



Chairman  
IPART  
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8 March 2013

<b>IPART</b>	
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**SUBJECT: Wyong Shire Council - Application for Special Rate Rise**

On 7 February 2013 I attended a public meeting called by Wyong Shire Council re its proposal to make an application to IPART for special rate increase on 6.9% each year for the next seven years. At that meeting I asked two questions relating to the precarious financial position that the Council had fallen into a few years previously and the state of some assets that had deteriorated to a very bad condition. Neither question was answered that night by either staff or the Mayor or a Councillor. The only explanation given was that of action that had been taken to overcome financial and efficiency problems within the organization.

On 8 February 2013 I wrote to the Mayor, Councillor Eaton, (copy attached) but as of today no response, either by way of acknowledgement or attempted explanation, has been received. I note that in the "Mayor's Column" in the Central Coast Express Advocate ON 6 March 2013 (I had been absent from the area for about 10 days) the Mayor has advised that Council has made a decision to make application for the 9.5% rate increase for the next seven years and I am still waiting for a response.

I have read all the information that the Council provided on its web site prior to the public meetings but nowhere has it been clearly spelt out to ratepayers and residents that the proposed special rate increase each year then forms part of the next year's base and future applications of the special increase is then actually compounded.

I mainly bring this to your attention as I consider that as a resident and ratepayer in the Wyong Shire that I was entitled to the courtesy of a response from the Mayor prior to the final decision being made by the Council.

Yours sincerely

**C G COTTON**



Cr Doug Eaton

Mayor Wyong Shire Council

PO Box 20

WYONG NSW 2259

Dear Cr Eaton

I attended the Public meeting on 7 February 2013 re the proposed rate increase for the next 7 years. At that meeting I asked two (2) questions which were not answered, these questions were:

- 1 How did the Councillors and staff let the Wyong Shire Council get into such a precarious financial position?
- 2 How did Councillors and staff let assets deteriorate to the extent as shown in the photos exhibited at the meeting?

Neither question was answered. Maxine gave the standard answer re the financial position being the actions taken over the last two years to correct the position but made no attempt to answer how staff let the financial position reach such a precarious position. No attempt was made by you, as the Mayor, or any Councillor present to explain how the Council let the financial position reach the precarious position.

My understanding of Local Government is that staff, and in particular the General Manager, are engaged to advise Council and keep it informed on financial and other matters. It seems to me that the General Manager at the time and his staff did not advise Council adequately or if they did Council did not meet its obligations to direct corrective action to be taken. It also seems to me that the Council of the day either did not understand the financial position and advice placed before it, if such was, and or the Councillors took no action to remedy the situation.

To reiterate, my question relates to how the precarious financial position was permitted to reach the stage it did before remedial action was taken and continual reference to corrective measures taken, which are well documented in the information made available to the public, does not answer the question.

In relation to the second question I am at a loss to understand how assets could be let deteriorate to the extent of some shown in the photos shown at the meeting and in the information handed out. I consider that this is a failure in the duty of staff to let such happen and not inform Council and if Council was informed it was a failure on their part not to direct action be taken to maintain the asset. Or is it that at the time the assets were considered not utilized and therefore redundant to need and is now only raised to support the cause for the proposed large rate increase?

As a matter of interest how many (and the question is numbers not names) of the three staff who made the presentations at last night's meeting and the General Manager own property in the Wyong Shore area?

I am a ratepayer in the Wyong Shire are and live in the area, however in respect of a question and statement by a female at the meeting last night people who rent property within the Wyong Shire have as a component of the rent they pay the rates paid to council therefore they are not freeloaders.

If new housing development is a burden to the Council why does the Council place such a priority of trying to attract further development? I personally believe that new housing development is a benefit to the all in this area and enables cost of some facilities to be spread over a greater spread of population.

I look forward to your early response.

Yours faithfully

C G COTTON