

Dear IPART

Please find attached a submission from myself regarding the 2017 Port Macquarie-Hastings Council's submission/request for an SRV.

I am a former councillor and deputy mayor of this council and did not re-contest the September 2016 elections for a number of reasons, not least for the way the council was and is being managed from a financial and also project delivery point of view.

I raised many issues whilst a councillor including council's poor track record of project delivery and most importantly, the ever-increasing cash hoard that has now reached more than \$239,000,000.

I currently write a column for a local independent newspaper in the Port Macquarie area and have written many columns covering the performance of the council and also the local of communication or transparency on a number of key issues.

I am more than happy to provide more information if required.

Regards

Adam

Adam Roberts
[REDACTED]
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Submission Below

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Submission to IPART

RE: Port Macquarie-Hastings 2017 SRV Application.

From: Adam Roberts, Ratepayer, Port Macquarie Hastings LGA (former deputy mayor, PMHC)

The February 2017 council meeting Report on the state of the Port Macquarie Hastings Council financial accounts showed \$231,000,000 of ratepayer and taxpayer funds stashed away, mostly in investment accounts. This is up from just over \$100,000,000 held in accounts since 2012.

March 2017 sees another nearly \$8,000,000 added to the cash stockpile which has now reached a staggering \$238,900,000.

What is interesting is that as this massive cash hoard grows larger, the council throws out more 'spin' when it comes to trying to explain its way through this monumental crisis.

The most recent council Report on the finances acknowledges 'Whilst the current level of investments remain high, these largely relate to funds which have legal restrictions (for example water and sewer), or for funds held for specific purposes'.

This quote is particularly concerning as it only 'strategically' tells part of the story and therefore to the unaware, it sounds quite a legitimate position statement.

Unfortunately, what a balanced statement should read is something to the effect (and in addition to the above quote): However, council has more than \$115,000,000 in the General Fund which is available to be distributed according a council resolution.

Putting it much more simply, the council report suggests that 'the' money is restricted, when in reality, only part of the money is 'earmarked' for specific jobs all the while failing to tell the full story as to why the cash pile is growing at an alarming rate.

Further, councillors have full control over what the General Fund cash is spent on, not staff, and it is certainly not all 'legally' restricted.

The main reason the cash is stock-piling and is growing so fast is simply because council cannot deliver infrastructure works and or projects on the ground as quick as they can syphon money from other levels of government and also the hit up the ratepayers. They collect more money than they can spend quick enough.

The whole local government area would no doubt economically and socially benefit from an increased council output when it comes to delivering projects and infrastructure. Jobs would be created and the infrastructure backlog would shrink, placing council and the community in a very positive position.

Council's rate of capital works or projects delivery in the last four years was approximately 50% of what was promised. An incredibly poor performance by any standards.

Private enterprise would have sacked the board or management group already with a track record like that. Let alone not having a plan to deal with the fundamental crisis it finds itself in.