

Submission Clarence Valley Council (CVC) Special Rate Variation

We oppose the CVC proposed rates increase. In support:

- The rate burden will largely impact self-funded retirees and the pensioner community as they are in the majority based in the higher rated areas of the Shire such as Yamba, Maclean, Ashby, Iluka, Angourie, Woombah, Wooloweyah, etc. And as a local service provider, Council is not fulfilling its responsibility to its constituents for the fair and equitable provision and distribution of a broad range of services: the people of Grafton and those in close proximity benefit more from a greater range of goods and services such as a new library in Grafton, the swimming pool, playing fields, parks reserves, the art gallery, improvements on river Grafton riverfront, public utilities such as Community centres etc. There is a great variability in expenditure per capita.
- The pensioner rebate has not increased for some time. As can be seen in Councils Social Plan, The Clarence Coast (those living on or near the river or ocean) has a significantly higher proportion of population in the 60 – 84 year age group compared to the rest of NSW (24% Clarence Coast to 17.3% NSW). Also household income significantly lower compared to NSW and a higher percentage of lone person households than NSW. Also a higher percentage of home ownership rate compared to NSW hence higher rate income to CVC.
- We understand there has been a great increase in CVC administration and governance costs and efficiency gains are lacking, as highlighted in a number of studies since amalgamation in 2004.
- Other similar Councils application to IPART for a special rate variation are proposing less percentage increases than CVC. For example Great Lakes is proposing a total cumulative increase of just over 20% for four years, yet CVC is proposing a total cumulative increase of 37% for five years. Ratepayers in CVC are being harder hit;
- Lack of information to the community about the range of measures the General Manager claims that Council has taken to deliver services more efficiently;
- Ratepayers appear to consider the Council untrustworthy to accurately analyse and submit community feedback to IPART from a very limited survey of 500 people from a total population of over 50,000. From the survey only a response rate of 44.5% received carried out over 8 days with double the number of households surveyed and collected in Grafton and South Grafton (lower rated areas) than in Maclean, Yamba and Iluka. The Greater Grafton area has the largest share of CVC population (46.9% seen in the CVC Social Plan) hence the survey is potentially distorted;
- Lack of details and information to the community about making a submission.
- As ratepayers for in the area for 25 years and ex-employees of the Councils amalgamated to form Clarence Valley Council all we can see is a large increase in Councils office costs and overhead costs, a large amount of underutilised plant and machinery in an area where this machinery can be readily hired and a divisive attitude within the Council between Upriver and down river residents. The community in general do not believe that Council has made any realistic attempt to cut its costs of operation or increase its efficiency

We are now retired but have both worked in Local and State Government for many years.

Robert is a Civil Engineer who has worked in various Councils for approximately 30 years' service in small rural Councils as well as major Councils such as Wyong Shire he also spent 20 years in Major Road Construction.

Robert and Lynette Cairns
