



March 12 2014

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I want to be certain my premature submission 6 January 2014, in protest to Maitland City Council's (MCC) application for a large rate increase for next seven years, is accepted and hence I re-submit it.

I further wish to emphasize MCC blatant lack of efficiency of financial matters, the effect of which it is now endeavouring to impose on its ratepayers. This should be opposed with strict advice to function within its income, in the same way its ratepayers have to.

A Maitland Council handout re the "Seven Year Rate Proposal", advises *"an operational shortfall of \$92 million Over the next ten years if current services are to be maintained."*

Notwithstanding this acknowledgement, council is determined to press ahead, against great opposition, with a makeover of a failed mall, which will cost \$15 million to \$17 million.

Part of this makeover involves the purchase of Italian stone to pave the roadway through the mall. This is most costly and could be achieved much more economically using Australian material like tar or asphalt.

A gross and wilful waste of ratepayers' money, of which council has been advised.

The same council document advises of a rate increase proposal, *"This increase would be retained permanently in the rate base after the seven years."*

The structure of the rating system should be such to allow reductions if in future a no-nonsense financial system is employed.

It is envisaged council's application for a rate rise will be supported by testimony claiming surveys have indicated support for council's endeavour to increase rates.

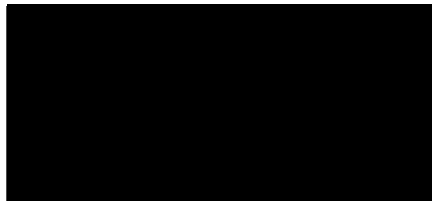
This may seem factual, but we are all familiar with and aware (and are taught) that surveys may be constructed in various ways to give desired results - either genuine or hypothetical.

A self produced survey, when the adjudicator is party to the objective of the survey, should be a no, no.

Maitland Council must restrict rates to an affordable level and particularly learn, as ratepayers have to, live within its income.

**MAITLAND COUNCIL'S APPLICATION FOR AN
OVERSIZED RATE INCREASE SHOULD BE DENIED
IN FAVOUR OF A MORE PRACTICAL ONE.**

**THE COUNCIL SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO LIVE
WITHIN ITS INCOME.**



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1 of 3

6 January 2014

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Ref : Maitland City Council Rate Rise Application

I am a ratepayer to Maitland City Council (MCC). I am retired and live on the aged pension.

As such I am a low income receiver and have no alternative but to live within my fixed income.

I exercise my freedom of choice when I wish to purchase or pay for something so exist comfortably within my limitations according as to how I manage my finances.

However, some things are not reliant on one's own choice and can place a heavy burden on his being.

My concern is with MCC and its current attempt to increase rates by a hefty amount for seven years and thereafter.

With so many costs rising in the recent past, the potential increase by MCC to its rates charges is helping to drive many people to the end of the road.

Ratepayers are burdened to financing local government, to a large degree, but have no choice over how much or on what our money is spent. This is in spite of having elected representatives as members of council.

Such being the situation, a stand has to be made to make known ratepayer's dilemma in his position of being charged for items such as "wants" by councillors in marked contrast to "needs" by ratepayers.

There will always be different opinions to any plan or idea put up by a public body and it is hoped common sense will prevail for the common good.

MCC in the past has performed some questionable acts which attract extensive negative criticism from a fiscal viewpoint.

An overview of past actions to determine if the requested rise in rates is justified.

Maitland Council's events in the past include;

1. The current Maitland mall was established some years ago regardless of considerable opposition to the project.
Since that time Maitland has grown considerably which has encouraged private enterprise to develop shopping centres (malls) around the district close to where new developments have occurred.
Natural change and progress have caused the city centre to wither and businesses to fail or languish.
Many requests have been made over time for the mall to be reopened to traffic to help return business to the area.
Council went to a lot of expense to have a costly appraisal prepared by professional planners (which was not at all popular) to help make its mind up about a rejuvenation.
Of the suggestions tendered from this, council chose the most expensive one which has many inclusions not considered in the initial request to reopen the main street to traffic again.
The absurdity of the matter is that originally it was expected the street be opened economically in an affordable way, to two way traffic. But the chosen theme was one way traffic with a pompous, flamboyant theme which was not asked for, or affordable.
A waste of millions of unaffordable dollars.
2. A further torment presented itself when it was announced council would add a walkway to the project, from the mall to the adjacent river.
This will involve purchasing and demolishing two buildings and constructing the thoroughfare.
This had already been done soon after the development of the current mall, only a few metres away.
The walkway already exists so the suggested duplicate walkway will be a willfull waste of money.
3. Another unpopular act will be the removal, from the mall, of several recently installed replica heritage street lamp posts.
These were recently specially made for the existing mall but apparently do not fit in with the modern aspect of the future facility. It is doubted a destination has been determined for them and it is implied they may be placed in storage.
A stubborn, unreasonable behaviour by a public body.
4. Another cost effective exercise will be one predicted to install several "Welcome to Maitland" signs at entrances to the town.
This venture is another duplication as signs with large letters "Maitland" were recently installed at several entrance points to the town and will only dupictae what has already been done.

Maitland Council has declared it is carrying a large debt. It intends to increase it by several million dollars, by borrowing a massive amount to develop a new mall we ratepayers have to pay for in the big rate increase currently asked for.

This is bad management principle when the responsibility for it is carried by ratepayers who opposed it anyway and not by those who decide the increase.

Media reports indicate council run surveys are not conclusive because of the way they are structured.

In respect to the cost of the new mall, council is advising that in ten years it will have a \$92 million dollar debt.

Questions are being asked as to how are surveys conducted and are samplers being manipulated until the required result is achieved.

An increase in rates will entice council to continue spending ratepayers money and increase its debt.

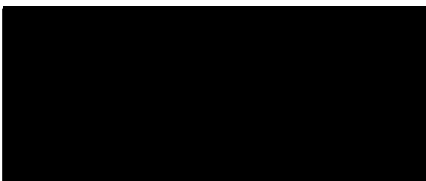
It is bad financial management to continue spending, and increasing debts, while owing massive amounts of money which cannot be repaid.

Council should be advised to live within its income and show competence in financial management.

In conclusion - I am strongly opposed to a strong rate rise for Maitland because I think council has been badly run.

I am adamantly against council raising rates when ratepayers do not have the same privilege of telling their employer they want an increase in wage to pay for rates.

It would be interesting to see the detail in council's application for a rate rise.



Jim Crethary