

Tom, Example of "priorities".

NEWS

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Urban land levy plan angers the developers

New home buyers in the Tweed area will have to pay thousands of dollars more for their land under a council plan to charge developers an estimated extra \$89 million over the next 15 years.

Under the proposal Tweed Shire Council would levy developers up to \$5342 for each new urban block of land and up to \$10,824 for each new rural block to pay for new roads.

The plan has outraged housing developers and led to forecasts that battling new homebuyers would shy away from the Tweed.

But councillors supporting the plan say existing ratepayers will otherwise have to pay for new roads with one predicting annual rates would have to be 43 per cent higher for the next 15 years.

The council voted at a surprise special meeting this week to put the Tweed Road Contribution Plan on public display for 28 days before another vote on adopting it.

One councillor opposed to the proposal, Warren Polglase, warned: "The writing is on the wall the council will adopt it on a very close vote."

"The plan is asking in excess of what people can afford to pay," he said.

"To develop a block of land in

Tweed Shire now costs about \$50,000 to \$60,000, not including filling and the like.

"If you add another \$3,000 on it starts to put the cost out of the ball park. People will go elsewhere."

Cr Lynne Beck described the plan as 'an absolute disgrace' and a method of stopping development.

She said it especially attacked country people. She said the new strategic plan restricted locations where new rural blocks could be developed and they now cost up to \$10,824 more.

"Who can afford that?" she asked.

Development consultant Harry Ellis said the plan meant new settlers would pay for all new roads although they would also be used by existing residents.

"I don't think that is user pays," he said.

He added the council should beware 'any sensible business doesn't whack its prices up and not suffer the consequences of market forces'.

Supporter of the plan Cr Ron Cooper said current ratepayers did not need new roads.

"They may use them when they are built but by the same token the new people will use the old roads and are not required to make a contribution to them," he said.

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