

Large Rate Increases Looming

Did you know that the Shoalhaven City Council proposes to apply by 13 February 2017 to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), an independent State Government tribunal, for a large Special Rate Variation (SRV)? The Council is considering three options for the SRV, which including the impact of annual rate pegs, would put your rates up by between 45 and 64 per cent over the next eight years.

Council is currently undertaking a community consultation process to consider three options for rate increases:

- Option 1: Increase rates by 11.5% every year for two years (plus the annual rate peg);
- Option 2: Increase rates by 6.27% every year for four years (plus the annual rate peg); or
- Option 3: Increase rates by 5% every year for seven years (plus the annual rate peg).

IPART has determined a rate peg for 2017/18 of 1.5% and has recommended to Council to use a rate peg of 2.5% from 2018/19 onwards. The total increase in rates by 2023/24 for each option would be 45.7%, 49.3% and 64.4% respectively (ie including the impact of the annual rate pegs).

On 21 November 2016, Council initiated community consultation on these options for rate increases. Information about the proposals including a Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions can be found at getinvolved.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/rates. However, some Councillors are questioning the accounting supporting this information.

The VRRA strongly encourages members to get involved in this community consultation. They can do this by any of the following methods: writing to the General Manager at Shoalhaven City Council, PO Box 42, Nowra NSW 2541; by sending an e-mail to Council@Shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au; or having their say on-line.

Community Consultative Bodies (CCB) across the Shoalhaven, including the VRRA, have been active in scrutinising Council's proposals and raising our strong concerns. At the General Meeting of the VRRA on 15 December 2016, members unanimously supported the following resolution to go to Council.

The VRRA/CCB does NOT support any of the 3 options for future special rate increases presented by Council, and calls for a deferral of any special increase for 1 year. Before any special rate increase above the IPART rate peg amount of 1.5% is considered, Council should first explain to the Community:

- * what plans it has for Review of Services not considered important by the Community;
- * what operational efficiencies it has identified, and the money saved; and
- * how it plans to increase Value for Money on large purchases and capital projects.

On 18 January several Shoalhaven CCBs met to discuss the proposed rate increases and agree on a way forward to achieve a better outcome for ratepayers. There will be a meeting of CCBs with the Mayor and senior Council staff on Wednesday 25 January to progress this. There is also a meeting being organised to by the Shoalhaven Independents to discuss rate rises at Huskisson community centre at 7 pm on the 30 January. A good summary of the activities by CCBs and other parties is provided on the website of the Huskisson and Woolamia Community Voice, <http://www.hwcv.org.au/rates-rises-2017.html>.

National Broadband Network Rollout in Vincentia

Contractors have commenced the installation of fibre optic cables along Elizabeth Drive in Vincentia in advance of the rollout of the National Broadband Network. Planned availability of the NBN in Vincentia is expected from October/December 2017. You can check the planned availability for your residence or business at nbnco.com.au/connect-home-or-business/check-your-address.html.



Coastal Hazard Mapping - Collingwood Beach

Shoalhaven Council has very recently revised its Coastal Zone Hazard Maps for Collingwood Beach. For those whose property is on the coast, these hazard lines can have significant (adverse) impact on the property's value and development controls. If your property is deemed to be under threat it can even be seized by government. It is important that you understand and are aware of what these hazard lines mean to you.

The latest sea level rise predictions adopted by Shoalhaven City Council have been modelled by consultant Advisian to determine the impact on Shoalhaven beaches. The Advisian Shoalhaven Coastal Hazard Mapping Review report utilises (in part) the survey data that the Collingwood Beach Preservation Group (CBPG) has been collating over the last few years for the Collingwood beach dunes. The Advisian report confirms the data that the CBPG has been supplying to Council over the years, namely that Collingwood beach is accreting (growing towards the sea). CBPG survey measurements show that the edge of the dune vegetation is now eight metres further seaward of what was the Mean High Water Mark on the original subdivision built in the 1950s. The survey measurements also show that between 1974 (100 year storm event) and November 2016 some 93,165 cubic metres of sand have been deposited on the beach, and this is with the significant June 2016 East Coast Low impacting the beach in the intervening period.

The Advisian assessment has shifted the 2030, 2050 and 2100 hazard lines placed on waterfront properties by Council seaward. The 2100 line is now located off most properties. Maps of the hazard lines for Shoalhaven beaches are included in the Advisian report. The report and map can be seen on Shoalhaven Council Website.

The immediate hazard line is now further seaward and not going through properties as previously stated and predicted on previous maps. This highlights the necessity to use evidence based information when preparing Coastal reports. As stated by Isabelle Ghetti, Natural Resources & Floodplain Manager at Shoalhaven City Council, in her presentation to the VRR/CCB on 13 January 2017, this is a "significant improvement" for Collingwood beach.



Damage to Native Trees Along Collingwood Beach Shared Pathway

Readers may recall the article in the November 2016 Newsletter advising of contractors engaged by Council to repair the Collingwood Beach shared pathway which was uplifted by the roots from the adjacent banksia trees. To provide access for the heavy equipment required to replace sections of the concrete path, it was necessary for the contractors to cut back adjacent banksias.



Residents on Susan Street subsequently received letters from Council advising that a number of banksias appear to have been cut down in the foreshore area. Council also advised that it is concerned about wanton destruction of native trees in the waterfront reserves particularly by persons who wish to alter their view. The VRRRA strongly condemns tree vandalism in the reserves, however, we note that this is not the first occasion that Council has inferred that waterfront residents may be guilty of 'vandalism' that appears to have resulted from the activities of contractors engaged by Council or Council staff.

Vincentia Village Twilight Produce Markets

The Vincentia Village Chamber of Commerce is seeking to bring some culture and activities to the Village shopping centre with the introduction of regular weekly Twilight Produce Markets.



Aimed at connecting local producers, growers and food-makers with the community at larger; this initiative will inject more life into a shopping centre that has been an important and central part of Vincentia for many years.

While there is not yet a start date for the first market, the Chamber has already put considerable work into planning and preparation and is currently seeking enthusiastic volunteers to help coordinate and assist in the day-to-day running of the Vincentia Village Produce Markets. Roles range from Safety Coordinators and Stall Liaisons requiring a solid 5-10hrs per week, through to general volunteer positions for those who have only a couple of hours to spare on a monthly basis. Basically, if you want to help in anyway, they will take you!

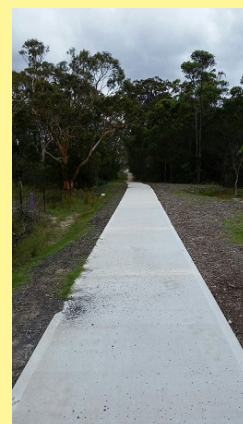
The VRRRA supports the Chamber of Commerce's activities to re-invigorate the Village shopping centre and encourages all Vincentia ratepayers and residents to consider volunteering to support the Twilight Produce Market. The VRRRA will also invite Erica Jones from the Chamber of Commerce to its next meeting on Thursday 16 February to further discuss the Twilight Markets proposal.

Anyone interested in learning more about this initiative or volunteering, please contact: Erica Jones, Vincentia Village Produce Markets, info@vvpmm.org.

Improvements in Bayswood Public Facilities

Thanks go to Shoalhaven City Council for the recent improvements to Bayswood Park. They are fixing the flooding problems and shifting the children's park area to higher ground to avoid further flooding. We understand that the current children's play area will become grassed over and used for public recreation.

The walking/cycle path from Bayswood to the Leisure Centre has also been much improved - it is now a wide and lovely quality path in excellent condition. It even has little bridges over the stream, so the walk has become very scenic.





Huskisson Ultimate Triathlon Festival

Elite Energy will be hosting the World Famous Huskisson Ultimate Triathlon Festival on Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th February 2017 with over 6000 athletes competing and around 5000 spectators. They are inviting volunteers to come and be a part of this spectacular event and work behind the scenes with their team.

Elite Energy are looking to involve local schools, community groups, sporting groups or charities in a volunteer capacity and in turn assist in raising much needed funds. The VRRRA provided volunteers for the two triathlon events in 2016 and raised \$450. The VRRRA thanks all those volunteers for their efforts.

So what can you fundraise for your group or the VRRRA?

- Adults (18+) - \$50/per person donation e.g. *20 x adult volunteers = \$1000
- Youth (10-17yrs) - \$25/per person donation e.g. *10 x youth volunteers = \$250

If you wish to volunteer as a member of VRRRA, please advise vrra.ccb@gmail.com by Tuesday 14 February and we will coordinate and notify Elite Energy. Alternatively you can go direct to the Elite Energy website (eliteenergy.com.au) and register as a volunteer.

No matter what your motivation, all are welcome to volunteer - mums, dads, family members, supporters, friends and neighbours. On Race day you will receive an event T-Shirt, lunch and a drink, plus you will be behind the scenes of a fantastic event.



Thanks to Council, NSW Police and Emergency Services for Holiday Season Work Well Done

With the holiday period coming to another close, we note that Council staff have done excellent work in maintaining the cleanliness and safety of Vincentia area during the heavy influx of tourists. In particular we have noted the regular maintenance of public parks, emptying of waste bins along the Round the Bay path, street sweeping along Elizabeth Drive and the painting of white lines along a section of the Orion Beach shared path. Your work during the heat of the holiday season is most appreciated by both residents and holiday makers.



We have also appreciated the friendly presence of NSW Police in the area, particularly for their responding to emergencies in the region and their efforts along the busy shared pathways to ensure that cyclists have been wearing helmets and riding responsibly. Other Emergency Services personnel have also been doing great work - including Maritime Rescue NSW providing emergency help on the Bay and NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers responding to fires including illegal and irresponsible fires on the beaches.

Annual General Meeting of VRRRA

The Annual General Meeting of the VRRRA is scheduled for 7.30 pm on Thursday 16 February 2017 at the Vincentia Community Hall in the Coles car park.

The meeting will receive the Committee's report on the activities of the Association during 2016, the recently amended VRRRA Objects and Constitution and new Code of Practice, and the financial statement as required under Associations Incorporation Act 2009.

The meeting will also elect office-bearers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary) and ordinary committee members (up to five additional committee members). Nominations for office-bearers and committee members must be in writing to the Secretary (vrra.ccb@gmail.com) at least 7 days before the Annual General Meeting. Nominations must be signed by two members of the association and be accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. In accordance with the VRRRA Code of Practice, as nominations are received by the Secretary they will be emailed to members for their information.

Members may seek to include other business on the agenda of the Annual General Meeting but are requested to advise the Secretary no later than 2 weeks before the meeting.

To be eligible to nominate and vote, you must be a member of the VRRRA. Existing memberships remain current until 1 March 2017. If you wish to participate in the Annual General Meeting but are not currently a member of the VRRRA, you will need to join and pay a membership fee for 2016 of \$5. Membership application is quick and easy. It can be done on the night or online by going to our website www.vrra.org. The Annual General Meeting is also likely to consider the level of the membership fee for 2017.

Contentious local issues in recent years have led to divisions in the community and criticisms that the VRRRA is not fully representative of the community. However, all Vincentia ratepayers and residents are welcome and strongly encouraged to participate in the activities of the VRRRA. We invite all members of the local community to consider joining so that we can more accurately reflect their views and concerns in our dealings with local, state or federal governments or with other individuals and organisations.

Input for Future Newsletters

Do you have any issues/news that you want circulated in the Vincentia community in future Newsletters?

Do you want to respond to something in a previous Newsletter?

If so, please send your contributions to vrra.ccb@gmail.com and we will consider its inclusion in future publications. Articles of no more than one page including photos are preferred. You do not need to be a VRRRA member to contribute, but the VRRRA reserves the right to determine whether an article will be included.