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Submission: The whole Hunter valley including Newcastle is suffering more than other parts of the State due to the collapse in the mining boom. We have the highest unemployment rate in the State at present. Even in boom times no one is stupid enough to believe that rate payers can cope with such a ridiculously high increase in rates. A good Council would continue to seek out cost saving measures to protect its citizens from such a ridiculous increase. At the same time as asking for this huge increase Newcastle Council is trying to reinstate all the services that were cut or reduced by the last council & provide funding for a rebuild of our art gallery. They should be seeking savings. Not seeking spending. The current Councilors have NO business experience & do not understand how to budget. If IPART approves their rate rise request, they will spend it rapidly then cry poor to you again. Please do not approve this ridiculous request for increase in rates.