

towongshire



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Fair Go Rates System

# Community Engagement Forum



Juliana Phelps

Chief Executive Officer  
Towong Shire Council

# Towong Shire?

Where's that?



Right here

Area: 6,635 sq km

Pop: 5,985 (2016 Census)

Agricultural base:

Beef grazing, Dairy, Sheep, Forestry

21 towns and villages:

2,335 occupied private dwellings

Median age: 50 (Vic 37 Aust 38)

25.7% of population over 60

Approx. 50 births pa

Household income: 27.9% of households less than \$650/week

Local Road Network:

371km sealed 805km unsealed

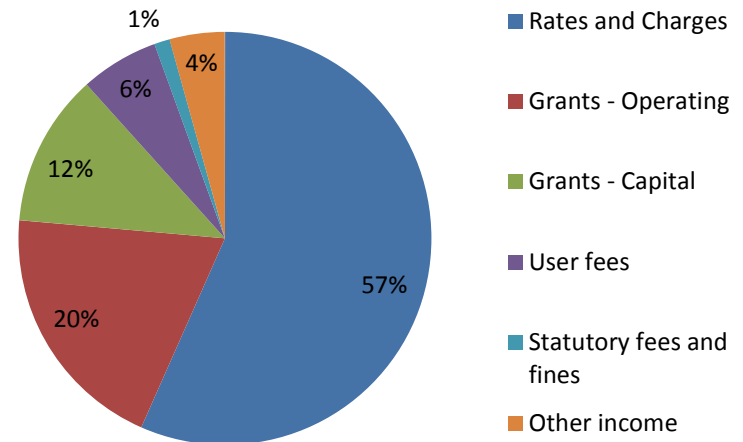
Bridges and major culverts: 167

# Our Council

- 5 Councillors
- Total Income: \$15m
- Rates and Charges: \$8m
- FTE: 64 (employee costs: \$6m)



## 2017/18 Budgeted Income



The little council that could.



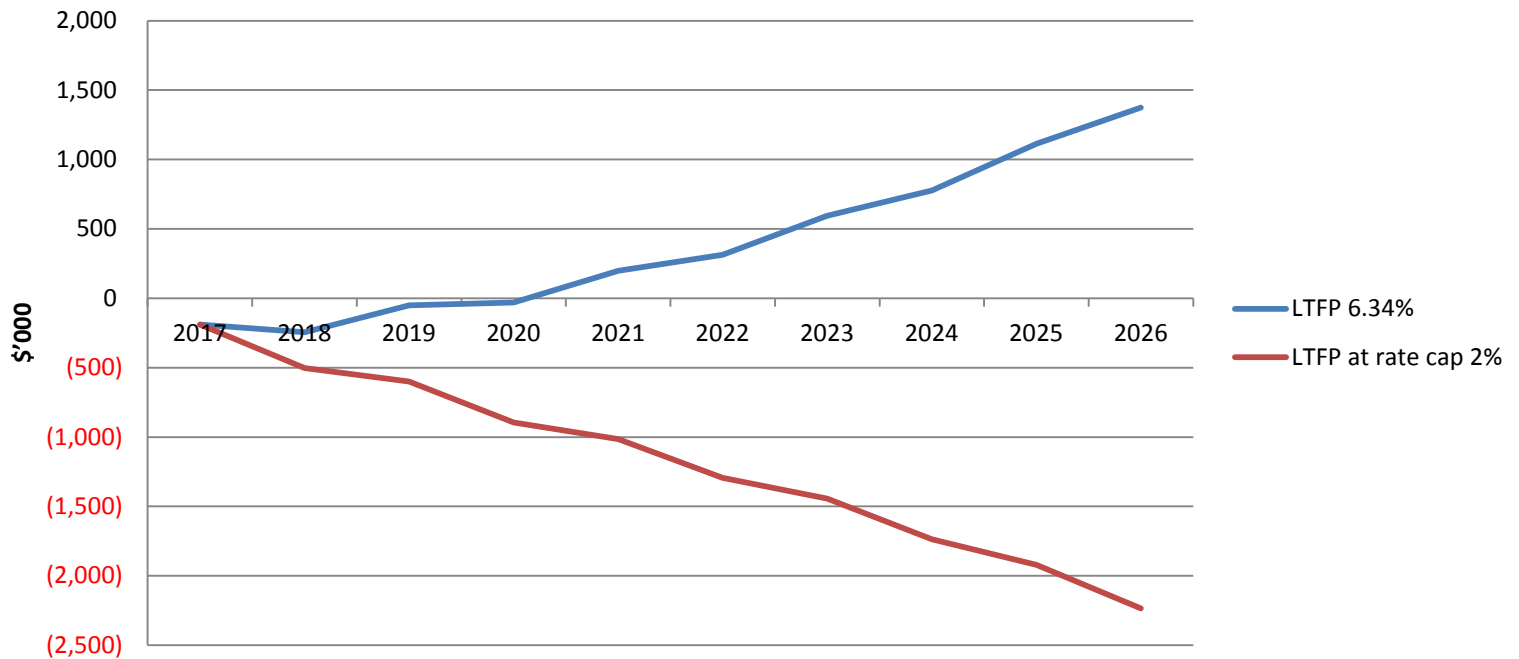
# Higher Rate Cap

2016/17 6.34% (1 year)

2017/18 5.55% (for 4 years)

**Context:** a 1% increase to rates and municipal charge yields an additional \$65,000

### Underlying surplus/(deficit) per LTFP



# 2016/17 Application

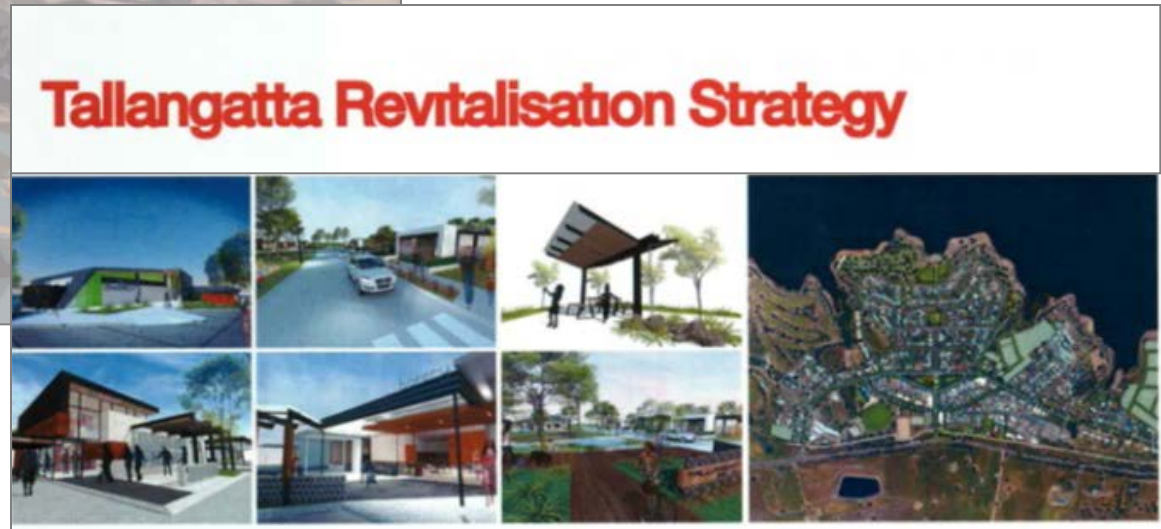
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Three key elements:

- Robust Long Term Financial Plan
- Community Master plans
- Strong track record with reform agenda



# 2017/18 Application

Same, same but different?!



LET'S TALK  
ABOUT THE  
FUTURE

## Six Community Forums

- Welcome by Mayor
- CEO presentation
- Group time (5 questions)
- Reporting back

# Community Forums

Record numbers

196 participants = 3.3% of our population

LET'S TALK  
ABOUT THE  
FUTURE



# Community Forums

CEO presentation  
then...

## **FIVE** questions

- What do we do well?
- What would you like us to do better?
- Two or three projects or programs you would like to see delivered?
- Are you getting 'Value for money' and if not, why not? (How do you measure 'value for money'?)
- What rate increase (if any) are you prepared to pay to maintain the current level of services and infrastructure? And what are you prepared to do without?





## How was the feedback used?

- Feedback was collated and grouped:
  1. **Operational** issues
  2. Items for inclusion in the **Council Plan**
- Informed 'new' Council (and staff)
- Confirmed the higher cap application was '**the right thing to do**'
- All participants were emailed a copy of collated feedback



# Evaluation?

We kept it pretty simple...

- **Survey** (4 questions)
- **Direct feedback** (email and verbal)
- **Internal reflection** (Councillors and senior staff)



## Survey Results

85%\* said they had appropriate opportunity to provide input into the future direction of Council

The fine print: \* 7 participants

# Reflections

(and my unresolved questions...)

- Engagement - we need to (and should) do it
- It can be hard work
- What is the best format?
- Resourcing required
- Needs to be managed well
- How do you get people's heads around Council operations and finances?
- The 'trade-off' question isn't that easy...

AND..

Are people really that interested? Are we over consulting? What is the role of elected reps and professional staff in relation to decision making?

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*Thank you*



**Juliana Phelps**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Towong Shire Council