Two rises are on the way

By CLAYTON BENNETT

RURAL residents have received a rough rate rise. Litchfield council has released its draft 2014-15 municipal plan with a proposed rate hike of 3.5 per cent.

For the average resident in the area that means an extra $22, up to $658.26 from $636 last year.

The previously subsidised waste levy will increase from $20 to $315.

Mayor Allan McKay said the rates were necessary.

"Everything is going up and if you don’t have a rate increase now we’d have to have a big jump (later on)," he said.

Mr McKay said the small base of ratepayers in the municipality meant there wasn’t much money coming in from rates anyway.

"It doesn’t give us a lot of money to plan for the future, so we’ve got to be careful with how we spend it," he said.

Elected members are expected to get an increase to their allowances, with Mr McKay set to earn a maximum of $93,766.91.

Mr McKay’s proposed pay boost, an increase of $3,951.86, comes weeks after he was criticised by other elected members for not communicating properly or consulting with councillors. It is understood the rural council is undergoing mediation.

The municipal plan includes: $1.9 million capital road works for resealing; $2 million road repairs and maintenance; $1.3 million for waste transportation costs to Shoal Bay Darwin landfill; $1 million on recreation reserves and $900,000 on vegetation slashing, mowing, weed and fire management.

The draft plan will be available for public consultation until June 23. Email council @litch.nt.gov.au or write to Ms Diane Chellingworth, Corporate Services Manager, Litchfield Council, PO Box 446, Humpty Doo NT 0836.

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A taste of the USA for troops

A SMALL group of Australian troops trained with 80 US Marines at Kangaroo Flats on Thursday last week.

Eight ADF members took part in the event 30km south-east of Robertson Barracks.

It was a bilateral training session for “fire team” leaders; the smallest tactical unit in the Marine Corps.

Training included attacking a hostile bunker in the bush and a medical evacuation to a Sikorsky helicopter.

The Marines said joint training events were an excellent opportunity to improve both forces’ interoperability.

US Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel Keven Matthews said it was about getting to know each other.

“It’s an incredibly great opportunity for us,” he said.