

To whom it may concern,

The Randwick council's vote to increase council rates by 19.85% over the next 3 years should be rejected on the following grounds;

- Although there was comprehensive community engagement, the majority of respondents to the survey did NOT chose Option 3 to increase the rates to 19.85%. As noted in survey results, 49% of the 5,713 to return the survey voted option 3. Therefore a majority 51% chose NOT to increase this rate however this was split between two lesser amounts. To suggest that majority of residents are happy to be hit in the pocket by an extra 20% on their council rates is misleading & deceiving at worst.
- The results of the telephone survey of 603 respondents should be completely ignored. There has been no veracity of whether those interviewed in this manner are in fact ratepayers & impacted by the increase costs.
- Of the 51,349 ratepayer surveys issued, only (approx.) 2805 ratepayers agreed to the highest increase. This represents less than **5.5%** of all ratepayers.
- The timing of the surveys cover a period (December/January) when those that are effected greatest are busy with school holidays. Homeowners and families that already pay in excess of \$1800/year will see their rates move to \$2200 in 3 years. This in times of low wage growth & high cost of living pressures.
- It has not been made clear by council as to whether the options to increase are permanent or temporary. After the third year when the Special Variation has completed, are the rates discounted to return to their previous amounts (unlikely) or do the rates then continue to be increased by the Rate Peg each year following? If residents are aware that the increase remains and that future rates are increased at the higher level, then this compound effect will have a much more detrimental impact on ratepayers.
- According to the IPART Fact Sheet to assess Special Variations, most of the new projects do not meet the following IPART requirements;
  - Improvements in the council's financial sustainability (**the projects have not been properly budgeted & there is no guarantee that the \$27 million that council is looking to borrow will cover the costs of projects**)
  - Reductions in backlogs for asset maintenance and renewal (**no projects meet this criteria**)
  - New or enhanced services to meet the needs of the local community (**there may be some merit in this criteria but they are not for majority of the local community**)
  - Projects of regional significance, and (**Not applicable**)
  - Special cost pressures being faced by the council (**By increasing borrowings and projects there is likely to be an increase of cost pressures by the end of the 3 year period**)
- The council outlined the increase to cover the following projects:
  - Building a women's refuge centre; (**arguably to meet the need of the local community but no figures have been presented to validate**)
  - Undergrounding powerlines to increase street tree planting; (**nice to have but not essential**)
  - Building an arts and cultural centre; (**nice to have but not essential**)
  - Upgrading the La Perouse Museum and Randwick Literary Institute; (**nice to have but not essential**)
  - Implementing anti-terrorism measures to increase public safety; (**State or Federal Government issue**)

- Building a new indoor sports centre and gymnastics centre at Heffron Park in Maroubra  
(nice to have but not essential)

The majority of these projects should not qualify under Special Variations increase & certainly not effectively allow a tripling of the rate peg

- A review of the Community Engagement Report provided by council lists some of the responses of participants. IPART should take note of the impact to respondents between Option 1 (Rate Peg), to Option 3. A majority of Option 1 respondents refer to financial hardships & cost burdens that they are already enduring. Option 3 respondents do not appear to make comments on the benefits of the added or improved services, or to any key point related to IPART requirements listed above.
- Generally the Special Variations increase should be to cover essential services which the projects listed are clearly not. What is essential though is to minimise the impact to ratepayers who will be significantly impacted as respondents clearly commented in Option 1 (& 2) choices.
- In the current economic times these 'pet' projects of councillors must be dismissed.

Thank you for your time

Best Regards

[Redacted Signature]