

Private Submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

On

Wingecarribee Shire Council Special Rate Variation

Friday, March 11, 2016

Wingecarribee Shire Council has submitted an application for approval of a Special Rate Variation

I am a resident and ratepayer in that Shire. I ask the Tribunal to refuse Wingecarribee Shire Council's Special Rate Variation because the increase is an unreasonable and additional burden on Retirees **and** Wingecarribee Shire Council has submitted an application which does not have any credible community support.

**Unreasonable additional burden on retirees.**

**1. Wingecarribee** Shire has a higher proportion of older residents than the New South Wales and Australian average.

Age of Wingecarribee Residents			
By five year band, Compared with State and National Average.			
<u>Age</u>	<u>Wingecarribee Shire Council</u>	<u>New South Wales</u>	<u>Australia</u>
<i>People</i>	<i>% of population</i>	<i>% of population</i>	<i>% of population</i>
50-54 years	7.1	6.8	6.7
55-59 years	6.7	6.1	6
60-64 years	7.6	5.6	5.6
65-69 years	6.9	4.4	4.3
70-74 years	5.2	3.4	3.3
75-79 years	3.9	2.7	2.5
80-84 years	2.8	2.2	2
85 years +	2.6	2	1.9

Source: Wingecarribee Shire Council & ABS Census 2011

Although this data is aged I believe it will reflect today's demographic profile. Similar results were shown by the 2006 Census and I think we will see the trend strengthening in the 2016 Census.

**2. Most** retired people are on limited incomes. I have data but didn't think it would be necessary to provide proof of this statement. Ask your grandparents.

I also point out that there are many younger families who struggle with the cost of living.

**3. Wingecarribee** Shire Council rates were already 16th highest out of 150 Councils in NSW in 2012/13. If it has insufficient funds to carry out its works, it can look to past frivolous expenditure for a reason.

**Special Rate Variation Application has no credible community support.**

Wingecarribee Shire Council does not have community support for its application for a 10% annual rate increase.

In spite of a costly promotional campaign which included mail and radio, a total of 987 deliberate responses to Council's proposals was received.

This is only 2% of the 47585 residents identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in its 2014 ERP.

Of those: 31.7% chose Option 1, Deteriorate;

33.2% chose Option 2, Maintain;

33.9% chose Option 3, Improve.

Additionally; 21 submissions were received via email and letter. The majority of these submissions 'did not support an increase in rates or did not state a preferred option however raised concerns relating to the proposed increases.'

A petition with approximately 615 signatures opposed to the proposed increase was received by Wingecarribee Shire Council, opposing any increase greater than standard Rate Peg.

67.1% of respondents opposed Option 3 for which Council now seeks approval.

Council has made a Special Rate Variation Application based on the approval of 0.7% of the population.

I urge the Tribunal to reject this application.

Ian Robertson

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