

Sent: Friday, 3 March 2017 6:02 PM
To: Local Government Mailbox
Subject: Fwd: Proposed Rate Increase - Byron Shire Council

I am writing to voice my concern about the proposed Rate Increase by Byron Shire Council.

Firstly, this Council conducted a VERY expensive “**community consultation**” vote, for proposed rate increases, in the various categories of 7.5%, 10% and 12.5%, in which there was no provision for “**No Rate Increase**”.

- Nowhere in their brochure was there a box where Ratepayers could vote for NO INCREASE.

This was not a fair representation for a so-called Community Consultation/Survey.

- The increased general rate is to be compounded over 4 years.
- This is without water and waste charges undoubtedly increasing.
- I am a single person, so any rate increase at all will cause me hardship.

Secondly, regarding voicing concerns with Council, it should be noted that in spite of the huge public outcry over this proposal, and overwhelming numbers of submissions for NO RATE INCREASE, our Council are moving to go ahead with a rise of 7.5% compounded over 4 years.

Our elected Council, appointed to serve the community, are not listening to the community.

I believe that with a 7.5% increase, compounded, my rates will rise by 33% over 4 years. For me, and many others this would be a dreadful outcome.

This, coupled with the hundreds of visitors we are overwhelmed with whilst trying to go about our daily lives, has created a tipping point.

Many residents of Byron Shire are on low incomes.

To give an indication of the number of ratepayers, there are just over 15,000 rateable properties in Byron Shire.

With a ratio of approximately 45,000 ratepayers to 1.8 million (plus) tourists, many residents rightly feel that the maintenance of roads, facilities, infrastructure, etc., should be coming from the tourists as well. Many residents are in support of a Bed Tax ; it would only need

a small accommodation tax to solve the problem. Also, it has been proposed that funds be raised from Paid Parking Meters (residents exempt).

Residents need to be exempt from Paid Parking because with scarce public transport, we have to rely on our cars.

Also, many residents go out frequently, and only need to park for a short time.

With having to make frequent, short, visits, residents should be exempt from paid parking.

Visitors, in contrast, may need to park all day!

The overwhelming numbers of visitors is of great concern to residents, in the following ways :

1. We are already overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of visitors (5,000 per day) in our main towns, which simply were never designed for such huge numbers.

There is a scarcity of bus transport, so we all rely on cars, visitors as well. In the towns of Brunswick Heads and Mullumbimby, the streets are gridlocked with drivers, driving round and round the main blocks looking for a parking spot. It is very frustrating and also adds to the danger of accidents. These towns are nowadays parked out, even into residential streets, to get into the business area.

Therefore, it has become very difficult for residents to conduct our daily living tasks.

2. With the added influx of approx 40,000 festival-goers into this Shire, over 3-4 day periods throughout the year, (approx 40,000 each festival), the crowds have ballooned exponentially. We are at a tipping point.

3. The degradation to our parks, reserves and bushland is enormous, and every week our local papers print many letters about the waste left behind by visitors to our amenities, e.g. rubbish, glass bottles, often broken, human faeces, etc..

***** The point is, our rates are paying to clean this up, and our rates are being used to repair the roads and other amenities that 5,000 visitors per day are using. *****

An increase in residents' Rates will not solve the problem; there will never be "enough" money to keep up with the repairs and maintenance of this Shire's infrastructure, with so many and increasing numbers of tourists and festival go-ers.

We need funds coming in from our visitors.

Another option may be to restore the 6 or 7 Holiday and Camping Parks (3 in Brunswick Heads and 4 in Byron Bay, I believe) back to Council control. When these Parks were taken over by the State Government, our Council lost the income generated by these Parks, which used to pay for maintenance of our infrastructure. To the best of my knowledge, Council has not been reimbursed for that loss of income.

Yours sincerely,

