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Date of submission: Wednesday, 20 March 2019


Sent: Thursday, 14 March 2019 3:48 PM

To: Local Government Mailbox

Subject: Port Stephens Council SRV application submission

Hi,

I received an error message when trying to send my submission, so have sent it here as suggested.

Regards,
Alan Stark

**Submission to IPART regarding Port Stephens Council
application for a Special Rate Variation**

I submit for your consideration the following points regarding the current Port Stephens Council application for an SRV.

- Neither the SRV nor the \$65M Tomaree Sports Complex were part of the current Mayor's platform at the last council election. Such significant and costly (to individual ratepayers) issues as these should be taken to an election so all residents can directly be involved in the decision making process.
- Council currently runs its operations at a surplus and should be able to service the community's future needs without this extravagance.
- A significant proportion of the seniors who have retired to the Port Stephens area moved here due to the existing amenity of the location, not wishing or hoping for hugely expensive upgrade projects which will forever change the atmosphere and lifestyle.
- The Tomaree Sports Complex expenditure is a very large and unjustifiable cost item given that significant and adequate sporting facilities already exist at the location. The local peak sporting body, the Tomaree Sports Council, says "a mere \$5 million would go a long way towards addressing more immediate issues and ensure the site's viability over the next 5-10 years".
- Council's "community consultation" process resulted in an overwhelming rejection of the proposal, yet Council decided to forge ahead anyway, claiming the consultation process had been completed successfully. Some 61% of respondents to random council telephone calls, and 74% of the opt-in survey takers voted for option 1, which was to retain the existing rate peg as set by IPART. The last time I checked, Council were meant to act for their ratepayers, not in spite of them.
- Council used some very "clever" wording in their questions to residents, seeking their preference for local improvements, without specifically linking it to a rate increase. Council then used the responses to claim that many residents wanted significant facilities upgrades.
- An increase of 66% in annual rates over 7 years is a ridiculous imposition on residents, and I hate to think what Council would actually finish up spending the money on.
- Council's reckless, irresponsible and ultimately unsuccessful continuation of the "Nelson Bay Lagoons Estate" drainage case, which is acknowledged will now cost us millions of dollars, will potentially result in Council diverting monies to pay for that debacle.
- In its proposed projects list Council has provided many unverifiable costing estimates, and limited business cases for the major expenditures. A consultant's report by firm Morrison Low includes an economic benefits section full of elusive words such as "suggests, could, anticipated, should, indicates".

Please reject this application and allow the residents to decide on this major impact on the future of our area at the next Council elections, it's too important to be implemented without this.