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Media Release

For immediate release

3 December 2015

Mayor expresses disappointment over lack of flood protection funding

Mayor of the City of Wagga Wagga Councillor Rod Kendall has expressed his disappointment following Council's levee grant application being rejected by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH).

Council received notification last night its application to the Floodplain Management Program for \$2M over two years was not successful, putting the brakes on the vital levee upgrade project.

The stage one funding would see 2.1km of the Main City levee bank upgraded to one-in-100-year flood event protection.

Cr Kendall said councils and local land services across the state had to fight for a share of only \$4.93M in funding.

"Flood protection should be a higher priority for the State Government – we only have to look back at the devastation in 2010 and 2012 and the lasting impact it has on those affected," he said.

"I don't begrudge the other successful applicants, but we should all be disappointed and frustrated at the lack of funding."

Deputy Mayor Dallas Tout echoed Cr Kendall's sentiments.

"Almost three quarters of the \$4.93M went to one project, with the nine other successful applicants sharing in \$1.27M," Cr Tout said.

"There simply isn't enough funding available and as a result, the Wagga community are sitting ducks until funds come available.

"The detailed designs are done, the project is shovel-ready - all we need is the State Government to come to the party."

Council will continue to pursue funding opportunities so that the levee project can get underway as soon as possible.

At this stage Council is still considering an application for a Special Rate Variation.

Feedback from the community on the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) to fund Council's one-third share of the project will be presented in a report to the December Ordinary Meeting.

The General Manager and the Mayor are making an appointment to meet with Minister Mark Speakman SC MP, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage and Assistant Minister for Planning, to discuss funding issues.

We are working on a number of strategies to upgrade the levy to protect the CBD as soon as possible.

-Ends-

Contact Lauren Pezet on 6926 9197.0409 079 663 or media@wagga.nsw.gov.au or follow us on Twitter - **@WaggaCouncil**



Media Release

For immediate release

14 October 2015

Conversation on funding the levee upgrade begins

Wagga Wagga City Council is proposing to fund its share of an upgrade to the flood levee system with a Special Rate Variation (SRV).

Pending the outcome of grant applications for State and Federal Government funding, Council is committed to funding one-third of the cost to upgrade the Main City Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection, and the potential upgrade of the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 20 year level of protection.

Cost estimates by NSW Public Works indicate the upgrades will cost a total of \$23.3M. Council intends to fund its one-third share of \$7.75M with a Special Rate Variation (SRV). This would be a one-off increase above the rate peg that would stand for five years only.

Under the proposed increase, property owners in the Farmland rate category will pay an additional 1.91% above the rate peg. Assuming a rate peg of 3% **the total increase for Farmland properties would be 4.91%.**

All other properties will see an increase of 4.1% above the rate peg. Assuming a rate peg of 3% **the total increase for all rateable properties not in the Farmland category would be 7.1%.**

The Mayor of the City of Wagga Wagga, Councillor Rod Kendall, says this is an important infrastructure project.

“We need to get moving with this project to help protect the City of Wagga Wagga and safeguard its future prosperity,” Councillor Kendall said.

“If we don’t raise the funds needed with an increase in rates we will have to borrow the money and find a way to pay it back with interest, this will result in reduced services for the community.”

The Committee4Wagga is also throwing its support behind the upgrade.

“Flood security is pivotal to the potential growth required to ensure the commercial and economic viability of our City,” Committee4Wagga CEO Chris Fitzpatrick said.

Members of the community can learn more about the proposed Special Rate Variation and how it impacts them on the website: yoursaywagga.com.au/srv

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

When: 10.30, Thursday 15 October

Who: Mayor Rod Kendall, General Manager Alan Eldridge, Committee4Wagga CEO Chris Fitzpatrick

Where: Front of the Civic Centre

-Ends-

Media Release

For immediate release

16 December 2015

Council cements its commitment to flood levee upgrade project

Wagga Wagga City Council has strengthened its commitment to upgrading the city's flood levee system with a resolution to apply for a one-off temporary rate variation to cover Council's one-third share of the \$23.3M project.

Mayor of the City of Wagga Wagga, Councillor Rod Kendall, said the additional increase will only be applied to rates if and when the State Government begins to commit to its share of funding for the upgrade.

"We are committed to protecting homes and assets in the city and I now strongly encourage the State Government to come on board and provide its share of funding for this important project," Cr Kendall said.

"Wagga Wagga is the largest inland city in NSW and it's time the levee upgrade project was treated as a priority by all levels of government."

Council is pursuing a range of external funding options for the project, with the General Manager and the Mayor currently seeking an appointment with Minister for the Environment and Heritage and Assistant Minister for Planning Mark Speakman SC MP to discuss further.

Council will make the application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a rate increase in 2016/17 of 3.7 per cent for farmland properties and 5.8 per cent for all other properties.

This increase includes the 1.8 per cent rate peg already set by IPART, with the levee upgrade component of the increase being 1.91 per cent for farmland properties and 4.1 per cent for all other properties.

Rate increases for the remaining four years of the variation will be in line with the IPART rate peg only, before dropping off rates notices.

The \$23.3M project includes upgrading the Main City Levee to a 1 in 100 year level of protection and the North Wagga Levee to a 1 in 20 year level of protection. More information on the rate variation and flood levee upgrade project can be found at wagga.nsw.gov.au/srv.

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Known media articles referencing the proposed SRV published during and after the “Fund the levee upgrade” campaign (launched in October 2015) up until 6 January 2016.

Date	Title	Source	URL
15 Dec 2015	“Rates Rise” (starts 2.25min)	Prime News Wagga	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_9AkylCLc0
15 Dec 2015	“Council to apply for rate rise to fund levee upgrade”	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3567751/council-applies-to-ipart-for-rate-rise/?cs=148
15 Dec 2015	“ABC Riverina News Bulletin”	ABC News	http://blogs.abc.net.au/nsw/2015/12/0730-abc-riverina-news-15122015.html?site=riverina&program=riverina_news
14 Dec 2015	“Levee levy losing support”	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3562707/levee-levy-losing-support/?cs=148
13 Dec 2015	“Don’t support increase”	Letters to the Editor: The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3564271/letters-to-the-editor/?cs=155
11 Dec 2015	“ABC Riverina News Bulletin”	ABC News	http://blogs.abc.net.au/nsw/2015/12/0730-abc-riverina-news-11122015.html?site=riverina&program=riverina_news
10 Dec 2015	“Tighten the Belt”	Letters to the Editor: The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3547934/letters-to-the-editor/?cs=148
8 Dec 2015	“I’d rather get wet”	Letters to the Editor: The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3542110/letters-to-the-editor/?cs=155
7 Dec 2015	“Council still looking to proceed with rate hike”	ABC News	http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-07/mccormack-kendall-levees/7006114
7 Dec 2015	“ABC Riverina News Bulletin”	ABC News	http://blogs.abc.net.au/nsw/2015/12/0630-abc-riverina-news-07122015.html?site=riverina&program=riverina_news
4 Dec 2015	“Council urged to back rate rise”	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3538592/council-urged-to-back-rate-rise/?cs=148
4 Dec 2015	“Levee upgrade program...comes to a halt in Wagga”	ABC News	http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-04/levee-money/7000348
3 Dec 2015	“Rate rise still on”	Prime News Wagga	https://au.prime7.yahoo.com/n4/news/a/-/local/30267335/rates-rise-still-on-video/
1 Dec 2015	“Out to dry”	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3531151/out-to-dry-council-told-to-put-north-wagga-levee-upgrade-on-backburner/?cs=148
1 Dec 2015	“Wagga MP lobbying Premier to release more money for levee bank upgrades ”	ABC News	http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-01/wagga-levees/6988898
30 Nov 2015	“Wagga City Council wanted to break the bank”	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3528034/wagga-city-council-wanted-to-break-the-bank/?cs=148
27 Nov 2015	“Levee funding left high and dry”	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3523492/levee-funding-left-high-and-dry/

27 Nov 2015	"Wagga misses out on levee funding"	Prime News Wagga	https://au.prime7.yahoo.com/n4/news/a/-/local/30215204/wagga-misses-out-on-levee-funding-video/
19 Nov 2015	"Levee debate" (starts at 5.50min)	Prime News Wagga	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG6SCG-mvwE
19 Nov 2015	"Forum calls for unity"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3503720/forum-calls-for-unity/?cs=148
18 Nov 2015	"Levee rate rise 'unfair'"	The Riverina Leader	http://www.riverinaleader.com.au/story/3497860/levee-rate-rise-unfair/?cs=1501
16 Nov 2015	"Levee funding"	(starts at 5.50min)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usKumNS0wnQ
14 Nov 2015	"No equity in funding"	Letters to the Editor: The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3490577/letters-to-the-editor/?cs=155
12 Nov 2015	"Levee rate rise unfair"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3487926/levee-rate-rise-unfair/
12 Nov 2015	"We need your help in return"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3488213/trot-track-decision-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly/
10 Nov 2015	"WWCC reviews old rate hike benefits"	ABC News	http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-10/srv-wagga/6926146?WT.ac=localnews_riverina
7 Nov 2015	"We want evidence"	Letters to the Editor: The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3474253/letters-to-the-editor/?cs=150
31 Oct 2015	"Levee bank a priority"	Letters to the Editor: The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3458675/letters-to-the-editor/?cs=150
30 Oct 2015	"Decision makers back a rate rise"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3455817/decision-makers-back-a-rate-rise/
26 Oct 2015	"Upgrade uproar puzzles"	Letters to the Editor: The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3445219/letters-to-the-editor/?cs=150
24 Oct 2015	"Better options to fund the levee"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3442769/better-options-to-fund-a-levee/?cs=148
22 Oct 2015	"Levee levy not right"	Letters to the Editor: The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3437423/letters-to-the-editor/?cs=155
20 Oct 2015	"What is Council thinking?"	Letters to the Editor: The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3431031/letters-to-the-editor/?cs=155
18 Oct 2015	"Blanket rate rise not fair"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3429032/blanket-rate-rise-not-fair/
16 Oct 2015	"Business to cop brunt of rate rise"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3427231/businesses-to-cop-brunt-of-rate-rise/
15 Oct 2015	"Council seeks rate rise for flood protection"	Prime News Wagga	https://au.prime7.yahoo.com/n4/news/a/-/local/29822665/council-seeks-rates-rise-for-flood-protection-video/
15 Oct 2015	"Pay to protect yourselves"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3424774/pay-to-protect-yourselfes/
5 Jan 2015	"North Wagga has potential to be 'city's gem'"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3639164/citys-potential-gem/?cs=148

Additional known media coverage that does not have an online link

WIN News (TV): 15 October 2015, coverage of campaign launch

WIN News (TV): 19 November 2015, coverage of community forum

WIN News (TV): 15 December 2015, coverage of Council decision to make an application to IPART

The Daily Advertiser Editorial: 16 October 2015 "Levee work is needed, but ratepayers shouldn't foot the bill"

Known media articles referencing the proposed SRV published prior to the "Fund the levee upgrade" campaign (launched in October 2015)

Date	Title	Source	URL
18 June 2015	"Wagga council eyes rate rise to become Fit for the Future"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3155312/rate-rise-on-cards/
16 June 2015	"WWCC Fit for the Future submissions flags two potential special rate variations over next six years"	ABC	http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-17/wwcc-future/6551574
26 April 2015	"WWCC draft budget indicates no further job losses and ambitious capital works program in 2015/16"	ABC	http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-04-27/wagga-budget/6423394
4 Dec 2014	"Disappointment in Riverina at rate peg limit for next financial year"	ABC	http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-04/rate-peg/5939486
17 June 2014	"Extra funding scenario to ensure levee commitment"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/2355418/extra-funding-scenario-to-ensure-levee-commitment/
28 May 2014	"Wagga levee upgrade debate continues"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/2311607/wagga-levee-upgrade-debate-continues/
23 May 2014	"Levee bank upgrade full steam ahead: Councillor"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/2303079/levee-bank-upgrade-full-steam-ahead-councillor/
21 May 2014	"Proposed Levee Funding Changes Challenged At Forum"	Committee4 Wagga	http://www.committee4wagga.com.au/proposed-levee-funding-changes-challenged-at-forum/
17 May 2014	"The \$6.7 million dollar levee bank question"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/2287766/the-67-million-dollar-levee-bank-question/
14 April 2014	"City and North Wagga levee bank upgraded sidelined in WWCC 2014/15 budget"	ABC	http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-15/wagga-budget/5390774
14 April 2014	"Changes to help Wagga City Council's financial future"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/2213816/changes-to-help-wagga-city-councils-financial-future/
4 Dec 2013	"We're doing a good job: Kendall"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/1950265/were-doing-a-good-job-kendall/
3 Dec 2013	"Kendall 'furious' over rates"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/1946584/kendall-furious-over-rates/
2 Dec 2013	"Rate pegging announcement of 2.3% is inadequate"	WWCC media release	http://www.wagga.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/27601/2_12-rate-pegging-increase-final.pdf
11 April 2013	"Councillors cold on rate variation"	The Daily Advertiser	http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/1423923/councillors-cold-on-rate-variation/