

## **SUBMISSION**

### **RE: Hepburn Shire's application for a rate cap variation**

We wish to object to Hepburn Shire's application for a rate cap variation above the State Governments current 3% cap.

- Council is proposing a 10% rise in rates which we believe is excessive and will push many to the edge who are already doing it tough.
- Community consultation has been inadequate and the survey it refers to in the application is flawed along with the misleading interpretation of findings. How was the 10% figure reached? This survey was not purely focused on whether the community was open to a rate rise but was part of a larger 'Financial Vision' survey. Respondents amounted to only 315. This is not a sufficient sample considering the consequences of a potential rate rise of this magnitude. It is clear from posts on social media and talk on the street that many people were not aware of this survey. Many were occupied at the time with responding to the draft Rural Strategy and the 5 draft Town Structure Plans. People are rightfully stressed and angry.
- Although we acknowledge there have been external forces which have contributed to the current financial situation, it is obvious there has been serious mismanagement of ratepayers money over a number of years - financial documents reveal this. Along with others we ask why should ratepayers bear the brunt of this mismanagement and cop such an excessive rate rise?
- There is a lack of trust and confidence. We and others fear there will be further mismanagement of ratepayers' funds if such an increase in rates becomes reality. A \$15-20m redevelopment of the Daylesford Town Hall is currently being mooted which is in contradiction to the 'Financial Vision' that states the funding of asset renewal of existing community facilities is a priority, not new capital works or building redevelopment (see pages 16,17 of Financial Vision') How can this even be considered now or even into the near future, is beyond us.

- We are not convinced that the council has done all it can to avoid such a rate rise. Ratepayers have not been provided with enough detailed evidence of proposed reductions in spending nor the rationale/criteria for these reductions. There does not appear to be any innovative or creative solutions provided.
- The adopted 'Financial Vision' document submitted to support the council's application, is in our opinion, full of contradictions and double speak.

In conclusion, we reiterate we are not supportive of such an excessive rate rise as the one being applied for by Hepburn Shire. We would be open to a modest one but not above the current rate cap. But before any decision, we feel there needs to be extensive community consultation to provide more conclusive evidence of community views.

Heather Mutimer & Ken Warren

