

LG Submission Form 2021-2022 - Applications

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Related form version: **2**

IPART Special Variation Submission Form - Applications

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| Industry | Local Government |
| Review | (LG) Special Variations & Minimum Rates 2021-2022 |
| Document Reference | |
| Council | Georges River Council, Special Variation Application |

If you have any general feedback regarding your council's proposed SV, please leave your comments in the comment box below.

In summary, the council has not been open and honest with its dealings with the community on a number of issues. Despite petitions to the order of 10,000, it continues to do what it thinks with a divided and dysfunctional council, overriding previous decisions. Eg Carss Park.

They have shown multiple waste of funds without taking consideration of the community wants. The consultation process is not a genuine process but is steered to yes or no answers. It saddens me that the council has not compared itself financially to other council and has not managed to collect \$4 million worth of developer fees that is supposed to be collected prior to building. There has been a shut down of community voices at council and is performing poorly, despite the supposed financial benefit of amalgamation. There has not been any evidence provided to the community of a sincere cost-cutting especially with the number of directors compared to other council. The council owes the community that it represents to be transparent and honest about its management or mismanagement of funds. The council is not looking out for the community and represents.

Your comments on Criterion 1:

The council has failed to compare itself to other like organisations who have managed their funds better. Like Botany Bay which has fewer directors than Georges River Council for a similar sized population. There has been a focus on projects that have not been requested by the community and have wasted on money where the council was dysfunctional such as the Carss Park War Memorial pool which had 10,000 signatures requesting it. We asked for a simple pool but they have been looking at some major income provider where we as the community there is no need for it. We have major cricket ground and money invested in cricket museums where there was no community buy- in but closure to our pool and refused to refurbish it - we only have on functioning pool in the whole area and we are required to swim out of area. Councillors keep stating that if they don't increase the rates then services will lose out. However, other councils have managed to do this and the top heavy administration cost of directors does not appear to be factored in. Also, the incompetence of not having collected \$4 million worth of developers fees. Yet they are sacrificing safety to get income from traffic fines. Eg Trafalgar Street Peakhurst has a soccer field where every weekend with soccer, parents are forced to make safety decisions. Instead of rectifying the issue with the fence being too close, they use it as a means of collecting revenue. Complaints have been provided by the community to no avail.

Your comments on Criterion 2:

There only seems to be a comment that the council needs more money. They have not justified why they need more money and when compared to other amalgamated council they are performing so poorly and selling assets. It appears to be the in ability to manage the funds that they have properly as opposed to burdening the community without a clear justification of what they've done and a threat that

workers will go. There are multiple concerns that the community has not been given the entire picture and true consultation has been sacrificed with

██████████ questions as opposed to open and true consultation process. Some issues include:

- no information on cost savings proposed and introduced by GRC since 2016 to 2021,
- no access to the Financial Sustainability Working Party, formed in mid-2019, to look at potential cost savings,
- the Audit and Risk Management Committee recommended sale of Council property – 2 carparks – to reduce the financial deficit,
- the A&RMC recognised that expenditure was outstripping income, which suggests that financial management is poorly controlled,
- the wide discrepancy between the former Hurstville and Kogarah Council's minimum rate, being \$586 and \$967 respectively, the proposed new rate will be \$965.80,
- no effort to find a mid-way point, financial relief for those former ratepayers from the 2 amalgamated councils, and then work towards gradual increases in rates in the coming years,
- Citizen Advice Group, randomly selected ratepayers, September 2020, deliberations not disclosed,
- compared to neighbouring amalgamated councils, GRC has fewer FTES, more directorships, lowest population but needs a much higher minimum rate in the proposal to IPART.

- ██████████ mentioned that savings have been made during the period of COVID-19
- Audit & Risk Management Committee given as saying that deficit can only be run for so long, then response to increase income

- [REDACTED] strong suggestion that waste in financial management has happened
- [REDACTED] referred to 'transition period' for rates harmonisation in draft legislation
- response from General Manager that new councillors can run on platform of changes to rates
- claims that savings identified in application to IPART. Yet General Manager refers to other cost savings with remodelling

The community has also been misled with comments such as

- council rates are tax-deductible so won't affect the rental market,
- no mention of cost savings in brochures, or in correspondence with mayor and director of City Innovations
- supposedly \$1 to \$3 per week increase in 2019; in 2020, supposedly 60cents extra per week, could be misleading to use the average weekly increase in rates,
- emphasis on average values/increases muddles the discussion,
- ad valorem and land valuation figures used inappropriately to deflect from rates harmonisation,
- avoiding any focus on business rates,
- much community consultation 'shut-down' by MC, to deflect the negative comments

Your comments on Criterion 3:

I realised that the rates would be similar in the previous Kogarah and Hurstville Council. However, I didn't expect to be such an incredibly high rate rise, especially in these times of hardship and the fact that other council have managed to do so much better. My questions would be whether or not this council would be better off going under administration. Definitely do not feel that we are getting any value out of our rates especially with such a lack of facilities like swimming pools.

Your comments on Criterion 4:

Not aware of these documents

Your comments on Criterion 5:

I have not been made aware of any productivity improvements or cost containment strategies. Rather, they have sold off property without the community being aware of it. It is just poor management of funds.

If you have attachments you would like to include with your feedback, please attach them below.

Your Details

Are you an individual or organisation?

Individual

If you would like your submission or your name to remain confidential please indicate below.

Publish - my submission and name can be published (not contact details or email address) on the IPART website

First Name

Christina

Last Name

Jamieson

Organisation Name

Position

Email

[REDACTED]

IPART's Submission Policy

I have read & accept IPART's Submission Policy