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Submission:

Wyong Councils request for an increase in rates of 6.9% each year for the next 7 years should not be considered for the following reasons:

Council does not demonstrate sound financial management by voting in continued use of debt to fund activities. In the latest balance sheet it clearly indicates a debt level of \$197 million incurring a large interest bill. The rate rise is primarily to fund a significant proportion of this debt.

The rate payers of Wyong have lost confidence in a number of elected officials (such as the Mayor) who have been on council for many years and through voting on decisions put forward to council have put the Shire in this poor financial position. Why give more funds to people who have not demonstrated sound financial management in the past?

Council is still spending money it doesn't have by funding initiatives that probably won't succeed such as a proposed regional airport for Wyong.

Wyong has currently one of the highest percentage outstanding rate collections in the State. What will happen to those who cannot afford to pay a compounding 6.9% interest rate increase over 7 years. It will force people to reduce their standard of living or to sell up and potentially move out of the Shire.

Council needs to demonstrate improved efficiency by the Council with the current funds available before receiving additional funds.

Council needs to demonstrate a more open form of government by ensuring that all facts are presented in a clear and precise manner to rate payers such as the current debt levels and why the Shire has these. There was no such mention in the "Your Say" brochure sent to each rate payer along with the rates requesting feedback on 3 funding options.

Permitting a 6.9% increase in rates for each of 7 years is not in the best interest of the rate payers and IPART is requested not to approve their request. Council MUST demonstrate significantly improved financial management before even considering such a request. If fact it might be an appropriate time for the NSW State Government to appoint an Administrator to really understand Councils position and to put it back on track.