



# Media release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Tough decisions to be Fit for the Future**

A RANGE of savings and revenue measures with a combined value of about \$15.5million over four years have been adopted by the Clarence Valley Council and will go out for public consultation.

At its meeting last night, council voted to adopt savings measures of about \$8million over four years and to consider a special rates variation (SRV) application that would provide additional revenue of about \$7.1million over the three years from 2018/19 to 2020/21.

The proposed SRV would be for an 8% increase in the general rate each year for three years (including an estimated rate pegged limit of 2%), with a cumulative impact of 25.9%. If adopted, this would be retained permanently in council's rate base.

Mayor, Jim Simmons, said the time had come for tough decisions.

"We've been living beyond our means since the councils of the Clarence Valley were amalgamated in 2004," he said.

"We need to have a balanced operating result by 2020/21 to meet the NSW Government's Fit for the Future financial benchmarks and we believe the best way to get there is through a combination of efficiency savings and a rate increase.

"We believe we have struck the right balance. We have examined every conceivable cost reduction measure and have already started implementing them. But we don't believe we can reduce costs further without making a significant impact on the facilities and services people expect council to provide.

"If we were to make further cuts we would need to look at ending our involvement with such things as the Grafton and Maclean sports centres, the aquatic facilities in Grafton, Maclean and Yamba, the South Grafton saleyards, regional art gallery, youth services, cemetery services and a host of other things we feel people want us to retain.

"But we will listen. We have already made commitments to not close the Iluka Library after receiving plenty of objections from the Iluka community. The \$60,000 in savings will now be found within other areas of the library service.

"If people don't want to pay more in rates or they want to restrict the SRV increases, they will need to tell us which of the services we provide that they feel should go.

"We can't have it both ways. We cannot continue to provide these services without additional revenue."

Cr Simmons said people should remember council already met the Fit for the Future efficiency benchmarks.

"We have not reached this point because we are an inefficient organisation, or because we don't provide our services efficiently," he said.

"We have reached it simply because we are trying to provide more services to the community than we can afford and are at the point where that cannot continue.

"Something has to give."

Council general manager, Ashley Lindsay, said council would soon announce details of a public consultation program that would provide all residents and ratepayers with the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

"The suite of integrated planning documents (includes Community Strategic Plan, 10 Year Long Term Financial Plan, 4 year 2017-2021 Delivery Program and Operational Plan, Budget and Revenue Policy for 2017/18) adopted at last night's Council meeting will all be available on Council's website and at our branch libraries (Grafton, Maclean, Yamba and Iluka) and customer service centres at Grafton and Maclean from Friday (May 19)," he said.

"The community have until Friday, June 16, to provide their comment and feedback to council.

"Council will consider the feedback from the community at its meeting on June 27."

Release ends.

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**For media inquiries contact Clarence Valley Council communications coordinator, David Bancroft, on 6643 0230 or 0429 104 118.**