



2 March 2021

IPART submission regarding Central Coast Council proposed rate increase

We write to express our most serious concern regarding Central Coast Council rate increases proposed by its Administrator, Mr R Persson, insofar as it affects this region of the enlarged Council area.

There are a number of points we wish to make;

1. The merging of the Gosford and Wyong Councils/Areas was a flawed strategy in the first place. This merged Council, as well as a number of other similarly merged NSW councils, is experiencing serious financial difficulties in bedding down the enormously complicated integration of IT and other services. These costs, from what we can glean, very significantly exceed any savings mooted at the time of the merger by the NSW Government (from memory, savings of \$16 million per annum in the case of Central Coast Council).

In part, this type of concern is reflected in a report produced by the Office of Local Government in 2013-14 which demonstrated generally poorer financial performance the larger the Council was (note Appendix 1 attached).

2. The Administrator, being appointed by the NSW Government, is totally conflicted by what he can say in relation to the original (flawed in our opinion) merger proposal. In various statements he has conveniently skated over any responsibility that may lie with the NSW Government in regard to the merger policy as being a major contributing factor to the issues he is confronting.

3. Further, the Administrator has been economical with the truth (to say the least) in explaining the **TOTAL** cost to former Gosford Council residents – we Patonga residents are not looking at a potential 15% increase in rates but more like a 45% increase due to, so called, 'harmonisation' of rates with former Wyong Council residents.

No matter whether "derelict" financial management was, or was not, an issue at Gosford Council (and we only have one side of that argument), this proposed additional cost of harmonisation was never mentioned or spelt out by the NSW Government at the time of the merger proposal.

4. The Central Coast Council size, diversity and population – it has the 3rd largest population area in NSW with 328,000 residents in 2016 (note Appendix 2 attached) and by far the largest NSW Council area for its population size (1681km²) – made it a very challenging proposition to integrate and effectively manage two very large budgets. Even a major corporation would have been challenged, let alone a group of Councillors some of whom had little business experience. It calls into question what effective financial and systems support the NSW Govt rendered to these merged Councils at that time.

We are now told by the Administrator that the Council size should be cut from 15 to 9 members, each of whom would represent on average 36,000 residents over an area which extends from Lake Macquarie in the north to Patonga (Broken Bay) in the south and Wiseman's Ferry to the west (note Appendix 3 attached). This, in a Council area which can expect to experience an above-average population growth pattern in future years – it's already happening.

Popular comment indicates that most of the NSW Council mergers effected 5 years ago have met with poor to mixed results, highlighting the flawed policy, a policy which begs the question of why was it enacted in the first place by the NSW Government?

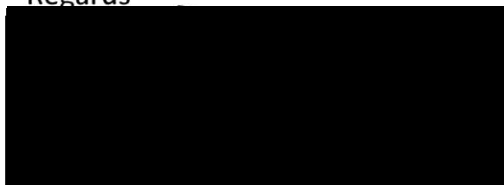
A flawed policy which Gosford Council residents are now being asked to pay for.

Much has been written about the poor financial management of the former Gosford Council, much of which has been refuted by its former CEO in recent times. However, we, the residents, only have one official line of comment to rely on, that from a conflicted Administrator.

We are aware that our Patonga Progress Association has already made a submission to IPART and we generally support the comments and concerns raised in that submission, although we do not necessarily endorse comment of poor economic management by the former Gosford Council, simply because we only know one side of the argument.

However, we do agree that a fair and equitable way forward must be promoted by IPART in respect of future rates that former Gosford Council residents will be asked to bear as a consequence of this merger.

Regards

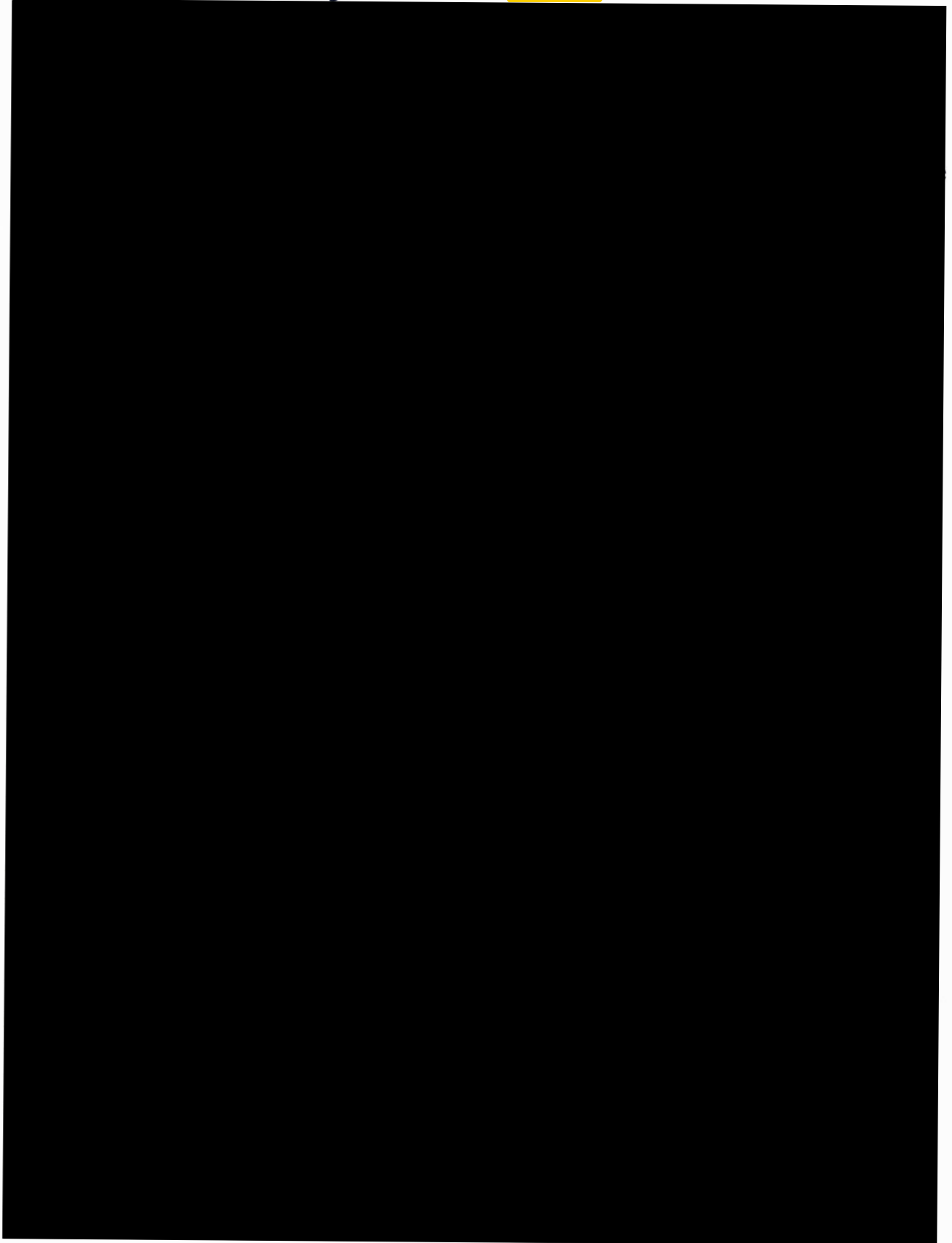


This was published 5 years ago

APPENDIX 1

Five largest councils found to be bottom of the class on key ratio

(Newspaper article redacted due to copyright concerns)



APPENDIX 2

Local government area	Region	Area			Population		References
		km ²	sq mi	Rank	2016 census	Rank	
Albury, City of	Riverina	307	119	108	53,767	44	[3][4]
Armidale Regional Council	New England	8,621	3,329	27	29,449	60	[5]
Ballina Shire	Northern Rivers	484	187	93	41,790	50	[6]
Balranald Shire	Riverina	21,693	8,376	7	2,287	126	[7]
Bathurst Region	Central West	3,820	1,470	56	41,300	51	[8]
Bayside Council	St George-Sutherland	50	19	115	156,058	17	[9][10]
Bega Valley Shire	South Coast	6,279	2,424	37	33,253	57	[11]
Bellingen Shire	Mid North Coast	1,602	619	81	12,668	84	[12]
Berrigan Shire	Riverina	2,066	798	76	8,462	97	[13]
Blacktown City Council	Western Sydney	247	95	104	336,962	2	[14]
Bland Shire	Central West / Riverina	8,560	3,310	29	5,995	109	[15]
Blayney Shire	Central West	1,525	589	82	7,257	100	[16]
Blue Mountains, City of	Western Sydney / Blue Mountains	1,432	553	84	76,904	31	[17][18]
Bogan Shire	Orana	14,611	5,641	12	2,692	124	[19]
Bourke Shire	Orana	41,679	16,092	4	2,634	125	[20]
Brewarrina Shire	Orana	19,188	7,409	8	1,651	128	[21]
Broken Hill, City of	Far West	170	66	107	17,708	72	[22]
Burwood Council	Inner West	7	2.7	130	36,809	55	[23]
Byron Shire	Northern Rivers	567	219	92	31,556	58	[24]
Cabonne Shire	Central West	6,026	2,327	38	13,386	80	[25]
Camden Council	Macarthur	201	78	105	78,219	29	[26]
Campbelltown, City of	Macarthur	312	120	99	157,006	16	[27]
Canada Bay, City of	Inner West	20	7.7	122	88,015	27	[28]
Canterbury-Bankstown, City of	Western Sydney	72	28	113	346,302	1	[29][30]
Carrathool Shire	Central West / Riverina	18,933	7,310	9	2,719	123	[31]

Central Coast Council	Central Coast	1,681	649	79	327,736	3	[32] [33]
Central Darling Shire	Far West	53,511	20,661	2	1,833	127	[34]
Cessnock, City of	Hunter	1,966	759	78	55,560	42	[35]
Clarence Valley Council	Northern Rivers	10,441	4,031	18	50,671	45	[36]
Cobar Shire	Orana	44,065	17,014	3	4,647	113	[37]
Coffs Harbour, City of	Mid North Coast	1,175	454	87	72,944	33	[38]
Coolamon Shire	Riverina	2,433	939	74	4,315	114	[39]
Coonamble Shire	Orana	9,926	3,832	20	3,918	116	[40]
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council	Riverina	3,981	1,537	55	11,141	89	[41] [42]
Cowra Shire	Central West	2,810	1,080	68	12,460	85	[43]
Cumberland City Council	Western Sydney	72	28	113	216,079	7	[44] [45]
Dubbo Regional Council	Orana	7,536	2,910	31	50,077	46	[46] [47]
Dungog Shire	Hunter	2,251	869	75	8,975	93	[48]
Edward River Council	Riverina	8,881	3,429	25	8,851	95	[49] [50]
Eurobodalla Shire	South Coast	3,428	1,324	60	37,232	54	[51]
Fairfield, City of	Western Sydney	102	39	110	198,817	11	[52]
Federation Council	Riverina	5,685	2,195	41	12,777	83	[53] [54]
Forbes Shire	Central West	4,720	1,820	50	9,587	91	[55]
Georges River Council	St George-Sutherland	38	15	117	146,841	19	[56] [57]
Gilgandra Shire	Orana	4,836	1,867	48	4,236	115	[58]
Glen Innes Severn Council	New England	5,487	2,119	42	8,836	96	[59]
Goulburn Mulwaree Council	Southern Tablelands	3,220	1,240	65	29,609	59	[60]
Greater Hume Shire	Riverina	5,746	2,219	40	10,351	90	[61]
Griffith, City of	Riverina	1,640	630	80	25,641	63	[62]
Gunnedah Shire	New England	4,994	1,928	46	12,215	86	[63]
Gwydir Shire	New England	9,453	3,650	22	5,258	112	[64]
Hawkesbury, City of	Western Sydney	2,793	1,078	70	64,592	38	[65] [66]

Hay Shire	Riverina	11,326	4,373	16	2,946	121	[67]
Hills Shire, The	Hills District	401	155	96	157,243	15	[68]
Hilltops Council	Southern Tablelands	7,139	2,756	34	18,498	71	[69][70]
Hornsby Shire	North Shore / Northern Suburbs	462	178	94	142,667	20	[71]
Hunter's Hill, Municipality of	Northern Suburbs	6	2.3	131	13,999	79	[72]
Inner West Council	Inner West	35	14	119	182,043	14	[73][74]
Inverell Shire	New England	8,606	3,323	28	16,483	73	[75]
Junee Shire	Riverina	2,030	780	77	6,295	104	[76]
Kempsey Shire	Mid North Coast	3,380	1,310	63	28,885	61	[77]
Kiama, Municipality of	Illawarra	258	100	102	21,464	67	[78]
Ku-ring-gai Council	North Shore	86	33	111	118,053	22	[79]
Kyogle Council	Northern Rivers	3,589	1,386	59	8,940	94	[80]
Lachlan Shire	Central West	7,431	2,869	32	6,194	105	[81]
Lake Macquarie, City of	Hunter	648	250	91	197,371	12	[82]
Lane Cove, Municipality of	North Shore	11	4.2	126	36,051	56	[83]
Leeton Shire	Riverina	1,167	451	88	11,168	88	[84]
Lismore, City of	Northern Rivers	1,290	500	86	43,135	49	[85]
Lithgow, City of	Central West / Blue Mountains	4,551	1,757	52	21,090	68	[86]
Liverpool, City of	Western Sydney	306	118	100	204,326	9	[87]
Liverpool Plains Shire	New England	5,086	1,964	45	7,687	99	[88]
Lockhart Shire	Riverina	2,895	1,118	67	3,119	119	[89]
Lord Howe Island		15	5.8	123	382	130	[90][91]
Maitland, City of	Hunter	392	151	97	77,305	30	[92]
Mid-Coast Council	Mid North Coast	10,053	3,881	19	90,303	26	[93][94]
Mid-Western Regional	Central West	8,737	3,373	26	24,076	64	[95]
Moree Plains Shire	New England	17,930	6,920	10	13,159	81	[96]
Mosman Council	North Shore	9	3.5	128	28,475	62	[97]
Murray River Council	Riverina	11,865	4,581	15	11,680	87	[98][99]

Murrumbidgee Council	Riverina	6,880	2,660	36	3,836	117	[100] [101]
Muswellbrook Shire	Hunter	3,405	1,315	62	16,086	75	[102]
Nambucca Shire	Mid North Coast	1,491	576	83	19,212	70	[103]
Narrandera Shire	Riverina	4,117	1,590	53	5,853	110	[104]
Narrabri Shire	North West Slopes / Northern Tablelands	13,031	5,031	13	13,084	82	[105]
Narromine Shire	Orana	5,264	2,032	44	6,444	103	[106]
Newcastle, City of	Hunter	187	72	106	155,411	18	[107]
Northern Beaches Council	Northern Beaches	254	98	103	252,878	4	[108] [109]
North Sydney Council	North Shore	11	4.2	126	67,658	36	[110]
Oberon Shire	Central West	3,659	1,413	58	5,301	111	[111]
Orange, City of	Central West	285	110	101	40,344	52	[112]
Parkes Shire	Central West	5,958	2,300	39	14,608	76	[113]
Parramatta Council, City of	Western Sydney / Northern Suburbs	82	32	112	226,149	5	[114] [115]
Penrith, City of	Western Sydney	405	156	95	196,066	13	[116] [117]
Port Macquarie-Hastings Council	Mid North Coast	3,686	1,423	57	78,539	28	[118] [119]
Port Stephens Council	Hunter	979	378	89	69,556	34	[120]
Queanbeyan–Palerang Regional Council	Southern Tablelands	8,960	3,460	23	56,027	41	[121] [122]
Randwick, City of	Eastern Suburbs	36	14	118	140,660	21	[123]
Richmond Valley Council	Northern Rivers	3,051	1,178	66	22,807	66	[124]
Ryde, City of	Northern Suburbs	41	16	116	116,302	23	[125]
Singleton Council	Hunter	4,893	1,889	47	22,987	65	[126]
Shellharbour, City of	Illawarra / South Coast	147	57	109	68,460	35	[127]
Shoalhaven, City of	South Coast	4,567	1,763	51	99,650	24	[128]
Snowy Monaro Regional Council	Snowy Mountains / Monaro	15,162	5,854	11	20,218	69	[129] [130]
Snowy Valleys Council	Riverina	8,960	3,460	23	14,395	77	[131] [132]

Strathfield, Municipality of	Inner West	14	5.4	124	40,312	53	[133]
Sutherland Shire	St George-Sutherland	370	140	98	218,464	6	[134]
Sydney, City of	Sydney CBD	25	9.7	120	208,374	8	[135] [136]
Tamworth Regional Council	New England	9,892	3,819	21	59,663	40	[137]
Temora Shire	Riverina	2,802	1,082	69	6,110	106	[138]
Tenterfield Shire	New England	7,332	2,831	33	6,628	102	[139]
Tweed Shire	Northern Rivers	1,321	510	85	91,371	25	[140]
Unincorporated Far West	Far West	93,300	36,000	1	698 ^a	129	[141]
Upper Hunter Shire	Hunter	8,096	3,126	30	14,112	78	[142]
Upper Lachlan Shire	Southern Tablelands	7,102	2,742	35	7,695	98	[143]
Uralla Shire	New England	3,230	1,250	64	6,048	108	[144]
Wagga Wagga, City of	Riverina	4,826	1,863	49	62,385	39	[145]
Walcha Shire	New England	2,621	1,012	72	3,092	120	[146] [147]
Walgett Shire	Orana	22,336	8,624	6	6,107	107	[148]
Warren Shire	Orana	10,760	4,150	17	2,732	122	[149]
Warrumbungle Shire	Orana	12,380	4,780	14	9,384	92	[150]
Waverley Council	Eastern Suburbs	9	3.5	128	66,812	37	[151] [152]
Weddin Shire	Central West	3,410	1,320	61	3,664	118	[153]
Wentworth Shire	Riverina	26,269	10,143	5	6,794	101	[154] [155]
Willoughby, City of	North Shore	23	8.9	121	74,302	32	[156]
Wingecarribee Shire	Illawarra / Southern Highlands	2,689	1,038	71	47,882	48	[157]
Wollondilly Shire	Macarthur	2,560	990	73	48,519	47	[158]
Wollongong, City of	Illawarra	684	264	90	203,630	10	[159]
Woollahra, Municipality of	Eastern Suburbs	12	4.6	125	54,240	43	[160] [161]
Yass Valley Council	Southern Tablelands / Riverina	3,999	1,544	54	16,142	74	[162]

APPENDIX 3

