

General Manager
Blayney Shire Council
91 Adelaide Street
Blayney NSW 2799

28th January 2014

Dear General Manager,

Re: Blayney Shire Council Special Rate Variation (SRV)
Application to IPART.

We make the following submission in relation to the above subject.

There has been no community consultation in regard to a special rate variation of 6% for two years. The decision was made solely by Council. Its inclusion in the IP&R documents released for comment over the Christmas/New Year period is not consultation. For many ratepayers their vacation plans will coincide with much of the time allowed for comment.

The outcome of the three options presented at community meetings provide no basis for the 6% decision. To imply community endorsement is not correct.

Without knowing the numbers attending the community meetings it is not possible to determine the significance of the percentages voting for each option. The fact that the percentages total 105 makes the data suspect. The times for most of these meetings would have limited community participation. One was at 1pm, two at 3.30pm and four at 5.30pm. That meant seven of the nine meetings would have precluded people in employment and business and farm operators.

In contrast the meeting organised by the local Farmers' Federation at 7.30pm was attended by about 100 people. That meeting gave a clear message to Council with some 97% voting for the rate pegging option (then 3.3%).

We believe if anything can be drawn from community involvement it is for continuation of rate pegging.

The theoretical conclusion by the Western Research Institute that shire ratepayers (except farming) can afford a 15% SRV defies reality. Cost of living pressures are foremost in everyone's mind. Council should not base its analysis of the affordability of any SRV on that report.

BLAYNEY SHIRE
COUNCIL

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It should also be recognised that local businesses will try to pass on any cost increase to their customers.

Council consistently emphasises that the priority for expenditure is maintenance of infrastructure especially bridges and roads. Now Council is proposing that 90% of the extra income generated by the 6% SRV will be spent on Village Enhancement Programmes. Since these cannot be considered a priority, Council has demonstrated no Special Rate Variation is required.

We are opposed to any SRV and support increases based on the rate pegging formula

Yours faithfully