

## SUBMISSION TO IPART – CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL

I strongly oppose the proposal to raise Central Coast Council rates by up to 15%, and the way in which the Council has communicated the events surrounding the proposed increase to its residents:

- Council's website stated that "*Council's current financial situation is due to spending more money than we had coming in, both before and after the amalgamation*". Given this, why would the NSW Government even consider an amalgamation of Gosford and Wyong Councils?
- the amalgamation was an experiment to see if there would be efficiencies for both councils, and they were provided less resources as an amalgamated council than they had as individual councils. The NSW Government did not monitor the amalgamation and simply waited until it fell over. Throughout this amalgamation process there was little or no community consultation.
- Mr Persson, the Administrator appointed by the NSW Government to oversee Central Coast Council operations, has stated that the Council has been mismanaged and claims that the NSW Government has "no case to answer", yet it is the very same government that has set-up situation to occur.
- no information was provided to residents about the dire situation of Council's financial affairs leading up to the rate increase proposal; there was more information provided to residents through the press than through Council!
- residents were given access to a survey that only gave options for 10% and 15% rate rises and no ability to comment about alternatives to raise funds such as managing and assessing user charges and viability of services with just the 2% rate peg.
- the survey was amended to incorporate a small amount of feedback and a 0% rate increase option, but only when residents expressed **total outrage** about the limitations of the first survey. This speaks volumes about the consultation process undertaken by Council.
- both surveys were poorly designed. For example, the information used by council to justify the rate increase options was included in the online survey only. Survey respondents who used the phone option could see the relevant information on the Council's website but those who had no access and who were unable to visit their library were 'out of luck'. No residents were provided with an option of a mailed survey with essential background information. Considering the area is heavily populated by elderly rate payers, this situation is appalling. I believe the responses were limited and results skewed.