

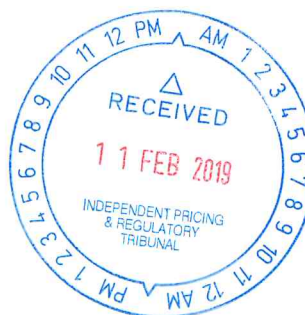
10 February 2019

CEO

Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)

Level 15, 2-24 Rawson Place

Sydney NSW



Re: IPART SPECIAL RATE VARIATION of 50% by Sutherland Shire Council

As a long-time resident of the Sutherland Shire, I am writing to strongly object to the proposed unfair rate increase of 50 % for unit owners, who are currently paying the minimum residential rate of \$602.30.

The proposed rate increase should not occur as it is unfair because:

- 1 This appears to be an opportunistic money grab by council due to the excessive increase in high density developments. The increase in the number of units / apartments is a result of poor planning by council under it's Local Environment Plan and it's failure to act on residents' concerns. This poor planning has created the high demand on public amenities which have been eroded over recent years eg sudden overnight demolition of the Cronulla Women's Rest Centre, poor maintenance of toilets in Cronulla Mall and Cronulla Central.
- 2 The proposed rating changes includes the "market" value of home unit "dwellings" plus the value of (shared) land value as determined by the Valuer-General. However, the "market" value of the dwelling of a detached home on it's own (private) land is valued on the land value only. This by it's very nature is inconsistent and therefore unfair. Unit owners do not (privately) own the land on which their dwelling sits as this is common property and is becoming smaller due to the reductions in green space required for unit developments. However, the owner of a dwelling on their (private) parcel of land does. Whilst owners of detached dwellings have access to public amenities such as parks and recreational areas, the owners of units do NOT have access to the private land of detached dwellings eg their back yards or gardens.
- 3 The increase in the number of units and apartments means an increase in the number of rate payers; therefore more revenue will be raised from these rates as a result, without the need for a 50% increase to unit owners.
- 4 According to local councillors, the NSW state government has reduced it's funding for local council therefore shifting the burden onto unit rate payers and abdicating it's responsibility to govern. NSW Government ought to restore and regularly increase it's funding contributions to Sutherland Shire Council.
- 5 Developer contributions ought to be raised significantly to provide for the ongoing additional services and amenities needed to support the exploding population. Developers are making enormous profits, whilst the cost of living increases for the constituents of the local council area (voters).

6 Many pensioners will be adversely impacted at a cost to the entire community. For those who may have worked hard and contributed to the local area during their lives, finally retired and may be in the position of owning their own unit, Council has no plan in place to protect them from a 50% rate hike. Pensioners are often targeted and misrepresented as being asset rich which often is not the case. Many pensioners rent and the passing on of excessive rate costs to tenants from unit owners will no doubt cause hardship to many. Many pensioners are women who may join the homeless due to the shortages of social housing.

7 How will council respond to this?

8 Holding the "consultation" period and information sessions during the Christmas / New Year holiday period whilst many (affected) constituents are away, appears to be in an effort to provide as little opportunity as possible for any objections to be lodged.

9 Many owners of investment properties will not be aware of these changes as the payment of council rates are often handled by their managing agent.

10 It is also apparent, that commercial businesses who currently pay the minimum council rates of \$602.30 will not be required to pay the proposed 50% increase.

Why is this the case and how is this fair?

These changes are clearly NOT a "Fairer Way Forward" contrary to the publicity from Sutherland Shire Council. The current rates model HAS worked for many decades. The rising costs are a result of the poor planning model introduced by council and the subsequent impacts. Sources of revenue can be found without burdening those who are not in the fortunate position of owning land with a single dwelling on it and impacting those who can least afford it.

Please note: I do not want my address published nor have I donated any gifts or contributions to council staff or councillors.

Yours sincerely

