

## **Re: Wingecarribee Council's Proposed 45.3% Rate Increase**

In recent months, in what seems like at great expense, we in the Wingecarribee Shire have been inundated with information about our Council's desire to increase our council rates substantially. We've been told that if it doesn't happen our shire will deteriorate dramatically. After some considerable thought I feel I must object to this increase for the following five reasons.

**1) Personal Income:** I've owned a property in our shire for 35 years; originally I could afford to pay both my water and land rates with one annual cheque. Now I pay them separately and quarterly and I'm considering paying them monthly to spread out the burden. This substantial proposed increase is going to be significant for our household. There are many wealthy people living in our shire, who earn their income from outside our area, that would possibly not notice an increase in rates, but I am not one of them! Since moving here I have never had a full time job that pays all of the benefits like superannuation, sick leave or holiday pay at the one time, I just muddle through. There are many residents in a similar low income situation like this which is one reason for not wanting such a significantly large increase in council rates.

**2) Wasted Spending:** I cannot miss noticing the amount of regular new vehicles council staff use. My Toyota is 25 years old and has travelled over 400,000km. Its original clutch and rear brakes still pass their annual medical. Modern transport's improved reliability with service and maintenance times being extended must save running costs and extend a vehicle's life so why does council need to enjoy new vehicles every couple of years? The loss of money (due to new vehicle depreciation) endured by changing a fleet so regularly must be considerable. Could that money saved by not buying new equipment so regularly be better spent without needing to increase our rates?

**3) Excess Staff:** I can't justify the cost of being on the internet at home and regularly use the facilities at the local library. Ten years ago I had to book in and wait to use a computer terminal now it's not unusual to be the only one in the library's computer room. Again the equipment appears to be unnecessarily and expensively upgraded regularly. I cannot help but notice the amount of staff who are employed in our library even though we now have automated check-in, check-out etc. One afternoon I counted three staff to look after myself and a lady with a child. Do employee numbers, in all areas of council, need to be reduced which will save a considerable amount of expense on unnecessary council staff who are very well paid compared to local private industry?

Council here, at our expense, organise HSC study, learn to drive courses, mystery bus tours. Are these council's responsibilities? Could private businesses do this? Could the money spent on these activities be better spent doing more important things that affect everyone like fixing our roads?

**4) Ineffective Spending:** For decades residences have complained about the poor condition of our shire's roads which affects everyone. Not just in comfort but more importantly in safety; I lost twelve months after an accident caused after hitting a bad pot hole. Council patch roads using excessive expensive labour but using cheap materials. Regularly only a few months after a repair is done a road is as bad as it was. Repairs should be done properly so they don't have to be expensively patched time and time again with excessive waiting periods in-between. This should be council's main objective not HSC study nights, weekend learn to drive courses or organising mystery bus tours; other organisations can do these things if required.

**5) Increased Population:** It is quite obvious we have a steadily increasing amount of local traffic which is backed up by the amount of new building work been done within our shire. This fully supports the figures that our shire's population is steadily growing. With any new building work the cost of new infrastructure is met by the developer not council. This must equate to more revenue received by our council through new building applications and rate payments from increased

population. Surely this alone will increase Council's income without having to burden existing residences with increased rates.

Our council has a record of excessive and wasted spending (maintaining four public swimming pools in a cold climate, lost money in overseas investments etc etc). They should not be rewarded with more of our hard earned money via increased council rates. They should learn to use our money more wisely, work harder and make cuts where necessary. Pass on unnecessary jobs to private industry or volunteer groups and concentrate on core council duties and do them well.

I appreciate probably everyone in the world doesn't want increased taxes but, with inflation, a near 50% increase in land rates is going to make a significant and unwanted increase to our living expenses. I trust with your knowledge on such matters you can make the right decision in granting or hopefully not granting this significant increase to our council rates.

Yours truly,