

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGO - 26TH MARCH 2009

Council considers an Application for Special Rate Variation

At today's meeting, (26 March 2009), the Moree Plains Shire Council considered an application to the Minister for a Local Government for a Special Rate Variation for the 2009/2010 year.

The proposed increase of 6.7%, on top of the rate pegging allowance, would apply to farmland and is earmarked to fund the much needed maintenance of the rural road network.

Moree Plains Shire Council's General Manager, David Aber said "Council's staff have undertaken a comprehensive study of the condition of roads within the Shire and the cost of maintaining the road network is well above the current level of funding".

Mr Aber said the rate increase would provide an additional \$880,000 for the road network with a further \$240,000 from budget savings, resulting in an increase in the road maintenance budget of \$1.10 million. The aim is to make a significant improvement to the condition of the rural road network.

In addition funding from Council and to meet the identified road funding shortfall, the Shire will also be reliant on funding becoming available from the other State and Federal Governments.

The proposal to seek a special variation was considered by a Special Rating Taskforce, consisting of a small group of councillors and staff, charged with the responsibility of identifying all rating options.

Mr Aber indicated that while the current proposed rating increase is restricted to farmland, the Taskforce will continue to discuss options for rating equity for all residential sectors.

As part of the Management Plan consultation for 2009/10, there will be a series of community meetings to discuss the proposal. The meeting schedule will be released next week.

END

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