



Dear IPART,

I wish to register that I object to Port Stephens Council's proposal to increase rates by 66% over 7 years.

Over 70% of submissions to Council's proposal were against the increase. Over 2,000 people made their voices heard. Council ignored every single one of them. Thousands more locals have signed online and paper petitions. Local businesses are against this proposal.

There is poor awareness about Council's proposed projects. This lack of awareness has been fuelled by Council changing amounts of money being allocated to projects, between when this proposal first went out for public submission, and what has been submitted to you.

This includes \$25million less over 10 years for roads. Perhaps the 30% of people who indicated a willingness for a rate rise in the first round of consultation may have opted for no increase had they seen the most recent proposal from Council.

There is no evidence that any of the projects proposed by Council are 'needs'. Rather, they appear to be 'wants'. I agree that most of the projects would be nice to have, but none of them are essential to Council continuing to operate.

Council has in recent years, demonstrated a sound capacity to fund large-scale projects without the need for a rate increase.

However, they also have a history of poor decision-making when it comes to legal action being taken against them, costing the Council many millions of dollars more than if they had taken the advice given to them in the first place.

Wages are stagnant, power prices are soaring, and the cost of petrol, insurances, and consumer goods is only increasing. Cost of living is rising and I am one of many people who are already struggling.

There is a large percentage of both pensioners and young families in the area. Pensioners are already deciding between turning the heater on in the dead of winter, or not spending that money so they can pay bills. Their pensions are not increasing enough to cover the increase in rates that are being proposed. If this increase is accepted, then I fear parents will be unable to afford extra-curricular activities for their children, or they will have to work longer hours in order to afford the increase, thus spending less time as a family.

Port Stephens Council has ignored residents, and I ask that you listen to us when we say: this rate rise is unnecessary, unaffordable, and will cause extreme hardship for many. I ask that you reject this application outright.

Regards,

