

I wish to lodge an objection to Maitland City Council's(MCC) proposal to increase rates.



Background

Initially, MCC embarked on a campaign to increase rates, 6.64% above IPART'S Rate Peg of 2.3% ,making for an overall increase of 8.94% for residential ratepayers.This is at a time when MCC has savings of \$60 million. This request was exorbitant and absolutely outrageous in the current climate.

In 2011-2012 and 2012-2013,MCC received two consecutive increases of 9.8%p.a and 10%p.a. respectively.This increase was to cover maintenance of infrastructure and now MCC wants to embark on more money wasting projects like the "Levee". ("Levee" project,opening of a Mall to one way traffic,it used to be a 2 way road through the town then they closed it for a Mall,now they want to reopen it to one way traffic)They plan to repave the mall,using Italian tiles ,thus allowing

one lane of traffic to pass through ,with only an additional 15 park bays costing \$17million.In fact,MCC has already negotiated a loan for \$10 million to start this "Levee" project in 2014. But, according to Councillor Bob Geoghegan, no money from the rates increase will pay for the Levee project.We are only paying the \$700 000 interest per year on the loan with the rate increase. Obviously, the ratepayers of Maitland are being taken for fools. On the 12th of December,MCC signed a contract for the supply of Italian tiles at a cost of \$820 000.

MCC has embarked on a campaign of deception from day one. Initially, when determining the increase, they were quoting a rise of 8.35%p.a. over 7 years as $(8.35 \times 7)\%$ as a 58.45% increase. This figure has mislead the community for 6 months,as they did not admit that,it was an 'average' rate over residential, rural and business. Furthermore ,they failed to point out that it was compounding.At one stage, MCC made a poor attempt to indicate,that, it was "a cumulative 58.45%".I'm afraid though, this statement is meaningless.I informed MCC that it was meaningless and it wasn't until December,6 months later that a representative from MCC, acknowledged that it was an average 75.3% increase ,as the amount paid each year is compounding. In terms of a residential ratepayer,8.94% equates to an 82% increase over 7 years.

The First Proposal(Ordinary Meeting Agenda 10th December)

MCC met on the 10th of December to discuss the proposed rate variation and consequently voted for the 8.94% increase for residential ratepayers.Numerous letters were submitted against any increase,I could not find one letter in support of an increase. Furthermore,on examining the final survey of 400 ratepayers conducted by Micromex , it found that the majority of ratepayers were supportive of council. One has to question this survey, with its "airy fairy" questions.For example: "Do you want enhanced services?" Well,of course they would say yes. MCC has interpreted the answer to the "enhanced services" question as,yes,"we want a rate increase" ,in order to gain MCC's desired result.

The phone survey questions on the options,Option 1 reduce services and accept around 3% increase,Option 2,maintain services and increase rates above 3% or Option 3 ,enhance services and increase rates above 3%.There is no mention of the actual 8.94%pa increase, at any stage.That is, an 82% increase over 7 years. Overall, I believe that this survey is not a true indication of the wishes of the ratepayers of this community. A survey run in the local paper , the Mercury dated 25/11,found that 30% were in favour of an increase and 70% were for a cut in services,that is,no increase.[see article] Simple question, simple answer.I must apologise if all this sounds confusing,but,the "Funding Our Future"(Booklet enclosed) is confusing.When ratepayers filled in the survey

attached, Options were not numbered. Once again only a select few received the opportunity to comment on this "Funding Our Future" document. The whole process, I believe has been one of confusion.

In 2011, MCC received consecutive increases of 9.8% and 10% for the years 2012 and 2013. If one includes these increases, it equates to a 120% increase in 9 years. That's more than double the 2011 rate. At the MCC Ordinary meeting on the 10th December, they determined that, the residents of Maitland wanted the increase in rates. Let's examine those results presented at that meeting. The random phone survey which I know for a fact, disallowed a ratepayer from taking part, as that person was over 65. The 65 and over category accounted for 19% (page 26). MCC's own admission (Mercury 7/2/2014) indicated that, they targetted sections of the community. These actions of ignoring or targetting certain sections of the community in the so called random survey, cannot and should not be ignored. The online survey indicated that 76.1% (Q7) were not supportive of the proposal (page 26) and 70% (Q9) thought that it was not necessary to introduce the rate variation (page 26). Then there are the written submissions presented at the meeting. Of the 25 submissions (pages 29-53) presented at the meeting, Yes, presented at the meeting, 20 were not in favour (that's 80%) 3 were non committed and 2 were either unrelated or illegible, and not one in favour of a rate increase. These figures are from MCC's Ordinary Meeting Agenda consisting of 521 pages held on 10th December, when they came up with the decision that we have taken into account the wishes of the ratepayers of Maitland and we intend to proceed to IPART to seek an 82% increase in our rates over 7 years.

MCC's municipality is recognised as a growth area and has increased considerably over the last 10 years and so has its rate base. 1000's of homes have been constructed and their owners have contributed to general rate revenue. Despite this increase in population, not everybody receives a large income. I refer to an article in the Newcastle Herald dated 25/11/2013, where it indicates the mounting debt due to the already burdening rates. This situation is also supported by a letter from the former mayor and councillor Ray Fairweather dated 25/11/2013. This debt problem is anticipated by MCC, with MCC advertising in the Newcastle Herald on Sat 8/2/2014 for an additional Debt Recovery officer. We also have had increases in waste disposal charges to the tune of \$262/tonne. That results in approximately \$130/trailer load. Further more, MCC has increased the waste collection charge by \$50 or a whopping 16% to \$394.

The Final Proposal (Ordinary Meeting Agenda 11th February)

Well, MCC has held another Ordinary Meeting (11/2/2014) and have taken on board some sentiment of what MCC believe is the minority of ratepayers and have decided that an average increase of 7.25% or 7.7% for residential, is justified. That's a 68% increase, over 7 years. My rates would go from \$1700 to nearly \$3000. On completing some research, residents of Sydney's Suburbs pay much less than we pay. (See Mercury 3/10/2013, Sydney rates \$891) This decision was made on cherry picking a 400 resident phone survey, not necessarily ratepayers, and relied mainly on the question, "Do you want enhanced services?" MCC has accepted the "Yes" answer here and applied it to a conclusion that, "the residents want a rate increase". A completely false assumption.

It gets worse, at that same meeting, 66 written submissions had been presented. 55 submissions (83%) [pp26-97] were against any increase, 7 were N.A. and 4 unrelated. Once again there were no submissions in favour of a rate increase. The General Manager presented an additional 17 written submissions. 15 were against and 2 N.A., that's 88% against [pp119-136] and not a one in favour. Another survey in the Mercury, dated 10/2/2013, the day before the meeting, asked the question, "Is MCC proposed reduced rate increase of 7.25% acceptable?" The results were Yes 18% and an emphatic 82% No.

Obviously, MCC continues to ignore the wishes of the ratepayers and cling to a false assumption that "enhanced services" means "increase rates."

Conclusion

Right from the start, I believe that this Council has embarked on a campaign of deception in not quoting the real increase to residential ratepayers. They have carried on a charade of informing ratepayers that the majority are in favour of a rate increase through what I and others believe are biased surveys involving unrelated and irrelevant questions conducted through Micromex in order to enhance their agenda. This is no reflection on Micromex who I believe, may have been under instructions. The fact, that, at their own Council Meetings on the 10th of December and 11th of February, the written submissions, indicating 80% were against were totally ignored. Phone surveys, I believe, were screened to obtain the desired result.

It is most appreciative to see that IPART realises that times are tough and through their wisdom, they have decided to set a realistic rate peg limit. Mind you, I could never understand why the rate peg always exceeded the CPI. If we were experiencing the good times, then, there may be some justification to approve an increase to match up to the CPI. But, at present, these are not the good times. Obviously the State Government acknowledges the cost of living in the country, by offering a \$10000 incentive for people to move from Sydney to the country. This inducement would not last long in the country, where we pay higher fuel, electricity, water, food and at present land rates.

I realise that this letter is lengthy but it outlines a chronological account of MCC rate proposal. I believe that MCC needs, not only, to tick the boxes required by IPART, but, I believe more importantly, it also needs to take into account, the wishes and capabilities of the ratepayers, especially those on fixed incomes who rely on CPI increases with no concessions. The majority, of written submissions (80odd% against), online surveys (70odd% against) and in the two public surveys conducted by the local paper (The Mercury), have been an, emphatic, 80odd% against an increase. MCC may be facing challenges and should refrain from embarking on expensive projects such as, the "Levee", in the current climate. I believe MCC has changed its position numerous times in the last 8 months and the final decision, made on the 11th of February, of an average of 7.25%p.a. or 7.7%p.a., for residential over 7 years has not been discussed or put to the ratepayers. The reason for the reduction, is that MCC had miraculously discovered some \$0.5 million in savings somewhere, which they had not found in the previous 8 months. Possibly they could look a little closer for savings when they advertise for jobs like, "Technical Weeds Advisor, \$61-\$68K, 38h week, RDO every 4 weeks and long service leave (LSL) after 5 years" . (Newcastle Herald 1/3/2014) LSL after 5 years, really?

IPART should consider the wishes and capabilities of the ratepayers and the challenges that they are experiencing in the current difficult economic climate.

John W. Alterator



- Enclosed are
- (1) Written submission (3pages) [*Emailed as well]
 - (2) copy of the Ordinary Meeting Agenda 12th December 2013(521pp)
 - (3) " " " " " " 11th February 2014(507pp)
 - (4) copies from local papers Mercury and Newcastle Herald (5 pp)
 - (5) copies of advertisements of meetings and rate increases(4pp)

Please tell 'em they're dreamin'

3/10/2013

Maitland City Council's request for a further increase in rates of 7.25 per cent per annum or 8.95 per cent pa for seven years is simply unbelievable.

As a ratepayer, we have already suffered three lots of 10 per cent for the last three years in order to maintain services and cover maintenance of infrastructure.

The very next day, after they were granted the last request, council embarked on a \$7 million mall that then escalated to a \$15m mall and currently has blown out to a \$17m, Mall-Levee project.

More infrastructure to be maintained.

Now the latest thought bubble is to utilise the old lanes with commercial enterprises.

MCC has begun the process required by the independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

That is, to discuss the proposed increase at community meetings, conduct a survey with the ratepayers, resulting in the conclusion, that, "residents don't mind paying the increases in rates provided services are maintained".

Once MCC has ticked all the boxes as required by IPART, the proposed increase can be awarded.

If MCC succeeds in achieving the lowest increase, our rates will increase 63 per cent from their current level.

If they achieve the maximum of 8.95 per cent pa, our rates will increase 82 per cent.

MCC keeps referring to the average rate of \$986.

A better measure would be the median which would be much higher.

But, like the deception above, it tends to be glossed over and it does not look much when IPART considers the application.

At Sydney City Council, they have a minimum rate of \$503 and a rate charge of 0.001623c in the dollar on the land plus \$363 waste management and \$25 for stormwater.

At Maitland, we pay a base amount of \$352 plus 0.0043c in the dollar for land, waste management \$340 and stormwater \$25.

For a \$213,000 UCV block in Sydney, total rates in Sydney \$891, and in Maitland \$1653, that's nearly double.

This figure could reach \$2694 or \$3008 in seven years.

This is absolutely outrageous.

If you paid \$1000 in rates in 2010, this could go to \$2425 by 2020.

MCC is asking for suggestions on what to cutback on.

Well, what about scrapping the \$17m Levee fizzer and take a leaf out of Newcastle City Council's book by reducing staff and cutting back on the waste, instead of dreaming up new ideas simply to maintain your job.

I would like to urge all Maitland ratepayers to write a submission to IPART (ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au) to indicate that we, the ratepayers, cannot afford these exorbitant increases that are well above the rate peg limit of 3.2 per cent, which is already well above the inflation rate.

JOHN ALTERATOR
LORN

Rates and services a tough balancing act for council

22/11/2013

Maitland City Council could find itself on a collision course with some of the city's ratepayers.

Letters to the editor and online blogs the *Mercury* has received in recent weeks show a groundswell of disapproval for the council's intention to increase rates by 8.35 per cent annually for seven years. Compounded, this would mean an increase of 82 per cent by 2021.

the Maitland Mercury

EDITORIAL

This is a large impost on low-income earners, especially when wages growth has been minimal in recent years.

On the face of it, however, council's

proposal has merit.

The increase would close the gap on an estimated \$92 million budget shortfall within 10 years and that would be a good thing for our city.

But that's where council faces a conundrum.

Community surveys continually throw up wish-lists of what ratepayers want - with a heated swimming pool, more cycleways and better roads

usually topping the list.

That's all well and good, but these services come at a cost - money the council doesn't have.

To tick the items on this wish-list council would need to raise rates - something which continues to divide the opinions of ratepayers.

While some are happy to pay more, others say they are at breaking point and want council to tighten its belt -

just like they have had to do in these tough economic times.

Mayor Peter Blackmore and fellow councillors will be under pressure to find a balance that allows for future growth and improved services while at the same time remaining affordable for ratepayers.

Maitland is a wonderful place to live and, yes, there will be some growing pains as our population increases.

MCC

25/10/2013

Compounding a rates headache

So, Maitland City Council has adopted to pursue an 8.35 per cent increase each year over the next seven years.

As mentioned previously, this is not a seven times 8.35 per cent over the seven years, resulting in a 58.45 per cent increase by 2021, as MCC would like ratepayers to believe.

It is a 75.3 per cent increase over seven years.

It's compounding (getting larger) each year.

That is, if you paid \$1700 in rates now, you will be paying \$2980 in 2021, up 75 per cent.

I believe that the survey conducted by the council is also deceptive and misleading.

Options that are displayed in the brochure are not numbered, yet council in the survey, has used this information to determine outcomes by referring to the option numbers.

The options are numbered and colour coded at the bottom of a graph on page 5 of the brochure and not numbered on the previous page, only colour coded.

Furthermore, the survey contains four options, again not numbered or colour coded, together with space for comments.

Councillor Steve Procter has invited residents to inform council if they have objections to the proposed increases.

I do not buy the paper each day but, to my knowledge, I do not recall any letters in favour of the increase.

I do, however, recall a number of letters against any increase.

I have never, ever, in my life come across any person who states they don't mind paying more for a product or service, yet, council finds 43 per cent, that's 516 people in a few weeks, almost half in a 1200-person survey.

I would like to call on ratepayers to write to council, the media and more importantly express their concerns to: IPART (PO Box 290, QVB Post Office, NSW 1230 or ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au) otherwise, they, MCC will get the proposed increase, because they have ticked the boxes: need, consultation and the survey.

**JOHN ALTERATOR
LORN**

22/11/2013

Council must live within its means

Well said Jim Crethary concerning our next seven years of 8.95 per cent rate rises as I am sure no matter what we say or vote our mayor will oversee the rate increase no matter what the final vote.

Spending nearly \$70,000 in publicising the much-needed increase highlights the determination of this council in spending money where least needed.

Beautifying a shopping precinct and having a limited number of car parks with traffic flow along a street/mall is not enough to generate long-term viability to a shopping precinct that died many years ago and is a waste of ratepayers' hard-earned money.

If you wished to really do something with the area, pull the whole lot down and start again with proper planning and foresight.

A lot of Maitland families will feel the hardship as I know of no job that increases their annual salaries by 8.95 per cent. And what if a blow-out of estimated costs were to occur? I wonder who would be asked to foot the bill?

We may need to hold back on the imported paving.

I would hate to think that Maitland council could be at the forefront of changing times with insurance companies, utilities, other government bodies jumping on the band wagon and follow in Maitland council's footsteps with 8.95 per cent increases annually.

And what in seven years' time, it is not enough, what then?

Maybe Maitland council should take a leaf out of Tony Abbott's book in attempting to stop the boats, let's stop the houses, give Maitland's infrastructure a chance to catch up with developers.

I implore all Maitland residents, no matter which way they wish to vote, to consider all advertised options and vote accordingly as I would hate to see a rate rise be imposed by a minority vote.

What a disaster it would be for council to learn to live within their means as we families/ratepayers have to. A predicted \$90 million blowout in years to come means to me very poor management.

East Maitland

11/10/2013

IPART must hear our rates plea

Well, I must apologise for the error - three years instead of two - made in my letter in the *Mercury* dated October 3, titled "Please tell them they're dreaming".

However, I must point out the error made by Maitland City Council general manager (Letters, October 7) indicating that, at an average rate of \$986, 50 per cent of residents will pay this or a lesser amount.

I believe this is incorrect. It can be true, however, the median rate (a higher amount) is the measure that ensures this result.

Council's own documents indicate that for a block of land valued at \$250,000, rates of \$2923 will be payable in seven years, if council is successful in this request through IPART.

Council has already ticked the boxes of the financial need, the community consultation and has conducted the survey, indicating that "we don't mind paying these exorbitant increases, provided we maintain the services currently provided".

All the boxes except one, are now ticked.

The residents of Maitland must show strength by writing to IPART indicating their objection to this outrageous request of an increase 8.95 per cent for seven years, a figure well above the inflation rate, currently 2.6 per cent, and the rate peg of 3.2 per cent.

MCC speaks of the challenges it faces financially. At no stage, does it consider the challenges that we, the residents face.

We, and I hope I speak for the majority of ratepayers of Maitland, appreciate the services provided by council, however, in difficult times we all must consider demands placed on our budgets. MCC must realise that we have not got a bottomless pit of funds.

Maybe, if council must have some of these requests and it is absolutely essential to provide a particular service, it should draw on its \$60 million in savings, otherwise, do what we the public try to do and live within our means until times improve.

Once again I must urge Maitland ratepayers to write to IPART to object to these outrageous requests otherwise we will pay 180 per cent more in rates within seven years.

**JOHN ALTERATOR
LORN**

Resident urges council to live within its means

Have the gods smiled on us? Those of us who question the cost of the second attempt to revitalise Maitland City Centre may think so.

Some years ago central Maitland was converted into a mall, despite considerable opposition.

The mall severed the historical route which, in our early history was a thoroughfare for early settlers and pioneers trekking to the New England and North West regions of NSW from Morpeth.

With that lost from our memory, the resultant facility failed. Activity in the once thriving city stalled or languished.

Maitland betrayed itself by virtue of its own resources, by attempting increased population and residential areas.

Private enterprise came in and helped our town grow further by establishing shopping centres (malls) where population was situated, to save people coming all the way into the old shopping centre, which was central Maitland.

By natural progress there are seven shopping malls (centres) around Maitland; provided by private enterprise, whereas once there was only one, in High Street.

The effect of this transition is what we are left with. And council is trying to overwhelm natural progress with a new edition mall.

The original request by central Maitland businesses, to curtail this downturn in business, was for

traffic to be allowed into High Street again. It would be a much less costly project to convert the current mall into a traffic way than to convert it to a fairland as proposed by council.

In the meanwhile time is being wasted by red tape and businesses are still where they were 12 years ago.

While the fight to rejuvenate traffic in Maitland is theirs, the fight to save our rate money is ours.

Maitland mayor, Cr Peter Blackmore, responding to the government refusal to honour the previous government's commitment of \$7 million to the project was quoted in the *Mercury* on November 4, "this project will definitely go ahead."

Federal Member Joel Fitzgibbon was quoted on November 4: "Council has indicated it will push on without this government funding but this may mean our ratepayers will have to pay more."

And council is pushing for an annual rate increase of 8.95 per cent for seven years.

Ratepayers can't afford worthless frivolous ventures.

Cr Blackmore and Mr Evans, just open High Street to two-way traffic at a minimum cost and live within council's income - like ratepayers.

But we need an efficient waste service including kerbside bulky goods pick-up.

Woodberry

Please report to authorities anything that appears slightly suspicious, as this may save your loved one or someone else's.

Name and address withheld

2/11/2013

Council must tell truth on rate hike

MAITLAND City Council is planning to hike rates up 75.3 per cent in seven years, not the 58 per cent as reported ("Rate hike decision looms" *Herald* 29/10).

It is not $8.35 \times 7 = 58.45$. This rate is compounded (getting larger) each year.

If you paid \$1700 now, you will pay \$2980 in seven years' time.

Come on council, ratepayers need the truth.

I'm sure we would all like a 75.3 per cent increase over seven years in our finances to cover council's request, but, I don't think that is going to happen.

Fair enough, if times are good, a modest increase may be acceptable. However, I believe, that we are not experiencing these times at present.

Dreams such as the \$17-million mall "levee" project may just have to be put on hold.

If the council cannot afford to function to supply services, then they must take a leaf out of Newcastle City Council's book and cut back on staff and projects.

Maitland council has now

ticked all the boxes - that is, the need, the survey and the community consultation - in order to lodge their application for a rate increase.

It will be granted, unless the residents of Maitland write to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, when the application is lodged early in 2014, indicating the increase is unaffordable.

John Alterator, Lorn

Price movements nothing but con

PETROL pricing in Newcastle often gets an airing in the letters pages and in news reports.

Last month there were letters talking about the near-uniformity of high prices around Newcastle.

Yesterday's report ("Fuel price ups and downs" *Herald* 1/11) deals with the difference in price movements' speed between increases (instantaneous and affecting every service station in town within seconds, apparently - but there's no collusion) and decreases (random and delayed for days) when the wholesale price changes.

What gets me about these movements is that the petrol in service-station tanks when prices rise was almost certainly delivered before wholesale

MCC 3

Councils take action to recover millions in unpaid rates

From Page 1

Newcastle City and Lake Macquarie councils both raised rates by at least 8 per cent for 2012-13. And Maitland council is expected to give the green light on a similar hike next month.

Mr Gilshenan said councils were "constantly monitoring the situation". And a 9 per cent a year interest rate was charged daily on unpaid bills.

"We understand there are employment issues, that economic growth is faltering and population rises are contributing to debt," he said.

"That's why we try to come to an arrangement with any ratepayer struggling financially."

Port Stephens mayor Bruce Mackenzie said the \$1.2 million owed to his council would "solve a lot of problems".

MOUNTING DEBT

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Maitland	\$349,606	↑ \$62,891	20,430	\$11.80
Newcastle	\$5.9 million	↓ \$2 million	65,000	\$90.70
Port Stephens	\$1.2 million	↓ \$20,000	31,134	\$38.50
Cessnock	\$2.8 million	↑ \$685,000	24,034	\$116.50
Lake Macquarie	\$3,779,174	↑ \$322,453	79,528	\$47.50
The combined councils' outstanding rates for 2012-13				\$14,035,780.79

"We could fix our roads, spend it on ageing buildings, fix drainage problems," he said.

"But I'm also concerned for the ratepayer. I understand that it's not easy at the moment and only getting harder. There are genuine people out there doing it tough and I'd be the last person to start coming down hard."

Auditors revealed at last week's Newcastle City Council meeting that the council was spending \$24 million a year less on infrastructure maintenance than it should.

Lord mayor Jeff McCloy said access to the millions in unpaid rates would help achieve infrastructure goals in the city.

"[Council] could bring forward some of the key identified projects such as the completion of Bathers Way and the revitalisation of Hunter Street," he said.

"It is always a priority to hold ratepayers to their financial responsibility to the city they live in. This needs to be balanced against the needs of those experiencing genuine financial difficulties, where council can offer advice tailored to the ratepayer's circumstances."

Roads were a concern for other councils - especially Cessnock which had the worst debt-ratpayer ratio at \$116 owed each.

"Our whole [roads] network could do with [the money]," mayor Bob Pynsent said.

"We need to be talking with ratepayers and try to be nice and proactive about it instead of taking legal action."

25/11/2013

Push for further council rate rises disappointing

I am disappointed that council has visited ratepayers again so quickly after having only increased rates by 9.8 per cent in 2011-2012 and 10.2 per cent 2012-2013, this equates to a 20 per cent increase in rates with an accumulative affect forevermore.

The proposed increase in rates of 8.95 per cent each year over seven years will almost double your rates over that period. An increase of 8.95 per cent over seven years will see you paying an extra 82.2 per cent in rates.

The suggestion that we have the lowest rate per head per capita by any council in the Hunter is calculated on the basis of including every child in Maitland's local government area. We all know that Maitland is the fastest growth inland city in NSW and many young families, which includes many young children, are moving into our area. The situation is very different if you calculate on how much each home owner pays as rates compared with other local government areas in the Hunter.

The residential ratepayer is at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to paying rates and I will give you an example:

□ Businesses that pay council rates can claim those payments as a tax deduction and pass on those increases by way of price increases for goods and services to their customers. Lessees of business premises will eventually pay more rent, all of their costs will be passed onto the public.

□ Rural rates are also tax deductible.

□ Residential rates are not tax deductible.

□ Pensioners who pay rates are entitled to a reduction of \$250, (approximately shared between council and the state government, this amount has not changed for 30 to 40 years.)

□ Renters will find that their rents will increase as the owner passes on those rates increases.



FLASHBACK: The *Mercury's* report from Friday, November 22.

□ Young families with large mortgages, and with all the housing development in Maitland there are a lot in this category, will find the proposed increases another financial burden.

So, one can see that a lot of people are affected by a large increase in rates, and those people deserve due consideration by our elected council. It should also be about the ability of ratepayers to pay.

Cr Bob Geoghegan has assumed that councils are obliged to automatically apply the government-approved increase. This not the case. Council can apply any percentage up to the approved amount. I recall in the 1980s council did not increase the rate at all – but I would not recommend council consider doing that.

Council needs to have an audit on what services they are providing; it appears to me that some of those services are not basic local government responsibilities. Some of council services are duplication of services provided by other organisations.

RAY FAIRWEATHER

Former mayor and councillor 1977 to 2012

CRANKY

24/10/2013

Little resistance to rate hike proposal

Typical of these councillors who pass the rate increase to the next level when only 17 per cent of people in the MCC survey were in favour of the 8.35 per cent increase which hardly makes anywhere near being the majority of people in favour of it.

But they would ignore this as the whole public consultation is probably just a smokescreen so they can say to IPART that they went through the process.

Cr Procter is happy to just assume that the majority may be in favour of it.

Hardly what I would call taking a responsible approach in representing his constituents.

Unless council realises that it has to actually reign in its own costs and waste, and operate in fiscally responsible manner we will just continue to see both the council and its current bunch of councillors treating the ratepayers as a cash cow it can milk dry at their own discretion.

25/11/2013

ONLINE POLL

TODAY'S QUESTION:

Should the southern Maitland bypass plan be a low or high priority for the state government?

YESTERDAY'S POLL:

Do you support a special rate variation or a cut to Maitland City Council services?

RESULTS:

RATE VARIATION 30.6%
SERVICE CUTS 69.4%



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maitland

city council

Funding Our Future

A SUSTAINABLE COUNCIL FOR A SUSTAINABLE CITY

RATING - WE NEED YOUR INPUT

Council is talking with the community about funding the future we want for our city. Without significant change, Council will face a funding shortfall of \$92 million over the next ten years. While all sources of Council income and potential savings are being examined, rates revenue will be a major part of the solution.

Deliver services as programmed	Enhance and improve services	Deliver reduced services and/or deficit budgets
Increase rates to deliver services as programmed, being 7.25% p/a for seven years. This option would see all services continue, as well as building an indoor 25m pool, construction of 'The Levee' and river link building in Central Maitland and upgrades to Maitland Railway Station precinct and surrounds. This would equate to an average increase of \$89 per year on the average residential rate.	Increase rates sufficiently to improve or expand 18 key service areas, being 8.95% p/a for seven years. This would include all services and projects as programmed, as well as see new projects and programs initiated in line with community priorities, with a significant boost to road and footpath funding, improved city appearance, new youth facilities, expanded recreational cycleways and more. This would equate to an average increase of \$116 per year on the average residential rate.	Increase rates by annual rate peg amount only, being approximately 3% p/a. This would result in deficit budgets and/or cuts to the broad range of council services as well as reductions in the initiatives already programmed. This would equate to an average increase of \$35 per year on the average residential rate.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

- Complete a detailed survey at maitlandyoursay.com.au
- Attend a community information session

WHEN	WHERE
Monday 9 September 5.30 - 7.30pm	East Maitland Library
Wednesday 11 September 10.00am - 12.00pm and 5.30pm - 7.30pm	Town Hall, Maitland Room
Thursday 12 September 5.30pm - 7.30pm	Rutherford Library
Monday 16 September 5.30pm - 7.30pm	Thornton Library

Visit maitlandyoursay.com.au to find out more and use the rating calculation tables to see what impact each option will have on your rates.

LET'S TALK ABOUT

Roads, footpaths, libraries, pools, CBD revitalisation, playgrounds, cycleways, heritage, events, city appearance, skate parks, cemeteries, culture, engagement, community buildings, suburban town centres, environment, sports facilities, emergency management, tourism and customer service.

maitlandyoursay.com.au

 facebook.com/maitlandyoursay

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t 4934 9896

maitland

city council

Funding Our Future

DELIVERING TO OUR COMMUNITY PROPOSED RATES INCREASE

Council's Delivery Program 2013-17 (Revised) and Operational Plan 2014/15 is on exhibition until 24 January 2014.

The comprehensive program outlines Council's objectives through to 2017, and incorporates the budget, rating, fees and charges for 2014/15.

Over the last eight months, we've asked the community about their service expectations for the future. The revised program has been developed to deliver what our community wants as our city continues to grow.

Importantly, the program incorporates a seven year special rate variation proposal to increase total rates revenue by 8.35% each year for seven years and an adjustment to the proportion paid by each rating category. This is shown below.

Rating category	Rate \$ Current 2013/14	Average increase per annum (%)	Summed % increase over seven years (includes 22.4% standard 'rate peg')	Compounded % increase over seven years (rate peg + srv)%	Rate \$ 2020/21 (year seven)	Average increase per annum (\$)
Residential urban (average land value \$148,000)	\$986.54	8.94%	62.58%	82.08%	\$1,796.32	\$115.68
Residential non-urban (average land value \$296,500)	\$1,662.67	8.34%	58.38%	75.21%	\$2,913.18	\$178.64
Farmland high intensity (average land value \$686,000)*	\$2,954.46	6.52%	45.64%	55.64%	\$4,598.44	\$234.85
Farmland low intensity (average land value \$445,000)*	\$2,167.36	6.22%	43.54%	52.57%	\$3,306.77	\$162.77
Business (average land value \$303,500)	\$5,260.57	7.03%	49.21%	60.91%	\$8,464.62	\$457.72
Mining (average land value \$1,039,000)	\$151,903.88	8.35%	58.45%	75.31%	\$266,298.63	\$16,342.11

* Farmland rating will be reviewed during the exhibition period.

Two information sessions will be held at the Maitland Town Hall, High Street Maitland, Tuesday 21 January 2014 at 10.00am and 6.00pm

Have your say - submissions received up until 5.00pm 24 January 2014

- Online maitlandyoursay.com.au
- Email yoursay@maitland.nsw.gov.au
- In writing to: The General Manager, Maitland City Council, PO Box 220, Maitland NSW 2320

To find out more and read the Delivery Program 2013-17 (Revised) and Operational Plan 2014/15 visit maitlandyoursay.com.au

maitlandyoursay.com.au

[facebook.com/maitlandyoursay](https://www.facebook.com/maitlandyoursay)

yoursay@maitland.nsw.gov.au

t 4934 9896

PROPOSED CHANGES TO WASTE DISPOSAL FEES AT MAITLAND CITY COUNCIL'S MT VINCENT RD WASTE MANAGEMENT CENTRE

25/10/2013

Maitland City Council is proposing to change the waste disposal fees at its Mt Vincent Rd Waste Management Centre from 1 January 2014. Council resolved on 22 October 2013 to place the proposed changes to the disposal fees on exhibition for 28 days.

The following changes are proposed:

1. Lowering disposal fees for recyclable materials to encourage recycling and to maximise the diversion of waste from landfill.
2. Implementing equity by charging for the actual weight of waste disposed of rather than applying a fixed fee based on the type of vehicle carrying the waste.
3. Increasing disposal fees for waste that requires higher level of management such as asbestos, bulky waste, odorous and dusty waste.

WASTE/RECYCLING TYPE	CURRENT DISPOSAL FEE (incl GST)	PROPOSED DISPOSAL FEE (incl GST)
MUNICIPAL WASTE		
Sedans and Stations wagons	\$23.00 / vehicle	\$262.00 / tonne
Panel Vans, Utilities, trailers (single axle, <2.5m ²)	\$66.00 / vehicle	\$262.00 / tonne
Trailers (dual axle, >2.5m ²)	\$262.00 / tonne	\$262.00 / tonne
COMMERCIAL WASTE		
Mixed commercial waste	\$262 / tonne	\$262 / tonne
Special waste (dead animals, dusty waste, odorous waste, difficult to compact and bulky waste)	\$262 / tonne	\$340 / tonne
Bulk polystyrene	\$262 / tonne	\$2,000 / tonne
DEMOLITION WASTE		
Mixed demolition waste	\$262 / tonne	\$262 / tonne
Asbestos	\$262 / tonne plus \$200 burial cost	\$340 / tonne
Concrete, bricks, roof tiles (concrete or terracotta) – uncontaminated	\$262 / tonne	\$152 / tonne
Virgin excavated natural material – (VENM) certified	\$262 / tonne	\$107.80 / tonne \$262 / tonne (in excess of operational requirements)
VEGETATION AND TIMBER		
Vegetation, prunings, timber (non-treated, non-painted, nails removed, no stumps)	\$262 / tonne	\$262 / tonne
Domestic loads of vegetation delivered Saturday and Sunday	No charge	No charge
RECYCLABLES		
Mattresses	\$27.50 per unit	\$27.50 per unit
Electronic Waste (up to 5 items)	No charge	No charge
E-waste (more than 5 items)	\$262 / tonne	\$262 / tonne
Scrap metal and vehicle batteries	\$262 / tonne	No charge
Household quantities of general recyclables (cardboard, paper, bottles, cans, plastics, waste oil)	\$262 / tonne	No charge for domestic customers
MINIMUM FEE	\$23	\$23

Council is inviting comments on the proposed changes to the waste disposal fees at the Mt Vincent Road Waste Management Centre. Comments will be received until 25 November 2013 and can be made by:

Mail: Maitland City Council, PO Box 220, Maitland NSW 2320 **Email:** info@maitland.nsw.gov.au
For further information please contact Ms Elfi Blackburn on 4934 9700

mcc7

Council Careers

Newcastle Herald

MAITLAND

Technical Weeds Advisor (Readvertised)

Salary: \$61,474 - \$68,237 per annum plus super

Full time - 38 hours per week + RDO every 4 weeks, long service leave after 5 years

In this position you will have the responsibility to supervise the staff, manage the resources of the Weed Control Team and assist in the enforcement of noxious weed control on private property within the Maitland Local Government Area. You will have a Diploma in Conservation and Land Management (specialising in weed management) or equivalent with solid demonstrated experience in weed control and pesticide application and excellent interpersonal skills.

Contact: [REDACTED]

Apply: www.maitland.nsw.gov.au

Closes: Friday 7 March 2014

MAITLAND

Gardener/Greenkeeper

Salary: \$46,068 - \$51,136 per annum plus super

Full time - 38 hours per week + RDO every 4 weeks, long service leave after 5 years

You will use your trade to provide expertise in the areas of gardening, greenkeeping, turf maintenance, landscaping services and maintain sporting, leisure and open space which improves and maintains the City appearance. You will have a Certificate III in Horticulture along with solid experience in general gardening, grounds and turf maintenance, landscape and installation of water reticulation systems.

Contact: [REDACTED]

Apply: www.maitland.nsw.gov.au

Closes: Friday 14 March 2014

MAITLAND

Merchandise Officer

Salary: \$28.36 - \$31.48 per hour plus super

Part time - 21 hours per week + long service leave after 5 years

The Merchandise Officer is responsible for enhancing the visitor experience at the Maitland Regional Art Gallery and in doing so, encourage strong growth of revenue through the Gallery shop. You will have a Certificate IV in Arts Administration, Business Administration or equivalent demonstrated contemporary experience as well as solid experience in the retail environment.

Contact: [REDACTED]

Apply: www.maitland.nsw.gov.au

Closes: Friday 14 March 2014

1/3/2014

Council defends its public survey

Maitland City Council has refuted claims that it relied on a flawed random phone survey for public consultation on a rate rise.

Council enlisted Sydney-based company Micromex Research to survey 400 randomly selected people to canvass public opinion about the proposed compounded seven-year rate hike.

Bolwarra resident Doug Preston claimed, in his submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, that Micromex surveyed more than 400 people and eliminated some responses from the study based on demographics.

Mr Preston said this meant the phone survey was not random as claimed.

"My personal opinion is the people of Maitland deserve a fairer outcome than this large rate increase," he said.

"In this case I believe that sufficient people are not supportive of this very large rate rise."

Micromex Research CEO Stuart Reeve referred the *Mercury's* questions to council.

A council spokeswoman said Micromex surveyed 413 people for the study.

She said 13 respondents were removed from the study for demographic reasons before the data was processed.

"The sample was manually weighted to ensure all demographic sectors of the community were appropriately represented," she said.

Rutherford resident Bernie Trzecinski said he received a phone call from Micromex late last year.

Mr Trzecinski told the questioner he did not wish to take part in the survey because, as a pensioner who lived in government housing, he did not pay rates.

"They shouldn't have surveyed people who don't pay rates, that would have been fairer," he said.

"Why should I say whether I want a better garbage service when I don't pay rates?"

He said he did not take part in the survey even though the caller politely insisted.

The council spokeswoman said Micromex surveyed a cross section of all residents in the local government area because everyone, not just ratepayers, could use council's services and facilities.

Mercury

1/3/2014

IPART submissions a chance to

Maitland City Council is caught between a rock and a hard place in its bid to improve services.

To achieve this goal it has set on a course of rate increases - 7.25 per cent to be compounded annually for the next seven years.

It says it needs the money to fix a forecast \$92 million deficit over the next decade.

Council can't formally proceed

the Maitland Mercury

EDITORIAL

with a rate rise until the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal looks at submissions from council and ratepayers and makes a final decision, possibly by June.

Council says it has consulted the community and believes the majority of ratepayers are willing to pay higher rates in return for improved services.

However, a *Mercury* poll taken in November, last year, shows the opposite.

We asked readers if they supported a special rate variation or a cut in council services and 70.5 per cent said they would prefer to cut services while

have a say on rate rise

only 29.5 per cent favoured a rate rise.

Online comments to the *Mercury's* website since then have been critical of council's push to increase rates, with many saying they simply can't afford it.

There has been some apathy in that many believe there is little that can be done to stop the rate rise.

On pages 4 and 5 today *Mercury* journalist Nick Bielby tells the story of

a Metford single mother-of-three who is doing it tough and will struggle to pay the rate increase.

Well, people power still has a chance to shine.

Submissions to IPART will be accepted until March 24 (see details on page 5) so it's not too late to have your say - one way or the other.

If you agree or disagree, please take the time to have your say.

Mercury

7/3/2014

Speak now or be prepared to pay higher council rates

Mercury 7/3/2014

LAST CHANCE

Time is running out for Maitland ratepayers to have their say on council's proposed rates hike.

Submissions to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal – which has the final say – close on March 24.

Council has applied for a special rate variation to lift rates an average of 7.25 per cent, to be compounded annually for the next seven years.

It has taken this course of action in light of a forecast \$92 million deficit over the next decade.

Public debate has run hot since council said its surveys showed that most people were willing to pay higher rates for improved services.

The *Mercury's* online polls and comments have told a different story. In November, last year, more than

70 per cent of respondents indicated they supported a cut in services rather than a special rate variation.

In a special rates report on pages 4 and 5 today *Mercury* journalist Nick Bielby presents all the facts to help ratepayers form their own opinion.

Whether you support a rate rise for improved services or oppose it and are happy to live with a cut to services, the time to have your say is now.

Now is not the time for apathy.
□ Pages 4 and 5: How much you will pay; what the survey found.

MAITLAND RATES DEBATE

Mercury 7/3/2014

Regulator gets final say on

Only one hurdle remains before Maitland City Council can implement a seven-year rate rise.

Council lodged an application for a special rate variation to lift rates an average of 7.25 per cent to be

compounded annually for the next seven years.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal will consider council's application and make a decision by June.

The proposed rate rise has been a contentious issue across the community since it was first touted.

All councillors, except two who were absent, voted to approve the rate rise last month after 10 months

of community consultation showed residents wanted improved council services.

Council argued it needed to increase rate revenue in light of a forecast \$92 million deficit over the

next decade if it were to improve, or maintain, services.

Mercury reporter NICK BIELBY looked at some of the issues that have been raised during the public debate.

rate rise over seven years