

Submission

Anonymous please

13 July 2015

INDEPENDENT PRICING  
& REGULATORY  
TRIBUNAL

To IPART -- Fit For The Future

Reference : Yass Valley Council

I do not wish to have my name revealed to Council.

I have lived in the district for over 50 years and am involved with a number of community groups. I have younger family members also living in the town. Therefore I believe I can express my concerns about the current Council based on past experience and my desire to support the community of Yass.

I have recently been part of Yass Valley Council community working group to consider YVC's "Fit For the Future" proposal.

It is interesting to note that in December 2014 I was told by 3 staff from Y.V.C that we could expect a "big" rate increase in 2015-16.

The convening of the Community Working Group took place in March, 2015 and the whole process seemed very hurried to fit the Govt. guidelines.

In consideration of these community meetings and the 'input' from Council I have serious misgivings about the ability of the current Yass Valley Council management team to be "Fit for the Future".

- 1] In May 2014 YVC terminated the General Manager's four year contract mid-term but then went on to offer a new four year contract at a salary increase of \$32,000 per year. This was done confidentially at a planning meeting, rather than at an open meeting of Council. This action would seem to be in direct contravention of the Director General of NSW's Guidelines [5] & [6] which deal with
5. Contract Renewal or Separation    6. Reward & Remuneration.

This suggests that Yass Valley Council does not consider itself answerable to NSW legislation.

Further the \$32,000 yearly increase was diverted from the gravel roads maintenance budget.

- 2] Since approx 2006 YVC has been purchasing real estate amounting to many millions of dollars, but these purchases were made with no reputable valuation & no subsequent valuations appear to have been done by a qualified valuer. The current valuation of all this real estate is therefore a Council "guesstimate". One purchase of \$3,200,000 was made based on a loan from an individual [REDACTED] and Council is due to repay \$800,000 of that loan in October this year. Where is the money coming from?

Ratepayers money was used for these purchases. Money which should first have been used for maintenance & development of roads, bridges, community facilities and repair/ replacement of necessary machinery. Any remaining funds could then have been expended on real estate.

It would appear that Yass Valley Council is very good at doing deals [REDACTED] but not very good at informing the community and ratepayers as to how it is using THEIR money.

Rates that are being paid now, should benefit the current community -- it is their money and should service their needs.

- 3] Yass Valley Council's Financial Statement & Auditing appears to be somewhat haphazard since certain items are omitted from the accounting process.

These include - long term loans ; internal loans ; financial projections infrastructure assets; net cost of services; water & sewage service & operations. Council appears to have a \$19,000,000 debt which is not being audited.

Council should provide the community with a comprehensive and transparent Financial Statement and Audit of all its income, assets, and expenditure. This is not happening.

At the community meetings it was very obvious that Yass Valley Council had one objective -- to 'whitewash' a large rate increase.

At the meetings it was consistently put to Council management that the desired financial outcome could be achieved by a mix of small rate increases, plus efficiencies in management practises and sale of some real estate.

These suggestions were vigorously discounted by management.

Council management made it quite clear that they were not prepared to make any concessions or efficiencies in their practises. The only solution that they would accept was a steep rate rise.

I feel very strongly that our present Yass Valley Council is NOT " Fit for the Future". Indeed the best outcome for the people of Yass Valley could be a dissolution of the current Council with installation of an Administrator.

