

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 13 February 2019 6:32 AM
To: Local Government Mailbox <localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Port Stephens Council proposed rate increase

Dear IPART

I wish to register that I object to Port Stephens Council's proposal to increase rates by 66% over 7 years.

Over 70% of submissions to Council's proposal were against the increase. Over 2,000 people made their voices heard. Council ignored every single one of these people. Thousands more locals have signed online and paper petitions. Local businesses are against this proposal. The argument that much of the population did not raise a submission and so therefore must support the rate rise is invalid if tested across local communities. All of the community people I have talked to are against this level of rate rise. Some say they cannot afford any; some argue the lowest scenario presented of about 5% was more than enough if projects were prioritised on what is critical to communities, and less Nelson Bay and parts of Raymond Terrace cbd focused.

There seems to be little correlation with community needs and the priority of Council's proposed projects. Expansions to Nelson Bay and parts of Raymond Terrace cbd as priorities are not understood even by some people in those areas. There is no evidence that many of the projects proposed by Council are 'needs'. More critical safety projects such as safe footpaths in areas like Medowie seem to be seen as lower priority than other projects that appear to be 'wants'. I agree that most of the projects would be nice to have, but many are not essential to Council continuing to operate.

Council has, in recent years, demonstrated a sound capacity to fund large-scale projects without the need for a rate increase.

Wages are stagnant, power prices are soaring, and the cost of petrol, insurances, and consumer goods is only increasing. Cost of living is rising and as a retiree I am one of many people who are already struggling. While Council has argued there is a rebate for those meeting hardship criteria, this does not assist those of us who may be a little over that cut off limit. Pensioners are already deciding between turning the heater on in the dead of winter, or not spending that money so they can pay bills. Parents are already deciding whether they can afford to buy bigger shoes to send

their kids to school in, or whether they can afford a bigger school uniform. This is without a rate increase. Council have decided for a full rate increase rather than a smaller increase. There seems little concern for the community in making this decision.

Thanks

Geoff Voigt

