

4th March, 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to appeal to you to reject Coffs Harbour Council's submission for their outrageously proposed 16% increase over and above the nominal increase allowable under the existing rate-pegging restrictions.

Council has undertaken "consultation" from ratepayers by inviting them to "balance the books" on-line, plus surveying, after giving ratepayers information on the council's view of the reasons why it needed such a hefty rate increase. This survey was done twice (as council did not receive the positive outcome the first time), both times with the result that over 70% of ratepayers objected to such an increase. We question the council's figures for the bare maintenance of council services, particularly in view of well-known waste and reluctance by the council to firstly trim their own operating costs and eliminate waste.

The council often state that they need the proposed increase just to maintain services for the ratepayers, however:

- (i) The general manager has recently been granted a bonus, supposedly for his economic management – yet he has been instrumental in providing new, “top heavy”, very well paid positions for his own assistants. Not only that, but there seems to have been little in the way of auditing council expenses, particularly in view of work practices and obvious waste (ask just about any ratepayer for examples of waste of council's time and resources).
- (ii) While council is applying for this huge rate hike, they are suggesting projects such as a new performing arts centre, the costly ongoing development of the Jetty foreshore area, an expensive city centre upgrade, paying exhorbitant amounts for viability studies, plus giving grants to individual small community groups and larger sporting bodies such as the Rabbitoes, to encourage tourism.

We have no objections to a small increase to account for the CPI, even though ratepayers' welfare payments, governments pensions, etc., do not seem to receive the same increases - but this increase would be well within the rate-pegging allowance under the State Government. We personally cannot afford the proposed increase, after hefty increases in other services such as electricity, gas, etc. I would warrant that any housewife, accustomed to making do with his/her limited budget, could look at the council budget and easily make cuts and trim waste. Perhaps the general manager, probably on around \$200,000 a year, could take lessons on making cuts from those struggling to cope with ever-increasing bills with only a handful of dollars.

It concerns us that our present council is not listening to the very people who voted for them as our representatives. Perhaps, as suggested recently in a letter to the editor in *The Advocate* someone should be asking whether an Administrator needs to be appointed?

Yours sincerely,

