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Submission: This proposed rate variation does not have the support of the majority of ratepayers, most of whom cannot afford such an extreme rate rise.

Many Port Stephens ratepayers are retirees on a fixed income or pension and as such are unable to absorb such a rate increase.

A recent Port Stephens Council survey showed only 14% support such a rate rise while 72% are against yet Council persists in pursuing a massive rate hike.

A 7.5% increase compounded annually will mean that our own personal rate charges would increase by 65-70% after the proposed seven years. This does not take into account increases in assessments by the NSW Valuer General of which at least two are likely to occur during this period.

Recent negotiations for council amalgamations argued that Port Stephens Council is in a viable, healthy financial position, able to stand on its own yet now Council is claiming to be unable to maintain a "range of new projects" which are largely unspecified.

Some of the Projects Port Stephens Council believes to be desirable are likely to be funded by recent promises by both State Government political parties thus rendering such an extreme rate rise unnecessary.

There is the fear that some of the "desirable" projects will benefit only the few and that there will be a waste of public funds.