion wrote submissions to the council.

It is wrong to propose that "most people wanted the rate rise not be approved"

Our councillors do not just represent the submission writers but all of the Ballina Shire residents and voted in their best interests for the present and future pool users.

I have read with dismay the negative letters to this paper regarding the rate rise which equates to less than \$1 a week over the proposed four years for single property owners.

Thank goodness those councillors almost 40 years ago voted to build two public pools.

They too probably faced the same opposition.

I have visited two new modern public aquatic centres this year costing \$90 million and \$50 million respectively, so the \$5 million to bring the Ballina pool up to a modern standard is cheap compared to building a new community aquatic facility.

For almost 40 years the Ballina Shire has maintained and improved the pool surrounds, but the pools now require major capital expenditure to bring them up to modern requirements.

A water stimulus area for toddlers, replacing the old scum gutters with wet decks, heating for all year round use and appropriate access to the main pool for the elderly and disabled and widening the pools so they meet competitive standards are just some of those improvements now needed.

I congratulate the councillors who voted for the "right thing to do" and were not swayed by those with other agendas or were worried about voter backlash at the next election.

This is what local, state and federal governments are elected for: to make decisions in the best interests of their constituents, and not pander to lobbyists or their own personal agendas.

Last week more than 1000 entries to the pool were schoolchildren having intensive swimming classes.

Private pools do not cater for those who either do not have a back yard pool or those who cannot afford swimming lessons.

Yes indeed, dozens of lives have been saved by children who received free swimming lessons at their public pools.

We live in an excellent community with sporting and recreational facilities provided and mainly

maintained by our council and their hard working staff for the benefit of locals and visitors alike.

They are there whether we choose to use them or not.

How poorer Ballina Shire would be without them.

Rates are well spent on improving pools for the health and well-being of all who choose to take advantage of them.

Just as the library, skate park, hockey field, surf club, sporting and recreational parks etc are there also for everybody's use

Anne Marchment,
Cumbalum

Have a say

I CANNOT believe that Ballina council has only acknowledged a few hundred submissions against their rates increase.

I have yet to hear one person agree to it and they also mention that they do not know anyone who does.

Trying to make sense of the council's own files (of which there are six) titled Submissions in Opposition - I could not even locate my own emailed opposition.

I congratulate Norm Headford and Stephen Bocking for bringing the latest mismanagement of ratepayers' money to our attention in last week's Advocate (10/12).

Please, please make a note of the date that you can make your submission to IPART, who need your concerns to be highlighted so that the council cannot waste more money against our wishes.

You can only submit between the dates of February 15 and March 15 to www.ipart.nsw.gov.au.

Make a note on your 2015 calendar and diary because we only have this last avenue to get a fair hearing from IPART which will be bombarded with the so-called experts facts and figures that try to support this rate rise.

You can write to IPART, PO Box Q290, QVB Post Office, NSW, 1230.

Every single email and

letter will count.

Say "I am opposed to the rate increases" with your name and address and it will be included in our case.

J Mangleson-Henry,
Ballina

What's the plan?

AS a non-Ballina Shire ratepayer, but grateful user of some of its sports facilities, I have followed the "debate" regarding its swimming pools with some interest.

Council faces a daunting task, it's true, but perhaps it would receive less criticism if it revealed its plan for all future sporting development, if indeed it has one ...

It certainly seems that a modern indoor stadium as well as an indoor aquatic centre, not just overdue maintenance of its outdoor pools is needed, not to mention other sports facilities to cater for the growing population.

Unfortunately many public sporting facilities operate at a loss, so it is to be hoped that future developments do not result in further rate increases.

So far the issues have revolved largely round the capital cost of maintenance, but little apparent thought has been given to ongoing costs and future

management. How will the facilities be managed, who will be responsible for future maintenance and any operating deficits, who will be responsible for setting fees and charges, and will there be any increase in user fees etc?

Ballina ratepayers deserve to know what is planned for the future, how priorities are determined, and just exactly how any future developments will be financed.

Martin Hole,
Suffolk Park

Advocate
17/12/14

Advocate
17/12/14