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Submission: I am strongly opposed to Port Stephens Council's request for a variation in the Standard Rate rise as I believe are the majority of the Port Stephens community.

The request for a Special Variation comes at a volatile time as the cost of living is soaring and wage growth stagnant, it is irresponsible and unfair for Council to be proposing to massively increase rates.

Our summers are getting longer and hotter and I personally know of at least two households where the elderly residents have resorted to sitting at a shopping centre for six hours to keep cool because they were too concerned about the electricity cost of running their air conditioner all day while restricted to a pension.

Council should be looking at its priorities and making decisions based on what they have now, [REDACTED] including a \$20 million legal bill in 2018 for a case it was "warned not to fight", after receiving a court-appointed expert's report that showed it was likely to lose.

(<https://www.theherald.com.au/story/5637141/left-with-the-bill-council-loses-case-it-was-warned-not-to-fight>)

In May, 2016 Justice Pembroke criticised the council for "incurring the costs of four barristers" to argue a point it was "blindly obvious" the council would lose.

[REDACTED]