

Attention: IPART Chairman and Committee.

Re: Request by Mid Coast Council for a 28.5% Special Rate Variation.

We are writing to ask that you give thoughtful consideration to the following points when attending to the submission by Mid Coast Council (MCC) for a 28.5% Special Rate Variation (SRV) over the next four years.

- ⤴ The Administrator of MCC was appointed, not elected and therefore has no mandate from the ratepayers.
- ⤴ There are no elected representatives to Council, therefore ratepayers have no one to present their concerns to the administration.
- ⤴ Ratepayers were informed by former Great Lakes Council (GLC) at a Community Meeting in 2016 that it was deemed fit to “stand alone” when the mergers were first proposed. It was not in favour of, nor was going to pursue a merger with Taree and Gloucester Councils, as the financial state of these Councils would be an encumbrance on GLC.
- ⤴ The decision by GLC to merge was taken very suddenly, without any further public consultation. It is grossly unfair to burden ratepayers with the financial consequences of this decision, especially as no valid reason was given, nor opportunity for discussion provided.
- ⤴ MCC commissioned a survey of ratepayers to ascertain support or otherwise for the SRV. A sample of 407 people were contacted by telephone with a further 61 answering on-line. This represents 0.85% of the ratepayer population of approximately 55,000 and therefore cannot be considered to be representative. No indication is given how many, if any, are non-residential ratepayers, of whom there are a significant number in the former GLC.
- ⤴ Results of the survey showed that only 28% showed that they could comfortably support the proposed SRV increase. 24% said that they would struggle to pay, and 38% said they would struggle to pay the combined SRV and Environmental levy. To have such a large percentage of the population struggling to pay is not a satisfactory outcome. There was however more general support for an Environmental levy, with only 15% rejecting it.

The former GLC residents live in the oldest demographic region in NSW, consisting of large numbers of fixed income self-funded retirees and pensioners, all dependant on CPI increases to meet rising costs. The proposed increases are way above the current CPI, hence for these people any increase would mean hardship.

Based on the above issues we therefore request that IPART reject the application by Mid Coast Council for a Special Rate Variation.

