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Submission: Dear Sir or Madam, Objection to Newcastle City Council Application for a SRV As a resident and ratepayer of Newcastle City Council (NCC), I object to it applying for a special rate variation (SRV) of 8% over each of 5 years to take effect from 2015-16. I thus request that IPART take consideration of my objections when it formally considers the application – and disallow the increases sought. My objection arises from the blatant lack of community engagement that has transpired in the SRV application process. The data from the community engagement survey, as published on the NCC website, states that there were 1,633 valid responses across the four methods of engagement. By analysing the data, it can be determined that: - 38% of 900 online survey respondents chose Option 2 as their first preference (34% for Option 3, 28% for Option 1) - 24% of 59 online feedback respondents chose Option 2 as their first preference (42% for Option 3, 34% for Option 1) - 28% of 274 written feedback respondents chose Option 2 as their first preference (38% for Option 3, 34% for Option 1) - 52% of 400 telephone survey respondents chose Option 2 as their first preference (20% for Option 3, 28% for Option 1) The overall results of the community engagement survey can be stated as: - 39% (or 641 respondents) chose Option 2 - 32% (or 515 respondents) chose Option 3 - 29% (or 477 respondents) chose Option 1 Given that NCC's own management team appeared to take significant direction from the voice of the community and recommended to the NCC Councillors that Option 2 (6.5% to 6.8% increase for 5 years) be included in the application to IPART, it beggars belief that this was overruled by one casting vote by Ms Nelmes and an application was submitted in line with Option 3 (8% increase for 5 years). One can only assume that the time extension was applied for to allow NCC to rewrite their submission documents [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Option 2 was communicated by NCC to the online survey respondents as being able to "...retain and in some cases improve the existing level of services without depleting our cash reserves and ensure our financial sustainability." The official submission to IPART and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in the local media fails to acknowledge this original statement and are painting a picture of doom and unsustainability unless an 8% rise is granted. At a time when unemployment in the local area has surpassed 10% and other expenses continue to rise at rates exceeding CPI, I strongly urge you to reject this SRV application as it has been clearly shown through the community survey that it is not what the ratepayers want. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any clarifications on the above. Regards, Lee Hughes