

Formal Submissions

Integrated Planning and Reporting, January 2023

Restore & thrive

www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised Delivery Program 2022-2026 and Resourcing Strategy 2022-2026
Date: Wednesday, 11 January 2023 10:38:09 PM

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing to provide my feedback to the IPART submission.

LIVE WITHIN YOUR MEANS! For the last 15 year's Armidale council has repeatedly mismanaged its funding and submitted for special rate variations rather than engaged in prudent financial management.

I am utterly opposed to any more increases.

I am disgusted with the games the council plays with the community to ensure it complies with the SRV community engagement requirements while only exposing just enough to the community to minimise opposition.

I am fed up with this council's incompetence.

Sincerely

Nathan Heberley

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: SRV
Date: Wednesday, 11 January 2023 11:21:43 PM

The General Manager,

I am totally against this move to increase the rates and am appalled at the timing asking for submissions – 16th December to 20 January. As Council office was closed for most of this time, preventing me from paying my water rates until last Monday (9th), it seems clear that Council does not really want community feedback. So much money and time has been spent on this, hopefully doomed exercise, that I feel our rates could have been better spent on actually achieving what they are meant to do.

No doubt this email will be sent directly to the circular filing cabinet as I am sure Council does not want to record any negative responses to their submission. Clearly, it is my sincere hope that the SRV will be rejected.

Dr Darrell Fisher

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: 
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised Delivery Program
Date: Thursday, 12 January 2023 2:46:42 PM

Dear Sir,

A query rather than a comment.

Armidale's rates will progress to being the highest in the Sample group.

To what extent are the lands exempt from rates likely to cause this to be the case and, with a view to easing the substantial financial burden on the residential land owners, could a review of these exempt lands come some way to addressing the funding shortfall?

It would appear that the activities on the exempt land will benefit, not only from the maintenance of the level of community services and infrastructure provided by the Council, but will also presumably be better off when some of the water/waste service charges are eased in the future.

Regards, W. Epps

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Fwd: Have your say on amended IP&R documents for SRV proposal to IPART
Date: Thursday, 12 January 2023 4:41:01 PM

On 1/12/23, Peter Simpson [REDACTED] wrote:

> ATT ARC General manger
> A massive increase in rates is not the answer to councils shortfall
> in funding its the wasting of monies IE Oaky dam , wasn't viable in
> the 70s and in my 40 years I have only seen it full twice, Have you
> asked local businesses can they afford a rate hike of this magnitude,
> bet you will see some close and what about those renting premises will
> they be able to cope with high rent increases, will new business
> coming to town be put off by your high rates
> As a business owner in town I know for sure I cant & wont afford your
> rate increase
> Peter Simpson AEC

>
> On 1/11/23, Your Say Armidale <notifications@engagementhq.com> wrote:

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>> [image]

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>> At the Ordinary Council Meeting of 23 November 2022, Council resolved to
>> formally notify IPART that it intends to submit a Special Rate Variation
>> application for 50% (58.8% cumulative) to be implemented over three
>> years.

>>

>> Council provided as much information as was available to it in the
>> Delivery

>> Program 2022-2026 at the time of its original adoption in June 2022,
>> including the proposed intention to seek community feedback on a 50% SRV.
>> Now that the community engagement on the proposed SRV has been completed,
>> along with further data analysis and a Capacity to Pay Report (provided
>> to

>> Council at the November 2022 meeting) the Delivery Program 2022-2026 has
>> been amended to include an addendum that outlines, collates and updates
>> this
>> information.

>>

>>

>> Public Exhibition

>>

>> Have your say on the revised Delivery Program 2022-2026 and Resourcing
>> Strategy 2022-2026

>>

>> Following the decision the documents that form part of the Integrated
>> Planning and Reporting Framework (IP&R) and asset documentation have now
>> been amended or developed and are on public exhibition for 34 days from
>> Friday 16 December to Friday 20 January 2023.

>>

>> Delivery Program 2022-2026 (four-year plan aligned with the term of each
>> council)

>> Resourcing Strategy 2022-2026 (comprising the Long-Term Financial Plan

>> (10-year plan), Workforce Management Plan (four-year plan) and Asset
>> Management Strategy and Plans
>> (10-year plan).
>> Asset Management Plan for; Airport, Buildings, Parks and other
>> structures,
>> Transport, Stormwater, Asset Management Maturity Report and Strategic
>> Asset
>> Management Plan
>>
>> Review the revised documents today
>>
>>
>> Thank you for being part of Your Say Armidale. We look forward to seeing
>> your submission.
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>> You're receiving this email because you are a registered participant on
>> Your
>> Say Armidale.
>> Powered by EngagementHQ
>> Unsubscribe
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>> [image]
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From: [christine.goodman](#)
To: [Council](#)
Subject: SUBMISSION
Date: Thursday, 12 January 2023 10:06:04 PM

I received an email about sending a submission about your increased rates.
I DO NOT AGREE WITH THIS.

Because I own a rental property with very low rent so that a low income single mother can have accommodation. The rising cost of rates is out of proportion to the rent that I receive. I am fed up with funding for people much richer than me and covering the financial incompetence of previous paid council members.

I do not agree with and do not want to pay the higher rates. End of story.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised IP&R Documents - submission
Date: Friday, 13 January 2023 6:10:41 PM

Hello,

I support the Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 50%. I also support the revised Delivery Program, Resourcing Strategy and Long-Term Financial Plan.

Regards,

Mark Conroy

[REDACTED], Armidale

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Re: Revised IP&R
Date: Monday, 16 January 2023 8:33:20 AM

Attention: The General Manager

Armidale Regional Council

I do not support the Revised IP&R proposal documents.

Mrs. Smith

[REDACTED]
ARMIDALE. 2350

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised Delivery Program 2022-2026 and Resourcing Strategy 2022-2026
Date: Tuesday, 17 January 2023 11:23:05 AM

17.1.2023 Phil Williams

[REDACTED]

Armidale NSW 2350

General Manager

Armidale Regional Council

Dear James,

Please see below my submission with relation to the revised delivery program 2022-26.

Refer page 21.

All of this has my support, its critical is targeting new businesses to the region and supporting our existing businesses.

What is missing is that I **cannot see any planned reverse trade missions from ARC key staff and community stakeholders** to be undertaking the necessary business development activities and personal relationship building that will be critical to bringing in new businesses and residents.

Refer page 22.

Again, all of this has my support, however I would like to see brought forward in terms of timeframes the **Shop local campaign** this is an important task for our existing businesses and community members, but it also showcases to prospective entrepreneurs that ARC backs its small business owners.

Refer page 33.

Specifically, the attract regional, state & large-scale sporting events.

This has my **very strong support**, however the quality of our infrastructure here in Armidale is significantly lacking when comparing to other regional centres who have the same plan.

We **need a genuine sports precinct with up-to-date facilities to genuinely be any chance of attracting these types of events**. I would strongly encourage the Councilors and ARC executive to visit the sporting precinct at Tamworth as an example of how far behind we really are in this regard.

Overall, we need to grow the region, and I love the aim of getting 10,000 new jobs to the region, but that will take critical activities around **personal and business relationship building**, and **creating** the infrastructure by that I mean the **lifestyle amenity that will retain young families** here because it's a great place to live, run a business, build a career, study, invest etc....

Yours Sincerely,

Phil Williams

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised IP&R Documents
Date: Tuesday, 17 January 2023 2:29:16 PM

Dear Mr Roncon,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the revised documents associated with Council's application for a Special Rate Variation of 50% implemented over three years.

Council approved its goals and planning documents for our region in June 2022. Obviously, these have to be funded and this application is both the logical, and necessary, next step in achieving those ambitions.

I strongly support the application.

best wishes

Bob Clarke

Robert Clarke

[REDACTED]
Armidale NSW 2350
Australia

mob/cell: +61 (0)419 263 236

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised IP&R Documents
Date: Tuesday, 17 January 2023 4:17:54 PM

Attn General Manager
Armidale Regional Council

Dear Sir,

I refer to your request for community submissions with reference to Armidale Regional Councils revised rates/funding strategy.

Our area of concern is with regard to the Main North Rail Line.

Your plan to remove the line and build a Rail Trail goes against your own documented philosophy of providing green and sustainable transport for your constituents and those in adjoining areas.

You plan to obtain 19 million dollars in funding for this project which the majority of the residents do not want.

They also do not want to have to fund through their rates the ongoing maintenance of this project.

The figures of income this project would supposedly generate is highly questionable.

In your own words you state your constituents want improved transport and infrastructure, transport services that link your community with local towns and villages and inter regional train travel.

You have the infrastructure in your area to do this, you should be campaigning to have the line and regular services reinstated.

There are a number on new businesses that want to locate to the region and use the line, this would bring in more income and employment than any bike path.

It has been proven in other growing regions that removing rail infrastructure is a mistake and the cost of reinstating it is enormous.

The line can provide, public transport, freight services and heritage tourism services, all bring income and employment.

Your constituents and those in adjoining council areas want this line reopened, not a cycle path.

Yours Sincerely,

Andrew Fraser

President

Tenterfield Heritage Rail

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised IP&R Documents
Date: Tuesday, 17 January 2023 5:17:48 PM

I do not believe residents should be subjected to huge rate increases in order to fund the destruction of a railway line which should instead be reinstated to provide tourist access into the region, access to medical and other services for residents, and save lives by moving freight onto rail. It could also attract many tourists via the operation of steam and other historic rolling stock.

Rail trails have huge ongoing expenses, while often NOT providing the promised benefits. They also introduce weeds and other biosecurity hazards to farms.

Thanks,
Julian.

Julian Sortland, [REDACTED].

Ph: [REDACTED]

General Manager
Armidale Regional Council
19th January 2023

Allan Thomas



Armidale.

Re proposed rate variation and Rail/bicycle trail.

Families in our region are dealing with a myriad of price hikes which will continue to rise. Insurance, electricity, gas, school fees, building products etc are just a few examples that are impacting heavily on our community.

Added to these are the back to back challenges that people have been through with COVID, finding affordable housing and now increasing interest rates on mortgages.

I understand that a small rate variation can be justified, possibly linked to the CPI/inflation.

I do not support in any shape or form the notion of “finding money” to support dubious schemes such as the proposed rail trail. This is a scheme where, if it was to go ahead, should be fully funded by the users. Not the Region’s general ratepayers.

As an aside, I am aware of the various arguments for and against the retention of The Great Northern Rail Line and the hope that it could be upgraded and used in the future for freight and passengers. This may or may not happen. if it does, it would be at no direct financial cost to local ratepayers, being funded from elsewhere And be for the greater good, rather than various individuals. This furthers my opinion that the development of a rail trail is something which definitely should not be factored into our rate variation.

Allan Thomas



From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Revised IP&R Documents_NEGAT submission; attention General Manager
Date: Thursday, 19 January 2023 2:46:06 PM
Attachments: [Revised IP&R Documents_NEGAT_submission.docx](#)
[Revised IP&R Documents_NEGAT_submission.pdf](#)

Dear Mr Roncon,

Please find attached a submission (in pdf and word form) from the New England Greens Armidale Tamworth (NEGAT) to Armidale Regional Council's exhibition: 'Revised IP&R Documents'.

NEGAT is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

Elizabeth O'Hara,
Co-convenor

cced: Gaynor McGrath Co-convenor

Submission: Revised IP&R Documents

Revised Delivery Program 2022-2026 and Resourcing Strategy 2022-2026

New England Greens Armidale Tamworth (NEGAT)

All points in our previous submission still apply

To ensure our previous comments are not overlooked, the original submission is included as an Appendix.

Additional relevant points

1. Costings remain unclear. Many lay people will find it difficult or impossible to understand the details and costings currently presented in the Asset Management Plans. The first step should be a list of assets, the cost of maintenance, their value to the community and whether or not they should be replaced at the end of their useful life.

Until this information is provided, it is impossible to tell whether or not a 58% SRV is justified.

2. Repetition obscures important information. The Asset Management Plans are very repetitive, making it unnecessarily difficult to read and to identify any important information. All the general information (e.g organisational structure for service delivery from infrastructure assets, Goals and Objectives of Asset Ownership, road map for preparing an AMP) should be hived off to a separate document.

3. Using the SRV to fund the Airport is inappropriate. The airport serves the regional community, not just Armidale Regional Ratepayers. As in the past, it should be funded by grants and passenger charges, not by an SRV on Armidale Regional Ratepayers.

4. ARC should commit to reducing the rates every year by additional amounts received in grant funding. For example, the NSW Government has announced additional road repair funding for which ARC should qualify for at least \$3.5 million, based on the information provided in the Delivery Program: Sealed roads 651km, Unsealed roads 1,077km, Regional roads, 122km.

This money is 'windfall' money that will offset some of the proposed expenditure in the delivery program. Rather than unnecessarily increasing reserves, Council should return at least some of this money to ratepayers.

5. Hardship policy should address hardship, not defer payment. The Delivery program states: *"Council recognises that circumstances of financial hardship can arise requiring respect and compassion. In cases of genuine hardship, Council will work with people to put affordable payment plans in place that are generally in line with the existing minimum payment arrangement criteria. For further information please refer to the Hardship Support page on the Council website."*

Council's Hardship Support Page says: *"Once Council receives a hardship request either by phone or email, our Revenue Officer will be in contact to discuss options and provide you with a payment arrangement form for signing. Please note that there are minimum amounts dependent on the total outstanding."* **Residents who can't afford the SRV will end up in an increasing cycle of debt.**

Fixed Charges Levied on all urban Armidale Ratepayers, FY 2022-23	
Residential - Armidale Base Amount	\$ 470
Residential - Sewerage Access Charge	\$ 525
Water Access Charge	\$ 315
Domestic Waste Service	\$ 436
Regional Landfill Levy	\$ 155
Regional Landfill Operation Charge	\$ 72
Armidale Drainage Charge	\$ 50
Total Fixed Charges	\$ 2023

The above fixed charges for an Armidale resident in 2022-23 total \$2023. Adding in the *ad valorem* component, water usage charges, plus another \$500 for the SRV, even modest households will pay over \$3,200 per year. In the 2021 census, 21.1% of households in Armidale had incomes below \$650 per week. For some of these people, the SRV may be unaffordable.

Low-income households generally spend a higher proportion of their income on unavoidable spending that is rising at the much higher rate of 18.5% in NSW (as explained, ABC News, 10 Jan 2023), making it even harder to make ends when benefits and wages aren't keeping up with the official rate of inflation.

	DISCRETIONARY	%	UNAVOIDABLE
NSW	5.5		18.5
Vic	4.9		18.4
Qld	9.8		14.9
SA	9.0		15.5
WA	6.4		16.7
Tas	6.3		16.8
NT	12.8		19.6
ACT	2.0		13.9

Source: ABS

6. ARC's dismissal of community sentiment causes concern. In the previous SRV Survey, 66% supported managed decline, 70% supported some worsening of road conditions, and 75% supported some decommissioning of community buildings. If ARC does not believe these responses are representative of community sentiment, council should commission its own survey of randomly-selected residents.

Ignoring the results of the previous consultation, without evidence that it wasn't representative of community sentiment, reduces the consultation process to a tick-box exercise. It suggests to the community that it's not worth the time and trouble to respond to future consultations if they are likely to be ignored.

7. Consideration must be given to strategies for saving money and reducing the rates. The revised Delivery Program contains some items listed as feasible only with a SRV. There is no indication of costs and benefits, so it is impossible to say for sure what items are worthwhile. Quite possibly, especially if efficiency is improved, or realistic service levels are set, some savings could be achieved for several of the items listed.

For example, some of the maintenance standards, e.g. painting every 10 years, replacing cabinets and vinyl every 15 years, Gyprock every 40 years might seem like a luxury to ratepayers who can't afford to maintain their homes to the same standard.

The items below merit further consideration and perhaps deletion from the Revised Delivery Program, **unless additional grant funding is available to cover the cost, or a benefit-cost analysis is provided** for ratepayers who are currently finding it difficult to make ends meet and struggling to afford the SRV. This is especially true if commercial consultants or advertising companies are used. Advertising and promotion can be very expensive, compared the benefits that might be expected.

Provide planning and business concierge services for engine industries (T1.3.3) **\$\$SRV**

Deliver the ARC Tourism Strategy initiatives (T2.1.2) **\$\$SRV**

Attract increased visitors through promotion of our natural assets and local attractions (T2.2.1) **\$\$SRV**

Investigate future entertainment, attractions and lifestyle infrastructure that would enhance the region's offering (T2.3.2) **\$\$SRV**

Implement strategies to support the development of an inspiring organisational culture that motivates, sustains and rewards growth (S2.1.7) **\$\$SRV**

Maintain financial sustainability by meeting Performance Ratios and Fit For the Future Benchmarks, while ensuring sustainable cash reserves to support service levels and assets. (S2.3.2) **\$\$SRV**

Appendix

Submission: Proposed Special Rate Variation New England Greens Armidale Tamworth (NEGAT)

ARC's residential rates are higher than average even before the SRV

ARC's residential rates averaged \$1044 in 2020-21. This is already higher than the average of \$1023 for all NSW councils ([Your Council Website](#)). The proposed SRV would increase ARC's rates by 50% to \$1556, putting ARC in the top 5% of NSW councils for residential rates. Rather than allowing the region to thrive, as well as causing potential hardship, such high rates might discourage new residents and be counter-productive.

Drastic fall to \$1.6 million Capital Grants & Contributions seems unrealistic; don't burden residents with increased rates until other sources of funding have been exhausted

Capital Grants & Contributions are predicted to fall to \$1.6 million in FY2023-24 (screenshot below, p80, ARC's resourcing strategy, adopted 20 June 2022), compared to \$70.9 million (2022-23), \$18.5 million (2021-22), \$11.5 million (2020-21) and \$19.3 million (2019-20)? ARC has not yet explained this- see question [asked in the online forum](#).

Scenario 2: SRV 50% Over 3 Years

Income Statement – General Fund

\$'000	Actual	Revised Budget	Projected Years					
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Revenue								
Rates & Annual Charges	26,862	27,957	28,677	32,265	36,429	41,251	42,282	43,339
User Charges & Fees	17,000	17,286	18,868	11,902	12,194	12,492	12,798	13,111
Interest & Investment Revenue	191	159	787	568	586	590	687	818
Other Revenues	2,616	2,547	2,348	2,406	2,467	2,528	2,621	2,687
Operating Grants & Contributions	15,648	15,498	12,102	11,785	11,993	12,206	12,424	12,646
Capital Grants & Contributions	11,514	18,503	70,906	1,602	1,602	1,602	1,602	1,602
Total Revenue	73,831	81,950	133,688	60,528	65,271	70,670	72,414	74,203

ARC needs [to show IPART](#) there is:

- community awareness of their plans
- a demonstrated need for *higher increases to charges*
- *a reasonable impact on ratepayers*
- *a sustainable financing strategy*
- *a history of well-documented council productivity improvements*

In the current difficult financial circumstances, it is hard to describe a 58% rates increase as a *reasonable impact*. It represents a considerable burden to many members of our community. To comply with IPART's requirements, at the very least, ARC needs to exhaust all other sources of funding for maintaining important assets and also, in the somewhat unlikely event that grant funding will not be available, consider whether such assets need to be replaced at the end of their useful life.

For assets that are not likely to deteriorate significantly before external grant funding can be found, waiting until grant funding becomes available is a win-win strategy. In audited financial statements, the depreciation term is useful for commercial businesses, but less meaningful for local councils (because assets constructed using grant funding will most likely, as has happened in the past, be replaced with other assets constructed using grant funding).

Despite predicted fall to \$1.6 mill Capital Grants, reserves increase to \$68.5 mill

If the 58% SRV goes ahead, ARC’s reserves are predicted to increase to \$68.47 million by 2031-32, comprising \$26.4 million external restrictions, \$36.6 million internal restrictions and \$5.5 million unrestricted cash. What demonstrated need is there for these relatively high reserves?

Only 3% of roads were in poor condition before extreme weather

Condition of Road Assets at 30 June 2020	1	2	3	4	5
Sealed roads	49%	35%	15%	1%	0%
Unsealed roads	46%	16%	27%	7%	4%
Bridges	35%	41%	23%	1%	0%
Footpaths	53%	20%	10%	10%	7%
Other Road Assets (including Bulk earthworks)	90%	6%	1%	1%	2%
Sub-total	63.3%	22.5%	11.2%	1.7%	1.3%

1 = Excellent, 2 = Good, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Poor, 5 = Very Poor.

It’s unreasonable to expect local councils to pay for damage from extreme weather events. At 30 June 2020, only 3% of road assets were in poor or very poor condition (ARC annual report, 2019-20). Since then, many roads have suffered unprecedented damage coinciding with extreme weather events, including roads maintained by the NSW Government, such as Waterfall Way. The 1125 mm of rain recorded at Armidale Airport in 2021, the highest on record, could have more to do with the current state of roads disrepair than lack of maintenance. Before increasing the burden on ratepayers, ARC should therefore consider possible sources of grant funding to help our region recover from the extreme weather, to adapt to climate change and make the roads more resistant to extreme weather events in future.

Imposing speed limits on infrequently-used roads to reduce the damage seems a sensible option, especially given the community responses in the consultation on the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) to spend just 12% of funds on roads.



Current levels of service could be maintained by improved efficiency without SRV

Scenario 1: Baseline Scenario (No SRV)

Income Statement – General Fund

\$'000	Actual	Revised Budget				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Revenue						
Rates & Annual Charges	26,862	27,957	28,677	29,394	30,129	30,882
User Charges & Fees	17,000	17,286	18,868	11,902	12,194	12,492
Interest & Investment Revenue	191	159	787	584	593	566
Other Revenues	2,616	2,547	2,348	2,406	2,467	2,528
Operating Grants & Contributions	15,648	15,498	12,102	11,785	11,993	12,206
Capital Grants & Contributions	11,514	18,503	70,906	1,602	1,602	1,602
Total Revenue	73,831	81,950	133,688	57,673	58,977	60,277
Operating Expenses						
Employee Costs	21,338	24,397	25,815	24,150	24,753	25,372
Borrowing Costs	1,249	966	845	691	536	383
Materials & Contracts	18,476	20,834	21,443	15,589	16,003	15,728

From 2018-21, ARC’s employee costs averaged \$21.2 million (\$21.0, \$21.2, \$21.4 respectively in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21), with a big increase to \$24 million in 21-22. If ARC is becoming more efficient, it could be expected that current levels of services could be maintained for similar employee costs as previous years. Scenario 1, with no SRV, is based on employee costs of \$24.150 million in 23-24, but substantial cuts to services. Why, with improved efficiencies, isn’t the projected \$3 million more than employee costs for 2018-2 sufficient to maintain current service levels?

ARC should serve people

Important community services that should not be cut include caring for the environment and protecting our health. It would be unwise to plan for growth while at the same time discouraging people from moving to Armidale because of our failure to meet World Health Organisation Air Quality Standards.

Community Strategic Plan vision aims for transparency

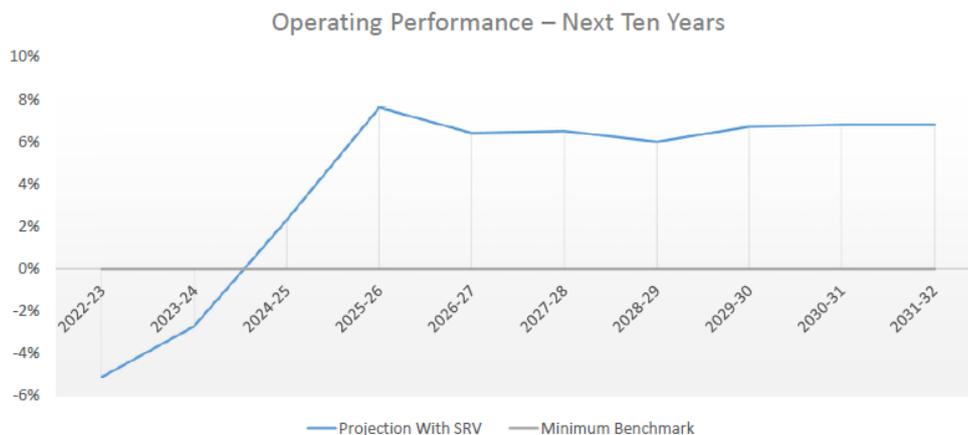
IPART’s requirement of a demonstrated need for the rate rise and ARC’s vision for a productive, transparent and strong community (SRV information pack, page 1) can be achieved only if ARC provides easy-to-understand financial information on capital and operational grant funding, expenditure for all operations and a register of assets showing:

- a) the asset’s monetary value and benefit to the community,
- b) its current rate of use, state of repair, and maintenance costs,
- c) whether there is a need to replace an asset at the end of its useful life if grant funding isn’t available.

Unfair to present a false dichotomy between managed decline and full SRV

The graph presented at the Town Hall and in the online video shows an ‘operating performance’ of 6% above the minimum bench mark for 2025-26. However, ‘thriving’ doesn’t mean gold-plated assets, simply maintaining those that the community values to an acceptable standard. ‘Thriving’ also should not be measured simply in terms of population growth. Ratepayers who can’t afford to maintain their own assets to an acceptable standard shouldn’t be asked to maintain council’s assets to a gold-plated standard. There is a third alternative: a smaller increase in rates to cover urgent repairs, while seeking grant funding to bring assets damaged by extreme weather events to an acceptable standard.

While the first instalment of the SRV might be necessary, ARC should assure the community that staff are pursuing every possible opportunity to seek additional external funding, and will not continue the rate rises if additional grant funding is obtained, or if the register of assets shows that some assets can remain functional and useful in their existing condition with routine maintenance and that only minimal additional benefits would result with additional upgrades and renovations.



Current residents shouldn’t have to pay for growth that damages the environment or reduces quality of life

Growth should not come at the expense of reduced quality of life or reduced sustainability or create additional financial difficulties for residents. Potential threats to quality of life include increased traffic congestion and increased difficulty accessing vital medical or other services as well as environmental deterioration resulting from overdevelopment.

The costs of ensuring that growth is sustainable are very difficult to estimate, but include a range of requirements: from infrastructure costs (increased parking in the CBD, increased need for paved roads and footpaths) to services needed to maintain our current quality of life, including attracting GPs and other medical professionals and other service providers.

Increased population increases the total amount of rates ARC can collect – IPART's population factor increases the rate peg by 1% for every 1% increase in population. This should be enough to fund growth and, together with improved efficiency, help maintain assets without increasing the rates by 58%.

Closing submissions on a Friday is incompatible with council policy and lacks empathy with busy residents with full-time jobs

Resolution 96/19 (May 2019) requires ARC to extend the submission date to 8:30 am on Monday, unless ARC intends to process submissions over the weekend. ARC has not stated any intention to process submissions over the weekend. Consequently, setting a closing date of Friday seems incompatible with current ARC resolutions, as well as lacking understanding of the needs of busy residents who might need more than 2 weekends to prepare a submission after attending a public forum. It also seems contrary to ARC's stated aim to always '*put the needs of our community first*' (SRV Information pack, page 1).

Summary

ARC has higher than average residential rates before the SRV, and should exhaust other sources of funding to maintain important assets before burdening residents with increased rates.

The predicted large drop to \$1.6 million in Capital Grants & Contributions suggests that some or all of the SRV would not be needed if additional grant funding could be obtained. This, together with the high level of reserves even if capital grant funding falls to \$1.6 million indicates that IPART's requirement of a demonstrated need for the 58% increase has not been satisfied.

Only 3% of roads were in poor condition before the recent extreme rains. It's unreasonable to expect local councils to pay for damage from extreme weather events. Imposing speed limits on roads to reduce the damage seems a very sensible option.

Services enjoyed by hundreds of people must be protected. Current levels of service could be maintained by improved efficiency without a SRV. Current residents shouldn't have to pay for growth, especially if that growth reduces quality of life by increased traffic congestion and increased difficulty accessing vital medical or other services, or results in environmental deterioration.

The CSP vision to be transparent and productive can be achieved only if ARC provides easy-to-understand financial information on capital and operational grant funding and expenditure for all ARC's operations and a register of assets showing:

- a) the asset's monetary value and benefit to the community,
- b) its current rate of use, state of repair, and maintenance costs,
- c) whether it is necessary to replace an asset at the end of its useful life if grant funding isn't available.

'Thriving' doesn't mean gold-plated assets and cannot be measured by simple measures such as population increase. It means maintaining those assets that the community values to an acceptable standard. A viable alternative is a smaller increase in rates to cover urgent repairs, while seeking grant funding to bring assets damaged by extreme weather events to an acceptable standard.

While the first instalment of the SRV might be necessary, ARC should assure the community that it is pursuing every possible opportunity to seek additional external funding, and will not continue the rate rises if additional grant funding is obtained, or if the register of assets shows that some assets can remain functional and useful in their existing condition with routine maintenance and that only minimal additional benefits would result from additional upgrades and renovations.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised IP&R Documents -Submission relating to the SRV and the revised Delivery Program under Connected Region
Date: Thursday, 19 January 2023 3:17:33 PM

To the General Manager, Armidale Regional Council, PO Box 75A, Armidale NSW 2350

Dear Mr. Roncon,

Thank you for seeking further community feedback on the revised delivery program 2022-2026 and the Council plans in relation to the SRV.

The Delivery Program 2022-2026: 'this outlines the initiatives that Armidale Regional Council can and will undertake to help achieve the goals of the Advancing our Region Community Plan. It is Armidale Regional Council's commitment to the community for the duration of the Councillor Elected Term, and up to four years. Each of the Council initiatives outlined in this document has been developed in line with Council resources to ensure that Council can achieve them with the finances, people, and assets available to it. This document should be read in conjunction with the Annual Operation Plan which details the service levels provided in each year of the four-year Delivery Program. In order to meet service levels and community expectations, some Delivery Program Initiatives will require additional financial contributions through a Special Rate Variation (SRV). These Initiatives are marked with '\$SRV'.

The Connected Region: Goal 2 : 'Transport and technology that enable connectivity both locally and outside the region - Strategies: Provide access to public and private transport services that link our community to our local towns and villages, other regions, our local attractions, and lifestyle infrastructure. Promote and encourage the establishment and uptake of sustainable transport options and services'. Under connected region , I am pleased to note the statement: 2.1. Partner with community groups and other tiers of government to advocate for additional transport options to other regions and cities (C2.1.1).

The council has identified **interregional connectivity** as a key dimension, but strategies to achieve this are not well identified or listed?

The delivery program states that 'the council will seek funding for the rail trail in 2023-24 (C2.1.6)and actually build it in the last 2 years of delivery program (C2.1.7). I assume that this rail trail is to be built in the existing rail corridor between Armidale and Ben Lomond after removing the railway infrastructure. If so, my question is *how can the council explore additional transport options to other regions and cities to the north when the only available rail line is compromised by building a rail trail?*

Seeking funding and construction of rail trail between Armidale and Ben Lomond during the 4 year period of delivery concerns me for a range of reasons that are reflected in the following questions as well:

1. Has the Council undertaken an independent cost-benefit analysis about the rail trail between Armidale and Ben Lomond before deciding to proceed with the plan? My understanding is that the ARC is using a business case prepared for a cycle lobby group rather than conducts its own analysis of cost and benefits.
2. Why acquire a new asset like the rail trail with no income to the council with all its impending costs that are not adequately identified when the council is seeking additional

funding for maintaining the existing assets and renew some?

3. When the community submissions and consultations clearly stated transport as number 1 priority, why the council is reluctant to pursue funding and other support from NSW Government to restore the northern railway line from Armidale north is not clear?

4. Do you have evidence of community support that I have not seen for a rail trail as evident from community consultations or submissions received? My view is that you don't. Instead overwhelming number of submissions indicated the need for train services between Armidale and the Qld border.

5. Given that the 50% rate rise is that the council needs more funding for existing asset maintenance and renewal because there is an asset renewal backlog(See Resourcing Strategy), can the ARC rule out using funds raised by SRV for the purpose of planning, marketing, constructing or maintaining the rail trail?

Looking at the Income statement, **Only increase in revenue over the 4 yrs is in rates and annual charges presumably with the SRV. Other sources stay stagnant or decline over the period.** For instance, grants for capital purposes decline from 75 to 14,31,26 in later yrs. User charges and fees decline from 28 to 22,22,23. Given this scenario, and the possibility of ARC not getting the approval for the full 50% rate increase from APARTR, how wise is it to proceed with the rail trail plan even if future funding is made available by the government for construction? Operational costs of rail trail asset will be an additional burden on ARC.

When the former administrator, Mr. Viv May approved the NE rail trail plan by the NERT Inc. , he asked the council to exercise due diligence(see relevant mayoral minute in 2020 Or 21). If the ARC plans to proceed with seeking funding and construction of the rail trail on the basis of the business case prepared for the NERT Inc by Northern Development Institute(where no author or qualification of the author are mentioned), this will not satisfy the requirements for a sound business case formulated by the NSW treasury. It will also show a failure of due diligence by the ARC.

I am made to understand that Transport for NSW is planning to develop an Integrated Regional Development Plan for New England and Northwest in consultation with relevant councils and community groups this year. It would make much sense for the ARC (and indeed Glen Innes Severn Council) to actively participate in this plan development process with a view to seeking funding from Transport for NSW to carry out a feasibility study of restoring train services to Glen Innes. If the ARC is still interested in seeking funds and constructing the rail trail to Ben Lomond, it should only be accomplished only after an independent cost benefit analysis involving all options for the rail corridor as suggested in the Dept of Premier and Cabinet Community Consultation report 2018.

Various planning documents associated with SRV show some good ideas in terms of the vision for our region, various pillars and strategies. However, given above mentioned concerns and questions relating to the Connected Region strategies in the delivery program, I cannot support the 50% SRV sought by the ARC. If my concerns and questions are taken into account, and the delivery program is amended to incorporate an independent cost-benefit analysis about the use of northern railway line for all options i.e. rail and trail and a sound business case is formulated by the ARC with community support, I am happy to re-consider my decision.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Siri Gamage



Armidale NSW 2350

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised IP&R Documents - ARC Delivery Program 2022-2026
Date: Thursday, 19 January 2023 6:29:01 PM

Dear Mr Roncon

Thank you for the opportunity to provide community feedback on the Revised IP&R Documents.

The 2019 drought, followed by bushfires & then the pandemic has changed the direction we need to take to adapt. I congratulate the Armidale Regional Council Executive staff & councillors for making the very difficult & unpopular decision to apply for the necessary rate increase. I attended the consultation forums provided which were informative.

In that light, I support the rate increase to enable our region to work towards 4 priority initiatives which, it seems, would not be possible without the rate increase:

- * improved water security, including water treatment facilities
- * ongoing, improved road enhancement/maintenance
- * a tourist attraction campaign to create a strong tourism sector, and
- * a protected & enhanced natural environment - our greatest asset.

With Armidale at the end/beginning of the Waterfall Way, known nationally as one of the most scenic roadways, it makes sense to invest in this asset to attract tourism. Additionally, with the New England Area west of Armidale & south to Uralla identified as a significant habitat for the now endangered Koala, along with the impending extinction of the Regent Honeyeater, it also is imperative to invest now in enhancing our unique habitat for future generations.

With kind regards

Muriel Dell

[REDACTED] Tilbuster.



BLACK MOUNTAIN NSW 2365

18 January 2023

General Manager
Armidale Regional Council
PO Box 75A
ARMIDALE NSW 2350
council@armidale.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir

We are writing to lodge our strongest objection to Councils' intended application to IPART for a 58.8% Special Rate Variation over three years. We are rate payers and have been residents of both Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Shire Councils for over 40 years and our reasons for objection are as follows:

- Since the unwanted forced amalgamation of these councils there is no evidence of a city centric controlled council being capable of managing a new larger rural based area, without balanced true representation – we believe it will never be successful.
- The arrogant, condescending and dismissive demeanour of some councillors and staff during the so-called SRV consultative period did nothing towards selling the massive rate increase to the rate payer.
- We ask “why is ARC so intent on financial recovery in such a short period of time?”(three years). While we agree that a rate increase is needed and inevitable, it should be spread over seven years in to the next term of council. This would possibly make it more affordable.
- Using the ARC webpage rate calculator, the total rate pool will increase by 50% compounding to 58.8% over three years but not all rate payers are affected equally with the percentage change based on rateable values varying considerably. Calculations indicate the compounding and flat interest rates applied over the proposed three years vary from 48% to 198% increase from the base 2022-23.
- The former Guyra Shire rate payer will be by far the most affected ie: Armidale residential with rateable value of \$200,000.00 will increase from \$1516.00 (22-23) to \$2542.00 (25-26) = 167.6%. Guyra residential with rateable value of \$200,000.00 will increase from \$1331.00 (22-23) to \$2440.00 (25-26) = 183.3%. Armidale farmland with rateable value of \$3million will increase from \$7381.00 (22-23) to \$11,190.00 (25-26) = 151.6%. Guyra farmland with rateable value of \$3million will increase from \$5,956.00 (22-23) to \$11,190.00 (25-26) = 187.8%. These figures show that this SRV is not affordable for the majority of rate payers and is totally unacceptable. Why should former Guyra rate payers and residents be burdened with the financial inefficiencies of a council they never wanted.
- The financial problems of ARC and most councils in regional NSW can be identified to some extent as administrative inefficiencies and diseconomies of scale, particularly where amalgamation has been instigated. The NSW Government can be held responsible for the economic, social and general breakdown of many councils including ARC. This council should be looking at Government funding and their own management inefficiencies to rectify the debacle before slamming further burden on the rate payer.
- We have attended a number of meetings held by council regarding your SRV, having been regularly told by the Mayor that we need an adult conversation – we are adults and find it

patronising and insulting. We were also told that if “council does not get it’s way we will be looking at a managed decline or wake up one morning to find we are broke”. This is not the way to appease a rate payer or community especially when you want more money from them. At these well-attended meetings, we only heard one person (council staff and councillors aside) support the proposed 50% SRV who later withdrew his support. The council representatives showed a total disregard for the rate increase imposed since July 2020 made up of huge jumps in fees and charges and at least two rate increases (8.5% SRV 2021 and 1.8% ARV 2022).

- This SRV is a disincentive for people considering to relocate here and you tell us you want an extra 10,000 by 2040 – “How?” is our question.
- Since ARC’s Extraordinary Meeting in early January the changes made to the Delivery Program and Resourcing Strategy and release of the new Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework it would appear the goal posts have moved in regard to your proposed SRV. We question the validity of some submissions you may have received prior to this last meeting. In relation to Items C2.1.6 and C2.1.7 where council will be seeking funding for the construction of a rail trail from Armidale to Ben Lomond, which was not included in previous drafts, gives us more reason not to support your current SRV application to IPART.

Yours faithfully

Rob & Belinda Lenehan

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council: Sam Coupland](#)
Subject: General Manager & Mayor -Revised IP &R Documents
Date: Thursday, 19 January 2023 10:50:51 PM

Good morning

How often does the term if we had only realised been spoken of after the fact when an opportunity has been ignored and others that have acted on foresight have taken up the challenge and benefited significantly. I have purposely raised this here in regards to the reopening the GNL as an opportunity equal to what our forefathers brought to the NE area with the arrival of rail here in the first place one hundred and forty years ago for what lies ahead for passenger rail in the future.

Rail transport in tomorrow's world will capitalise for one from the aviation industry's very much reduced ability to perform resulting from the enormous amount of power needed to become airborne alone and to this day seemingly there is no alternative to aviation fuel.

Fortune favours the brave so must we regarding the rail corridor that passes through the NE to the QLD border for here is an opportunity that will not only bring wealth and prosperity but open up an essential transport route for the region to gain access to a world without the benefit of what fossil fuel will no longer be able to provide in the very near future.

We have to act on this situation if not for the sake of our children alone by planning and constructing a very much upgraded and electrified rail network connected not only to the major cities such as Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne but also to the Inland Rail project for our public transport system not only awaits but is gearing up for a world without Greenhouse Gas emissions.

Regards
Brian Flint
Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised IP&R Documents
Date: Friday, 20 January 2023 8:54:42 AM

To the General Manager Armidale Regional Council

Dear Mr Roncon

In reading and trying to understand these documents you have not made it easy for the common man to understand .First in one part of the document you say you want to harmonise the regions then you say look after villages and so on .You then say you need better transport so can you please tell us why you want to pull up a rail line to make a rail trail .Be assured the community and towns people of the Village of Ben Lomond do not want this ill conceived project and object very strongly to any rates and future rate rises being used to help fund the project .Can you give us an assurance that this will not happen .

Barry Litchfield

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Cc: ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au
Subject: SUBMISSION ON THE PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION
Date: Friday, 20 January 2023 1:10:41 PM
Attachments: [submission to srv.doc](#)

Attention: General Manager

I have attached my submission on the Special Rate Variation proposed by Armidale Regional Council. A copy has been sent to IPART as well. There appears to be some confusion as to the date for submissions to be submitted. On the ARC website it states submissions closed on 30th September but I was told I can still lodge a submission up to the close of business today 20th January 2023. So I have attached my most recent submission.

Regards

Paul McCann

[REDACTED] Armidale 2350

SUBMISSION REGARDING THE SPECIAL RATE INCREASE

- 1) My understanding of the need to justify such a huge increase in the rates as proposed by Armidale Regional Council is that it is to provide the necessary funding to reduce the infrastructure maintenance backlog. Our roads and other essential infrastructure is in a very poor condition with pot holes in roads, weeds invading our parklands and unsafe footpaths. So what assurance can be given that the extra funds will not be used for new projects such as the proposed rail trail which does not have the widespread community support the proponents claim it has? Ratepayers should not be expected to fund either the construction or maintenance of a project that will not deliver any benefits to them in the form of improved services.
- 2) Public transport options between our LGA and adjoining LGA's is very poor. I have family in Queensland and it is very costly and time consuming for me to get to Brisbane. Currently the only direct service to Brisbane is to fly and most households cannot afford the air fares which start at \$194 one way. So that would cost me \$388 return which myself and many other households cannot afford. Then there is the added costs of getting from Brisbane to regional Queensland where my relatives live. There is no direct coach or train service between Armidale and Brisbane. While this is a matter for the NSW Government to look into Armidale Regional Council should be putting it's efforts into lobbying the NSW Government to provide better transport services for it's residents and not pandering to vested interests who wish to see the railway ripped for a rail trail the majority of the community DO NOT WANT and will significantly add to Council's already stretched maintenance budget.
- 3) I support the reuse of Oaky Dam as an additional water reserve. I do not support the multi-million price tag that the NSW Government has imposed on our region just to transfer the ownership of the dam between two government agencies. Armidale Regional Council should be negotiating through Adam Marshall MP to have the dam transferred to Armidale Regional Council at no cost to the ratepayers. Asset transfers between the NSW Government and local councils have happened in the past without ratepayers having to pay for the transfer. So why can't a no cost transfer happen here in our LGA? What additional rate increases will Armidale Regional Council seek in the future to cover the multi-million price tag set by the NSW Government.
- 4) I am concerned about plans to upgrade Armidale Regional Airport. This airport is used by residents from adjoining LGA's so the costs should not be imposed on residents of Armidale LGA especially if they do not use the airport. As mentioned flights to Brisbane are unaffordable to most residents and the same applies for flights to Sydney. Also people travelling to intermediate destinations such as Tamworth or Newcastle flying is not an option so they either have to drive or catch the train. For people who are travelling for medical procedures not available in our region the advice is to not drive after any procedure involving aesthetics for a defined period. So in such cases they have to use the coach/train service. Those with a physical disability find getting in and out of road coaches very difficult. The Mayor is proposing an upgrade to Armidale airport so it can handle larger jet powered planes. Given that most planes especially those flying in from the south often fly over most of the residential areas in Armidale larger planes will bring more noise which is what people who have moved here from the larger cities such as Sydney DO NOT WANT. What assurance can ratepayers get that the rate increase will not be used for future airport upgrades? An airport upgrades should be paid for by those who use the airport and not by ratepayers that don't use it.

At an information session last year for the SRV I asked the facilitator Mayor Sam Coupland what guarantee can Armidale Regional Council give to ratepayers that the extra revenue raised by the SRV will only be used to reduce the maintenance backlog. Mayor Coupland's reply was "next question". I think the ratepayers and residents of Armidale Regional Council deserve a better answer than "next question" from our Mayor.

Renata Davis

Subject: Rate increase submission

From: Gordon Youman [REDACTED]

Date: 20 January 2023 at 12:24:41 pm AEDT

To: Sam Coupland <SCoupland@armidale.nsw.gov.au>, Todd Redwood <TRedwood@armidale.nsw.gov.au>, mocconnor@armidale.nsw.gov.au <mocconnor@armidale.nsw.gov.au>, Cr Dorothy Robinson(External) <drd.robinson@gmail.com>, Debra O'Brien <DOBrien@armidale.nsw.gov.au>, Paul Gaddes <PGaddes@armidale.nsw.gov.au>, Bradley Widders <BWidders@armidale.nsw.gov.au>, smicheal@armidale.nsw.gov.au <smicheal@armidale.nsw.gov.au>, Jon Galletly <JGalletly@armidale.nsw.gov.au>, Paul Packham <PPackham@armidale.nsw.gov.au>, Steven Mephram <SMephram@armidale.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Rate increase submission

Submission re: Armidale Regional Council Special Rate variation

To : ARC COUNCILORS

The proposed 58.8% rate increase being sold to rate payers as a 50% rate increase is unjustified and must not occur until the whole community is consulted, understands it and most of all listened to the concerns of the rate payers. Everything put forward is so complicated to read through in such a short time too.

This rate increase will cost Guyra rate payers far more than 58.8%, with some up to 160% or more. Before this rate proposed, we personal had increases of over 300%. This will be impossible for some to pay but the ARC refuses to hear the these concerns. The Region has had 6 years of promised improvement to services and cheaper rates, with the community prospering, this has now failed drastically. The Region has gone backwards with services disappearing, and service costs going skyward. A lot of rate payers are being charged council fees for services they don't receive. We have personally been charged over \$3000 for services not provided and after bringing up with the ARC ignored. The roads are in a disgrace, impassable for some from poor maintenance programs from years gone by, along with very poor management. One good example is a bridge being put in and then another ordered for the same creek crossing, leaving I believe some \$1.5 million wasted with a bridge that can't be used. The GM receives about \$653,000 per annum for this achievement. (this is a figure from the Office of Local Government)

It has been proven by experts in the field like Professor Drew and others that the economy of scale is the cause, yet the ARC ignores these facts and continues bring the Region down. There has been ARC vehicles counted (some 15) heading back to Armidale at 3.30 pm each day as a example of waste.

Now with this submission, my concern is the consulting, where the Mayor claimed has support for a rate increase by the community, but in fact no majority at these meetings supported this rate increase. Why wasn't, there a show of hands or a vote is taken. When trying to speak up at these meeting, micro phones were take off those who ask questions on costs. The community was on the very clear understanding after these meetings that NO support was there in the community for this rate increase , and with our submissions into the ARC, They would then decide whether to apply to IPART. Considering there was a over whelming against these rate increases, the ARC then had a meeting on the 13th January and moved the goal posts by adding new proposals in, (eg the bike trail) giving rate payers until the 20th January (7DAYS) to put new submissions in! The old Guyra Shire has been also portrayed as in financial trouble which is totally wrong and this used flawlessly to say it has caused the debt we in now to sell this rate rise.

This type of action is I believe deceitful and does not represent rate payers in any way. The waste of money over the last 6 years is in my opinion criminal and requires an inquiry as this action shows clearly voters are not being listen too.

The effect on community moral cannot be ignored over last 6 years and this rate increase has been a concern for peoples welfare along with staff to see this mismanagement destroy our community. This point was clearly shown with the study of Cootamundra and Gundagai forced merger. There is no strategy to address this issue.

Priorities should be put into roads and maintenance. Weeds have been neglected which affects the main industry and yet is ignored by the ARC.

Until transparency happens, accountability, we get representation and mismanagement is corrected, and a separation occurs it's an absolute no to any rate increase in the Region.

A confirmation of the receipt of this email would be appreciated.

Gordon Youman

[REDACTED]

Black Mountain, NSW 2365

[REDACTED]

From: [Ali](#)
To: [Council](#)
Subject: I Object to ARC and a Proposed Rate Rise. And a Wage. The GM's Wage. Disgusting. No wonder you owe money. Ours.
Date: Friday, 20 January 2023 1:20:17 PM
Attachments: [3e2779ff-e703-45ef-9bf5-d19cf6dc98ec.doc](#)

Years ago, I sent a letter to ARC about rehabilitating Guyra Waste and Transfer Depot. Using Microbes. And cheap. Low cost. Watching ARC Waste money needs an Investigation. I mean, we pay. We do. When we don't need to. The cost of a Centralised depot in Armidale, and out of Armidale, is going to paid for by who ?

Who's leaving our region. Due to the inability of ARC to use money not theirs wisely. I'm looking at the details of a Dump. Garbage Dumps. We're not Sydney. We're a Rural region. Dumps can be localised. Instead of Centralised. Won't cost much. Won't. Will not. And Microbes are used to clean up Toxic sites. Why haven't you done anything about this. I feel you need an investigation. For Wasting Money. Our money. Ours. You are Costing our community a lot of money. Some are leaving the area to set up their businesses. Do you understand. You better. I Object to ARC in my region called Guyra Ben Lomond Black Mountain Wandsworth. I Object Outright to ARC in our region. I need them Investigated. Soon. Before they raise our rates too high again. Again. I am needing James Roncon under investigation. Because he earns over \$300,000 per year. I need to know Why. Why. Why would he receive that much. Who pays for that. I need to know.

Disgusting is ARC. Wasting money. And planning a Huge Cost Future. I wonder who will be here by 2030. I Object Outright to a Rate Rise. Oh Yes I do. I do. I do. You've wasted four years you see. Wasted it. And I need an Audit done on all ARC members. All. Since 2013. Since then. I am told ARC tell lies. Why do you tell lies. This is a Lie.

Guyra had to Amalgamate with a city council. That's a Lie. And I need to know Why Guyra was Forced to Amalgamate with a city council. Because I do. A city council wastes money. Our roads are horrible. Costas are Perfect. Get it.

Do you Get it.

Revised Delivery Program 2022-2026 and Resourcing Strategy 2022-2026

Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 50% to be implemented over three years (58.81% cumulative) commencing in the 2023-24 financial year.

I Object. You are not listening to community. Not. Why. You are not able to. And we know that. You follow orders. You aren't hearing your people. And that's wrong. Very wrong. I feel you need an Investigation ASAP into what issue ?

Waste of Funds not yours to waste. I see too many Silly projects occur. Occur. Yet you want More money. And from your people you will not hear. You will not hear. How Dare You in Armidale Regional Council. If you hear what your people are saying about ARC, aren't you interested in what they say? Why aren't you. If Rate Rises create Homelessness, you wont care. You haven't today. And ARC will increase homelessness under Agenda Politics. Wasting the People's money. You need a Audit right now. I hear you are in a million dollar debt issue re an Airport region. Waste of money is the western Airport what ? What. Theres nothing there . One what. Storage shed. What did that area cost to develop ? View the other side. Full of new Industry. Hmmmmm. And you owe millions ? A Million. Heard on the Grape Vine.

Do you owe a million dollars to this project ? I need a Reply.

If you do, are you sharing that with community. Hmmmmm. I don't think so. That's why I need you undergoing a Audit. An Audit. Independent you must offer. State government must offer. I feel both governments need Investigating. Both. ARC and State. And very soon. Our people are being given no information. Yet you send out documents then say don't bother offering a Submission now. Today. Because ARC probably wont read them ! How Dare you. How Dare You. Who are you ? Which department are you. That's a question. I need a reply. I haven't received one yet. Ive sent many emails. Not one reply. Oh. I forgot. Rates. Its interesting I get a reply whenever I email the rates Dept of ARC. Usually very quickly after sending Rates Department an email. How Dare You. How Dare You. You are all needing an Investigation. Because you all know whats going on. And which ones stay working for this council. Which ones leave council. Which ones Resign from council. Eg. A CEO. Who cost our community their Shire. Oh yes. Now she's Resigned. On good pay. Speaking of which.

Mr Roncon. I hear he gets paid \$300,000 Plus. Really ? Does everyone know that. What does he do for that. I need an itemized account of why he receives \$300,000 Plus. Yet will not ever reply to my emails. And to many I Speak to. Yet some Always receive replies. Yet he is a General Manager. Really ? Doing what. What. Itemise it. What he does.

I Object to any Rate Rise. We had one far too high last time. Yes we did. My rates for my Land went up by this.

\$84 / quarter to \$196 / quarter. And I Do Not Need a Garbage Service of Any kind. Yet I am forced to pay for something I don't use. Why should I. I need User Pays. Yes I do. And I need Garbage Weighed per household. I don't place much rubbish out in my other home. The one I live in. I want a User Pays system for rubbish. And I need the Green Bin

Banned. Banned. And I need what else. A new Garbage Dump Moved off a area above a Wetland leading to The Gara River, above Catchment from which Vital Rare Rainforest region. Completely Unprotected by ARC. Oh yes it is. When will you offer the Gondwana Rainforest area rights. Because you aren't. And you will destroy More of it. How Dare You. How Dare You. It's a World Heritage Listed area. That means it's a very special area. And an Idiot put a Garbage Dump on its Upper Tributary Catchments. Well, you don't Care at all for special Wilderness areas. You don't. Nor do you care for downstream Macleay Catchments. Because you are completely ignorant about Vital Upper Tributary Catchments. And that's why you will Destroy More of a World Heritage Listed Rare Gondwana Rainforest region. I need someone to Care for Country. I need an Enquiry into ARC. I feel it's a need. You cannot ever Care for Country. Ever. You Add Cumulative Impact every week. To Malpas Catchment. To Ben Lomond. To which other eastern flow Catchment. All. Aberfoyle River Catchments are basically being taken at beginning catchment level. Costa Group. Oh yes. Get rid of the Eastern Tomato Farm right now. Let them take it to New Zealand. No water issues there. Otherwise our Rate Payers Pay for a Big Dollar Profit making company. Why are we. I need ARC under an Investigation. And I need Mr Roncon facing a Town Hall meeting to hear the community. Because he isn't. And That's my Submission to ARC. Who I need under Investigation. Oh Yes. Oh Yes. Many issues.

Covid woke many up to government corruption. Government corruption. Too many Agendas not Discussed with community. Community. Community. Many people do not Rent. They don't know Rates will rise. That's wrong.

How do you get the Truth from ARC.

How do you receive replies from ARC.

How do ARC staff receive orders.

How come I do not receive emails from council.

And that's a reason to Object to a Rate Rise. Because you never listen to community, do you. Eg.

Save and Grow Guyra group need assistance. They aren't getting any. And they should get it. That's your job. To help your community. But you haven't done it. That's wrong. It is wrong. You're Supposed to help your community. Supposed to. And that's another reason you need An Investigation. Waste of Money ARC. Wanting more. For nothing. Eg. Roads. Worst Ever Seen in the area in a way called Guyra Shire. Yet I watch Costa Group receive up to 4 times more roadwork than eg, Aberfoyle Rd. Black Mountain Tom Gully Road. Guyra Road. I mean that's a Major Road. Really you must get investigated. Because you are very much Wasting Funds. It seems you don't have the ability to Manage a large area. But. But. You seem to always always give money away to Profit making Big Dollar companies, who get Heard, and Rights.

I Object Outright to a Rate Rise. We got one 4 years ago ? 4 ? That took away Locals you see. Costa Group are taking Locals away from their homes. And you do not even offer a replacement method. Very tiny homes on areas council can buy. Oh Yes they can. Using State government funding. HmMMMM. I hear Mr Roncon wont stand up for our

community. He let tiny homes get replaced by Huge monstrosities being built when it is a acknowledged Homeless State. NSW. Homeless Increase while home size Increases. It is wrong to ignore the poor. The poor are unable to be cared for. The poor will increase in number. And who gets \$300,000 Plus per annum. Disgusting ! Disgusting !

Homelessness is a serious issue. Ignored by government. And its time the community actually saw what ARC spend their money on ? Their Money ? We all have to Budget. Its Time ARC did. Budget. But theyre not. I need ARC investigating and Audited. And since this date. 1947.

In 1947, something changed. That needs investigating. Oh yes it does. The community are not being heard. Considered. About time they were.

I feel ARC need an Investigation. That's all personnel. Because they all with knowledge about ARC. Ill be asking for one. I have to . They are Threatening our region. A Vital Upper Tributary Catchemnt and Vital Upland Wetland region they know Nothing about. They know Nothing About. They knoe Nothing about and will Threaten every species on the Drainage Divide of these Vital Upper Tributary Catchments.

Aberfoyle. Under threat at beginning altitude. That's Costa Group.

Malpas Dam. Under threat from a Wall. What a waste of money. As was a Pipeline. That will Cost community Dollars very soon. Unless we all choose Rainwater Tanks. And we can Choose Rainwater Tanks instead of Mains Supply. A Tank method will be worth it. Cost of Water will increase very soon. To community. Unaware whats coming. And that's another issue re ARC. Dealing is a issue. Dealing. Without community knowledge permission or consent. You see. Councils are supposed to Listen to community. Who can Have a Say. Who Want to Have a Say. Wont get heard.

Which staff member told a man today, to not bother sending his Submission re a Rate Rise document being sent to IPART. Which staff member said that. And this.

Don't bother. Youre Submission probably wont get read anyway. Which staff member said this. They need investigating. Well they do. Its known government don't read Submissions. Sent in by community. Their community. That's why I need government investigated. They ignore those who pay their wages. Yeh. Why is Mr Roncon receiving \$300,000 Plus per annum. That's really worth investigating. It's a bit much isn't it.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: FW: Attention: Sam Coupland. Rate Rise.
Date: Friday, 20 January 2023 1:25:27 PM

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 20 January 2023 1:21 PM

To: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: Attention: Sam Coupland. Rate Rise.

Dear Sam, If you are considering running for politics in the near future, then I believe you need to look closely at the following. Armidale could be turned around reasonably easily, if you put your mind to it.

There are many problems with the current rate rise.

1. **WATER:** there is a flagrant disregard concerning water. Coming out of a La Niño, people have become slovenly , and do not conserve their water. When Council offered to install, at half price, tanks on houses, this was a step in the right direction. However, tank water is better for one's health than council water – my children, having lived on tank water for 40 years can attest to that – no tooth decay, and a higher immune system. Every home should be only using the water from their own tank and not rely on Council; if their tank gets low, then either they pay heavily for water from Council, or go without/l.e. conserve or buy another tank. "If it's yellow, let it mellow; if it's brown, flush it down."
2. **RAISING THE DAM WALL:** Malpas Dam wall does not need to be raised. That money should be going to people to fund tanks on their houses – which includes drinking water/showering, watering gardens. They'll soon learn how to conserve.
3. **ROADS:** Trucks: **B-Dubs and trucks** create a huge cost for government of all stripes. Freight rail (preferably at night)

should be upgraded immediately, and goods transported by those trains to stations where a waiting EV truck can take the goods to the local 'store'/farm/ - again, preferably at night. Each rail station needs to have an **in situ crane** (concreted into the ground) that can lift a container off the freight train and onto a waiting truck. This will not only a) get goods to their destination faster, b) get the speeding trucks off the road c) cause less damage to 'pavement' & repairs. The upside of this is that the truckies might have a bit of a home life, instead of spending countless hours on the road eating junk food and taking uppers and downers – thus becoming an added burden to the health of this nation.

4. **Stock Transport:** At present, there are no regulation regarding transporting livestock. Those trucks have no water for the animals, often held in those cages for up to 10 hours or more. **A)** the trucks should be EV; **B)** they should have **water channels** on both sides for the livestock to drink during the trip. It would be preferable for the stock to travel at night (**minimising heat stress**) but it would be much, much better to have those animals shunted onto to a freight train in a rail 'cage' which would get them to their destination faster, using EV trucks at either end.
5. **TOURISM:** there are all manners of tourist attractions that ARC can help fund vs. the small number of outsiders to go on a rail trail. The number of people coming by rail to go further up the mountain in order to bike **down** to Armidale could be a huge success., but expecting a huge increase in bike riders going **UP** the mountain is simply folly – and a total waste of money.
6. **Other Tourist Attractions:** Has anyone thought of asking those who provide hot air balloon rides to come to

Armidale? Our scenery is spectacular. We would need an atmospheric physicist to do a feasibility study – regarding weather patterns etc. first. But it would be a real winner. They could have one of the blocks of land outside the airport to store their balloons. I can't even begin to image how well that business would go. Canberra has such a business – they may be the first to ask. Bird watching is another avenue.

7. **TRAINS:** If passenger trains included a carriage for bikes, motor bikes, pets, mail, luggage, wheel chairs) then trains would be King. The cost of upgrading the rail tracks pales into insignificance versus the cost of continually upgrading the major (and in many cases – minor) roads.

Overnight trains (so beloved of many of our community) could come back too.

8. **BUSINESSES:** Not only Costa, but any business that needs plenty of water, needs to collect their own, **NOT** rely on Malpas and/or Dumaresq. Bore water is all well and good, but ultimately, it is taking water from the Great Artesian Basin, and is not a final solution.

9. **COUNCIL RATES: Church lands and Private Schools NEED TO PAY RATES. It is iniquitous that in this day and age, they are exempt. State Schools, or farm-land-for-educational purposes would be exempt. All schools should be having solar panels on their roofs too.**

10. **SOLAR PANELS:** There are masses of carparks in Armidale that could be 'roofed' using solar panels. In that way, Council will benefit from the electricity they can collect, + the cars will be protected from our hot summers. Needless to say, the solar panels will be collecting **your** electricity all year round. A no brainer. [The airport, the council car park/Cinder's Lane; ex-K-Mart car park; behind Hannah's, outside the Library, caravan parks, the

showground, the race track, sporting fields, – the list goes on. The roof on the Council building is a good place to start.]

11. **THE MALL:** Money saved on building the Malpas Dam wall should be used to **cover the Mall with a retractable roof.** The playground in both Malls are good starting points, but the **main Mall** would not only be a wonderful place for children to play whilst their parents are shopping, but if high glass/poly self-closing doors were on either side, and access by a code that could not be reached by young children, it's a win-win situation because then some of those shops could be converted into 2/3 bedroom apartments, lifting the vibe of the Mall no end. We have skylights that when rain drops land on them, they automatically close. Too simple.
12. **SALARY:** The recent salary rise for the top jobs is a disgrace. Now is not the time to increase salaries. Council employees at the lowest level are doing the job of those at the top. **This must stop.**
13. **Housing:** There is evidently a huge homeless population in Armidale. The so-called charities, Salvation Army, Vinnies and Anglicare are not helping. Duval High school is sitting up there, empty. With very little modification, it could be used to house the homeless. They could be part of the ground staff, keeping the place in good order.
14. **RENTS:** Those landlords who own shops in the Mall +, should have **their** rates increased until they can find a business who can afford the rates/rent. I have been told that Council can't do that. Bollocks! Other councils have done it. Peppercorn rents for start-ups, particularly the artist/music/+++ need central spaces which would enliven The Mall, and become the envy of Inverell instead of its fifth-cousin three-times removed.

15. **RENTERS PROTECTION:** Renters should have the right to go to a designated person in Council to complain if their landlord is not doing the right thing. Real Estate Agents side with the landlord. The rents are too high and the standards are too low.
16. **THE TIP:** I understand that part of the rate rise will also include a massive increase from the consumer to tip rubbish: consumers need to conserve more, but if the rise in rates includes The Tip, then why do we have to pay so much to tip something that cannot be recycled?

My conclusion? The proposed rate hike is a travesty of justice. I am not the only person in our community who believes this.

Yours sincerely,

Deni McKenzie

[REDACTED],

Anaiwan 2350

[REDACTED]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Revised IP&R Documents
Date: Friday, 20 January 2023 4:16:29 PM

To the General Manager, Armidale Regional Council

Dear Sir

I am writing to express my concerns about the revised delivery program 2022-2026 and the Council plans in relation to the SRV. I see that the plan includes a rail trail.

A rail trail runs directly contrary to: the priority the community accords to public transport; the council's own stated aims to increase connectivity with other towns and regions; and the aim of reducing the financial burden on the council budget and ratepayers of establishing and maintaining assets.

A rail trail North of Armidale would be very costly to establish and also for the Armidale council and ratepayers to maintain, with the latter costs extending indefinitely into the future. The rail trail would procure no additional revenue to cover said costs. Most importantly a rail trail would involve tearing up the existing railway line and create an unnecessary, costly obstruction to the ultimate restoration of the train line and train services for passengers and freight from Armidale north to the QLD border. There has been no cost benefit analysis nor credible business case put forward to justify a rail trail.

The arguments in favour of restoring the Great Northern Train line service are legion. It would provide safe, reliable, convenient, affordable access to regional centres and capital cities for all residents, but notably for the poor, youth, elderly, and infirm residents who are unable to drive. It would take traffic and freight off our roads thus reducing the risk of accidents and the cost of road maintenance. A rail service would attract investors who want fast, efficient transport for staff and freight alike. A train would also improve access to the region for tourists and students. I oppose the SRV including the rail trail and I oppose the level of increase in any case as it seems excessive and far beyond what is needed to ensure the provision of essential services to the community.

Yours sincerely,
Karin von Strokirch
Armidale

Mr James Roncon (General Manager) & Councillors
Armidale Regional Council
135 Rusden Street
Armidale NSW 2350

James

Dear Mr ~~Roncon~~ & Councillors,

Re your Revised Delivery Program 2022-2026 and Resourcing Strategy 2022-2026.

In good faith I put in a submission in September last year and am disappointed that you now require a new one. My opinion is exactly the same as before, however, my concern is that my last submission is null and void so I am re-submitting it (immediately below):

I have attended a number of meetings held by Armidale Regional Council (ARC) regarding your proposed 50% Special Rate Variation (SRV).

Each time I am/we are told that if Council doesn't get this SRV we will be looking at a managed decline in services, or wake up one morning to find that we are out of money. I believe that this dramatic language is alarming and unnecessary in trying to 'sell' your message.

At the public meeting in the Armidale Town Hall on 13 September, which was very well attended, I didn't hear one person (Council staff and Councillors aside) supporting the proposed 50% SRV. On the contrary, everyone who asked a question/made a comment was highly concerned about it. I believe that the feeling from the Guyra meeting was much the same and am not sure about Wollomombi.

The other obvious thing from the Town Hall meeting, and this is also a general issue in the wider community, is that many people still aren't fully understanding your message, as, in my opinion, you have over-complicated the whole process by wanting too large an increase with your SRV proposal.

A recurring comment in the community is the disincentive you are creating for people considering relocating here. If we want an extra 10,000 people by 2040, it needs to be affordable for them to move to our region.

On a personal level, this will hurt me financially. At age 66 I have only just been able to get back into sustainable employment, after three years of minimal employment. My total rates notice is \$████████ per annum in rates, which I regard as a lot.

On the Residential Armidale + Residential Armidale Base Account component of my rates notice I currently pay \$████████. By Year 2025 this will be \$████████ and I am sure that the other fees and charges will also be higher by then.

As well, please don't disregard the three rate increases you have imposed since July 2020, those being a substantial increase in the water rate in 2020, an 8.5% SRV last year and a 1.8% ARV this year. These don't seem to have been factored-in.

I do understand, from looking at the budgeted figures, that ARC does require a SRV, and that the annual IPART mandated increase is inadequate, however, please no more than 30%! With the spiralling cost of living, any more than this would put ratepayers, many already struggling with their current rates, under more pressure.

Yours faithfully,

Rob Richardson

Rob Richardson
20 January 2023

From: dorothy rankmore <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, 19 January 2023 1:39 PM
To: Your Say <yoursay@armidale.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Have your say on amended IP&R documents for SRV proposal to IPART

The Mayor & Councillor's,
Armidale Regional Council.

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment and put forward my views on the "Proposed Rate Increase" for our city and surrounding towns & constituent's.

Firstly I would like to introduce myself, I was not born in Armidale, I transferred to Armidale with my employment with N.A.B. in December 1995, most likely not considered a local yet. Along with my wife, Dorothy and our 3 sons, we have made our home in Armidale and enjoy our life in this city.

Our 3 son's attended local schools (Martins Gully Primary & Armidale High), all 3 now left Armidale and to date have forged successful careers.

Being a former Bank employee, I have some background in Financial matters and understand Basically" how the Business of a local council operates.

In Resect to the proposed Rate increase of 58% over the next 3 years, am in Total Opposition to this Proposal.

I believe I not only speak for myself, though for the vast majority of Rate Payers in this Council District.

While I do not have the exact numbers, given what I see and read and can gain from my interactions with my friends, associates etc, the population of Armidale and Region is somewhat stagnant.

I understand we have taken in/accepted from overseas a number of refugee's from war-torn countries and offered our city/region to them & others from Australia and overseas the opportunity to settle here and make our city and region their home.

While this decision has helped maintain our population, it has done little to assist council with their biggest problem, ie, Insufficient Capital to maintain & Update , current Fixtures & Fittings, Assets, as well as paying ever increasing wages etc.

I commend the council for the development of "Air Side" and believe this to be a great initiative and hopefully it will bring many New Business's to our area, which in turn will inject much needed capital into the accounts of council.

Apart from trying to influence Business's to re-locate and or set up new offices here, how, do we generate Sufficient income to service the requirements of Council to main existing assets, Replace and update assets, Fixtures & Fittings etc, the list goes on??

In respect to a "Drastic" increase in rates is "I Believe" NOT the answer!! You can only flog the same horse for so long before the horse pulls up stumps or dies.

Yes, I can understand an increase in rates, IN LINE WITH INFLATION, though hardly the increase that is proposed, this, I believe, shows, absolutely No Initiative or Foresight.

All communities have a duty of care to the Aged, the Disabled and the Disadvantaged in our community and I support this duty wholeheartedly.

Our Aged, Our Disabled and Our Disadvantaged that own property certainly cannot entertain such a drastic burden, that this proposed rate increase will impose and impact on them.

The remainder of the population "The Old Horse" will also find this proposal, extremely difficult to manage.

Basically the less money that our rate payers have, the less they will spend in our community, which is what we are now & have been seeing, Business's, shops closing down or moving to areas that have councils, that are initiating progressive and go ahead strategies, that they can see VALUE for their rates & taxes.

Armidale does not have the luxury of the Pacific Ocean etc, though what we do have is "Water, Few Natural Disasters, Excellent National Parks & wild life, good climate, excellent educational facilities, a great life style, basically a casual lifestyle, no waiting in long queues etc

I am not laying the blame on the current council and councillors as the problem/position we all find ourselves in, has been instilled in our council for a very long time.

What we need is a change in ATTITUDE, change in IDEAS and have a CAN DO mentality that will INSPIRE change & generate income and prosperity to our district without bleeding the old horse.

One idea I have that will not cost the council very much capital at all, though the result will not only benefit all in our district, but also give a really solid reason for relocating to this district.

We have a large number of residents in our council district that do not work, Do not contribute to the betterment of our community and do absolutely nothing to generate the income that the council requires to run a successful business.

In fact a large number of these residents impact on the moral fibre of what the majority of the residents and council are trying to achieve in our community.

I believe it is the councils responsibility to fix our current and ongoing crime situation in Armidale & our region by putting pressure on the powers that be to clean-up our towns of these people and make so hard that they leave for easier pickings.

I do not blame our police force for this problem, though I do put the blame squarely on our magistrates for being so lenient that the criminals are not worried about retribution as they know that our magistrates are so soft and so out of touch with the community they just

continue to ply their trade of assaults, theft etc etc, knowing full well if they are apprehended they will only get a slap over the wrists & be on there way.

If our current magistrates are NOT on board, with implementing a hard line on crime, we need replace same with people who will implement the law.

If juvenile's are brought before the courts, they should get one warning, their parents or guardians told that this the one warning, then they will face the full force of the law OR let their parents/guardians take the responsibility, one way or the other we need to get tough.

Surely having a city/district that is clean in terms of crime & Drug usage & sales, would be a magnet for the type of residents to want to come, live & ply their trade in.

The more good people with trades/qualifications, generates a increased desire for other people to want to be apart of this type of community.

It may sound simple, though I firmly believe if we have a strong, ridged, yet fair system to control crime, we can, move forward without a huge cost burden to council. To be fair I am one of the community that is sick of the stealing, burning of vehicles, assaults, & putting up with drugged out dead beats.

We will though, need to stand up to the "Do-Gooders" that will howl down, that we are being too tough etc, we and the council need to be strong & stand firm.

Soon many of the criminals or criminal element will leave or move to greener pastures and our region will reap the benefit.

We also need to remember that there are More Good People than Bad and surely the majority should rule.

We should also take into account, these criminals, drug users etc use & utilise the facilities that the "OLD HORSE" pays for with their rates, they do not contribute to the upkeep of facilities and fixtures & fittings and assets that are required by council to run/operate a successful council business.

These people believe it is their god given right to have these facilities etc yet they are also the first to abuse same. ie. Vandalism, theft etc.

Of course, there are many other ways to help our financial position, trim the fat, ensure council staff work to capacity ie. if a job can be completed in say 2 hours, complete same not 5 hours, utilise government grants for what they are provided for, not salted away in financial institutions to make the councils position look strong, I do not wish to delve into the Lehemem Bros debacle.

Prior to trying to implement the quick fix of increasing rates, which many in our community will find a huge burden, let us take into account the recommendations proposed and see if we can work not harder but smarter.

Removing or at least making the criminal element fully accountable for their actions under the full force of the law, will at least show that Armidale & Region is an area that all people

are respected and if you want to live in and utilise what we have to offer, you live by the law.

Yes it will cause criticism, though we need to be strong and stand-up for what is right.

The law of the land applies to all Australians, all colours. all races, it is not discriminatory, it is the law.

Yours Sincerely,

Bruce Rankmore

From: [Executive Office](#)
To: [Renata Davis](#); [Ann Newsome](#)
Subject: FW: ARRA Submission re the SRV
Date: Monday, 23 January 2023 2:51:49 PM

From: Richard Makim <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, 20 January 2023 4:50 PM
To: James Roncon <JRoncon@armidale.nsw.gov.au>; Sam Coupland <SCoupland@armidale.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Fwd: ARRA Submission re the SRV

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Fri, 20 Jan 2023 at 4:47 pm
Subject: ARRA Submission re the SRV
To: Richard Makim <[REDACTED]>

20.01.2023

Cr Sam Copeland

Mayor, ARC

Dear Mayor Copeland,

On the subject of your council's proposal to raise future Ordinary Rates by 58.1 % per annum compounded for the next 3 years please be advised of the following:

At its Ordinary Meeting of the Armidale Regional Rate Payers Association in late 2022 we resolved to endorse, and actively support the ARRA Executive's recommendation of a rise of 38.2% compounded over the next 3 years.

This decision was taken after an exhaustive investigation into all available facts and figures much of which was made freely available by ARC Administration.

We wish to convey our appreciation to the Council for its willing cooperation on this important matter.

We also wish to inform your Council that ARRA will be forwarding our 38.2% recommendation,

and supporting statements to IPART for its consideration, and determination.

We also wish to bring to your attention the situation that Guyra rate payers have been in since the forced amalgamation was implemented. ARRA also represents these rate payers who are disadvantaged by distance.

Yours Sincerely,

Richard Makim

President, ARRA

Submission to: Revised IP&R Documents

General Manager
Armidale Regional Council,
PO Box 75A,
Armidale,
NSW 2350
council@armidale.nsw.gov.au

Re: Submission to draft Revised IP&R Documents

Draft Delivery Program 2022-2026	Council-led initiatives to help achieve the goals of the Community Plan
Resource and Asset Management Strategies	

From: Annette Kilarr

Personal Background: I am Convenor of the Climate Action Group – Sustainable Living Armidale (SLA) and Moderator of the Climate Action Armidale (CAA) Facebook group. The Climate Action Group of SLA has formed two working groups with independent facilitators, one orientated to issues around Renewable Energy and the second to issues around Water, which I oversee. Member of the Climate Action Network Australia (CANA) and previous Co-Chair of the Climate Emergency Working Group (CEWG) of the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) of Armidale Regional Council.

This submission is informed by SLA’s Mission statement: - “To raise awareness of the implications of climate change and the depletion of natural resources, to build networks, and inspire and empower our community to build a more self-reliant, resilient and sustainable future.”

I have been a resident of the New England Region for 30 years and employee at UNE in various capacities from 1993 to 2020 and I have also undertaken some project work with SNEELC. I have three young adult sons with my partner who is now an adjunct of UNE. Our sons are in their early adult youth, aged 22, 20 and 18.

Dear General Manager James Roncon and Armidale Regional Council

Thank you for the opportunity for community input to Armidale Regional Council's Strategic Directions and Integrated Planning and Reporting and specifically here to the second public exhibition of the relevant documents.

I, along with 58 others, made a submission to the IP&R documents original Public Exhibition in June 2022. The Recommendations that I made in that submission were addressed in the Council “Integrated and Planning Submissions Report” for the June 29, 2022 meeting of Council. I thank Council for addressing those Recommendations. I am taking the opportunity here to make an additional submission to the IP&R document and the second Public Exhibition due on 20th of January 2023. As per the first submission, I commend not only the inclusion of a statement about the Climate Change Declaration into the Delivery Program document, but the following active engagement within that document:

In the preparation of this document, Council has taken into consideration its important role in advocating for greater acceptance and action for Climate Change, as well as the actions that Council itself can undertake in its policies, processes, and services to adapt to Climate Change. Armidale Regional Council has marked (with the symbol 🌱) all Council Initiatives that are:

- directly, or indirectly, impacted by Climate Change
 - contribute positively towards Climate Change adaptation
- This symbol demonstrates the broad reach of the impacts of Climate Change and acknowledges where consideration or action must be taken in relation to Climate Change by Council, its staff and the community.

This second submission concerns questions and recommendations that have come to my awareness on further reading of the documents and/or in experience of the content of the SRV Community Consultation.

This submission addresses the Delivery Program and the Resourcing and Asset Management Strategies and around the issue of Water Resources, Water Valuing, Water Security and cohesive community engagement on these matters.

Council is most certainly aware that the issue of water security is very important for our region.

However, there has been insufficient attention paid to the crucial ecosystem services that it provides and the potential adverse impacts as well as potential benefits to these of the water security measures currently being considered, both in our region and downstream . Proposals for expanding the storage volume of Malpas Dam and purchasing Oakey dam - and, with part of that additional volume, attracting hydroponic industries, require a lot more community deliberation. To be effective this community deliberation will depend on a thorough audit of water resources. This is an area where community engagement needs to be ongoing as well as concurrent.

I am aware that a good amount of Council's time this year has been occupied with the SRV community consultation process. I wish, however, to make the very important point that this process has *not* included a transparent community engagement and consultation around the collective management, valuing, and proposed industrial (e.g. Intensive horticulture expansion) and community demand for water within the "Restore and Thrive" and "Growth" context. I wish to ensure that this is appropriately addressed in the Strategic Initiatives of the Delivery Program.

I am encouraged by the energy, cohesion and attention exhibited by the new Council and by the extensive work gone into the Delivery Program's structure and content. I nevertheless feel concerns about the narrative of *growth* and the way in which this narrative is sometimes promoted. When it comes to the phrasing of 'Restore & Thrive', it is important that we have a broad vision of what it means to 'thrive' *in* a community – rather than a narrow vision of merely striving to grow the population to increase the rate base. Any actions to promote growth need to be couched squarely in terms of sustainability. A re-orientation to sustainability aligns with the rankings that came out of the communities' rankings for our region: #1. Economically robust, #2 Environmentally sustainable, #3 Led through good governance, #4 Strong Tourism sector, #5. A cohesive community. Based on this ranking it would be appropriate if all statements and actions around growth were couched in terms of sustainability.

I support the focus on sustainability and partnership with the community in the following statement of the Delivery Program in the section “Our plan for growth and development” p.11

Council is committed to growing a prosperous and sustainable region over the next decade and beyond. We will ensure that we have a clear vision for the future of our region developed in partnership with our community. This will centre around the jobs of tomorrow and how we will grow whilst protecting and enriching the lives of our community and the region. We

I acknowledge that the content of the Delivery Program and Resourcing and Asset Management Strategies as presented is dependent on the decision, already made by ARC, to lodge for a 58% SRV application to IPART (Item 8.2 Nov 23, 2022 Meeting of Council, Decision Resolved 227/22), as such I am not commenting on that decision.

Following are some Questions and Recommendations. If my Questions appear to have an obvious answer, please accept my apologies in advance for any misunderstanding.

Question 1.

The Resource Strategy states that: “Council’s corporate approach to the management of assets has resulted in infrastructure assets being classified as: • Transport• Buildings• Stormwater• Parks, recreation and others• Water• Sewer• Waste• Airport” and “each asset class will be supported by (an) individual Asset Management Plan”

In the documents up for public exhibition and amongst the Asset Management plans I cannot see a “Water Asset Management Plan”. Is this an oversight or is the “Water Asset Management Plan”, one that is to come forward at a future date? Or is it located in a different suite of documents? What is the situation here?

Could you clarify the absence of a “Water Asset Management Plan” or indication of where it is otherwise located? (Nb. There is also no “Sewer Asset Management Plan” – is the answer here the same?)

Question 2.

In the Addendum “Special Rate Variation” p. 51 there is a heading titled “Investment Priorities” and then a list of “Investment priorities – our infrastructure”. Neither Water nor Sewerage infrastructure are included in this list. Why is this the case? Is this because they are located elsewhere? If so, where would that be? Are they funded from the Water and Sewerage Fund’s respectively? If so where is documentation about that located in the IP&R documentation.

Investment Priorities

Should Council be successful in its application for an SRV, the following list outlines the infrastructure priorities to be funded through an SRV:

Investment priorities - our infrastructure

Sealed Local Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resealing target - 55km per year• Currently - 11km per year• Backlog is now \$19 million in rehabilitation works
Unsealed Local Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resheeting target - 70km per year• Currently - 35km per year• Compounding effect in maintenance cost
Bridges and Culverts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replace 5 timber bridges within 10 years
Footpaths and Cycleways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Renew 6km of our footpaths and fix existing trip hazards• Construct missing links in cycleways and paths
Kerb and Gutter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Renewal of 11km of failed kerb• Currently - renewing 1km per year
Urban Stormwater Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-lining or replacing pipes at the end of life• Upgrades to address capacity and local flooding issues
Community Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$10 million or outstanding building upgrades and maintenance
Playgrounds and Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Without SRV no new or upgraded playgrounds unless grant funded
Sporting Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing maintenance and renewals

Question 3.

Even though not appearing in the above list, are Water and Sewerage still considered to be "infrastructure priorities", but sitting somewhere else? Could you clarify the question around priorities?

Question 4.

Is it a correct interpretation to conclude that Water and Sewerage infrastructure will NOT be funded by the increased SRV (should it be approved)? Or can Council utilise the SRV to top up the Water and/or Sewerage fund should they choose to do so? If so, is there a special process required to override the "Investment Priorities" listed above? Or can that simply be Moved and Resolved by Council at a later date and at their discretion?

Recommendation 2. Re: Qs 1-4.

Clarify these Questions 1-4, as appropriate, in the IP&R documentation

Question 5.

The Delivery Program mentions the Water Security Package in the "Mayoral Message" on p. 4 and under the heading "Water" of the "Turning our challenges into opportunities Section" on p. 11, see below:

Council has a \$157 million Water Security Package which includes raising the Malpas Dam wall by the maximum 6.5 metres, acquiring and commissioning Oaky River Dam or alternatively building off-take from Styx River, and connecting it to Malpas Dam. This will secure the future needs of the region and support a population of around 50,000.

However, there is no mention of the specific "Water Security Package" and related actions in any of the Strategic initiatives of the Delivery Program.

Is this an omission by oversight, or other reason?

Recommendation 2.

Include a Strategic Initiative (or initiatives) about the Water Security Package in an appropriate section of the Delivery Program. This would seem to fit in section F2.5. It may be interpreted as encapsulated in section F2.5.2 e.g. "Finalise and Implement the Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy to plan for future infrastructure and water service needs". However, as going forward with the "Water Security Package" was agreed by Resolution in March 2022 inclusion of this specific detail and relevant actions in the Delivery Program would be appropriate.

F2.5 Ensure the community is provided with safe and accessible water and that our water availability is sustainably managed now and into the future.	Collect, store, treat and distribute quality water in line with community needs, availability, and future requirements (F2.5.1) 🟢	Provide	Water
	Finalise and implement the Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy to plan for future infrastructure and water service needs (F2.5.2) 🟢	Plan	Water
	Work with Southern New-England Landcare, under a Memorandum of Understanding and the 10 Year Catchment Water Quality Strategic Plan to improve the environment and water quality around ARC water catchments (F2.5.3) 🟢	Partner	Water
	Investigate options and funding for the replacement of the Armidale Sewer Plant (F2.5.4)	Plan	Water
	Operate, maintain, and update the sewer networks and plants to minimise blockages, overflows, and environmental impact (F2.5.5)	Provide	Water

In addition, bringing the Water Security Package to fruition goes now goes beyond “Planning” and requires both “Advocacy” and “Partnering” actions with the State and Federal Governments. For support of this statement see the Delivery Program p. 11 below.

The safe and secure provision of water is an essential element for our region to grow and remain sustainable and Council will continue to advocate to State and Federal Governments to help fund our Water Security Package.

Recommendation 3:

In the Mayoral Minute and item 6.2 January of 2022 the Mayor stated “If we choose to grow, we need to do so sustainably. We need to use our resources more wisely, to protect our natural environment ... Water security and economic resilience will be key challenges. This journey will require a sense of unity and a common purpose both as a council and a community if we are to succeed.” However, in the Mayoral Message of the Delivery Program and “Restore and Thrive” p. 4 a statement of this commitment to sustainability is not included.

The Mayor’s statement of January 2022 was very important and two simple amendments to align that statement with the Mayoral Message of the Delivery are respectively suggested.

In the Mayoral Message p.4, paragraph 6 add the word “sustainably” and paragraph 9 add the words “and sustainable”:

Thus to read:

Paragraph 6 - “Council has a multi-million-dollar shortfall in asset maintenance and that backlog is swamping us – particularly our road network. While we want to be a progressive and **sustainably** expanding Council, we also need to fix what has not been done in the past....”

Paragraph 9 - “It is time to become a region of significance again. A region that delivers the basics exceptionally and efficiently and is thriving, competitive **and sustainable** in all aspects,”

Recommendation 4:

Support and facilitate the recent recommendation to Council of SLA's newly formed Water Working Group at the 14 December 2022 OCM meeting that the Water group work with Council to hold a broad community Water forum or forums early in 2023, well before the statutory requirement for a "Willingness to Pay" consultation around water, planned for April. This recommendation would align with a number of the Strategic Goals and Initiatives from the draft Delivery Program currently before Council:

Background

In the second half of 2022 the Armidale Climate Action Group of SLA formed two working groups, one orientated to issues around Renewable Energy and the second to issues around Water. The membership of the Water group includes a number of concerned citizens, some with considerable expertise in this area and with backgrounds from Environmental Sustainability, National Parks Association, NSW Office of Water, Economics and Education. The aims of the Water group is to:

1. seek to have thoughtful engagement with Council regarding the Malpas Dam + Oaky water security proposal to ensure all issues are considered, and that the decision-making process is robust, transparent and inclusive of the community
2. advocate for protection of environmental and ecosystem values
3. highlight the crucial importance of water and appropriate water valuing within our community
4. advocate for sustainable use of water within the limits of the availability of the resource to users within and outside of our region and in the context of resilience and drought preparedness.

At the December 14, 2022, OCM, the Facilitator of the Water Issues Group Ms Kate Boyd and group member Dr. Graham Marshall presented in the "Have Your Say Session". In order to support Council's current and future decision-making processes they took the opportunity to present aims, queries, gaps and recommendations relating to water and recommending the above mentioned forum (s)

Such a forum would embrace and support the following Strategic Goals and Initiatives from the draft Delivery Program currently before Council and which this recommendation endorses:

- Strategic Goal S1. **An informed and actively engaged community** that builds partnerships and shapes its future
S1.1 Help the community to be informed and have input into decisions about its region and future
- Implement the Community Engagement Strategy, including its supporting framework and processes (S1.1.1)
- Strategic Goal - S2 - Strong governance and leadership that supports our region to grow and prosper
S2.2 Ensure that strategic directions are **informed by, and with, the community** and are delivered in consideration of available resources
- Strategic Goal - F2. – A clean, green, and responsible region,
F2.1 - Proactively adapt to and mitigate the local impacts of climate change
- Maintain Council's commitment to the Climate Emergency Declaration and **promote further community-led action** (F2.1.2)

- **Partner with community groups** to educate and promote urban sustainability initiatives (F2.1.3)
- Strategic Goal - F2. – A clean, green, and responsible region,
 - Maintain Council’s commitment to the Climate Emergency Declaration and **promote further community-led action** (F2.1.2)
 - F2.5 – Ensure the community is provided with safe and accessible water that is **sustainably managed now and into the future.**
 - Collect, store, treat and distribute quality water in line with community needs, availability, and future requirements (F2.5.1)
 - Finalise and implement the Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy to plan for future infrastructure and water service needs (F2.5.2)

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the revised draft IP&R documents. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further details.

Kind Regards

Annette

Annette Kilarr



Convenor – Climate Action Group – Sustainable Living Armidale

Moderator- Climate Action Armidale- Facebook Group.



Stand for climate action now

**TOGETHER
WE CAN**

Sustainable Living Armidale acknowledge the [Anaiwan](#) People who share the caring of this land with the [Gumbaynggirr](#), [Djangadi](#), [Gamilaraay](#), Ban Bai and others. We pay respect to their elders past, present and future.

20.01.2023

General Manager, ARMIDALE REGIONAL COUNCIL
Rusden Street Armidale

Submission by Northern Railway Defenders Forum Re IP & R Documents for a Rate Rise

Dear Mr. Roncon,

We refer to the most recent re-exhibition of Armidale Regional Council's "Advancing our Region" Community Strategic Plan and the Delivery Program 2022-2026 with its inclusion of the proposed 58% Special Rate Variation in its revised Integrated Planning and Reporting (I P and R) documents.

The Northern Railway Defenders Forum represents a number of rail support organisations and members of the community in our region who are committed to the return of rail services for passengers and freight on the Northern Line between Armidale and the Queensland border and into Queensland.

We have undertaken a careful analysis of the revised strategic planning documents (I P and R) currently on public exhibition and note that the Delivery Program still includes Council proposing to undertake a rail trail project between Armidale and Ben Lomond which would prevent the development of rail services being re-instated on the Northern Line between Armidale and Queensland for decades to come. We have taken particular note of the "Connected Region" Pillar of the Advancing Our Region Community Plan. The rail trail project, if and when implemented, will inhibit and deny future generations from our region and our neighbor regions such as Glen Innes Severn, Tenterfield and Inverell, from accessing inter regional low carbon emission logistics systems for passengers and freight. Transport is the highest and best use of the northern railway line for achieving Council's vision and goals that are compatible with several core pillars and strategies over and beyond connected region, and this factor has never been taken into serious consideration by ARC. In adopting a rail trail project that has not been validated by an independent cost-benefit analysis into its Community Plan, the Council is going against the findings of all relevant public consultation about the SRV, Delivery program and associated plans to date.

We do appreciate what Council is trying to achieve by seeking a special rate variation of 58% in order to realise its vision for the future but we are forced to object to this very large increase in rates while ever the relevant IP and R documents include the rail trail project that has not been backed up by a sound business case commissioned by the Council or expressly supported by the community.

This is for good reason, in that it flies against the much needed highest and best use of the railway line and the clear wishes of the community to have a better, safer inter regional transport system. It will incur many additional costs for Council (and ratepayers) in the build, management and maintenance functions. Alarming, this will be in the context of a revenue (income) policy backdrop which anticipates no increased income for Council, other than additional revenue from this proposed SRV and increased fees and charges. Income from other sources to the council during the 4-year period will be either stagnant or in decline (see the income report). Even if the IPART approves an increase in rates, declining or stagnant income sources to the council will hit the rate payers again in the future to coincide with the rail trail project and its success or failure. Undertaking an additional responsibility for a new asset in this manner is quite an irresponsible act in our view. Savings or efficiencies on the part of Council to offset this additional build and lifecycle costs of the project will not be sufficient.

We are concerned that Council has not undertaken any due diligence in putting the rail trail project into the Delivery Program. What is needed is an independent cost benefit analysis, which has not been attempted. Why has the rail trail project been included in the Delivery Program without there having been any specific community consultation, and when previous state government

consultations on the issue in Guyra and Tenterfield have returned a strong “no” to the rail trail project? We are aware of a petition signed by the residents of Ben Lomond objecting to the rail trail. One other petition was presented to the Legislative Council with over 1200 signatures. Another is circulating in the community requesting the Legislative Assembly to reintroduce passenger train services to the border and it is expected to reach 10,000 signatures in due course. The petition in Change.org has more than 200 signatures already.

From the survey conducted by Northern Railway Defenders Forum, community, both in Armidale and other regions to the north of us such as Glen Innes, who have historically been reliant on the Northern Railway Line, overwhelmingly want the rail way line to be restored to its original purpose, namely passenger and freight services. The woeful state of intra and inter regional public transport in Northern Inland NSW is now being recognised at State Government level. We wonder why the ARC is not even planning to play an advocacy role during the four-year period for improving public transport opportunities by way of rail services? Instead promote a micro project like the rail trail which can be attractive to a narrow group of cyclists with able bodies? On moral or financial grounds, the Council has **no mandate** for such an adventure which is driven by ideological grounds rather than community welfare grounds.

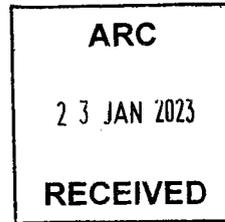
We note that previous community submissions to the original IP and R documents were overwhelmingly in objecting to the Rail Trail project's inclusion in the Delivery Program yet Council has not amended or deleted it in this most recent version of the Delivery Program under “Connected Region”. We urge Council to amend the delivery program to reflect the community sentiment before the documents are sent to IPART. If it does not do this, the community will send a large number of submissions pointing out the risk of including a rail trail proposal in the delivery program by a council struggling to meet its asset management functions with the lack of required funds. We respectfully ask the Council to listen to our concerns carefully and respond at the next Council meeting.

Yours Sincerely
Dr Siri Gamage and Mr. Matthew Tierney
Co-Conveners
Northern Railway Defenders Forum
[REDACTED] Armidale NSW 2350

E: [REDACTED]

General Manager
Armidale Regional Council
PO Box 75a
Armidale 2350

Armidale 2350
20 January, 2023



Dear Sir, Ref. Revised IP & R Documents

The issue of the 58+% rise has developed into an application to not only maintain assets but to increase them.

My understanding a year ago was gained in the Mayor's speech to explain the proposed rate rise, in which he said the rise was for the purpose of reducing the Council's debt!

I absolutely object to including the intention to borrow further (or gain funding) for such a project as the rail trail. Not only does this not have the wholehearted support of the community and district but a rail trail has limited benefit to few participants and will ultimately prove unprofitable and lead to further debt.

A modest rate ^{rise} for essential reasons could be acceptable but anything greater, in my opinion, would have long-term detrimental effects, especially in the current situation of rising inflation and consequent hardship to many.

Yours sincerely
Dora Koops