

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 26 February 2020 4:34 PM
To: Local Government Mailbox <localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Submission re Lismore Councils Proposed rate Rise.

Lismore City Council has applied to increase their rates by a figure FAR above the 2.6% rate peg.

For the viable future of Lismore this simply cannot be allowed.

SOME RELEVANT STATS. TO LISMORE COUNCIL.

The situation here in Lismore has been **deliberately misrepresented** to iPART.

A/ Lismore Council's current employment costs stand at 28% of recurring budget. This is **ALREADY** 10% over the State average. To compound this, the Council has only recently voted

itself a pay rise, and is also actively recruiting even further staff right now.

As of this moment staff numbers stand around 431,with the State average being 349.

B/ Council is making much of the large length of roads to be maintained in this area.

FACT: Road length per capita is 27.9 KM; ...the State average for Councils is 39.5km.

That means Lismore Council has **LESS** to care for!

C/ Lismore Council's infrastructure backlog stands at a huge 13.6%, while the State average is only 5.6%

On these figures alone, Lismore Council crying poor-mouth is nothing but incontrovertible proof of not only their profligacy, but their total inability to manage funds they already collect, and over a long period of time.

THE COMPLETE AND UTTER DISREGARD FOR THE RESULTS OF ALL CONSULTANCY.

I served on most of the panels that Council put together for their so called "consultancy".

First there was an online survey. This ran to nearly four long pages and **NOT A SINGLE SUBMISSION** was for the Rate Rise.

Then came a telephone survey. This was deliberately skewed to be so long and involved that most subjects would either hang up or refuse to continue, however I believe the results were no more in favour.

Lismore Council refused to release any exact figures.

Then came the most farcical event of all. I was invited to sit on a panel hastily convened by Council where the members were actually told that Council would NOT be answering any questions.

Then the firm hired to run the evening pulled out the greatest con ever. We were all issued with post-it notes and specifically directed to come up with POSITIVE advantages of the rate rise. This of course instantly gave Council the ability to claim that some ratepayers were in favour of the proposal. The body of the meeting itself was nothing of the sort, becoming more than a little hostile and highly AGAINST the rate rise.

Council has therefore not only completely IGNORED all the required consultancy results, but then shamelessly gone on the claim that the ratepayers were in favour, when clearly they were NOT! This demonstrates the dishonesty of the current Council.

LISMORE ITSELF.

Lismore is a “poor” town, with a very high percentage of residents on some form of welfare or supporting pensions. There is also a high proportion of those renting property and rents are already high. Naturally any rate rise will be passed on to tenants, causing immense financial hardship.

The Central Business district is dying. Only a few businesses returned after the recent flood that topped the levee. A huge proportion of businesses are now either gone leaving empty shops, or are in the process of closing, invariably citing crippling rates as a huge factor. Lismore Council comes up with a few “pretty” band-aid solutions but then proposes a huge rate rise?

The impact of such a huge rate rise as is proposed will have a monumentally deleterious effect on all aspects of the population of Lismore, both commercial and private.

Therefore it fails the test of being “reasonable” because it plainly is not.

Should this rise be granted this Council will go down as the one that finally destroyed the CBD for good.

THE FAILURE TO EXPLAIN AND SHOW THE ADDED EFFECT OF ALL LAND BEING CURRENTLY REVALUED.

This is a duty of the Council and it has shamelessly failed to explain to all that as rates are based on land valuations, this rate rise will end up being FAR more than they are actually telling the public. We actually had a Mayor quoted as saying in the local newspaper that it would amount to “ONLY 25% CENTS A DAY”! Now this is clearly and demonstrably a lie, and demonstrably so.

I am on Rural Residential Rating and for the likes of myself and any farmers, that figure is absurdly low. Another misrepresentation to the ratepayer! Lying and dishonesty.

COUNCIL ITSELF.

Currently Council is composed of several members who have personal agendas such as climate change very much to the for.

One Councillor even went so far as to force Council to hold up a scheduled meeting to declare “A Climate Emergency” claiming that the Pacific Ocean would not only soon rise over coastal Ballina but even threaten to cover Lismore!

Now not wishing to get into any argument for that concept or against it, but it is clearly NOT Lismore Council’s elected duty to do anything at all about such matters.

Time and time again Council’s time and ratepayer’s money is wasted on schemes that are not part of Council’s responsibility, while our roads (which very much are!) fall into ever more neglect. Lismore has some of the most expensive sculptures, murals and other decorations of highly dubious value daubed about the city, but absolutely appalling roads, footpaths and street drainage?

It’s plain to see just where the current Council’s priorities lie, and it’s NOT with anything as mundane and dreary as roads or city maintenance.

The sheer profligacy of this Council has to actually be investigated to be believed. The money wasted on useless artefacts and consultancies is just incredible, and yet they want even more?

We, the ratepayers could not prevent this Council from going ahead and asking for this rate rise. They simply ignored us. The very fact that their submission of over 100 pages was up and ready even before the final “consultation” proves that the decision had already been taken, regardless of what ratepayers said.

It can now only remain with iPART to save us and our town from the sheer greed and arrogance of this Council. This application must be denied, not only for the sake of the residents and the businesses of the town, but so that we can have the opportunity to vote these current arrogant and wasteful Council members out and replace them with more representative members who will actually listen to the ratepayers.

I plead with you to ensure that this application is refused and Lismore Council directed to use its funds more wisely and cease the wasteful ways to which it has become accustomed.

Yours sincerely,

Barry N. Parker

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