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Submission: I strenuously object to the Port Stephens Proposal to increase rates by 66% over 7 years on economic and moral grounds.

First, Port Stephens demographics reveal a large percentage of pensioners, low income families, and self-funded retirees who cannot afford any rate increase whatsoever. Many of these people are struggling to make ends meet and now they may face the prospect of a reduction in their income derived from existing franking credit provisions should a Labour government be elected as well as the additional, unbearable SRV proposal. Income from interest rates have declined, wages are stagnant, and the cost of living (petrol, power, consumer goods, and insurance) is rising. The last thing that we and our neighbours can afford is a rate rise of this magnitude.

Second, the Council has blatantly behaved in a most appalling manner by initially assuring rate payers that it would act only in accordance with the results of a survey which laid out a series of rate increase/project outcomes. (I took the time to attend a meeting at which this assurance was explicitly enunciated by the Mayor.) The Council completely has ignored the result which indicated overwhelmingly (70% of respondents) a preference for NO increase in rates. Residents in the Port Stephens area fought against the merger with Newcastle as their council area was found 'Fit for the Future'. We did not want the higher rates that Newcastle imposes, nor the change to our services that are more suited to our non-metropolitan area.

Many of the projects proposed by the Council are worthy of funding, but over time, with planning and outcomes, and within our Council's current budget. I therefore ask you to REJECT this application outright.

Regards, ■■■