

**BURWOOD COUNCIL RATE INCREASE – SUBMISSION 18 MARCH 2014**

I attended a Burwood Council meeting in January to find determine the outcome of the proposed 65.9% increase over 7 years. I had previously attended a community consultation with 15 others and voted against the increase, it was recommended by ratepayers that Council undertake and efficiency review prior to any increase in rates.

Community consultation results were presented in item 13/14 of Council papers. The results indicated that residents declined the increase in rates. Council decided the telephone survey conducted with 400 residents was deemed 'more accurate' and refused to include the other 236 community responses. This resulted in a preference for Option 2 with an increase of 60.6%.

The telephone survey results indicate that 76%, (100 people) were not ratepayers this confounds the results as the primary issue was a rate increase, although this was the last question asked after resident's view of Council services. Council's recommendation was for Option 3 an increase of 65.9% over 7 years. Council then stated it did not require resident approval.

\$35,000 was paid to encourage community consultations, ignored by Council.

This Council wrote of \$7 million dollars in 2012 due to costs of the previous General Manager. The Deputy Mayor was recently fined \$60,000 regarding a property improvement. T-Corp Dept of Treasury reported that Council had enough funds for the next 10 years to support short term and long term capital infrastructure. Burwood has increased in housing /apartments and rates. There is deemed an inappropriate culture in council that has led to community mistrust.

The local paper supports 4 Mayoral columns and advertising, and in my view has not provided residents with all aspects of these issues. Therefore it is imperative that all the community consultations results are included.

Councillors voted for the 60.6% increase over 7 years. No consideration was given to the impact on older residents who account for 16% of the population or new home owners with young families struggling with mortgages. It is not like turning off lights to reduce your electricity; ratepayers cannot change their behaviour to reduce these costs as this increase is out of their control. Less than half of the population is in the workforce (46%).

Counsellors noted that residents would be happy with their decision and could afford \$2.00 per day. How many \$2.00's a day are people supposed to find to address all these increases to core services while the decision makers of the service have made poor financial decisions that impact on residents.

I request that IPART refuse the approval for an increase in rates for Burwood Council. I request that IPART ask Council to conduct an efficiency review on its service prior to any proposed increase in the future. I recommend that IPART inform Council of its ethical obligations regarding community consultations and their evaluation and that all results should be taken into account.

Sincerely

[Redacted signature]

Cc NSW Department of Fair Trading.

[Redacted address]

18/3/14

