

Ratepayer submission in response to Bellinger Shire Councils SRV application 2018/19

Dear Sir/Madam,

In relation to the proposed rate increases by Bellingen Shire Council, I would like to raise my most strenuous objections. My objections fall into these three main areas:

- **Affordability** – Having moved to the Bellingen Shire just over a year ago, I expected rates to be significantly lower here than in Sydney. I was shocked to find that even without the proposed increase, the rates I pay here are on a par with the rates I was paying in Sydney. My husband and I are on a fixed income, and rate increases of the type being proposed are just not affordable for me.
- **Communication** – I do not feel that the rate increases have been adequately explained by Council, and the Council meeting where the rate increase were to be discussed left no opportunity for residents to raise their objections. The Mayor walked out and refused to go on with the meeting when he realised there were people there who objected to the proposal.
- **Efficiency gains made by Council** – While Councillors seem to be on very healthy, ever increasing wages, much of their constituency are on fixed incomes, like me. They are not being realistic in what is affordable for a great many people in the Shire. Also, I do not feel that the services Council currently provide are anywhere near up to standard. To give two recent examples: (1.) We have two general clean-ups a year, with one scheduled for February 12. We were told to have our rubbish out by that morning. We need not have hurried, though, as IT WAS NOT COLLECTED UNTIL FEBRUARY 27. In the meantime, wind, rain and scavengers scattered the garbage all over the streets and footpaths. This sort of delay is unacceptable for a scheduled clean-up. (2.) A few nights ago, a large bough on a huge gum tree situated on council land came down during a storm. It caught on power lines connected to my, and a neighbour's, house. A call to Essential Energy had workmen arrive within an hour to cut down, and cut up, the bough. They stacked the branches up tidily and advised us to call Council first thing in the morning to get someone out to collect the wood. We are still waiting. This was a Council tree on Council land. Before asking for more money from residents, perhaps they should be more efficient in the 'services' they provide.

Please refuse Bellingen Shire Council's application to raise our rates. Please acknowledge receipt of this submission to [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Linda Mekertichian

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