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Submission: I urge IPART to reject the application from Coffs Harbour City Council for a Special Rates Variation for the following reasons: 1. This increase is overwhelmingly rejected by Coffs residents. The random online panel survey recorded 71.4% opposed to the increase while the Council's own "consultation" survey recorded 88% opposed. 2. Coffs Harbour is an economically disadvantaged area with high unemployment and an above average pensioner population. The proposed increase will place a major financial burden on a population which cannot afford to pay. If approved, this additional increase will cause significant financial hardship to many in our community. 3. The Council has proposed some type of freeze on water and sewerage access charges to "offset" the proposed additional rate increase. If savings are achievable in this area, such savings should be realised regardless and passed back directly to users who pay the charges. This is NOT a REAL offset to ratepayers. 4. At the most recent council election none of the candidates went to the election with this policy. It was only after the election that some decided to make this their policy. This policy has NOT been endorsed by voters. Nor is this increase supported by all councillors - only 6 supported this rise. 5. Too much is currently being spent on a favoured few special interest groups in our area rather than on core council services (such as infrastructure maintenance, roads and gutters). Council expenditure should be for the general good of the whole community not just a favoured few. Better and more equitable allocation of existing revenue would solve any infrastructure problems. 6. It is ludicrous for any council that can lavish ratepayer expenditure on the arts and subsidised overseas trips for "delegations" to holiday in Japan, to suggest that they desperately require a special rate increase. In summary this is a savage impost on a group who cannot afford to pay and who (overwhelmingly) oppose this increase. The result of this increase would be major financial hardship on many within our disadvantaged community.