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Date of submission: Friday, 28 April 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

In the last 19% SRV application we provided documentary evidence that Bellinghen Council had lied to the community with respect to the diversion of road funding away from roads. We submitted internal council documents and proved the mayor had lied in a front page news paper article IPART covered this up and still approved the SRV. We are hoping that this time around IPART will deny the application due to the fact that the assurances the council gave last time proved to be worthless, why should this council be given another and even greater 31% cost of living increase on ratepayers when their word is worthless. What happened to rate pegging and security for the less well of and fixed incomes. If IPART has any real integrity and independence it will deny this application as it is simply unjust.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

An incompetent council will always have a need for an additional revenue source. Establishing such a need according to the criteria that is predetermined from the outset to be automatically recognised as legitimate is an indicator of a fixed approval process. This is the situation with IPART special rate variations. The office of Local Government sets the IPART approval criteria so as to guarantee revenue increases regardless of genuine need and the negative outcome for ratepayers on fixed and minimum income.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

In IPART SRV applications Bellinghen Council will make token attempts to canvass alternatives to the rate rise but these attempts are always disingenuous and to a certain extent avoided because they really do not want to seriously look at cost saving within the bureaucracy and all the unnecessary duplication of responsibility cost shifted from State or Federal jurisdictions. We all know that there is a correlation between bigger bureaucracy and higher wages for the executive staff. Bellinghen Council will always claim that there is no real alternative other than slugging the poor defenceless ratepayer the easiest target. This is the same lie rehashed every few years to keep a fundamentally unviable bureaucracy afloat it is always at ratepayers expense and never at genuine economic responsibility. The alternative to this rate rise was the last rate rise that was sold as a remedy to avoid this rate rise as usual it was a lie and IPART accepted it.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

As is the usual standard of communication from Bellinghen Shire Council there is minimal effort to communicate with the community. This Council does the minimum in community consultation that it thinks is enough to tick the box for the assessment criteria. They always try to hide the cumulative cost and instead run a campaign based on weekly or daily additional cost saying it will have minimal impact, we say tell that to pensioners that can not afford heating in winter. IPART's record is that of accepting there flawed methodology and tokenism for those experiencing hardship. The reality is 31% is unaffordable for most ratepayers and this is on top of the last 19% rate hike that was supposed to resolve councils economic incompetence.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No! There is no appropriate variety of engagement methods to sell a stinking unconstitutional back door tax increase. If the Council wanted to genuinely engage with the community it would do what it said it would do in their election promises this was there only real engagement with the community. Not one of the elected Councillors ran on a platform of raising rates. In fact the majority of Councillors when asked before the election gave promises that they would not raise rates and within a few months they seemed to suffer bureaucratic capture where they betray their constituents to benefit of the bureaucracy that can not live within its means. The community is fully aware and suffers significant objection fatigue we know that this SRV is predetermined to get approval by IPART. There is no engagement process everyone knows it is a waste of time IPART is a rubber stamp. Council will claim that the lack of response is an approval for the SRV this is a lie the community has simply given up on the consultation process it is a waste of time objecting or making submissions.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The Council simply does not care for community feedback, ratepayers are seen as an endless resource to be plundered. No one in this community wants another rate rise beyond the pegged limit. These endless SRV's have basically destroyed rate pegging. The action taken by Council was to apply for a 31% rate rise regardless of community feedback, it speaks for itself.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Firstly it is a fact that Bellinghen Council stated in the last 19% SRV application that IPART approved that the 19% SRV would be sufficient to put the Council in a positive long term economically viable situation. So why should anything they say in this

current application be considered as anything but proof that what this Council says can not be relied on in any way. Many land owners in this Shire are paying in excess of \$4000/annum now how can another \$1000 or 31% be considered reasonable? Everyone is suffering from the drought then the floods then covid and inflation. There is no correlation between rates paid and services received we receive no services to our property at all yet we are asked to pay 4000 for nothing. Yet people with similar values in Sydney pay far less overall rates and receive far more services. The impact of this 31% rate hike given the current economic conditions and the inequity within the State renders this SRV totally unreasonable on any measure.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The only people that have the capacity to pay are those recent arrivals who have sold at high city prices and purchased in this area with plenty of money in reserve. As for the majority of long term residents there is no capacity to pay without a significant sacrifice in our standard of living, this is especially the case for those on fixed and minimal incomes. Bellingen Council seems to believe that most of this area is now populated by cashed up city people, and they have callous disregard for long term residents. This Council is basically running a policy of pushing out the old and less well off and encouraging wealthy immigrants. It is a form of economic apartheid so the Council can maintain it's empire building and excess. Beyond the token box ticking for the application there is no council consideration of the communities capacity or willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Introducing payment options or whatever simply can not address the fact that a 31% rise will only induce hardship and as we have said above they would prefer to push people suffering hardship out of the Shire. Bellingen Shire Council simply sees ratepayers as a resource to exploited any hardship provisions will be enacted reluctantly they would prefer that you move away. Maintaining this unsustainable bureaucracy is the Councils highest priority, stuff the people that are struggling this is the Council position and it would also seem to be the position of IPART going on past applications.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

The relevant IP&R documents were provided in the last 19% SRV application which IPART approved it did not make one iota of difference in the long term or short term outcome. The fact is this Council stated in the last 19% application that their economic predicament would be resolved if that rate rise was approved, now they are asking for a 31% rise and they will give the same or similar assurances but the simple fact is they are unable to live within their means, they have made no significant productivity improvements and they still see the ratepayer as a soft target to be endlessly exploited. Tic the box IP&R docs included what a joke.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

It is painfully obvious that what ever cost containment and productivity improvements that this council has claimed to have made, it has been grossly inadequate. Otherwise they would not be wanting to pillage the rate payer a further 31%. This empire building bureaucracy is simply incapable of significant cost containment everyone in this country is suffering from inflation currently and all the small businesses, home owners, pensioners simple have to struggle on and make ends meet why should this council be any different? What Council needs to explain and quantify is why the last 19% SRV that they stated would resolve their economic problems has not not worked and why anyone should consider this application as being any more trust worthy with their assurances?

Author name: G. Peadon

Date of submission: Tuesday, 2 May 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Go  yourselves

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

None

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The increase is far too high for a service that is already considered average

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

No consideration as no one is willing to pay the ridiculous increase

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The plan will hardly help anyone in hardship

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

There will be no improvements with this rate rise