

Attn : Local Government Team

Please accept this as my submission as an individual ratepayer, regarding the recent application by Newcastle Council to increase rates by 8% annually compounded over 5 years.

I submit that :

- Newcastle Council have not consulted adequately with ratepayers
- Newcastle Council have mis-represented ratepayers when reporting the results of surveys (although I am aware of one survey only). I personally have contributed to one survey conducted by the Council "Voice" web survey portal, in which rate increase options were canvassed. There were three options given, of which one was to be selected. The rate increase sought by Council was not one of these options. The increase sought is considerably more than those canvassed.
- the rate increase sought is an "ambit claim" and that Council are setting an unrealistic and unjustified goal for funding in the knowledge that iPart will agree to a lesser amount, albeit that amount will be higher than if originally requested.
- ratepayers are not satisfied with the efficiency of Council and manner in which the current rates are spent. There has been insufficient communication of other options including cost reductions such as contracting out of some services, and user pay options for some services.
- many ratepayers cannot afford rate increase of this magnitude. That is not to say a small increase is not warranted, perhaps up to the statutory maximum rate increase (ie with no variation). In this economic climate any increase in rates will make home budgeting for many a burden that is not sustainable.
- It is highly likely these rate increase will be passed on from landlords to tenants, which may put further economic pressure on the less advantaged residents of Newcastle. I myself own 3 investment properties in Newcastle all of which if this rate rise is approved will force me to pass on this rate rise to my tenants. Currently I attempt to keep the rental of these properties at the lower end of recommended rental income as I am aware of the difficulty families have in securing affordable rental properties in Newcastle and the significant waitlist for social housing in Newcastle (over 10 years as at June 2014) coupled with the limited number of affordable properties available.
- The rate increase is politically motivated and is designed to be used as a means to build infrastructure much of which will be difficult to justify, simply as a means to promote the political profile of some Councillors. One example of this is featured in the Newcastle Morning Herald today page 11 Saturday 28 March 2015- Which features Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes boasting of the council plan to undertake "A significant makeover to the Newcastle Foreshore" and "with plans to create a playground to rival Speers Point" I was unaware the Council was in competition with Lake Macquarie Council and the foreshore area appears to be in good order with many Novacastrians and visitors using this area each weekend. This playground which is the centrepiece of this redevelopment is stated by [REDACTED] "to be a very exciting development for families in Newcastle and the region" however these same families will also be the losers if this extraordinary rate increase is approved. The increase in rates these families will be either directly or indirectly paying may make it highly unlikely they can afford the travel expenses to visit this exciting development.

Regards

[Debbie Bradfield](#)