

TO IPART SUBMISSION AGAINST WYONG SHIRE COUNCIL RATE INCREASE:

As a ratepayer and resident of Wyong Shire Council wish to submit my objection to Council's proposed rate increase as submitted for 2013/14.

“The Council has the stewardship for fiscal management and responsibility of the organization to the community Council has failed to do this and is expecting people to suffer hardship to right its mistakes.”

My objection is based on several factors.

- This proposed increase will cause hardship for many ratepayers and members of the community. A significant number of the Wyong Shire residents are on low incomes, fixed incomes i.e.: pensioners, self-funded retirees the unemployed etc. These people don't have an increase in their incomes they have to live and survive within their means. Times are already difficult without another burden put on these members of the community. It is time council started living within its means as opposed to hitting the community to bail it out of a self inflicted problem reflecting its mismanagement and incompetence over the years .It must demonstrate that it has and is and will do better to manage its finances because so far it has failed on all fronts. There are several questions that need to be answered. Are the capable enough? What happens if they get the increase and fail to deliver? Who is accountable? What are the consequences?
- Council does not have the confidence of the ratepayers and community to be trusted with managing itself with how and what is does now let alone if it were to have an increase of funds. People are suspicious of Council wanting this increase over a 7year period and have cast a lot of doubt in Councils ability to manage its finances. Ultimately Council has itself to blame for the situation it now finds itself and that is interpreted as mismanagement and incompetence of Council in the view of the majority of ratepayers and community in general.
- Council is responsible for reaching the position of not being sustainable. It has taken years to arrive in this situation, which indicates gross mismanagement and incompetence over the years. If assets are in so bad a condition etc these should have been correctly managed years ago through good management plans along with a good asset management system and policy. These were obviously not done and now Council

expect the community to pay for its incompetence for what should be seen as unacceptable management of Councils affairs the community overall is not in a position to pay above and beyond the rate peg for so many years.

- In regards to Council and community consultation. Apart from being inundated with advertisement and pamphlets etc full of fear mongering. Council held 3 public meetings. I attended two of them being the first and the third of these meetings. Some at the meeting accepted that Council may need extra funding but were not agreeing to the 3 options on offer and did not accept or agree to the current proposal in their submission to IPART. Council representatives at these meetings had difficulty in answering most of the questions put forward from the community in fact the attendees of these meeting were subjected to a lot of spin from the speakers and shown a plethora of nice colored pie charts and lots of graphs with colored lines explaining how financially bad off Council was. It was very intimidating to most people as the threat of reduced services and all the gloom and doom were almost like a scare tactic being presented to the community. This method of consultation is very intimidating I believe the Council simply went through the motions of consultation and its real agenda was to put fear into the community by threatening its services due to lack of funds. Again this is not the community at fault here it is the sole responsibility of Council for the financial crisis it alleges it is in. Council failed to provide substantial answers to most questions presented creating a view that they had not done research or prepared for these meetings. The scenario was the same at the two meetings I attended they had not improved from the first round. This lack of ability to provide answers only brings more focus on the incompetence of Council.
- Council has to cut its costs. Council claims it has this is not the case with the continuing inefficient and ineffective way it carries out its day to operations. They are continually returning to job sites to repair the failed work recently completed. Majority of the work quality is below accepted industry standards. This being the case how can Council be trusted to improve if they have extra funding by way of a rate increase and deliver the acceptable standard of services?
- Council needs to address its problems before asking for a rate increase. It needs to take a realistic serious look at its structure and make some real cuts to staff in both management and operational staff. It needs to rationalize its plant and workshop activities i.e.: dry hire of plant, contracting repairs to plant etc. The use of contractors needs to be implemented as a major cost cutting measure there is no way Council can compete on day labor for operational works and if it claims it can I would not believe the figures or facts presented. Council should rid itself of obsolete assets and land etc that is only a cost burden depleting its budgets. Council should look at the way it does things and adopt a mantra

of “*do the right job*” and “*do the job right*” this is certainly not currently happening. In essence with the funds provided through a rate increase will only be wasted unless Council make “real” changes immediately and focus on those changes. The existing “culture” that is in Council needs to be changed accountability needs to be addressed along with employees performance assessment not a watered down annual appraisal where everybody goes away safe. These are serious and real issues Council has and in my view and individuals I have spoken with in the community agree this Council has not shown any real savings through work practices and efficiencies, as it is not happening out in the real world.

- In conclusion serious consideration should be given to investigating the workings of Wyong Shire Council and its ability to manage the organization. The best result would be to appoint an administrator till the Council is in a more acceptable financial and operational position.