

25th February, 2019

Local Government Team
IPART
PO Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop, NSW 1240



Re: Port Stephens Shire Council SRV

Dear IPART

I wish to register that I object to Port Stephens Council's ridiculous proposal to increase rates by 66% over 7 years.

I am not a resident or a rate payer in the region, however, my elderly mother is and as such I have made myself aware of the issue after listening to her concerns, after which I have researched the issue further and the following points are extremely concerning and appear to have been not considered by the council. A council which has a poor track record of managing the resources of the region to a point where it could be considered mismanagement, from poor decisions of project approval to obstinate attitude towards resident's concerns.

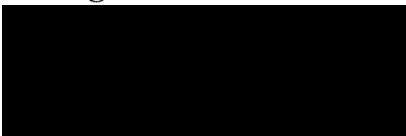
- The PSSC has by their own admission received in excess of 70% of the submissions that are against the proposed SRV increase.
- They have totally ignored the over 2,000 submissions which were against a 7% increase and the council has asked you to approve a 7.5% increase each year for the next 7 years.
- The awareness of the Council's proposed projects is almost non-existent, this lack of awareness has been fuelled by Council changing the projects and the amounts of money being allocated to projects, between when this proposal first went out for public submission, and what has been submitted to you, just like the amount of increase as the previous point.
- Furthermore, the council seems to have no understanding of their residents as the vast majority are senior citizens who have not grown up with computers and technology, and yet when asked for specifics the typical answer that they have received is that the information is available on their website. My mother is fortunate that she has been learning to use the internet and has my assistance for research for this, however, from the people that she has spoken to this seems to leave her

in the minority. ***‘This would appear to be age discrimination at the least and an attempt to conceal the facts at worst.’***

- The proposed projects appear to be a wish list of wants rather than a list of projects that are essential to Council continuing to operate.
- I did grow up in the region and have many friends who still live there, I know from speaking to them that the region like the vast majority of the country are doing it hard with low wage growth, high increases in the cost of living, a fact that the council has totally ignored with this requested increase.
- There are many additional emotional points that could and should be raised, however, given that you are being asked to make a decision to approve an additional increase to these rates based on logical reasons my request will remain in the same vain, to approve this increase will greatly disadvantage the majority of the residents of the PSSC for the benefit of a few – it would be against the reason that IPART exists to approve it.
- At the very least council should be only allowed to request such an increase for one year, the concern that their request for 7 years raises is that it will create a precedent for the council to expect similar increases at the end of this particular SRV.

Port Stephens Council has ignored residents, I would like to add my voice to the many thousands of residents who are asking you to listen to us when we say: *‘this rate rise is unnecessary, unaffordable, and will cause extreme hardship for many. I ask that you reject this application outright’.*

Regards



Brett Perkins

