



25th of July 2022

Tenterfield Shire Council
Daryl Buckingham - CEO
And all Councillors
Tenterfield Shire Council
NSW 2372

By email

OBJECTION TO ITEM GOV 61/22

Dear Councillors and TSC Administration

On behalf of the OSOCI members, supporters and the wider community potentially affected by the proposed actions, we hereby object to the above item which was tabled by the Administration for this week's meeting.

COUNCIL

27 JULY 2022

Department:	Office of the Chief Corporate Officer
Submitted by:	Manager Finance & Technology
Reference:	ITEM GOV61/22
Subject:	Commencement of Further Community Consultation - Special Rate Variation 2023/24 and 2024/25

LINKAGE TO INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK	
CSP Goal:	Leadership - LEAD 14 - Resources and advocacy of Council are aligned support the delivery of the community vision outlined in the Community Strategic Plan.
CSP Strategy:	Council is a financially sustainable organisation, delivering value services to the Community.
CSP Delivery Program	Ensure that financial sustainability and the community's capacity to pay inform adopted community service levels.

1. INVALID

This item is not a valid report or item for the Councillors to decide on as it is based on the invalid Community Strategic Plan – reference Breach Notice dated July 14th 2022.

The previously failed community consultation, in BOTH rounds 1 and 2, clearly showed the community wishes LOWER service levels and NO RATE RISE. Moreso, qualified and timely submitted community responses requested 15% savings and TSC to focus on core business.

The proposed 104.49% Rate Rise is therefore NOT founded on a valid community consultation, CSP and budget.

The Proposition also fails to provide a 10 year long-term budget forecast that would allow the **councillors to make an educated decision.**



2. ANTI-SOCIAL AND DISCRIMINATING

The proposed Community Consultation process is in direct contradiction to, and therefore a breach of, the council's Values and Community Engagement Strategy – as well as a breach of legislation.

It is unreasonable and unacceptable to limit the community's options to contribute and also reduce the consultation to a small group (by selective survey).

- a) It is **discrimination** against ratepayers who live out of town and have a busy life – and for the older community members who are not able to attend such one-on-one meetings but wish to contribute.
- b) Dealing with Council is a traumatic and intimidating experience for most people. Residents feel afraid of the council – as they or someone they know has been shunted by the council for speaking up. Forcing them to sit in front of the CEO or a Councillor who hasn't represented them previously is absolutely out of the question for most.
- c) It is **unreasonable** to force individual residents or property owners from Urbenville, Brisbane, Ballina (6 hours drive) or Liston, Bolivia, Drake or Tabulam way to come to town to a pre-fixed meeting to participate in a matter that affects all of the ratepayers = approx. 5,000 people.
- d) During **COVID**, the Administration was shut down and everything was done remotely and electronically. COVID fear is still around – Forcing people to sit in a room with council representatives is a **COMPLETE DETERRENT**.
- e) The means of writing a letter, email, online portal, direct consultation via the councillors – AND direct interaction with the existing community groups – AND allowing everyone to discuss and contribute – ARE available and **MUST BE EMPLOYED** in order to make this a meaningful AND compliant community consultation process.
- f) It is not acceptable to continue down that path of silencing the community every time the community **WANTS** something this council administration does **NOT** like or want. **YOU** are here to represent the community – and how can you do that if you do not openly engage with the community.
- g) Requests from the community to provide information are simply ignored or rejected. This administration and the councillors are **NOT** open and transparent – contrary to the glossy brochures that pretend this is how council operates.
- h) OSOCI has received reports and complaints from long-standing members of this community that when they interact with the council they either get talked down to, are completely ignored, or lectured. This is not acceptable behaviour – the people are **BOTH** your Employers and your Customers.
- i) Furthermore, the proposed one-on-one meetings method is a massive waste of resources – and hence money. The Administration, under the given financial constraints, **MUST** work in more meaningful, economical and effective ways. Councillors must do their Jobs and **OPENLY** communicate with the Community – **PUT THE PROPOSED RATE**



RISE out there in open forums – meetings – listen to the community – then bring it back and INSTRUCT the Administration.

NOT the other way around.

- j) The proposed consultation period of nine days effective IS NOT SUFFICIENT FOR SUCH AN IMPORTANT MATTER that hits a large number of residents in an existence-threatening way. The CEO publicly stated “that the rate rise will affect many people as they won’t be able to afford living here anymore – AND – THAT “he thinks that was NOT A BAD THING”.
How is that for social justice and working for the community at large?
- k) The further so-called “community consultation” proposed, in the form of a Community Satisfaction Survey, is in NO WAY an appropriate method to consult and collaborate with the community as a whole. It targets a pre-selected micro-group of the community for feedback only.
- l) The proposed consultation is no such thing. It does none of INFORM, CONSULT, INVOLVE or COLLABORATE. We refer you to page 17 of our Community Engagement Strategy which details the appropriate actions to take with respect to Shire Wide High Impact decisions. We also reference the Office of Local Government Website for information on how Councils are to engage with and include the community.

In Summary

This proposed method of “so called” community consultation – if accepted by the council – can only be seen as **an attempt to subdue and avoid proper community consultation** and involvement.

On that basis, OSOCI requests that the report be rejected and the TSC Administration be instructed to prepare and deliver a proper consultation process – fully inclusive – proactively informing the community through all available channels about the proposed Rate Rises AND effects it will have – **INCLUDING a revised 10 year budget** – and details on how the increased funds will be used.

Also include a proper plan to further reduce spending in the GENERAL FUNDS = Administration by 15%.

TRIPLING of the rates (not including the fees and charges) will have a catastrophic impact on thousands of ratepayers.



COUNCIL IMPLICATIONS:

1. Community Engagement / Communication (per engagement strategy)

Commence engagement on the impacts of a **Special Rate Variation (SRV)** of 43% in FY 2023/2024 and a 43% Special Rate Variation in Financial Year 2024/2025, resulting in a compound (accumulative) impact of **104.49%**, to formulate an application to IPART.

Council will be conducting **Special Rate Variation specific community engagement sessions**, in the format of **drop in sessions**. These will be held from Monday 8 August 2022 to Friday 19 August 2022 **at Council's Administration Building at 247 Rouse Street Tenterfield**. Residents, and business, community and other interest groups will be able to **book an appointment to meet with Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Corporate Officer and the Director of Infrastructure** to discuss the Special Rate Variation and provide views and feedback. Sessions will be booked in segments of 15 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the requirements of those booking appointments.

Council's biannual Community Satisfaction Survey will also be conducted from 8 August 2022 to 19 August 2022. Survey questions this year will include **a section of questions on the requirement for a Special Rate Variation**. Final results of the survey will be provided to Council by end September 2022.

Feedback from both the drop in sessions and the survey will be collated with community feedback from Council's January 2022 and April 2022 community engagement sessions, for inclusion in Council's Special Rate Variation application.

Initial Community Engagement took place in January 2022 (excluding SRV). **Community Engagement regarding SRV** took place in April 2022 across Shire.

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21 July 2022

In addition to the above, we request that OSOCI representatives are included in future planning and decision making. Your open-door statement and conditional offer to consider certain input is not satisfactory. You are not entitled or authorised to operate in isolation of the clearly identified and specified requests and needs of the wider community.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of its members and the supporting community members

by the OSOCI Executive Team

This letter will also be made available publicly via website and other media