

Submission to Reconsider Randwick Council's Application for a Special Rate Increase

I am asking that IPART review Randwick Council's application for a special rate increase, and disallow this application based on the following...

- The community was not correctly or appropriately advised of the results of the survey.
- The basic overview provided to the community by email skewed the results to make them look like a majority of people favoured the maximum rate increase when in fact this was not true. When you look at the numbers, a majority of people preferred either no rate increase, or a delayed & smaller increase.
- The report also emphasised results of the telephone survey over the mail and online survey despite the fact that the telephone survey only accounted for about 10% of the total number of people polled. The report also provided inadequate details around the questions asked in the survey, and how they differed from the postal survey. This was not transparent.
- The priorities for Council work that are proposed by the council as justification for the rate increase fail to resolve the most basic and high priority services that the community needs (such as footpath and bus access works around Maroubra Junction), and favours restoration of old derelict buildings that no-one visits or uses.

Incorrect and Misleading Results Summary

The council advised residents by email that a majority of residents had voted in favour of Option 3 – To increase the rates by 19.85% over 3 years. This was factually incorrect, as I will explain later in this submission.

Also, the council's results summary document was buried within several layers of web pages, and very hard to find. The document provided more detail on how people voted in the survey, but gave a misleading impression that the majority of voters had supported Option 3, when in fact, this was not the case.

The report emphasised the phone survey results over online and written surveys despite the fact that the phone survey only accounted for approximately 10% of total voters.

From the council's own figures...

5337 ratepayers completed the online & postal survey

50.89% of these ratepayers (a majority) didn't support Option 3 (2716 people)

49.11% of these ratepayers supported Option 3. (2621 people)

603 people were included in the phone survey

43% of residents didn't support Option 3 (259 people)

57% of residents preferred Option 3 (344 people)

Summary of Actual Results

From these figures above, the following calculations can be made...

2975 people didn't support Option 3

2965 people supported Option 3

Therefore, from the Council's own figures, a majority of people didn't support Option 3 (50.08%).

Telephone Survey Issues

The report doesn't state when the telephone survey was carried out. It would be interesting to find out if the telephone survey was carried out after the email and written surveys as this might suggest that the Council could see that most residents didn't support Option 3 and were looking for another way to skew the data in favour of Option 3.

I believe that the telephone survey may have used a different emphasis on the various options to skew results in favour of Option 3.

Also, the telephone survey only accounts for a very small percentage of the number of respondents, roughly 10% only.

Council Priorities Fail to Provide Basic and Essential Services to the Community

The stated priorities of Randwick Council, to support their application for rate increase, fail to provide the most basic and essential services to the community.

Maroubra Junction is desperately in need of improvement works on the Eastern side of Anzac Parade. The bus stop and surrounds is completely inadequate to service this high volume bus stop.

- The footpath is uneven, making it difficult for older and disabled people to negotiate. The paving is very dirty, and needs to be replaced with a higher quality paver that can handle high pedestrian traffic.
- There are signs and benches obstructing the main ingress/egress point at the bus stop. These need to be moved so that people can more easily enter and exit the buses, and to allow better wheelchair access.

It is a concern that the Council wants to increase rates by almost 20% to renovate derelict buildings that no-one visits, rather than providing basic and essential services to the community.

Conclusion

I am asking that IPART review the application from Randwick Council, particularly the survey results which show that a majority of residents don't support Option 3 – to increase rates by almost 20%.

I am also asking that IPART review the nature of the survey, particularly the emphasis of the telephone survey in the report despite it only representing around 10% of respondents, and the fact that residents were not advised exactly what questions were asked in the telephone survey. This process was not transparent.

I am also asking that IPART review the council priorities that support their application, as they seem to fail to provide the most basic and essential services in favour of renovating unused derelict buildings.

Finally, I would ask that IPART disallow Randwick Council's application for a special rate increase for the reasons stated.

Author name: Anonymous

Date of submission: Monday, 26 February 2018

Submission: Dear IPART, I'm writing to ask you to disallow Randwick Council's application for a special rate increase. I've attached a document with more detail for you to review. I'm asking IPART to disallow Randwick Council's application on several grounds...1. The community was not correctly or appropriately advised of the results of the survey. The council's results summary document was buried within several layers of web pages, and very hard to find. 2. The basic overview provided to the community by email skewed the results to make them look like a majority of people favoured the maximum rate increase when in fact this was not true. From the council's own numbers, a majority of people preferred either no rate increase, or a delayed & smaller increase. 3. The report also emphasised results of the telephone survey over the mail and online survey despite the fact that the telephone survey only accounted for about 10% of the total number of people polled. 4. The priorities for Council work that are proposed by the council as justification for the rate increase fail to resolve the most basic and high priority services that the community needs (such as footpath and bus access works around Maroubra Junction to improve wheelchair access), and favours restoration of old derelict buildings that no-one visits or uses.