

Tony Camenzuli / Michael Seery  
IPART NSW

Dear Sirs,

We wish to submit an objection to what we believe will be a manifestly unjust increase in our annual rates, (after 3 years - 21.82%), should your organisation, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), approve a Special Rate Variation for Greater Hume Shire Council (GHSC).

We find it difficult to comprehend:-

considering the poor maintenance of roads had been identified in 2012 and reiterated as a “high priority”, as they were “*QUITE dire, dangerous and just not good enough,*” (Mayor Heather Wilton- *The Border Mail (TBM)*, Wednesday, November 5, 2014);

that,

- Council destroyed two perfectly good intersections in Jindera which required ongoing construction with the inclusion of two, (now, as anecdotal evidence suggests- unwarranted and unwanted), roundabouts, (taking several attempts to complete due to poor quality workmanship-as addressed in Ordinary Meeting, GHSC, Wednesday, 20 August 2014);
- Council removed and replaced already sound infrastructure (viz. footpaths in Jindera-eastern side of Urana St between Adams and Creek Sts);
- Council sought quotations for the removal and replacement of further sound infrastructure, (viz. footpaths-western side of Urana St (attached photos) between Adams and Creek Sts), *TBM*, Wednesday, February 18, 2015;





- Council removed several trees that created an inviting ambience, on entering Jindera from Albury (one of the major attractions for our moving to Jindera in 2006-which now appears as an uninviting, barren landscape); and

Council has funded the above with an estimated **\$850,000.00** + of ratepayer's money.

This only represents what has happened in Jindera. What has occurred in Culcairn, Holbrook, et al.?

Jindera ratepayers, such as ourselves, could be forgiven for suggesting that this is rather "contemptuous" when the Mayor and General Manager have made several representations in the media "bemoaning" a lack of funds and insisting that "*more cash only way to get ahead, says mayor*", (TBM, Wednesday November 5, 2014).

Add to this the anecdotal evidence that suggests the phone survey conducted by Council was conducive to reach a positive outcome for Council and further anecdotal evidence suggests that not all ratepayers received the correspondence relating to the Council's proposal.

We find that the claim in the press by the General Manager that suggested 60% of ratepayers were in favour of the proposal was somewhat misleading and not representative of the true figure that the respondents consisted of a mere 2.5% of ratepayers, (TBM, Thursday, February 12, 2015), while those in the affirmative consisted of only 1.3% of total ratepayers. This does not embellish "*Backing for rate 'extras' strong*", as claimed by the General Manager (TBM, Saturday December 13, 2014).

Further comments by the Mayor that, "*It's not an onerous amount of money...*" (TBM, Wednesday November 5, 2014), suggests that the Mayor is neither a pensioner, nor a low income earner.

Given the disparity in land values and the fact that this will occur for three years, the claim of an “average” increase of \$50.00 (*TBM*, Wednesday, November 5, 2014) is also misleading. This is, as an alternative, a representation that “all animals are equal but some animals are more equal”, (*George Orwell-Animal Farm*, 1945), in that some ratepayers will be paying much more than others for the privilege to drive on the same roads that are financed by this proposed rate increase.

In summary, our opinion is that the Council needs to take a serious look at its spending regime and do as all other businesses need to do and prioritise, spending only what the business can afford.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment and have no objection to contributing to our Council as long as it is equitable and fair and that Council shows a true commitment to the responsible use of ratepayer’s money.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us on

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Kind regards

Paul and Vicki Browne  
GHSC Ratepayers