

Submission opposing MidCoast Council's application for a special rate increase.

There are a range of reasons why IPART should reject MidCoast Council's application for a special rate increase. These include the fact:

1. Ratepayers have had no opportunity to be properly represented regarding this latest application as we have not had any elected representatives on council, which is run by an appointed administrator.
2. The latest application for a special rate variation has not been canvassed with ratepayers, and the survey that was carried out for an earlier but subsequently abandoned application revealed that only 20 per cent of ratepayers indicated they could afford the rate increase, with 55 per cent indicating they would be inconvenienced by the proposed rate increase. I suspect if they had known how big the rise was going to be they would have felt much more than inconvenienced.
3. The proposed increase is extremely large being, as your web site states, a total of 28.5 per cent over four years. This is at a time when inflation is officially running at around 2.5 per cent a year. What's more the proposed increase will come on top of rates that are already very high especially given the fact the council area includes a large number of retirees. If the application is granted, in four years many people will be hit by rates of around \$3000 on relatively modest homes.
4. When the earlier application was withdrawn the council stated that, in fact, the proposed rate increase wasn't necessary as it had found sufficient savings to cover its anticipated costs. So how can the council justify its latest application?
5. The decision to withdraw the earlier application reflected the fact one of the provisions of council mergers was that there would be no additional rate rises for the next four years. It was only after the NSW Parliament passed special legislation to allow MidCoast council, in effect, to apply to IPART for an increase that the latest application has been made. This special concession goes against a key principle of good government, that is, a condition imposed on a significant change should be adhered to, not abandoned after the change has been made.

For all these reasons, I call on IPART to reject MidCoast Council's application for a special rate variation.

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26th June 2017