

To the Independent and Regulatory Pricing Tribunal

I am writing to submit my strongest possible objection to the Clarence Valley Council proposed SRV.

I own a regular sized residential property in [REDACTED] which has a high UCV.

My current Council rates and charges before water rates is [REDACTED] per annum. With the SRV approved, at the end of the 3 year implementation, these charges will increase to [REDACTED] (as per the Council rates estimator on their website). This is over \$200 per week and having been retired for 6 years, this amount is totally obscene and unacceptable.

During the last 6 years these charges have more than doubled. Currently we are paying 4 times more than waterfront properties on Sydney Harbour which have higher UCV's. The Council seem oblivious to these facts and have denied, on more than one occasion, that this is true, even though I have provided them with my property number to check for themselves.

We, as well as neighbouring properties, have needed urgent repairs to stormwater drainage problems on an unstable hillslope in Yamba, which was promised in a letter from Council in 2012. This still hasn't been resolved and is continuing to cost us ongoing maintenance from an unprecedented rainfall event in March 2017. We have continually tried to communicate to Council regarding this to no avail.

The Clarence Valley has a very low socio-economic demographic compared to the rest of NSW. Low employment, high suicide rate and mental health figures, low educational attainment and a high level of aged pensioners mean that any increase in rates will impact not only on landholders but rental properties when Landlords increase their rent to compensate for a SRV.

The council is not "Fit for the Future". They have failed the people in not consulting adequately during 2017.

The "survey" sent to residents in 2017 was laughable and could have been written by a primary school student.

One of the very few questions asked was "How important is it for Council to be viable and sustainable?" Of course, everyone would want this to be the case and it now seems that Council are using the stats on this question as a tool to say to you, that a large percentage of the populace want Council to have the SRV as they want a sustainable Council!

I am one of the people who collected the petition signatures (almost 5500) and while doing so, 80% of the people to whom I spoke, were unaware of the proposed rate increases. This is because people do not have the time nor the energy to travel to meetings by Council when they are not listened to and are treated with contempt. They do not read the papers /listen to news..they are too busy trying to get by day by day in order to keep their heads above water. Had all residents (ratepayers and renters) been approached, and have their say, there would have been an enormous amount of objections.

The amount of full time employees at the Council is 2-3 times the average for Council Employment. This is an area which needs to be drastically cut. The Super Depot has cost \$22 million. The Regional Airport in Grafton is greatly under-utilised and REX are considering pulling out. Hopefully it will be closed as this is another exorbitant cost to ratepayers.

The cost of transporting the asbestos to Queensland was another enormous cost. Transparency of Councillors attendance at Conferences need to be improved. The Regional Gallery costs \$600 000 per year to run with hardly any benefit from entry costs.

The payouts to incompetent General Managers has been another area whereby money has been wasted. Also the ongoing costs for Consultants since 2004 amalgamation has been enormous.

Businesses are closing, as can be seen is the amount of vacant shop fronts in Grafton and residents are leaving the Valley. After the Highway work is finished there will be an even more economically depressed community.

I do not believe that rate increases should exceed the CPI and this proposal is morally wrong.

I do not know how that as a self-funded elderly retiree, how we can continue to exist if we have to pay [REDACTED] per year. (Self-funded retirees are often worse off than the aged pensioners as we do not get any benefits from the Government.)

Please take Clarence Valley Ratepayers objections seriously when considering this submission.

We should not have to pay for the Council's continuing incompetence and wastage of our money.

Yours Sincerely,

Lynne Wilson