

Attachment 6: Community Consultation Activity Register for Lismore City Council's proposed Special Rate Variation 2016/17

Date	Target Audience	Activity	Description
Consultation on the BMS and proposed SRV - 26 November 2014 to 24 February 2015			
24 Sept 2014	Key stakeholders	Stakeholder Reference Group	A Stakeholder Reference Group was presented with funding options to implement the Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) and a possible Special Rate Variation (SRV). Their feedback was provided to Lismore City Council (LCC) Councillors for consideration and to inform drafting of the Draft BMS and SRV proposal. See List of representative participants at (Figure 1)
11 Nov 2014	Interested residents/ratepayers	Council meeting, business paper and public access	Published SRV proposal on LCC's website in the Council Business Paper on 4 Nov 2014 (one week prior to the 11 Nov Council meeting; Council Business Paper, Item 2: http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au/infocouncil2/Open/2014/11/OC_11112014_AGN_AT_WEB.HTM); and Attachments to the Business Paper (Item 2. Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and consultation on a \$500,000 Special Rate Variation: http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au/infocouncil2/Open/2014/11/OC_11112014_ATT_EXCLUDED_WEB.HTM). The Council meeting was open to the public to attend and there was the opportunity for two community members to speak in public access time (one supporting the proposal and one objecting).
25 Nov 2014	All residents/ratepayers	Exhibited on Council webpage	Exhibited the SRV proposal on LCC's 'On Exhibition' page (http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-MOK-03-77-58). This included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy with actions to be funded by the proposed SRV, - Question and Answer document on the SRV (Figure 2), and - Factsheet on the SRV (Figure 3). The 'On Exhibition' page can be accessed from the home page of Lismore City Council's website: http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/home.asp . This page also provides the community with access to 'live support' from LCC staff, as well as lodging online submissions.
25 Nov 2014	All residents/ratepayers	Service Desk	The SRV Factsheet and draft BMS (Figure 3) were placed at LCC's front counter for the public to view throughout the public exhibition period. This hard copy availability was also advertised to the whole community through the 'On Exhibition' webpage and publications

Date	Target Audience	Activity	Description
			(see below).
25 Nov 2014	All residents/ratepayers	Social Media	Post on LCC's Facebook page seeking submissions on LCC's proposed SRV: https://www.facebook.com/LismoreCityCouncil (Figure 4)
25 Nov 2014	All residents/ratepayers	Media Release	LCC provided a media release to all relevant media contacts in the region, including newspapers regarding the exhibition of the Draft BMS and proposed SRV (Figure 5). Various media articles were published by local newspapers in hard copy and online.
26 Nov 2014	All residents/ratepayers	LGA wide newsletter	LCC announced the commencement of the exhibition period for the BMS and consultation on the SRV in its fortnightly 'local matters' newsletter which is distributed to every mailbox in the Lismore LGA - approx. 23,000 households. (Issue 23 of Local Matters: http://issuu.com/lismorecitycouncil/docs/lcc_newsletter_23_online?e=7144101/10292798) (Figure 6).
26 Nov 2014	All residents/ratepayers	Media - TV	LCC interviewed by NBN TV regarding the proposed SRV. This was broadcast throughout the Northern Rivers Region in the 26 November 2014 News Broadcast: http://www.nbnnews.com.au/2014/11/26/how-much-will-lismore-locals-pay-to-protect-their-environment/
26 Nov 2014	All residents/ratepayers	Media - Radio	ABC radio interview. Features on the 27 November 2014 ABC Morning Show
Nov 2014	Key stakeholders	Letter & BMS (hard copy)	Key stakeholders were sent a letter and hard copy of the Draft BMS notifying them that the Draft BMS and proposed SRV were out for exhibition and they are encouraged to provide comment.
Dec 2014	3 rating categories	Letter & Factsheet	Letter (Figure 7) and Factsheet (Figure 3) was sent to all ratepayers in the 3 rating categories potentially impacted by the proposed SRV (approximately 17,000 ratepayers).
10 Dec 2014	All residents/ratepayers	LGA-wide Council newsletter	LCC put the BMS feature picture on the cover of its fortnightly 'local matters' newsletter which is distributed to every mailbox in the Lismore LGA, as well as a note on the back cover reminding the community to have their say on the Draft BMS and proposed SRV. (Issue 24 of Local Matters: http://issuu.com/lismorecitycouncil/docs/lcc_newsletter_24_online?e=7144101/10471960) (Figure 8)
Jan 2015	3 rating categories	Survey by independent consultant	The Hunter Research Foundation undertook an independent phone survey of 200 successful ratepayers to determine the level of willingness and capacity for the proposed SRV.
21 Jan 2015	All residents/ratepayers	LGA-wide Council newsletter	LCC reminded the community to provide comment on LCC's Draft BMS and proposed SRV in its fortnightly 'local matters' newsletter which is distributed to every mailbox in the Lismore

Date	Target Audience	Activity	Description
			LGA. (Issue 27 of Local Matters: http://issuu.com/lismorecitycouncil/docs/local_matters_issue_27_online?e=7144101/10927994) (Figure 9)
1 Feb 2015	All residents/ratepayers	Lismore Carboot Market	Market stall provided information and an opportunity for the community to get informed and provide a formal submission on the day.
3 Feb 2015	All residents/ratepayers	Media – TV	Interview with NBN TV. Included in the 3 February 2015 News broadcast: http://www.nbnnews.com.au/2015/02/03/lismores-own-robin-hood/
8 Feb 2015	All residents/ratepayers	The Channon Markets	Market stall provided information and an opportunity for the community to get informed and provide a formal submission on the day.
10 Feb 2015	All residents/ratepayers	Organic Farmers Markets	Market stall provided information and an opportunity for the community to get informed and provide a formal submission on the day.
12 Feb 2015	All residents/ratepayers	Lismore City Markets	Market stall provided information and an opportunity for the community to get informed and provide a formal submission on the day.
15 Feb 2015	All residents/ratepayers	Lismore Carboot Market	Market stall provided information and an opportunity for the community to get informed and provide a formal submission on the day.
18 Feb 2015	All residents/ratepayers	LGA-wide Council newsletter	LCC for the third time asked the community to provide comment on LCC's Draft BMS and proposed SRV in its fortnightly 'local matters' newsletter which is distributed to every mailbox in the Lismore LGA. (Issue 29 of Local Matters: http://issuu.com/lismorecitycouncil/docs/local_matters_issue_29_online?e=7144101/11470488) (Figure 10)
7 Mar 2015	3 rating categories	Community Forum	LCC conducted a Community Forum with randomly selected participants, where the community could provide LCC with their informed view of the SRV to implement the BMS.
14 April 2015	All residents/ratepayers	Council meeting, business paper and public access	Council Business Paper published on Council's website on 7 April 2015 (one week prior to the 14 April Council meeting) for the public to review. This Business Paper was associated with a decision on whether to apply to IPART for the SRV based on community consultation results (Council Business Paper, Item 3: http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au/infocouncil2/Open/2014/11/OC_11112014_AGN_AT_WEB.HTM); and Attachments to the Business Paper, Item 1 : http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au/infocouncil2/Open/2015/04/OC_14042015_ATT_EXCLUDED_WEB.HTM) The Council meeting was open to the public to attend and there was the opportunity for two community members to speak in public access (one supporting the proposal and one against).

Date	Target Audience	Activity	Description
Consultation on proposed amendments to the 4 Year Plan and Long Term Financial Plan			
8 Sept 2015	All residents/ratepayers	Council meeting – open to the public	The 8 Sept 2015 Council meeting resolved to exhibit proposed amendments to the 4 Yr Plan and LTFP. This was open to the public and proposed amendments where published on LCC's website.
14 Oct 2015	All residents/ratepayers	LGA wide newsletter - <i>Local Matters</i>	Initial notification by LCC to the community in its fortnightly LGA-wide 'local matters' newsletter that LCC would be exhibiting proposed amendments to the 4 Yr. Plan and LTFP in the Northern Star and Echo for 28 days before the end of the year. (Issue 46 of Local Matters: http://issuu.com/lismorecitycouncil/docs/local_matters_issue_46_online_80b55036f0f4d0?e=7144101/30671545) (Figure 11)
23 Oct 2015	All impacted Lismore ratepayers residing outside 2480 (2055 ratepayers)	Letter and factsheet	A letter and factsheet was sent to all impacted ratepayers residing outside of the LGA, which advertised exhibition of proposed amendment to the 4 Year Plan and LTFP, as well as provided additional information on the SRV. (Figure 12 and 13)
24 Oct 2015	All residents/ratepayers	Exhibition notice and article - Northern Star Classifieds and Article	LCC announced the commencement of the exhibition period for proposed amendment to the 4 Yr. Plan and LTFP, and provided additional information on the SRV. This was published in the Saturday Northern Star and commencement of the 28 day exhibition period.
29 Oct 2015	All residents/ratepayers	Exhibition notice and article - Northern Rivers Echo	LCC again announced the exhibition of proposed amendments to the <i>Imagine Lismore</i> 4 Year Plan and LTFP, and provided additional information on the SRV through a publication in the Thursday Northern Rivers Echo.
11 Nov 2015	All residents/ratepayers	LGA wide newsletter - <i>Local Matters</i>	LCC again announced the exhibition of proposed amendments to Strategic Plans and provided additional information on the SRV in its fortnightly 'local matters' newsletter which is distributed to every mailbox in the Lismore LGA. (Issue 48 of Local Matters: http://issuu.com/lismorecitycouncil/docs/local_matters_issue_48_online?e=7144101/31289972) (Figure 14)

Figure 1: List of representative participants from the Stakeholder Reference Group for the Biodiversity Management Strategy.

Member	Representation
Mr Andrew Gordon	Ratepayers Association of Lismore Inc.
Dr David Newell	Southern Cross University (SCU)
Mrs Emma Stone	Richmond Landcare Inc. and Whian Whian Landcare Inc.
Mr Jeffrey Zanette	Richmond River Banana Growers
Mr Jolyon Burnett	Australian Macadamia Society
Mrs Kath Robb	NSW Farmers
Mr Kel Graham	Coo-eeEE Property Rights Inc.
Ms Leigh Shearman	Norco Co-operative Ltd
Mr Michael Delaney	EnviTE Inc.
Mr Paul Cheeseman	Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers Inc.
Ms Donna Graham then Dr Roslyn Irwin	Friends of the Koala (Fotk)
Ms Sharon McGrigor	WIRES Northern Rivers



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Biodiversity Management Strategy and supporting Special Rate Variation

These 'Questions and Answers' provide responses to questions regarding the Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) and the proposed Special Rate Variation to implement the BMS.

Q: How does the BMS achieve what the community wants?

A: In the *Imagine Lismore* consultation process the community said it wanted Council to provide environmental leadership. Council responded by, like many other councils, developing a BMS. Council is now asking the community if the BMS is what they wanted, and if they are willing to invest in what they said they wanted in *Imagine Lismore*. The BMS will achieve what the community wants if you (the community) guide Council by providing comments on the Draft BMS and a proposed Special Rate Variation.

Q: How can the community get involved?

A: At this stage you can provide comment and feedback on the Draft BMS in the public exhibition period between 26 November 2014 and 24 February 2015. You can send submissions to the General Manager at PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480 or email council@lismore.nsw.gov.au. You can also make an online submission at the bottom of the page detailing the BMS public exhibition materials.

Q: Is Council just trying to increase rates?

A: No. Council is offering the community a BMS, which the community asked for, and is asking if the community wants to pay for it. Council cannot increase rates if the community is not supportive (see below).

Q: Can Council just decide to increase rates?

A: No. Even if the Lismore community wants a rate increase, and Council applies for a rate increase, it is up to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to make the final decision to increase rates.

Q: How much would the rate increase be?

A: The rate increase would be an ongoing \$500,000 per annum, which equates to a 1.9% increase in Council's current annual rates revenue.

Q: Who would have to pay?

A: Three rating categories of ratepayers would pay the rate: Farmland, Residential/Rural and Residential Urban/Villages. Businesses would be excluded as they incurred the Special Business Rate Variation Levy in 2013.

Q: How much would it cost landowners?

A: The cost depends on which rating category you are in and the value of your land. Land value is based on the NSW Valuer General's land value, and does not include assets (buildings etc.) on your land.

Table 1 below shows the average cost for each rating category which has been calculated on the average land value in each of the three rating categories. The average land values for each rating category are: Farmland = \$375,000; Residential Rural = \$192,000; and Residential Urban/Villages = \$113,000. Note that the average cost for Farmland is higher due to higher average land values.

Rating Category Average	Average Increase (per year)	Average Increase (per week)
Farmland (1,920 ratepayers)	\$50.63	97c
Residential Rural (2,852 ratepayers)	\$31.68	61c
Residential Urban/Villages (12,356 ratepayers)	\$25.43	49c

Table 2 below shows examples of land values and the corresponding cost for each rating category.

NSW Valuer General Land Value			
Rating Category	\$100,000	\$250,000	\$500,000
Farmland	\$13.50	\$33.75	\$67.50
Residential/Rural	\$16.50	\$41.25	\$82.50
Residential	\$22.50	\$56.25	\$112.50

Note the average land values for each rating category: Farmland = \$375,000; Residential/Rural = \$192,000; and Residential = \$113,000.

Q: When would people start to pay?

A: The rate increase could start in July 2016, at the earliest. However this would only happen if the community supports the rate increase, Council applies to IPART in February 2016, and IPART approves the application.

Q: What will the community get for its money?

A: Besides benefitting biodiversity, the community will get: cleaner roadsides; confidence that Council is undertaking best environmental management practice in its activities; recognition for your work and community achievements; assistance to landholders and community groups to manage pests and weeds; opportunities to gain knowledge; assistance to manage bushland and riversides in on rural land; more opportunities to get involved through community events, workshops and field days; well-managed urban bushland reserves; and more recreational opportunities in the urban setting, such as walking tracks.

Q: What will the community have to do now?

A: Nothing, if you don't want to – but Council would encourage you to make a submission on the Draft BMS and proposed SRV. If the BMS is adopted, Council will make sure you (the community) are informed on how you can get involved in BMS programs. This will be done in Council's door-to-door Local Matters publication, our website, and other media.

Q: Why can't it be covered in the existing Council budget?

A: Council's resourcing strategy, in Council's *Imagine Lismore* 10 Year Plan, shows what Council has done to tighten its belt to increase efficiencies; however no budget has been available to implement the BMS. It has been decided that an Special Rate Variation is necessary to make sure existing Council services are not impacted and the BMS receives reliable and long-term funding.

Q: What will change?

A: The BMS provides an array of 63 actions. Most of these provide opportunity for the community to get involved in the benefits of managing biodiversity in the urban and rural landscapes. The consultation period is the community's opportunity to help guide Council on what you want to see changed. Please consider this when compiling your submission on the Draft BMS actions.

Q: How can we see if the BMS is working?

A: The BMS will be reviewed every four years and the community will be informed of Council's progress in achieving the objectives of the BMS within that time. Key achievements of the BMS will be regularly broadcast to the community to keep you informed.

Q: Will it mean more regulation?

A: No. The BMS will actually provide clearer direction for developers and the community regarding Council's expectations of sustainable development. Council will do this by developing a Biodiversity Development Assessment Framework that formalises what Council already implements when it assesses developments. In terms of environmental protection zones, see below.

Q: How will this affect E-zones?

A: The BMS has looked at E-zones as just one of a range of tools it can use to protect and enhance biodiversity in the Lismore LGA. The BMS points out that in many cases there may be more benefit in encouraging and assisting rural landholders to manage biodiversity on their land through a well-funded incentive and education program, than applying E-zones, which in the past has created conflict and division. However this relies on there being enough funding to make incentive programs meaningful to landholders. Although the BMS considers E-zones as a potential tool, the State Department of Planning and Environment is currently reviewing the use of these in the northern NSW, meaning the use of E-zones is uncertain, and any use of E-zones is determined through Council's Local Environment Planning (LEP) processes (not the BMS).

Q: How much funding would Council get and why?

A: The 10-year BMS budget allocates 11% of the annual \$500,000 to upgrade Council's planning, processes and operational procedures, and provide training for best practice. However 5% of this would go towards addressing

Figure 3: Factsheet

Comparative to other NSW councils, Lismore City Council is a poor spender on the environment. The NSW Government Comparative Information on NSW Local Government Report compares the performance of local governments across NSW. In 2012/13 this report stated that Lismore City Council spends about 23% less on the environment (including waste) compared to the average NSW council.

How do we compare?

As a matter of good practice, strategies should include a funded implementation program. Council's current *Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan* proposed that the BMS could be funded and implemented via grant funding from the former Commonwealth Government's Biodiversity Fund. However, this funding no longer exists. Consequently, Council investigated alternative funding mechanisms including: Council's existing general purpose revenues, an SRV, rate rebates, Section 94 contributions, and grant funding. Most of these options were rejected based on their inability to deliver reliable, long-term funding.

It has been concluded that the only effective way to reliably fund implementation of the BMS in the long term, that does not substantially impact Council's existing services, is through an SRV.

Council is now asking the community if it is willing and able to support this rate increase to enable implementation of the BMS.

Background to the Special Rate Variation proposal

The BMS can be viewed at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au or in hardcopy at Council's Corporate Centre, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah, during normal business hours Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Setting the Scene

Development of the BMS was a requirement from Council's previous and current Community Strategic Plan (*Imagine Lismore 10 Year Plan*) as well as the subsequent Delivery Plan (*Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan*). It is also a response to the *Imagine Lismore* community consultation process where the environment emerged as the community's number one priority and the community said it wanted Council to provide environmental leadership.

Development of the Draft BMS has been guided by regional biodiversity management plans as well as consultation with the public, stakeholders through a Stakeholder Reference Group made up of representatives from key industry, landholder and environment groups, and a Councilor Feedback Group. It also took into consideration mapping studies of vegetation and key wildlife habitats and corridors.

Background to the Biodiversity Management Strategy

Lismore City Council has drafted a Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) for the Lismore Local Government Area (LGA).

The Draft BMS is designed to improve the health of our waterways, increase habitat and biodiversity for our native flora and fauna, improve parks and bushland reserves, and ensure new development is ecologically sustainable. The strategy also aims to build strong partnerships with rural landholders and community groups to increase biodiversity.

The Draft BMS is on public exhibition for three months between 26 November 2014 and 24 February 2015. During this time, Council is also consulting with the community on a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to enable implementation of the BMS. This fact sheet provides an overview of the Draft BMS and the proposed SRV (who would pay, how much it would cost and what it would pay for). It also provides the various ways you can provide Council with feedback.

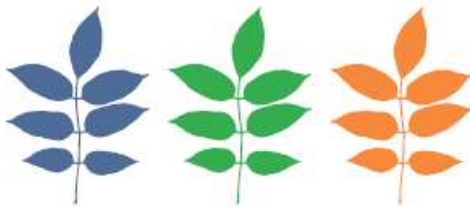
Council is seeking your feedback



Please read the enclosed information on the Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and proposed Special Rate Variation carefully.

We are seeking your feedback. Your input will help us understand what the community wants.

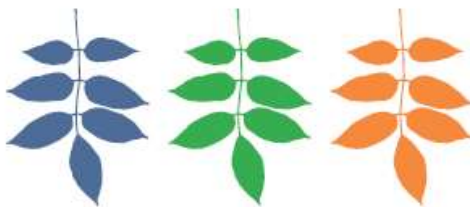
Feedback and submissions are due by 24 February 2015.



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Written submissions should be addressed to the General Manager, PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480 or emailed to council@lismore.nsw.gov.au.

To make an online submission go to our website www.lismore.nsw.gov.au and find the Draft BMS in our 'On Public Exhibition' section.



Biodiversity Management Strategy

Community consultation on Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and proposed Special Rate Variation.



43 Oliver Avenue
Goonellabah NSW 2480
1300 87 83 87
www.lismore.nsw.gov.au



► The proposal

When would it start?

At the earliest, the rate increase could start on 1 July 2016. However this would only happen if the community supports the rate increase, Council decides to apply to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) and IPART approves the application.

Whose rates would increase?

There are seven ratepaying categories in the Lismore LGA, of which only three would pay the rate: Farmland, Residential Rural, and Residential Urban/Villages. The business rating categories would be excluded from the SRV.

How much would the increase be?

To fully implement the BMS, the proposed SRV would seek to raise an ongoing \$500,000 per annum which equates to a 1.9% increase in Council's current annual rates revenue.

Council has also prepared two other possible options for consideration. The option detailed in this fact sheet is the proposal and the other options are for comment. For further information visit www.lismore.nsw.gov.au and go to our 'On Public Exhibition' section.

The proposed SRV does not qualify for a fixed amount per property increase, meaning the cost would vary for each ratepayer depending on which rating category they are in and the NSW Valuer General's land value (not including buildings and other assets).

Table 1 below shows the average cost for each rating category which has been calculated on the average land value in each of the three rating categories. The average land values for each rating category are: Farmland = \$375,000; Residential Rural = \$192,000; and Residential Urban/Villages = \$113,000. Note that the average cost for Farmland is higher due to higher average land values.

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How does the rate increase relate to Council's Long Term Financial Plan?

An SRV for the implementation of the BMS has been considered in the context of Council's Long Term Financial Plan, a key element of the *Imagine Lismore 10 Year Plan*. The Long Term Financial Plan sets out a 'Road to financial sustainability' by using existing resources more wisely and potentially seeking a rate increase above current rating caps. The current Long Term Financial Plan proposes a separate SRV of \$2 million per year from 2018/19 for renewal of infrastructure, predominantly roads.

Any future SRV would be outside of this Council term, meaning this elected Council would not be able to deliver on the community's vision of developing and implementing a BMS. However, Council has decided to ask you, the community, if you would be willing to financially support and secure the implementation of the BMS within this Council term. If the community supports this SRV and it is approved by IPART, this would be incorporated into Council's Long Term Financial Plan and considered in any future application to IPART.



► What will the BMS and rate increase do?

The Draft BMS is designed to protect and enhance biodiversity right across the LGA. This includes improving the health of our creeks and waterways through riverbank restoration, increasing habitat for native birds and animals on public and private land, enhancing walking tracks and opportunities to enjoy parks and bushland reserves, and ensuring new development is ecologically sustainable.

The Draft BMS sets out 63 actions to achieve this over the next 20 years. Many of these actions will be implemented with Council's existing resources, however 28 require funding. The Draft BMS includes a 10-year budget that provides a view on what the rate increase would pay for.



BMS actions are roughly divided into three categories:

Internal (Council keeping its house in order)

- Review, update and development of Council processes, procedures and associated staff training to ensure best-practice environmental management. For example, review the Operational Plan for Roadside Vegetation Management and invest in implementing staged management of roadside weeds.
- Develop a Biodiversity Development Assessment Framework to provide clarity on Council's expectations regarding ecologically sustainable development.

Partnering with the community

- Support the community to improve biodiversity values in the Lismore LGA and celebrate landholder and community achievements around biodiversity.
- Provide a variety of educational resources and programs tailored to different levels of experience, exposure and interest, such as the general community, schools or industry groups. These actions focus on involving and supporting the community.

Rural (working with the rural community)

- A Rural Landholder Initiative is being developed in partnership with Southern Cross University and Lismore's agricultural community. This initiative is based on creating incentives and resources to assist and encourage landholders to manage biodiversity and ecosystem services on their properties. The initiative focuses on the benefits to both biodiversity and a healthy environment for agricultural production (ecosystem services).
- Invest in repairing riparian areas in the rural environment and building partnerships with community and industry groups to enhance Lismore's biodiversity values.

Urban (working within the urban environment)

- Build and protect biodiversity values in Lismore's urban environment by linking and enhancing existing bushland and riparian areas. This will include weed management and bushland regeneration.
- Promote biodiversity values and increase opportunities for the community to interact with biodiversity through a range of initiatives, such as the development of bushland walking tracks.
- Implement actions in the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management to benefit Lismore's koala populations.

► The consultation process

Between 26 November 2014 and 24 February 2015 you have the chance to provide Council with a clear indication of support, or otherwise, for the Draft BMS and proposed SRV.

The Draft BMS and details on the proposed SRV can be viewed at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au or in hardcopy at Council's Corporate Centre, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah, during normal business hours Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Community feedback is vital for Council to understand:

- If the Draft BMS meets your expectations and if you have any comments and suggestions.
- If you would be willing and able to support a rate increase to implement the BMS.

Council will reach as many people as possible to spread the word and seek the community's feedback. Every mailbox in the Lismore LGA will receive information in Local Matters. Council will also send out media releases, hold market stalls, use its social media forums, put information on the website and ask key stakeholders to distribute information through their networks.

All residents and ratepayers in the Lismore LGA

Written submissions

All residents and ratepayers in the Lismore LGA can make a written submission to Council. Written submissions should be addressed to the General Manager, PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480 or emailed to council@lismore.nsw.gov.au by 24 February 2015.

Online submissions

All residents and ratepayers in the Lismore LGA can make an online submission. Simply go to our website www.lismore.nsw.gov.au and find the Draft BMS in our 'On Public Exhibition' section.

The three ratepaying categories

Mail out

All ratepayers that would pay the increase (Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Villages) will receive an explanatory letter and this fact sheet. Ratepayers are encouraged to have a say regarding Council's proposal.

Community Forum

Council will invite 40 participants from the three rating categories to attend a Community Forum and lunch on Saturday afternoon, 21 February 2015. Participants invited will be randomly selected through an external automated process to ensure there is no bias in the selection process.

Workshop participants will be a wholly representative sample of the ratepayers from the three categories and will be selected from across the whole Lismore LGA.

If you receive this opportunity Council encourages you to participate as your views and ultimately your submission will play an important role in Council's decision-making processes.

Independent consultation

Council has engaged the independent Hunter Research Foundation to undertake independent community consultation on the Draft BMS and supporting SRV. The Hunter Research Foundation will randomly select around 200 ratepayers in the relevant three rating categories to conduct short telephone interviews.

If you receive this opportunity Council encourages you to participate as it will play an important role in Council's decision-making processes.

If you would like further information on the Draft BMS, proposed SRV and the consultation process, please phone 1300 87 83 87.



Figure 4: Facebook post

The image shows a Facebook post from Lismore City Council. The post is titled "Consultation begins on biodiversity strategy and proposed rate increase – Lismore City Council". The text of the post reads: "Have your say on the Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and the proposed rate increase to fund its implementation. What is biodiversity worth? Are you willing to help pay to improve and protect it? There is three months to comment. All ratepayers will be sent a letter to their home discussing the proposal and anyone can make a submission online via our website." The post was published by Tereza Seacord on 25 November 2014. On the right side of the post, there are statistics: 7,701 Post Reactions, 928 Post Engagements, and 1 Week in Review. Below these statistics, it says "2 of 1 Response" and "12 hours Response". At the bottom of the post, there is a link to the full article: "Lismore City Council will tomorrow place the Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) on public exhibition and begin community consultation into it..." with the URL "LISMORE.NSW.GOV.AU".

MEDIA RELEASE



Consultation begins on biodiversity strategy and proposed rate increase

Lismore City Council will tomorrow place the Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) on public exhibition and begin community consultation into a proposed rate increase to fund its implementation.

Over the next three months, Council will ask the community for its opinion on a proposed \$500,000 per annum Special Rate Variation.

The funds would be used exclusively for the implementation of the BMS, which includes building partnerships with the community and measures to protect and enhance biodiversity on public and private land in both urban and rural landscapes.

"During the Imagine Lismore consultation, the community said it wanted Council to provide environmental leadership and Council has responded by developing a BMS. The Imagine Lismore process showed that the environment is a top priority for our community," explained Council's Ecologist Theresa Adams.

"Council is now asking the community if the BMS we have developed is what they wanted, and if they are willing to invest in it. Council cannot raise rates unless the community is supportive of the idea, so the consultation period is our chance to explain the BMS and ask our community if it has the capacity and the desire to fund these environmental initiatives.

"In essence, the BMS will deliver cleaner roadsides; assist landholders and community groups to manage pests and weeds; assist management of bushland and riversides on rural land; provide more opportunities for community involvement through events, workshops and field days; and provide more recreational opportunities in well-managed urban bushland reserves, such as walking tracks."

The BMS sets out various key actions that include:

- Improving Council processes, procedures and associated staff training to ensure best-practice environmental management.
- Achieving ecologically sustainable development by creating a Biodiversity Development Assessment Framework for the assessment of development applications.
- Implementing the Rural Landholder Initiative in partnership with Southern Cross University and Lismore's agricultural community. The program is based on creating incentives to assist and encourage landholders to manage biodiversity on their properties.

- Implementing the Urban Green Corridors Plan to enhance Lismore's urban environment by linking existing bushland and riparian areas.
- Education programs tailored to the community, schools and industry groups.

The proposed rate rise would apply to three rating categories – Residential, Rural Residential and Farmland – and exclude businesses as they incurred a rate increase in 2013.

The rate rise would be based on the NSW Valuer General's land values, with the average urban resident paying \$25.43 per year; the average rural resident paying \$31.68 per year; and the average farmland resident paying \$50.63 per year. The average cost for farmland is higher due to the higher average land value.

If the community is supportive of the rate rise, Council will decide whether to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for the Special Rate Variation. If approved, it would take effect from July 2016.

All ratepayers affected by the proposed Special Rate Variation will receive a letter detailing the proposal and opportunities for comment. Council will also engage a consultant to undertake independent community consultation over the next three months.

The Draft BMS is on exhibition from 26 November 2014 until 24 February 2015.

It can be viewed at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au or in hardcopy at Council's Corporate Centre, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah, during normal business hours Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Submissions on the Draft BMS and proposed rate increase can be made online via our website, emailed to council@lismore.nsw.gov.au or posted to the General Manager, Lismore City Council, PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480. Submissions should state reasons for objection or support.

Terra Sword | Media Coordinator | Lismore City Council

T 02 6625 0529 | M 0437 697 723 | www.lismore.nsw.gov.au

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Figure 6: Local Matters Newsletter



DRAFT BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND PROPOSED RATE INCREASE

On public exhibition 26 November 2014 to 24 February 2015

Council has placed the Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) on exhibition for three months for community comment.

In conjunction with the exhibition period, Council will hold community consultation into a proposed \$500,000 per annum Special Rate Variation to fund the implementation of the strategy.

The BMS provides a framework for Council to build partnerships with the community to protect and enhance biodiversity on public and private land in both urban and rural landscapes.

The BMS aims to deliver cleaner roadsides; assist landholders and community groups to manage pests and weeds; assist management of bushland and riversides on rural land; provide more opportunities for community involvement through events, workshops and field days; and provide more recreational opportunities in well-managed urban bushland reserves, such as walking tracks.

The proposed rate increase to implement the BMS would apply to three rating categories: Residential, Rural Residential and Farmland.

The rate rise would be based on the NSW Valuer General's land values, with the average urban resident paying \$25.43 per year; the average rural resident paying \$31.68 per year; and the average farmland resident paying \$50.63 per year. Note the average farmland cost is higher due to higher average land values.

If the community is supportive of the rate rise, Council will decide whether to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for the Special Rate Variation in April 2015. If it is approved, the rate increase would take effect from July 2016.

All ratepayers affected by the proposed Special Rate Variation will receive a letter detailing the proposal and everyone in the community is encouraged to provide feedback.

The BMS can be viewed at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au or in hardcopy at Council's Corporate Centre.

Submissions can be made online, posted to the **General Manager**, Lismore City Council, PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480 or emailed to council@lismore.nsw.gov.au. Submissions should state reasons for objection or support.



Figure 7: Letter to ratepayers



Our Ref: ED14/29454

8 December 2014

Dear Lismore Property Owner

Proposed Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy and proposed Special Rate Variation

Lismore City Council has developed a Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) aimed at enhancing Lismore's unique natural environment. This includes improving the health of our creeks and waterways, increasing habitat for native wildlife, and improving access and amenity in our parks and bushland reserves. The strategy also aims to build strong partnerships, in particular with rural landholders.

It is proposed to largely fund the actions in the strategy with a Special Rate Variation (additional rates for the specific purpose of enhancing biodiversity). The reason I'm writing to you is to advise that we are now seeking community feedback on both the Draft BMS and the proposed Special Rate Variation.

The Draft BMS has been on the Council's work program for some time and the importance of the natural environment was a key priority coming out of the extensive consultation undertaken as part of the development of Council's Community Strategic Plan (called 'Imagine Lismore').

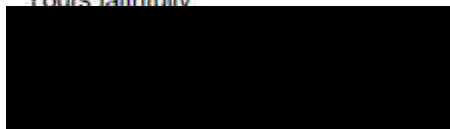
Following a detailed investigation into a range of funding mechanisms to implement the Draft BMS, it was concluded that the only effective way to reliably fund implementation of the strategy without substantially impacting upon Council's existing services is through a Special Rate Variation. Council is now consulting with the community on a proposed ongoing rate variation of \$500,000 per annum to implement the BMS commencing 1 July 2016. This variation equates to an average 1.9% increase of Council's current annual rates revenue. The rate variation would apply to three rating categories: Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Villages.

Please find enclosed a fact sheet containing detailed information on the proposed rate variation, the Draft BMS, and details of the consultation process. Submissions regarding the Draft BMS and the proposed Special Rate Variation close on **24 February 2015**.

After the consultation period is over, Council will make a decision in April 2015 whether to adopt the BMS and to make an application for the Special Rate Variation to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), which is the NSW Government agency that determines if proposed rate variations proceed.

Council encourages your involvement in this public submission process.

Yours faithfully



Brent McAlister
Executive Director Sustainable Development

Enclosed: Fact Sheet

www.lismore.nsw.gov.au

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Figure 8: Local Matters Newsletter



LOCAL MATTERS
LISMORE CITY COUNCIL NEWS
ISSUE 24, 10 DECEMBER 2014

WWW.LISMORE.NSW.GOV.AU



REMINDER:

SHREDDED PAPER GOES IN THE GREEN BIN

Just a reminder to all that shredded paper goes in your green-lidded organics bin.

Most residents are placing shredded paper in their yellow bin. While we understand this might seem logical, shredded paper gets caught in the machinery that turns glass products into sand, so it's important we recycle it with our organic materials instead.

Please keep this in mind and always place shredded paper in the green-lidded organics bin.

Thank you!

Please note: If you are a business and do not have an organics service please phone us for advice on

1300 87 83 87.

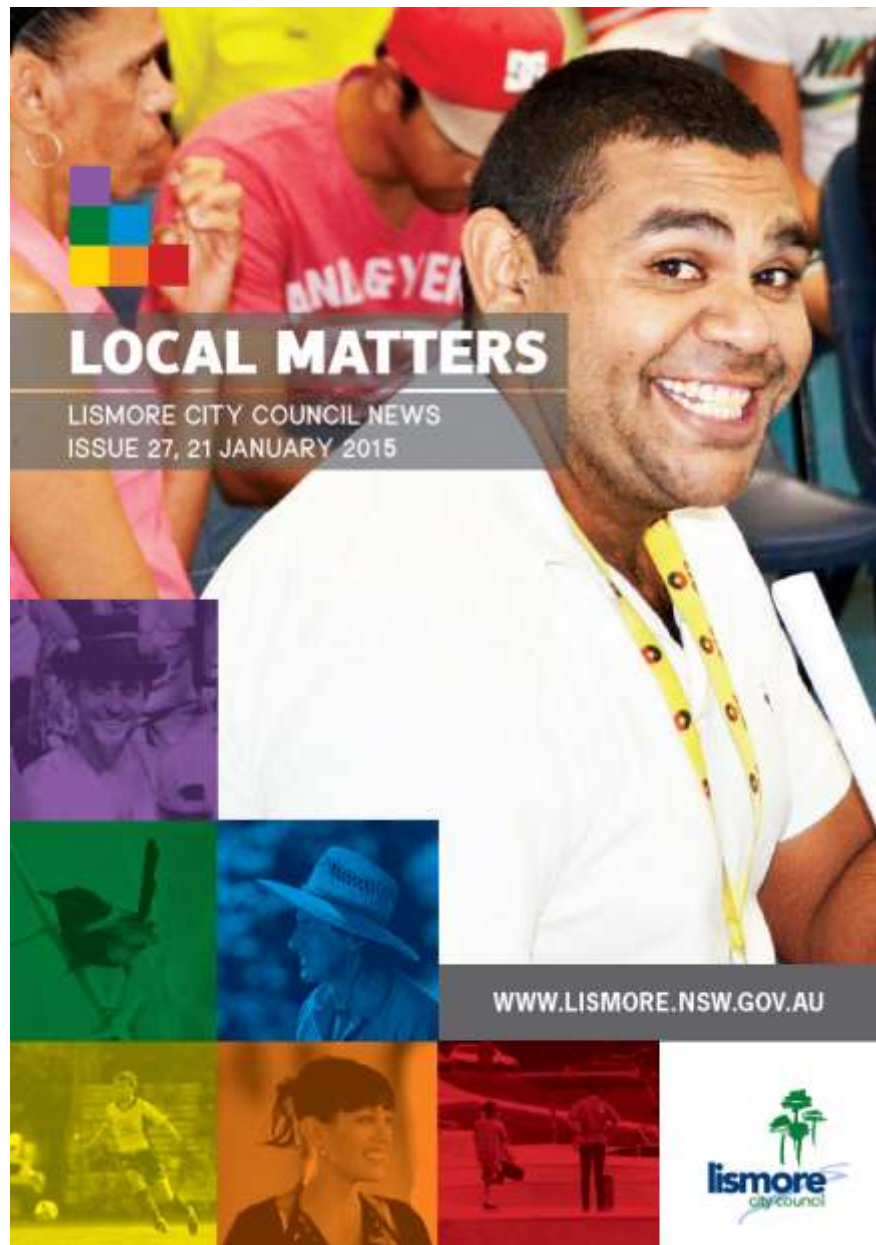
YOUR COVER

We recently placed the Draft Biodiversity Management Strategy on public exhibition and we are holding a community consultation on a proposed Special Rate Variation to fund its implementation.

We are sending letters to every resident that would be affected by this so everyone can provide feedback on the draft strategy and proposed rate rise. Keep an eye out for the letter and a fact sheet sporting the native rose-crowned fruit dove on this week's cover.



Figure 9: Local Matters Newsletter



REMEMBER TO COMMENT ON BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND PROPOSED RATE INCREASE

Time is fast running out for people to have their say on the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) and proposed Special Rate Variation.

Residents have until 24 February to make a submission about the content of the draft BMS and voice their opinion on a proposed rate increase to fund its implementation.

In essence, the BMS aims to deliver cleaner roadsides; assist landholders and community groups to manage pests and weeds; assist management of bushland and riversides on rural land; provide more opportunities to get involved through community events, workshops and field days; provide well-managed urban bushland reserves; and provide more recreational opportunities in the urban area, such as walking tracks.

In conjunction with the BMS exhibition period, Council is holding community consultation into a proposed \$500,000 per annum Special Rate Variation to fund the implementation of the strategy.

The proposed rate increase would apply to three rating categories – Residential, Rural Residential and Farmland.

The BMS and details on the proposed rate increase can be viewed at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au or in hardcopy at Council's Corporate Centre, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah, during normal business hours Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Submissions can be made online, posted to the General Manager, Lismore City Council, PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480 or emailed to council@lismore.nsw.gov.au. Submissions should state reasons for objection or support.

Figure 10: Local Matters Newsletter

LOCAL MATTERS

LISMORE CITY COUNCIL NEWS
ISSUE 29, 18 FEBRUARY 2015

WWW.LISMORE.NSW.GOV.AU



REMEMBER TO COMMENT ON BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND PROPOSED RATE INCREASE

People have less than a week left to comment on the draft Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) and proposed Special Rate Variation. Submissions are due by 4.30pm on Tuesday, 24 February.

Council is holding community consultation into a proposed \$500,000 per annum Special Rate Variation to fund the implementation of the strategy.

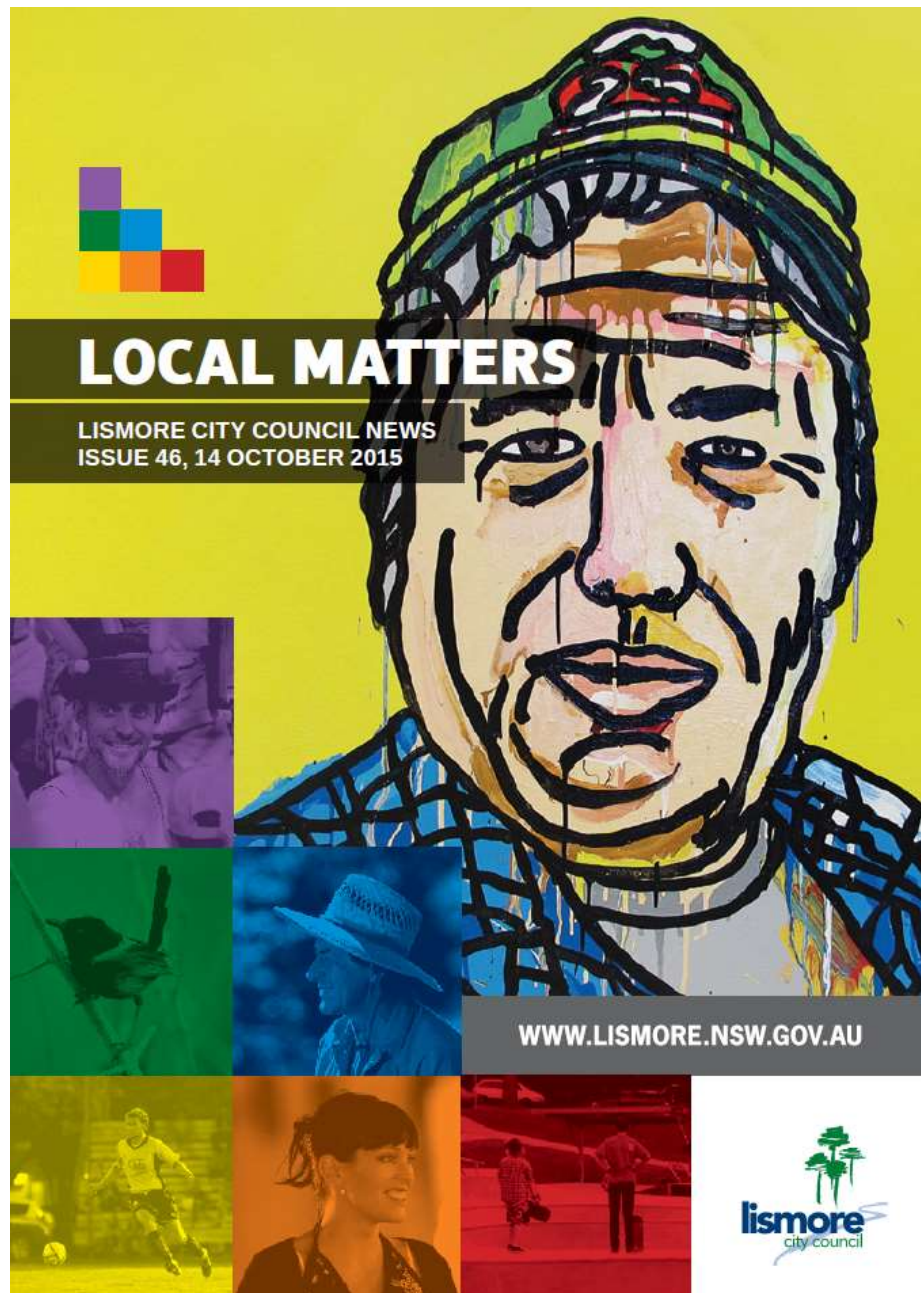
The BMS is designed to protect and enhance local biodiversity through 63 separate actions. The strategy includes actions to deliver cleaner roadsides; assist landholders and community groups to manage pests and weeds; assist management of bushland and riversides on rural and urban land; provide more opportunities to get involved through community events, workshops and field days; provide well-managed urban bushland reserves; and provide more recreational opportunities in the urban area, such as walking tracks.

The proposed rate increase would apply to three rating categories – Residential, Rural Residential and Farmland. The rate increase would equate to \$25.43 per year for your average urban ratepayer, \$31.68 for your average rural residential ratepayer and \$50.63 for your average farmland ratepayer.

We have lots of documentation on our website you can read as well as answers to frequently asked questions. You can view the information and make a submission at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au.

You can also send submissions to the **General Manager, Lismore City Council, PO Box 23A, Lismore NSW 2480** or email them to council@lismore.nsw.gov.au.

Figure 11: Local Matters Newsletter



- 19 Hewett Street, Lismore (F DP36026)
 - 39 Casuarina Drive, Goonellabah (Lot 33 DP 841587)
- For enquiries, please contact Council's Strategic Planning Coordinator Paula Newman on 1300 87 83 87.

Exhibition of additional Special Rate Variation information and amendments to Council's strategic plans

On 5 May 2015, Council resolved to apply to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to fund implementation of the Biodiversity Management Strategy.

Council sought feedback on the proposed SRV from November 2014 to February 2015. IPART now requires Council to provide the community with additional detail on the proposal and amend its strategic documents to reflect this additional information.

Council will be exhibiting the additional information and amendments to its strategic plans once IPART releases its guidelines on special rate variations.

Council will advertise in a *Saturday Weekend Star* and in *The Northern Rivers Echo* in the near future. The information will be on public exhibition for 28 days from that date.

In the next available edition of *Local Matters* following the advertisements we will also have a reminder that the information is available for viewing and comment.

YOUR COVER

Save the date! The *Hurford Hardwood Portrait Prize* (formerly the *Northern Rivers Portrait Prize*) is coming up. Our cover is *Jeremy in his Rolling Stones cap* by Nigel Sense, a portrait of Jeremy Oxley. The prize is only held every two years so don't miss your chance to see who wins the \$10,000 major prize and vote in the \$1000 People's Choice Award. Entry to the Lismore Regional Gallery is free. More details inside.



Figure 12: Letter to ratepayers outside 2480 postcode



Our ref: TA:EF10/123
Contact: Theresa Adams

23 October 2015

«Address_Line_1»
«Address_Line_2»
«Address_Line_3»
«PCode»

Dear Lismore Property Owner

Proposed amendments to Council's 4 Year Plan and Long Term Financial Plan, as well as additional information on Council's proposed Special Rate Variation to implement the Biodiversity Management Strategy.

Lismore City Council recently adopted a *Biodiversity Management Strategy for the Lismore Local Government Area 2015-2035* (BMS). This Strategy was developed in response to the community's vision for Council to 'provide environmental leadership', as identified in the Community Strategic Plan.

Successful implementation of the BMS requires reliable, long-term funding. Council investigated a range of long-term funding sources and came to the conclusion that the only way was through a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to increase rates. Consequently, Council decided to apply to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for an SRV to fund implementation of the BMS.

Council provided all affected ratepayers with information and an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed rate increase from November 2014 to February 2015. The proposed increase remains unchanged, however in line with IPART requirements, Council is providing you with additional detail on the SRV proposal (enclosed). This additional detail constitutes proposed amendments to Council's *Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan* and the *Long Term Financial Plan* (LTFP).

The reason I'm writing to you is to advise that you have the opportunity to provide feedback on the enclosed information:

- Proposed amendments to the *Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan* and LTFP; and
- Additional information on Council's proposed SRV (specifically consideration of rate-pegging and its impact on ratepayers over time).

Submissions can be made online at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au on the 'On Public Exhibition' section, posted to the General Manager, Lismore City Council, PO Box 23A, Lismore, NSW 2480 or email council@lismore.nsw.gov.au. Submissions should state reasons for objection or support.

Submissions are due by 4.30pm on Saturday, 21 November 2015.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Theresa Adams on 1300 87 83 87.

Yours faithfully,



Manager Integrated Planning

Enclosed: Information on Lismore City Council's Proposed Special Rate Variation.

www.lismore.nsw.gov.au

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Figure 13: Factsheet with letter to ratepayers outside 2480 postcode



INFORMATION ON LISMORE CITY COUNCIL'S PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

To fund implementation of the Biodiversity Management Strategy

Background

Council recently adopted the *Biodiversity Management Strategy for the Lismore Local Government Area 2015–2035* (BMS). This strategy was developed in response to the community's vision for Council to provide 'environmental leadership', as identified in the *Imagine Lismore 10 Year Plan*.

Successful implementation of the BMS requires reliable, long-term funding. Council investigated a range of long-term funding sources and came to the conclusion that the only sustainable way was through a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to increase rates. Consequently, on 5 May 2015, Council resolved to apply to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for an SRV to fund implementation of the BMS.

Council provided all affected ratepayers with information and an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed rate increase from November 2014 to February 2015. The proposed increase remains unchanged, however in line with IPART requirements, Council is providing you with additional detail on the SRV proposal. This additional detail constitutes proposed amendments to Council's *Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan* and the *Long Term Financial Plan* (LTFP). These documents are on public exhibition from 24 October to 21 November 2015.

What alternatives to a rate increase were investigated?

Council's initial *Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan* proposed that the BMS would be implemented via grant funding from the former Commonwealth Government's Biodiversity Fund. However, Council was unsuccessful in its application and this funding program no longer exists. Council investigated several alternate funding mechanisms based on their ability to deliver reliable, long-term funding. The following funding options were investigated and were subsequently rejected:

- General Purpose Revenue – Funding implementation of the BMS through an annual budget of \$500,000 would substantially impact upon the delivery of the other services delivered by Council. Had this not been the case, Council would have allocated General Purpose Revenue to implement the BMS.
- Rate rebates – Rate rebates could be used as an incentive by Council for landholders willing to manage their land for biodiversity. However, any rebate program that provided sufficient incentive would need to be supported by a Council budget, at the expense of other services delivered by Council.
- Section 94 contributions – Developer contributions can be used as a method of funding public infrastructure (e.g. by funding preservation of a vegetated watercourse within a Council reserve), however this type of investment generally requires a large co-investment by Council.
- Grant funding – Grants are not a reliable source of funding as all government and most philanthropic funding bodies distribute grants through competitive application. There are no current grant programs that could deliver funding for substantial components of the BMS implementation program.

What are the impacts of the proposed rate increase?

The proposed SRV is for a single year rate increase in 2016/17 to be retained permanently in the rates base. The percentage increase is 4.3% of Council's Total Rating Income, which includes an assumed annual rate-peg increase of 2.5% and 1.8% to fund the BMS. In the first year (2016/17), the BMS component of the proposed SRV would raise \$500,000 and in subsequent years this amount would increase by the annual rate-peg.

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Ratepayers in the Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Villages rating categories would incur both the rate-peg and BMS components of the SRV to be applied to rates from 2016/17. For ratepayers in the Business rating categories, only the annual rate-peg component of the SRV is to be applied to rates from 2016/17. Council considers business rates are already too high and business ratepayers would not receive sufficient benefits from implementation of the BMS to warrant paying the increase.

Only the annual rate-peg component of the SRV would be applied to ratepayers in the Business rating categories. Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Village rating categories will pay slightly more to make up the 4.3% of the total SRV. This means the impact on these three rating categories is a 4.7% overall increase in 2016/17.

The impact of the proposed SRV on each ratepayer depends on their rating category and the NSW Valuer General's land value for their rated land. Table 1 indicates how the average ratepayer in the Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Village rating categories would be impacted by the proposed SRV.

Table 1: Impact of the Special Rate Variation applied to Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Village rating categories:

FARMLAND	Average Land Valuation	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Average Farmland rate under rate pegging	\$375,000	\$2,216	\$2,271	\$2,328	\$2,386	\$2,446
Annual % Increase		2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Average Farmland rate under the SRV	\$375,000	\$2,216	\$2,319	\$2,377	\$2,436	\$2,497
Annual % Increase		2.4%	4.7%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Impact of SRV above 2015/16 levels			\$103			
BMS amount only			\$48			
RESIDENTIAL RURAL	Average Land Valuation	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Average Residential Rural rate under rate pegging	\$192,000	\$1,383	\$1,418	\$1,453	\$1,489	\$1,526
Annual % Increase		2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Average Residential Rural rate under the SRV	\$192,000	\$1,383	\$1,448	\$1,484	\$1,521	\$1,559
Annual % Increase		2.4%	4.7%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Impact of SRV above 2015/16 levels			\$65			
BMS amount only			\$30			
RESIDENTIAL URBAN/VILLAGE	Average Land Valuation	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Average Residential Urban/Village rate under rate pegging	\$113,000	\$1,109	\$1,137	\$1,165	\$1,194	\$1,224
Annual % Increase		2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Average Residential Urban/Village rate under the SRV	\$113,000	\$1,109	\$1,161	\$1,190	\$1,220	\$1,251
Annual % Increase		2.4%	4.7%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Impact of SRV above 2015/16 levels			\$52			
BMS amount only			\$24			

What will the community get for its money?

Besides benefiting biodiversity, the community will get: cleaner roadsides; confidence that Council is undertaking best environmental management practice in its activities; recognition for your work and community achievements; assistance to landholders and community groups to manage pests and weeds; opportunities to gain knowledge; assistance to manage bushland and riversides on rural land; more opportunities to get involved through community events, workshops and field days; well-managed urban bushland reserves; and more recreational opportunities in the urban setting, such as walking tracks.

Table 2 below provides a summary of activities and initiatives planned for 2016/17 to 2019/20. Activities and initiatives are planned to be ongoing.

Table 2: Biodiversity Management Strategy Budget Summary – Year 1 to Year 4

	BMS Action #	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Cleaning up our own backyard					
<i>Planning and Processes</i>					
Review Operational Plan for Roadside Vegetation Management 2005	1	20,000			
Staged weed management in road reserve High Conservation Value areas	2	20,000	30,800	31,500	37,700
Complete vegetation mapping for the Lismore LGA	3	80,000			
<i>Supporting the community</i>					
Recognition of community achievements	25	5,000	5,100	5,300	5,400
Strategic conservation projects (e.g. wild dogs)	28	10,000	30,800	31,500	32,300
Education actions	57; 58	10,000	10,300	10,500	10,800
<i>Subtotal</i>		<i>\$145,000</i>	<i>\$77,000</i>	<i>\$78,800</i>	<i>\$86,200</i>
Working with rural landholders					
<i>Implementation</i>					
Rural landholder capacity building - project implementation	44	33,400	107,200	105,200	116,500
Rural landholder capacity building - extension officer	45	86,000	88,200	90,400	92,600
Rural and rural residential collaborative information pack	46	5,000	5,100	5,300	5,400
Coastal Zone Management Plan implementation - riparian restoration in rural areas	48	38,600	48,400	44,700	48,100
Community and industry group partnerships	47	20,000	30,800	36,800	32,300
Rate rebate program	38		10,300	10,500	10,800
<i>Subtotal</i>		<i>\$183,000</i>	<i>\$290,000</i>	<i>\$292,900</i>	<i>\$305,700</i>
Working in the urban environment					
Implement components of the Sport and Recreation Plan	54	20,000	21,500	26,300	26,900
Wellbeing and tourism initiatives	54	5,000	5,100	5,300	5,400
Weed management in urban bushland	52	25,000	30,800	31,500	32,300
Weed management in priority urban riparian areas	53	25,000	25,600	26,300	21,500
Road and traffic management for wildlife	13	26,000	25,600	26,300	10,800
<i>Koala Plan of Management Implementation</i>					
Advisory Group	14	1,000	1,000	1,100	1,100
Training program for development assessment	36	10,000			
Koala habitat restoration program	14	30,000	35,900	36,800	32,300
Study: koala density and population in koala planning area	14	30,000			16,200
<i>Subtotal</i>		<i>\$172,000</i>	<i>\$145,500</i>	<i>\$153,600</i>	<i>\$146,500</i>
Total per year		\$500,000	\$512,500	\$525,300	\$538,400

When would the proposed rate increase start?

Council will submit an application for an SRV to IPART in February 2016. It is expected that IPART will make its decision by May 2016. Should the application be approved by IPART, the proposed increase could commence from 1 July 2016.

Feedback

Submissions can be made online at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au, posted to the General Manager, Lismore City Council, PO Box 23A, Lismore, NSW 2480 or email council@lismore.nsw.gov.au. Submissions should state reasons for objection or support.

Submissions are due by 4.30pm on Saturday, 21 November 2015.

Figure 16: Local Matters Newsletter



INFORMATION ON PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION TO FUND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Council recently adopted the *Biodiversity Management Strategy for the Lismore Local Government Area 2015-2035 (BMS)*. This was developed in response to the community's vision for Council to provide 'environmental leadership', as identified in the *Imagine Lismore 10 Year Plan*.

Successful implementation of the BMS requires reliable, long-term funding. Council investigated a range of long-term funding sources and came to the conclusion that the only sustainable way was through a Special Rate Variation (SRV) to increase rates. Consequently, on 5 May 2015 Council resolved to apply to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for an SRV to fund implementation of the BMS.

Council provided the Lismore community with an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed rate increase from November 2014 to February 2015. The proposed increase remains unchanged, however in line with IPART requirements, Council is providing you with additional detail on the SRV proposal. This additional detail constitutes proposed amendments to Council's *Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan* and the *Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP)*. These documents are on public exhibition from 24 October to 21 November 2015.

What alternatives to a rate increase were investigated?

Council's initial *Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan* proposed that the BMS would be implemented via grant funding from the former Commonwealth Government's Biodiversity Fund. However, Council was unsuccessful in its application and this funding program no longer exists. Council investigated several alternative funding mechanisms based on their ability to deliver reliable, long-term funding, but these were ultimately rejected. Funding options investigated included general purpose revenue, rate rebates, Section 94 contributions and grant funding.

What are the impacts of the proposed rate increase?

The proposed SRV is for a single year rate increase in 2016/17 to be retained permanently in the rates base. The percentage increase is 4.3% of Council's total rating income, which includes an assumed annual rate-peg increase of 2.5% and 1.8% to fund the BMS. In the first year (2016/17), the BMS component of the proposed SRV would raise \$500,000 and in subsequent years this amount would increase by the annual rate-peg.

Ratepayers in the Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Villages rating categories would incur both the rate-peg and BMS components of the SRV to be applied to rates from 2016/17. For ratepayers in the Business rating categories, only the annual rate-peg component of the SRV is to be applied to rates from 2016/17. Council considers business rates to be already too high and business ratepayers would not receive sufficient benefits from implementation of the BMS to warrant paying the increase.

Only the annual rate-peg component of the SRV would be applied to ratepayers in the Business rating categories. As a result, the Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Village rating categories will pay slightly more to make up the 4.3% of the total SRV. This means the impact on these three rating categories is a 4.7% overall increase.

The impact of the proposed SRV on each ratepayer depends on their rating category and the NSW Valuer General's land value for their rated land. The table provided indicates how the average ratepayer in the Farmland, Residential Rural and Residential Urban/Village rating categories would be impacted by the proposed SRV.

INFORMATION ON PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION TO FUND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

FARMLAND	Average Land Valuation	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Average Farmland rate under rate pegging	\$375,000	\$2,216	\$2,271	\$2,328	\$2,386	\$2,446
Annual % Increase		2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Average Farmland rate under the SRV	\$375,000	\$2,216	\$2,319	\$2,377	\$2,436	\$2,497
Annual % Increase		2.4%	4.7%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Impact of SRV above 2015/16 levels			\$103			
BMS amount only			\$48			
RESIDENTIAL RURAL	Average Land Valuation	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Average Residential Rural rate under rate pegging	\$192,000	\$1,383	\$1,418	\$1,453	\$1,489	\$1,526
Annual % Increase		2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%

Average Residential Rural rate under the SRV	\$192,000	\$1,383	\$1,448	\$1,484	\$1,521	\$1,559
Annual % Increase		2.4%	4.7%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Impact of SRV above 2015/16 levels			\$65			
BMS amount only			\$30			
RESIDENTIAL URBAN/VILLAGE	Average Land Valuation	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Average Residential Urban/Village rate under rate pegging	\$113,000	\$1,109	\$1,137	\$1,165	\$1,194	\$1,224
Annual % Increase		2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Average Residential Urban/Village rate under the SRV	\$113,000	\$1,109	\$1,161	\$1,190	\$1,220	\$1,251
Annual % Increase		2.4%	4.7%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Impact of SRV above 2015/16 levels			\$52			
BMS amount only			\$24			

INFORMATION ON PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION TO FUND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

What will the community get for its money?

Besides benefiting biodiversity, the community will get: cleaner roadsides; confidence that Council is undertaking best environmental management practice in its activities; recognition for community work and achievements; assistance to landholders and community groups to manage pests and weeds; opportunities to gain knowledge; assistance to manage bushland and riversides on rural land; more opportunities to get involved through community events, workshops and field days; well-managed urban bushland reserves; and more recreational opportunities in the urban setting, such as walking tracks.

A full breakdown of the BMS budget can be found in the draft amendments to the Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan. These documents are now on public exhibition and can be viewed at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au via the 'On Public Exhibition' link or at the Corporate Centre, 43 Oliver Avenue, Goonellabah, from Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.30pm.

When would the proposed rate increase start?

Council will submit an application for an SRV to IPART in February 2016. It is expected that IPART will make its decision by May 2016. Should the application be approved by IPART, the proposed increase could commence from 1 July 2016.

Feedback

Submissions regarding the draft amendments to the Imagine Lismore 4 Year Plan and Long Term Financial Plan can be made online at www.lismore.nsw.gov.au, posted to the General Manager, Lismore City Council, PO Box 23A, Lismore, NSW 2480 or emailed to council@lismore.nsw.gov.au. Submissions are due by 4.30pm on 21 November 2015.