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Submission: I strongly object to Port Stephens Council's proposal to increase rates by over 66% over 7 years on many grounds, but three (3) main grounds as stated below.

First, many of the residents cannot afford this increase. Some of us are self-funded retirees, others are pensioners and low income. All of us face economic struggles as costs continue to increase including power, petrol, insurance, food and other consumer goods. Incomes are stagnant or are being eroded by low interest rates, threats to funds from imputation credits and our superannuation. We must live with our current budgets, and the council should too. Yes, there are things that would be nice to have, but for us as it should be for council we must plan and budget the expense over time.

Second, Port Stephens Council is completely ignoring the preference of the majority of respondents to this proposal. I know for a fact that many of our neighbours objected to the proposal at each step of the process. I was one of the 70% of submissions to Council who strongly objected to the proposal, and still do. The council refuses to hear any opinion but their own preference.

Third, the proposal has changed numerous times since it was first presented to residents. I am not sure they have a clear plan, business case, or vision. I would prefer they approach these proposed projects within the current budget and in a prioritised way that includes measurable outcomes for each in a methodical and systematic manner prior to starting the next project or set of priorities.

In conclusion, I ask you to Reject this application outright thereby supporting the residents and the finding that this is a council area that is 'Fit for the Future'.

Regards ■■■