

You asked, we answered!

It was great to see so many friendly faces from across the MidCoast when we held the latest round of Community Update meetings in March. For those who couldn't make it, here are a couple of common questions that our team were asked...

Q When will we see the new MidCoast identity?

A The process is almost complete! Your involvement has provided valuable insights into what matters to our community and formed a great foundation for the development of our Community Strategic Plan.

What matters most is our **people and place**, and the values expressed have been used to develop a brand concept for MidCoast. Road-tested with our community in late March, the new branding will soon be finalised for gradual rollout on things like our website, signage and publications. We hope you agree, it captures the essence of our region!

Q Why reseal roads that are in reasonable condition when others are full of pot-holes?

Read about our Roadcare Program overleaf

A Resealing is an important periodic maintenance treatment that is applied to the worn, brittle or cracked top layer of the road. It helps waterproof the pavement (the structural layer of a road) and prevent the formation of pot-holes, extending the life of the road. It also results in a more durable, quieter and skid resistant driving surface.

Roads that are pot-holed have already failed, and resealing is not effective as it doesn't address the issues under the surface. These roads require far more extensive (and expensive!) rehabilitation or reconstruction works.

THE DOLLARS AND SENSE

Resealing makes our roads last longer. By spending \$5 per m² now, this delays the need to spend \$60 per m² for reconstruction when the road fails. It's a value-for-money strategy.

The next round of Community Update meetings will take place later this year, so keep an eye out on our website, via our Facebook page and in local media where we'll announce the details.



More ways to be involved

We're in the process of developing our Community Strategic Plan and we need your input. This is the community's plan which outlines your long-term aspirations and objectives. It will provide a roadmap to ensure we're focusing on the key social, environmental, economic and civic leadership priorities that you identified as important to the MidCoast community.

Our next steps will be to detail and prioritise what you think needs to be done to address these priorities. Over coming weeks expect to see our team at your local community market, regional show and other locations in our community.

If you'd like us to come and hear what your community organisation or local community has to say, please contact us at community@midcoast.nsw.gov.au Find out more by visiting our website, where you can also provide your input.



IMPORTANT

Fire and Emergency Services Levy

New item on your rates notice from July 2017

From 1 July 2017 the NSW Government will change the way they collect the levy that funds the state's fire and emergency services. It will be removed from your home insurance premium, and instead be included as a line item on your rates notice.

This is not a Council charge or levy.

To find out more about what has changed, how it's calculated, and how it impacts you, check the FAQ's on the back of the enclosed letter from the Government, or **contact the NSW Treasury directly:**

Visit fesl.nsw.gov.au

Call 1300 78 78 72

Email FESL.info@treasury.nsw.gov.au

For advice and guidance about how the Government will oversee the transition from an insurance-based levy to the property-based levy, visit the Emergency Services Levy Insurance Monitor website at eslinsurancemonitor.nsw.gov.au

Tourism professionals from across NSW love us too



Donna Rygate, Chief Executive, LGNSW

The 13th Annual Local Government NSW Tourism Conference, hosted in Taree last month, was an outstanding success with over 200 delegates enjoying a first-hand experience of what our amazing region has to offer.

Fresh local produce, our rich cultural heritage and stunning natural assets including the mighty Manning River, Cattai Wetlands and Saltwater National Park were key features of this exciting event.

What shone through was our strong sense of community as local businesses, accommodation providers, service clubs, and countless volunteers came together to showcase the Manning Valley, and the broader MidCoast region as a premium tourist destination.



There's no doubt every one of our visitors left with great memories and an intention to promote our wonderful region when they return to their homes throughout the state and their jobs in tourism services.

The Conference was a great success, not least due to the outstanding efforts of our event partner, MidCoast Council. Thank you MidCoast!

Cr Keith Rhoades AFSM, President, Local Government NSW

CONTACT US

Get in touch by phoning our friendly customer service team on 6591 7222, email council@midcoast.nsw.gov.au or message us on Facebook.



Did you know we've committed a total of \$30M over the next four years to improving our roads and bridges?

This total is made up of:

- \$14M** from the State Government's Stronger Communities – Major Projects Fund
- \$16M** from \$4M per year in savings delivered by the merger



L to R: Pile splicing; bridge repairs; Resealing: Manchester Street, Tinonee; River Street, Taree

A program of works is already underway using savings achieved in Year 1, broken down as follows:

- \$250,000** Bridge testing/geotechnical investigations
- \$700,000** Structural repairs on timber bridges
- \$1,150,000** Bitumen resurfacing (various urban roads)
- \$500,000** Diamond Beach Road, Diamond Beach*
- \$300,000** Harrington Road, Harrington*
- \$800,000** Combined St/Dennes St, Wingham*
- \$200,000** The Bucketts Way, Stage 5a (bridge replacement)*

* Additional funding to extend scope or complete current project

The \$30M Roadcare Program is part of our commitment to improving infrastructure across the region and is over-and-above the existing road programs of the three former regions.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES GRANTS

Round 2 opens 1 May 2017

If you're involved with a community group or not-for-profit organisation, here's an opportunity to lift your next exciting project off the ground.

Applications for a second \$500,000 in Stronger Communities grants will be open from 1 May through to 9 June. Your project must meet specific criteria, and your application must include a detailed budget outline.

To find out whether your project is eligible and how to prepare your application visit midcoast.nsw.gov.au/grants from 1 May, where you'll also find the link to apply.

The Stronger Communities fund was established by the NSW Government to support the delivery of projects that improve community infrastructure and services across our region. Delivered in two phases, the first round of funding was awarded in November last year.

Successful Round 2 applicants will be announced from 31 July 2017.



Cuddlepie Early Childhood Learning Centre in Wingham have completed their "Wood be Good" project using funds accessed through Round 1 funding.

New Year, new look!

What is
MidCoast?

Our new MidCoast identity is almost here!

Thanks to everyone who took the time during October and November to tell us what you value most about our sensational region, and the things that make our home unique.

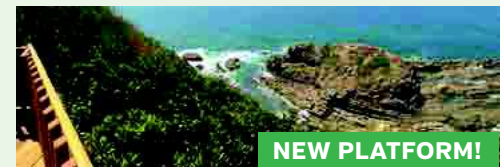
Your valuable input has helped shape two creative directions which will be unveiled at the end of this month. Both options will be on display from 30 January for two weeks, when you'll be asked to vote on the one you think best represents our region.

Visit the website from 30 January to review the options and cast your vote.



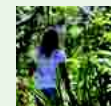
When family and friends come to visit

About 50% of Aussie holiday-makers choose a destination based on the opportunity to visit friends and family. Many of our MidCoast residents will play host over the summer and with so much to see and do in our stunning natural playground, here's a few ideas:



NEW PLATFORM!

Black Head's Whale-Watching Platform
Bring your binoculars for spectacular panoramic views. Access is via the street behind the surf club [off Main Street], with a short scenic walk through to the lookout. *Note: Whale-watching season doesn't start until late-April.*



Woko National Park, Barrington Tops

Enjoy the wilderness of Woko. Off Thunderbolts Way [via Curricabark Road], is a stunning family friendly campground on the banks of the Manning River. Ideal for birdwatching, bushwalking, or drifting down the river on an air-mattress, Woko has something for everyone.



Submarine Beach Walking Track, Yagon

The track begins at Yagon campground in the northern reaches of the Myall Lakes National Park. Stroll through forests of blackbutt and banksia before discovering the golden sands and crystal clear waters of Submarine Beach. Via Seal Rocks Road and turn right onto Yagon Road. *NSW National Parks Permits available from Forster Visitor Information Centre or National Parks Office Booti Booti.*



greatlakes.org.au
visitgloucester.com.au
visitmanningvalley.com.au

Be involved... Community update meetings

As part of our commitment to keeping you updated and involved, the next round of Community Update Meetings will take place across the region in March and April.

Meet with interim General Manager, Glenn Handford and key MidCoast Council staff to hear about the progress we're making in streamlining our services to the community, efficiencies achieved to date, and our plans for the upcoming year. You'll have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss specific projects or concerns in your area.



Meetings take place regularly [around once every six months] and are a great way to get to know us and stay informed about what's happening across the region.

Arrangements for the March-April meetings are still being confirmed so check our website and local media in February for specific details of dates and venues.

COME ALONG AND LET'S TALK!

Integration proposal: MidCoast Council and MidCoast Water

In a Council meeting held on 21 December 2016, the proposal to dissolve MidCoast County Council [MidCoast Water] and merge its functions with MidCoast Council was endorsed. The State Government will now commence a formal process, which includes placing the proposal on public exhibition for community feedback. Our website will be used to provide up-to-date information as the process moves forward.

The recommendation to merge the functions of the two organisations has been informed by projected cost savings achieved through a single management structure, with consolidated back-office and corporate functions. As always, we remain committed to ensuring value to our customers through delivering efficiencies in services.

Visit the website to stay updated

Note: Information correct as at 21 December 2016

Emergency Services Property Levy

From 1 July, you'll see a new line item on your Annual Rates & Charges notice, the NSW Government's Emergency Services Property Levy. NSW Councils will be required to levy, collect and transfer the funds to the State Government. This is not a new levy; it replaces the State Government's existing Emergency Services Levy, which funds our fire and emergency services. This is a new way for the Government to ensure all property owners, not just those who have insurance, are contributing to the important work of SES, RFS and Fire & Rescue NSW.

Visit www.emergencyservicespropertylevy.nsw.gov.au to find out more



Delivering better roads for our community

Towards the end of last year we consulted with our community about a proposed special rate variation (SRV), primarily focused on renewing roads and bridges, and to help us start reducing our significant backlog of roadworks.



Thanks to all who took part in the SRV survey where you were quite clear in acknowledging that something needs to be done.

In early December we notified IPART of our intention to apply for a SRV. At that time the NSW State Government had not clarified whether we would be eligible to apply as a newly merged Council.

In mid December the Office of Local Government announced that new councils created in 2016 would not be eligible for a SRV for the 2017/18 rating year. Although we are not able to introduce a SRV, we have identified other opportunities for increasing funding for our roads:

- Efficiencies and savings that we expect to realise over the next 4 years are estimated at around \$18million and will be exclusively dedicated to improving our transport network
- We're applying to the State Government to allocate \$14million of the Stronger Communities funding towards providing better roads for our community.

While this expenditure will go some way in addressing our roads and bridges, there remains a shortfall in funding for our road renewal program and the backlog of works on our roads. We'll continue to work with the Government and our community on the best way forward.

To find out more visit midcoast.nsw.gov.au/SRV

Note: Information current as at 23 December 2016

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Strengthening Stronger Communities Grants applications



Late in November, over \$500,000 in Stronger Communities grants was allocated to 17 very worthy community projects that ranged from boatsheds and community gardens, to hall refurbishments and exercise trails.

With the second round of funding due to be announced in April, Paul De Szell, MidCoast Council's Director of Community Spaces and Services provides some tips for making a successful application and some of the pitfalls to look out for.

Ensure your project is eligible

First and foremost, our assessment panel will check your application to make sure it meets strict eligibility criteria. This includes offering a benefit to the community, addressing an identified community priority, being well defined with a clear budget, being financially viable once set-up, and having a well-managed project team and processes to deliver the project.

Do your homework

Make sure your project will deliver on the needs and wants of the community and provide supporting evidence, such as survey results or statistics. Allocate time in the preparation of your application to speak with community members about your project, and collect data in a meaningful format. A simple poll or survey can make a big difference in showing support for your project idea. It's also a great way to road-test your concept and gather feedback that could make the end result even better.

Dollars and sense

Providing a clear and detailed budget outline is crucial in the application process. Think about every step required to deliver your project and then itemise the costs involved, including hard costs such as purchase of materials or hiring equipment, as well as labour costs even if these hours are provided by your community group at no charge. Where external costs will be incurred, attach quotes from potential suppliers. It's also wise to include a contingency allowance for incidentals like printing and postage, or unforeseen costs. The Assessment Panel will be looking for assurance that your project can be delivered within the budget allocated.

Another \$500,000 will be available to community groups in round two of the Stronger Communities fund, established by the NSW Government to support the delivery of projects that improve community infrastructure and services across our region.

Applications will be open from 1 May, so keep an eye out on our website and in local media where we'll announce details of information sessions we'll be holding to assist you with preparing your application.

Visit midcoast.nsw.gov.au/Community/Grants-and-Funding



CONTACT US

No matter what's on your mind, we're all ears.

Get in touch by phoning our friendly customer service team on 6591 7222 or emailing council@midcoast.nsw.gov.au

We hope you enjoy reading this second update from your new MidCoast Council and that it helps you stay on top of what's going on around the MidCoast region.

Building a stronger community, together



Stronger Communities Grants program

Applications for the first round of funding for the Stronger Communities program are currently being assessed. A wide range of community groups have put in many hours developing strong applications for much needed projects to benefit the community.

Community groups who have applied for funding will be notified next month of the outcomes of their application for projects to be implemented in 2017.

The Stronger Communities fund was established by the NSW Government to help newly merged councils kickstart the delivery of projects that improve community infrastructure and services. \$500,000 will be distributed in this first funding round, with another \$500,000 to be opened up for applications around September next year.



What represents our diverse communities, brings us together and will carry us into the future?

TELL US what you value

Online: Have Your Say via the MidCoast website

Social media: add #whatismidcoast to your post

Drop in at Council or Library

Phone or email

We've been working closely with you to better understand what MidCoast is, and we're keen to hear your thoughts to inspire creation of our new identity.

During November there will be more opportunities to provide input. Keep an eye out in local and social media and on our website for key dates and to find out how you can have your say.

midcoast.nsw.gov.au

whatismidcoast@midcoast.nsw.gov.au

Phone 6592 5316

Coming soon... Community update meetings

Once again Glenn Handford, our Interim General Manager and key staff from across MidCoast Council will be in your area to provide you with an update.

Topics will include a status report on the impact of the merger, the direction we are heading, and our long-term financial position and asset planning. See over for more information about special rate variation that will form part of these discussions.

These meetings are designed to keep you informed and provide you with an opportunity to ask questions. It's also a chance for us to understand your local issues, challenges and opportunities.

OCTOBER			NOVEMBER		
20	6.00 pm	WINGHAM	2	6.00 pm	HARRINGTON
24	10.00 am	FORSTER	3	6.00 pm	HALLIDAYS PT
24	6.00 pm	TAREE	8	6.00 pm	BULAHDELAH
26	6.00 pm	STROUD	9	6.00 pm	TEA GARDENS
31	5.30 pm	GLOUCESTER	14	6.00 pm	OLD BAR

Dates correct at time of printing. Check our website for confirmed details and venues.

Thank you

During September, an independent research company conducted a phone survey with people throughout the MidCoast area. If you participated, we'd like to say thanks for taking the time to share your views.

Results are currently being compiled and will not only help us identify areas for improvement, but provide a benchmark so we can measure our progress over time.

The last 5 months... have been a whirlwind of activity

A key focus has been on opening up the lines of communication, keeping you updated, and finding out what matters to you:

JUNE	MidCoast website launched
JULY	Facebook pages merged
JUNE/JULY	10x Community update meetings with Interim General Manager
AUG/SEP	6x Meet your Local Representative (LRC) drop-in sessions
SEPTEMBER	Customer Satisfaction Survey

Email us anytime, about anything
council@midcoast.nsw.gov.au



Australia Day Awards Nominations Closing dates

28 NOV 16	GREAT LAKES REGION
9 DEC 16	GLOUCESTER REGION
6 JAN 17	MANNING REGION

Australia Day 26 JAN 17

Manning Entertainment Centre	TAREE
Club Forster	FORSTER
Billabong Park	GLOUCESTER

New Year's Eve

Manning River Foreshore	TAREE
John Wright Park	TUNCURRY

Together!Day - everyone welcome
A free family fun day hosted by Ageing & Disability Services

19 JAN 17	FORSTER
24 JAN 17	TAREE

Council Meetings

26 OCT 16	2.00 pm	GLOUCESTER
23 NOV 16	2.00 pm	FORSTER
14 DEC 16	2.00 pm	TAREE
25 JAN 17	2.00 pm	GLOUCESTER

Visit our website closer to the time for full details of these events, and a listing of events across the region.

After-hours contacts



For emergencies that can't wait until business hours the next working day:

Bulahdelah	0400 413 955
Gloucester Region	0417 437 963
Great Lakes Region	
Roads, parks, reserves	0419 165 048
Animals, environmental issues, beaches	0408 652 662
Manning Region	6592 5399
Stroud	0408 656 704
Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest	0418 473 942

Water and sewer	
MidCoast Water	1300 133 455

Non-Council emergencies	
SES	132 500 or 6552 5866
Police	6555 1299
Manning/Great Lakes	
Emergency	000

We're hosting!

NSW's tourism industry comes together every year for the Local Government NSW Tourism Conference, and in 2017 they'll be arriving on our door step!

In March, the Manning Valley will proudly play host to hundreds of delegates over three fabulous days, showing the rest of the state why our region makes the perfect holiday destination. With our much bigger backyard, they'll also have the chance to explore the stunning beaches, lakes, and mountains across the entire MidCoast.



A great opportunity for our local businesses.

Not only will the conference bring extra visitors to our region, but delegates will leave talking about their amazing experience, placing us firmly on the map as a great place to holiday. It's a rare opportunity to build our economy into the future, leading to increased visitation and tourist spend, growing our local businesses, generating more jobs, and providing yet another reason to be proud of our fabulous home.

Let's talk Rates

This time last year there was a lot of talk about Special Rate Variations (SRVs), however because of the merger the applications could not be determined. The issues that previous SRV proposals aimed to address haven't gone away. A potential SRV remains an important part of our future planning.



We've compiled answers to some of the questions you may be asking below:

Why is MidCoast Council looking at introducing an SRV?

Part of our commitment to the community is to integrate the three former councils' budgets and asset management plans to inform the Long Term Financial Plan. This process has shown that while we've already made significant savings in the merger and freed up funds to enable additional borrowings, we still need to work towards achieving a balanced budget in the long term. A modest rate rise will assist our long term sustainability, and assist us to provide the standard of assets our community expects.

Will the community get a say? If so when and how?

In the first instance, community update meetings have been scheduled to provide you with information (see over for details). Engaging with our community is an essential part of the SRV application process and your input is critical. Your input helps inform our decisions. Details of when and how further consultation will take place will be confirmed and advertised.

Didn't the NSW State Government say merged councils couldn't apply for SRV?

The Government's initial position was to maintain the current rate paths of all former councils for four years, however IPART has since recommended that merged councils be allowed to apply for a rate rise under certain circumstances. Should the NSW Government support IPART's recommendations, we may be eligible to apply for SRV.

Visit the IPART website: ipart.nsw.gov.au

If approved, what will the SRV be used for?

As a large regional council, we have a significant infrastructure backlog. In short, introducing a SRV will ensure funding is available to address the condition of our extensive network of roads and bridges, which is now one of the largest in the state, ultimately providing a transport system that can be maintained to a satisfactory standard.

Register
for your rates
in your inbox



Visit our website
for more information
and to register.

Media release

For immediate release 3.55pm Wednesday 19 April 2017

Local roads set to benefit from change in legislation

Legislation passed in NSW Parliament earlier this month has provided the opportunity for MidCoast Council to apply for a Special Rate Variation, an important step forward in addressing the condition of the region's transport network and Council's ongoing financial sustainability.

The condition of roads and bridges has been highlighted by the local community as their highest priority. But with an annual shortfall of \$5million for funding depreciation of these assets, and a backlog currently sitting at \$180million, increased funding is needed to address the region's transport network. With this in mind, a special rate variation (SRV) proposal was developed and taken to the MidCoast community late last year. Now, in passing the Local Government Amendment (Rates - Merged Council Areas) Bill 2017, MidCoast Council has been given approval to proceed with submitting its SRV application.

The SRV proposal is for an increase of 5% (including the rate peg), each year over a 4 year period, along with the harmonisation of the environmental rate at 6% across the MidCoast local government area. Should the application be approved, the SRV will come into effect from 1 July 2017.

"Being given the green light to proceed with the SRV application is a positive step forward and one that is endorsed by our community, who have consistently rated the condition of local roads in need of significant improvement as of the highest importance", explains Glenn Handford, MidCoast Council's Interim General Manager. "In a survey conducted in November last year, over 75% of respondents supported a SRV at the proposed level or slightly lower, which pleasingly demonstrates the community's understanding of our current position".

When MidCoast Council was formed in May 2016, a critical initial priority was to consolidate the asset and financial position of the merged entity to determine a sustainable path forward for the community. An investigation highlighted the extensive asset backlog for roads and bridges, along with underfunding of depreciation for roads and bridges by \$5million annually, which until addressed, means the backlog of works will continue to increase.

"Since the merger, we have identified ongoing savings far exceeding the KPMG merger business case scenario. By committing these merger savings to our roads and bridges, along with additional merger funding through the Stronger Communities – Major Projects Fund, a \$30million Roadcare Program has been developed", Glenn said. "While this is a great result

for a newly merged Council, it will not address depreciation or the significant backlog, which is where the SRV will be critical in making a positive difference”.

Potential issues around affordability of the SRV proposal and its impact on ratepayers formed an important part of the community consultation last November. “The proposal includes a freeze on the waste levy for 3 years, which will provide a saving of \$120 and assist in some way to offset the rate increase”, he said.

The average increase per year is \$59 in the Manning region, \$64 in the Great Lakes region, and \$77 in the Gloucester region. To find out more about the SRV proposal, visit www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/SRV where information will continue to be updated as it becomes available.

Media Enquiries

For more information visit our website at www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au or call us on 02 6592 5399.

Forster | Breese Parade | PO Box 450 Forster 2428 |
council@greatlakes.nsw.gov.au | **6591 7222**
Gloucester | 89 King Street | PO Box 11 Gloucester 2422 |
council@gloucester.nsw.gov.au | **6538 5250**
Taree | 2 Pulteney Street | PO Box 482 Taree 2430 |
tareecouncil@gtcc.nsw.gov.au | **6592 5399**

Media release

For immediate release 12.35pm Thursday 22 December 2016

Holding pattern for SRV

The special rate variation proposed by MidCoast Council to address the region's roads and bridges has been placed on hold, with the Office of Local Government ruling out 2017/18 SRV applications for NSW's merged councils.

The confirmation comes after MidCoast Council expressed an intent to IPART early this month to apply for a 4-year special rate variation. The SRV proposal, designed to fund a shortfall in funding for Council's road renewal program and to start the process of reducing a significant backlog of roadworks, was acknowledged by the local community as important in moving forward.

Interim General Manager, Glenn Handford, explains, "While it's disappointing we're unable to make an application at this stage, the merger has allowed us to identify other funding opportunities, through efficiencies and savings, that will be dedicated to road renewal". MidCoast Council will also apply to the State Government to allocate \$14million of the Stronger Communities funding towards the program for the area's roads and bridges.

October and November community engagement activities provided the local community with an opportunity to understand the challenges faced in delivering improvements to the MidCoast transport network, where roads and bridges represent 76% of the total value of Council's \$3.3billion asset base.

"In all three former council regions communities placed a high priority on the condition of local roads, and nothing has changed", Glenn added. "The response we received in our recent round of community consultation and satisfaction survey was generally very positive towards a SRV as a way to make a difference now, rather than waiting and allowing further deterioration of our roads".

With assistance from asset experts, Morrison Low, the condition of almost 50% of the sealed road network across the MidCoast region has been categorised as fair to very poor.

"It's unknown at this stage what the guidelines will be for SRV applications beyond 2017/18, but in the meantime we'll be continuing discussions with the Government on additional opportunities for funding to assist in reducing the overall backlog on roads and bridges", added Glenn.

For more information about the SRV application process and the guidelines, visit www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

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Media release

For immediate release 10.45am Thursday 24 November 2016

SRV: Approval given for intention to apply

At MidCoast Council's meeting yesterday, Administrator John Turner gave the go-ahead for a notice of intention to apply for a special rate variation (SRV) to be provided to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

The decision to formally express an intention to apply for a SRV comes in the lead-up to a December deadline for IPART notification. At the same time the MidCoast community are being surveyed about their awareness of and willingness to support the SRV proposal, which seeks to address the condition of the region's sealed road network and formed a key component of MidCoast Council's recent round of community meetings.

Glenn Handford, Interim General Manager, explains "Our initial priority as a merged Council was to review our asset position - in particular sealed roads and bridges. As part of this review we've identified a \$5million shortfall per year in renewal funding for our sealed roads. This comes as no surprise off the back of each of the three former councils' asset positions, and unless we're able to address this gap, the condition of our roads will worsen, and the community will become increasingly dissatisfied".

"This is in addition to an estimated backlog of road works around \$150 million", Glenn added.

Providing notification to IPART of Council's intention to apply for a SRV by the expected December deadline is the initial formal step to making an application. "Feedback we've received through our community consultations to date has been generally receptive to the proposal. The results of the current survey will also play a role in informing our decision on whether to proceed further with the application", added Glenn.

The NSW Government currently has a stated position that limits a merged Council from applying for a SRV for a 4-year period. Based on that position, MidCoast Council's management is working closely with the Government on finding a constructive way forward to address the asset issues faced across the region.

The proposed SRV is for a 5% rate increase per year for 4 years, broken down as 2.5% each year for the rate-peg as specified by IPART and 2.5% each year for roads and bridges. In addition, a 6% environmental levy is proposed to cover all three regions, replacing the existing levies in Manning and Great Lakes and introducing it in Gloucester.

"Complexities imposed by the IPART process require that any rate variations due for expiry in the proposed SRV period are dropped out, and then reintroduced as part of the new SRV

application. This means the impact of the current SRV proposal on ratepayers will vary depending on their location”, added Glenn.

Independent researchers, Jetty Research, are currently undertaking phone surveys with a statistically valid random selection of residents from across the MidCoast community. To ensure everyone has a chance to provide input, the information pack and survey will be replicated online at the MidCoast Council website from Monday 28 November.

Through efficiencies and savings identified since the merger, Council has earmarked \$18 million for roads and bridges over the next four years, but this alone is simply not enough. “If we don't take action now to increase our rates income our community will see further deterioration of our road and bridge infrastructure, and an ongoing increase in the asset backlog. Tackling the renewal program and backlog of works in the immediate future provides a far more cost effective and fair proposition, than deferring it for future generations to deal with on a much larger scale”, Glenn said.

To review the proposed SRV and associated background information, visit ‘Have your say’ on the MidCoast Council website from Monday, where you can also take the online survey. The survey will remain open until 4.30pm on Monday 5 December.

Following collation of all information and feedback from community meetings and surveys, as well as the outcomes of the asset review, a report will be presented to Council prior to the submission of a SRV application. At this stage applications are expected to be lodged with IPART in February 2017.

Media Enquiries

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council@gloucester.nsw.gov.au | **6538 5250**

Taree | 2 Pulteney Street | PO Box 482 Taree 2430 |
tareecouncil@gtcc.nsw.gov.au | **6592 5399**

Media release

For immediate release 1.55pm Wednesday 9 November 2016

What are better roads worth to you?

MidCoast Council is looking for community perspective on the region's roads and bridges, the environment, and a special rate variation proposal, commissioning Jetty Research to undertake a telephone survey this month.

Participants will be randomly selected through a telephone recruitment drive, commencing next week. Director of Engineering and Infrastructure, Ron Hartley explains "people who are contacted and agree to take the survey will first be sent an easy-to-read information pack that includes information on the current condition of our sealed roads, and the proposed path forward. This will help them to provide informed feedback when Jetty phone back the following week".

Participants will be asked about their current levels of satisfaction with MidCoast roads, plans for funding maintenance and renewal of the road network, and their expectations for Council's management of the environment. The survey will also address options for funding community expectations through a special rate variation. It is anticipated the survey will take around 15 minutes to complete.

"We have assessed and rated the condition of our sealed roads and bridges from the former three councils. This asset data provides the basis for our way forward. Roads and bridges represent 76% of the total value of our \$3.3 billion asset base and they are our greatest challenge" said Ron Hartley.

Recruitment will commence for the random phone survey on Monday 14 November. "We're encouraging everyone who's contacted to participate as a way of having their say in the crucial decision-making process that will take our region into the future" added Ron Hartley.

"Previous research indicates the level of importance our community places on the condition of the sealed road network and on our natural environment. The results of the survey will assist us in determining whether the community supports increasing investment to improve the roads which are in poorer condition. At the same time we are discussing our environmental program and the levy that supports that".

For those who are not randomly selected for the phone survey, the information pack will be made available on Council's website later this month, where they can also complete the survey.

Photo: Survey participants will be asked to nominate their preference for the standard of sealed roads in our region (this road is Bucketts Way, Allworth).



Media Enquiries

Email media@midcoast.nsw.gov.au or telephone 02 6591 7377

www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au

Forster | Breese Parade | PO Box 450 Forster 2428 |
council@greatlakes.nsw.gov.au | **6591 7222**
Gloucester | 89 King Street | PO Box 11 Gloucester 2422 |
council@gloucester.nsw.gov.au | **6538 5250**
Taree | 2 Pulteney Street | PO Box 482 Taree 2430 |
tareecouncil@gtcc.nsw.gov.au | **6592 5399**

Media release

For immediate release 3.15pm Tuesday 1 November 2016

Community update meetings continue

With its second round of community update meetings now at the halfway point, the team at MidCoast Council is pleased with community response to the proposed path forward for the recently amalgamated MidCoast region.

An engaged community has already come out in encouraging numbers to attend five update meetings since they kicked off in Wingham on 20 October. Most recently around 60 attendees participated in discussions at Gloucester last night, where Glenn Handford, Interim General Manager and key staff provided an outline of the combined financial asset position of the new Council, and detailed a proposal that paves the way for delivering a 5 year, \$30 million roads program to address the current asset backlog. An additional \$20 million could be provided through a modest special rate variation (SRV).

Estimated at between \$150 - \$180 million, and representing 76% of the total value of Council's assets, the roads and bridges backlog remains the greatest challenge in creating a successful regional council, with recent independent community research confirming the importance that the local community places on the condition of its roads.

Interim General Manager, Glenn Handford explains, "Through efficiencies already in place since the merger, Council will contribute \$18 million towards a renewal program designed to address the deterioration of our transport network. Combined with \$12 million from the State Government, our objective is to deliver the quality of roads and bridges our community expects".

This injection of funding is however only temporary, and a permanent solution is required.

The proposal under discussion throughout the ten local community update meetings includes the potential for a modest SRV to ensure this renewal program can commence in the immediate future. "We're working closely with the NSW Government and IPART in seeking a rate variation that targets our roads and bridges, and community's input in that process is critical", Glenn added.

If successful, the proposed SRV of 11% (net 5% Great Lakes; net 6% Manning and net 11% Gloucester) in year 1, followed by 5% in years 2, 3, and 4 (inclusive of a 2.5% rate peg and 6% environmental levy) will deliver an additional \$20 million to strategically address community priorities which are squarely focused on an improved roads and bridges network. The SRV includes removing any existing rate variations in place in the three former council regions, and introducing the 6% environmental levy across MidCoast. Calculations

also factor in a waiver of the annual waste charge to deliver a cumulative saving to rate-payers of \$120 over 3 years.

“Visiting Wingham, Forster, Taree, Stroud and Gloucester to date, we’ve had many interesting and lively discussions, with feedback being generally very positive towards the proposal”, Glenn added.

Community update meetings are still to take place in Harrington (6pm Wednesday 2 November), Hallidays Point, Bulahdelah, Tea Gardens and Old Bar. Visit www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au for the full schedule.

Media Enquiries

For more information visit our website at www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au or call us on 02 6592 5399.

Forster | Breese Parade | PO Box 450 Forster 2428 |
council@greatlakes.nsw.gov.au | **6591 7222**
Gloucester | 89 King Street | PO Box 11 Gloucester 2422 |
council@gloucester.nsw.gov.au | **6538 5250**
Taree | 2 Pulteney Street | PO Box 482 Taree 2430 |
tareecouncil@gtcc.nsw.gov.au | **6592 5399**

Media release

For immediate release 3.05pm Friday 2 September 2016

MidCoast Council seeks feedback on community satisfaction

As part of the NSW Government's 'Stronger Councils' framework for all newly merged councils, MidCoast Council is currently undertaking customer satisfaction surveys.

The random telephone surveys will be conducted throughout September by National Field Services.

"The surveys will only take about 10 minutes and we hope that those who are contacted by telephone will be happy to take part and help us improve our services" said Council's Manager of Engagement and Communications, Jane Ree.

The survey results will provide baseline information on community views on MidCoast Council's performance and services.

"This information will be a valuable tool for Council to better understand what matters to our community and to develop measures to improve services, focus communications, enhance community perceptions of council and build stronger relationships with our community" said Jane Ree.

These results will serve as a benchmark for future research and analysis and the survey is intended to be repeated late 2017.

The project is a partnership between the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet and the 19 newly merged councils.

Photo: National Field Services is conducting phone surveys on behalf of MidCoast Council through September.



Media Enquiries
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Email media@midcoast.nsw.gov.au or telephone 02 6591
www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au

Forster | Breese Parade | PO Box 450 Forster 2428 | **6591 7222**
Gloucester | 89 King Street | PO Box 11 Gloucester 2422 | **6538 5250**
Taree | 2 Pulteney Street | PO Box 482 Taree 2430 | **6592 5399**

MidCoast Council (MCC) was formed in May 2016 through the merger of the former Great Lakes, Greater Taree City and Gloucester Shire Councils.

Our new region has a population of over 90,000 people, covers more than 10,000 square kms, and includes 190 kms of coastline, 3,574 kms of roads and 542 bridges, 195 of which are timber.



During October and November, we're visiting communities across the MidCoast region to discuss Council's progress since it was amalgamated, what has been achieved so far, and our integrated asset and long-term financial position.

With roads and bridges representing 76% of the total value of our \$3.3 billion asset base, they are our greatest challenge.

This update provides a snapshot of our current position and a proposed way forward.

MidCoast roads & bridges

Sealed roads are assessed on a scale of 1 [very good] to 5 [very poor]. Almost 50% are currently categorised as fair to very poor. Once roads slip into condition 4 and 5, the cost to bring them back to standard increases significantly. If funding is not available, the backlog of works and community dissatisfaction with the road network increases.

Community research indicates general satisfaction with condition 3 roads (and condition 4 for lesser used roads), so our immediate goals are to:

- Maximise asset life through a renewal program where roads can be held at condition 3;
- Prevent condition 4 roads slipping into condition 5 which is unacceptable from an asset management and community perspective; and
- Start to address the asset backlog

Breakdown by road condition: Length [km]; % of total network; value of roads in current condition [\$M]

1: very good		383km 21.5% \$201.6M
2: good		565km 31.7% \$297.2M
3: fair		510km 28.6% \$268.2M
4: poor		273km 15.3% \$143.8M
5: very poor		50km 2.8% \$26.1M

Renewal & backlog



Our roads:

Recent assessment by asset experts Morrison Low found we currently have an annual shortfall in renewal funding for roads of \$5 million. An additional \$5M per year will allow us to stop the decline of our road network by preventing roads falling from condition 3 to 4, and condition 4 to 5.

Our bridges:

At the time of the merger, the combined bridge backlog was estimated to be about \$4 million, however further assessment now indicates this will be significantly higher. Investigations continue and are expected to impact the total asset backlog figure.

Our total backlog:

Backlog refers to the total amount of renewal works that need to be undertaken to bring Council's assets to an acceptable standard. The current asset backlog for roads and bridges is expected to be \$150 - \$180M (excluding recent findings on the timber bridge network). We recognise that addressing the backlog is a generational issue, and funding this fully in the short term is not possible.



Strategy

to address renewals & backlog

Our long term strategy is based on recommendations by Morrison Low:

- Maintain roads across MCC in their current condition
- Don't let condition 3 roads slip into condition 4 and 5
- Prioritise condition 4 and 5 roads for renewal based on risk and economic benefit analysis
- Seek additional grant funding for regional roads and major transport routes
- Seek a special rate variation (SRV) to fund the gap in the renewal program

This will allow us to address the \$5M annual renewal gap, stop the backlog from increasing, and start to fund the generational backlog in our roads and bridges.

Special rate variation (SRV) proposal

All three former Councils highlighted the need for a SRV to address asset renewal and backlog issues.

As MCC, the need remains and a SRV of 5% each year for roads and bridges, for 4 years is proposed. This includes the rate peg of 2.5%.

Here's a comparative summary of pre- and post-merger rate paths and SRV proposals.

	Previous Council proposal	MCC proposal [actual impact]*	Difference
Manning region	49.6% over 6 yrs	22.1% over 4 yrs	-27.5%
Great Lakes region	20.7% over 4 yrs	20.8% over 4 yrs	+0.1%
Gloucester region	63% over 4 yrs**	28.5% over 4 yrs	-34.5%
	13% for 2017-18	28.5% over 4 yrs	+15.5%

* The actual impact on ratepayers is shown in the table above. MCC also proposes to deliver an environmental program across the region through an environmental levy. The actual impact (what they are paying now vs what they will be paying with the MCC proposal) in the 3 regions varies due to the different existing environmental levies. Figures are cumulative and include an assumed rate peg of 2.5%. Details of the impact on average residential rates in each of the 3 regions is available on separate handouts. ** 63% includes the last year of an existing 13% special rate variation and a proposed 3 years x 13% increase as per the Fit for the Future submission of the former Gloucester Shire Council.

The modest SRV proposal is a means to address our renewal and backlog issues.

Through efficiencies achieved, right-sizing the organisation and support from the State Government, our SRV proposal is modest and will deliver sustainable improvement in our roads and bridges. Doing nothing and only applying the rate peg of 2.5% for 4 years, will mean continued deterioration of our roads and bridges, resulting in the need for a more significant increase after 4 years.



Sustaining our environment Environmental levy



We are also proposing to deliver an environmental program across the region through an environmental levy. Our proposal includes:

- Renewing the 6% Great Lakes region environmental levy
- Continuing the existing Manning region 5% environmental levy, and raising it to 6%
- Introducing an environmental levy of 6% for the Gloucester area.

The environmental program has been well-supported in both Great Lakes (20 years) & Manning regions, resulting in the protection and improvement of our natural assets. Continuing and extending it across the entire region will:

- Deliver on community priorities of a healthy environment and catchment
- Allow for integration of strategic environmental protection across the region
- Attract additional environmental grant funding to deliver community outcomes

The way forward

We believe that by working in partnership we can find a constructive and fair way to deliver community priorities and a strong regional Council.

Our proposal includes investment from Council achieved through efficiencies, the State Government, and from our community through a proposed SRV of 1 year x 11% and 3 years x 5%. The 11% includes the 2.5% rate peg, 2.5% for roads and bridges and a 6% environmental levy for the region.

	2016-17	2017-18 Year 1	2018-19 Year 2	2019-20 Year 3	2020-21 Year 4	Total
MCC	\$3M	\$5M	\$5M	\$5M	Nil	\$18M
State Govt	Nil	\$5M	\$5M	\$2M	Nil	\$12M
SRV	Nil	\$2M	\$4M	\$6M	\$8M	\$20M
Totals	\$3M	\$12M	\$14M	\$13M	\$8M	\$50M

The table above shows the proposed contributions to the road and bridge renewal program.

Affordability and impact on our ratepayers is key to our proposal.

We've worked hard to balance this with the importance of maintaining our road and bridge network.

As part of our proposal we are also freezing the waste charge for 3 years, providing ratepayers with cumulative savings of \$120 over 3 years. We expect a positive outcome for our community with rate levels being held to considerably less than would have been the case pre-merger, significant improvements to roads and bridges across the region and expansion of activities that protect and enhance our natural environment.

We will continue to work with our community to strategically address both short and longer term priorities. Our efforts to quickly identify the combined financial and asset position of the new council, and proposing a modest SRV demonstrates our focus on addressing community priorities.