

2/12/2024

Dear Councillors,

On behalf of Indigo Community Voice (ICV), I extend our congratulations on your recent election to the Indigo Shire Council.

Our submissions to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services identifies a range of concerns with several warranting your prompt attention as follows.

Revenue and Rating Plan. The Plan requires amendment to comply with the Local Government Act 2020 for financial stability and predictability for rate payers. The current Plan fails, with excessive and unpredictable rate increases for rate categories that annually exceed the state rate cap. Annual adjustments to differential rate categories are essential for fair and equitable outcomes.

Community Engagement, Trust & Priorities. Community satisfaction with Indigo Shire Council hit a decade low, reflecting a clear loss of trust over council's last term. Over three years, surveys of 700+ respondents reveal financial decisions misaligned with community priorities and expectations.

Essential Services and Infrastructure. The community has consistently prioritised the maintenance and improvement of core infrastructure—roads, drains, footpaths, and community buildings. However, the council has neglected these priorities, with inadequate asset renewal and a diluted focus caused by non-essential infrastructure grants.

Environmental Management Contribution charge. This charge, initially intended for \$4.2 million rehabilitation of four closed tip sites, collected over \$7.5 million in 16 years has not delivered the promised works. The charge is misleading, giving the appearance of lowering general rates and inappropriate cost cross-subsidising is concerning. Removal of the charge or justification to the Essential Services Commission through an increase in the general rate is required.

Tourism and business. Tourism North East significantly lacks financial transparency and alignment with community priorities. Local business promotion and marketing has been neglected due to excessive funding of Tourism North East.

Transparency and Integrity. Increased transparency and integrity by conducting open briefings, ensuring robust and genuine decision-making and fostering closer alignment with the community.

We look forward to your leadership in redressing these issues promptly for the community over your term in office.

Herb Ellerbock

President, Indigo Community Voice Inc.
0418 549 749