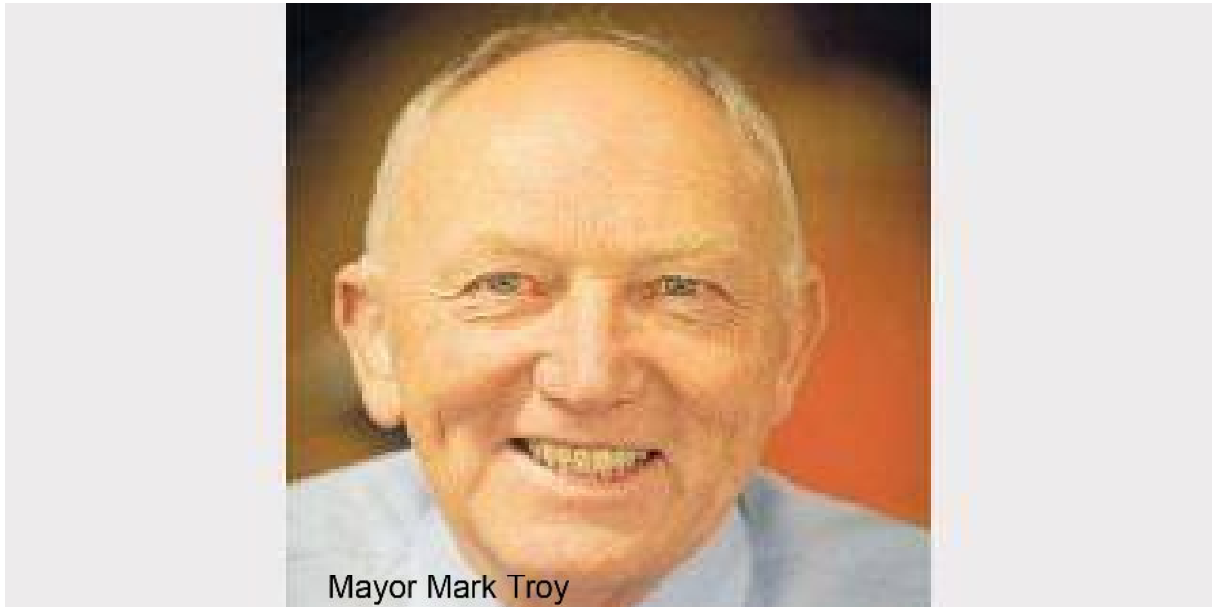


# Mayor warns of rate rise

April 24, 2013, 5 p.m.



SAVAGED by the cost of repeated flood repairs on top of an expanded portfolio of responsibilities Bellinghen Shire Mayor Mark Troy has warned of a looming rate rise to help balance the books.

In a wide ranging interview with the Courier-Sun, Mayor Troy, said “cost-shifting” by the O’Farrell Government had been a key factor in ramping up budget pressure on the shire.

A soon-to-be released report by the state government’s Independent Review Panel has found the Bellinghen Shire’s finances to be “moderately sustainable,” he said.

Options being promoted by the State Government to improve council’s financial position include rate increases, the mayor warned.

“There are councils that have had repeated rate rises above the rate peg – that’s not been the case with Bellinghen.

“And we would have to convince the community that they will get value from any future rate variation,” Mayor Troy said.

The shire’s general manager, Liz Jeremy, - also present at the interview added: “The (government’s) Independent Review Panel is on the record that not raising rates is irresponsible because it does not allow you to maintain your assets.”

Additional duties given to the shire by government include, swimming pool inspections, restaurant grease trap inspections and site inspections of food premises.

The shire is responsible for maintaining a wide range of services including public libraries a job made more difficult by an annual reduction in funding from the state, Ms Jeremy said. Business

Bellingen Shire operates at a cost disadvantage with more than 53 per cent of its land area un-rated because it is either held by the Forestry Department, Crown Land or Commonwealth.

Mayor Troy called for a more equitable funding arrangement for the shire by the state government including a financial contribution by forestry to offset their massive holdings.

“It’s an area the government needs to look at – a means of securing a contribution from those government agencies and yes, particularly forestry,” he said.

Recent devastating floods had also contributed to the council’s parlous financial state.

“When we are dealing with an emergency situation, the normal works program is simply not being undertaken and we don’t have any extra people,” the mayor said.

He strongly denied claims that the council’s administration had been expanded at an unsustainable rate.

Total staff increases over eight years amounted to 19 per cent – a rise in full time equivalent positions from 111 staff in 2004 to a current 130.

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# Forums to test waters for possible Bellingen rate variation

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Greg White | 17th Nov 2013 5:00 PM



*Bellingen mayor Mark Troy says three public forums will be used to put the case for a possible special rate variation to tackle infrastructure backlogs.*

Rob Wright

THE CASE for a special rate variation will be put to residents by Bellingen Shire Council at a series of public forums.

Council is considering an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a rate increase above the standard peg rate to fund capital works on roads and bridges.

Mayor Mark Troy said the community would be taken into confidence about developing new delivery programs and long term financial plans to address the infrastructure backlog.

"The first stage will see a series of three community forums," he revealed.

"Councillors and staff will provide information on our financial position, road and bridge infrastructure requirements and options to address the backlog including an application for a special rate variation.

"As part of this process we will be seeking feedback from our community."

The forums will be held on consecutive nights, starting at Dorrigo Hall on Monday, November 25.

The following night's meeting will be held at Bellingen Uniting Church Hall, with Urunga Senior Citizens Centre the venue on night three.

All forums begin at 6pm and should last one hour.

General manager Liz Jeremy said Bellingen Shire is responsible for maintaining 567km (of a total 636km) of roads and 136 bridges (of 153 in

total).

"We have been working for the past two and a half years on a process of major organisational reforms which have aimed at improving our effectiveness and efficiency," she said.

"This has involved a major structural review, reform of a series of processes and programs, embarking on a process of service reviews and most recently the adoption of a customer service charter and establishment of an Internal Audit Committee.

"The process will continue to ensure ongoing improvement and reform.

"Each review aims to evaluate what we provide to our community in terms of standards of service and value for money."

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# The Bellingen Shire Courier-Sun

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# Rate hike on the table

## Council to quiz residents on possible special increase

BY ALICE BURNET

BELLINGEN Shire Council (BSC) has scheduled a number of community forums to discuss a Special Rate Variation (SRV).

An SRV would be a rise separate, and in addition to, the annual ordinary rate rise.

It is expected the State Government will set the pegged rate rise for the next financial year at 2.4 per cent. Rate pegging is a practice undertaken only in NSW and it determines the maximum increase councils can apply.

The practice of rate pegging has been in place in NSW for 30 years and BSC argues this standard state-wide regulation has not kept pace with the urgent need for capital funding in Bellingen Shire.

The shire has approximately 636km of roads and 153 bridges, and of this BSC must maintain and renew 567km of roads and 136 bridges.

BSC believes on current revenue estimates, it is challenged to fund these expensive infrastructure projects, deliver services and adequately fund a backlog of infrastructure renewal.

Council general manager Liz

Jeremy told the Courier-Sun that council had already taken a number of steps to improve its efficiency and financial sustainability.

"We have been working for the last two-and-a-half years on a process of major organisational reforms which have aimed at improving our effectiveness and efficiency, and importantly, improving our service to the community," she said.

However, council believes it will still come up short of the sum needed for pending road and bridge projects, so it is considering an application for a SRV to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

Ms Jeremy said all revenue raised from a successful SRV would go toward funding capital works on road and bridges.

Council will put a number of possible special rate rise figures to the community: 2.4 per cent, 8.4 per cent, 11.9 per cent and 17.4 per cent. These are cumulative percentages and, as such, reflect the incorporation of the annual rate peg and SRV. For the average residential Bellingen Shire ratepayer, this would equate to a rise of the following amounts: \$19 at 2.4 per cent, \$65 at 8.4 per cent and \$92 at

11.9 per cent.

Mayor Mark Troy said community input on the proposals was crucial.

"As part of this process we will be seeking feedback from our community. These are important and long term decisions that will determine our infrastructure priorities and the means to fund them, so I encourage the community to be involved and have your say," Cr Troy said.

The first stage of the consultation process will see a series of three community forums where councillors and council's executive team will provide information on council's financial position, road and bridge infrastructure requirements, and options to address the infrastructure backlog, including an application for a SRV.

Community meetings:

Dorrigo - Monday November 25, from 6-7pm at Dorrigo Public Hall, Hickory St, Dorrigo

Bellingen - Tuesday, November 26, from 6-7pm at Bellingen Uniting Church Hall, Hyde St, Bellingen

Urunga - Wednesday, November 27, 6-7pm at Urunga Senior Citizens' Centre, Bowra St, Urunga

A wide range of engagement ini-



Funding is needed for bridges and roads: construction of Roses Rd Bridge

tiatives using various media are being rolled out to ensure residents are informed and have the oppor-

tunity to have a say. For further information, contact Peter Clare on 6655-7343.

# Letters to the editor

CONTINUED FROM PVIOUS PAGE

Those few who survived the starvation and beating of the Sandakan prisoner of war camp, and then survived the infamous Sandakan death marches, were murdered by the Japanese officers after Japan had surrendered.

Only six, who had successfully escaped, lived to testify against their tormentors.

The contribution to Australia of all those young men who suffered at this camp is beyond our comprehension.

Now, in Bellingen, in 2013, what is our obligation to those men?

In accordance with ANZAC traditions, it is appropriate that we reflect on that critical time in Australia's history.

We should remember the sacrifices those young men made in order that we have the freedoms we enjoy today.

We should encourage our friends and children to read the remarkable but terrible history of the Sandakan camp and death marches.

We could also recognise that each generation of Australians is confronted by issues that attack or erode the freedoms so hard fought for in the past.

The war graves at Labuan remind us that every challenge to these freedoms must be met, even through the price may be high.

In memory of those soldiers.  
**MARTIN RIDDELL  
BRIERFIELD**

## A ceremony and contribution worthy

ON BEHALF of the Bellinger River RSL sub branch, I would like to thank the following members of our community who made our Remembrance Day celebrations a success:



1. Mayor Mark Troy and the Bellingen Council who were instrumental in planting the Lone Pine (donated by our president, Brian Mortimer) in Pigott Park, and the council workers who made the garden with flowers.

The plaque is a wonderful inclusion and everyone should get down and see the Lone Pine.

It is, and will continue to be, a source of pride for the whole community and a reminder of the sacrifices made by so many men and women.

2. The Bellingen Public School choir who sang the Soldiers Prayer and the National Anthem at the dedication ceremony.

3. The many staff from shops in town who came and joined us for the Remembrance Day ceremony at the cenotaph.

Without the community input, the above would not have been successful.

Thank you, one and all.  
**PETER MILES  
HON SECRETARY  
BELLINGEN RIVER RSL SUB BRANCH**

## Formula doesn't stack up for rural ratepayers

YES, our council management is on the offensive yet again, pushing to raise taxes by either six per cent or 9.5 per cent over and above an expected IPART-mandated thresh

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Connecting the Community

Bellingen Shire  
COUNCIL



## ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORTS

Notice is hereby given that in accordance with Section 418 of the NSW Local Government Act, 1993, Council's Financial Reports for the period ended 30 June 2013 will be presented to the public at 2pm during Council's Extra Ordinary Meeting scheduled for Wednesday 4 December 2013.

### SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL REPORTS

for the period ended 30 June 2013 (Local Government (General) Regulation 2005)

	Current Year \$'000	Previous Year \$'000
<b>Income Statement</b>		
Total Income from continuing operations	29,518	31,033
Total Expenses from continuing operations	32,126	33,147
Net operating result for the year	(2,608)	(2,114)
Net operating result for the year before grants and contributions provided for capital purposes	(4,157)	(5,728)
<b>Balance Sheet</b>		
Total Current Assets	35,668	38,380
Total Current Liabilities	5,554	6,435
Total Non-Current Assets	527,487	519,938
Total Non-Current Liabilities	5,586	5,698
Total Equity	552,015	546,185
<b>Other Financial Information</b>		
Unrestricted Current Ratio	2.48:1	2.13:1
Debt Service Ratio (%)	2.5%	2.92%
Rate Coverage Ratio (%)	36.0%	31.00%
Rates Outstanding Percentage (%)	9.1%	9.39%
Assets Renewal Ratio	0.51:1	0.79:1

The business to be conducted during that meeting will include the presentation of the audited Financial Reports and the Auditor's Report. Interested members of the public are invited to attend.

The Financial Reports (including the auditor's report) are available for inspection at Council's Offices in Hyde Street, Bellingen during ordinary office hours which are 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

In accordance with Section 420 of the NSW Local Government Act, 1993 any person may make submissions to the Council with respect to the council's audited financial reports or the auditor's reports. A submission must be in writing and must be lodged with Council within seven days after the date on which the reports are presented to the public.

**LIZ JEREMY, GENERAL MANAGER**

Phone: 6655 7300 Fax: 6655 2310  
Email: council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au Website: www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au

# Super Santa Weekend!

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November

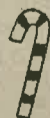
See Santa arrive in style on a vintage fire truck at 10.30am

Plus between 10.00am - 1.00pm

- FREE baby animal petting farm
- FREE face painting
- FREE kids craft activities
- FREE balloons and giveaways

And receive a FREE Personalised 2014 Calender with any Santa Package purchased for one day only!

\*Valid only 30/11/13. Terms and conditions apply.



Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December

'Santa Paws' pet photos with Santa supporting our local RSPCA

Between 2.00pm - 5.00pm

Bookings are essential. Simply call 6653 3214 or e-mail hattie.watson@federationcentres.com.au before Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November to register your pet. Registrations are not accepted on the day.

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# Letters to the Editor

**HAVE YOUR SAY!**  
Send in your letters to:  
editor.couriersun@ruralpress.com

## CONTINUED FROM PVIOUS PAGE

old of 2.4 per cent.

In fact, over the next four years I estimate we're likely to see this impost increase by a minimum of 28 per cent.

Governments continually talk about the necessity to reduce cost pressures on consumers.

They target electricity companies as the number one villain, but they are wrong, for we can at least reduce usage or switch it off. No, the number one driver of cost in relatively impoverished rural communities is local government which bludgeons us with property based taxes at every opportunity.

Returning to the here and now, Bellinghen Council management convened an extraordinary meeting of council on Monday, November 11, to present its case for this rate variation.

We will now see council progress through its 'tick the box' approach to so-called community engagement which generally results in council management continuing to do precisely what it wants to do, largely on account of general apathy among the community and a reluctance to take an active role in standing-up to our Hyde St masters.

We are the owners of an uneconomic 240 acres of steep terrain with forested gullies. While Bellinghen Council maintains the 7km stretch of road required to access the property, it provides no other services that we use apart from our library and tip access. Our payments to council have increased by an accumulative 70 per cent in the eight years from 2005.

If the next increase is of a magnitude of 2.4 per cent plus six per cent, our liability will increase by \$162 on the current year to total \$2513. The accumulative increase since 2005 therefore translates to 82 per cent. With respect, this is unsustainable.

Let's consider the current year position vis-a-vis the cousins in the city: the cousins in North Sydney who can walk to work.

They also have public transport options at their doorstep ... rail, bus and ferry.

They are typical dinks (double income, no kids).

Their city based incomes are on huge multiples. They live in a substantial three bedroom townhouse with underground parking.

Their total annual payment for

rates, inclusive of refuse collection, water and sewerage fees is \$1455.

Compare that with friends in Urunga in an 'average residential' abode.

They might as well be on another planet.

They enjoy no public transport.

They are retired on a small fixed income.

They would love to supplement this but employment opportunities are like hen's teeth ... and the rates of pay are minimal at best.

Their annual payment for rates, water, sewerage and rubbish removal is \$2232.

How great is that for disparity ... 53.4 per cent greater than the city cousins.

Being further from the seaside, Dorrigo is at a slight discount to Urunga with comparative annual costs of \$2014, or 38.4 per cent more than their city cousins. (2012/2013 figures sourced from Bellinghen Council)

The driver of the current push to hike rates is the alleged to be the condition of our roads and bridges, but the reality is there is absolutely no way a handful of country ratepayers can sustain road and bridge infrastructure across hundreds of square kilometres.

The current model of property based taxes might work in metropolitan areas but it is certainly not sustainable in rural NSW, where the proposed rate increases are already coming off a high base and will have a devastating effect as 'the Bush' also combats the flow-on effects of drought.

Until there is a whole of government approach to this issue, our council should focus on living within its current funding and targeting every dollar on maintaining essential services, because the reality is that the replacement of much of our infrastructure is beyond that of our community, and others in rural NSW, likewise.

**ROWLEY BECKETT  
DORRIGO**

## We are not being very neighbourly

MR ABBOTT is acting in Asia like a man ignorant of the region's history.

This tremendous area had advanced civilizations centuries before the west.

Comparatively recently, the Dutch ruled Indonesia, the Japanese invaded, the British and Americans came, Indonesia became a republic, booting out the

Dutch, and became an independent nation.

India, Sri Lanka, Indo-China - all have a plethora of non-Christian religions.

They are all emancipated from their previous European rulers.

Records show that the Chinese and all the local nations commonly travelled, fished and traded with Aborigines in Australian waters.

These nations were here before Europeans.

They are not all necessarily friendly between themselves or with us.

Indonesia has an enormous archipelago of islands and a population of near 250 million people and increasing. Australia has about 24 million; it is advanced, regarded as prosperous. Indonesia is doing it tough; it has poverty, internal religious conflicts, trouble feeding its people and limited means of solving the problem.

Recently Australia criticised and halted animal exports, the Labor Party insisting that Australian standards be followed in a different country where human life is no picnic.

Now Australia is virtually twisting the arm of the Indonesians to 'stop the boats'.

What for? The total inflow is piffling in Indonesian terms.

Mr Abbott swans about in this environment like a conqueror.

He has just given two warships to Sri Lanka, a dodgy business.

Is this the action of a diplomat regarding his neighbours as equals?

The relevant ministers are not to be seen; the military man is the fall guy.

Grow up, Mr Abbott. I tell you, the Nationals would be better off on their own.

**TOM GURANICH  
BELLINGHEN HEIGHTS**

## Too many cooks a recipe for confusion

IF YOU drink and drive, we will catch you; our enforcers have been telling us.

We now know that if you drive an unregistered vehicle you will also be caught.

The recent booking by police of a council employee operating an unregistered council vehicle is testimony to the above.

But to council's extreme embarrassment, and much public amusement, it was further revealed that their entire fleet was

unregistered.

My guess is that 40-plus vehicles were cruising about, unregistered, and had to be shut down till things were sorted.

Only for the vigilance of a police officer, one wonders how long before the oversight would have been discovered. Imagine a major accident involving one of the above vehicles.

One should feel a little compassion for those that may be held to account, but oversights and mistakes do happen, even though I can't recall ever having made one myself.

But the old memory is slipping a bit.

When you have five doing the job of one, overlapping, confusion and mistakes are a forgone conclusion.

Even on the home front, when I attempt to help Pauline in the kitchen, the result is always a dogs breakfast.

So it's Pauline for the cooking and me for the dishes.

That's probably why our dish-washing machine was nicknamed Darcey.

We really should by now know that one doing the job of five is better than five doing the job of one.

The reward is that one gets full credit and job satisfaction for the task completed, and mistakes are rare, as he is accountable.

And of course if it's not your money the problem is compounded.

It's always better value if it's your money.

While we are still cracking up regarding the above, Fred's wife asked what he would do if she won Lotto.

Fred's rapid response: "I reckon I would take my half and shoot through".

The wife then came back: "I have just won \$10 so take your five and bugger off".

**DARCEY BROWNING  
THORA**

## Caring for koalas and their habitat

I WOULD like to address comments made by Mr Tedder (Koalas can't bear destruction of trees, 13/11/13), which I believe unfairly characterise the efforts of Forestry Corporation to manage koalas and their habitat.

Timber harvesting in State Forests is subject to stringent regulation and Forestry Corporation's operations are independently audited by the Environment

Protection Agency as well as Australian Forestry Standard certification auditors.

Forestry Corporation conducts thorough searches for evidence of koalas before timber harvesting and where there is evidence of koala use, we apply provisions to protect their habitat.

Forestry Corporation also takes additional voluntary steps to stagger harvesting, retain habitat and in some cases, plant additional preferred koala feed trees along creeks and in other areas not being harvested for timber. Forestry Corporation has also sponsored a range of research on koalas in forests across NSW to help improve our understanding of koala populations and habitat use.

I would like to assure your readers that koalas remain a priority for Forestry Corporation. We continue to harvest our forests sustainably so they provide ongoing habitat for thriving koala populations and other threatened species, while ensuring that we can meet the community's current and future timber needs - as we have been doing in NSW for more than 100 years.

**DEAN KEARNEY  
HARDWOOD FORESTS PLANNING  
AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGER  
COFFS HARBOUR**

## Gobsmacked by such a beaut community

IT'S BEEN seven weeks now since I damaged my foot in a local store. I was on crutches for four weeks and hobbling around with an ulcer for the rest ... with still some healing left to go.

In that time I had to move house, attempt to try to make a living, and travel to Sydney twice. It's hard to express how deeply grateful I am to my Bellinghen friends - new and old - for all their incredible support. What a magnificent community! Bellinghen, you truly lived up to your name as an actual living breathing community.

Many thanks to those of you who cooked and cleaned and drove me short and extremely long distances; who spent hours tirelessly packing house-moving boxes, and unpacking at the other end. Also huge thanks to the great healing community - both alternative and traditional, who have generously and skilfully supported my healing.

Bello - you rock!  
**FRANCES AMAROUX  
BELLINGHEN**

## Internet reading gains momentum

BELLINGHEN Shire library users are continuing to quench their thirst for material that's turning the page from traditional books to those available on the internet.

Research indicates that over the past 12 months, shire library members have been gradually increasing their collections of eAudio books, eMagazines and eBooks on their computer, tablet or mobile phone to supplement print collections.

Mayor Mark Troy said "eAudio books (talking books) led the way as the first collection to appear on the local libraries website and their usage rapidly took off."

"Bellinghen Shire library users have been topping the state in their thirst to have

books read to them through the internet," Cr Troy said.

"Since July 2013 eMagazines and eAudio books have 1433 users with 56 of them being new.

"This proved early on that the Bellinghen Shire community is not only very computer savvy, and with an appetite for reading, but our community are quick to combine the two into a different and enjoyable way to get to their favourite books."

The start of 2013 saw the libraries offering eMagazines and library users can now also read old issues of through the service known as Zinio.

The latest addition to the stable of eReading has been the Wheelers eBook collection.

Launched only two months ago, there are now more than 100 library members in the Shire downloading recently published books to their computer or device to read.

To keep up with this demand; another 200 titles have been added, covering novels, non-fiction and even some kids' books.

"The new service gives library members 24/7 access to a wide range of eBooks from anywhere," Cr Troy said.

Library members can use their home internet or the free wifi service available at all Shire libraries to download eBooks to their devices.

Residents can become members by visiting one of the libraries at Bellinghen, Dorrigo or Urunga.

## Waste as a resource

COUNCIL is focusing on best practice (waste) management with recent and significant improvements being made to the Dorrigo and Raleigh facilities as well as improving services and innovation in waste diversion to our community.

Bellinghen Shire's current rate of kerbside waste diversion is an impressive 84 per cent diverted from landfill. This places Bellinghen in the number two position in the State for waste diversion rates and well above the NSW EPA target of 66 per cent.

Council is also pioneering the improvement of waste management services in the region, such as the recent Clothing Collection Trial delivered in partnership with Coffs Coast Waste Services and run in North Bellinghen.

This initiative aims to improve the reuse of clothing and rag material by offering a new and convenient method of charitable donation through the existing roadside collection infrastructure. Should this trial be considered a success it could pave the

way for a future of innovation in waste within NSW, helping to cement our position as waste management leaders.

The NSW EPA recently announced the release of \$465.7 million of funding within NSW over the next four years to increase waste resource recovery.

This announcement has allowed Bellinghen council to focus on further improving its waste management infrastructure, particularly in areas that will increase waste diversion rates and offer increased services.

In particular, council will seek funding towards upgrades to existing drop off centers and options for improved public place recycling.

"Our focus on improving council's waste management facilities, services and performance, as well as closer collaboration with the Midwaste group and Coffs Coast Waste Services is assisting council to offer improved services to the community into the future," mayor Mark Troy said.



# Letters to the Editor

## Debate smacked of tokenism

I WRITE to inform you of my disgust with the manner in which the public meeting, to discuss the proposed extraordinary rate rises, was held at Urunga on Wednesday, November 27.

The meeting was opened at 6 o'clock by a consultant who laid down the ground rules for the meeting.

She advised that everyone would be given a chance to express their opinion but that the meeting would conclude at 7pm. Then, council employees advised us as to the need for the rate rises - this went on until 6.41pm.

When a ratepayer had the gumption to suggest that council could save money by reducing office staff and consultants and inquired as to why the meeting had to be facilitated by a consultant, an indignant council employee rose to her feet and advised the meeting along the lines that this was to control unruly residents in Urunga!

There were residents who attended the meeting who did not get to voice their opinions before the meeting was terminated after 7pm.

I got the impression that these 'proposed' rate rises are a fait accompli.

I also got the impression that council will be arguing strongly to attain the highest rate rise of 17.1 per cent.

**WARWICK FAWBERT JP  
URUNGA**

## Rate hike can't be justified

AFTER attending the council forum on their proposed rate hike at Dorrigo on Monday evening, we were shocked at the apparent disdain that councillors and the managerial staff have for the community.

They arrived with a predetermined outcome, presenting only four options, all of them rate rises.

There was no option for no rate rise at all without pegging, no option for a rate reduction and no option for the council to address the real issue.

The real issue is that Bellingen Council along with many others is bankrupt. They have relentlessly spent our money on wages, holiday pay, super and travel for unnecessary staff to do unnecessary jobs.

Our community is being asked to fund and provide a sheltered workshop for a council incapable of fulfilling their primary function.

Today councils exist as self serving, empire building corporations - a burden on the community.

They have absolutely failed in their primary function as a utility service provider.

All rates are consumed by the now obese bureaucracy, and the only time utility services are provided or maintained is when they receive a grant from a legitimate level of government.

The forum was presented as a community consultation process but in fact, it was a top-down ultimatum that does not address the real issue.

When Bill Mark addressed the forum and told the truth that the forum was a disgrace and an insult to the community, the council representatives tried to laugh it off, but Bill was absolutely right.

The community most emphati-

cally does not want a rate rise - we want the council to reduce its administration costs proportionally to the extent that council can afford to perform its primary function of providing utility services and nothing more.

The community petition against this rate rise is gathering force - make sure you sign it.

**NO RATE RISE.  
BRUCE CLEARY  
DEERVALE**

## An unfair ask on ratepayers

AN OPEN letter to the the Bellingen Shire Council mayor:

I, like many other ratepayers have good memories.

\$7 million for Works Depot upgrade despite a 95 per cent against vote by ratepayers.

Yes, did it anyway. What about the council chambers' extensions and the provision of a lift so staff don't have to walk up a flight of stairs? No community consultation there.

Then there is the employing of two extra managers to take the load off our poor overworked and frazzled general manager.

No community consultation here.

It appears to be a case of empire building in council.

How much all up, Mr Mayor, \$7-8 million?

Now you are asking for ratepayers' support to help you place an 'extra tax' on those shire ratepayers to do necessary infrastructure works that \$7-8 million would have covered adequately.

You and your supporters created this mess so now you should have to get yourselves out of it.

Shame on you for thinking your constituents to be so naïve.

**ARTHUR ANFORTH  
UTUNGA**

## And the response from council

COUCIL is considering four rate increase options including restricting the increase to the 'rate peg', the legislated increase applied annually by IPART.

Community engagement initiatives and supporting information are outlined on council's website and include written material, meetings and workshops, and a survey - all designed to inform and capture community opinion. In January, council can consider the option of a special rate variation and which, if any, will be applied for.

Forums were hosted by a facilitator to enable the sessions to be as independent and productive as possible. Councillors were in attendance as well as council staff who were available after each forum to speak with residents.

Concerns expressed at the forums include administration costs, management of ratepayer funds, expenditure on the Raleigh Depot and restricting services to the more traditional.

53.5 per cent of council's 146 permanent roles are engaged in outdoor operations with 46.5 per cent engaged in 'indoor roles'. 60 per cent of 'indoor roles' are directly involved in providing services eg libraries, engineers, customer service.

The restructure removed three director positions and created two - deputy general manager positions - resulting in an approximate reduction of 28 per cent in salary costs at that level.

Raleigh Depot was constructed in 2010 at a cost of \$4.75m, funded through borrowings.

The lift in council's administration building is in accordance with the Building Code of Australia.

**LIZ JEREMY  
GENERAL MANAGER  
BELLINGEN SHIRE COUNCIL**

## Registration issue begs many questions

IT IS of great concern to the ratepayers of the Bellingen Shire, that council had failed to road register (green slip) their entire road fleet.

This action had left the entire ratepaying community vulnerable to financial penalties and possible litigation for almost three days.

The failure of the staff (not depot staff) to follow the procedure to send the cheque prior to November 11 [note - all the BSC road vehicles are due every year on the same date], has far wider implications than just an "oops, I will do it on Monday".

1) It is the failure of the indoor staff to follow the procedures and policy of the local governance that created the problem. The date all registrations of council road registered vehicles were due was Remembrance Day, it occurs every year, same date, same channel.

2) The payment covers the green slip (insurance). This money not being paid left the community at risk - highly unacceptable since it was large tonne machines and cars that were on the road in the community making every person driving near the equipment, at risk.

3) For approximately 2.5 days, all council road vehicles were unregistered on the road until a council employee was pulled up by police for driving an unregistered vehicle. All vehicles were then stopped on the side of the road or at the relevant depots for 4.5 hours until the registrations were paid. Wages for drivers, costing for freight and hire rates, the driver who was fined \$600 and loss of points - at what cost to ratepayers?

4) The individual drivers of the vehicles should, by Work Health and Safety regulations/legislation have a daily proactive checklist before they drive a vehicle. All levels of government have this as a mandatory requirement of their workers [and I am sure Bellingen Shire Council would have the above regulation in place!]. This obviously was or is never done in a fashion that picks up a simple issue that the vehicle is not registered (I do know it is more difficult now to know if a car is registered as the window registration stickers are no longer issued). Hence the worker is then vulnerable financially due to his/her failure to complete the check.

5) The failure also leads to the question were the pink slip registration checks done, that were also required prior to the cheque being forwarded. If not, shame on you. If it was, then the blame lies with the staff member/s responsible and therefore their procedures need reviewing.

From past experience I know that all the relevant safety checks were done on the trucks and machinery daily by the operator, but the paperwork ie registration, was never sighted other than for the registration sticker which was on the windscreen for display.

By the way, this is the same council that wants a rate increase - I don't think so.

**MERVYN KENNEDY  
URUNGA**

## Let's work together to safeguard koalas

I WRITE in reply to Dean Kearney, Forestry Corporation NSW (CS Letters, 27/11), and his response to Mr James Tedder's well researched letter (CS Letters, 20/11).

Mr Kearney's claim that the FC NSW carries out a carefully activated logging plan for koalas and their habitat doesn't match-up with the reality on the ground. FC NSW has done little to protect the habitat of the largest colony of wild koalas on the NSW coast.

These koalas are dependent on Pine Creek State Forest to connect them between Bellingen and Coffs Harbour for their survival. The colony is threatened with further danger of displacement, illness and injury from proposed harvest operations, due to commence in the near future.

Over the last few years more than half the timber from this area has been removed and growing numbers of displaced and sick koalas are evident to the community in North Bellingen and Repton and other coastal villages to the north and the south of Bellingen.

"Conserving koala populations" across the Mid North Coast region, "identifies Bellingen and Coffs Harbour as supporting key areas of koala habitat" (Smith and Andrews 1997, Smith 2004) "However even in this nationally important sub-population declines are apparent". (D Scotts 2012).

In spite of warnings that the colony is in decline, FC NSW proposes to remove even more of the remnant koala habitat.

Corridors between Pine Creek State Forest and Bongil Bongil National Park have been clear felled and must be properly reinstated and maintained for our invaluable, threatened koala colony to survive.

The Bellingen Environment Centre (BEC) offered photographic evidence that stream bank vegetation in Pine Creek State Forest has been neglected and it is this process of stream bank maintenance that is so vital to the protection of the water in the catchment. BEC found stream banks choked with lantana and other weeds which prohibited animals from utilising these areas for a refuge or an escape-route after logging operations were completed.

FC NSW must consider a long period of recovery from the logging of the remnant vegetation until such time as the wildlife can again utilise the areas recently clear felled. The BEC and its 95 members would be more than willing to help FC NSW with planting suitable koala habitat trees in the areas of Pine Creek State Forest, which have recently been clear felled. Pine Creek State Forest and the maintenance of connecting corridors is the vital link for the survival and health of Bellingen and Coffs Harbour's, invaluable and threatened, wild koala colony.

**CAROLINE JOSEPH  
BELLINGEN ENVIRONMENT  
CENTRE**

## Modern society owes brave a great debt

I HAVE just read about a courageous ex-serviceman in your paper and found his story very touching.

Many of us realise what these young men and women did to save our country from a Japanese takeover and how different 'our world' would have been if it hadn't been for their courage and commitment.

How can we repay what they did?

We can't and haven't, but without their sacrifices (for the rest of their lives) we would have been in total subjugation and without the freedom we enjoy today.

I was 11 years old when the Japanese submarines came into the country, so I knew very little about what was happening in the harbour!

Things were kept from us and the security was tight.

I wonder how many people remember that the signs were taken down from the railway stations so you had to guess where you were even going.

What can we do to truly remember men like Alfred Martin (Courier Sun, page 21, November 20) and his wife (who was a nurse in the war).

Thank you from all of us who lived lives of freedom because of your sacrifices.

We could never repay you but hopefully one day you'll get your eternal reward.

**ESMA MAY  
NEWRY ISLAND**

## Bravo for a truly wonderful concert

WE WOULD like to say a very big thank you to all the community members who came out in force on Saturday 23/11/2013 to support our annual concert 'The Rock and Roll Circus' held at Nambucca RSL.

The show was truly amazing and it was such a pleasure to see the crowd so enthralled and entertained by the variety of acts performed.

Our budding actors were glowing after their performances which entailed fine tuning their skills and unlocking their hidden talents.

We would also like to give our huge thanks to the staff of the RSL Club who gave us invaluable assistance with the performance and the packing up as well.

Our service was relieved on the day due to the Nambucca RSL's generous donation of afternoon tea which enabled our staff to focus on the concert.

We would also like to thank the local businesses and community members who so generously supported us again this year; without your support we could not be able to undertake such a large production.

A very great thanks to the clients and staff of the Open Arms Care Inc., Valleys to Plateau and Life Without Barriers who combine their resources each year to provide such a show as was seen on Saturday.

A special mention must go to Bob (director) and Gail (assistant director) for the tremendous efforts throughout the year and beyond what is asked of them. We would also like to extend our appreciation and gratitude to all the volunteers who helped on the day.

**OPEN ARMS CARE INC.  
SUPPORTING PERSONS WITH  
DISABILITIES SERVICE**

## Spot on thinking to scotch deal

I HAVE just heard Joe Hockey announce his refusal of the sale of GrainCorp to Archer Daniels Midland (ADM).

I'm absolutely delighted. I think it's the right decision and I hope it makes this government think twice about the stupidity of selling off the farm.

As for Labor's disappointment I am disgusted that they are so short-sighted. I thought better of them.

**TOM GURANICH, BELLINGEN**



## From the desk of Mark Troy



### DORRIGO SHOW

I was pleased to attend the Dorrigo Show recently and would like to congratulate the show committee, volunteers and stall holders on hosting a successful event, despite the sudden downpour of rain on Saturday afternoon.

Council was happy to participate with a weeds information stall to provide advice on the identification and control options for several weed species, as well as showing live specimens of Tropical Soda Apple and the Giant Devils Fig which has recently been found in the Coffs Harbour area.

As well, landholders were told to be on the lookout for Chinese Holly Grape which is currently moving through the Dorrigo plateau.

If you would like to discuss weed identification and control for your property contact council's invasive plants officer on 6655-7385.

### PUBLIC FORUMS FOR A SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

It was pleasing to see a good turnout at the three public forums held last week to discuss the options for funding works through a special rate variation.

Our community are not afraid to express their opinion on important matters and there was some lively and interesting debate.

I encourage everybody to visit council's website and view the background information and fact sheets before taking a survey or using the 'Have Your Say' online form.

Follow the link from the home page at [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)

### AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

The Australia Day Committee are delighted with the community response for nominations in all categories for the 2014 Australia Day Awards (ADA).

The ADA Ambassador for the shire will be announced next week after which final preparations can be made.

It is sure to be a great family day out in Maam Gaduying Park on Sunday, January 26.

Further details will be available shortly.

### MIDROC

The Mid North Coast Regional Organisation of Councils (MIDROC) held their annual general meeting at Port Macquarie on November 22 with the election of the board being the first item on the agenda.

The new board consists of chair - mayor Liz Campbell (Kempsey), deputy chair - mayor Mark Troy (Bellingen) with mayor Denise Knight (Coffs Harbour) and general managers Steve McGrath (Coffs Harbour), David Rawlings (Kempsey) and Liz Jeremy (Bellingen) filling the remaining executive positions.

# Young people gain insight into protecting Bellingen's natural environment

LAST WEEK the Bellingen High School's FUTURES program looked at protecting the natural Bellingen environment.

Students joined local professionals for a walk along Cemetery Creek at Connell Park. Here they gained valuable insight into the variety of local work, being undertaken to preserve our precious natural environment.

Council's river and biodiversity projects officer, Jane Eales described how her role involved grant funding applications, property visits, river bank condition assessments and project coordination.

Invasive plants officer, Carmen Muldoon, explained how her career path evolved over time from being a hands-on trainee to team leader and coordinator of weed management across the shire.

During the walk, students saw firsthand how bush regeneration gradually improves the



Back: Kim Cheney and Colin Matthews; front: Jane Eales, Year 10 Students and Carmen Muldoon

health of the natural environment such as the stream bank along Cemetery Creek.

Colin Matthews, coordinator of Bellingen Landcare, expressed his enthusiasm for what he does, even after 15 years on the job. In particular, he spoke of the diversity of science, creativity and social aspects.

Kim Cheney, owner and

manager of Bellingen Bush Regenerators, also provided valuable insight into the motivation and energy needed to do the hard yakka. He encouraged students to grab any training/skills development opportunities that come their way.

"The workshop was a great opportunity for Bellingen's young people to meet local

specialists and gain insight into the career paths available and the variety of skills and interests needed to look after our natural environment,"

mayor Mark Troy said. The FUTURES program and workshop was supported by the NSW Government's Office of Environment and Heritage Estuary Management Program.

**LIQUOR STAX**  
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<p>Lazy Days Blackwood Valley / Margaret River 750ml Varieties \$10 ea.</p>	<p>Spirit Bay Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 750ml 2 FOR \$20</p>	<p>Taylor's Estate 750ml Varieties \$16 ea.</p>	<p>Croser NV 750ml \$21 ea.</p>		

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Art and soul in Outer-  
 Island surf boards

Page 2

14

Sleeps to go!

The countdown to  
 Christmas is on - be  
 sure to shop locally



This all costs money and where does the funding come from?

## A rowdy, robust and spirited debate

**ALICE BURNET**

THE SPECIAL Rate Variation (SRV) community forums may have lacked numbers - about 50 shire residents at each - but those attending certainly made their voices heard.

The forums aimed to look at Bellingen Shire Council's (BSC) proposal to a one-off additional increase in rates to pay for looming infrastructure costs.

Council has already signalled it will raise shire rates in 2014 by 2.3 per cent in line with the legislated 'rate peg' applied for NSW Local Government.

However, BSC wants an increase over and above the rate peg, arguing that additional revenue is needed for bridge and road restoration and replacement initiatives.

The three SRV scenarios are:

- 8.3 per cent increase that will provide additional revenue of \$488,886

- 11.8 per cent increase that will provide additional revenue of \$695,043, and;

- 17.3 per cent increase that will provide additional revenue of \$1,019,003.

The BSC has done some modelling to show what the money would mean in real terms.

An increase of 8.3 per cent could provide 84km of reseals and 6km of reconstruction;

11.8 per cent could provide 100km of reseals and 8km of reconstruction and 17.3 per cent could provide 150km of reseals and 14km of reconstruction.

With respect to bridge infrastructure, major investments would occur in terms of 'urgency', according to council.

Restoration of the Newry Island Bridge would receive immediate attention, in addition to five other bridges across the shire.

While the community forums were designed to discuss the SRV, the sessions soon became a series of questions regarding the financial management and efficiency of the council.

Accountability, the perceived level of excess administrative costs, the management of ratepayer funds, including the Raleigh depot and the type of council services that should be offered were all highlighted and questioned.

Some councillors were known to be taken aback by the strength of some of the community sentiment.

Council general manager, Liz Jeremy, said BSC acknowledged the community concerns and is endeavouring to address numerous complaints.

The BSC maintains that its operations have been in a process of major restructure since May, 2012.

There are 146 staff members at BSC: 78 being in outdoor roles and 41 indoor (this adds up to 119?).

During the last financial year a reduction of 11.75 per cent was made to temporary and day labour staff costs. Recruitment fees, reduction in overtime, reduction of workers' compensation claims and a 55 per cent drop to days in injury all served to improve the BSC bottom line.

In executive costs, restructuring has seen a 28 per cent reduction in salary costs.

Other reform processes have seen: the youth centre increase its income; waste division savings that prevent state tax being applied; and the overseeing of the waste facilities as an operating and financially viable business.

With respect to the Raleigh Works Depot, which was constructed in 2009 at a cost of \$4.75 million, council said it is mindful of the significant concerns that were raised at the time and remain - regarding occupational health and safety, security and efficiency issues.

It is worth noting that council did attempt to seek approval for a one-off rate rise of 5.9 per cent for the depot but the application was declined.

Council concedes some who attended the community forums remain unconvinced of the need for a rate rise over and above the rate pegged 2.3 per cent.

However it believes the results of the 2012 community satisfaction survey may be more reflective of a broader Bellingen Valley view.

This study indicated residents placed a high importance on sealing roads and bridges.

What's not clear is whether the community is prepared to bankroll its infrastructure wish-list.

\* For more information regarding SRV, and further scheduled community discussions/workshops: call the council on 6655-7300.

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# Letters to the Editor

**HAVE YOUR SAY!**  
Send in your letters to:  
editor.couriersun@ruralpress.com

## The questions council should have asked

COUNCIL is asking ratepayers to complete a questionnaire about the proposed Special Rate Variation (see [www.bsc2013.questionpro.com/](http://www.bsc2013.questionpro.com/))

The questions limit the debate only to things council wants you to talk about. Here are some other questions they ought to have asked:

□ To limit any cutbacks to other council services, would you be prepared to accept higher user charges for: use of libraries? Hire of sports fields and community

halls? Youth services? Services to senior citizens? Weed control services?

□ Is there scope for council to find additional funds for bridges by re-ordering priorities within the roads budget? Or by greater efficiencies in road activities, including more contracting out?

□ Should council be reducing salaried staff numbers and/or imposing an efficiency dividend on administrative costs - even if this results in some reduction in overall efficiency of the administration? If so, how big a cut would you envisage?

□ Should any Special Rate Variation be the same percentage

across the whole rate base, or should it vary across rate categories? If so, how would like to see the increases apportioned?

□ Do you believe that, where particular expensive bridge upgrades benefit particular groups of ratepayers (potentially adding to their property values), then they should be asked to make an additional contribution towards the cost?

If, 'yes', do you believe that Newry Island residents should make an additional contribution towards the \$1 million cost of replacing their wooden bridge with a concrete one? Replacing Newry Island bridge is the most expensive item in the proposed

works program. A concrete bridge will substantially enhance the island's attractiveness.

You've scope to write your views on these questions into the questionnaire, even if council does not want to know the answers!

**BOB HAWKINS  
BIELSDOWN HILLS**

## Waste not and we won't be wanting

IT'S A bit like movie world, with all those revolving pictures of collapsing bridges, potholes, and neglected infrastructure.

The situation is dire, we are told, but salvation is possible, if you good people could find it in your hearts to dig a little, and accept a rate increase of up to 17.5 per cent. But then the heavy stuff. Cough up, shut up, or your potholed bitumen will be returned to gravel, and your bridges will have weight limits imposed, until they collapse.

17.5 per cent will raise an extra million a year, but won't even touch the edges, so huge is the problem council has created.

After witnessing so much waste and inefficiency for so long, most would oppose an increase at any level.

Imagine having a business with a guaranteed increase in income every year, plus that river of cash every time we have a flood. Much easier for council to come up with a million or two a year than bleed the poor ratepayer. No one can oppose the fact that many councils are grossly overweight at the top end.

Locally the level of supervision outside is a laughing stock, all those white utes cruising about with a shire emblem.

With no money and no work to do, why is the above the case? Rather than penalising initiative, start rewarding it, encourage responsibility, not shun it. Crunch time is here and councils must stop passing the buck, accept responsibility for their failures and move on, and start paying their share.

Our GM quoted the cost of the depot upgrade as \$4.75 million, but

omitted to say the project was never completed and that the money was borrowed at 8.5 per cent over 20 years, and will ultimately cost closer to \$10 million. This is a big one, but just one example of many excesses.

A positive, I believe, is that our newly elected council have accepted the gravity of the situation, are uniting and will be pressuring our administrators for a lot more shut up and a lot more put up. The blame game must end.

**DARCEY BROWNING  
THORA**

## Facts key to garnering support for rate rise

DISAPPOINTINGLY, just five residents attended the council's presentation of the SRV (special rate variation) in Bellingen.

Three 'facts sheets' were made available.

One fact sheet related to the current process of local government reform.

From this it was noted that in the future, interest subsidies on loans and access to grants from the State Government will continue.

It should be a 'given' that the council's strategy on SRV should maximise opportunities to benefit

from such future opportunities.

The second fact sheet related to the backlog of capital works related to bridges and roads.

This is the issue central to SRV.

It was understood that the positions are that:

1. The problem has arisen because of restriction on rate rises for the last 36 years.

2. The estimates of the current cost to fund this backlog are in excess of \$11 million.

3. The current cost to maintain bridges and roads not included above is \$2.52 million.

4. In 2013/14 council has \$2.67million to fund all these works.

The situation is presenting two problems to council, namely funding the works and also implementing a communication program necessary to positively engage the community.

The remaining fact sheet dealt with the SRV process, providing different funding options from zero extra to a 15 per cent increase. No option seemed to complete the backlog in 10 years.

At the presentation it was not clearly explained what the impact would be to the community if the total backlog of work was not completed in say, 10 years.

In the above context it is important that the council make available:

1. A detailed list of the specific bridges and roads sections that comprise the \$1 million backlog. This list should include any general provisions or allowances and importantly, be prepared in three or four priority groups.

Such a list would provide: Clarity as to the exact extent of the problem.

A basis for setting priorities.

2. For each SRV option, a detailed explanation as to the impact of the works not completed.

This information would contribute greatly to the public information available and gaining ratepayers' approval of the SRV program.

Ratepayers at the meeting made it clearer that this problem, 36 years in the making, should not be expected to be quickly resolved.

The council has still much to do on both programs.

**MARTIN RIDDLE  
BRIERFIELD  
Speeding an issue  
at Gordonville Cutting**

I UNDERSTAND that the quarry trucks are necessary and that this enterprise is providing employment for many drivers. However, having just driven to Bellingen and back along the Waterfall Way, I was dismayed to experience some heavy vehicles ignoring speed limits. This was especially evident around the bends at Gordonville Cutting where there is a 60km limit for trucks and buses.

All who regularly share the Waterfall Way between Dorrigo and Bellingen have a responsibility to be extra diligent concerning speed and safety to ensure there are no accidents during the period of the highway upgrade contract.

**AMANDA YOUNG  
THORA**

## Connecting the Community

Bellingen Shire  
COUNCIL



### PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION COMMUNITY SURVEY

Council is currently considering the option of a Special Rate Variation. Detailed information is available at the SRV Information Centre on the home page of Council's website.

Residents are encouraged to complete the Investing in Our Roads and Bridges - Proposed Special Rate Variation survey by 9.00am Monday 16 December. Printed copies of the survey are available at each Shire Library, the Bellingen Administration Centre or it can be taken online at [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)

### ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

An Ordinary Meeting of Council will be held at 9.00am on Wednesday 18 December 2013. The Business Paper (Agenda) will be published on Council's website by close of business Friday prior to the meeting.

### CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR CLOSURES

Please note the following closures over the Christmas holiday break.

**Administration Centre and Shire Libraries:**  
Close: 3.00pm on Tuesday 24 December, 2013  
Reopen: 8.30am on Thursday 2 January 2014.

**Raleigh, Bellingen & Dorrigo Waste Management Centres**  
Closed: 25 and 26 December and 1 January 2014.

**Handybin Wheelie Bin Service** - as normal.

**Bellingen & Dorrigo Swim Centres**  
Closed: 25 and 26 December 2013

Check Council's website at [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au) for further information.

### BELLINGEN COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PLAN (CZMP) COMMUNITY SURVEY

Council is currently preparing a Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) for Bellingen Shire's open coast. A key step in preparing the CZMP is seeking input from our community regarding their knowledge, values and vision for the Bellingen Coastline.

The aim of the Plan is to preserve the high quality of environmental, recreational, cultural and economic values associated with the coast and will also provide practical actions for managing threats from coastal hazards to the coastal zone in our shire. The plan is funded by the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage and complies with NSW State legislative requirements.

The study area extends along the open coast from Tuckers Rocks on North Beach in the north, to Oyster Creek on Valla Beach in the south. The natural and undeveloped beauty of the Bellingen coastline is unique on the NSW coast, and is highly valued by visitors and residents alike. In fact, the natural state of Bellingen's coast makes it far more adaptable to coastal hazards such as erosion and future sea level rise than other parts of NSW, therefore a key aim of the CZMP will be to preserve the naturalness of Bellingen's coast.

Council welcomes community input until Friday 7 January 2014 via:

- Online Survey: [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au), or Have Your Say form.
- Email: [council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au)
- Mail: Bellingen Shire Council, PO Box 117 Bellingen NSW 2454

Further information is available from Council's website or phone Sandy Eager on 6655 7300. Hard copies of the survey are available at Administration Centre or Shire Libraries.

### DANGAR FALLS PATHWAY REOPENING FOR CHRISTMAS

Council is undertaking work to upgrade the Dangar Falls Reserve pathway in time for Christmas.

The pathway is closed for construction until 20 December 2013, subject to weather conditions. A section of the existing bitumen pathway will be replaced with a raised wooden walkway to improve the safety, accessibility and appearance of this important environmental and community asset.

The viewing platform, playground and picnic facilities at the start of the pathway will remain open throughout this project.

The closed area will be signposted however for more information contact Daan Schiebaan on 6655 7300 or view the designs on Council's website at [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)

**LIZ JEREMY, GENERAL MANAGER**

Phone: 6655 7300 Fax: 6655 2310

Email: [council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au) Website: [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)

## Staff figures qualified

ALICE BURNET

BELLINGEN Shire Council (BSC) has provided clarification over the number and role of its staff after a discrepancy was noted in last week's Courier-Sun. Council has 146 staff members. These roles are classified into either indoor or

outdoor; 53 per cent (78) of the permanent roles are engaged in outdoor operations with 46 per cent (68) engaged in indoor roles.

Of the indoor roles, 60 per cent (41) are directly involved in providing services or support to the community including: community planning, aged and disability support via the Dorrigo Support Centre, library staff, Youth Centre management, Visitor Information Services, engineers and planners, Health and Building surveyors, Sustainability and Natural Resource Management, Economic and Business Development (including sourcing grant funding), and front office customer service staff.

The remaining indoor roles (27) are primarily related to fulfilling BSC's regulatory and legislative requirements such as the management and reporting of finances, the collection of rates, technical and records management services, corporate governance, procurement, human resources and workplace health and safety.

Council general manager Liz Jeremy said she is concerned that 'misinformation' surrounding staff figures may obscure the "reality" that council has undergone substantial efficiency measures.

## Council helping the community

BELLINGEN Shire Council seeks to provide for the community in various ways.

Council is a major supporter of community organisations through the Community Event Sponsorship Fund and the Community Support Fund.

The successful applicants for funding in round two have been announced and will see community programs, projects and events benefiting with a boost of almost \$24,340.

Mayor Mark Troy said "Many organisations rely on external funding and Bellingden Council is pleased to be able to support those organisations that contribute to our local community".

The successful round two organisations include:

- Bellingden Readers and Writers Festival - 2 Days 2 Inspire
- Bellingden River Agricultural Society Ltd - E J Mantova Memorial Art Prize
- The Grub - Club Sergeant Matthew Locke MG Charity Event
- 1st Bellingden Scout Group
- Bellingden CWA
- Bellingden High School
- Bellingden Men's Shed
- Bellingden Youth Orchestra
- Bellingden Community Communications Co-op Ltd
- Bellingden River District Pipe Band
- Bellingden River Sailing Club Inc.
- Camp Creative
- Dorrigo CWA
- Dorrigo Dramatic Club

**BELLINGDEN VIDEO CONNECTION**

A Very Happy Christmas to all our members  
Closed on Christmas Day only

**Kumba** WINNER :-)  
SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS AWARD  
EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY

1 Church Street Bellingden Tel: 02 6655 9299  
**Affordable Living Food Bar**  
**NOW OPEN :-)**

**LAST MINUTE Gift Ideas**  
Boody Affordable Bamboo Wear  
Greenie Greek Backpacks & Lunchboxes

**OPEN EVERY DAY**  
through Christmas & New Year  
except Sundays & Public Holidays :-)

**SCOTT'S SMASH REPAIRS**  
55 High Street Bellingden

Merry Christmas & hope you all have a happy and healthy 2013

**CLOSED FOR HOLIDAYS**  
23/12/13 - 10/01/14

**URGENT ENQUIRES PHONE:**  
Adam: 0428 664 020  
Jason: 0428 664 000  
Lorraine / Michael: 0428 664 143

"Towing as Usual"  
24 HRS - 7 DAYS

**Sweet Bellingden**  
LOLLIES AND CHOCOLATES

**7 SLEEPS TO GO!**  
'Sweet' gifts, Hampers, Specials  
..and so much more in store.

**Closed Christmas Day**  
**OPEN BOXING DAY**

"Stay calm, Eat chocolate!"

[www.sweetbellingden.com.au](http://www.sweetbellingden.com.au)

- Dorrigo High School / P&C
  - Dorrigo Preschool
  - Girl Guides
  - Gleniffer Community Assoc. Inc.
  - Mylestom Pensioners Association
  - Urunga CWA
- Mayor Troy said that "Rounds one and two of the 2014 Community Event Sponsorship Fund and the Community Support Fund will open in May and August 2014, which will see a further investment of around \$50,000 in community programs."
- For any questions regarding the funding programs contact the Grants and Business Development Officer on 6655-7379.

# Seasons Greetings from

**Bellingden IGA Would Like to take this Opportunity to thank All Our Customers and wish them a Safe and Happy Festive Season.**

**Xmas Trading Hours**  
**Xmas Day - Closed**  
**Boxing Day - 8am-6pm**  
**New Years Day - 8am-6pm**  
**All Other Days Normal Trade**

**From the Management and Staff of Bellingden IGA.**

**IGA Bellingden Ph 6655 9500**

# Bellingen Coastal Zone Management Plan

COUNCIL is currently preparing a Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) for Bellingen Shire's open coast. A key step in preparing the CZMP is seeking input from our community regarding their knowledge, values and vision for the Bellingen Coastline.

The aim of the Plan is to preserve the high quality of environmental, recreational, cultural and econom-

ic values associated with the coast and will also provide practical actions for managing threats from coastal hazards to the coastal zone in our shire. The plan is funded by the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage and complies with NSW State legislative requirements.

The study area extends along the open coast from Tuckers Rocks on North Beach in the north, to Oyster

Creek on Valla Beach in the south. The natural and undeveloped beauty of the Bellingen coastline is unique on the NSW coast, and is highly valued by visitors and residents alike. In fact, the natural state of Bellingen's coast makes it far more adaptable to coastal hazards such as erosion and future sea level rise than other parts of NSW, therefore a key aim of the CZMP will be

to preserve the naturalness of Bellingen's coast.

Mayor Mark Troy stated, "It is important that Council hears about community values and concerns regarding our precious coastline so that we get the best plan possible. A good plan allows Council to seek grant funding to effectively improve coastal protection."

Council welcomes community input until Friday 10 January 2014 via:

Online Survey: [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au), or Have Your Say form.

Email: [council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au)  
Mail: Bellingen Shire Council, PO Box 117 Bellingen NSW 2454



## With Mark Troy

AT THIS time of year I have the opportunity to attend the end of year school awards presentations and never fail to be impressed by the immense talents of our students from kindergarten to Year 12 and their teachers' obvious enthusiasm and dedication to their teaching role.

We are so very fortunate to have these wonderful school communities for our children and young adults. Congratulations to all.

### CHRISTMAS CLOSURES

Council's Administration Centre and Shire Libraries will close for the

holidays at 3pm on Christmas Eve and reopen on Thursday, January 2.

Check Council's website at [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au) for further information.

### COASTAL ZONE

#### MANAGEMENT PLAN SURVEY

Council is seeking community input into the preparation of the Coastal Zone Management Plan.

The plan aims to preserve the environmental and recreational values of the coast and to manage threats from erosion and future sea level rise.

Further details, along with a survey can be found on council's web-

site at [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au) or by phoning 6655-7300.

This will be my last column for 2013 and so I extend my best wishes to our community for a happy and healthy festive season and I urge everybody who will be travelling over the holidays to take that little extra care on the roads to make sure you and yours arrive safely.

### PROPOSED RATE VARIATION

Residents will be aware that council is considering four proposals for rate increases for 2014/15 and are actively engaging the community in discussion on the need

for investment in road and bridge infrastructure and the means to fund these works.

The options are for an increase of 2.3 per cent to keep up with our cost index increases, or increases of 8.3 per cent, or 11.8 per cent, or 17.3 per cent that would also address backlog works for roads and bridges in the Shire.

Lively community forums have been held in Urunga, Dorrigo, and Bellingen, a forum for the Shire's Chambers of Commerce and information has been regularly appearing in the local media.

A Special Rate Variation

Information Centre has been set up on council's website to provide additional information and opportunities to offer feedback via an online survey or using the Have Your Say page.

Your feedback on the proposals will be an important part of our consideration of the preferred option in January 2014 and I encourage you to have an input.

Although the survey is now closed, you can still write, email or telephone council with your views, and your Councillors are also available to listen to what you have to say.

## LETTERS

### Something clearly doesn't add up

THE COMMON complaint from all three public meetings on the proposed rates increase was that Bellingen Council is overstaffed and infrastructure spending is neglected in order to employ more admin staff.

Referring to the Local Govt. Comparative Tables of Local Councils performances (2012) reveals that Bellingen had 142 staff (the GM claimed 146 so we have gained four in 12 months!)

Bellingen has a population of 12,886. Nambucca, with a population of 19,286, has a staff of 116. So with a population 50 per cent greater than Bellingen's, Nambucca gets by with 22 per cent less staff! Roads distances and land areas are similar for both councils.

**DOUG WINN  
BELLINGEN**

### Has Christmas been yanked away from us?

I WAS at Park Beach Plaza a few days ago listening to the music being placed and noticed it was basically American 'Happy Holiday' music.

Over the time I was there, no traditional Christmas Carols were played and I wondered if management had taken Coffs Harbour's stated multicultural image to extremes and locked run of the mill Christmas out of their celebrations.

A sort of 'come and bring you money, leave your faith at home'.

**HM TALLING  
URUNGA**

### Who is leading Australia?

ARE AUSTRALIANS, the product of Rupert's world, falling into an intellectual abyss?

When the 70 year history of a Ministry for Science is abolished, are we in trouble?

When our prime minister says

that "climate change is a load of crap", should we ask if his Rhodes Scholarship for footy is confirmation of his status?

When the threat of mining to the Great Barrier Reef and the evidence of its demise is hastened by 'streamlining the environmental approval process', to 'cut green tape' through a 'one stop shop' - 'going forward'.

We see study refuted by the language of nongs.

Clumsy words and redneck science, this is government in a neural vacuum.

Not smart enough to make cars any more, the debate has narrowed to Holden versus afford. Australia, the Stone Age economy: we dig and sell rocks.

There is much to fear.

**WARREN TINDALL  
BOGGY CREEK**

### Disappearing work ethic

AUSTRALIANS are now enjoying the highest wages in the world, in combination with the best working conditions, plus also perhaps the lowest productivity level.

The work ethic is vanishing from the radar.

Play time is given priority over work time, and the new game is how much we can get for how little we give.

This was once a great nation of doers.

We could grow and process, we could invent and manufacture, we could build and produce almost all of our requirements.

This is not the case anymore.

There are, of course, many still doing the hard miles, small business, farmers, tradies etc, but they are collapsing under the burden of the non doers and the bureaucratic monster.

Holden's recent announcement - why such shock and indignation?

Ford and Mitsubishi are gone; our once proud national airline is doomed; agriculture is struggling; education is struggling and Kellogg's is gone.

The list is endless.

Why is a Holden worker any more important than any other worker?

A job is a job.

At least a Holden worker, having been within a union protected industry, is well looked after and will receive a generous redundancy.

Even Japan, a high cost society with the same technology, produces two cars to our one in the same time.

Should we stop contemplating our navels and start thinking about our children - the cotton wool generation?

Many are over indulged, overly protected, never been disciplined, and never been asked to assist with chores.

Some adversity in early life is a great buffer for the future and godd for character building

Having relied on digging it out,

we have dropped our guard, and are pricing ourselves out of business.

As a huge country with only 23 million, the fact that we now have a large percentage of our food produced and processed off shore, should have the alarm bells ringing.

Very briefly.

I have done an inspection on the two new concrete bridges on Old Coramba Rd build by Dorrigo Quarries as a condition of consent.

They have set the bar for council: on cost, design, construction time, and provided a whole new concept.

Council should adopt this approach for many of its bridges.

I was impressed and will provide the full details down the track.

**DARCEY BROWNING  
THORA**

### Generous donation

Last week, a gentleman from the Bellingen Legacy Units, dropped by the Bellingen Courier Sun's office to request that we write a letter on his behalf.

David wanted to let the community know that the Legacy residents had all received an anonymous Christmas card with a significant sum of \$50 dollars placed inside. He was indeed astounded and greatly touched by such a generous gesture, as we were all.

So a message to the donor from David and the residents at Legacy, thank you.

And from all of us, thank you for spreading the spirit of Christmas throughout this wonderful community.

*This letter was written by the staff at the Courier-Sun on behalf of David from the Bellingen Legacy Units, Church St, Bellingen.*

**Connecting the Community**

**Bellingen Shire COUNCIL**

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**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING**

An Extraordinary Meeting of Council will be held at 9.00am on Monday 13 January 2014 to allow Council to determine:

- 1) if they wish to continue with the application for a Special Rate Variation, and if so,
- 2) to allow Council to determine the preferred option to progress and to adopt the IP&R documents to that effect.

The Business Paper (Agenda) will be published on Council's website prior to the meeting.

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**CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR CLOSURES**

**Administration Centre and Shire Libraries:**  
Close: 3.00pm on 24/12/13 - Reopen: 8.30am on 2/1/14

**Raleigh, Bellingen & Dorrigo Waste Centres**  
Closed: Christmas, Boxing & New Years' Day

**Handybin Wheelie Bin Service** - as normal

**Bellingen & Dorrigo Swim Centres**  
Closed: Christmas & Boxing Days

**Bellingen Youth Hub - (William Street)**  
Close: 5.30pm on 20/12/13 - Reopen: 2.00pm 6/1/14  
Afternoon activities from Monday 6/1/14 - 10/1/14

**Dorrigo Support Centre**  
Close: 4.00pm on 20/12/13 - Reopen: 9.00am 6/1/14

**LIZ JEREMY, GENERAL MANAGER**  
Phone: 6655 7300 Fax: 6655 2310  
Email: [council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au) Website: [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)

# Possible local government changes

THE SPECTRE of a super council on the Mid North Coast, which would see Bellingen merge with its neighbours, remains on the table following the release of two high level reports into local government in NSW.

Bellingen mayor Mark Troy has welcomed delivery of the final reports from the Independent Local Government Review Panel and the Local Government Acts Taskforce.

He said while the shire would now run the fine tooth comb through the findings, he noted that the view of the panel had moved little on the question that bigger is better.

"It would seem that the report of the Independent Local Government Review Panel recommendations for the Bellingen Shire have not changed significantly from that in their draft report (i.e. a joint organisation comprising Bellingen, Nambucca, Clarence Valley and Coffs Harbour councils)," Cr Troy told the Courier-Sun.

Despite that, Local Government Minister Don Page, reiterated the O'Farrell administration's pre-election pledge that there would be no forced council amalgamations under their watch.

"We made an election commitment of no forced amalgamations of councils and that commitment continues as we discuss the options

proposed by the panel," Mr Page said.

"Some ideas in the reports will require careful consideration and development. We need to take the time to get this right.

"The reports show quite clearly that local government is facing many challenges and that 'no change' is simply not an option if we want NSW to become No.1 again."

Mr Page said releasing both final reports for a period of comment until March 7 would help the NSW

Government develop its response and give a final opportunity for councils and their communities to provide input on the way

forward.

Cr Troy was more circumspect, noting the shire now had to absorb the findings.

"We are pleased to see the reports released and look forward to considering these in detail over the coming weeks," he said.

"We support the calls from Local Government NSW to allow more time for councils to consider these reports and provide feedback."

Mr Page has highlighted the need for cooperation between the levels of government.

"We need to work together to identify what is really important and what needs to be done to strengthen and support the system

of local government," Mr Page said.

"The Local Government and Shires Associations (now Local Government NSW), recognised the need for change and requested this review by the Independent Local Government Review Panel."

Both the panel and the taskforce had spent the past year considering the issues in detail and consulting with councils and their communities.

"The Government wants to get on with reform and prepare a response to these two important reports. In preparing this response there will now be an opportunity for communities and their councils to comment," Mr Page said.

## Special rate rise update

BELLINGEN Shire Council (BSC) is one of 36 councils across NSW to have notified the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) of their intention to apply for a Special Variation to increase their general income above the rate peg in 2014/15.

The rate peg for 2014/15 is 2.3 per cent.

A full list of the councils lodging notifications is available on IPART's website.

BSC has notified IPART of their intentions to apply for a special rate rise and they now have until February 24 to submit their application.

As part of application process, community consultation and meetings are scheduled to take place over the next few weeks.

When received, the applications

will be assessed against guidelines published by the Division of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The assessment criteria include demonstrating the need for and the purpose of the additional revenue, evidence of community consultation and an assessment of the impact on affected ratepayers.

The BSC phone number is 6655-7300 and the website is [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)

Full details about the assessment criteria for Special Variations and the amounts sought by each council can be found on the IPART website [www.ipart.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au) under Local Government, Fact Sheets & Information Papers.

## Renters encouraged to move north

PEOPLE caught in the rent trap in the Greater Sydney Basin are being tempted by a new \$7000 carrot to move to areas like the Bellinger Valley.

Local MP Andrew Stoner said the NSW Government Regional Relocation Grant had already seen a number of city-based home owners shift to the country in the past two-and-a-half years.

Mr Stoner said 85 grants of \$7000 had been taken up by eligible people moving to Bellingen, Nambucca and Kempsey areas to buy a home since the scheme began in July 2011.

But the catchment pool has now been extended.

"Amendments that took effect on January 1 included extending the Regional Relocation Grant scheme to metropolitan long-term renters in Sydney, Newcastle

and Wollongong," Mr Stoner said.

"This is great news for our region, with the program now open to more city-based families willing to move to a regional community and buy a home.

"We are already seeing families and individuals taking up the grants to assist with relocation costs, with Kempsey, South West Rocks, Nambucca Heads, Macksville and Bellingen now home to many of these grant recipients." Mr Stoner said a separate new incentive of \$10,000 also came into effect on January 1, to encourage more people to relocate from metropolitan areas to regional NSW for employment.

"The new Skilled Regional Relocation Incentive will attract metropolitan workers interested in the many industries our region has to offer, like tourism and hos-

pitality, health and aged care, primary production and housing and construction," Mr Stoner said.

"This incentive will attract workers to take up jobs in our region, unfilled by the local workforce.

"It is designed to appeal to young families, young professionals, small business owners and tradespeople looking to genuinely establish themselves in a regional area.

"Both grants are subject to meeting specific eligibility criteria, including a minimum distance requirement of 100 kilometres for the relocation.

Applicants can only apply for one of the grants, not both."

\* For more information visit: [www.business.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/regional-nsw](http://www.business.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/regional-nsw)

## Rare birds remarkable breeding observed on Urunga Coast



Photos supplied by Anne and Terry Evans

BY ALICE BURNET

URUNGA locals are inordinately proud of their seaside town, and appreciation of this gem of a location is apparently shared by the rare beach Stone-curlew.

The beach stone-curlew is listed as an endangered species and while it has been observed around the North Coast of Australia, it has largely disappeared, and is now rarely spotted on ocean beaches.

In fact, the Australian population may be as few as 15 breeding pairs.

The range and distribution of the species, within NSW, is thought to have contracted as a result of urban, industrial and recreational development and activities on the coastal area.

So, to have a breeding pair of the beach stone-curlew at Urunga, is quite a coup.

Richard Jordan, Sanctuary Australia Foundation board mem-

ber and avid local bird watcher, has been taking close interest in the pair over the past few years.

Mr Jordan has watched with delight in recent weeks as there has been an addition to the Urunga beach stone-curlew family.

Last year an egg was observed and fortunately, despite all the hazards and disturbances, a successful hatching and survival of juvenile development has seen a three-month-old, virtually fully-grown bird emerge.

This is particularly exciting as, in the previous season, an egg did not hatch.

Mr Jordan has speculated this failure may have been a "result of disruptions from members of the public walking by with dogs, and this then prompted the Bellingen Shire Council, in conjunction with the NSW National Parks, to place warning and information signs around the breeding habitat area."

Much to Mr Jordan's joy, these proactive measures appear to have paid off.

The next stage is to monitor the bird and enable its movements to be tracked throughout its life.

This will provide important information about the biology of this rare species.

The research of the Urunga pair is to be overseen by Dr Greg Clancy, an ornithologist from Grafton.

He has, with permission from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, attached a small yellow 'flag' labelled C4 to one of the legs of the young bird and a numbered metal band to the other.

Now identified, members of the public are encouraged to report any sightings of the Urunga beach Stone-curlew to either Richard Jordan at [emutours@gmail.com](mailto:emutours@gmail.com) or Mandy Wright at [mandywright1@bigpond.com](mailto:mandywright1@bigpond.com)

## Fact file for the beach stone-curlew

### DESCRIPTION

The beach stone-curlew is a very large thick-set wader that is readily distinguished from all other waders by its large size, massive bill with yellow patches at the base, and bold black and white pattern on the head.

### HABITAT

Beach stone-curlews are largely sedentary, with young birds not moving very far from the parental territory.

Beach stone-curlews are usually solitary.

The activity of beach stone-curlews is largely dictated by tides.

### BREEDING

Beach stone-curlews breed from

September to February. Their nests can often be located on sandbanks, sandpits, or islands in estuaries, coral ridges, among mangroves or in the sand surrounded by short grass and scattered casuarinas (she-oaks).

Typically one egg is laid per season but a second may be laid if the first is lost. Both parents care for the hatchling who remains dependant on them for 7 to 12 months.

### SOUND

During the night, breeding beach stone-curlews use a harsh, wailing territorial call which is higher pitched, harsher and less fluty than that of the bush stone-curlew.

When alarmed, the species may vocalise with a weal yapping.



**FULLMOON CANOE TOUR**  
Thursday 16th January

**NIGHT CANOE TOUR**  
Friday 17th January

A great experience!!!  
Canoe along the Bellingen River  
on the clear, moonlit waters

**BELLINGEN**  
**CANOE**  
**adventures**  
6655 9955

**Bellingen**  
**canoe**  
**Adventures**  
6655 9955



# Letters to the Editor

**HAVE YOUR SAY!**  
Send in your letters to:  
editor.couriersun@ruralpress.com

## Logging of forest must be stopped

IWAS shocked to hear that our precious koala is being threatened. What is the Government thinking?  
There is so much destruction. Why deliberately cut down this little stand of koala habitat?  
Why aren't we endeavouring to protect and support this threatened species?

Robyn Parker as Environment Minister must act.  
**CAROL SPARKS  
BELLINGEN**

## Comparison begs some questions

COUNCIL'S own figures show that Nambucca council has 6.1 staff per 1000 residents, Ballina has 6.6, Armidale 9.3, Byron 7.9, Lismore 8.7, Kempsey 9.83, Taree 5.3, Great Lakes 7.9, Port

Macquarie 5.9, and Coffs Harbour has 7.2.  
Bellingen however, has 11.3 staff per 1000 residents.  
And Bellingen council wants to increase our rates to employ more people!  
This demonstrates to me that we have a council and bureaucracy that appears out of control and that we need a Residents Action Group to oversee the body which spends our money.  
**DOUG WINN  
BELLINGEN**

## Our nest egg should fund works/ services

IN LIGHT of Bellingen Council's proposed rate rise, it should be of interest to the community and ratepayers in particular that as at November 2013, council had an investment fund in excess of \$27,000,000.

It appears that over many years council has been reallocating our rate money into a great big fund instead of funding the infrastructure/maintenance projects like bridges and roads.

At the public meetings council held to push the rate hike, we were always told that there is not enough funds to provide for bridge and road infrastructure.

Moreover, council threatened that if they did not get their rate rise variation, that infrastructure would be let to run down and other services cut.

There is something seriously wrong within the council culture, running a never ending administrative growth model on the backs of ratepayers while providing diminishing services.

With \$27 million of our money in a big fund, why on Earth should ratepayers be asked to pay even higher rates?

Misdirecting our money and then screaming for more shows council to be an out of control bureaucracy, and it is time we as a community make them justify their existence and fully account for every cent of community ratepayer funds. We need an extensive independent community review of:

1. What we expect from council? And what is their primary function?

How much we are prepared to pay? And how many we are prepared to employ?

Why has council been so loud on its desperation for funding and yet so quiet on our money it has in an investment fund?

Council's investment strategy sees rate money used to meet council's "liquidity requirements", and the preservation of the capital is the principal objective of the investment portfolio.

Ratepayers could be excused for demanding that our rate money directly funds infrastructure and maintenance projects and that there should be no redirecting of our money away from that primary responsibility.

The community most emphatically does not want a rate rise. We want the council to reduce its administration costs proportionally to the extent that council can afford to perform its primary function of providing utility services and nothing more.

It now appears that Bellingen Council has the money but instead of spending it, they want us to pay higher rates. The community says no to any rate rise.

Council must respect the community will and spend our money which it has invested, and then reduce administration costs significantly before it pushes for higher rates!  
**B CLEARY  
DEERVALE**

## Koala population must be safeguarded

IT IS such a shame that NSW State Forest Corporation is due to destroy 250 hectares of prime koala habitat along Gleniffer Rd.

The Mid North Coast's koala numbers have plummeted by over

75 per cent in just 10 years; these crashing numbers are very alarming.

We all know that intense logging causes habitat loss, soil erosion, detrimentally effects ecosystems, water catchments and river health and can lead to the loss of 1000 litres of water a second.

The comments made by Craig Busby in the Courier-Sun (January 8) are open to challenge. There is no doubt koala habitat and viability will be destroyed by this proposed logging.

Koalas and panda bears are the two most recognised animals in the world. We need to preserve our national icon for future generations to be proud of.

The logging of compartments 26 and 27 in Pine Creek State Forest will have dire consequences to the already compromised animals in our area, and will rob these diverse compartments which are alive and full of wildlife and biodiversity.

It is your duty of care, Premier Barry O'Farrell, Minister Parker, Mr Busby, Minister Butler and our local MP Andrew Fraser, to save these areas and ensure they are safe from logging - and added into Bongil Bongil National Park where they belong.

**CATHERINE JONES  
KALANG**

## Beaut locals assisted after I came a gutser

WHILE holidaying at Urunga between Christmas and New Year, staying at the cabins at Hungry Head, I had an accident on the beach and was kindly helped by some passers-by from the Bellingen Shire who really went out of their way to assist me.

I was out kite surfing at Hungry Head, after patrol hours, during that big southerly that hit on Sunday, January 29.

As luck would have it I had seriously injured my ankle.

I was unable to walk and in serious pain. Two couples were walking down the beach heading to Urunga for dinner and stopped to see if I needed assistance.

These kind people retrieved my kite and board, they also went over to the cabins at Hungry Head to inform my wife that I was injured and then proceeded to assist me up the beach to the car park, where my wife was waiting with the car to take me to Coffs Hospital.

I'd like to let you know my ankle is not broken, only badly compressed, swollen and very bruised.

I really appreciate your help and kind words, it would have taken me hours to hobble back on my own. I hope they kept your tables for you at the pizzeria as I hear the pizza is excellent.

**ANDREW LISSER  
CRONULLA**

The Courier Sun has been inundated by letters regarding the koala article in last Wednesday's (8th) edition.

We will continue to run these letters in next weeks paper.

A truck meeting has been confirmed at the Bellingen Uniting Church on Tuesday, January 21 at 7pm.

Regarding both these issues, please be sure to have your say heard in the local newspaper.

www.bellingencourier.com.au

**Connecting the Community** **Bellingen Shire COUNCIL**

### BELLINGEN SHIRE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS & CELEBRATIONS

Residents are invited to join in the 2014 Australia Day Community Awards and Celebrations to be held at Bellingen on Sunday 26 January 2014.

Activities commence at 9.00am Maam Gaduying Park (Council Grounds) with a free sausage sizzle breakfast provided by the Bellingen Scouts.

Displays and a morning of family entertainment, including the flag raising, Pipe Band, bush poetry, Nat's Fun Singers until the Citizenship and Award Ceremony at 12.00 noon in the Bellingen Memorial Hall.

Morning Tea available from the Bellingen Red Cross.

Children's Aussie theme best decorated bicycle/scooter competition, judging 10.30am.

**SPECIAL GUEST - AUSTRALIA DAY AMBASSADOR BENITA COLLINGS - ACTOR AND TELEVISION PRESENTER.**

Further details are available at [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au).

### ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council will hold its Ordinary Meetings in the Bellingen Council Chambers commencing at 9.00am as follows:

Wednesday 29 January	Wednesday 23 July
Wednesday 26 February	Wednesday 27 August
Wednesday 26 March	Wednesday 24 September
Wednesday 23 April	Wednesday 22 October
Wednesday 28 May	Wednesday 26 November
Wednesday 25 June	Wednesday 17 December - TBC

The Business Paper (Agenda) will be published on Council's website by close of business Friday prior to the meetings.

### DRAFT INTEGRATED PLANNING & REPORTING DOCUMENTS ON PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Council at its Extraordinary Meeting held on 13 January 2014 resolved to place the following documents on public exhibition from Wednesday 15 January 2014 to until Tuesday 11 February 2014. The documents can be downloaded from Council's website or viewed at the Administrative Centre or Branch Libraries.

1. Draft Delivery Program 2012-2016
2. Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2014/15-2023/24
3. Draft Revenue Policy 2014/15
4. Draft Rate Category Town Boundary Maps 2014/15

Written submissions can be made until close of business on Tuesday 11 February 2014 as follows:  
Post: PO Box 117 Bellingen 2454  
Email: [council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au)  
Online: 'Have Your Say' form at [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au).

### PUBLIC EXHIBITION NOTICE - UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT CONDUCT POLICY

Council resolved at its Ordinary Meeting on Wednesday 18 December 2013 to place its draft Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy on public exhibition for a period of 28 days.

The document can be downloaded from Council's website under 'Documents on Public Exhibition' or a hard copy can be obtained from Branch Libraries or the Administration Building during the exhibition period.

Written submissions are invited until close of business Wednesday 12 February 2014 as follows:  
Post: PO Box 117 Bellingen 2454  
Email: [council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au)  
Online: 'Have Your Say' form at [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)

### BULKY GOODS COLLECTION

Council advises that the bi-annual Bulky Goods Clean Up days for residents receiving a garbage service are:

- Bellingen, Ferrmount, Raleigh, Mylestom - Monday 27 January 2014
- Dorrigo - Monday 3 February 2014
- Urunga A - Monday 27 January 2014 for Acacia & Riverside Drives and Short Cut & South Arm Roads
- Urunga B - Monday 3 February 2014 for all other streets within the Urunga township

Unwanted items should be placed neatly on the kerbside for removal prior to these dates. Heavy or dangerous materials will not be accepted. Any useful items should be donated to charity if possible as collected items will not be reused.

For further information call Coffs Coast Waste Services on **1800 265 495**, visit [www.coffscostwaste.com.au](http://www.coffscostwaste.com.au), download the free **MYBIN** app.

**LIZ JEREMY, GENERAL MANAGER**  
Phone: 6655 7300 Fax: 6655 2310  
Email: [council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au) Website: [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)

# Rate hike proceeds

BY ALICE BURNET

AT AN extraordinary meeting on Monday, January 13 council resolved to narrow down the options for a 2014/15 general rate rise.

The two options that are now being presented to the community are a 2.3 per cent general rate increase in line with the rate peg, as determined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) or an 11.8 per cent Special Rate Variation (SRV), to pay for additional road and bridge works.

For the average Bellingin Shire ratepayer, an 11.8 percent equates to a extra \$90 per annum, and, will provide 100km of reseals and 8km of reconstruction.

The Bellingin Shire Council (BSC) also released the results of an online survey, undertaken in November/December 2013, by 101 persons.

This research revealed rate-payers have a clear message for the BSC: that the community expects council to deliver better value and that some additional funding for roads and bridges should come from redirection and/or cost savings from other areas.

The final report also indicated, the majority of Shire ratepayers surveyed (52 per cent) were happy for a SRV, although the extent by which varied widely: 25 per cent nominated 8.4 per cent SRV to 9 per cent selecting the maximum rise of 17.4 per cent SRV.

When asked as to which services they would prefer council to cut, the largest proportion of respondents viewed cuts to community organisations and community events, as preferable to cuts to roads and bridges.

A statement released by the BSC aimed to allay the concerns raised by the local residents.

"As a result the report considered by council specifically addressed future

improvement initiatives and committed to presenting opportunities for efficiencies and cost savings of at least \$150,000 per annum for three years.

Nevertheless, the BSC was adamant, a SRV was necessary for the health of the Shire infrastructure.

"Council considered, however, that in the short term cost savings alone will not provide the resources required to address the backlog in road and bridge infrastructure and that on balance the proposal for an 11.8 per cent SRV is reasonable and affordable".

Mr Stephen Taylor, BSC Deputy General Manager of operations, said that it was pleasing that the majority of those who participated in the online survey were supportive of a rate increase.

However, he "understood the concerns of the community and was aware the BSC needed to continue to prove itself as a efficient deliverer of works and services".

Mr Taylor said that, "he had committed much of his working life to building and overseeing transport infrastructure and he would like to see the shire with decent bridges and roads, all done cost-effectively".

Those shire residents that attended the meeting were small in number, but nevertheless vocal.

One such attendee was local resident, Mr Bruce Cleary, who has long been an agitator against government rates.

Mr Cleary was furious a petition he had organised and distributed throughout Dorrigio had been ignored at the meeting by councillors, and indeed, it was ripped up by one councillor.

The petition was against a SRV and had over 300 signatures.

"This is another example of BSC not listening to the community. They are putting

the rates up and they do not care what the people think," Mr Cleary said.

Mr Cleary perceived council as unable to effectively manage and implement a roads and bridge program.

In addition, he also raised the possibility of using accumulated funds held currently by the BSC, instead of a large rate rise.

"The BSC has these enormous funds held in investment accounts.

"I know they are legally obliged to have funds stored in case of financial distress, but it is my understanding, they hold funds well above this amount.

"If the council has excess money, why aren't they using this, instead of taking more money from the shire residents?" he asks.

The Courier Sun contacted the mayor and councillors for a post-meeting comment, with the exception of councillor Dominic King who was away on leave.

With the exception of Mr Gordon Manning, who indicated he would send a letter to the editor shortly, all councillors declined to comment.

The draft Delivery Program, Long Term Financial Plan, and Revenue Policy are on public exhibition on Council's website from Wednesday, January 15 until Tuesday, February 11 with submissions open on the documents during that time.

The minutes for the extraordinary meeting of January 13 and the associated attachments are also available on council's website and provide a great deal of additional background material for information.

Submissions can be mailed, emailed, or made to council via the "Have your say" page on council's

website.

Council will consider public submissions on the draft Delivery Program, Long Term Financial Plan and Revenue Policy at an extraordinary meeting on February 19 with a view to adopting the documents.

At that meeting Council will also consider whether to apply to IPART for a Special Rate Variation (applications close February 24).

If you have views on the draft Delivery Program, Long Term Financial Plan, Revenue Policy, or the proposal for a Special Rate Variation that you would like Council to consider please forward your submission by Tuesday, February 11 and have your say.

**WINNER :-)**  
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EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY

1 Church Street Bellingin Tel: 02 6655 9299

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kg



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Check out our extensive range of locally grown herbs, fruit and veges including this weeks fantastic specials\*.

How the locals like it

Bellingin



Supermarket

\*Specials available until Sunday 26th January 2014



# Letters to the Editor

**HAVE YOUR SAY!**  
Send in your letters to:  
editor.couriersun@ruralpress.com

## Koalas and forestry don't thrive together

FOR THE second time I have read comments from Forest NSW North East Regional Manager Craig Busby stating the local timber industry and koalas continue to thrive together (Courier Sun 8.1.14).

This is outrageous misinformation. We all know the population is dramatically declining.

These animals are territorial and cannot move into another koala's territory without a fight to the death and so they often starve to death after logging. Dogs, cars and loss of habitat increase the stress on these animals which in turn increases the incidence of Chlamydia.

This disease can be passed on to babies in the pouch and can also lead to sterility in females which further limits the population of this nationally listed vulnerable species.

It is not just koalas either - the entire biodiversity of our precious life-sustaining forests is in dramatic decline.

It is time, and decades overdue, to stop putting our heads in the sand and start making decisions on the value of all that our forests provide, including our water supply, rather than short term false economics.

**SUSAN HAWORTH  
KALANG**

## Logging must change to save these koalas

CRAIG Busby's comments (Courier Sun 8.01.14) about logging in Pine Creek State Forrest are factually wrong.

The significance of this forest to the endangered koala cannot be brushed away by his assurances.

The fact that we the taxpayers will lose money while logging Compartments 26/27 needs to be acknowledged.

The fact that the industrial harvesting method will totally decimate this native forest needs to be admitted.

The koala population in these two compartments has declined by 75 per cent in the last 10 years. This area of forest has long been established as a significant habitat of state importance.

The adoption of a 'landscape-based' approach would potentially overcome the current situation of "death by one thousand cuts" to the Pine Creek Koala population where uncoordinated decisions about the use of public and private native and plantation forestry, the rapid coastal development and infrastructure provision continue.

The logging of Compartments 26/27 in Pine Creek State Forest must be deferred until a 'landscape-based' approach is applied to the management of Pine Creek Koala sub-population and adjoining populations.

The people of this area and NSW do not want to pay for the extinction of koalas.

**PAULINE KIDSON  
BELLINGEN**

## Information overload is too much to bear

THE good folk of Darkwood are thrilled they are held in such high esteem.

Our council has dug deep to find \$6000 plus, to inform them of proposed works on Joyces Bridge.

There are a few miserable sods, including myself suffering from low self esteem, who feel they don't deserve such generous consideration, claiming information extravaganza.

To do a major rehab on the above, the bridge was to be closed for nine days, from 8am to 3.30 pm daily, commencing Tuesday, January 14 until Friday, January 24 inclusive, weekends excluded. Simple eh!

However, a letter drop to all residents stated the bridge would be closed from 8am on the Tuesday until 3.30pm Tuesday, January 28. They forgot to mention daily, they forgot to mention the five non working days.

The message was total closure for 14 days instead of partial for nine.

Then the ads - via the local press, the web and of course the old trusty grapevine.

But on top of that instead of the traditional large yellow printed signs, the deployment of two huge flashing display signs!

A call to Kennards hire revealed they would each cost \$750 per week, plus delivery. Four weeks costing \$6000.

Council probably did get a paupers discount but with all the other stuff, still over \$6000.

So many other signs, even

Rommell couldn't break through with a tank.

If I were to ask whoever ordered these signs, would he have them if he was paying?

A resounding no, and this is the problem, not my money.

Council's only excuse is if we don't inform the residents, they complain, but tough titty, someone will always complain, no matter what, and even abuse the bridge boys for blocking the road.

Information overload is destroying the human mind.

Doesn't look like an organisation starving for cash and begging for a 12 per cent rate hike, but rather a case of money to burn.

PS One sign now removed so maybe 4.5 or 5 thousand  
**DARCEY BROWNING  
THORA**

## New sign is not a warm welcome

I'M VERY disappointed in the new welcome sign erected by council.

It is too small, very bland and boring.

This is Bellingen and our welcome sign should represent our vibrant and creative community!

Also, why is it behind the 50 kph sign? You can't read it properly until you virtually pass it.

There is no information as to population etc either?

**MICHAEL SARTORI  
BELLINGEN**

## Uninsured vehicles a sorry staff story

SUMMARISING my comments on staff numbers, Bellingen council has 36 per cent more staff than the average of the 10 similar councils surrounding us!

The facts that I have highlighted recently on staff numbers will be presented to IPART now that council has, not surprisingly, voted to go ahead with the increase in rates, despite the clear opposition to this at the meetings arranged by the council's consultant.

We will also be pointing out that this council has found millions to build itself new offices and workshops while unable to find the money to maintain our bridges.

Interestingly, Darcy Browning in his last letter informed us that Council now has an "Officer for Personal Well-being" and an "Officer for Floods"!

Can this possibly be true?

Is Alice's Wonderland now called Bellingen?

**DOUG WINN  
BELLINGEN**

## Resturant to the rescue

THANK you to the Embers Woodfired Restaurant, Urunga for their understanding and outstanding customer service to my mother (84 years-old) and her sisters who arrived at their restaurant as the kitchen was closing.

They had been to their brother's 50th wedding anniversary luncheon in Bonville and as they are from different regions in NSW, they chose to stay the night in Urunga.

After a long day, they walked into the evening looking for a small meal and drinks to finish their night.

The wonderful staff at Embers, welcomed them in, sat them down and looked after them with wonderful food, freshly cooked for them.

It was the perfect end to a wonderful day.

**LIZ BYRNE  
SOUTH WEST ROCKS**

## Inconveniences are for greater good

THERE has been a lot of discussion concerning road safety on Waterfall Way since the council approved a DA which allowed a quarry at Dorrigo to increase its capacity.

This was necessary to supply materials for the Urunga Bypass of the Pacific Highway.

I, too, am greatly impacted by this development and I live on Martells Rd, Urunga on the southern side of the Kalang River.

A lot of the trucks from the quarry plus machinery and construction vehicles have to travel down Gossip Rd which is also the access road to my property.

I have to negotiate two lots of traffic control officers to reach my property and my neighbours, whose property is adjacent to the bypass, have to negotiate four lots of traffic control.

I also have to put up with a lot of noise from 6.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday resulting from the dumping of rocks and spreading with bulldozers.

That is not to mention the noise from the rest of the machinery like excavators and tree mulchers.

Shortly we will also have to put up with blasting.

There are also a lot of other residents of Urunga who live along Shortcut Rd and South Arm Rd, not forgetting those on the Pacific Highway, who are being impacted by this construction.

I have found the construction company, Lend Lease, to be very co-operative and they always keep us up to date with what is happening.

By the same token we are co-operative.

We denied them access to our property for the trucks carrying the rock from the quarry because they had access down Gossip Rd.

Gossip Rd is single lane and has many turns so it is not easy for them and probably would have been much easier through our place but they accepted our decision.

In return, we have allowed them to use our access for extra long vehicles that probably wouldn't be able to get down Gossip Rd.

So it is all a matter of negotiation and co-operation so that we can get this bypass finished as quickly and efficiently as possible.

This bypass is the best thing to happen in our shire.

It is causing a lot of disruption to people while under construction but when complete it will get rid of a major black spot on the Pacific Highway and we need to stop the carnage.

Too many people have lost their lives on that section of highway.

It is also the best thing to happen to our local economy and we should milk it for all it is worth.

I think there are probably about 400 workers on site now who are all spending money locally.

The local shops are loving it.

It is also providing employment for local contractors and the quarries.

Most houses that were for sale in Urunga have been sold and the boom is also reaching the neighbouring Nambucca and Coffs Harbour Shires.

I suspect it will probably provide more income than tourism in our shire during the term of construction.

The trucks rumbling through Bellingen are a small inconvenience when compared to the disruption to Urunga residents but at the same time I would urge everyone to take extra care when using Waterfall Way, either as a motorist or pedestrian.

**MAIDA BUGG  
URUNGA**

BELLINGEN Environment Centre (BEC) are continuing to ask the Mayors of Coffs Harbour and Bellingen, the Premier, the Deputy Premier the Member for Oxley, Andrew Stoner and MP for Coffs Harbour Andrew Fraser to stop logging Bongil Bongil National Park in Coffs Harbour Compartments 26/27 of Pine Creek State forest.

Further updates for meetings and campaigns can be found at: [www.facebook.com/pages/Bellingen-Environment-Centre/](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bellingen-Environment-Centre/)

## Council's response

LAST week, the Courier Sun published a letter by Robyn Marchant, that stated raw sewerage was seen in the Bellingen River, and moreover, that it appeared to be from pipes running from a house situated near the riverbank.

Mr Stephen Taylor, the Bellingen Shire Council's Deputy General Manager of operations has responded to these concerns.

"The Bellingen Shire Council (BSC) rates the sewerage systems into three categories, those being low, medium and high risk.

"Those closer to the river are categorised as high risk and warrant an annual inspection.

"All the inspections that have taken place along the Thora river stretch have been found to have no evidence of system failure.

"However, in response to Ms Marchant's letter, the BSC has again re-inspected the concerned property.

"On re-inspection, the BSC has not been able to find evidence of any breaches to the sewerage system.

"The only pipes that run from this property are for watering the garden.

"The owners are themselves avid users of the river and highly value the health of the water system," Mr Taylor said.

**COMPOSED BY ALICE BURNET**

**Connecting the Community** **Bellingen Shire COUNCIL**

**ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

An Ordinary Meeting of Council will be held at 9.00am on **Wednesday 29 January 2014**. The Business Paper (Agenda) will be published on Council's website by close of business Friday prior to the meeting.

**NOTICE FOR ROADSIDES AND RESERVES VEGETATION CONTROL**

The 2013-14 Control Program for Blackberry; White Blackberry; Scotch Broom; Groundsel Bush; Lantana; Camphor Laurel under 3m; Yellow Bells; Privet and Kudzu; on land under the control of Council will continue throughout February 2014.

Spot spraying will occur on roadsides and reserves throughout the Shire including the Dorrigo Plateau and Bellingen Valley. This is subject to favourable weather conditions.

The following herbicides and their (active ingredient) will be applied:

Weedmaster Duo (Glyphosate 360g/L)  
Ken-met/Brush-off (Metsulfuron-methyl 600g/L)  
Grazon Extra (Picloram 100 g/L + Triclopyr 300g/L + Aminopyralid 8 g/L)

For further details contact Council's Invasive Plants Officer on 66557300, Monday - Thursday 8:30am - 4:30pm or visit the Vegetation Management page on Council's website.

**LIZ JEREMY, GENERAL MANAGER**  
Phone: 6655 7300 Fax: 6655 2310  
Email: [council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bellingen.nsw.gov.au) Website: [www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au)





# Letters to the Editor

**HAVE YOUR SAY!**  
Send in your letters to:  
editor.couriersun@ruralpress.com

## Shed mates miss their good mate

AS IN many parts of this country, organisations on the Mid North Coast of NSW rely on the use of volunteers – dedicated people who give up an amazing amount of their own time doing this work.

This is no more evident than those concerned with aspects of the life and health of others.

An example of this is the Neighbourhood Centre at Urunga, one of many such centres in the area delivering services and hope to people in need.

Australia has played a major part in the recognition and need for the establishment of the Men's Shed Organisation, not only here, but now in other countries.

The concept was based, and still is, on the concern for men's wellbeing and related mental health problems.

John Hamill shared in the dedication to the community through his outstanding effort in establishing the Men's Shed at Urunga.

As the force behind our shed, John fought the bureaucracy, which should have been more forthcoming to provide the services and help to maintain these services on behalf of the community.

While suffering ill health himself, he continued to fight these battles on behalf of the community without redress to his own condition.

The Men's Shed in Urunga stands as his legacy.

A good man, we will miss him at the Shed.  
**BRIAN FRANCIS**  
URUNGA MEN'S SHED MEMBER

## Citrus part of plan for clean future

IN RESPONSE to Darcey Browning's letter (Courier Sun, January 5), I would like the people of Bellingen to know this (citrus tree) project was started with the idea that the

children of this town deserve to live in a community that plans for their future and provides a cleaner greener environment.

I thank the council and chamber for having the courage to allow this change to take place in this great town of ours.

It wasn't supposed to come down to money, as the original idea was to have community support so that no single group or individual had to be out of pocket for these types of projects.

A town of this size should be able to quite easily fund and maintain those trees as well as the other edible gardens to show the rest of the country how to become green and create an environmental connection that is rarely seen in the world today.

I would like to ask the great people of this town to offer ideas and come to the party with any way of supporting these ventures as a whole community - for us and our children.

Sponsorship by families and community groups can make these projects viable and bring the community together.

If there are any ideas from people in the community please make them heard by contacting Northbank Community Gardens or Transitions so that we can develop a culture of understanding and co operation for the future.

The price for the up-keep of the trees is a lot less than \$4500 - it would be good to get the facts straight ... \$3250 per year.

**JESSTER KERR-WEARNE**  
PRESIDENT, NORTHBANK  
COMMUNITY GARDEN, BELLINGEN

## Thanks for all the birthday fun(d)

I WOULD like to thank all my guests at my 90th birthday parties for their generosity.

With their donations, we have raised \$1500 for the Bellingen Hospital.

Thank you again.

**RUTH PHILLIPS**  
GLENIFFER

## Respect is key to safe local roads

AFTER listening to the comments and remarks about the supposed traffic problems on the Dorrigo Mountain road and the traffic congestion through the streets of Bellingen, I thought it was about time to speak up about the roads and its users.

Although it is now more than 14 years since I drove heavy trucks on this road, I feel it would not be much different today.

Regarding the main street of Bellingen, it has always been a problem.

Most people think a large truck making a bit of noise is going fast, especially through a fairly narrow street line Bellingen, but this is not always the case.

Some drivers use their engine brakes or retarders to reduce their speed.

These are very effective methods of reducing speed, but generally they make a lot of noise.

The drivers who were driving our trucks were instructed not to use a brake retarder in a 'built up' area.

If the vehicle is properly maintained and regularly serviced, and the speed limits are observed by the drivers, it is not necessary to use these retarders in town.

Just think - every wheel of a truck and trailer has more braking capacity than an ordinary motor car. It also carries a lot more weight.

As far as Dorrigo Mountain goes, 14 years or so ago, coming down the mountain, there were 13 areas wide enough for a truck to pull over and allow faster moving vehicles to pass with safety.

Going up the hill was slightly different.

The uphill traffic was in the left side lane and could not move over to allow the traffic pass.

I believe that if everyone respects the mountain road for what it is, all would be able to work and travel together.

The other point of this argument is more serious:

The material produced from the quarry is necessary for urgent roadwork that will save

lives.

We have rivers and creeks clogged up with gravel that was previously used for road making and repairing, but nowadays we can't use this resource, so the other option is to use quarry material instead.

We are a hard mob to please.

**JOHN CABAN**  
BELLINGEN

## Response to council's funding reserves

BY ALICE BURNET

THE SPECIAL Rate Variation (SRV) and impending rate rise, has placed the spotlight on the Bellingen Shire Council's (BSC) investment fund and cash reserve.

Members of the community have questioned why a rate rise is needed when the BSC has already large funds stored away.

The Courier Sun has been advised that the BSC is not legally required to hold a minimum amount in reserves, however, there is legislative requirements relating to how council funds are held in reserves and are subsequently managed.

Mr Mark Troy, BSC Mayor, said in a statement; "under the NSW Local Government Act 1993 Council's cash funds are held in Externally Restricted Reserves and Internally Restricted Reserves.

"Externally Restricted Reserves include funds raised for water, sewerage, domestic waste, Special Roads Levy, Environmental Levy, Section 94 Contributions etc. and are only to be used for the purpose they were raised.

"Internally Restricted Reserves include funds held under resolution of Council for employee leave entitlements, plant and vehicle replacement etc.

"These funds are only to be used for the purpose under which they were resolved by council.

"The 2013 financial year financial reports Note 6 show that Externally Restricted Reserves amount to \$25.9m and Internally Restricted Reserves amount to \$2.993m".



## Network upgrade Dorrigo Plateau

- > A significant electricity network project will take place along **Tyringham and Armidale Roads, Dorrigo** commencing late January 2014
- > Work will continue for six weeks (weather permitting) to allow the replacement of poles and crossarms and powerline maintenance
- > While every effort will be made to minimise the impact of the work on customers, a number of planned interruptions will be required over the course of the upgrade and maintenance
- > Individual customers will receive advance notification from Essential Energy with the specific dates and times of the planned interruptions
- > We thank the community in advance for its patience while we deliver this important project
- > For more information contact Essential Energy's Supply Interruptions line on **13 20 80**



## BACK TO SCHOOL STRESS IN STOPLIGHT

Kids Helpline is encouraging parents to help kids tackle back to school stress by preparing them for the new year and paying close attention to their behaviour.

According to Kids Helpline Acting General Manager Tony Fitzgerald, while a new class or school can make children highly apprehensive, parental support will equip kids to deal with resulting stress.

"Parents are the key. They know their children better than anyone and will soon see if their kids need extra support at the start of the new school year," Mr. Fitzgerald said.

"By helping their children prepare for change and keeping an eye out for behavioural changes, parents can make all the difference to how their school year begins and ends.

"Some kids may fear they won't make new friends, others might not understand what a new school routine might mean.

"It can be particularly daunting for students moving to high school where they adapt to routine changes like a new room for each class and different teachers. They may also fear letting their parents down academically".

Mr. Fitzgerald said young people may also experience fears about new social situations involving older students, difficulty managing their time and disruption of previous peer relationships.

"Young people may appear

## Advertising Deadlines at the Gazette

Just a reminder to all of our Advertisers and Correspondents of Gazette deadlines.

### COPY

We at the Gazette would appreciate all correspondence to be on A4 size paper as small pieces could get misplaced.

### PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

It is business as usual at the Gazette on public holidays with the only exception being Easter

### CONTRACT ADVERTISING

All contract advertising needs to be received at the Gazette by close of business THURSDAY. This will guarantee that they will be in the next edition as the Gazette is now closed over the weekend.

### CASUAL ADVERTISING

All casual advertisements would also be appreciated where possible on Thursdays.

### OTHER CORRESPONDENTS

All other correspondents to please have copy in by Friday noon if possible. Friday night or weekend sports etc would be appreciated by 5:00 a.m. Monday.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Any letters to the Editor must be signed by the author. Letters with handwriting that's illegible or are considered as abusive will not be published. Typed letters are preferred.

The views expressed in all letters to the editors and all signed articles are those of their authors. The opinions of

anxious or frustrated and display negative or disruptive behaviour. This can make the transitioning process even more difficult for the young person," he said.

"The most important thing you can do is let your child know that you trust them and keep communication open".

Back to School preparation tips include:

- \* Practice the upcoming morning and bedtime routine a few days beforehand to help young people get into a regular pattern of sleeping and waking

- \* Ensure they eat breakfast each day to give them energy to focus on their studies

- \* Help them prepare for their new environment by providing the equipment they will need

- \* If your child is catching public transport to school or walking/cycling, help them get familiar with how they will get to and from school.

Tips for helping children through the school year include:

- \* Be available to discuss problems and help them think of ways to overcome these challenges

- \* Attend parent-teacher interviews to give you information on how the young person is going

- \* Encourage them to do homework and revise their in-class material so that they don't fall behind in their academic progress

- \* Provide opportunities to develop their social networks by encouraging them to invite other students over to your home outside of school hours.

Kids Helpline, Australia's only national children's counselling service, provide 24/7 counselling services to young people aged 5 to 25 years — 1800 551 800 or www.kidshelp.com.au

## NOW FOR A LAUGH

One day, a diver was enjoying the aquatic world 20 feet below sea level. He noticed a guy at the same depth he was, with no scuba gear on whatsoever.

The diver went below another 10 feet, but the guy joined him a minute later.

The diver went below 15 more feet, and a minute later, the same guy joined him.

This confused the diver, so he took out a waterproof pad and pencil, and wrote, "Amazing! How are you able to stay this deep down without equipment?"

The guy took the pencil and pad, erased what the diver had written, and wrote, "I'm drowning, you fool!"



## A weighty paradox

As the recent heat wave draws Australians to the haven of pools and beaches, has the Christmas and swimsuit season brought more attention to your eating and weight?

I believe Australian women are finding themselves in a weighty paradox.

Firstly, increasing attention has been given to Australia's rising obesity rates — approximately 1 in 2 individuals were overweight or obese according to the NSW Government's 2012 health statistics.

While obesity rates are still highest amongst men, the data now indicates that women are not far behind. In 2002 38.5% of women in NSW over the age of 16 were overweight or obese, come 2012, we saw a 6.4% increase to 44.9%. Compare this to a 0.9% increase in men over the same time period (53.4% to 54.3%) and we have somewhat startling conclusion on our hands: soon, like Australian men, 1 in 2 women will be overweight or obese.

This conflict is of particular relevance to rural and remote areas of Australia, where overweight or obese compared to their urban counterparts at 43.3%. Reasons identified for this disparity include higher costs, and limited availability, of healthy foods and perhaps against the grain of common understanding data, indicates that rural persons lead more sedentary lifestyles.

The Health risks surrounding such statistics are well understood by health professionals — given obesity is a major risk factor in chronic illness including kidney disease, Type 2 Diabetes and cardiovascular disease. However, recent research has revealed a different perspective that has largely gone un-noticed: the psychological and emotional impact of being overweight.

Therefore I believe the paradox is this: the Australian lifestyle is increasingly leading to weight gain, whilst women are living in a culture that idolises thinness.

Few Australian women have escaped the media attention and pressure to conform to the "thin ideal". The end result of this is women who, under Media influence, feel they should fit that side 8-10 swimsuit whilst our lifestyle, and indeed likely our genetics, guarantee failure. It is clear the tension such a paradox could cause in women's lives.

But how do women resolve this tension? What role does this paradox have to play in whether eating behaviours are impacting negatively on psychological quality of life?

As part of my PhD focused on binge eating — or overeating — I seek to further our understanding of what role 'body image' has in regard to women's eating habits and what impact this has on a woman's quality of life.

Through focusing on adult women who struggle with overeating and asking questions in regards to their quality of life. I hope to create a clearer picture of women's challenges.

The survey takes around 30 minutes to complete, is voluntary, anonymous and participants will be provided with further information and the

opportunity to win one of three \$100 gift vouchers to either Amazon, iTunes or Meyer.

Most importantly, your contribution will help increase understanding around how to address the challenges that women face. If that sounds like an issue relevant to you, go to the following link <http://bit.ly/1agLN4J> or contact me directly on [overeatingstudy@gmail.com](mailto:overeatingstudy@gmail.com)

Carmel Harrison  
Psychologist / Clinical PhD Candidate  
The Australian National University

## Back (pack) to School

NSW children will give a collective groan about going back to school this week, but now is the perfect time to check their school bags won't cause pain or injury.

"A heavy backpack increases the risk of poor posture and possible injury," said Dr. Patricia Thomas (Osteopath), Australian Osteopathic Association Board President and Sydney Osteopath.

Studies show that 10-30% of healthy children experience back pain, especially low-back pain.

Similar studies also reveal that the average weight of a school backpack is 22% of the individual's bodyweight and nearly one in three children carries loads that are 30% or more.

"Heavy backpacks are a real problem. Children will often compensate for the weight with a forward head posture which puts stress on the whole body, especially the lower back and neck".

A forward head position can cause pain, poor posture and potential permanent damage to growing spines.

"A good rule of thumb is to limit the packed weight to 10% of the child's bodyweight".

Backpack weight can be kept lower by carrying only the essential books for the day and using a locker at school. Students can also partner with a friend to share a textbook during class, reducing some of the load.

"Some textbooks have soft covers available, greatly reducing the need to carry the heavy textbook to and from school," said Dr. Thomas. "If your child uses a laptop or tablet at school, they might not need to carry textbooks at all".

In addition to keeping the weight low, it is critical that children have a good quality backpack and wear it properly.

Top tips when purchasing & wearing a backpack:

- \* Make sure the backpack is the right size — it should be no wider than the child's chest.
- \* Comfort and fit should be first priority, not looks.
- \* Choose a backpack that has wide shoulder straps with padding.

## Special Rate Variation — transparency and accountability

Options for general rate increases for 2014/15 are currently on public exhibition until 11 February 2014. The options are:

1. A 2.3% general rate increase in line with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) determination in December 2013 (the "peg" rate)

2. An 11.8% Special Rate Variation (SRV) — 2.3% for cost increases for Council services funded by general rates and 9.5% for additional transport (road and bridge) infrastructure

Details on the options are contained in Council's Long Term Financial Plan, Delivery Programme, and Revenue Policy and together these three documents provide comprehensive and detailed information on the rate increase proposals and their impact. These draft documents are currently on public exhibition with written submissions being accepted until close of business Tuesday

11 February 2014.

Feedback and submissions from the first round of SRV community engagement indicate that you consider efficiency, and productivity, and transparency and accountability in service delivery as key priorities. The documents currently on exhibition provide details on past, current and future work with regard to efficiency and productivity improvement. The report to Council in January 2014 made further commitments to identify efficiencies and cost savings. While improving efficiency and productivity is an ongoing priority for Council, we value your input to the process through considered suggestions.

With regard to transparency and accountability, Council is subject to a range of legislative acts and regulations, accounting standards and guidelines that dictate how we provide information and report to various parties. That said, we are interested in how we can inform you our community on the things that matter to you. One suggestion from the SRV community engagement process was for Council's organisational charts to be published to allow comparison with other Council's and to let you see what positions Council has to deliver the services we provide. These organisational charts are available on Council's website (under the Council tab, or search for "organisational charts").

If you have views on what you would like reported, how you would like to see it, and how often, please let us know. Submissions, suggestions, and proposals on all of the above can be mailed, emailed, or made to Council via the "Have your say" page on Council's website.

Council will specifically consider submissions on the draft Delivery Programme, Long Term Financial Plan and Revenue Policy at an extraordinary meeting on 19 February 2014 with a view to adopting the documents. At that meeting Council will also consider whether to apply to IPART for a Special Rate Variation (applications close 24 February 2014). If you have views on the draft documents or the proposal for a Special Rate Variation that you would like Council to consider please forward your submissions by Tuesday 11 February 2014 and have your say.

## What a Mistake

A teenager went with his mother to the country court at Blackburn, Lancashire. Once there he nipped into the ladies and changed into his sister's clothes, adding a touch of realism by pulling his socks into the bra to look like breasts.

His mother then duped court officials into handing over £951 held in trust for her 17-year-old daughter.

The disguised boy told officials that 'she' was emigrating. The town's magistrates, who later heard them admit obtaining the cash by deception, thought the whole thing was a drag and gave the pair suspended jail sentences.

\* Always use both shoulder straps. Wearing a pack on one shoulder curves the spine unnaturally, putting stress on the whole body.

\* Don't wear the backpack below the small of the back.

\* Use the waist strap to help evenly distribute the weight of the pack.

Take the time to teach your child how to wear their backpack correctly, if unsure speak with your local osteopath.

Carrying a backpack and sitting at desks all day can cause some stiffness in the back, neck and shoulders.

"Encourage your kids to do a few stretches when they get home. This will loosen and relieve their muscles and boost their energy after a long day at school. It works for everyone, so join in if you can!"

Simple stretches for home: Shoulder shrug

\* Inhale and shrug your shoulders up to your ears. Hold then release and drop. Repeat three times.

Arm circles

\* While standing, stretch your arms out to the side. Slowly circle your arms forward for five rotations. Stop and circle your arms backwards for five rotations.

Torso twist

\* Stand with your arms loosely by your side and turn your torso to the right. Let your left heel come off the ground as you twist. Repeat for the

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SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL DISTRICT THINK

**Thanked:** Fundraisers rewarded with a flight in the simulator

# Donors, we have lift-off

THE people behind two successful and benevolent local businesses this week got the chance to virtually lift-off.

Ray and Lisa Smith from Tom Jung Quarries and Gary Innes from Good Price Pharmacy were given the chance to get behind the controls of the Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter's helicopter simulator.

It was their reward for their businesses having reached a major milestone – donating more than \$10,000 to support the service's life saving work.

Fundraising and community relations officer Russ Holland said the generosity of the businesses and their employees was greatly appreciated.

"Support from the business community is a major contributor that helps fundraise the \$7 million annual budget of the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter," Russ said.

"Without the support of businesses like these we couldn't continue the lifesaving work that we do"

If your business would like to support the vital local service of the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter you can contact Russ Holland on 0411 303 660.



**FLYING HIGH:** Russ Holland, Ray and Lisa Smith and Gary Innes check out the Westpac rescue simulator at Tom Jung quarry. PHOTO: PHOTO: TREVOR VEALE

## Scholarships on offer for nursing diploma course

SCHOOL leavers or people interested in a career change can now apply for one of 300 scholarships for the Diploma of Enrolled Nursing program being offered by the NSW Government.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner said NSW Health, in partnership with the Department of Education and Communities, is running the program in which students will train at metropolitan and rural TAFE NSW colleges as well as the NSW Health Registered Training Organisation at Rozelle and Liverpool.

"Enrolled nurses work with health care professionals, such as registered nurses, specialist nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, doctors, social workers and pharmacists," Mrs Skinner said.

"They care for and support patients in a range of facilities, including aged care centres, operating theatres, paediatric hubs or mental health units.

"I strongly recommend

**“There will be a guaranteed offer of a job**

– Minister Jillian Skinner

anyone with the essential skills to provide preventative, curative and rehabilitative nursing apply for these scholarships.

"Most importantly, there will be a guaranteed offer of a job at a NSW public hospital upon successful completion of the course." Scholarship applications close on February 12.

Applications are invited from HSC school leavers, mature age applicants or those who have already completed a Certificate III or equivalent educational qualification.

Selection for the scholarship involves a written application, a basic literacy and numeracy test and interview.

For more information, go to [www.health.nsw.gov.au/nursing](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/nursing).

## Council seeks to raise its rates

COUNCIL is seeking a 2.3% general rate increase in line with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal determination, and a special rate variation of 11.8%.

That increase includes 2.3% for cost increases for council services funded by general rates and 9.5% for additional transport infrastructure, including roads and bridges.

Details on the options are contained in council's Long Term Financial Plan, Delivery Program and Revenue Policy, which are on public exhibition.

Written submissions are being accepted until the close of business on Tuesday, February 11, and can be mailed, emailed or made to council via the "Have your say" page on council's website.

Council will consider submissions on the draft Long Term Financial Plan, Delivery Program and Revenue Policy at an extraordinary meeting on February 19 with a view to adopting the documents.

Council will also consider whether to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for a special rate variation before February 24.

## New turns are milestone

ANOTHER milestone in the completion of the Pacific Highway upgrade is about to happen.

Tomorrow the right turn in and right turn out of the access road south of the Moonee Beach shopping centre will be closed.

The intersection will become a left-out only, which is the main traffic movement at this intersection.

Northbound traffic can access Moonee Beach via the intersection of the highway and Wakelands Rd and the service road to the overpass.

If northbound motorists miss this opportunity, they will be able to access Moonee Beach via the intersection of the highway and Bucca Rd and the local service road.



**CHANGING LANES:** Access changes to Moonee Beach are occurring as part of the Pacific Highway upgrade.

Traffic from Moonee Beach wanting to travel north on the highway will be able to access the highway via the overpass and heading north along the local service road to the intersection of the

highway and Bucca Road.

On Tuesday the intersection of the access road south of the Moonee Beach shopping centre will be permanently closed and the southbound on-ramp opened.

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\*Value based on full retail price of ducted air conditioning option in a Marooloa 32 single storey home. Offer applies to new home preliminary agreements entered into commencing 4th January 2014 and is available for homes with Coral Homes Indulgence specifications only. For T&C's go to [www.coralhomes.com.au/downloads](http://www.coralhomes.com.au/downloads). QBCC 50792/1014053 & NSW 62084C.

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 - see p16

# The Bellingen Shire **Courier-Sun**

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# New kings of Tamworth

## Bellingen combo conquers the Boulevard of Dreams



The Mid North won both the coveted 'Battle of the Bands' and the 'Busking Championships' at this year's Tamworth Country Music Festival

**BY ALICE BURNET**

COMING hot on the heels of nationally acclaimed local band, Aunty Hu Hu and the Big Lazy, another Bellingen act has taken the stage by storm.

The Mid North, a bluegrass outfit, have won both the coveted 'Battle of the Bands' and the 'Busking Championships' at this year's Tamworth Country Music Festival.

It was an extraordinary and impressive achievement, considering it was their first time at the festival.

The Mid North banjo player, Bill Faulkner, said it was all a little bit overwhelming.

"We've been walking on air -

we're going to have welts from pinching ourselves," he told the Courier-Sun.

The band played 17 individual performances over nine days, including a three hour pub act, a main stage appearance, a Peel St stage show and in between, busked along the Tamworth 'boulevard'.

"The festival was a fairytale come true," said singer and songwriter, Scott Collins.

The Mid North's trip to Tamworth may have been a "wild ride for sure", but it was never a certainty, Scott said.

"We had wanted to go to the Tamworth Festival but were a little intimidated and had not applied.

"Then we got a call from Geoff

Thrift, owner of PnB Music Tamworth, who was travelling through Bellingen.

"He had heard our album playing in Roots Records and told us that we had to get to Tamworth.

"He was the reason that we applied and went. Without Jeff's enthusiasm, we wouldn't have gone."

The win is big.

"It means that we have poked our heads up higher into the country music scene, we are being watched by the industry and will also have some bigger shows at next year's Tamworth Country Music Festival," Scott said.

The Mid North formed just over two years ago, and they have

played and headlined numerous festivals around the country.

At the North Coast Entertainment Industry Association award ceremony in 2012, the band won Album of the Year for their debut effort, 'You Are Right About The Stars', and Country Song of the Year for 'Rosewood', a single from the album. 'Rosewood' also reached No.1 on the Australian Music Radio Airplay Project charts.

The Mid North meld mountain folk, bluegrass, old-time and gospel.

According to the Hudson Valley Bluegrass Association in the USA, The Mid North, "combine the spirit of old-time roots music, the energy of the new young string bands and

the musicianship of bluegrass".

Greg McGrath, an Australian bluegrass blog beamed: "You Were Right About The Stars is a corker. This is an album that had me hooked at the first song".

But as an independent band, The Mid North are disadvantaged in terms of marketing and budgetary assistance that is part and parcel of a record deal.

However, the upside is that the band "controls its destiny".

For folks who are interested in following, listening and supporting The Mid North on their ride to stardom, like their Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/themidnorth](http://www.facebook.com/themidnorth)

Look out for the next album coming out in February/March.

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## Land revaluation threatens rate base

**BY ALICE BURNET**

A DROP in land values across the Bellingen Shire could impact on the proposed special rate variation that residents are being asked to consider by the council.

The release of land values by the NSW Valuer-General, Philip Western, for 6070 properties in the Bellingen Local Government Area, showed the total value of the area's land had dropped from \$1.52 billion three years ago to \$1.48 billion.

"Land values are one factor considered by councils when determining rates," he said.

"Land values are fixed for rating until new values are issued to the council, which usually occurs every three or four years."

Bellingen Council's general manager Liz Jeremy told the Courier Sun the revaluation would not exacerbate the rate variation calculations.

"Council's total rating income will not increase or decrease due to changes in the land valuations provided by the Valuer General.

"The total rating income is pegged by a percentage determined by IPART.

"The proposed 9.5% special

rate variation is also calculated on the total rating income.

"Based on this therefore the land revaluation will not exacerbate the rate variation calculations as the total rating income is set at an 11.8% increase if the special rate variation.

"The mix of increases/decreases in land values provided by the Valuer General will change the individual amounts levied within the total rating income. That is, movement of land values may incur an increase or decrease in rates levied for individual rate payers."



# Letters to the Editor

**HAVE YOUR SAY!**  
Send in your letters to:  
editor.couriersun@ruralpress.com

## Works depot upgrade loan proves a millstone

WITH council now pushing ahead with its rate hike that the community is overwhelmingly opposed to, would it not be an appropriate time for any journalist worth their salt to start asking council some serious financial questions?

Is it not a fact that Bellingin Council is taking \$440,000 per annum away from roads to make repayments on the Raleigh Works Depot upgrade loan? And this will continue for the next 20 years or more.

Is it not a fact that Bellingin Council is taking \$66,000 per annum from sewage and water for repayments on the works depot loan?

Is it not a fact that Bellingin Council is taking \$60,000 per annum from the Working Funds for repayments on the Raleigh depot loan.

Is it not a fact that the Raleigh Works Depot upgrade was opposed by the community but council pushed ahead with this expensive use of our money regardless?

Is it not a fact that senior staff and councillors were fully informed that by pushing ahead with the Raleigh Works Depot upgrade that it would have serious long term impacts on services over the next 20 years or more? And roads/bridges would be neglected as a result.

How does the redirecting of these funds fit into the externally and internally restricted reserves regime?

From what funds do the cost of wages, holiday pay, superannuation, long services leave, sick leave, travel expenses, and training costs derive? Is this fund a restricted reserve?

How many income streams does council have, and how is each restricted?

Does the total rate intake cover the cost of running the administration and bureaucracy?

How much money did Bellingin Council contribute toward the promotion of councils being recognised in the constitutional referenda that did not go ahead in 2013? Which fund did it come from?

How much money has Bellingin Council contributed to local government associations over the last 10 years and which fund did this money come from?

How much money has council given to community groups over the last 10 years, and what fund did it come from?

Is it not a fact that failure to upgrade the Raleigh Works Depot may have resulted in the eventual loss of the service provision by Bellingin Council and that would have compromised the validity of the council itself?

Is it not a fact that council decided on our behalf that the 20-year loan on \$4.528 million reflects the convention whereby future generations of ratepayers are to pay for this monstrosity that the community was opposed to?

Council's financial crisis was forewarned and is self inflicted - why should ratepayers pay be saddled with the clean-up?

**BRUCE CLEARY  
DEERVALE**

## Hindsight Not A Pretty Picture

TO BE sure, it's been a tough week. Kicked off with my granddaughter fronting with a wobbly front tooth. Did the cotton pulling trick and placed the tooth and twenty cents in a glass for the tooth fairy. Pauline says, how mean, the going rate is \$2. Another nineteen to go and with four of the little buggers running about. Little wonder so many fairies these days.

And then some caffeine addict in Church Street giving me a serve regards my criticism of Council affairs.

Taking a quote from a quote I say, but someone has to keep the bastards honest. But don't you think they are doing their utmost he says.

Rising to the occasion I say, of course, but only via to-days standards, and this is the tragedy of it all. The bar is set at ground level, and there is no longer a benchmark. All this of course is just fine if we could all survive by this new standard, but sadly there are many forced to uphold and even lift the old standard to remain a float. The fortunate majority should never forget, that as they do less, some poor unfortunate has to do more.

Finally the proposed rate increase. Council have been honest in presenting their case, but many still believe it to be one off. Its not one off, its every year forever, and will be compounded annually by the C.P.I. pegged rate which in recent has been 3 to 5%. If as I believe a 12% is approved and the pegged rate remains at 3% for the next 10 years your rates will increase by 50%, \$3,000 becoming \$4,500. Many, to assist with the backlog, may even support an increase, if council were to reduce its admin costs by a similar figure, and the funds did actually flow into roads and bridges. I struggle to remain positive, but sometimes hindsight is not a pretty picture.

**DARCEY BROWNING  
THORA**

## Why I support the rate rise

WE HEAR a lot in the national news about the 'infrastructure backlog' and/or who's to blame or not for it etc. How many years have we heard the State Government blaming the Federal Government and vis-à-vis.

One seriously has to look at how long it has taken for the goat track called the Pacific Highway to be improved to an accepted modern day standard, and this is an ongoing job.

Just over a year ago our local council was faced with a bridge

failure - Hanley's Bridge. Without re-capping all the detail, the bottom line was that just more than \$400,000 had to be found, and in a hurry.

Subsequent to this, a thorough analysis was done of the state of the many bridges within our shire. It was not a pretty assessment, with clear recommendations for strategic improvements made by management.

A series of workshops were held for councillors on the bridge and road situation, with options as to where we could go in so far as funding the required works.

The answer as to just how our roads and bridges have been allowed to get into the condition where they are now cannot be answered in a short letter, or if at all. But one thing that has become clear to me is that to continue to neglect the work will ultimately lead to an even bigger problem down the track.

At some point, like the Pacific Highway upgrade, the buck passing has to stop.

Within Australia, over the past few decades, a mindset has crept in that says everyone else should pay, but not me.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter what it is, but it has to be paid for.

This is now the case for our shire, and as such ratepayers are being asked to dig further into their pockets.

On balance, Bellingin Shire's rates are not too dissimilar to other country shires.

I accept that for some ratepayers the increase will be an issue for them but public policy is about the greater good, and council does have facilities for those in financial stress.

The extra 9.5 per cent, if approved, will not be enough to bring road and bridge infrastructure to where they should be, but it will go a reasonable way down the track.

Supporting a rate rise has been a difficult decision as I went into this against such a rise. However, post Hanley's and the bridge assessments that have been made, I believe it is in the best interests of our overall community to ensure our infrastructure does not deteriorate any further, but rather, be improved.

**GORDON MANNING  
COUNCILLOR  
BELLINGIN SHIRE COUNCIL**

## Three cheers for Putt Bennett organisers

AFTER reading the coverage of the Putt Bennett Fishing Competition held recently, I wish to congratulate the organising committee and volunteers for again conducting a popular event.

With a record 633 competitors taking part and a fantastic selection of fish taken, this competition must rate with the best in NSW.

I also note the comment regarding the good health of the river, which allows the success of the fishing to take place.

This is no doubt due to the closing of the Kalang and Bellingin rivers to commercial fishing and a big vote of thanks must go to those keen fishermen who fought hard for this to happen, and succeeded, in May 2002.

**JOHN 'BEETLE' BAILEY  
URUNGA**

Congratulations to all prize winners and best wishes for the competition's future.

**'WATERHOLE' WAL TYSON  
BELLINGIN**

## So much hot air on wind and solar

AROUND the world, the opinion that solar and wind are not alternative to fossil fuel and nuclear is growing.

The European Union is recommending the cessation of all government subsidies to wind and solar throughout Europe.

Britain has found that their land based wind turbines have in 20 years diminished their production to just one per cent from a high of 20 per cent of capacity.

Their sea-sited wind farms need renewing after 10 years and they have made the decision to build coal, gas and nuclear power stations as quickly as possible.

Germany already has 31 coal/gas stations underway.

Let's hope our Federal Government follows the example being set and saves us from the current madness that was brought about by an unproven ideology in which our participation has been zero - with no effect except to increase the wealth of other countries and reduce our standard of living.

**HM TALLING  
URUNGA**

## Bad rap for truckies fails the truth test

I HAVE been reading with great interest articles in the Courier-Sun concerning heavy vehicles on our local roads. Most of the comments lately have been concerning all the trucks using the Dorriggo Mountain and then going through Bellingin's main street, hauling quarry products for the highway upgrade. Some of the comments are absolutely ridiculous.

Lately there have been many heavy trucks using this road, so I would like to know two things first.

One: How many accidents have happened on the Dorriggo Mountain so far caused by the trucks?

Two: How many people have been run over in Bellingin's main street? None, that I have heard of.

Give the drivers of trucks a bit of credit for the way they handle their rigs on second class roads.

Most of the drivers are family men who want to have a safe day at work and return to their families safely.

The problem is that people have been brainwashed for decades that trucks are dangerous and that truck drivers are not much better.

You can be assured that the Highway Patrol will make sure that the drivers obey the speed limits.

I spent a lifetime driving semi trailers and the percentage of truck drivers doing the wrong thing is no worse than any other trade: like builders, plumbers, police officers; and no worse than that of car drivers.

There is no need for pedestrians to walk across Hyde St if a truck is close. If all drivers use a bit of courtesy, there will be no hassles with trucks.

**JOHN 'BEETLE' BAILEY  
URUNGA**

**Connecting the Community** **Bellingin Shire COUNCIL**

**NOMINATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ESAC)**

Council is seeking nominations from community members and representatives of environmental sustainability community groups to fill two positions on the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC).

Primarily the role of the ESAC is to provide advice to Council on specific environmental sustainability matters. The topics that are addressed through the ESAC are;

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- Sustainable food production;
- Waste management;
- Coastal and river ecosystem management;
- Biodiversity management; and
- Invasive plant management

Council encourages representation from each of the three main shire areas (Dorriggo, Bellingin and Urunga) from persons with adequate skills and experience in the above areas. Indigenous representation on the Committee is strongly encouraged.

Further details including the ESAC Terms of Reference, Advisory Committee Manual and Nomination Form are available from Council's website or contact Council's Manager Sustainability and Natural Resource, Daan Schiebaan on (02) 6655 7300.

Applications must be submitted by close of business Wednesday 26 February 2014.

**ROAD REGULATION 2008 - NAMING OF ROADS**

NOTICE is given pursuant to Section 9 of the Roads Regulation 2008, that Council has named those sections of road described hereunder:

**Ironbark Place** - The subject road intersects Figwood Drive in the locality of Bellingin.

Authorised by a Council Resolution of **18 December 2013**.

**LIZ JEREMY, GENERAL MANAGER**  
Phone: 6655 7300 Fax: 6655 2310  
Email: council@bellingin.nsw.gov.au Website: www.bellingin.nsw.gov.au

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## Indian Myna Project draws to a close

The Indian Myna is an invasive feral bird that drives away native birds and carries diseases and lice.

They are listed as one of the world's most invasive species and left uncontrolled will reduce native bird populations by competing for food and nesting locations.

For the last five years the Indian Myna Project for Mid North Coast has been co-ordinated through Nambucca Valley, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen Landcare's Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca Councils and NPWS.

This project has been the driving force to reduce numbers of Indian Myna birds in the region. With over 500 volunteers and over 4000 birds trapped and destroyed, this project has made a significant impact on the invasive species and improved the native species population future.

The project has made immense progress in raising community awareness and supporting volunteers. The project is now drawing to a close. The future operations of the project will now fall with Councils, Landcare and community volunteers.

Volunteers have put in a tremendous effort to reduce the population of Indian Mynas in Coffs Harbour, Nambucca and Bellingen local government areas and now need even more assistance to ensure the numbers do not increase. It's time to increase the awareness and get more volunteers to assist in reporting sightings of birds, conduct trapping and reporting roost sites.

A volunteers Picnic and information Day will be held at the North Coast Regional Botanic Gardens in Coffs Harbour on Thursday 27th February. Commencing at 9:30 a.m., morning tea and lunch provided, RSVP to 0438 218 261 by Monday 24th February.

Any person who has seen the destructive bird around their back yards or local areas are asked to report the number and location to the Project. This can be done via email: indianmyna\_midnor.hcoast@yahoo.com.au or contact the Project Co-ordinator Dave Hitchcock on 0438 218 261 or simply follow us on Facebook at Indian Myna Project Mid North Coast.

## Warning on Yellow Page Scam

NSW Fair Trading Minister Stuart Ayres is warning NSW businesses and consumers about a billing scam by a company posing as Yellow Pages.

Mr. Ayres said the scam, which first came to the attention of consumer protection authorities in Australia in 2010, had re-surfaced and NSW Fair Trading was aware of reports from businesses in Wagga Wagga, Moss Vale, Broken Hill and Young.

"Businesses are sent unsolicited order forms or invoices from 'Yellow Page Australia' and 'Open Business Directory' that are simply a scam," he said.

"Businesses should ignore any demands for payment and make sure their staff members are aware of the scam."

"The documents can easily be confused with the legitimate Yellow Pages name and walking fingers logo and as a result, in the past, many businesses have fallen into the trap of making payments."

The forms appear to be a confirmation of contact details, but are cleverly disguised as an agreement to sign up for an online business directory, with reference in small print to a \$99 per month charge for a minimum two year period, paid annually.

NSW Fair Trading has been advised that although the company behind the latest variation of the scam, Open Business Directory Ltd, claims to be based in Hong Kong and the bogus invoices ask for payment by credit card, bank transfer or by cheque posted to a Hong Kong address, the scammers operate a website www.yellow-page-australia.at on the Austrian domain, which is registered to the business in the Russian Federation.

"This scam has registered a website in Austria to make it look like it is based in Australia," Mr. Ayres said.

An abuse report has been sent to domain authorities in Austria by Consumer Protection in Western Australia following a number of businesses in that jurisdiction being targeted earlier this year.

Minister Ayres said when payments are not made, businesses receive numerous reminders threatening legal action.

even if a contract was signed.

"If you received a 'Yellow Pages' fax or email, confirming it is authentic by calling Sensis on 13 23 78".

The Yellow Page scam first surfaced in mid-2010 when public warnings were issued.

The entities behind it, Yellow Publishing Ltd and Yellow Page Marketing B.V. based in The Netherlands, were prosecuted by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

In April 2011, the Federal Court in Melbourne imposed penalties of \$2.7 million, issued an order prohibiting the use of the Yellow Pages logo and declared the contracts with Australian businesses void.

Authorities in the United States and Canada have also successfully prosecuted other scammers involved in to identical scheme.

### TIPS TO AVOID THE SCAM:

- \* Read all documents carefully before signing any contract for directory listings or advertising
- \* Restrict the number of employees who are authorised to sign contracts and approve payments for directory listings or advertising and make sure all staff members are aware of how these scams work.
- \* Avoid giving out information about your business to third parties before clarifying the purpose of their enquiry
- \* Deal with people you know and trust wherever possible
- \* If you receive a threatening letter demanding payment for unauthorised listings or advertising ignore it and report it to Fair Trading on 13 32 20 or Scamwatch at www.scamwatch.gov.au

## CONTACT US

## Nose-to-tail collisions are the number one crash on N.S.W. roads

New South Wales drivers have more accidents than any other state as a result of failing to give way to other vehicles, according to new data revealed by leading national car insurer, AAMI, in its annual Crash Index.

NSW drivers are also finding themselves in nose-to-tail collisions more often than any other type of crash, and have the second highest rate in the country, outranked only by Victoria.

Analysis of almost 250,000 accident insurance claims between October 2012 and September 2013, show the top five types of accidents occurring on NSW and Aussie roads are:

NSW

1. Nose to tail (28.7%)
2. Failed to give way (22.5%)
3. Parked car dings (20.6%)
4. Collision with a stationary object (13.8%)
5. Collision while reversing (9.9%)

NATIONAL

1. Nose to tail (27.8%)
2. Parked car dings (21.4%)
3. Failed to give way (20.5%)
4. Collision with a stationary object (14.7%)
5. Collision while reversing (11%)

Over the years there has been little change in the type of accidents on Australian roads. AAMI's Crash Index reports show that the incidence of nose-to-tail collision has remained stable for the past decade, hovering between 27% and 29%. Parked car dings, however, continued on an upward trend having risen from 15% in 2004 to 21.4% in the latest Crash Index.

Although NSW drivers seem to lack patience behind the wheel, drivers nationally are starting to improve their driving skills and behaviours. The proportion of crashes from failing to give way has reduced steadily from 23.1% in 2001 to 20.5% in the past 12 months.

"Worryingly, NSW is above the national average when it comes to nose-to-tails and crashes from failing to give way, so its vital for NSW motorists to be aware of the driving behaviours that lead to these particular types of accidents," said AAMI spokesperson, Reuben Aitchison.

According to Mr. Aitchison, impatience is often overlooked as one of the leading factors behind accidents on our roads and can adversely affect our judgment when we need it most.

"Fender benders and prangs from failing to give way tend to happen because of inattention and driver impatience, with the latter often leading to tailgating or following too closely behind other vehicles."

By their own admission, nearly three-quarters of drivers who've had a prang say it was avoidable, so if we want to see a reduction in accidents on our roads, drivers becoming more patient would be a great start.

"Being a safe driver means accepting the speed limit, understanding that the conditions of the road are always changing and adjusting driving behaviour according. Environmental factors can play havoc on the road and continue to making them more dangerous so give yourself plenty of room to stop behind the vehicle you are following, especially when road surfaces are wet and slippery".

Mr. Aitchison added: "Drivers Must also make a conscious decision in heavy and congested traffic to slow down, keep a safe distance between them and the car in front and resist the urge to weave in and out of lanes. Above all, be extra vigilant behind the wheel as this is the best way to avoid an accident and make our roads safer for everyone".

## Special Rate Variation — Final Report to Council

The period for accepting written submissions on the Special Rate Variation proposal closed on Tuesday 11 February 2014 after a four week period of public exhibition of Council's draft Long Term Financial Plan, Delivery Programme, and Revenue Policy. Together these three documents provided comprehensive and detailed information on the rate increase proposals and their impact.

The two options proposed in the draft documents were:

1. A 2.3% general rate increase in line with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) determination in December 2013 (the 'peg' rate)

2. An 11.8% Special Rate Variation (SRV) — 2.3% for cost increases for Council services funded by general rates and 9.5% for additional road and bridge works

Submissions are being collated and will be included in a report to Council for its extraordinary meeting on 19 February 2014. Council will consider submissions on the Draft Delivery Programme, Long Term Financial Plan and Revenue Policy with a view to adopting the documents, and also consider whether to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for a Special Rate Variation (applications close 24 February 2014).

The Business Paper (Agenda) will be available on Council's website prior to meeting day.

Liz Jeremy BSC

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# Letters to the editor

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## COUNCIL STAFF: LET IT BE APPLES AND APPLES

A RECENT letter to the editor (January 22) raised questions regarding comparative staffing numbers between Bellinghen Shire Council (BSC) and neighbouring councils.

BSC has to date provided staffing data based on the number of positions in the structure including both full time and part time positions.

The numbers quoted from other councils appear to be what is referred to as 'full time equivalent' which converts all hours worked by employees, including those who may be part time, to an equivalent number of full time employees.

BSC has a significant number of part time employees, particularly in the indoor workforce.

For example, 22 of the 53 positions in BSC's Corporate and Community Section are part time.

Applying the same reporting methodology as other councils results in a full time equivalent of 131.8 (versus 146 actual positions).

A couple of observations can be offered for the differences at our council.

For example, Bellinghen has three separate waste transfer stations along with three library locations.

Additionally we have a number of positions that are externally funded, including some 15 staff allocated to the RMS Waterfall Way contract, four staff based at the Dorrigo Support Centre dedicated to supporting various community and social groups in that location, and a river and biodiversity position which is also externally funded.

These functions or services are either not provided for in other council structures or the service requirements are different. Council does not have an 'officer for personal well-being' or an 'officer for floods'. Council does however have a Community Wellbeing section that provides and coordinates services to the community such as the Dorrigo Support Centre, the Bellinghen Youth Hub, our libraries as well as support for many community management committees.

The above services reflect the importance that the Bellinghen Shire community, as a whole, place on supporting their young people, aged, disabled and community minded individuals as well as our local environment.

I trust the above provides clarity on the matter. Further information in relation to council's organisation structure can be found on council's website.

**LIZ JEREMY**  
GENERAL MANAGER  
BELLINGHEN SHIRE COUNCIL

## COUNCIL NEEDS TO GET A GRIP ON ITS EXPENSES

ALL OUR attention has been on the proposed Special Rate Variation through which council proposes to raise an additional \$650,000 for the general fund in 2014-15. However, council also released in January a revised budget projection for 2014-15. This shows that, compared to the forecasts adopted in June 2013, total expenses from continuing operations are apparently set to blow out by \$460,000 before there is any additional expenditure on roads and bridges.

Contributing to the apparent blow-out are: Employee benefits and on-costs (up \$600,000) and materials and contracts (up \$1,350,000). These are partly offset by a projected reduction of \$1,480,000 in "other expenses".

There is very little explanation of any of these changes in forecasts. The increase in forecast employee benefits is despite numerous "savings" in labour cost items, listed in the council papers.

Council's rush to levy a Special Rate Variation contrasts sharply with its leisurely approach to achieving cost savings. Management has undertaken to offer council unspecified "opportunities" to achieve a further \$150,000 annual savings in costs over each of the next three years. This amounts to a token 0.8 per cent of continuing expenses (excluding depreciation and borrowing costs).

Council has apparently already blown three times that amount with the upwards revisions to forecast budget outlays in 2014-15.

It is about time councillors showed the backbone we naturally expect of our elected

Commonwealth and State governments. They should act collectively to impose some real fiscal discipline on council management.

A three per cent "efficiency dividend" on continuing expenses (excluding depreciation and borrowing costs) would save close to \$600,000 annually. Councillors should demand this be achieved without significant cuts in services.

By reducing some services and increasing some fees and charges, a total budget turnaround of \$1 million annually from 2014-15 would seem an achievable goal.

What about it, councillors?"

**BOB HAWKINS**  
DORRIGO

## HANDS OFF OUR MARINE SANCTUARIES

ONLY four per cent of our coastal water in NSW is currently protected in Marine Sanctuaries, including part of our local Solitary Islands Marine Park, but in just a few days, the Premier of NSW could decide to remove even this small percentage.

The marine sanctuaries were introduced to protect our most threatened marine life, to allow an undisturbed area for marine research, to protect sustainable fishing, to promote aquatic tourism and to allow the natural development of the marine life without the interference from fishers.

All of the above is currently taking place in our protected areas. The scientists are reporting increased size, mass, age and fecundity of fish in the sanctuaries.

We have seen increased tourism associated with our marine envi-

ronment. Fisher are reporting increased catches of fish from the "spill over" affect from these fully protected areas. Importantly, the sanctuaries are securing future generations an opportunity to catch a fish, making protection a must.

Allowing fishing in our marine sanctuaries would be devastating for biodiversity and local communities. From threatening already endangered species to increasing the amount of hooks, rubbish and fishing line in these precious places, opening up our sanctuaries is not a good idea.

The Bellinghen Environment Centre urges the Premier and his cabinet to leave the marine sanctuaries fully protected from all kind of fishing.

**LEIF NIELSEN LEMKE**  
BELLINGHEN ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

## SAD SOME CAN ONLY SEE NEGATIVES

I WONDER if those who continually write disparaging letters about council, council's work and council's staff, might consider seeing the glass as half full and also periodically consider noticing and writing something positive.

**COUNCILLOR STEVE KLIPIN**  
BELLINGHEN

## SUMMERTIME SWIMMING BLUES AT THE LIDO

We are into another summer and I am sorry to say that I cannot see the Bellinghen Council has done anything to the seaside Lido, at Urunga.

I went for my second swim in the

Lido recently with one of my sons standing by.

Thank heavens he was there, as one as one minute I was exercising and the next being carried by a strong current.

It happened very quickly, without warning, with only my son and another man to come to my assistance.

My sons have made jokes that if "you had of drowned they could have named it the Esma May Removal Pool."

But I am just happy just calling it the Lido and hope 'springs eternal' the dredging and what needs to be done to make it like it was years ago.

We have regressed here in Urunga in this respect and yet in every other way we are the luckiest people on 'Gods earth' to live in such a wonderful place.

The boardwalk is a much used and appreciated aspect with it all encompassing view of the mountains the rivers and the sea.

And all we want is a safe tidal pool without fearing for our lives when we are fortunate enough to use it and have it free from weed and slime for future generations.

**ESMA MAY**  
URUNGA

## VALENTINE'S DAY MEANS LIBRARY LOVERS WEEK

Bellinghen Shire Libraries are running competitions to celebrate Valentine's Day and Library Lovers Day.

Readers are invited to guess the most desired book and can also have a blind date with a book by borrowing an unknown title wrapped in brown paper.



WITH cattle prices in real terms at historic lows, I feel a more sustainable career path, to be the go.

With legality just round the corner, first in should be best dressed and bring home the bacon.

**DARCEY BROWNING**  
BELLINGHEN

(The photograph is not marijuana but a commercial crop of Indian Hemp growing next to Bellinghen Community Garden)

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SATURDAY Medley Golf Comp

SUNDAY Every 3rd Sunday Brad and Wozza

MONDAY

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THURSDAY

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## EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

An Extraordinary Meeting of Council will be held at 9.00am on **Wednesday 19 February 2014** where Council will consider submissions on the draft Delivery Program, Long Term Financial Plan and Revenue Policy with a view to adopting the documents.

Council will also consider whether to apply to IPART for a Special Rate Variation.

The Business Paper (Agenda) will be published on Council's website prior to the meeting.

**LIZ JEREMY, GENERAL MANAGER**

Phone: 6655 7300 Fax: 6655 2310

Email: council@bellinghen.nsw.gov.au Website: www.bellinghen.nsw.gov.au