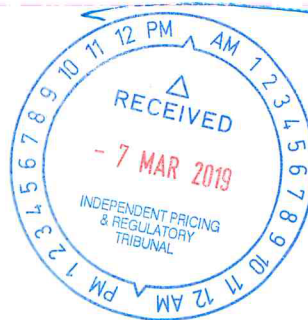


CONFIDENTIAL

To: Local Government Team
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW
PO box K35
Haymarket Post Shop
NSW 1240



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
1/3/2019

PORT STEPHEN COUNCIL SPECIAL RATE VARIATION SUBMISSION

This submission is in two parts, the first, a simple example of council waste and lavish expenditure, the second a more philosophical reason why council has betrayed its constituents, and the contempt it has for those who voted them in. I think ipart's brief to simply vet proposed fees is not wide enough, there is a link between rate payer perception of their council and vice versa, which impacts directly on rate levels/performance and value of services delivered. It is also ipart's duty to join the war against increased cost of living and make a point that this electorate is far from an affluent demographic.

EXPENDITURE

1) This morning I saw a brand new, latest model, Council vehicle, manned by one person doing simple repair work: The vehicle was the latest model Toyota Land Cruiser, V8 turbo diesel. (The type used by the US army in Syria). The base model costing about \$65,000A. But not content with that, the vehicle was fitted with prestige Magnesium Alloy wheels, (an additional deluxe option from the base work vehicle) decorative wheel arch surround assessories, making the total package well over \$70,000. Note that this vehicle cost, is not far below the luxury vehicle tax. Now nobody denies a man good tools, but this extravagance, when a light, nofrills, Toyota ute (at half the price) could have easily done the same job, and I doubt if the sophisticated 4 wheel drive capabilities of this expensive unit would ever be required. A better example of Council waste could not be found, and as far as I am concerned a graphic example of the tip of the iceberg of lavish spending council is now asking you to endorse and compensate for, by rate increases beyond the level of inflation or reasonable logic. As any good manager knows, there are two methods revenue can be increased: a reduction in costs, overheads and inefficiencies, or [REDACTED] simply passing costs onto the consumer, which ipart is now been implicated in. Distorted priorities, many examples: when a bus shed is destroyed in a car crash, don't replace it, simply leave the concrete slab, let school children stand in the rain or heat. A false economy, bad management.

PHILOSOPHY

Historically Port Stephens council has enjoyed a close relationship with its rate payers. An example of this, was during the recent state government round of proposed council amalgamations. Over 10,000 local signatures were collected in support of the existing council, to retain existing boundaries, in a vote of support for the then officers, staff, methods and attitude of their council. Recent council elections replaced most of those long standing officers and Mayor, and rather than the new council board recognising the huge asset they had (in their compliant and faithful

ratebase, who supported austerity, understood the limitations of a large geographic area with a small population and adjusted their expectations accordingly) The new council, in their inexperienced, young naive way, keen to pander to the lobbyists of tourist and developer elements, who sighted the new council as fresh blood for exploitation. Panicked at the daunting task ahead of them, and came to the unanimous, irrational conclusion that the only way to make their job easier (and be perceived to doing their job properly) was with buckets of cash. Hence the dodgy list of unfunded proposals and wish list items being paraded by council as essential projects, most of which will be beautification of the township to attract more tourists while the core issues go unattended and the squandered funds quickly depleted before another request for a hand-out. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] If there is no practice of economic management, council will never learn how to stretch their finances. We don't want a bigger tourist and developer presence, because that is simply stoking the fire with petrol. Council proposes to subsidise the tourist and real estate industry using rate payer funds, when the expansion of this trade does little for the community (benefits few) and rather impacts upon it, does little for day to day improvement, while locals and retirees depart because of a decline in residential and community ambience and unnecessary rate increases due to council inexperience and lack of economic wisdom and vision.

We (ratepayers) ask ipart to reject this request, give this new council more time to demonstrate how efficient they can be, (track record) allow council time to formulate concrete essential community proposals, rather than a vague wishlist, pandering to special interest groups and lobbyists. Throwing a bucket of lollies at a petulant child never solved anything, just destroys the character of the child.

We note council methodology here: they developed a new graphic logo ...for a rate increase press advertising promotion campaign, bought swish full page press advertisements, obviously put together by professional graphic designers and advertising consultant experts. Do you see the picture? No austerity, just casual indulgence, flashy corporate identity, photo opportunities, all image and no substance, waste, incompetence, and expensive delusions of running a corporate enterprise way beyond the simple brief and scope of a regional local council.

We sternly, with much gravity, request your help to prevent this proposal of injustice foisted upon people who can't afford it, and in the process, educating council to become better managers by making do with less, and learning to walk before they run. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 2 March 2019 10:32 AM

To: Local Government Mailbox <localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL SPECIAL RATE VARIATION APPLICATION

Ask yourself how many Local Councils are 50% owners of an international air port, with the RAAF as a tenant, and soon to be the home of the joint strike force jets, and proposed aerospace hub, as well as the resources of a huge extractive sand mining industry, a massive lucrative recreational harbour, home to several profitable tourist charter fleets who enjoy unlimited out of season international customers from cruise ships coming to Newcastle, the most beautiful waterway on the east coast of NSW, prestige marinas full of million dollar vessels, and every holiday season at 100% tourist occupancy of a massive accommodation industry. Vast tracts of hundreds of acres of flat land allocated to packaged housing development yielding a huge rate base, luxury residential real estate average sale over \$1.2 million, an all year round resident population of cashed-up retirees, a massive over 55's retirement home industry... AND THIS COUNCIL ASKS RETIREES & LOW INCOME DEMOGRAPHIC RESIDENTS FOR A RATE RISE!!.....what is council doing with their income?

All this revenue going to State and not local government you argue, well the State government can and should return some of that by way of special grants. Not bleed the poor locals who are subsidising all this with their meagre rates! What a [REDACTED] cop-out from a young and inexperienced new council, who is all spin, corporate image and photo op without substance.

If ipart can not reason from all of the above, AND REFUSE THE APPLICATION and ask where all the revenue is going, then your role' is not one of review, but collaboration, and will readily be seen as a rubber stamp to this naive rate rise application. We would prefer an Administrator, appointed by the Minister for Local Government, to have a close look at council, rather than a rate rise, (which I'm sure will be revealing) which will cause undue pain to those already burdened by an outrageous high cost of living. Did anyone mention CPI? (Consumer Price Index)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SUBMISSION FOR ANONYMOUS PUBLICATION NAME AND ADDRESS TO BE
WITH HELD AS CONFIDENTIAL