

From: Brigitte Mackenzie
Sent: Friday, 6 March 2015 7:35 AM
To: IPART Mailbox
Subject: Blue Mountains Council rate increase

I would like to add my comments to what im sure is an avalanche of feedback you will receive concerning the underhanded and sneaky way our council recently tried to increase our rates by 40%.

I am extremely concerned, not only about the size of the increase, but the process that took place to achieve, what council declared was an overwhelming vote in favour of it.

I work with the public Sir, and can honestly say, of the dozens of people i have asked, not one person voted for this increase, and i cant really imagine anyone doing so; who do you know that would vote in favour of your rates going up by 40%?

There was no transparency in this process, and certainly we were not given our rightful opportunity to vote at the polls for, or against it, which should be the process for something so major in an electorate surely.

All we received was an expensive glossy pamphlet, (which looked like a shopping catalogue, and therefore probably ended up in most peoples recycling bins), and the 3 choices we were given all involved an increase in price of different levels, and, either a decrease, static, or increase in services, respectively. Everyone i know voted for the least of the 3 evils, which was the most moderate increase in price, and involved a declaration of a decrease in services. There was never any explanation as to what the services were mind you, but it was the only acceptable option for most of the residents who actually read the document at all.

This council is known for its financial mismanagement, and every resident knows personally of many examples of wastage, including myself, who regularly witnesses council trucks 'parked up' doing nothing, and, as i live near a council park, also regularly see the 5 or 6 council workers it takes to plant a seedling tree or mow the grass that i could do alone in a third of the time allocated. These are not isolated instances, having lived in the mountains for 27 years, they are just accepted as normal for our council which is a bit sad in itself.

I am aware also of the top heavy nature of wages and management in our council, having been studying same since this matter arose, and i truly believe that council should look internally for the savings they need to fix their deficit instead of expecting the tax payer to pick up the tab with increased rates.

I work in the private sector, and am in charge of budgets, staff management and achievement of profit in a small business, so i understand how income and expenses work and the need for balance. I believe that in the private sector if you see your profit fall or your income decrease, you look at your own processes and assets for savings to change the fortunes of your balance sheet. You cut back expenses as a first point of call, review your own spending, and see if there are better ways to achieve your goals within your sales income. Why cant council do this?, why is their first option to put residents rates up, while not reviewing any of their own processes or expenditure for savings first. Doesn't this mean that in a few years time we will simply be back

here again, with the same debate, as council will have continued to live beyond their means and 'used up' even this increase in revenue?

I am appalled quite honestly that this matter has gone as far as it has, and that council, in their own minds feel it justified, while the people who fund them don't.

We did have 2 councillors who opposed the process that was undertaken, and these 2 councillors, in my mind were the only 2 members of council actually doing their jobs and representing their ratepayers. They stood tall and requested more options and more transparency in the process, but both were shouted down and 'attacked', subsequently resigning in the face of such closed, and out of touch minds.

Please consider the feedback you are receiving sir, and the enormous impact a 40% increase in rates will have on the average persons living costs. Personally, i am a single mum, with a mortgage, paying my own way, with a reasonable standard of living, but certainly not with vast amounts of surplus income to 'bail' out the Blue Mountains Council due to their own inability to balance their own books.

CPI increases are expected, but that should be limit, as per residents wage increases (if they are lucky).

Thank you
Brigitte Mackenzie

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