



Community Newsletter

The Macleay Valley Coast
...Lifestyle - second to none

APRIL 2006 - SPECIAL 'Rates Variation' EDITION!

From the Mayor...

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released recently on Regional Population Growth, Kempsey Shire was the fastest growing coastal Local Government area in NSW in 2004. These figures confirm, as suspected, that the Kempsey Shire is, indeed, a growth area on the Mid North Coast. In recent years there has been an influx of new residents, particularly in the coastal areas, due to the migration of people, predominantly retirees, looking for a more relaxed lifestyle away from the larger urban areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.

This growth has increased pressure on the basic framework that links our community together such as roads, drains, water and sewer mains, footpaths, public amenities buildings and so forth. As a result of this pressure and the restrictions of rate pegging, Council has struggled over the last couple of years to meet the community's expectations in terms of the maintenance of this infrastructure and the level of service it provides.

In June last year Council withdrew an application for a special rate variation for the 2005/06 year after listening to community concerns and has held a number of workshops over the last 12 months involving Councillors and Staff to see if costs could be pruned or additional revenue raised by other means. Every effort has been made to search for alternative solutions to this pressing problem. For example, Council has tried to source more income through grants, examined its procedures and processes, taken steps to maximise return on assets, and is resource sharing with other councils on the Mid North Coast. While these have assisted Council, unfortunately, they have not closed the gap significantly enough to avoid increasing rates.

Council has applied for a "Special Rate Variation" of 6% for 2006/07 and subsequent years, to fund additional specific road maintenance works and bridge replacements. We are now in the process of gathering community feedback on the proposed increase to forward to the Minister for Local Government for consideration with Council's application. We welcome your input into this public consultation process, which closes on 13 June, 2006.

Before responding please take a good look around our Shire, its roads and bridges, and ask yourself how we, as a community, can bring them up to scratch **without** investing more in maintaining them.

J A C Hayes
MAYOR

Significant savings expected on Road Reseal Program in 2005/06



Council's Shire Services Department has been able to achieve estimated savings under the 2005/06 Rural Road Reseal program of \$118,000 and \$73,000 under the 2005/06 Urban Reseal program.

Council will reallocate these funds to rehabilitate sections of Dungay Creek Road and Arakoon Road, both which have previously been identified as priority rehabilitation projects.

The what, why and how of rate variation

Council, unlike many commercial enterprises, is limited to rates, user pays fees and charges, grants and developer contributions to generate an income. The State Government pegs General Fund rates so Councils are only allowed to increase their rates by a small percentage annually. These increases are generally less than increases in the Consumer Price Index, making it increasingly difficult for Council to keep pace with its costs. This year's increase has been pegged at 3.6%.

Councils can apply to the Minister for Local Government for a Special Rate Increase over and above the percentage nominated by the Minister. Our application, supported by a financial analysis, was submitted to meet the March 31, 2006 deadline. The results of our community consultation process, when complete, will also be forwarded to the Minister for Local Government to support our application.

Kempsey Shire has applied for a 9.6% increase in the Ordinary Rate inclusive of the Minister's allowable increase of 3.6% for the 2006/07 year. The Special Rate Increase request of 6% will raise additional revenue of \$571,304 in 2006/07. This additional income source will continue to be raised in subsequent years.

The increase would apply only to the Ordinary Fund portion of your rates. Water, Sewer and Garbage will not be affected by this change. The guide below will give you an indication of how the increase may affect your Ordinary rate:

- Average Residential rates increase from \$604 to \$661,
- Average Farmland rates increase from \$1002 to \$1,099,
- Average Business rates increase \$1,291 to \$1,415

If approved, this means that the majority of residential ratepayers will pay an additional \$1.20 per week in their rates in the 2006/07 year.

Where will the money be spent?

The road network provides an essential transport link for the community to function on a daily basis. Roads provide the community with access to services, employment, education facilities, health facilities, shops, commercial and industrial businesses, recreation and social interaction.

Council controls and maintains 1021 kms of local roads and is responsible for an additional 142 kms of regional roads. Of these, there are 405 kms of sealed rural roads, 598 kms of unsealed rural roads and 160 kms of sealed urban roads. Council has 39 bridges that need replacement or major repair.

The current value of Council's Road Network is estimated at \$174 million and Council needs to ensure that the replacement of that infrastructure is funded on a cyclical basis. Road pavements typically have an estimated life cycle of 10 years for a gravel road, and 40 years for a sealed road, before requiring replacement.

Council has been unable to provide sufficient funds to the road and bridge network over a long period of time and there is a large backlog of works. Roads and bridges need a huge injection of funds. If successful the application for the Special Rate Variation will provide a much-needed injection of funds to help prevent

further deterioration in our road and bridge network. The special rate increase of \$571,304 is to be allocated as follows:

- Urban Streets \$160,000
- Rural Roads \$260,000
- Timber bridge replacement \$151,304

The budget required to fund necessary works in 2006/07 is \$6.36 million. Unless current funding levels are increased for specific road maintenance, the accumulated deficit in deferred works will increase from \$10.08 million in 2006/07 to \$37.91 million in 2016/17. The estimated cost to bring our bridge network to an acceptable standard is \$5.5million.

For every dollar we spend now, we can save up to ten times the cost of future road repairs by undertaking periodic preventative maintenance.

Council's strategic emphasis for roads is to give priority to funding specific maintenance so that the existing road network is maintained at sustainable levels ahead of new capital works.

Council has made every attempt to source State and Federal funding for Road and Bridge projects to ease the burden on our Ratepayers and will continue to do so in the future.

Consecutive Surveys show need for better roads...

A community survey conducted in February 2005 by Micromex Marketing P/L, an independent market research company, identified a significant level of dissatisfaction with the condition of the road network - in fact, 68% of survey respondents expressed either a medium or low satisfaction ranking with the condition of our road network. In the 2004 survey, maintaining the road surface and improving the overall condition of roads received a very high 98% importance ranking but 79.8% medium to low satisfaction rating.

Have your say about rate increase

Kempsey Shire Council realises that a rate increase will affect many people in different ways. If you would like to comment on the proposal, please choose from the following options:

- Write to the General Manager, Kempsey Shire Council, PO Box 78, WEST KEMPSEY NSW 2440
- Download the feedback form on Council's website (www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au) and post it to the above address or drop it into Council's Customer First Centre in Tozer Street, West Kempsey.
- Complete the Rates Variation Survey in this newsletter or on-line at Council's website.
- Email Council at ksc@kempsey.nsw.gov.au
- Fax your submission to Council on 02 6566 3205.

All submissions and feedback will be collated and referred to our 2006/07 Management Plan deliberations. They must be lodged with Council by close of business on Tuesday 13 June, 2006.

Invitation: You are invited to attend a public meeting to discuss the draft 2006/07 Management Plan on Tuesday 30 May, 2006 at 6pm at the Civic Centre in Elbow Street, West Kempsey.

YOUR COUNCILLORS

Mayor Janet Hayes	6562 3531 0418 289 151
Deputy Mayor Brian Sowter	6567 4281
Councillor John Bowell	6562 5122 0438 625 122
Councillor Terry Hunt	6561 7157 0414 356 197
Councillor Betty Green	6562 8938
Councillor Jim Gribbin	6566 6907
Councillor Bob McWilliam	6566 5465
Councillor Dean Saul	6567 4682
Councillor Ellis Walker	6562 2119

✂ Rates Variation Survey ✂

Council welcomes your participation in its Rates Variation Survey below. Please tick the box which most applies to your opinion:

1. Please rate your satisfaction with condition of Council's road and bridge network:

- Satisfied Not satisfied

2. How important is it to you for Council to maintain the road and bridge network in good condition?

- Very important Minor importance
 Important Not important at all

3. Should Council allocate more funds to roads and bridges?

- Yes No

4. Are you prepared to support an increase in rates if the funds are used specifically on maintaining the Shire's roads & bridges?

- Yes No

5. Are you a ratepayer?

- Yes No

To validate your survey please provide your contact details below:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please complete and return survey to Council by 6 June, 2006.

How do your rates compare with other Councils?

The following is a comparison of average rates paid in various categories in nearby Council areas in 2005/06. This is taken from the annual "Rating Return" lodged by Councils with the Department of Local Government or from individual Council's Management Plans.

	Residential	Farmland	Business
GREAT LAKES	734	424	1829
PORT STEPHENS	713	1082	2690
HASTINGS	749	1193	2728
KEMPSEY	604	1006	1292
GREATER TAREE	586	888	2013
NAMBUCCA	614	1175	1195
BELLINGEN	696	1428	824

The most recent 'Comparative Information' on NSW Local Government Councils, published by the Department of Local Government for the year 2004/05, indicated that Kempsey Shire's average residential rate is \$121 below the average for the group of 32 other Councils with which it is compared.

Other Councils on the Mid North Coast are experiencing similar pressures and are also applying for Special Rate Increases for the 2006/07 year. Those announced to date include Greater Taree, Nambucca, and Coffs Harbour.

Seeing the bigger picture...

Council has recognised the need to be more pro-active in its approach to customer needs. During this financial year it has invested substantially in a customer first centre to help it become more customer-focussed. By channelling customer inquiries through one location, problem areas will be identified and acted upon quickly so that customer needs truly become the driving force in Council's future direction.

Council's plan to be more pro-active also involves investing more in maintaining roads and bridges so that the quality of this infrastructure better meets the expectations of residents and ratepayers. The proposed rate increase, if successful, will enable Council to manage this change in a deliberate and well-considered manner.

Other Councils interested in our Customer First

The procedures put in place with the introduction of Council's Customer First Centre are generating interest from other councils. So far the Centre has been visited by Hastings and Great Lakes Councils.

Councillor John Stephens, Graeme Frappell (Manager Human Resources) and Deborah McQuaigue, (Coordinator Customer Service) from Great Lakes Shire, who visited the centre in February, are pictured here watching Toni, one of our Customer Service Officers in action.

Council received excellent feedback from our visitors, who were very impressed with our system and enthusiastic staff.



Council assists Red Cross



Jim Dumay, from Council's IT section, assisted Red Cross recently by installing a computer donated by Council at the Kempsey headquarters of Red Cross. The computer was an older model, no longer used at Council, so Jim checked the system to ensure everything was working well. Jim is pictured here checking out the computer with Marcie Cheers from Red Cross.

Pola Creek Restoration

The Pola Creek Restoration Project commenced last year and combines floodgate management and creek bank restoration. One of the Pola Creek floodgates is now kept open in non-flood periods to allow increased water movement and fish passage within the Creek but is then lowered when a flood warning is issued.

The other component of the project was the removal of weeds such as privet, lantana and camphor laurel from the bank of the creek by Council's Parks and Garden crew with assistance from Conservation Volunteers Australia.

The weeds were replaced with rainforest plants native to the Macleay and they are having a great season with the strangely named Hairy Pittosporum already fruiting, hopefully a sign of things to come!



Save Money, Save Time

Are you planning to build a new house, modify an existing house, put in a pool, erect a fence, add a carport or garage or undertake minor industrial or commercial development?

Want to know if you can save time and money with your application?

Complying Development is generally development that meets predetermined standards provided by Kempsey Shire Council and contained within Development Control Plan 30 (Exempt and Complying Development), a copy of which is available to download free of charge from Council's website (www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au) or can be purchased at a cost of \$5.50 from the Customer First Centre.

If development meets all the standards, an approval can be issued. The costs and time associated with a complying development certificate are substantially less than those associated with development applications. In fact, our turnaround time for these types of applications is just seven (7) days.

Interested?

Call the Customer First Centre today on 6566 3200 and ask for a copy of the Complying Development Help Guide to be sent to you.

Youth say Library rocks



Above: Local band the Kaotic Penguins got 'Loud in the Library' as part of Youth Week. Did you know that 48% of young people aged 12-18 in the shire are members of our library?

Controlling weeds

In the next few months Council will be controlling Red Lantana on selected roadsides throughout the Shire. The Weeds Officer has released some Lantana Rust onto common Pink Lantana in several areas in the shire. With ideal weather conditions for releasing the rust, these areas will be monitored to see if the rust will increase and be successful for control or slowing the infestations down.

Council will also be continuing with the control of Groundsel Bush in the Shire and Bitou Bush control on the coast.

Council's Environmental Weed control program has had its first successful run and Environmental Weeds such as Cocks Comb Coral Tree, Lantana, Camphor Laurel, Privet and Cats Claw Creeper have been reduced in numbers where the program has taken place. For more information contact Greg Egan, Council's Weeds Officer on 65 663200 (Ext 285).

2006 Senior's Luncheon

Kempsey Shire Council's Annual Seniors' Luncheon was a huge success! A crowd of around 380 people came to celebrate the day, to enjoy a meal together and to hear Al Showman and Brunie Riley perform songs from the greatest and most memorable musicals of the Twentieth Century.

Students from Kempsey High School, Melville High School and St Paul's College were putting their Food Technology skills into practice serving lunch during interval.

The luncheon is jointly funded by Kempsey Shire Council and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care with support from Kempsey Macleay RSL Club and staff. The event is held during Seniors Week in recognition of the valuable contributions older people make to our communities.

Right: Richard McKay and Irene Anderberg enjoy entertainer Al Showman's performance at the Seniors' Luncheon, held at Kempsey Macleay RSL on 6 April 2006.



Above: Ruth and Rolland Nelson chat with Natalie from Macleay Community Care Options at the Seniors' Luncheon.



"Know your Heart" Seminar

West Kempsey Community Renewal Program is looking for one candidate from each sporting and youth organisation in the area to sit for their St. Johns Senior First Aid Certificate free of charge.

These representatives will also have the opportunity to attend the "Know your Heart" Seminar to be held on Friday, 9 June 2006 at the Wombat Beach Resort in Crescent Head. The keynote speaker at the seminar will be Professor Chris Semsarian from the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital's Centenary Foundation who will speak about "Sudden Death in Young People". The West Kempsey Community Renewal Project is a Department of Housing Initiative administered under the auspices of Kempsey Shire Council. It received funding through a partnership with Partners in Aboriginal Care to run this seminar and workshops on Sudden Death (genetic link) in Young People under 35 years.

Organisations can express their interest in the seminar by emailing mavis.symonds@kempsey.nsw.gov.au, by phoning 65 621409 to arrange to be sent an "Information and Registration Form".



Come down to the riverside on 7 May

The second annual Riverside Taste and Sounds Festival will be held at Kempsey on Sunday 7 May. The event, which promises to be a fun day out for the whole family, will bring together the best food, music, art and culture on the Macleay for a day-long celebration in Riverside Park, Kempsey.

Centre stage will focus on the sounds of the Macleay with entertainment planned to include performances by The Tryst, The Roys and Shane Fritsch. There will also be a Karaoke Competition to encourage amateur talent, which is open to the first 20 entries received on the day.

Local restaurants and wineries will showcase the tastes of the Macleay and chef Clive Ward (aka Clive @ ABC) will demonstrate his culinary skills. In addition there will be market stalls and growers produce for sale.

The kids are also catered for with "The Rainbows" performing their fantastic interactive family show. There will be face painting, a casting competition on the river and an exhibition of local artists' work on-site.

Sponsors of the event include Kempsey Shire Council, Regional Publishers, and Radio 2MC.

For more information on the Riverside Tastes and Sounds Festival at Kempsey on 7 May contact Macleay Development and Promotions on 65 663100.

How can we help you?

Please contact us



Cnr Elbow and Tozer Streets
PO Box 78, West Kempsey NSW 2440
Phone: 6566 3200 Fax: 6566 3205
Email: ksc@kempsey.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au