

IPART
Box K35
Haymarket NSW 1240



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

We wish to object to the proposed rate increases by Port Stephens Council on the following grounds:

LACK OF APPROPRIATE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

1. A letter outlining the reasons for the proposed rate changes was promised in 18/19 rate notices. No letter was forthcoming
2. The public meetings that were held by the council were generalized lectures only with little opportunity for feedback. They covered a small percentage of the population
3. Phone surveys by the council were badly designed and narrow in population covered. Complaints to council members about inadequacies of this survey were met with promises to look into it. No response was forthcoming.

ABSENCE OF CLEAR GOALS TO SPEND MONEY ON

Statements in town meetings and phone survey were general in nature eg Improve town centres, Improve council services.

There is nothing specific like

Upgrade Foreshore drive with dedicated bike and pedestrian paths

Give all ratepayers curb and guttering.

Council members are giving different goals for spending from each other and they are changing over time eg Councillor [REDACTED] said on one occasion "It will be easier to run the council" and on another he stated that the priority was to keep young people from leaving the area for employment.

RECORD OF POOR MANAGEMENT

1. [REDACTED] (owned by the council) sold at a loss (millions of dollars).
2. [REDACTED] has been in legal dispute with our council for many years. This has cost ratepayers large sums in legal fees because the council is unable to resolve this issue.
3. Council has a multistory carpark in Nelson Bay that cannot be used because it has structural issues. This has gone on unresolved for many years. Expensive temporary parking alternatives had to be sourced from the private sector.

NO MANDATE FOR RATE INCREASES

1. Not one of the current members on Port Stephens Council went to the last election with this as a policy
2. Local media surveys found over 70% of population against the increases
3. As a ratepayers we were not given an opportunity to make my choice of 4 options for rate increases. This was done solely by the council without the opportunity for our input.

INCAPACITY OF RATEPAYERS TO SUSTAIN INCREASES IN RATES due to large numbers of retirees in council area with largely fixed incomes. Possible changes to Federal Government with proposed changes to superannuation could further erode these incomes and people's ability to pay. Council rates are already one of our largest bills, and will become the largest bill if the changes come through, especially with the compounding effect over 7 years. It is unacceptable from a council who appears to look after its own interests at the expense of the people it is supposed to represent.

Yours sincerely



5 - 3 - 19