

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Monday, 13 March 2017 11:11 PM  
To: Local Government Mailbox  
Subject: Byron Shire Council Proposed Rate Increase

RE BYRON SHIRE COUNCIL PROPOSED RATE INCREASE

To whom it may concern,

I have lived in Byron Shire for 30 years I finally feel compelled to write this letter to NSW Government iPart regarding Byron Shire Council's proposed 4 year, 7.5% p.a. cumulative rate increase.

Please take it that I do not agree with any proposed rate rise beyond the standard iPart annual rate peg.

In April 2016 Byron Shire Council (BSC) was deemed by the NSW govt to be "fit for the future". Not a word was released to the ratepayers and residents, by the local council or the local papers including the self proclaimed investigative journal "The Echo", to advise that BSC was only going to be fit for the future if they foisted a massive rate increase on their long suffering ratepayers.

There was no mention of any rate rises in the weeks and months preceding the September local government election. Then, lo and behold on the agenda for the very first BSC meeting following the election was the option to have either of a 7.5%, 10% or 12.5% cumulative rate rise over four years. BSC then proceeded to run a sham community consultation process whereby they posted all ratepayers a survey offering the three options above but there was no option to request just the standard rate peg increase. Then the exhibition period was very short - four weeks over the Christmas period with no extension. So much for the BSC's well held regard for "Community Consultation". It seems that they use this to push through legislations that suit their purpose and flagrantly flout it if it doesn't.

So, on to further reasons why BSC should not be given any extra over the standard iPart rate peg" increase:

1) BSC have many under utilised assets and seem incapable of managing them for their ratepayers best benefit. One example is the BSC owned land at Belongil could be sold but the council is in the courts on this one too. Many other assets could be sold and some shaped up to deliver ratepayers an ongoing revenue stream, but it seems that BSC is too lazy to do this and wants to sit on assets while using the ratepayers as a soft target.

2) BSC is responsible for the dire state of the shire's infrastructure and now want the ratepayers to bear the cost of their incompetence.

3) The list of monumental blunders that BSC has made is long. Some examples include:

The Byron Bypass mismanagement saga. At one stage BSC had a DA lodged with itself and it sat there for over ten years before being withdrawn. Unbelievable, but sadly now 25 years has passed since the land was purchased, we still have no bypass and BSC is in the Land and Environment Court defending itself at our expense again.

On this project and many others BSC has spent an enormous amount on consultants studies which end up gathering dust on the shelves at Mullumbimby.

The 25 year "Roundhouse" saga in Ocean Shores which funnily enough ended in a mismanagement controversy similar to the one that started it.

The Lighthouse Road pedestrian walkway erosion closure - a six year fiasco where the most notable achievement by BSC was their conversion, after some time, of the diesel generated traffic lights to solar. Ultimately the project was completed years late and way over any budget and after huge inconvenience again to the ratepayers.

BSC mismanagement of the holiday rental industry in Byron Bay and Brunswick Heads plus anywhere that a garage can be used as a bedroom in Byron Shire. Proliferation of secondary dwelling approvals, with no Section 94 collections, used for tourism / massive holiday rental numbers in urban areas / skyrocketing rents and house prices (as a side effect of BSC's affordable housing policies !) / overloaded deteriorating infrastructure with no funding mechanism in place / lack of affordable housing.

Byron Shire Council has allowed this situation to evolve over many years and now wants the ratepayers to be slugged to fix up the mess.

There are many other examples, the list too long to detail here now but suffice to say there are many more and if you would like me to elaborate further I am happy to help.

In my opinion the bottom line is BSC is not capable of planning or efficiently executing most projects. BSC has systemic problems and giving them more money will only provide cover for them to continue to waste and squander hard earned ratepayers funds.

Yours faithfully

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[Redacted contact information]