

SRV APPLICATION ATTACHMENT H

Community Feedback – Community Satisfaction Survey,
submissions/feedback from the public exhibition period



Measuring satisfaction and priorities with regard to Council-managed facilities and services

Results from a random telephone survey of 405 adult residents in the Bellingen Shire

Client:
Bellingen Shire Council

Dated:
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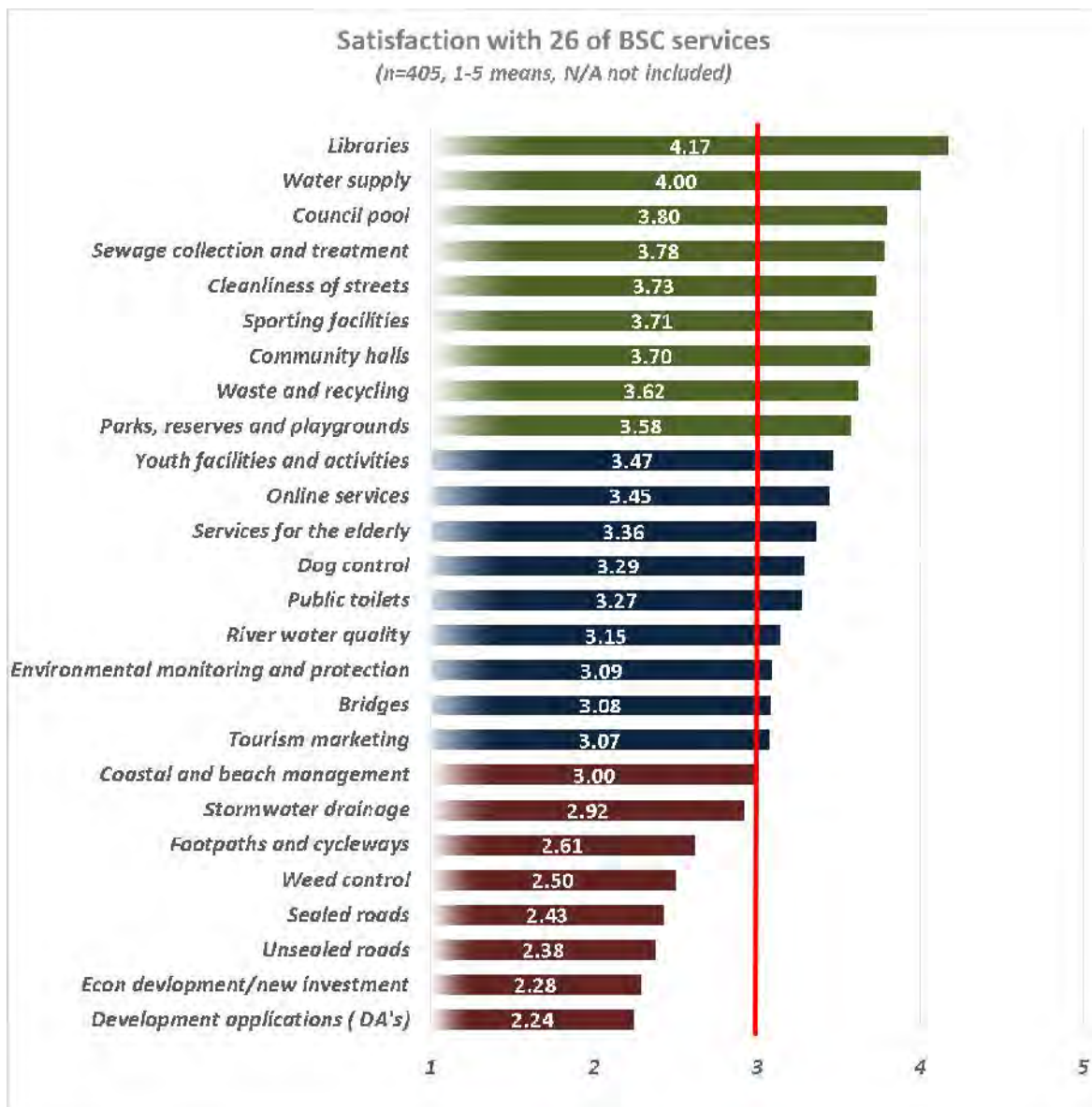
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Part 1: Satisfaction with, and importance of key services and facilities

The survey commenced with a series of scale-based questions designed to understand the satisfaction and importance attributed by residents to 26 Council-managed facilities and services. With a few exceptions³ these were unchanged from the 2012 survey, in order to allow direct comparison of results.

Looking first at satisfaction, using a 1-5 scale (where 1 = very dissatisfied, 3 = neutral and 5 = very satisfied):

Graph 1.1: Summary of mean satisfaction scores for 26 different Council services and facilities, 2016 only



³ One service measured in 2012 was removed (enforcement of environment and land use) and two services were added to the 2016 monitor (weed control and services for the elderly).

This suggests that 18 of the 26 facilities and services scored at or above the 3.0 “neutral” ranking. These were led by libraries, which scored 4.17 out of a possible 5, and water supply (at 4.0). The Council pool and sewage collection and treatment also scored exceptionally well.

Among the eight facilities and services scoring less than or equal to the neutral ranking, development applications was the worst-ranked of the services measured (with a mean of 2.24 out of 5) followed closely by economic development and new investment (2.28). Both unsealed and sealed roads as well as weed control also scored poorly.

Table 1.1, below, looks at how mean satisfaction scores compare with the same survey conducted in 2012. Changes of more than 5% are marked in green (positive) and red (negative):⁴

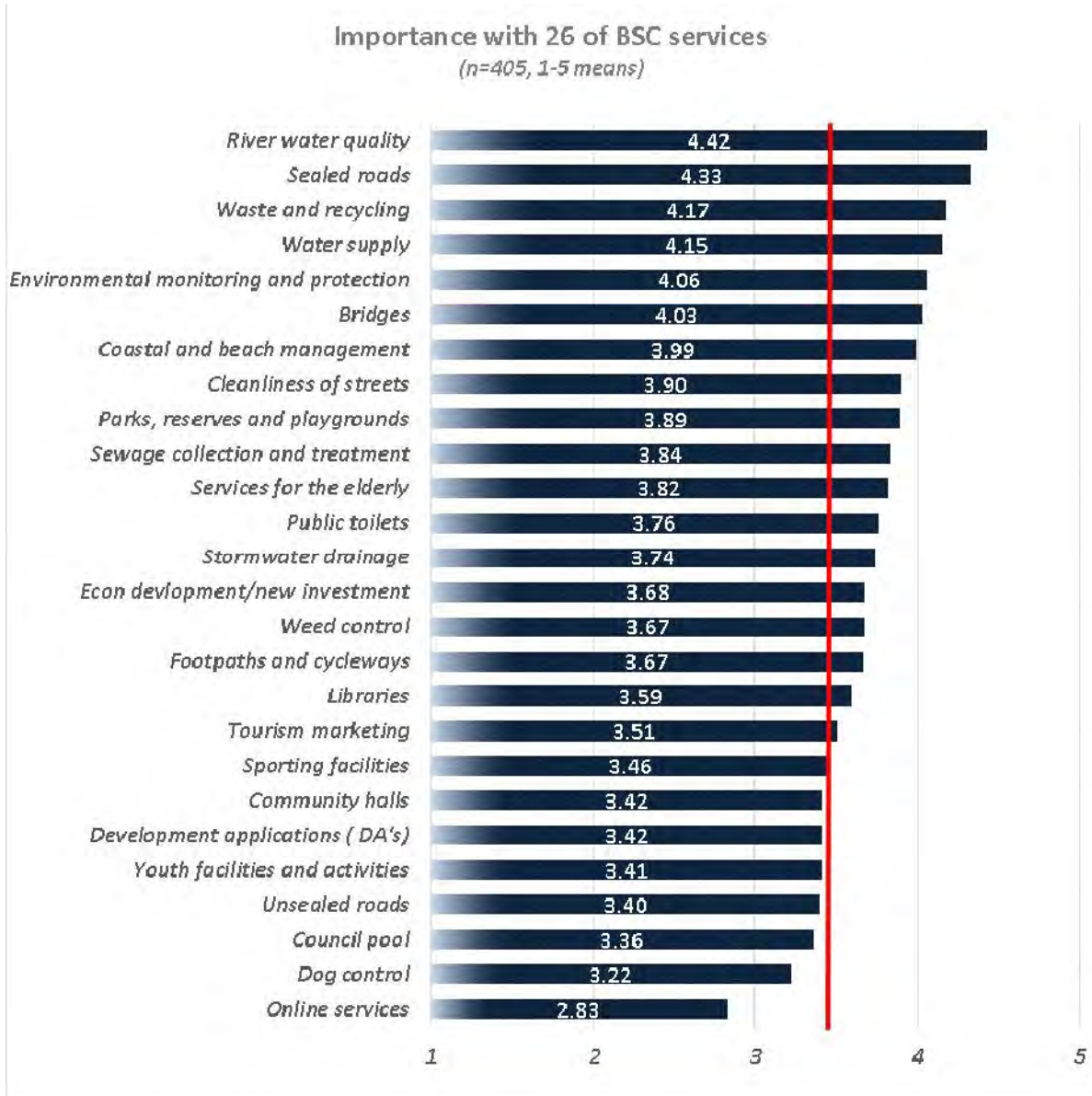
Table 1.1: Comparison of satisfaction mean scores 2012 vs.2016 (rated from highest positive change to highest negative change)

Council services	Satisfaction		
	2012 Mean	2016 Mean	Difference
<i>Council pool</i>	3.29	3.80	15%
<i>Youth facilities and activities</i>	3.06	3.47	13%
<i>Dog control</i>	2.90	3.29	13%
<i>Sewage collection and treatment</i>	3.35	3.78	13%
<i>Water supply</i>	3.60	4.00	11%
<i>River water quality</i>	2.84	3.15	11%
<i>Community halls</i>	3.38	3.70	9%
<i>Waste and recycling</i>	3.34	3.62	8%
<i>Online services</i>	3.19	3.45	8%
<i>Bridges</i>	2.87	3.08	7%
<i>Public toilets</i>	3.05	3.27	7%
<i>Coastal and beach management</i>	2.82	3.00	7%
<i>Sporting facilities</i>	3.51	3.71	6%
<i>Cleanliness of streets</i>	3.61	3.73	3%
<i>Unsealed roads</i>	2.33	2.38	2%
<i>Libraries</i>	4.09	4.17	2%
<i>Parks, reserves and playgrounds</i>	3.52	3.58	2%
<i>Stormwater drainage</i>	2.96	2.92	-1%
<i>Footpaths and cycleways</i>	2.66	2.61	-2%
<i>Sealed roads</i>	2.51	2.43	-3%
<i>Environmental monitoring and protection</i>	3.21	3.09	-4%
<i>Tourism marketing</i>	3.26	3.07	-6%
<i>Development applications (DA's)</i>	2.41	2.24	-7%
<i>Econ development/new investment</i>	2.50	2.28	-9%
<i>Weed control</i>	N/A	2.50	N/A
<i>Services for the elderly</i>	N/A	3.36	N/A
<i>Enforcement of environment and land use</i>	2.90	N/A	N/A

⁴ Note the use of 5% is an arbitrary measure, and does not necessarily denote a statistically significant difference. However in most cases (in this instance) they are closely equivalent.

In terms of importance, and again using a 1-5 scale, Graph 1.2 shows how Bellingen Shire residents rank the relative importance of the same 26 facilities and services:

Graph 1.2: Summary of mean importance scores for 26 different Council services and facilities, 2016 only



What is most notable about this graph is that *everything* is considered important: even the lowest-ranked facility, online services, registered a mean importance score of 2.83 (out of a possible 5). And 18 of the 26 had mean importance scores exceeding 3.5 out of 5.

Table 1.3, meanwhile, shows how average importance scores have changed since the last survey in 2012. As with table 1.1, changes of more than 5% are noted in green (increase) and red (decrease):

The quadrants are summarised in Table 1.5, below:

Table 1.5: Summary of satisfaction and importance quadrants

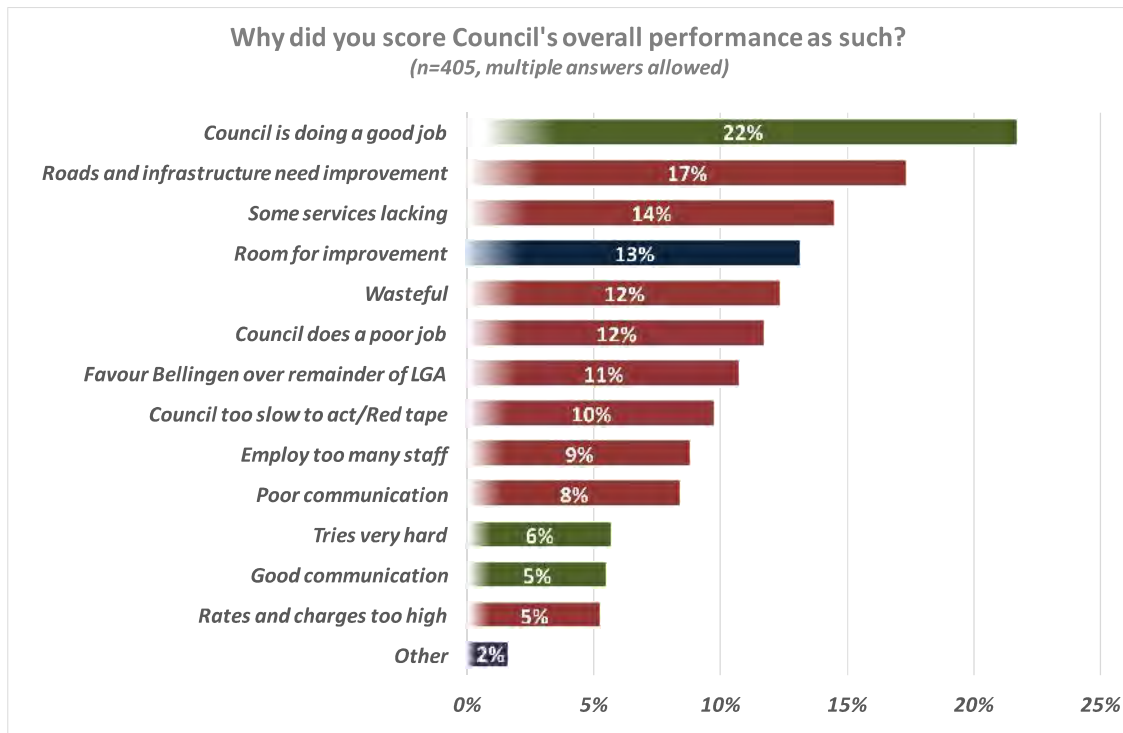
Higher Importance, Lower Satisfaction	Higher Importance, Higher Satisfaction
Sealed roads Econ development/new investment Stormwater drainage Footpaths and cycleways Weed control	Water supply Cleanliness of streets Waste and recycling Parks, reserves and playgrounds River water quality Bridges Coastal and beach management Libraries Services for the elderly Sewage collection and treatment Public toilets Environmental monitoring and protection
Lower Importance, Lower Satisfaction	Lower Importance, Higher Satisfaction
Unsealed roads Development applications (DA's)	Tourism marketing Youth facilities and activities Online services Dog control Council pool Sporting facilities Community Halls

Twelve of the 26 services and facilities (i.e. 46%) fall into the “higher importance, higher satisfaction” quadrant, as opposed to just five (19%) in the “higher importance, lower satisfaction” corner. Key issues of concern were (in no particular order) sealed roads, economic development and attracting new investment, stormwater drainage, footpaths and cycleways, and weed control.

One final way to analyse this data is by measuring the gap between importance (interpreted here as “expectation”) and satisfaction. In an ideal world, the satisfaction of a service would match or exceed the importance placed on it by residents. This does not work in practice, primarily due to the extremely high importance scores for pretty much every facility or service. However it is still useful to see where the “expectation gaps” are highest and lowest. This is shown in Table 1.6 (ranked from lowest to highest gap):

(Continued over page...)

Graph 2.2: Can you explain why you gave that score? (unprompted)



The majority of those with positive scores had trouble articulating specific reasons for their satisfaction, noting instead that Council did a good job generally.

Others noted that Council tried hard and was good at communicating.

Those with negative comments, on the other hand, tended to be more specific. While a significant proportion indicated that there was generally room for improvement, roads and infrastructure were noted as requiring improvement. Some criticised Council management commenting that Council was wasteful, does a poor job, favours Bellinghen over the remainder of the LGA, is slow to act, employs too many staff and is a poor communicator.

“Other” comments were varied:

- ⇒ *The shire should be amalgamated with a larger council.*
- ⇒ *I think there is a lack of transparency.*
- ⇒ *Tip fees are too expensive, Council needs to supply 1 or 2 vouchers free when you pay your rates.*
- ⇒ *I think all the media attention seems to be negative rather than positive and council don't seem very good at promoting themselves in a positive light. I am not informed enough with the right information to say whether or not they are doing a good job.*
- ⇒ *The media coverage regarding admin costs of the council. Wages, etc.*
- ⇒ *There are some interest groups have far too much say in council...should be more practicality...it appears that we are ruled by groups on fads at the time....*
- ⇒ *The water is unable to drink after the floods.*

Bellingen Shire COUNCIL



Bellingen Council Special Variation Engagement Activities Summary Report

Council invited submissions to the IP&R documents on exhibition during December 2017 and January 2018 and proactively sought to engage with the community during the consultation process. Council also developed a Special Variation One Stop Shop on the 'Create' website that enabled ratepayers to provide feedback/comments regarding the proposed 3 year 6% rate increase for years 2018/19 – 2020/21.

The following information is provided regarding the submissions/feedback/comments received during the public exhibition period. A copy of the submissions is provided as Attachments E.1 and E.2.

100 submissions were received across all mediums and are broken down as follows:

Type of Submission	Avenue	Number Received	Comments
Formal	Email, hard copy, Bellingen Shire Council website 'Have your say'	74	
Feedback/Comments	'Create' website	25	4 additional responses were provided by the SV Project Team. There were 3 additional comments received after the exhibition closing date
Informal	Drop in session	2	Received at the Bellingen drop in session
TOTAL		101	

It should be noted, that of the 74 formal submissions received, 16 were provided as a 'template' or 'petition' type letter. A summary of the key issues and claims made in submissions is as follows:

- There are too many staff compared to other councils
- Staff are paid too much
- Cutting Council jobs would free up more funds to go towards fixing roads and bridges
- Council mismanagement of funds
- The impact on pensioners as a result of the increase
- Too much money taken up in administration

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- Comparisons made to other councils (rates, jobs)
- Claims of Council inefficiency
- Long term maintenance a priority for our roads
- Council's roads and bridges need work
- Ensuring extra money going to roads and not on administration

It is considered that the various issues raised have been addressed in the extensive documentation that has been produced and publicly available. This documentation/information includes:

- Previous reports to Council
- SV fact sheets
- Community brochure
- Long Term Financial Plan
- Delivery Program
- Newspaper advertisements
- Media releases
- Council SV Information Centre on 'Create'
- Detailed information provided at the drop in sessions
- Council's annual statements (Financial statements, Annual Report, etc)

Additional reference tools used to address submissions and comments made and available online, by request and provided at the drop in sessions included:

- Large banners
- Interactive maps showing the road resurfacing program showing specific roads and priorities
- Bridges map showing locations and their priorities
- Feedback forms
- Kiosk that provided additional access to the rates calculator and interactive maps at the drop in sessions

A number of issues outlined in submissions that sit outside of Council's control and/or service provision includes:

- The need to rate State Forests
- The NSW Government should support the cost for local roads and bridges
- Land values set by the Valuer General
- Historical issues from previous councils
- Financial Assistance Grants need to be increased
- Rate pegging
- Cost of living

Issues unrelated to the SV raised in submissions included:

- The Town Beautification Project
- Same sex marriage plebiscite/rainbow flags
- Issues relating to Crown Lands reserves
- Cost of engaging with the community around the SV

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Community 'Drop In' Sessions

The community drop in sessions played an integral role in the consultation strategy and saw approximately 70 people attend. Of the 70 people that attended, 2 indicated they were residents and not ratepayers while 1 was neither a resident nor ratepayer. A breakdown of the sessions is as follows:

Drop in Sessions	Dorrigo	Urunga	Bellingen
Number of attendees	16	22	32
Unrelated issues raised	Service Requests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mowing x 1 • Slashing x 1 Enquiries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste x 2 • Rates Save Mail change user name x1 • Tree removal x1 	Service Requests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road Maintenance x 1 • Landscaping Sir Edmunds Park x1 • Mylestom Pool step repair x 1 Enquiry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCU meeting x1 • Waste Treatment Plant x1 • Load limit Old Coast Road Bridge x1 	Service Requests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footpath Bowraville Road x1 • Road Maintenance Darkwood Road x1 • Gate Access North Bank Road x1 • Footpath maintenance Memorial Hall x 1 Enquiry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SV Pamphlet cost and why non-recyclable x1 • Main Street Parking x1 • Evidence that BSC is listed 118 out of 150 NSW councils in rating x1 • DGMO Meeting request regarding Summervilles Road x1 • Mail outs - Brierfield compared to North Bellingen x1 • Additional waste service not on SV calculator x1 General enquiries

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			answered on the night: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main Street Plan x5• Planning x1• OSMS Approval x1

Unrelated concerns and issues raised were recorded by a Customer and Business Services Officer and will be addressed and responded to in accordance with Council's Customer Service Management Policy and procedures.

'Create' Bellingen Website Engagement Summary

A summary of the engagement activities on the 'Create' Bellingen website includes:

- Total unique visits – 318
- Documents downloaded – 83
- Visits to key dates page – 24
- Registered users that contributed to the feedback forum – 26
- Registered users that viewed photos – 3

Further information is provided in a copy of the detailed report as Attachment E.3.

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ATTACHMENT E.1

Submissions Register - January 2018

No.	Name	Comments and/or key issue(s)
1		Effect on farmland (farmers) ratepayers given other increases in things like freight charges, droughts/floods affecting stock prices. Makes mention of the number of empty shops in Dorrigo - this should be considered by Council. Should approach the State Government to pay rates. Talks about the bottle tax instigated by the State Govt but limited recycling facilities in Bellingen to recoup funds.
2		TEMPLATE LETTER The main issue is around affordability. Letter highlights statistics regarding income, unemployment, wage increases and CPI. Letter highlights previous special variation in 2017. Letter states that the rate increase should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as water, waste and sewer stating they are not at the scrutiny of IPART.
3		TEMPLATE LETTER The main issue is around affordability. Letter highlights statistics regarding income, unemployment, wage increases and CPI. Letter highlights previous special variation in 2017. Letter states that the rate increase should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as water, waste and sewer stating they are not at the scrutiny of IPART.
4		Unaffordability to pay more rates. Issues raised around the town beautification project - maintenance, bus issues, public safety, as well as the Council marriage equality vote
5		Against rate rise - seen nothing performed or achieved in the 9 years lived in the Shire. Other issues raised include a \$110,000 phone bill, the town centre beautification project and ongoing maintenance, suggests cut backs including irrelevant staff, outsourcing and rampant advisory fees.
6		Third one in 3 years! Obviously the normal business or domestic option of cutting costs is something they can't be bothered even considering! So easy to tax and spend other peoples' money!
7		TEMPLATE LETTER The main issue is around affordability. Letter highlights statistics regarding income, unemployment, wage increases and CPI. Letter highlights previous special variation in 2017. Letter states that the rate increase should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as water, waste and sewer stating they are not at the scrutiny of IPART.
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9		<p>TEMPLATE LETTER The main issue is around affordability. Letter highlights statistics regarding income, unemployment, wage increases and CPI. Letter highlights previous special variation in 2017. Letter states that the rate increase should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as water, waste and sewer stating they are not at the scrutiny of IPART.</p>
10		<p>I strongly object to another Rate increase.</p> <p>Compared to other country shires and similar populations, there are far too many indoor staff on the payroll and there are consultants paid exorbitant amounts for their frequently 'needed' advice on matters employees should be qualified to address.</p> <p>Please stop wasting our money. Road maintenance, waste removal, water and sewerage should be where the rates money is going.' Other issue raised regarding the town beautification project specifically related to parking</p>
11		<p>TEMPLATE LETTER The main issue is around affordability. Letter highlights statistics regarding income, unemployment, wage increases and CPI. Letter highlights previous special variation in 2017. Letter states that the rate increase should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as water, waste and sewer stating they are not at the scrutiny of IPART.</p>
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13		<p>I am strongly opposed to the proposed rate increase. If council can afford to spend a million dollars on the main street but cannot afford important infrastructure works, it does not need more money, it just needs to get its priorities right.'</p>
14		<p>Objects to rate rise citing rates have soared since 2013. Unaffordable to those on minimum wage/pensioners</p>
15		<p>Strongly objects to rate rise. Unaffordable. Beautifying Bellingen project a waste of money.</p>
16		<p>TEMPLATE LETTER The main issue is around affordability. Letter highlights statistics regarding income, unemployment, wage increases and CPI. Letter highlights previous special variation in 2017. Letter states that the rate increase should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as water, waste and sewer stating they are not at the scrutiny of IPART.</p>

The 204/15 special variation was to fix the issues. Council citing the same reasons for applying this time. No report provided to ratepayers regarding what the 2014/15 SV achieved. Specific issue regarding resident's road. No SV should be applied for until a thorough review is done on the range of services and assets Council has assumed responsibility for. SVs should not be automatically justified whenever Council decides to increase staff, purchase new assets or undertake new services.

17

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18

States strongest objection on rate rise. Giant impost on pensioners.

19

As a rate payer, I object to the proposed special rate variation on the grounds that Council has not been prudent in their management of finances in relation to the following:

Money spent support of the recent referendum on same sex marriage ... This was NOT a local government issue!
The huge financial input into the recent 'beautification' of the town centre which has completely changed the character of the area as well as taking away precious parking spaces and creating a dangerously narrow thoroughfare near the monument.'

20

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21

Questions raised regarding the local government reform process and Council being declared 'Fit for the Future'. These include whether BSC has responded, did it include the proposal to seek a SV, was the 6% per year specified, was the increase approved or taken into account in declaring BSC 'Fit for the Future'. What has Council done in response to the NSW Govt reform program as to future rate increases? Can it be anticipated that at the end of the 3 year period that further increases will be sought? Letter talks about the SV brochure stating it does not contain any priority list of works to be completed during the SV years including budgeted costs and a timetable. The lack of information provides no meaningful benchmarks for ratepayers to monitor progress. Brochure doesn't provide details regarding the 'One stop Shop - Create' mentioned. The role of Council is to provide essential services and not be spent on esoteric issues...marriage equality and ...Australia Day.

22

23		<p>Strongly objects to rate rise. Wants to know how much the 6 page colour brochure cost to make and send to ratepayers. Raised other issues about the cost to put up rainbow flags and the beautification project stating issues regarding buses, the cenotaph and parking. Previous SV money spent on other things. Reported that Council spends 80% on staff, \$110,000 phone bill. Disturbed about the things heard at the newly formed Ratepayers Group meeting.</p>
24		<p>TEMPLATE LETTER The main issue is around affordability. Letter highlights statistics regarding income, unemployment, wage increases and CPI. Letter highlights previous special variation in 2017. Letter states that the rate increase should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as water, waste and sewer stating they are not at the scrutiny of IPART.</p>
25		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rate variation.... We are opposed, not to spending on infrastructure but the money should come from other areas of Council spending. 2. How do pensioners on fixed incomes handle regular rate increases ABOVE CPI? 3. What is happening to such items as fixing Newry Island Bridge, the Lido, Atherton Drive?
26		<p>TEMPLATE LETTER The main issue is around affordability. Letter highlights statistics regarding income, unemployment, wage increases and CPI. Letter highlights previous special variation in 2017. Letter states that the rate increase should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as water, waste and sewer stating they are not at the scrutiny of IPART.</p>
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30		<p>we have not submitted a reply to Bellinghen Council re: the special rate variation. Instead we have written to IPART opposing it'</p>

I object to BSC's plan to increase rates after their overspend on "town beautification* which was not needed or wanted by residents.' Other issue raised regarding rubbish pickup for Summervilles Rd.
SUBMISSION 2 - Bellingen Council salaries consume 80% of our rates, 50% more than our neighbouring shires.

We OBJECT to BSC's proposed Special Rate Variation being rushed upon the shire.

Rates are extremely high in the context of what is paid throughout other areas of Australia. Unaffordable/pensioner. Why isn't priority given to infrastructure project such as roads and bridges. Raises issues regarding the beautification project (safety, issues for buses, tree removal, parking).

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Little or no on-the-ground evidence that sufficient money from previous rate increases has been put towards better services, infrastructure upkeep and transparency. Council doesn't listen to the community's objections and this latest exercise in consulting with the community is hypocritical. Other issues raised about Council funding issues/matters outside its role and responsibilities (gay marriage and Australia Day), review of Council roles, tree removal in Church Street, beautification project, invisible ranger, costly colour brochure.

Unaffordable. Other issues mentioned - town beautification and flags.

Doubts the likelihood of the proposed SV resealing the road network every 15 years and replacing all the bridges and expects an ongoing increases. The formula for determining the increase for individual rate payers is flawed. Rate payers are not being assessed individually for their capacity to pay more. The Council has done little to educate ratepayers regarding the collection and use of SRV funds in the past. Council spreads itself too thin - should focus on the core services freeing up income to maintain infrastructure without cost shifting to ratepayers.

Little improvement from previous rates rises in recent years. Cumulative effect will increase my rates to approx. \$3,000 and the nett result will be another flyer in 3 years' time with a similar story. Council should concentrate on provision of basic services, use Council staff for consultative work and outdoor staff instead of contractors. Raises issues with beautification project.

"I would like to ask that you not raise the rates as i recieve very little already for the rates i pay. We have no rubbish collection, no water, the roads are in a state pot holed all the way to my place. I feel that we already pay enough to live in the shire and would like my voice heard with the rest of Bellingen residents opposing the rise."

39	Our rates are more excessive than that of other mid north coast councils. Outrageous that Council is seeking an increase when it publishes an extremely expensive brochure to justify the increase. No mention that the rate rise will be applied to services other than ordinary rates. To only provide information online is disempowering to a lot of residents who will be detrimentally affected. The fact that we have had at least 2 SRVs in the recent past seems to suggest, despite council's insistence that it is making financial savings that this is not the case. Cut large administration costs. Affordability. Raises other issues regarding the beautification project and retaining wall in Crown St.
40	Receive no services (water, garbage). Rates over \$1,000 per annum. Issues around Forestry trucks damaging the roads, not paying rates. Road not being maintained, overgrown grass.
41	Against rate rise. Asked to meet with the mayor regarding the dangerous state of the unsealed section of Summervilles Road Thora. Claims was advised it wasn't costed, scheduled or genuinely looked at and wouldn't be. What rate rise was for. No justification for another rate rise and no way to ascertain if it proceeds that it will be used legitimately.
42	I object to the proposal for a special variation. I am on a pension and on a tight budget. Expect Council to do what you can with the money you have . Wasted money on a political statement for the yes vote by buying rainbow flags. More outgoing money looking after the botanical garden that has been planted in Hyde street.
43	Strongly objects to rate rise. Concerned about hearing of 80% of ratepayers money going to staffing - outrageous. Council needs to be held responsible for bad management decisions
44	Strongly object to rate rise due to Council's persistent refusal to maintain and regulate the roads. Ask Council to review its apartheid policies and inequitable allocation of roads spending. Roads are untrafficable and unsafe. Residents are severely disadvantaged due to adverse impacts on liveability.
45	I object to the Special Rates Variation, more time and information is required.
46	I strongly object to the proposed rate variation. In my opinion Council does not spend its existing rates wisely. Council is head office staff heavy and field staff too light.
47	I wish to object to the proposal that Bellingen Shire Council apply to IPART for a Special Rate Variation for 2018/19. The proposed increases will have a severe impact on many families, especially those on fixed incomes. Whilst I agree that maintenance of infrastructure is essential, it is a matter of priorities. This needs to be high priority and other less important expenditure sacrificed to fund it. We expect better management of the expenditure budget to be able to achieve the increases required to maintain our community assets.
48	I object to the SRV
49	I object to the proposed SRV
50	Do not put up the rates anymore as people will not be able to afford them

51		I object to the special rate variation proposed for Bellinghen council rate payers. I am a rate payer and object to the absorption of 80% revenue for council salaries that is not aligned with other council's business plan.
52		I object to BSC's special rates variation being rushed upon the shire . As I am already finding the rates costs to be high, an increase would cause difficulties on a low to average income.
53		I OBJECT to BSC's proposed Special Rate Variation being rushed upon the shire, please take this as my formal objection.
54		I object to Council's proposed Special Rate Variation. I receive the age pension and it is difficult to make ends meet now. Any rate increase would be a major problem for me.
55		I OBJECT to BSC's proposed Special Rate Variation being rushed upon the shire, we residents and ratepayers need more information. Especially that regarding wages of the top employees being made more than surrounding councils. Why do we need to pay more and why do we need to employ someone to a position and then employ an assistant to help that employee.
56		I object to the rushed rate variation being imposed upon the shire. There must be further review and detailed justification for the current expenditure.
57		We have been looking to buy a house in the Bellinghen area but want to let the council know that the rates by comparison to other areas are already outrageous, and now with news of a imminent rate hike, we are seriously considering buying elsewhere.
58		I am writing to express my concern and objection to the proposed special rate variation. Our rates are already high and living in an area with low employment, high cost of daily livings these suggested rate rises are adding to the pressure and are causing stress to many. I particularly object given the high percentage of our rates that goes to council wages. I would like to hear about plans of reducing the high wages cost until I would even begin to consider a special rate variation.
59		I object to Bellinghen Council's proposed Special Rate Variation being pushed through. People who are working do not get a chance to attend the meeting and in fact, most residents, from what I can ascertain, need more information about these proposed rate raises. It is such a huge raise and I am totally unsure how this can be justified. Please hold off on rushing this through. I for one, travel 500kms away for secure employment, as jobs are not easy to find in Bellinghen. People need a fair go. From a concerned rate payer.
60		I, [REDACTED] object to the SRV. Council does not use our rates on the necessary infrastructure such as roads and bridges but on staff salaries. The shire rate payers needs to get a grip on Council staff excesses.

61		<p>I am writing to make known I strongly object to the SRV proposed by council. I have read over all the related documents made available on the CREATE website.</p> <p>When I compare the annual average rate increase as stated in the LTFP_2017_2017_for_SRV.pdf of \$68.68 to the increase my rates would face of \$99.39 it highlights that there are people in the shire who will be more heavily impacted by the SRV. Considering my family finds it difficult to meet current rate payments, this increase without any substantial increase to our wages over the next 3 years as well as the arrival of our first child will make rate payments extremely difficult.</p> <p>I ask that council finds a more equitable solution to council expenditures.</p>
62		<p>I am writing to make known I strongly object to the SRV proposed by council. I have read over all the related documents made available on the CREATE website.</p> <p>When I compare the annual average rate increase as stated in the LTFP_2017_2017_for_SRV.pdf of \$68.68 to the increase my rates would face of \$99.39 it highlights that there are people in the shire who will be more heavily impacted by the SRV. Considering my family finds it difficult to meet current rate payments, this increase without any substantial increase to our wages over the next 3 years as well as the arrival of our first child will make rate payments extremely difficult.</p> <p>I ask that council finds a more equitable solution to council expenditures.</p>
63		<p>I strongly object to Bellingen Shire Council's proposed Special Rate Variation and as such request that my objection be formally logged and acknowledged.</p>
64		<p>I object to the proposed rate rise until we have more information on the intention and use of the money and Council's staff and wages structure.</p>
65		<p>I do most strongly protest over the latest request to IPART to raise the rates for this shire by and additional 6%, over and above the existing 6% increased amount.</p> <p>rate payers within the shire does not warrant the increase on the grounds of hardship.</p> <p>Town beautification issues (paving, tree removal, shade) Issues regarding development of the Raleigh Council site and buildings.</p> <p>Why does this small shire need two very expensive managers. Neither do I believe that the staffing levels are justified.</p>
66		<p>Bellingen shire council cannot keep putting their hand in rate payers pockets they have to stop wasting money and live off their own means.</p>
67		<p>I object your rate raising proposal</p>

68		I object to the rate rise
69		I wish to object to a rate rise. I believe Bellingen council has excessively high staff wages, and should improve financial management practices instead of hiking up rates. In this shire, most rate payers are under-employed, and wages and pensions have effectively decreased in comparison to cost of living.
70		You are an absolute bunch of thieves!!! How dare you even think about applying for another rate increase..... slugging the ratepayers in the Shire for your incompetence and mismanagement!!!! Bellingen Shire Council already has some of the highest rates in NSW. The rates go up but the land value does not!!!! I vehemently object to a further rate increase and REFUSE to pay any further increases!!
71		Low income earner with 6 children. Object to increase. Believe paying enough and struggling to pay current.
72		<p>I am writing to express my concerns over the special rate variation that I have recently found out about. I think more information needs to be provided to rate payers before such a motion should pass. I am hearing bits and pieces about out of control spending and would like to see more information about why the rise is needed, where the current spending is going, and an explanation why the last SRV hasn't covered the deficit. So that I can make a fair and educated decision about this SRV.</p> <p>I am appalled that the council would bring the motion forward just before Christmas, a time where many families are on holidays and a little out of touch with the happenings of their local council. Please register my disapproval at your proposed special rate variation. And had I have known there was a cut off of the 26th Jan I would have written to you sooner.</p>
73		Object to rate rise. Rural ratepayers pay higher rates than town but do not receive services. I have been told that 80% of rates is paid on wages, employees numbers have blown out, new vehicles, new facilities. Raised issues with the town beautification project. Going like Byron - over priced, over developed, dirty and unloved. Raised issues around parking, lack of shade, look of the town.
74		Disagree with rate rise. As a single person pensioner household this puts me in greater financial stress. Wants smaller bins to pay less.

10 January 2018

Cr Dominic King
Mayor
Bellingden Shire Council



Special Variation 2018/2019

Dear Mayor,

I am, with many others, concerned about the proposed rate variations, particularly as it affects Farmland Ratepayers with an annual increase of \$160.47 which is cumulative at 19.1%.

Small rural townships and the surrounding areas, like Dorrigo, Ebor, Meyon and so forth are struggling with the increased prices of their inputs due to freight charges from the cities and large towns like Coffs Harbour. Dorrigo in particular, is dependent upon tourism, beef and dairy cattle and to a lesser extent logging. For farmers and graziers they have no control over the weather, be it droughts or floods, or their input costs and the prices they receive for their produce. Having bred and raised cattle for over 30 years in the area I am well vexed with the financial difficulties they face.

I appreciate the problems Council has in maintaining the road and bridge infrastructure in the Shire. There is a large area where rates cannot be collected because of National Parks, forests and scrubland for which there is no ownership.

However, Council needs to bear in mind that both retirees and wage earners receive on an annual basis only the cost of living index increase. In my own particular case my RAAF pension has just increased by .8%. There is therefore a wide gap between the proposed rate increases, particularly as they are cumulative, and what the general rural population receive.

Previous rate increases have also been well outside the COL index.

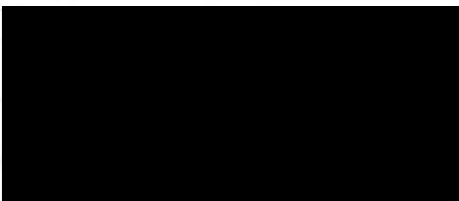
Another factor which Council needs to bear in mind, is, in the case of Dorrego, a large number of empty shops and the number of business which are for sale with no buyers. As a qualified accountant I am also aware that there are at least 4 other small business shops which will not be sustainable.

I believe that Council, instead of asking for rate increases beyond the Lpeg, they should seek the additional funds from the Australian NSW State Government which is awash with funds and is spending huge amounts on the cities like Sydney. An example of their monumental disaster is the tax on bottles and cans - there is only a limited number of refund collection points and the rural sector is completely ignored. You would be aware of this in Bellingen. So our sector bears the increased cost but has no means of seeking refunds.

There is a move afoot to form a Ratepayers Association within the Shire so that the Council can be aware of the adverse reaction to the proposed rate increases.

It would be in the interests of Council, in order to maintain the goodwill of its citizens and business's to make public their approach to the State Government to fund the increased expenditure needed by Council and the result of the State's reply.

Yours sincerely,



24 January, 2018

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
PO Box 117
BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Council Special Variation 2018/19

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We further object to Council's proposal to seek rate increases of 6.0 %, inclusive of IPART rate pegs, in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 fiscal years, i.e. which according to the Council's own figures amounts to a cumulative (compound) total of 19.1% over three years!¹

It is difficult to fathom Council's audacity in seeking these excessive and unreasonable increases, after significantly increasing rates in the current fiscal year. Council's ever increasing appetite to extract more money, and increase spending is beyond the means of the general community and will exacerbate the economic plight of vulnerable people, as demonstrated below.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that the All Groups Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased 1.9% over twelve months to the June quarter 2017. The most recent ABS September 2017 quarter data shows that CPI increased by 0.6% compared to 0.2% the June quarter 2017².
- Meanwhile Australian workers are still stuck with the lowest level of wages growth in at least two decades, as pay packets increased an average of just 1.9 per cent last financial year. ABS chief economist Bruce Hockman recently said that, even though unemployment was not particularly high at 5.6 per cent, underemployment was rife and weighing on pay demands³.
- Bellingen Shire is a particularly socio-economically disadvantaged local government area. For example:
 - The 2011 ABS census data shows that gross weekly individual income of resident workers was well below the NSW average, with 71% earning less than \$1000 per week compared with the NSW average of 55.2%⁴.

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- In the 2017 September quarter the unemployment rate in Bellingen Shire was 7.93% compared to the NSW average of 4.7%, and 5.6% nationally⁷.
- Council has already had approval for a special rate variation of 4.5% over and above the IPART rate peg of 1.5% effective from July 1, 2017. i.e. a permanent increase of in the rate base of 6%! So the overall compound increase which Council is seeking, inclusive of the increase exacted on our community in the current fiscal year would amount to 26.2% by 2021!
- The rate increases should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as sewer, waste and water are among the highest in NSW, i.e. the total average annual charges levied by this Council against each property. While these additional charges are supposedly “cost neutral”, the charges are not subject to the scrutiny of IPART, particularly with respect to “creative accounting” practices to cross subsidise Council’s general administration and staff costs .
- Residents are already being slugged with massive increases in the costs of electricity, with further increases flagged. The ABS reported 8.9% increase in the price of electricity in the September 2017 quarter alone.⁸
- The further rate increases which Bellingen Council is seeking are more than three times the growth in annual Australia’s CPI and wages.
- A high proportion of the local community are struggling single income families, unemployed, pensioners and self-funded retirees who are particularly exposed and vulnerable to these excessive increases.

Where are these significant additional costs, which are well in excess of income growth, supposed to come from in an already socio economically stressed community?

Clearly this Council’s spending is beyond the means of the community that it is obliged to serve.

We strongly urge IPART to recognise these critical issues and resoundingly dismiss Bellingen Shire Council’s audacious application for the further excessive special rate increases.

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Bellingen Council

Bellingen.2454.NSW

Bellingen 2454 NSW

I write in protest at the proposed rate rise. I've only lived here 9 years but have seen nothing performed or achieved in the parts of the of the lovely Bellingen i move in, that have convinced me the council deserve more funds. I grew up in Australia, lived in Cyprus, Wales, and on two of the Balearic Islands for over 30 years and travelled widely in Europe in that time. I experienced NONE of the extravagances i see executed here within the Bellingen Administration. Excusing a \$110.000.00 phone bill as normal needs looking into, this is a part of a state, NOT an offshore island community!

We had no need for the beautification of Bellingen, but my greatest concern now, is the ongoing maintenance. Looking at the overgrown plot in front of the Council Offices and the clumps in front of the Memorial Hall, i can only live in hope.

I would suggest cut backs on some Council costs if there is a shortage, including irrelevant staff, outsourcing, and the rampant advisory fees.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 23 December 2017 9:22:55 AM
To: [REDACTED]; Council
Subject: Coffs Coast Advocate: Rate increase application from Bellingen Shire

Third one in 3 years! Obviously the normal business or domestic option of cutting costs is something they can't be bothered even considering! So easy to tax and spend other peoples' money!

Coffs Coast Advocate: Rate increase application from Bellingen Shire.
<http://www.coffscoastadvocate.com.au/news/rate-increase-application-from-bellingen-shire/3296246/>



24 January, 2018

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
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BELLINGEN NSW 2454

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A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 10 January 2018 12:06:38 PM
To: council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au.
Subject: Further Rate Increase..NO

I strongly object to another Rate increase.

Compared to other country shires and similar populations, there are far too many indoor staff on the payroll and there are consultants paid exorbitant amounts for their frequently 'needed' advice on matters employees should be qualified to address.

Please stop wasting our money.

Road maintenance, waste removal, water and sewerage should be where the rates money is going.

Having removed 14 parking places for the 'beatification' of our main streets what is council wasting our money on next.....

Q. What will Council do to address current & future parking needs within the CBD?

A. Council in its current budget has set aside funding to carry out CBD parking studies in the three main town centres of Dorriggo, Bellingen and Urunga. The objective of these studies will be to assess parking generation development, identify opportunities to improve parking turnover as well as identifying opportunities to increase supply both on and off the street.

A sad, perfect example of waste!! Parking studies needed now for Bellingen so customers can get to shops in town. Not all of us can walk long distances to access the shops.. I recently tried to park in the main street to access the chemist for my prescriptions. I drove round and round for 15 minutes.....no parking spaces near by, so had to drive home and ask a neighbour to shop for me.

Please do not apply for Rate increase, most of us residents are not receiving the wages each week that you and your hired consultants at the Council are.

[REDACTED].
Bellingen resident for 30 years.

24 January, 2018

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
PO Box 117
BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Council Special Variation 2018/19

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- Bellingen Shire is a particularly socio-economically disadvantaged local government area. For example:
 - The 2011 ABS census data shows that gross weekly individual income of resident workers was well below the NSW average, with 71% earning less than \$1000 per week compared with the NSW average of 55.2%⁴.
 - ABS 2011 and 2016 census data reveals that 35.5% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes of less than \$497, and 32.7 % received just \$498 to \$891, compared to NSW regional average of 30.6% and 29.2% respectively. Only 10.6% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes above \$1465,

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compared to the NSW regional average of 16.1%⁵, and 30.3% in the Greater Sydney region⁶.

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- Council has already had approval for a special rate variation of 4.5% over and above the IPART rate peg of 1.5% effective from July 1, 2017. i.e. a permanent increase of in the rate base of 6%! So the overall compound increase which Council is seeking, inclusive of the increase exacted on our community in the current fiscal year would amount to 26.2% by 2021!
- The rate increases should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as sewer, waste and water which are among the highest in NSW, i.e. the total average annual charges levied by this Council against each property. While these additional charges are supposedly “cost neutral”, the charges are not subject to the scrutiny of IPART, particularly with respect to “creative accounting” practices to cross subsidise Council’s general administration and staff costs .
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Yours faithfully



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██████████

.....

..

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12-1-18

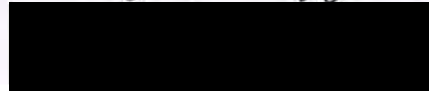


Bellingen Shire Council.

I wish to state that I strongly object to any rate increase.

This would be like adding insult to injury after your unnecessary & unpopular (so-called) "Beautifying Bellingen" (waste of money) project. If rates go up, rents increase also. Perhaps, like many of our politicians, you are out of touch with people who are not on big incomes, many struggling to cope - be they parents, pensioners or whatever.

NO, do NOT hit us hard again, just to appease your spending frenzy!



22 January, 2018

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
PO Box 117
BELLINGEN NSW 2454

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My husband died in 2017 and I am already struggling to pay the rates as it is.

I further object to Council's proposal to seek rate increases of 6.0 %, inclusive of IPART rate pegs, in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 fiscal years, i.e. which according to the Council's own figures amounts to a cumulative (compound) total of 19.1% over three years!¹

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[REDACTED]

January 16 2018

Liz Jeremy
The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council



Dear Madam,

Re: Proposed Special Rate Variance form 2018/2019

We have received the Council's information sheet regarding the above.

We are opposed to the proposal.

The reasons for our objection are as follows,

I. Prior to the 2014/2015 financial year, the community was consulted on the proposal that the council apply for a Special Rate Variance (SRV) that would apply to 2014/2015 onwards. The reasons cited were the same as those now put forward for the current SRV proposal Council applied for and gained approval for such a SRV.

The community was given to understand that as this was an ongoing increase in rates, would together with other financial arrangements set out in the Councils SRV Fact Sheet 2 (undated) would over time resolve the financial demands on the Council.

The impact on our rates was significant increasing by 15%.

Following the rate increase there were apparent increases in infrastructure maintenance work. It was understood that the catch up process would take some years.

However to the best of our knowledge no comprehensive report has ever been provided to ratepayers as to what was actually achieved by the 2014/2015 SRV as compared to the original proposals made by the Council at that time.

Nor does the current information paper to ratepayers make any acknowledgement of the 2014/2015 SRV and the Council's achievements as compared with the original plans.

Why would we therefore agree to further increases when that subject was already dealt with back in 2013/2014?

2. With some of the funding from the 2014/2015 SRV work was done to ; . There is a continuous which remains in an appalling condition. For reasons we cannot understand only sections of that stretch were improved. As a result there is a portion of the road that now can only best be described as a maze of pot holes vaguely connected by a lacework of bitumen. We are sure you are aware of that area.

So as ratepayers paying the SRV from 2014/2015 onwards and not getting the road returned to at least a basic standard, why would we agree to a second SRV?

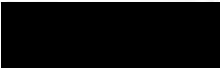
3. The information sheet on the current Special Rate Variation information sheet makes special mention as to the range of assets and services that the Council has assumed responsibility for.

We believe that no SRV should be applied for until a thorough review is made as to whether all of these are essential to the ratepayers. SRV's should not be automatically justified when ever the Council decides to increase staff, purchase new assets or undertake new services. Any changes of that nature should be clearly linked to the funding source and communicated to ratepayers. In particular economies of scale, that is working with other Councils and private enterprise should be continuously examined.

We will attend a Drop In Session and request that council consider our views.

Yours sincerely -

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.



22 January, 2018

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Bellingen Shire Council
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BELLINGEN NSW 2454

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4 <http://economy.id.com.au/bellingen/income>

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7 <http://economy.id.com.au/bellingen/unemployment>

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Hello All,

As you would be aware, Bellingen Shire Council will be submitting an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to increase general rates by 6.0% per in 2018-19, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, this amounts to a 19.1% cumulative compound increase over three years!

This increase is on top of the 6% increase which was granted by IPART for the current fiscal year. Amazingly, Council only received 19 formal submissions arising from the public consultation process for that increase. IPART only received 2 submissions from Bellingen residents, compared to 78 submissions from Ballina and 41 from Byron in respect to applications for special rate variations.

No wonder the 2017/18 rate increase was such a shoo-in!

Is this seeming community disinterest because we are all very content with the rate increases? ... or maybe a distrust of the process (i.e. Council will just do what it wants anyway without regard to community opinions)?... or maybe because Council's window for public submissions cunningly coincides with everyone's preoccupation with Christmas/New year festivities, holidays and recovery?

Well, if you do object to the proposed 19.1% rate increase, submissions must be lodged to Council by 4.30pm Friday 26. Written submissions must be titled 'Special Variation 2018/19' and either addressed to:

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
PO Box 117
BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Or submitted by email to: council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au

You are also urged to email a copy of your submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) at: ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au.

█ & I have prepared a draft template submission which is attached. The objection focusses on Council's spending beyond the means of this socio-economically stressed community rather than the nitty gritty of how they want to spend this additional money. Council is always adept at dreaming up "compelling justification" to increase revenue and spending.

You are at liberty to use any, all or none of the attached objection template should you wish. You are also encouraged to disseminate this email and template to your Bello friends, family and colleagues!

Kind regards

█

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 19 January 2018 3:10:46 PM
To: Council
Subject: [REDACTED]

As a rate payer, I object to the proposed special rate variation on the grounds that Council has not been prudent in their management of finances in relation to the following:

1. Money spent support of the recent referendum on same sex marriage ... This was NOT a local government issue!
2. The huge financial input into the recent 'beautification' of the town centre which has completely changed the character of the area as well as taking away precious parking spaces and creating a dangerously narrow thoroughfare near the monument.

24 January, 2018

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[REDACTED]

19 January 2018

SUBMISSION : SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

A glossy brochure "Special Rate Variation – Securing Our Future Through Improved Infrastructure" (SRV) was sent out to ratepayers in the Bellinghen Shire Council (BSC) in mid December 2017. The brochure relates to a proposal for the BSC to seek a SRV of 6% per year for 3 years (a cumulative increase of 19.1%).

In 2014, the NSW State Government initiated its "Fit for the Future" local government reform program that required all NSW Councils to submit a proposal demonstrating plans to achieve long term financial sustainability, better manage assets and become more efficient in the way services are delivered. In response to this the following questions arise:

- Can it be confirmed that the BSC has responded to the reform program and subsequently been declared "Fit for the Future"?
- If so, did the BSC's response include the proposal to seek a SRV and if so, was the increase of 6% per year specified and was this proposed increase approved or taken into account in declaring the BSC "Fit for the Future"? Should this be the case then isn't the SRV a fait accompli and will be implemented regardless of any submissions ratepayers may make as part of this process?
- Looking into the future, what undertakings has the BSC made in response to the NSW State Government reform program as to future rate increases? Can it be anticipated that at the end of the 3 year period covered by the SRV that further increases will be sought?

The brochure does not contain any priority list of works to be completed during the years covered by the proposed SRV, including budgeted costs and a timetable. The lack of this information provides no meaningful benchmarks for ratepayers to monitor progress in the completion of vital works to roads, bridges and other community assets. There is a reference in the brochure to a "SV One Stop Shop - "Create" but no details as to where the SV Information Centre is located and access arrangements.

In my opinion, it is the role of the council to provide essential services to the community in maintaining infrastructure and community assets as well as utility services such as water, sewage and garbage collection. Rate payers funds should not be spent on esoteric issues such as marriage equality and proposals to change the date of Australia Day. The BSC should "stick to its knitting" and restrict their activities to providing the basic essential community services of roads, bridges, other infrastructure and community assets.

[REDACTED]

19th January 2018

From:
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 10:36:08 AM
To: Council
CC:
Subject: SRV objection

I STRONGLY OBJECT TO BELLINGEN SHIRE COUNCIL'S SPECIAL RATE VARIATION.

It has come to my attention that Council has had two SRVs in the past ten years to maintain roads and infrastructure and this money has been spent on other things.

It is reported that Bellingen Shire Council costs 80% of rate monies to pay for it's staff etc, 50% more than neighbouring shires... and that they cost \$110,000 in last years phone bill. They are extravagant and expect us to pave their way.

The SRV plus the regular rate rises means that in three years, rates will increase by 20%, which is horrendous.

Council sent expensive brochures out just before christmas about the rate rise and gave a date for responding of today, 26 Jan. Many people are busy or travelling and haven't even had time to process or heard of the rate rise. If only 5% of people respond, Council reports that 95% of ratepayers agree to the rate rise, which is totally misleading and a lie.

I am very disturbed about the things I have heard about this Council at the newly formed Ratepayers Group meeting.

██████████

Email sent using Optus Webmail

From
Sent: Tuesday, 23 January 2018 12:05:31 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rates and Beautification

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I AM A RATEPAYER AND I STRONGLY OBJECT TO A RAISE IN MY RATES. I WAS TOLD I HAD TO SEND A LETTER OR EMAIL SO HERE IT IS.

I WANT TO KNOW HOW MUCH THE 6 PAGE COLOUR BROCHURE COST TO MAKE AND SEND TO RATEPAYERS?

I WANT TO KNOW HOW MUCH THE RAINBOW FLAGS COST TO MAKE AND PUT UP AND WHY COUNCIL WASTED MY RATE MONIES ON THIS EXTRAVAGANCE, ADDING INSULT TO INJURY AFTER OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WASTED MILLIONS ON ADS AND A POSTAL PLEBISCITE?

I WANT YOU TO STOP YOUR STUPID "BEAUTIFICATION" WHICH HAS RESULTED IN LOSS OF SHADE, LOSS OF TRADE TO LOCAL BUSINESS AND TOURISM, USELESS FLOWER GARDENS WHICH WILL COST RATEPAYERS MONEY TO MAINTAIN, USELESS PARK BENCHES IN FULL SUN, USELESS AND COSTLY TILES AND PAVINGS WHICH ARE SLIPPERY WHEN WET AND WHICH LEFT THE BUDGET BLOWN AND NO REPLACEMENT SHADE TREES AS PROMISED, SO NOW COUNCIL HAS TO SPEND TIME AND RESOURCES FINDING MORE "FUNDING" TO CONTINUE WITH THIS HORROR BEAUTIFICATION.... AND DON'T USE THE EXCUSE THAT IT IS ALL "GRANT" MONEY.... GRANT MONEY COMES FROM OUR TAXES.

THE CHURCH STREET BUS STOP IS NOW COMPROMISED HAVING BEEN MADE SMALLER AND BUSES FOR ADULTS AND SCHOOL CHILDREN NOW HAVE TO PARK ILLEGALLY WHICH IS ENDANGERING LIVES!!!!!!

THE OAK ST CENOTAPH WAS SO BADLY PLANNED THAT WE HAD TO LOSE EXTRA PARKING SPOTS SO THAT TRUCKS AND BUSES CAN ACTUALLY TURN THE FRICKING CORNER. WHO PLANNED THIS, A YEAR 2 STUDENT WOULD HAVE DONE A BETTER JOB.

EVERY TIME I RANG COUNCIL CONCERNED ABOUT THE LOSS OF PARKING DURING THE "BEAUTIFICATION", I WAS TOLD THAT WE WOULD NOT LOSE ANY PARKING AT ALL WHEN THE PROJECT WAS FINISHED!!!!!! OBVIOUSLY THIS WAS EITHER A BLATANT LIE OR YOU PEOPLE CANNOT COUNT.

NOW YOU WANT TO PUT IN A FURTHER HIGH MAINTENANCE, WASTE OF WATER FLOWER BED IN FRONT OF THE POST OFFICE WHERE THERE ARE CURRENTLY 2 FIFTEEN MINUTE CAR PARKS. THIS MUST BE STOPPED IMMEDIATELY, IT IS TOTAL MADNESS AND INSANITY. THE ENTIRE INTERSECTION IN QUESTION IS A HORROR AND NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED, NOT GLOSSED OVER WITH AN INANE FLOWER BED... WAS THE DEPARTMENT OF ROADS CONSULTED AT ALL IN THIS INSANE RUINING OF BELLINGEN'S INFRASTRUCTURE? SURELY A LEFT HAND TURN LANE COMING FROM SOUTH BELLINGEN WOULD BE MORE LOGICAL...

PLEASE GET BACK TO ME WITH THE COSTS OF YOUR EXTREME WASTE OF MY HARD EARNED RATE MONEY, THE BROCHURE AND FLAGS, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THE HERITAGE OF BELLINGEN IS ALREADY DESTROYED... THE SCHOOL BUS STOP NEEDS TO BE AMENDED AND CORRECTED, AND THE SHADE TREES REPLACED, THAT IS THE ONLY PART OF YOUR "BEAUTIFICATION" THAT SHOULD BE ALLOWED NOW, NO MORE FLOWER BEDS FFS.

I LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR REPLY AND I WILL BE ATTENDING YOUR RATE PROPOSAL TALK AT THE BELLINGEN MEMORIAL HALL.

I HAVE TOTALLY LOST CONFIDENCE IN THIS COUNCIL AND JUDGING BY COMMENTS ON FACEBOOK, THE COURIER SUN AND ADVOCATE, I AM NOT ALONE.

BELLINGEN WAS ALREADY A PARKING CHALLENGED TOWN, LETTERS TO THE ADVOCATE HAVE TOLD THAT COFFS HARBOUR RESIDENTS WILL NO LONGER BE COMING TO THE MARKETS AND THE RECENT CAMP CREATIVE PARKING WAS A TOTAL FIASCO.

YOURS TRULY,
[REDACTED] DISGRUNTLED RATEPAYER

1/23/2018

dwa4FC5.htm

Email sent using Optus Webmail

24 January, 2018

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
PO Box 117
BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Council Special Variation 2018/19

We, the owners/residents of the above property are writing to you to express our objection to Bellingen Shire Council's application for a special rate variation of 3.7% over and above the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) rate peg of 2.3% for the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

We further object to Council's proposal to seek rate increases of 6.0 %, inclusive of IPART rate pegs, in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 fiscal years, i.e. which according to the Council's own figures amounts to a cumulative (compound) total of 19.1% over three years!¹

It is difficult to fathom Council's audacity in seeking these excessive and unreasonable increases, after significantly increasing rates in the current fiscal year. Council's ever increasing appetite to extract more money, and increase spending is beyond the means of the general community and will exacerbate the economic plight of vulnerable people, as demonstrated below.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that the All Groups Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased 1.9% over twelve months to the June quarter 2017. The most recent ABS September 2017 quarter data shows that CPI increased by 0.6% compared to 0.2% the June quarter 2017².
- Meanwhile Australian workers are still stuck with the lowest level of wages growth in at least two decades, as pay packets increased an average of just 1.9 per cent last financial year. ABS chief economist Bruce Hockman recently said that, even though unemployment was not particularly high at 5.6 per cent, underemployment was rife and weighing on pay demands³.
- Bellingen Shire is a particularly socio-economically disadvantaged local government area. For example:
 - The 2011 ABS census data shows that gross weekly individual income of resident workers was well below the NSW average, with 71% earning less than \$1000 per week compared with the NSW average of 55.2%⁴.
 - ABS 2011 and 2016 census data reveals that 35.5% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes of less than \$497, and 32.7 % received just \$498 to

¹ <https://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/news/special-variation-updated-documents-public-exhibition>

² <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6401.0>

³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-16/wages-growth-remains-stuck-under-2pc/8812584>

⁴ <http://economy.id.com.au/bellingen/income>

\$891, compared to NSW regional average of 30.6% and 29.2% respectively. Only 10.6% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes above \$1465, compared to the NSW regional average of 16.1%⁵, and 30.3% in the Greater Sydney region⁶.

- In the 2017 September quarter the unemployment rate in Bellingen Shire was 7.93% compared to the NSW average of 4.7%, and 5.6% nationally⁷.
- Council has already had approval for a special rate variation of 4.5% over and above the IPART rate peg of 1.5% effective from July 1, 2017. i.e. a permanent increase of in the rate base of 6%! So the overall compound increase which Council is seeking, inclusive of the increase exacted on our community in the current fiscal year would amount to 26.2% by 2021!
- The rate increases should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as sewer, waste and water are among the highest in NSW, i.e. the total average annual charges levied by this Council against each property. While these additional charges are supposedly “cost neutral”, the charges are not subject to the scrutiny of IPART, particularly with respect to “creative accounting” practices to cross subsidise Council’s general administration and staff costs .
- Residents are already being slugged with massive increases in the costs of electricity, with further increases flagged. The ABS reported 8.9% increase in the price of electricity in the September 2017 quarter alone.⁸
- The further rate increases which Bellingen Council is seeking are more than three times the growth in annual Australia’s CPI and wages.
- A high proportion of the local community are struggling single income families, unemployed, pensioners and self-funded retirees who are particularly exposed and vulnerable to these excessive increases.

Where are these significant additional costs, which are well in excess of income growth, supposed to come from in an already socio economically stressed community?

Clearly this Council's spending is beyond the means of the community that it is obliged to serve.

We strongly urge IPART to recognise these critical issues and resoundingly dismiss Bellingen Shire Council’s audacious application for the further excessive special rate increases.

Yours faithfully



⁵ <http://profile.id.com.au/bellingen/equalised-household-income-quartiles>

⁶ <http://profile.id.com.au/sydney/equalised-household-income-quartiles>

⁷ <http://economy.id.com.au/bellingen/unemployment>

⁸ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6401.0>

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 16 January 2018 5:01:08 PM
To: Council
Subject: Various

- <!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->Rate variation.... We are opposed, not to spending on infrastructure but the money should come from other areas of Council spending.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->2. <!--[endif]-->How do pensioners on fixed incomes handle regular rate increases ABOVE CPI?
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->3. <!--[endif]-->What is happening to such items as fixing Newry Island Bridge, the Lido, Atherton Drive?

Regards
Tony

[REDACTED]

24 January, 2018

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
PO Box 117
BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Council Special Variation 2018/19

We, the owners/residents of the above property are writing to you to express our objection to Bellingen Shire Council's application for a special rate variation of 3.7% over and above the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) rate peg of 2.3% for the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

We further object to Council's proposal to seek rate increases of 6.0 %, inclusive of IPART rate pegs, in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 fiscal years, i.e. which according to the Council's own figures amounts to a cumulative (compound) total of 19.1% over three years!¹

It is difficult to fathom Council's audacity in seeking these excessive and unreasonable increases, after significantly increasing rates in the current fiscal year. Council's ever increasing appetite to extract more money, and increase spending is beyond the means of the general community and will exacerbate the economic plight of vulnerable people, as demonstrated below.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that the All Groups Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased 1.9% over twelve months to the June quarter 2017. The most recent ABS September 2017 quarter data shows that CPI increased by 0.6% compared to 0.2% the June quarter 2017².
- Meanwhile Australian workers are still stuck with the lowest level of wages growth in at least two decades, as pay packets increased an average of just 1.9 per cent last financial year. ABS chief economist Bruce Hockman recently said that, even though unemployment was not particularly high at 5.6 per cent, underemployment was rife and weighing on pay demands³.
- Bellingen Shire is a particularly socio-economically disadvantaged local government area. For example:
 - The 2011 ABS census data shows that gross weekly individual income of resident workers was well below the NSW average, with 71% earning less than \$1000 per week compared with the NSW average of 55.2%⁴.
 - ABS 2011 and 2016 census data reveals that 35.5% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes of less than \$497, and 32.7 % received just \$498 to \$891, compared to NSW regional average of 30.6% and 29.2% respectively. Only 10.6% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes above \$1465, compared to the NSW regional average of 16.1%⁵, and 30.3% in the Greater Sydney region⁶.
 - In the 2017 September quarter the unemployment rate in Bellingen Shire was 7.93% compared to the NSW average of 4.7%, and 5.6% nationally⁷.

¹ <https://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/news/special-variation-updated-documents-public-exhibition>

² <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6401.0>

³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-16/wages-growth-remains-stuck-under-2pc/8812584>

⁴ <http://economy.id.com.au/bellingen/income>

⁵ <http://profile.id.com.au/bellingen/equalised-household-income-quartiles>

⁶ <http://profile.id.com.au/sydney/equalised-household-income-quartiles>

⁷ <http://economy.id.com.au/bellingen/unemployment>

- Council has already had approval for a special rate variation of 4.5% over and above the IPART rate peg of 1.5% effective from July 1, 2017. i.e. a permanent increase of in the rate base of 6%! So the overall compound increase which Council is seeking, inclusive of the increase exacted on our community in the current fiscal year would amount to 26.2% by 2021!
- The rate increases should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as sewer, waste and water are among the highest in NSW, i.e. the total average annual charges levied by this Council against each property. While these additional charges are supposedly “cost neutral”, the charges are not subject to the scrutiny of IPART, particularly with respect to “creative accounting” practices to cross subsidise Council’s general administration and staff costs .
- Residents are already being slugged with massive increases in the costs of electricity, with further increases flagged. The ABS reported 8.9% increase in the price of electricity in the September 2017 quarter alone.⁸
- The further rate increases which Bellingen Council is seeking are more than three times the growth in annual Australia’s CPI and wages.
- A high proportion of the local community are struggling single income families, unemployed, pensioners and self-funded retirees who are particularly exposed and vulnerable to these excessive increases.

Where are these significant additional costs, which are well in excess of income growth, supposed to come from in an already socio economically stressed community?

Clearly this Council’s spending is beyond the means of the community that it is obliged to serve.

We strongly urge IPART to recognise these critical issues and resoundingly dismiss Bellingen Shire Council’s audacious application for the further excessive special rate increases.

Yours faithfully

.....

⁸ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6401.0>

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 21 January 2018 12:30:05 PM
To: Council
Subject: Objection to Special Variation 2018/19

21 January, 2018

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
PO Box 117
BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Council Special Variation 2018/19

We, the owners/residents of the above property are writing to you to express our objection to Bellingen Shire Council's application for a special rate variation of 3.7% over and above the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) rate peg of 2.3% for the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

We further object to Council's proposal to seek rate increases of 6.0 %, inclusive of IPART rate pegs, in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 fiscal years, i.e. which according to the Council's own figures amounts to a cumulative (compound) total of 19.1% over three years!

Furthermore we, as partly self-supporting pensioners, find it difficult to fathom Council's audacity in seeking these excessive and unreasonable increases, after significantly increasing rates in the current fiscal year. Council's ever increasing appetite to extract more money, and increase spending is beyond the means of the general community and will exacerbate the economic plight of vulnerable people, as demonstrated below.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that the All Groups Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased 1.9% over twelve months to the June quarter 2017. The most recent ABS September 2017 quarter data shows that CPI increased by 0.6% compared to 0.2% the June quarter 2017.
- Meanwhile Australian workers are still stuck with the lowest level of wages growth in at least two decades, as pay packets increased an average of just 1.9 per cent last financial year. ABS chief economist Bruce Hockman recently said that, even though unemployment was not particularly high at 5.6 per cent, underemployment was rife and weighing on pay demands.
- Bellingen Shire is a particularly socio-economically disadvantaged local government area. For example:

- The 2011 ABS census data shows that gross weekly individual income of resident workers was well below the NSW average, with 71% earning less than \$1000 per week compared with the NSW average of 55.2%.
- ABS 2011 and 2016 census data reveals that 35.5% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes of less than \$497, and 32.7 % received just \$498 to \$891, compared to NSW regional average of 30.6% and 29.2% respectively. Only 10.6% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes above \$1465, compared to the NSW regional average of 16.1%, and 30.3% in the Greater Sydney region.
- In the 2017 September quarter the unemployment rate in Bellingen Shire was 7.93% compared to the NSW average of 4.7%, and 5.6% nationally.
- Council has already had approval for a special rate variation of 4.5% over and above the IPART rate peg of 1.5% effective from July 1, 2017. i.e. a permanent increase of in the rate base of 6%! So the overall compound increase which Council is seeking, inclusive of the increase exacted on our community in the current fiscal year would amount to 26.2% by 2021.
- The rate increases should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as sewer, waste and water are among the highest in NSW, i.e. the total average annual charges levied by this Council against each property. While these additional charges are supposedly “cost neutral”, the charges are not subject to the scrutiny of IPART, particularly with respect to “creative accounting” practices to cross subsidise Council’s general administration and staff costs .
- Residents are already being slugged with massive increases in the costs of electricity, with further increases flagged. The ABS reported 8.9% increase in the price of electricity in the September 2017 quarter alone.
- The further rate increases which Bellingen Council is seeking are more than three times the growth in annual Australia’s CPI and wages.
- A high proportion of the local community are struggling single income families, unemployed, pensioners and self-funded retirees who are particularly exposed and vulnerable to these excessive increases.

Where are these significant additional costs, which are well in excess of income growth, supposed to come from in an already socio economically stressed community?

Clearly this Council’s spending is beyond the means of the community that it is obliged to serve.

We strongly urge IPART to recognise these critical issues and resoundingly dismiss Bellingen Shire Council’s audacious application for the further excessive special rate increases.

Yours faithfully,



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 24 January 2018 9:57:43 AM
To: Council; ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au
Subject: Bellingen Council Rate Increase- Objection!

18 January, 2018
 The General Manager
 Bellingen Shire Council
 PO Box 117
 BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Council Special Variation 2018/19

I, the owner and resident of the above property are writing to you to express our objection to Bellingen Shire Council's application for a special rate variation of 3.7% over and above the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) rate peg of 2.3% for the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

I further object to Council's proposal to seek rate increases of 6.0 %, inclusive of IPART rate pegs, in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 fiscal years, i.e. which according to the Council's own figures amounts to a cumulative (compound) total of 19.1% over three years!

It is difficult to fathom Council's audacity in seeking these excessive and unreasonable increases, after significantly increasing rates in the current fiscal year. Council's ever increasing appetite to extract more money, and increase spending is beyond the means of the general community and will exacerbate the economic plight of vulnerable people, as demonstrated below.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that the All Groups Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased 1.9% over twelve months to the June quarter 2017. The most recent ABS September 2017 quarter data shows that CPI increased by 0.6% compared to 0.2% the June quarter 2017.
- Meanwhile Australian workers are still stuck with the lowest level of wages growth in at least two decades, as pay packets increased an average of just 1.9 per cent last financial year. ABS chief economist Bruce Hockman recently said that, even though unemployment was not particularly high at 5.6 per cent, underemployment was rife and weighing on pay demands.
- Bellingen Shire is a particularly socio-economically disadvantaged local government area. For example:
 - The 2011 ABS census data shows that gross weekly individual income of resident workers was well below the NSW average, with 71% earning less than \$1000 per week compared with the NSW average of 55.2%.
 - ABS 2011 and 2016 census data reveals that 35.5% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes of less than \$497, and 32.7 % received just \$498 to \$891, compared to NSW regional average of 30.6% and 29.2% respectively. Only 10.6% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes above \$1465, compared to the NSW regional average of 16.1%, and 30.3% in the Greater Sydney region.
 - In the 2017 September quarter the unemployment rate in Bellingen Shire was 7.93% compared to the NSW average of 4.7%, and 5.6% nationally.
- Council has already had approval for a special rate variation of 4.5% over and above the IPART rate peg of 1.5% effective from July 1, 2017. i.e. a permanent increase of in the rate base of 6%! So the overall compound increase which Council is seeking, inclusive of the increase exacted on our community in the current fiscal year would amount to 26.2% by 2021!

- The rate increases should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as sewer, waste and water are among the highest in NSW, i.e. the total average annual charges levied by this Council against each property. While these additional charges are supposedly “cost neutral”, the charges are not subject to the scrutiny of IPART, particularly with respect to “creative accounting” practices to cross subsidise Council’s general administration and staff costs .
- Residents are already being slugged with massive increases in the costs of electricity, with further increases flagged. The ABS reported 8.9% increase in the price of electricity in the September 2017 quarter alone.
- The further rate increases which Bellingen Council is seeking are more than three times the growth in annual Australia’s CPI and wages.
- A high proportion of the local community are struggling single income families, unemployed, pensioners and self-funded retirees who are particularly exposed and vulnerable to these excessive increases.

Where are these significant additional costs, which are well in excess of income growth, supposed to come from in an already socio economically stressed community?

Clearly this Council’s spending is beyond the means of the community that it is obliged to serve.

I strongly urge IPART to recognise these critical issues and resoundingly dismiss Bellingen Shire Council’s audacious application for the further excessive special rate increases.

Yours faithfully

████████████████████

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 24 January 2018 10:06:47 AM
To: Council; ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au
Subject: Bellingen Council Rate Increase- Objection!

24 January, 2018
 The General Manager
 Bellingen Shire Council
 PO Box 117
 BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Council Special Variation 2018/19

I, the owner and resident of the above property are writing to you to express our objection to Bellingen Shire Council's application for a special rate variation of 3.7% over and above the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) rate peg of 2.3% for the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

I am a retired person who has a FIXED income. Please state to the community with figures the savings that the council will make and have made to negate having to hit the ratepayers yet again for the fiscal incompetency experienced in the past. With all the automation, computers staff redundancy etc? surely the council has made some savings???

I further object to Council's proposal to seek rate increases of 6.0 %, inclusive of IPART rate pegs, in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 fiscal years, i.e. which according to the Council's own figures amounts to a cumulative (compound) total of 19.1% over three years!

It is difficult to fathom Council's audacity in seeking these excessive and unreasonable increases, after significantly increasing rates in the current fiscal year. Council's ever increasing appetite to extract more money, and increase spending is beyond the means of the general community and will exacerbate the economic plight of vulnerable people, as demonstrated below.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that the All Groups Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased 1.9% over twelve months to the June quarter 2017. The most recent ABS September 2017 quarter data shows that CPI increased by 0.6% compared to 0.2% the June quarter 2017.
- Meanwhile Australian workers are still stuck with the lowest level of wages growth in at least two decades, as pay packets increased an average of just 1.9 per cent last financial year. ABS chief economist Bruce Hockman recently said that, even though unemployment was not particularly high at 5.6 per cent, underemployment was rife and weighing on pay demands.
- Bellingen Shire is a particularly socio-economically disadvantaged local government area. For example:
 - The 2011 ABS census data shows that gross weekly individual income of resident workers was well below the NSW average, with 71% earning less than \$1000 per week compared with the NSW average of 55.2%.
 - ABS 2011 and 2016 census data reveals that 35.5% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes of less than \$497, and 32.7 % received just \$498 to \$891, compared to NSW regional average of 30.6% and 29.2% respectively. Only 10.6% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes above \$1465, compared to the NSW regional average of 16.1%, and 30.3% in the Greater Sydney region.
 - In the 2017 September quarter the unemployment rate in Bellingen Shire was 7.93% compared to the NSW average of 4.7%, and 5.6% nationally.

- Council has already had approval for a special rate variation of 4.5% over and above the IPART rate peg of 1.5% effective from July 1, 2017. i.e. a permanent increase of in the rate base of 6%! So the overall compound increase which Council is seeking, inclusive of the increase exacted on our community in the current fiscal year would amount to 26.2% by 2021!
- The rate increases should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as sewer, waste and water are among the highest in NSW, i.e. the total average annual charges levied by this Council against each property. While these additional charges are supposedly “cost neutral”, the charges are not subject to the scrutiny of IPART, particularly with respect to “creative accounting” practices to cross subsidise Council’s general administration and staff costs .
- Residents are already being slugged with massive increases in the costs of electricity, with further increases flagged. The ABS reported 8.9% increase in the price of electricity in the September 2017 quarter alone.
- The further rate increases which Bellingen Council is seeking are more than three times the growth in annual Australia’s CPI and wages.
- A high proportion of the local community are struggling single income families, unemployed, pensioners and self-funded retirees who are particularly exposed and vulnerable to these excessive increases.

Where are these significant additional costs, which are well in excess of income growth, supposed to come from in an already socio economically stressed community?

Clearly this Council’s spending is beyond the means of the community that it is obliged to serve.

I strongly urge IPART to recognise these critical issues and resoundingly dismiss Bellingen Shire Council’s audacious application for the further excessive special rate increases.

Yours faithfully



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 24 January 2018 12:00:15 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special Rate Variation

General Manager – we have not submitted a reply to Bellinghen Council re: the special rate variation. Instead we have written to IPART opposing it – [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 3:48:39 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rates Rise

Bellingen Council salaries consume 80% of our rates, 50% more than our neighbouring shires.

We OBJECT to BSC's proposed Special Rate Variation being rushed upon the shire.

[REDACTED]

From:
Sent: ry 2018 8:13 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Have your Say

-----Original Message-----

From: webforms@bellingen.nsw.gov.au [<mailto:webforms@bellingen.nsw.gov.au>]
Sent: Wednesday, 24 January 2018 11:09 PM
To: Council; [REDACTED]
Subject: Form submission from: Have your Say

Submitted on Wednesday, January 24, 2018 - 23:08 Submitted by anonymous user: 101.191.72.244
Submitted values are:

Name: [REDACTED]
Email:
Phone
Street
Subur
State:
Postcc

Reason for Contact: Compliment

Subject: Bellinger Council Proposed Rate Rise Your Comments Here: I object to BSC's plan to increase rates after their overspend on "town beautification*" which was not needed or wanted by residents. I would, however, be happy to see a rubbish pickup service

Having paid rates since

1989 I'm of the opinion it's about time I got something for my money !

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/node/11411/submission/1006>

Special Variation 2018/19



12th January 2018

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
Council Chambers
Hyde Street, (PO Box 117)
Bellingen NSW 2454

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Council's proposed request for special rate variation over a period of three years.

We here in Bellingen pay council rates that are extremely high in the context of what is paid throughout other areas of Australia. We have seen ongoing requests from council for special variations to fund roads and bridge maintenance over a period of years.

I was dismayed to learn that council is now planning to make a submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a further special variation which will result in a rate increase of 19.1% over the next three years allegedly to cover ongoing running costs.

Council's brochure states, '*..... we need to live within our means while balancing the delivery of the best possible services.*' However, this is not what I see the council doing. As with any family budget, individuals are given a certain amount of resources to realise outcomes and they need to prioritise these outcomes to live within their means. Be it housing, food, education for children etc. etc. This same premise also extends to businesses, and they similarly need to operate within their means. Why does the council think it should be an exception to this?

Why isn't priority given to infrastructure programs such as bridge and road maintenance which are paramount for the safety of all shire residents, rather than cosmetic projects such as the Bellingen 'beautification' program which has done nothing but divide the community and create a nightmare in regards to Occupational Health and Safety issues.

The true cost of the 'beautification' project:

- I regularly walk past the 'gardens' on the corner of Church and William Street (outside the Banana Coast Credit Union). These garden beds have been over-run with weeds for months. Is this now what we can look forward to in our main street? Or will there be further rate rises to cover the maintenance of these new garden beds under the guise of requests for more funds for infrastructure?
- The polished concrete areas up the top of town near the War Memorial are already showing cracks and crazing, and during wet weather become lethally slippery especially for those of us who are no longer as stable on our feet as we once used to be. When they become covered in rotting debris from the flowers dropping from

overhanging trees this adds to their danger. Uneven surfaces along Hyde and Church Street further exacerbate smooth progress.

- The polished concrete has only been in place a matter of months, and already the area outside the *Tuckshop* is filthy. Dropped food and oily residues have been ground into the polished concrete creating a dirty looking patina. I heard just a day or two back that this is also what is planned for the eating areas in Church Street. The local café waitress said '... their (the council) not interested in listening to us, we've just been here for years and seen what works. What would we know.'
- The character of our town has been destroyed with the removal of the large shade trees in Church Street. The expense involved in their removal, along with the garden beds and plantings that have replaced them will need constant upkeep.
- As well as this the new plantings have led to restricted vision, with obscured views of pedestrian movement so it is difficult to see and make allowances for children who may turn and run across the pedestrian crossing with little warning.
- When driving, the plantings have resulted in a loss of clear vision when trying to turn from the intersection of Church and Hyde Street.
- Challenges for buses and articulated vehicles using the tight intersection of Hyde and Oak Streets.
- Loss of parking through the 'beautification' process means that already challenging issues of finding a park are further exacerbated. A recent letter to the editor in *The Bellingen Shire Courier-Sun* of January 10th indicates that businesses are all suffering with this loss of parking.

If council is not fulfilling the needs of the local residents and ratepayers by prioritising infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges which are important to their safety and wellbeing, and council is not concerned about loss of parking which impacts both residents and businesses, and council is not concerned about the ongoing health and safety of those who live in and frequent this town, who is it council is serving?

I clearly don't understand how a council who is supposedly elected to serve the residents and ratepayers of this community can so blatantly disregard the needs of the community in proritising tasks and then expect the ratepayers to facilitate the provision of basic services by way of a rate increase.

I am opposed to the rate increase. As a pensioner with limited resources, I do not wish to further facilitate the council's disregard for its residents and the town's innate beauty, while it pursues a course of spending on cosmetic trends that bring us closer in line to an outer Sydney suburb. This cosmetic trend will inevitably need an overhaul in a few years when it becomes outdated. We the rate-payers, are not an endless tap of resource to fulfill the whims of the council.

I have sat on this letter for some days now, concerned about sending it in. Will it unleash another tirade of bullying I have experienced from the council in the past when I have raised issues? Is this the way council deals with things, when a rate paying resident raises issues that are of concern to them, to have council staff threaten to make their life more difficult. I hope not.

Yours sincerely,





24 January, 2018

The General Manager
Bellingen Shire Council
PO Box 117
BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Council Special Variation 2018/19

We, the owners/residents of the above property are writing to you to express our objection to Bellingen Shire Council's application for a special rate variation of 3.7% over and above the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) rate peg of 2.3% for the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

We further object to Council's proposal to seek rate increases of 6.0 %, inclusive of IPART rate pegs, in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 fiscal years, i.e. which according to the Council's own figures amounts to a cumulative (compound) total of 19.1% over three years!¹

It is difficult to fathom Council's audacity in seeking these excessive and unreasonable increases, after significantly increasing rates in the current fiscal year. Council's ever increasing appetite to extract more money, and increase spending is beyond the means of the general community and will exacerbate the economic plight of vulnerable people, as demonstrated below.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that the All Groups Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased 1.9% over twelve months to the June quarter 2017. The most recent ABS September 2017 quarter data shows that CPI increased by 0.6% compared to 0.2% the June quarter 2017².
- Meanwhile Australian workers are still stuck with the lowest level of wages growth in at least two decades, as pay packets increased an average of just 1.9 per cent last financial year. ABS chief economist Bruce Hockman recently said that, even though unemployment was not particularly high at 5.6 per cent, underemployment was rife and weighing on pay demands³.
- Bellingen Shire is a particularly socio-economically disadvantaged local government area. For example:

1

<https://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/news/special-variation-updated-documents-public-exhibition>

2

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6401.0>

3

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-16/wages-growth-remains-stuck-under-2pc/8812584>

- The 2011 ABS census data shows that gross weekly individual income of resident workers was well below the NSW average, with 71% earning less than \$1000 per week compared with the NSW average of 55.2%⁴.
- ABS 2011 and 2016 census data reveals that 35.5% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes of less than \$497, and 32.7 % received just \$498 to \$891, compared to NSW regional average of 30.6% and 29.2% respectively. Only 10.6% of Bellingen households had weekly incomes above \$1465, compared to the NSW regional average of 16.1%⁵, and 30.3% in the Greater Sydney region⁶.
- In the 2017 September quarter the unemployment rate in Bellingen Shire was 7.93% compared to the NSW average of 4.7%, and 5.6% nationally⁷.
- Council has already had approval for a special rate variation of 4.5% over and above the IPART rate peg of 1.5% effective from July 1, 2017. i.e. a permanent increase of in the rate base of 6%! So the overall compound increase which Council is seeking, inclusive of the increase exacted on our community in the current fiscal year would amount to 26.2% by 2021!
- The rate increases should be considered in context with other charges levied by Council such as sewer, waste and water are among the highest in NSW, i.e. the total average annual charges levied by this Council against each property. While these additional charges are supposedly “cost neutral”, the charges are not subject to the scrutiny of IPART, particularly with respect to “creative accounting” practices to cross subsidise Council’s general administration and staff costs .
- Residents are already being slugged with massive increases in the costs of electricity, with further increases flagged. The ABS reported 8.9% increase in the price of electricity in the September 2017 quarter alone.⁸
- The further rate increases which Bellingen Council is seeking are more than three times the growth in annual Australia’s CPI and wages.
- A high proportion of the local community are struggling single income families, unemployed, pensioners and self-funded retirees who are particularly exposed and vulnerable to these excessive increases.

Where are these significant additional costs, which are well in excess of income growth, supposed to come from in an already socio economically stressed community?

4

<http://economy.id.com.au/bellingen/income>

5

<http://profile.id.com.au/bellingen/equalised-household-income-quartiles>

6

<http://profile.id.com.au/sydney/equalised-household-income-quartiles>

7

<http://economy.id.com.au/bellingen/unemployment>

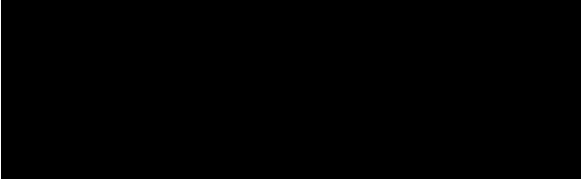
8

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6401.0>

Clearly this Council's spending is beyond the means of the community that it is obliged to serve.

We strongly urge IPART to recognise these critical issues and resoundingly dismiss Bellingen Shire Council's audacious application for the further excessive special rate increases.

Yours faithfully





19 January 2018

Cr Dominic King
Mayor
Bellingen Shire Council
33-39 Hyde Street
BELLINGEN NSW 2454

Dear Cr King,

Re: Special Rate Variation

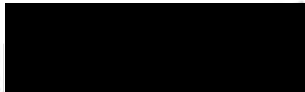
I wish to express my adamant opposition to your proposed special rate variation, which comes on top of previous increases. Following are just a few reasons:

1. There is little or no on-the-ground evidence that sufficient money from previous rate increases has been put towards better services, infrastructure upkeep and transparency. For example, we seem to have an invisible ranger, so dogs and skateboarders are running loose. Some streets are so bad that they could well damage cars driving there. The neglect of previous small plantings bodes ill for the future of the large new ones. Communication from the Council to residents is clouded in double-speak and spin. Your coloured and costly brochure attempts to explain where the money has gone, but why are the results invisible?
2. The so-called 'beautification' has destroyed the charming and historic vibe that Bellingen used to have. The redesign of roads and footpaths is a mess, creating traffic and pedestrian problems with the potential for serious accidents. We have lost over two dozen parking places – where is the Council providing new ones? Elderly people struggle to carry shopping bags longer distances. And why do we need fancy footpaths more suited to Sydney shopping centres?
3. The work of Council staff seems to be a mystery to everyone – there should be a review of roles and numbers, starting with the General Manager. The constant use of consultants needs to stop.
4. You were elected as Mayor because Bellingen is a 'green' place where people care deeply about the environment. We wanted a 'green' Council, yet you happily presided over the destruction of the large heritage trees in Church Street. And what has happened to the tree protection order that used to exist here? Trees are constantly being removed, and they can't all have proper approvals.

5. Finally, the Council has no business publicising and/or funding matters outside its role and responsibilities, such as gay marriage and the date of Australia Day. You are entitled to your opinion, as we all are, but you are not entitled to spend our rates on State/National matters over which you have no jurisdiction.

This latest exercise in 'consulting with the community' is hypocritical because the Council doesn't listen to the community's objections, and hasn't done so for some years now. There is plenty of evidence for the above in past issues of the *Courier Sun*, both articles and letters to the editor. A copy of this letter will be sent to other interested parties.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of the sender.

Bellingen Shire Council
Shire Chambers
Hyde Street
BELLINGEN NSW 2454



In regard to the rate variation say emphatically

NO

As a disability support pensioner and still trying to pay a mortgage, building and content insurance almost half of my pension is gone.

The left over goes on water, electricity, gas, Telstra, groceries, petrol, car repairs. There is not much left.

I don't go out to cafes, haven't been to cinema for 16 years. So, a very frugal life.


I rely on council clean up for household things, and thank God for the help of Neighbourhood Centre assistance, Cupboard of Plenty, free book and Life House Pantry. Clothes are from Op Shop or friends hand me downs.

How do you expect me to survive and keep my treasured home, as I am in fear of losing it with another rate increase?

Shame on you for wasting money on flags *etc.* when I am recycling and scraping to get by every day

and town beautification, hideous signs





25th January 2018

To: Bellingen Shire Council
33-39 Hyde st
Bellingen NSW 2454
council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au

Re: Special Rate Increases

We would like to record our opposition to further rate increases over those provided by rate pegging.

The interest in this engagement process is likely to be low, as has been for previous rate increases. We believe this is because people do not trust the process; if the Council follows IPART guidelines regarding the application, the outcome is predetermined. Council will make application for the increase and when this is the case people will not bother to participate. This perceived apathy can be taken by Council that the increase will not unduly affect them.

The Community Engagement period was through the Christmas holiday period (14 Dec-26Jan), as Council received the IPART guidelines 9/11/2017, which may also have an impact on the level of Community participation in the process.

The SRV community brochure points out the rate increase will allow the road network to be resealed every 15 years, and renew approximately 1 bridge per year, despite the Bridge assessment program identifying 400km of roads and 90 local timber bridges requiring maintenance or replacement. This is unlikely to occur with a SRV lasting 3 years, so ratepayers will need to expect an ongoing increase.

The formula for determining the increase for individual rate payers is flawed. Based on unimproved property values, some ratepayers will pay significantly more than others, yet for no extra benefit. Ratepayers are not being assessed individually for their capacity to pay more, rather than by the UPV of their property.

The Council, despite forming a SRV Project Team, have done very little to educate ratepayers regarding the collection and use of SRV funds in the past. The references in the community brochure regarding other efficiencies are vague, to say the least. We believe this Council spreads itself too thinly over the Shire and should get back to concentrating on core services, which may free up income to maintain infrastructure without cost shifting to ratepayers. An independent audit might be a good place to start.

Please add this document to the application to IPART.

Yours Sincerely,



24th January, 2018.



General Manager,

Bellingen Shire Council.

PO Box 117, Bellingen. 2454.

Dear Madam,

Ref: Special Rate Variation 2018/2019.

I am writing to object to the special rate variation proposed by Council for each of the next three years.

Council has already had several special rate variations in recent years. The nett result of these variations is the state of roads and bridges in the Shire as indicated in the SRV flyer that I received recently.

The cumulative effect of the three new variations as proposed by Council will increase my rates to approximately \$3,000 per year and the nett result will be another flyer in three years' time with a similar story. i.e. my rate increase will be swallowed up with little improvement in the condition of the Shire's roads and bridges.

In my opinion, Council should concentrate on provision of basic services, use Council staff for any consultative work that is needed instead of paying external consultants and use Council outdoor staff to actually do the work instead of using contractors. The debacle that is the "beautification" scheme in the main street of Bellingen is a perfect example of how not to do Council works. I feel obliged to point out the obvious danger of the tall bushes at the outer edges of the pedestrian crossing which will eventually result in a pedestrian getting skittled at the crossing.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted signature]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 25 January 2018 12:52:07 PM
To: Council
Subject: rates rise

Special Variation 2018/19'

To whom it may concern Bellingen Council

I am writing in regard to the projection of rates being raised over three years

I would like to ask that you not raise the rates as i recieve very little already for the rates i pay.
We have no rubbish collection, no water, the roads are in a state pot holed all the way to my place.
I feel that we already pay enough to live in the shire and would like my voice heard with the rest of
Bellingen residents opposing the rise.

Yours faithfully [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 24 January 2018 6:58:20 PM
To: Council
Subject: SRV

I am in NO WAY in favour of this special rate increase. Just briefly having discussed rates with people who live outside of this shire I recognise that they may live in an area that has a larger population base to draw on but our rates are more excessive than many other councils on the mid north coast. I also find it outrageous that council is seeking an increase when it publishes an extremely expensive glossy brochure to justify this increase...information that could have been easily presented on plain (recycled) paper ...it is symbolic of a very inefficient approach to spending our money. The fact that a whole stack of council brochures was left on the seat near the video store (a few weeks ago - and yes I am cranky at myself for not picking the lot up and returning them to the council) to blow away in the wind also suggest a lackadaisical approach to use of council funds (cynically I wonder if this was considered community consultation). There is no mention in the 'brochure' of increases that will inevitably be applied to services other than the ordinary rates (water sewerage garbage etc). To supply a series of documents only on line (I have been in to the office to try to find a copy and only the brochure was available) is also disempowering a lot of residents who will be detrimentally affected by this increase. The assumption that everyone has access to computer internet, knows how to log in to create and can successfully read computer screens is unacceptable (if not arrogant). The worst obfuscation is the Financial Statement Summary 2016/17 (417 KB) (pdf). In my mind a deliberate attempt to hide behind regulations...a clear summarised version should also be made available. Again it demonstrates a certain attitude of council administration to its employers (the ratepayers). The fact that we have had at least 2 SRVs in the recent past seems to suggest, despite council's insistence that it is making financial savings that this is not the case. I echo the thoughts of many and suggest council needs look at cutting administration costs that take up such a large percentage of its income. As to the mentioning of the beautification project - grant money comes from taxpayers (ie us) and/or the sale of our assets (state infrastructure such as the poles and wires etc). However where is the money for maintenance...will it require a SRV in the near future...the retaining wall in Crown St (between Ford and Prince Sts) has been waiting for years and continues to crumble and pose a very threat to anyone walking on the footpath along there (do we wait till someone falls and sues council before anything is done) I think it is important for the council to show the way rather than just constantly resorting to applying rate increases on a population with a significant number of fixed/low/self funded retiree income households.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 25 January 2018 3:31:41 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special rate increase submission

Special rate increase submission

To whom it may concern:

I am against this special rate increase proposal.

The people of Bellingen shire were subjected to a special rate rise recently and were told that this was to cover urgent roadworks and infrastructure updates. This has proven to be questionable for reasons explained below.

I have asked to meet with the mayor regarding the dangerous state of the

The mayor did not meet with me and told me on the phone that such works hadn't been costed, scheduled or genuinely looked at, and he had no intention to do so. He conceded that this is what he said the rate rise was for but still had no intention to give any attention to this potentially dangerous section of road, nor others I had mentioned after speaking to other citizens of the shire.

It was with great sadness and disappointment that I read of another proposed rate rise on already financially burdened citizens. If council has not costed, scheduled or even examined the poor third world condition roads and infrastructure, how can they genuinely say they want to raise rates? What costing is this figure based on? What projects have been assessed and costed and scheduled? It is easy to see that these figures are pure fiction plucked out of the air and imposed on financially stressed citizens.

Given the gross incompetence, negligence and petty viciousness of this greens led council in conjunction with no objective evidence or justification produced supporting any rate rise, there is no way to ascertain if the proceeds of any rate rise, past or present, are or will be used legitimately.

I therefore strongly object to any rate rise.

Yours sincerely,

Sent from my HTC

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 25 January 2018 4:24:28 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special Variation 2018/19

The General Manager,

I object to the proposal for a special variation rate rise of 6% for the next three years.

I am on a pension and on a tight budget, I need maintenance on my home which I have to carry out with the money I have. I cannot go to DVA and ask them for more money so I can carry out that work. I have to tighten my belt and prioritise and save up so I can complete this work. I expect council to do the same, there is a saying "Cut your suit to the cloth you have" in other words do what you can with the money you have. Your council wasted money on a political statement for the yes vote by buying rainbow flags and there is going to be more outgoing money looking after the botanical garden that has been planted in Hyde street.

Regards.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 10:29:52 AM
To: Council
Subject: OBJECTION to Variable Rate Rise.

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing in regards to the rate variation increase BSC is hoping to obtain...it is absolutely frightening how often this council applies for these variations and at the rate you want them to go up... I struggle now to keep on top of my rates and the thought of being eventually a retiree house owner on a government pension leaves me wondering how I could afford to stay in my own (small modest home). To hear that around 80% of rate payers money go to staffing is out outrageous (correct me if I am wrong , even 70% is outrageous) and I consider bad management, what business can sustain this... something or someone needs to investigate this council and hold them responsible for bad business choice that result in demanding variable rate rises every 3-4 years.

In saying this I would like it to go on the books that "I strongly OBJECT to BSC's proposed Special Rate Variation being rushed upon the shire", we residents and ratepayers need more information!"

Concern Shire Rate Payer

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 10:38:32 AM
To: Council
Subject: Special Rate Variation: Formal Submission

We strongly object to any further rate increases due to Council's persistent refusal to maintain and regulate the roads in our locality.

We ask Council to review its apartheid policies and inequitable allocation of roads spending which leave localities on the edge of Bellingen with third-world standard, dangerous and lawless roads that are derelict and devoid of safety signage.

Some roads in the Tarkeeth-Fernmount area are untrafficable due to many years of non-maintenance, and cannot be used to visit neighbours, or to escape in the event of a bushfire emergency.

It is a failure of governance if Council cannot maintain roads to a minimum safe standard for residents and ratepayers who live only 7 kilometres from Bellingen town centre.

There is nothing more essential and fundamental to residents in rural Australia than roads. It is a very reasonable expectation in 2018 that all roads in suburbs that closely surround Bellingen should be properly maintained and have proper road safety signage.

Residents are severely disadvantaged due to the adverse impacts on the livability of a locality when roads are not maintained and become dangerous or unusable.

Our position is that if Council cannot fulfil this fundamental obligation to its ratepayers, something is very wrong with its priorities.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 11:28:29 AM
To: Council
Subject: Special Rate Variation.

I strongly object to the proposed rate variation. In my opinion Council does not spend its existing rates wisely. Council is head office staff heavy and field staff too light. [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 11:33:45 AM
To: Council
Subject: Special Variation 2018/19

Hello

I wish to object to the proposal that Bellingen Shire Council apply to IPART for a Special Rate Variation for 2018/19. The proposed increases will have a severe impact on many families, especially those on fixed incomes, within the shire who are already struggling with cost of living increases. Wage increases have been extremely low for a number of years, and families just cannot afford additional costs. Whilst I agree that maintenance of infrastructure is essential, it is a matter of priorities. This needs to be high priority and other less important expenditure sacrificed to fund it. We expect better management of the expenditure budget to be able to achieve the increases required to maintain our community assets.

Regards

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 12:40:58 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special rate variation

Hi

I object to the special rate variation proposed for Bellingen council rate payers. I am a rate payer and object to the absorption of 80% revenue for council salaries that is not aligned with other council's business plan. We pay enough rates already and the yearly increase is sufficient

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 1:01:41 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rates rise objection

To Whom it May Concern,

I OBJECT to BSC's proposed Special Rate Variation being rushed upon the shire, please take this as my formal objection.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 1:16:00 PM
To: Council
Subject: proposed special rate variation

I object to Council's proposed
Special Rate Variation.

I receive the age pension and it is
difficult to make ends meet now.

Any rate increase would be a
major problem for me.

--

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 1:33:38 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special Rate Variation

I OBJECT to BSC's proposed Special Rate Variation being rushed upon the shire, we residents and ratepayers need more information. Especially that regarding wages of the top employees being made more than surrounding councils. Why do we need to pay more and why do we need to employ someone to a position and then employ an assistant to help that employee.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 4:16:54 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special rate variation.

I, [REDACTED] object to the SRV. Council does not use our rates on the necessary infrastructure such as roads and bridges but on staff salaries. The shire rate payers needs to get a grip on Council staff excesses. [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 4:22:31 PM
To: Council
Subject: Objection to Special Variation 2018/19

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing to make known I strongly object to the SRV proposed by council. I have read over all the related documents made available on the CREATE website.

I STRONGLY OBJECT TO THIS RATE INCREASE as when I compare the annual average rate increase as stated in the LTFP_2017_2017_for_SRV.pdf of \$68.68 to the increase my rates would face of \$99.39 it highlights that there are people in the shire who will be more heavily impacted by the SRV. Considering my family finds it difficult to meet current rate payments, this increase without any substantial increase to our wages over the next 3 years as well as the arrival of our first child will make rate payments extremely difficult.

I ask that council finds a more equitable solution to council expenditures.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 4:31:14 PM
To: Council
Subject: Proposed Special Rates Variation

The General Manager of BSC or whom it may concern,

I strongly object to Bellingen Shire Council's proposed Special Rate Variation and as such request that my objection be formally logged and acknowledged.

Regards,

[REDACTED]
Ratepayer.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 4:52:04 PM
To: Council
Subject: Object to rate rise

I object to the proposed rate rise until we have more information on the intention and use of the money and Council's staff and wages structure.
Bruce Miller

Appreciate the little things because one day you will look back and realise that they were the big things.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 27 January 2018 3:48:55 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rates

I object your rate raising proposal

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 29 January 2018 10:00:08 AM
To: Council
Subject: objection to rate variation

I wish to object to a rate rise. I believe Bellingen council has excessively high staff wages, and should improve financial management practices instead of hiking up rates. In this shire, most rate payers are under-employed, and wages and pensions have effectively decreased in comparison to cost of living.
Not appropriate,

This message is intended for the addressee(s) named and may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, please delete the message and any attachments and notify the sender. Views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of NSW Health or any of its entities.



Bellingen Shire Council



17th Jan 2018

Dear Bellingen Shire Council,

I am a low-income earner with six children and I am objecting the increase in council rates.

I believe I am paying enough and am struggling to pay the current amount.

Thank you for your understanding,



Bellingen Shire COUNCIL



Community Feedback Register SRV Drop In Sessions

Please ensure any feedback to Council is received by
Friday 26 January 2018

Name:	[REDACTED]	Phone:	
Address:	[REDACTED]		
Email:			

Drop in Session: Dorrigo / Urunga / Bellingen (please circle)

Comments:

- ① I wish to strongly object to the proposed rate rise.
Rural ratepayers have substandard roads, no infrastructure, no services (rubbish, kerb-side hard rubbish) and yet pay much higher rates than town based rate payers. What is the justification for this?
- ② I have been told that Bellingen council pays 80% of rates on wages
Nambucca and Coffs harbour 50%.
Is this correct? This is certainly the perception of everyone I talk to - that council employee numbers have blown out, new vehicles, new facilities at Kalergh and deterioration of services to ratepayers.
- ③ I have yet to come across a single ratepayer who likes the "beach B option". It is not sympathetic to Bellingen, not well thought out, not innovative and not user friendly. C minus.

Bellingen Shire COUNCIL



④ Most people say we are going the same way as Byron Bay - over priced, over developed, dirty and unloved. Being "funnelled" crowd town by planter barriers is not attractive or pleasant.

⑤ Loss of parking. I shop locally 30% less often than before. I cannot find convenient parking, so I leave town and shop away. Local business must be feeling this as other people I speak to are so distressed by the look of the town, the lack of shade and the lack of parking that they bypass town altogether.

This is a common topic of conversation amongst ratepayers and voters

Please do not continue the same "theme" further along the street - it is not what townspeople want.

Bellingen Shire COUNCIL



Community Feedback Register SRV Drop In Sessions

Please ensure any feedback to Council is received by
Friday 26 January 2018

Name:	<div style="background-color: black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>	Phone:	
Address:			
Ei			

Drop in Session: Dorrigo / Urunga / Bellingen (please circle)

Comments: I disagree with the rate rise.
As a single person pensioner household
this puts me in greater financial
stress.

AND

I would like smaller bins & have a
reduction in rates as other councils
do.

My red bin is never full - & I put my
yellow bin out every 2 months.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 15 January 2018 9:55:33 AM
To: Council
Subject: Special Variation Rate Rise

To whom it may concern,

My husband and I are writing to express our objection to the proposal for a Special Variation Rate Rise.

We feel that council should be able to manage the funds that are raised in rates in a better manner than putting more pressure on ratepayers with a Special Variation.

There are several reasons we have for our opposition.

Firstly,

There are already many elderly pensioners on very tight budgets in the shire and many people who would struggle to pay the existing rates; to increase them would place undue pressure on these members of our community. This we believe would be quite heartless and lacking the necessary care and consideration for those that already experience financial pressure. The council is here to serve them as well as the wealthier sectors of our society.

Secondly,

We would like to put in writing our dismay at finding that our rates were put to a political statement during the Marriage Equality Vote. Regardless of whether individuals believed in a Yes or No vote it was not up to our Council to support either side. Using our rates to purchase flags that supported the Yes vote was a political statement. That is not the purpose of a Shire Council. You should not use our rates to support a political campaign on the Left or the Right of the spectrum, regardless of any councillors' leanings or affiliations. Our rates would have been better spent on the roads and bridges that it is claimed you need the extra funds in the Special Variation request (which as we have said previously we believe will place many members of our community in both financial and emotional stress).

Thirdly,

The 'beautification' of Bellingen was as we have been told paid for by a grant, however, the upkeep of all the garden beds now in existence will place extra strain on Council funds, as workers will be required to weed and keep them 'beautiful'. The older garden 'bed' on the corner of William and Church streets is full of weeds every summer and needs constant care. It is in fact at the time of this email full of weeds which blow their seeds everywhere. This extra maintenance required is also misuse of our funds, one which could have been prevented if long term planning had gone into these 'gardens'. One which simply adds to extra funds being required by the Council, hence the Special Variation request.

In terms of the 'beautification' project, we would like to state in writing that as a local High School teacher and a School bus Driver we are both concerned for the safety of school children boarding buses at the newly renovated town bus stop, 'The Map'. Every school day for the past fifteen years we have been witness to by either driving buses or simply seeing children alight and disembark at this spot. No consultation seems to have been made with bus drivers or the bus companies as to the traffic flow in this area. The space has always had three buses at around about 7:45-8:00 pull in at the same time, three in a row and students have always alighted straight from the kerb onto the buses. These students travel to the Senior College, Bishop Druitt, John Paul, Nambucca Christian School and Coffs Harbour Christian Community and they usually have to change buses somewhere along the way- the northbound students at the 'interchange' at Bonville Public School, where there is plenty of room for lots of buses. However, with our 'beautification' project, the buses no longer have room at the bus stop for three buses in a row (not only have parking spaces been lost but room for school buses is now critical). The solution? To park 'illegally' (will the Council fine the bus companies?) three abreast with children (some very young) walking in front and behind the buses with their motors running because they are on strict timetables too. This is an accident waiting to happen.

Once this problem becomes visible will that also mean more of our rates need to be used to 'fix' something that has worked perfectly well and safely for many years? The other problem of our new landscaping is that these school buses can no longer negotiate the much narrower corners on Hyde and Church streets and on Hyde and Oak streets without crossing the middle lines of the road. Another

4 Daryl and Rob Gale submission

safety issue for ratepayers.

In finishing, for so many reasons, some of which are listed above, we are in strong opposition to a Special Variance Rate Rise and believe that it is not in the interests of our community to place further burden upon ratepayers for decisions made by council that have resulted in lack of funding for roads and bridges in the shire.

Yours Sincerely


Bellingen Ratepayers.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 15 January 2016 4:10:24 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special Rate Variation

I am strongly opposed to the proposed rate increase. If council can afford to spend a million dollars on the main street but cannot afford important infrastructure works, it does not need more money, it just needs to get its priorities right.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 15 January 2018 5:54:55 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special rates variation

This email is to voice my concerns with and objection to the proposed SRV.

Since purchasing [REDACTED] my rates have soared. The rates for my block in the year 2012-2013 were \$1278. This year they are \$2553.63 and if the SRV goes ahead it will be \$2655.76. This is nearly double over a 6 year period. I am sure that I am not the only person this applies to.

Meanwhile, as a minimum wage earner my weekly earnings have barely risen (I think I had \$5 / week rise some time in that period). At the same time power, fuel, food and all other commodities have also risen in cost. I don't believe I am alone in this financial struggle and am especially sympathetic to pensioners who also, even with their pension rate rebate, must be anxious about this proposal.

I realise the reasoning behind this proposal is that land values have risen because of inflated prices in our major cities causing "tree changers" to pay extremely high prices for Bellingen properties plus a rising cost in garbage services etc.

However a rate payer cannot sell a square metre of their inflatedly priced land to pay for these escalating rate price hikes. So "where is the money to come from?".

I believe this proposal, should it be accepted, will put undue financial stresses on those already struggling to pay their rates and therefore object strongly to it.

As an extra aside -I have sent my concerns in a direct email rather than via your website as I find it extremely difficult to navigate.

Sincerely

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 15 January 2016 10:52:44 AM
To: Council
Subject: Rates

I am writing to state my strongest objection to your proposed rate variation.

You already have one of these in place that is going to rip us off for the next 5 years or so and you now have the gall to want another one.

As a long time Bellingden resident whose rate payments are paid up well into the future, I am amazed that the Shire managed well in years gone by with far less office staff and the work was still done.

While I realise that our little town has turned into a trendy place with a lot of newcomers and their ideas, all the old people of the shire have not yet died out and as many are pensioners, this becomes a giant impost on them with no discount or choice but to somehow find the money.

Hopefully, our councillors will see sense and find other means to cut extravagant spending and expenses.

Thank you

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 25 January 2018 3:08:14 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rates rising

[REDACTED]

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to you regarding the Rates increases in Bellingen Shire -
and have done so since 1976 (42 years),.

I receive no services at all.

That is, no town water, garbage collection & as Sweedmans Lane is a dirt track I have to call Council and ask for road maintenance when the track is undrivable due to rain damage or the grass sides are so overgrown that it's another danger. Usually road crews come & maintain or tractors show up and mow once a year. Sometime after me calling the Council asking for service. My rates are over \$1,000 per annum.

I wish to bring to your attention that Forestry Corp are using the Tarkeeth Forest; this means the 20 truck movements a day plus their contractor vehicles are severely damaging the Lane causing deep ruts, enormous amounts of dust, that cover my property, my livelihood and it's damaging my health, Forestry send up water tankers irregularly but those drivers are instructed not to completely damp down my area! Also the junker drivers are using their brakes and I know that dust mitigation is Forestry business BUT, THEY ARE NOT PAYING RATES.

And in view of all this, I wonder why I am....?

In December 2016 at a meeting in council Forestry agreed to bitumen as their intended operations in Tarkeeth are for 10 years..!
I request Council & Forestry together to bitumen the very least in return for my years of paying rates for no services whatsoever.

Yours Faithfully,

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2016 10:45:55 AM
To: Council
Subject: Special rates variation

I object to the Special Rates Variation, more time and information is required.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From:
Sent: Friday, 20 January 2016 11:52:55 AM
To: Council
Subject: SRV

I object to the proposed SRV.
Margaret Bulanyi. Ratepayer of Bellingen.

From:
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 11:52:55 AM
To: Council
Subject: SRV

I object to the proposed SRV.
Margaret Bulanyi. Ratepayer of Bellingen.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2016 12:10:45 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rates

Do not put up the rates anymore as people will not be able to afford them .

SENT FROM MY IPAD

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 1:01:39 PM
To: Council
Subject: Objection to special rates variation

I object to BSC's special rates variation being rushed upon the shire .

As I am already finding the rates costs to be high, an increase would cause difficulties on a low to average income.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Home Owner

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 3:06:10 PM
To: Council
Subject: Oppose rate rise

I object to the rushed rate variation being imposed upon the shire. There must be further review and detailed justification for the current expenditure.
Regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 3:58:18 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rate rise

Dear Council,
I object to Bellingen Council's proposed Special Rate Variation being pushed through.
People who are working do not get a chance to attend the meeting and in fact, most residents, from what I can ascertain, need more information about these proposed rate raises.
It is such a huge raise and I am totally unsure how this can be justified.
Please hold off on rushing this through. I for one, travel 500kms away for secure employment, as jobs are not easy to find in Bellingen. People need a fair go.
From a concerned rate payer.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 3:29:55 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rate increase

We have been looking to buy a house in the Bellingham area but want to let the council know that the rates by comparison to other areas are already outrageous, and now with news of a imminent rate hike, we are seriously considering buying elsewhere.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 3:41:50 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special rate variation

I am writing to express my concern and objection to the proposed special rate variation. Our rates are already high and living in an area with low employment, high cost of daily livings these suggested rate rises are adding to the pressure and are causing stress to many. I particularly object given the high percentage of our rates that goes to council wages. I would like to hear about plans of reducing the high wages cost until I would even begin to consider a special rate variation.

[REDACTED]
Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 4:16:58 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special Variation 2018/19

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to make known I strongly object to the SRV proposed by council. I have read over all the related documents made available on the CREATE website.

When I compare the annual average rate increase as stated in the LTFP_2017_2017_for_SRV.pdf of \$68.68 to the increase my rates would face of \$99.39 it highlights that there are people in the shire who will be more heavily impacted by the SRV. Considering my family finds it difficult to meet current rate payments, this increase without any substantial increase to our wages over the next 3 years as well as the arrival of our first child will make rate payments extremely difficult.

I ask that council finds a more equitable solution to council expenditures.

Thank you,
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2018 3:05:17 PM
To: Council
Subject: Special Rate Variation 2018/19

The General Manager.
Bellingen Shire Council.
Bellingen, NSW.

Dear Madam,

I do most strongly protest over the latest request to IPART to raise the rates for this shire by and additional 6%, over and above the existing 6% increased amount.

I do this for a variety of reasons, the major one being that the socio-economic situation over the greater section of rate payers within the shire does not warrant the increase on the grounds of hardship. Whilst we all live in a very beautiful shire, a large proportion of the residents are in the lower socio economic grouping, and it is unreasonable to continue to exert further financial stress upon them.

The second main reason is that of financial management, which as a businessman, I have considerable doubt as to its responsible application. The latest effort of town beautification of which I approve, has come to an unfinished stop despite being grant aided. Is it overspent or a n other reason? This development has been left in a very poor state with loose gravel, upon which I and several others have already slipped. I also find that their financial management lacking in the area of removing the Camphor Laurel trees from Church Street, in both the cost and the lack of thought regarding the future tree installation, especially when you have a classic example of success with the Leopard trees outside of the Swiss Bakery etc. They perform a brilliant shade are for our tourists to come and spend their monies here. I am also totally disgusted with the way that the disastrous mess of the paving in Church Street has been left for many years, and appears still to be left in. It is highly dangerous and any responsible body would have seen to its effective repair, albeit even temporary. Tragically the council don't see it that way.

The other area of financial responsibility with which I have personally been disgusted with concerned the recent re-development of the Raleigh Council site and buildings. The Council, irresponsibly had loaded its ratepayers with an extortionate loan bill over massive excesses with their implementation of this development. It seems analogous to a bottomless pocket of money. This particularly hurts this writer as he spent several days making a submission which would have put the council's expenditure for this project, as approaching neutral, and the shire would have been very much better off for its implementation. Sadly the council seemed fit to not even respond to his eight page submission, let alone look into it. Instead, the massive debt on the ratepayer ensued.

Why does this small shire need two very expensive managers. I cannot believe for one moment that it does. Neither do I believe that the staffing levels are justified, and often question as to why the administrative staff levels continue to rise, almost without due care.

True knowledge of the above items is not available to the general public and it is largely as I see things that go on. I could expand further on items, which as a businessman with a financial responsibility, I deem unnecessary and/or irresponsible.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 January 2016 6:14:15 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rate rise

Bellingen shire council cannot keep putting their hand in rate payers pockets they have to stop wasting money and live off their own means.

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 28 January 2018 2:38:02 PM
To: Council
Subject: Rate rise

I object to the rate rise

[REDACTED]
Sent from my iPhone

From: '
Sent: Saturday, 27 January 2018 12:18:25 AM
To: Council; [REDACTED]
Subject: Form submission from: Have your Say

Submitted on Saturday, January 27, 2018 - 00:18
Submitted by anonymous user: 1.128.110.23
Submitted values are:

Name:
Email:
Phone:
Street
Suburb
State:
Postcode
Reason for contact: Complaint
Subject: Special Variation 2018/19'
Your Comments Here:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Bellingen Shire Council
already has some of the highest rates in NSW. The rates go up but the land
value does not!!!!
I vehemently object to a further rate increase and REFUSE to pay any further
increases!!
I travel a lot for work and did not receive any phone call, emails nor
letter to advise that you were considering this!!!! [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The results of this submission may be viewed at:
<https://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/node/11411/submission/1011>

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 29 January 2018 2:15:41 PM
To: Council
Subject: Disapproval of SRV

Dear council members,

I am writing to express my concerns over the special rate variation that I have recently found out about. I think more information needs to be provided to rate payers before such a motion should pass. I am hearing bits and pieces about out of control spending and would like to see more information about why the rise is needed, where the current spending is going, and an explanation why the last SRV hasn't covered the deficit. So that I can make a fair and educated decision about this SRV.

I am appalled that the council would bring the motion forward just before Christmas, a time where many families are on holidays and a little out of touch with the happenings of their local council. Please register my disapproval at your proposed special rate variation. And had I have known there was a cut off of the 26th Jan I would have written to you sooner.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]
Sent from my iPhone

Bellingen Shire COUNCIL



ATTACHMENT E.2

Feedback/comments from the 'Create' Bellingen Special Variation Information website

S.No.	Comment	Posted at
1	Bellingen Shire ratepayers already pay some of the highest rates in Australia and have little to show for it. Pushing aside political promises and pie-in-the-sky wish lists, one has to look at the past & present to see what may be achieved in the future. If one looks at Lavenders Bridge and Newry Island Bridge, one can imagine that extra bridge funding might achieve much of the same (i.e. poor design). In 2014 rates increased about 8% to fund timber bridge maintenance and/or replacement.	30 Dec 2017
2	The ratepayers of Bellingen Shire need to say no to a rate increase as the Council will miss manage it as they have the last increase which i might add from memory will be added to our rates again this year as it was an increase over 6 years. The last increase was to fix roads and there are still roads that need fixing, so its still a BIG NO to a rate increase from Me.	03 Jan 2018
3	Council want to raise our rates by 19.1% over the next 3 years. I find that we pay very high rates as it is and get the impression this application for a special rate variation is an attempt to raise money so that council can complete the Bellingen Beautification Project which they blew the budget for. I would prefer to see council better manage the budget they have than simply extract more money from the community. There are a lot of people struggling financially in Bellingen, increasing the rates will hurt the weakest members of our community most. My perception from conversations with the community is that a rates increase of 19.1% over 3 years is not wanted and I hope council will hear and respect that response.	05 Jan 2018
4	I say no to the rate increase, from memory add to our rates again over 6 years the last one was to fix the bridges and what happened zip. So I say no to the increase.	05 Jan 2018

5	<p>No to Special Rate Variation - Yes to better financial management In my opinion council should be able to manage their budget so as to not require such a large increase in rates. The proposed rates rise of 19.1% over 3 years will lump massive stress onto our community's poorest people, as rent and general living cost increases will flow from this. If a council needs to request a special variation which goes well above what is otherwise accepted as an annual increase in rates, I think that council's financial efficiency should be thoroughly examined.</p>	05 Jan 2018
6	<p>No - 19% rate increase is not acceptable nor, for many, affordable. If the Council cannot manage on its present rate increase, I believe that its financial management needs to be examined. I do not believe that the Council's huge increase in middle-management has given commensurate benefits for ratepayers. Council needs better and more effective management before imposing hefty rate increases on the public. I do not believe we are even now getting value for our rate \$.</p>	06 Jan 2018
7	<p>After reading your brochure again, I see that you say the average rate is \$1078.59 I would love to know who and where these people live. As everyone I talk to in Urunga pay a lot more than that I pay more than double that. I think the brochure is a little misleading and the reason I still say know to a rate rise .</p>	08 Jan 2018
8	<p>While I fully agree that more needs to be spent on repairing and improving our local roads and bridges, I think our current level of rates SHOULD be sufficient to cover these costs. I would be much more inclined to agree with a rate increase IF council first made a serious and complete review of its existing expenditure, and seriously looked at more cost saving excercises. The current level of wastage on (some) excessive staff salaries, lack of respect for expensive equipment etc. and any other areas of expenciture can surely be cut. You'd have much more acceptance by the community of a rate increase IF you make a genuine effort to cut existng costs first.</p>	10 Jan 2018

	<p>No way Bellingen Council.</p> <p>Rates are way higher, than anyone living here can afford. Pensioners who own homes outright, are struggling to pay rates.</p> <p>Families with only one spouse working, are finding it tricky.</p> <p>Friends that own homes on waterfront Central Coast & Agnes Waters (QLD) etc, are bemused as to why we pay so much more rates than other established cities.</p> <p>No way to increase.</p>	
9	<p>Thanks.</p> <p>Ratepayers do not get these sort of increases to pay extra rates, especially Pensioners and People on fixed incomes.</p> <p>Council need to be seen to lead and the best way is to show us some cost cutting especially in the huge cost of Administration.</p> <p>The current costs and staffing levels take too much of the Rate base and need to be trimmed by at least 20%.</p> <p>You ask the ratepayers to take on your costs and waste money on things like \$2500 on the Rainbow banners.</p> <p>Four people away for a conference when two would have been ample.</p> <p>Council need to be seen to be doing the right thing with ratepayers funds and that is not what we are seeing.</p> <p>There are other areas of the shire other than Dorrigo, Urunga and Bellingen, that are crying out for work that was promised over 60years ago and Council find it difficult to find time to consult with Communities.</p> <p>To run questionnaires and surveys over a holiday period especially when Council Office is not staffed during part of that period is not Public Consultation, also limiting to Create Website misses so much of the Demographic who are away on holidays, don't own computers or are unaware of this Create page.</p> <p>That is why Create has such a small ratepayer base.</p>	10 Jan 2018
10		10 Jan 2018

11	<p>Hello, While I agree with the need for further investment in local infrastructure I feel quite disenchanted with the brochure /public notification of the proposed special rate variation, in particular the brevity of what council has done to be more efficient? I am not satisfied that council has done enough in this area and, the "Motherhood" statements do not cut it with me. Council needs to be more specific if it wishes to convince ratepayers of its achievements in this area, I for one do not believe council has come close to fulfilling its obligation on this and , therefore I am opposed to this proposed special rate variation. I wish my opinion to be noted!! Regards, Joe.</p>	11 Jan 2018
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provide additional information regarding some of the comments made in order to clarify some of misconceptions.

Highest Rates in the State

The statements made regarding Council having one of the highest rates in the State is incorrect.

A comparison of rates across the State in 2015/2016 shows Bellingen Shire Council has one of the lowest rates in NSW. Out of the 151 councils, Bellingen ranked 118th in the State, a ranking of 1 being the highest, when looking at the average rate (total ordinary rates divided by the number of assessments in each shire). This means it is in the lowest 25% for rates.

Overspend of rate payer money on Town Beautification Project

This is incorrect. The Bellingen Town Beautification Project was not funded by 'rate payer' dollars. The project was fully funded through Roads to Recovery and Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) grants as well as Section 94 funds.

Council has not done enough to save money/cut costs

As outlined in the community brochure and FAQ documents available on the Create site, Council has been implementing a number of cost saving initiatives and efficiencies that has seen a massive reduction in Council's operating result. This is evidenced in Council's audited financial statements that shows a reduction in its financial deficit of \$9 million in 2014 to a surplus of \$0.28 million in 2017. This is a net improvement of \$9.3 million over the last 3 years. More information can be found in Council's Financial Summary located in the Document Library which can be found on the right-hand side of this webpage.

Council encourages anyone with questions or concerns to attend one of the 'drop in' sessions taking place in Dorrigo, Urunga and Bellingen on the 23, 24 and 25 January from 4-6pm.

13	<p>Another rate hike for many Bellinghen Council residents, that are pensioners, is an unsatisfactory solution to Council problems. Your table of how the rate variation will affect our rates details that by 2021 rates will have risen another \$500 which doesn't quite match the increase in the age pension. The Average Rate for residential was also very understated in your recent glossy flyer as my rates are currently \$2,582.48 for 2017/18, a rate mentioned for Average Farmland Ratepayers!</p>	15 Jan 2018
14	<p>A special variation rate rise is a play on words resulting in (already) unaffordable rates for pensioners & young couples already struggling to survive. We seriously need to question the quality of contractors mainly road resurfacing, I am sure resurfaced roads should last longer than three months. As for replacing wooden bridges with concrete bridges I am still trying to get my head around Newry Island Bridge which no can figure why.</p> <p>Urunga being the gateway to the Bellinghen Valley should be more of a show piece than what it is. Driving along the old Pacific Hwy on the north side of the Kalang river is a major embarrassment with weeds & long grass covering the centre islands.</p> <p>Atherton Drive could be a major show piece. The cottages are seriously out dated & need to be removed, the foreshores need to be secured to prevent further erosion. The road itself needs to be brought up to date, maybe speed bumps every 100M. Come on Bello council have a fair go.</p>	15 Jan 2018

15	<p>I note that someone at Council has seen fit comment on some of the feedback on this site. I am not sure that those comments are all that helpful.</p> <p>Council repeatedly boasts that it has made a net improvement in its financial position of \$9.3 million over the last 3 years. That begs the question - what is the source of that improvement and is it expected to continue? If it is expected to continue, why is there any need to raise additional rate revenue. I understand that much of the improvement has come from a change in accounting policy and an increase in RMS charges and not from any improvement in efficiency. I submit that it is deceptive to suggest that the improvement in financial position is evidence of cost saving initiatives without providing detailed information on the main source(s) of the improvement.</p> <p>I also take issue with the statistics on average ordinary rates in this Shire compared to elsewhere in the State. Ordinary rates are only part of the story. In our case, the Ordinary Rate represents 34% of the gross total of the rate bill (including water usage charges). The Community brochure makes no mention of estimated increases in the other charges that make up the total rate bill. Until we have estimates of the increases in those charges it is impossible to assess the full impact of the proposed SRV. The Ordinary Rate on my mother's property in Macksville is similar to that on our property but she pays over \$400 less per annum than we do, a clear indication of the effect of those extra charges on the total rate bill.</p> <p>The Bellingen 'Town Beautification Project' may well have been financed by grant money and developer contributions, but it is in my view another unnecessary distraction. Given the Council's limited resources, its primary focus should be to address the infrastructure backlog. Some of these other 'elective' projects can wait until the backlog is under control. I am the first to acknowledge the dilemma faced by this and many other councils with regard to infrastructure backlog. But I am not convinced that the organisation has done everything it can to reduce overheads and until such time as I am convinced, I will continue to oppose the SRV proposals.</p> <p>And as an aside, the Council needs to clarify whether comments submitted here are to be treated as submissions to the proposed SRV. If not, what purpose does the 'have your say' facility serve?</p>	16 Jan 2018
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I thank you again for the additional comments provided. Firstly, we would like to respond to the question raised regarding whether comments on this site are considered submissions. The answer is yes. Any comments made on this site, received via email at the council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au or hard copy letters provided at the Bellingen Administration Building on Hyde Street are considered submissions and will be included in Council's application to IPART. A copy of all submissions will also be provided as an attachment to the report to Council in February.

Other information is provided regarding some of the additional comments below.

The average rates stated in the brochure is less than what I pay – As previously stated in comments prior and also on information provided on this site, Council encourages anyone with questions regarding their specific circumstances to attend a drop in session in Dorrigo, Urunga or Bellingen. Staff and Councillors can take you through the rates calculator (also available on this site in the Document Library) that explains the breakdown of how the rates are calculated and includes other services (water and sewer) as well as the pensioner discount if applicable. Any increase in rates, e.g. a special variation, is only applicable to the general rates amount. IPART have made it very clear that councils need to specifically show this, and not include water and sewer, when speaking with their community. On saying that, Council has provided information so our community can see the whole picture that applies to them. You can see this on the rates calculator or attend a drop in session and have a staff member step you through your own set of circumstances. Those looking to attend are encouraged to bring their annual rates notice in order to do so.

Increase in rates is unaffordable – Council acknowledges that an increase in rates may affect some ratepayers. Persons in this position are encouraged to speak to Council and discuss the options available to them. Council would also encourage any pensioner to contact Council to see what discounts may apply to them including the concession on their rates. Pensioners may also be entitled to other discounts available for water and sewer

I am in NO WAY in favour of this special rate increase. Just brieny having discussed rates with people who live outside of this shire I recognise that they may live in an area that has a larger population base to draw on but our rates are more excessive than many other councils on the mid north coast. I also find it outrageous that council is seeking an increase when it publishes an extremely expensive glossy brochure to justify this increase...information that could have been easily presented on plain (recycled) paper ...it is symbolic of a very inefficient approach to spending our money. The fact that a whole stack of council brochures was left on the seat near the video store (a few weeks ago - and yes I am cranky at myself for not picking the lot up and returning them to the council) to blow away in the wind also suggest a lackadaisical approach to use of council funds (cynically I wonder if this was considered community consultation). There is no mention in the 'brochure' of increases that will inevitably be applied to services other than the ordinary rates (water sewerage garbage etc). To supply a series of documents only on line (I have been in to the office to try to find a copy and only the brochure was available) is also disempowering a lot of residents who will be detrimentally affected by this increase. The assumption that everyone has access to computer internet, knows how to log in to create and can successfully read computer screens is unacceptable (if not arrogant). The worst obfuscation is the Financial Statement Summary 2016/17 (417 KB) (pdf). In my mind a deliberate attempt to hide behind regulations...a clear summarised version should also be made available. Again it demonstrates a certain attitude of council administration to its employers (the ratepayers). The fact that we have had at least 2 SRVs in the recent past seems to suggest, despite council's insistence that it is making financial savings that this is not the case. I echo the thoughts of many and suggest council needs look at cutting administration costs that take up such a large percentage of its income. As to the mentioning of the beautification project - grant money comes from taxpayers (ie us) and/or the sale of our assets (state infrastructure such as the poles and wires etc). However where is the money for maintenance...will it require a SRV in the near future...the retaining wall in Crown St (between Ford and Prince Sts) has been waiting for years and continues to crumble and pose a very threat to anyone walking on the footpath along there (do we wa it till someone falls and sues council before anything is done) I think it is important for

17

24 Jan 2018

18	<p>IPART are of the opinion that those residents who do not make a written submission against this increase are passively in approval - a significant portion of the ratepayers are required to respond to get Council's attention. Get writing and tell your friends and neighbours to do the same.</p> <p>I say no to this rate increase.</p>	25 Jan 2018
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19	<p>Thank you again for the additional comments provided. Other information is provided regarding the additional comments below.</p> <p>Highest Rates in the State – As previously stated on this website, the statement made regarding Council having one of the highest rates in the State is incorrect. A comparison of rates across the State in 2015/2016 shows Bellingen Shire Council has one of the lowest rates in NSW. Out of the 151 councils, Bellingen ranked 118th in the State, a ranking of 1 being the highest, when looking at the average rate (total ordinary rates divided by the number of assessments in each shire) meaning it is in the lowest 25% for rates.</p> <p>You haven't stated what the increase will be to other services (water, waste, sewer charges) – Any increase in rates, e.g. a special variation, is only applicable to the general rates amount. IPART have made it very clear that councils need to specifically show this, and not include water and sewer, when speaking with their community. On saying that, Council has provided information so our community can see the whole picture that applies to them. The rates calculator can assist in providing a breakdown of the information applicable to your individual circumstances.</p> <p>Expensive glossy brochure – Council investigated developing and printing the community brochure in-house. To do this would have cost Council nearly twice as much, taken twice as long, as well as divert staff time from work that supports our community's services.</p> <p>High wages/too many staff - Council staff costs equates to 34.84% of operating expenses. Comparatively, the Group 11 council (local government grouping that Bellingen falls into) average is 35.44%. The NSW State average wage costs equate to 37.79%.</p> <p>Increase in rates is unaffordable – Council acknowledges that an increase in rates may affect some ratepayers. Persons in this position are encouraged to speak to Council and discuss the options available to them. Council would also encourage any pensioner to contact Council to see what discounts may apply to them including the concession on their</p>	25 Jan 2018
20	Thank you for taking the time to provide your comments. Any comments made on this site or emailed to Council by 4.30pm, Friday 26 January will be submitted to IPART as part of Council's application.	25 Jan 2018
21	We are strongly against any increase in the rates of this Shire.	25 Jan 2018

22	We are strongly opposed to the special rate variation, which is a major impost on the shire's residents who rely on a fixed income. Considering that a significant number of long term residents receive no waste removal services and do not have curb, gutter and pavements, as urban ratepayers do, and will not receive any additional benefits that will extend fundamental services to them we fail to see how this exorbitant increase can be justified. As a long term resident myself, of nearly forty years duration, and a ratepayer with two properties, I do not see how the increase is warranted. [REDACTED]	25 Jan 2018
23	I am against more rate rises. I would like council to go back to providing the basic services. Pay off their debts. And work within their budgets. NO RATE RISE !	25 Jan 2018
24	I am a rate payer and resident of the Bellingen Shire for over 40 years. Living out of town I receive no services. I am responsible for my own rubbish disposal and the road I live on, the parts that are sealed look like a patch work quilt with the number of fix up jobs council has done over the years and the unsealed section is an absolute shocker and only seems to receive any attention when it is needed as a logging road or if the Rally is in town. I feel that I am already subsidising the urban dwellers with very little benefit to us rural people. I am opposed to a rate rise [REDACTED]	25 Jan 2018
25	A note to the Special Variation Project Team about the closing time for comments. I was told by your office yesterday that the close off time was midnight 26th January, you state in your comments 4.30pm. Frustrating as yet again different information from different people in Council - please get your story straight.	25 Jan 2018
26	We strongly object to the rate increase proposal. We feel that this proposal doesn't take the best interests of the community into consideration and places unfair and unnecessary financial burden on everyone, especially those most vulnerable. We feel that the Council's current Economic paradigm requires close scrutiny and in-house rethinking [REDACTED]	25 Jan 2018

27	<p>Absolutely no way do I agree to yet another rate rise for residents. It's unaffordable. I'm already paying the same weekly amount on rates as I am on food. That's insane. Instead of seeking more money from residents, what would it take to change the rules/laws around Forestry not paying rates for half the shire's land? If they were paying their way, it seems there would not be this financial problem. As they are the major contributors to the damage to the roads and bridges that this money is claimed it will be going to fix - why aren't they paying? Why aren't we finding a way to get them to contribute fairly?</p>	26 Jan 2018
28	<p>This Council is totally inept at the management of the shires funds and assets and my husband and object in the strongest possible terms to the further proposed rate rise.</p>	26 Jan 2018
29	<p>Council could not cost justify roads that were needed to be upgraded when asked what car movements were on the roads Quoted 500 km of roads to upkeep how many are bush tracks Why waste money on beautification when they did not even resurface main st where are the priority's On these grounds I object</p>	26 Jan 2018
The following comments were received after the formal public exhibition period closed		
30	<p>I was appalled to see the rates on a 2 bedroom unit in Urunga compared to a 3 bedroom house in Repton on a 1 acre block, absolutely shocking and now you want us to pay more, no way. The Repton house pays more rates than your average and the unit is \$600 more than that house so I can see as an aged pensioner I will be paying more than your average increase. You need to manage better. I strongly object.</p>	27-Jan-18

Whilst asking for more money this council then proposes to spend \$65,000 on "real time" river height monitoring. Apparently this new system will be able to turn on "road closed" signs. Will it also be able to lower the handrail on lavenders bridge? Will it put access barriers across the road to prevent those that want to ignore the "road closed" signs? How does this save the ratepayer any money? Do you realise the the Bureau of meteorology ALREADY publishes river heights (for all rivers in the district) on an hourly basis for free? Where is the cost benefit analysis for this project??

Living out of town, I get NO SERVICES from council, No rubbish pickup, no roadside junk pickup, no water supply. The road I live on is a moonscape with ruts 30cm deep and tyre wrecking potholes it hasn't been repaired properly in years, the last time the grader came out it just dragged dirt from the gutter and spread it on the road.

This council is a joke and deserves NO MORE MONEY..

Electing a political party to run council was a mistake that I hope doesn't happen again.

I STRONGLY OBJECT! to this money grab

Questions for the "Special Variation Project Team".

What is the cost of the two sets of Portable (presumably rented, they have VIC plates) traffic lights parked on Kalang? Note, they are not in use.

Why did it take 1 light truck with two staff, 2 utes with stop/go staff to manage the two tractors to slash the road verge on waterfall way when previously the tractors worked alone? What is the cost of the extra vehicles and staff? Note, last week there were two tractors slashing the roadside on Sawtell road without the extra truck, utes and staff...

Why did council recently re-tar a section of Kalang Rd that was already in acceptable condition when sections of the Gravel part have dangerous potholes? Please explain the logic behind this? afterall if you consider the tar sections in need of repair, then in reality you should consider the gravel parts unusable.

Bellingen Shire COUNCIL



ATTACHMENT E.3

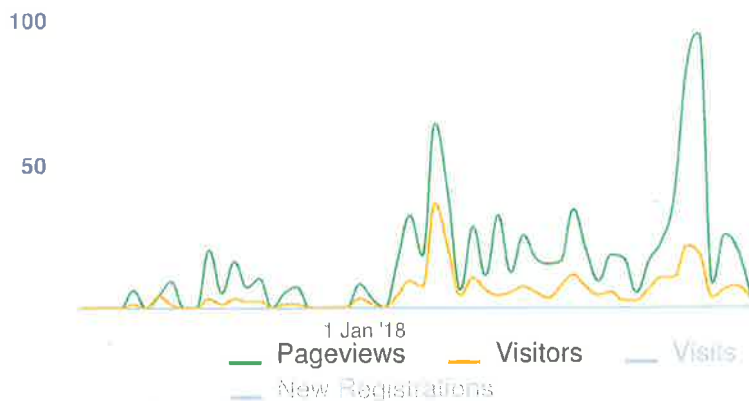
Project Report

30 January 2017 - 30 January 2018

Create Special Rate Variation



Visitors Summary

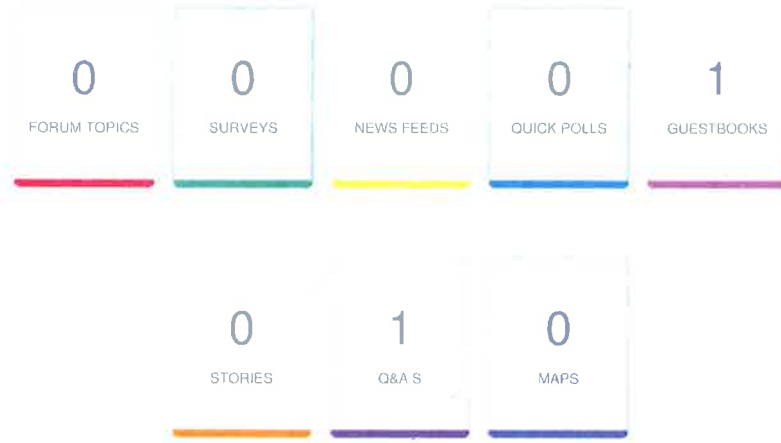


Highlights



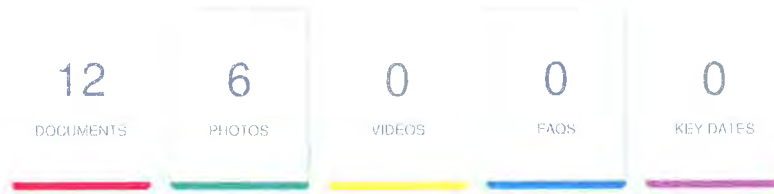
Aware Participants		203	Engaged			26
Aware Actions Performed	Participants		Engaged Actions Performed	Registered	Unverified	Anonymous
Visited a Project or Tool Page	203		Contributed on Forums	0	0	0
Informed Participants	110		Participated in Surveys	0	0	0
Informed Actions Performed	Participants		Contributed to Newsfeeds	0	0	0
Viewed a video	0		Participated in Quick Polls	0	0	0
Viewed a photo	3		Posted on Guestbooks	26	0	0
Downloaded a document	83		Contributed to Stories	0	0	0
Visited the Key Dates page	24		Asked Questions	0	0	0
Visited an FAQ list Page	0		Placed Pins on Maps	0	0	0
Visited Instagram Page	0		Contributed to Ideas	0	0	0
Visited Multiple Project Pages	78					
Contributed to a tool (engaged)	26					

ENGAGEMENT TOOLS SUMMARY



Tool Type	Engagement Tool Name	Tool Status	Visitors	Contributors		
				Registered	Unverified	Anonymous
Guest Book	Guest Book	Draft	34	26	0	0

INFORMATION WIDGET SUMMARY



Widget Type	Engagement Tool Name	Visitors	Views/Downloads
Document	Special Variation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)	37	49
Document	2017-18 Rates Calculator	36	48
Document	Special Variation Community Brochure	35	39
Document	Map - Bridge Condition	10	10
Document	LTFP 2017-2027 for SRV	9	14
Document	Timber Bridge - Priority Listing	9	9
Document	Map - Load Limit Bridges	7	7
Document	Delivery Program and Operational Plan 2017 - 2021	6	6
Document	Financial Statement Summary 2016/17	5	8
Document	General Fund Capital Works - SRV	4	4
Document	Rural resurfacing - Priority roads list	4	5
Document	deleted document from	1	1
Document	Additional Community FAQs	1	1
Key Dates	Key Date	24	33
Photo	Reids Creek Before	3	3
Photo	Yellow Rock Rd Raleigh After	2	2
Photo	Yellow Rock Rd Raleigh Before	1	1
Photo	Northbank Rd Raleigh Section 1 After	1	1

INFORMATION WIDGET SUMMARY

Widget Type	Engagement Tool Name	Visitors	Views/Downloads
Photo	Northbank Rd Raleigh Section 1 After	1	1
Photo	Northbank Rd Raleigh Section 1 Before	1	1
Photo	Reids Creek Bridge Kalang	1	1

GUEST BOOK

Guest Book

VISITORS 34	CONTRIBUTORS 26	CONTRIBUTIONS 33
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No Responses

