

JIM BEATSON

13 March 2017

Objection to Byron Shire Council's application for a Special Rate Variation

I object to Byron Shire Council's application to IPART for a 7 ½% annual cumulative increase in rates over four years for the following reasons:

- 1) The Community Consultation process was flawed for the following as follows:
 - a) The process did not explain how the rating system worked within the rate peg. In particular that ratepayers could receive a substantial rate percentage increases and decreases within the overall peg. As a result many ratepayers were misled as to the actual changes in rates that would occur if Councillors voted in a majority for any of the three options discussed.
 - b) On the only occasion when Byron Ratepayers were given the opportunity to vote for 'no increase in rates'.
 - c) 'no increase in rates' was supported by 70% of those who took part in that survey'.
 - d) Changing the original 7 ½% from "maintain Byron Shire infrastructure" in one survey to 7 ½% "deteriorate" in the following two surveys¹.
 - e) Refusing to include in the survey that Council had already increased resident rates in the previous year for many areas of Byron Shire by up to 22%, within the peg. While at the same time reducing business rates² in Byron Bay CBD by 8 ½% within the peg.

¹ In BSC's Ordinary Meeting Agenda 6 October 2016 page 32 Report No. 13.5 Proposed Special Rate Variation it described one option for a 7.5% as "maintain" yet several months later 7.5% became "deteriorate"? When did council's advocacy on this issue change and where is the change documented?

² According to the Agenda of Ordinary meeting 28/04/16, Staff report No 13.1 "Public Exhibition - Draft 2016/17 Operational Plan" under section "Draft General Land Rates and Charges" we see the following: Table 5 – Average General Land Rates Comparison

Category	2015/2016 \$	2016/2017 \$	% Change
Residential	1,095.68	1,139.02	3.8%
Business Ordinary	2,026.66	2,071.32	2.2%
Business Byron CBD	4,814.96	4,437.19	-8.5%
Farmland	1,868.03	1,605.54	-16.3%

- f) In one of the surveys Byron Council's consultants actually transposed the answers to the proposed 7 ½% increase with answers to the 12 ½% increase.
- 2) The Community Consultation surveys did not factor in or mention on-going triennial NSW Valuer Generals revaluations of land which is misleading to ratepayers.
 - 3) The community consultation surveys made no mention of the state government's intention to reassess rates to be based on land and property values, from land only values in the near future.
 - 4) I fear that pensioners, and retirees on fixed incomes, who purchased property in Byron Shire prior to the extraordinary rise in land values in the last 10 years will be forced out of the Shire in their senior years causing great distress. A pensioner receiving \$20,000 a year may now be subjected to a cumulative annual rate increase of 7 ½% on top of as much as 10% to 22% that they suffered under the 2015/2016 rate increase. Many in this situation have already expressed their fears. Some of these people were born in Byron Shire, and suffering from health issues. It is unreasonable to expect them to be compelled through rate increases to relocate at this point in their lives.

Yours Faithfully,

Jim Beatson

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