

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
(name and address are not for publication)

11TH March 2019

IPART

localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au

Dear IPART,

It is nearing the second anniversary of Port Stephens Council's quite bellicose, "Fit for the Future", statement on Council amalgamations. "Our financial future was assured and our investments in Newcastle and Newcastle Airport were a very certain financial positive". Our Council was gung-ho prepared to amalgamate with Dungog Council and deliver them from their dire financial situation. Now our Council is proposing a 7.5% rate increase coupled with additional loan funding causing community concern that accumulated loan debt financing will be very significant over time. This proposed rate increase amounts to an increase of over 60% in the seventh year. Such an increase will be an additional burden to us low income retirees and ordinary mortgage paying households of this area, unlike the specific benefits that are being given to pensioners.

There are items of significant issues on the wish list and as a resident of [REDACTED], I am one of many questioning the necessity to spend \$15M on revitalization of William and King Streets Raymond Terrace. Parking facilities use all the beneficial space available, the roadway has needed resealing for years but that doesn't amount to \$15M. This same questioning applied to many items listed for the three wards and is not really a needs-based criterion.

Over the last five years Council's Customer Satisfaction Survey has returned an 80% approval rate which does not indicate any accelerated spending is needed for the continuing success of the Council's operations.

In a Council wide run survey of the proposed Special Rate Variation it was publicised that there were 2,000 submissions of which 70% were against the rate increase.

This proposal is an initiative of the Council, it is not community endorsed and I request that the Tribunal grant no more than the annual pegging process stipulates.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]