

Tuggeranong Community Council

Rate hike to hit local residents

By Darryl Johnston

President

THE ACT Budget was handed down recently and included some very welcome initiatives for Tuggeranong in areas such as health, public transport, education and basic infrastructure.

The bad news is that it appears that Tuggeranong residents have been slugged with the highest percentage increase in general rates, with an average hike of 6.57 per cent.

This is compared to South Canberra (0.51 per cent), North Canberra (2.07 per cent), Gungahlin (2.99 per cent), Woden Valley (3.67 per cent), Belconnen (3.76 per cent), and Weston Creek (3.86 per cent).

Residents in Chisholm, Banks, Fadden, Bonython and Gilmore will be hardest hit with increases of between 8.98 per cent and 7.62 per cent.

This was a point I highlighted to members of the Legislative Assembly when I addressed the Estimates Committee on the ACT Budget. I expressed concern that the increases in general rates would have a significant impact on many families and individuals who were already doing it tough with recent rises in their weekly grocery bills and monthly home loan repayments.

I also highlighted the fact that charitable and social welfare organisations in Tuggeranong have reported an increase in demand for their services from families and individuals suffering hardship. St Vincent de Paul assisted a total of 4540 people in 2009 compared to 3669 the previous year and 3065 in 2007. The level of assistance it provides those in need has increased from just over \$90,000 in 2008-2009 to \$126,000 in 2009-10.

Other charitable and community welfare organisations tell a similar story. As we head into winter, I expect there will be a further demand on their services.

The TCC is participating in the ACT Government's strategic review of its wood smoke programs. The TCC partnered with the Australian Lung Foundation (ALF) Tuggeranong Lung Support Group in the review. Both organisations are concerned that high levels of neighbourhood winter wood smoke pollution is having a serious impact on public health, particularly the elderly, the very young and those with pre-existing heart and / or lung conditions.

Meanwhile, reliable figures suggest that only a very small number of households are responsible for the vast majority of Canberra's air pollution. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported in 2008 that less than four per cent of Canberra households burn wood for domestic heating. Yet, the Federal Government's 2007-08 National Pollution Inventory reported that the burning of wood for domestic heating was responsible for more than two thirds, or 67 per cent, of Canberra's air pollution.

Still on the environment, and green cars will be in the spotlight at the June 1 general meeting of the TCC. Representatives of Betterplace Australia will address the meeting on their plans to establish Australia's first electric car network in Canberra. It promises to be an interesting presentation. The meeting will commence at 7.30pm in the upstairs function room of the Southern Cross Club in Tuggeranong.