

From: Mark Byrne [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 23 June 2017 11:42 AM
To: IPART Mailbox
Subject: MCC SRV2017

Message for Chairman Dr Peter Boxall,
Dear Doctor Boxall,

What a juicy episode of "Four Corners" it would be if they put the spotlight on what has happened and is happening at Mid Coast Council (MCC.)

Some of the questions they may ask could include:

The former Great Lakes Council (GLC) which was financially sound was forced to merge with the unsustainable Greater Taree and Gloucester Councils. This was against the recommendation of the NSW Government inquiry into council viability, the councillors at the time and the rate payers. So why force GLC into the merger?

GLC had consistently applied SRV's over the years, often two and three times in excess of CPI. That is why they were viable with big financial reserves. So why would GLC want to merge with under performing councils?

Ratepayers in Greater Taree and Gloucester Councils were paying much lower rates than we did in GLC. That is why their councils were in financial troubles. Why would ratepayers in GLC agree to merge unless the council rates were brought into parity before any merger was considered?

When the merger was floated, the person assigned to oversee the popularity of the proposal asked for community feedback. A significant number of people from the GLC area voiced their concern

against the merger. He dismissed their concerns because it was not a clear majority of ratepayers in the area. How would you get a majority voice against it unless you went through an extensive and expensive process of door knocking, telephone survey or plebiscite? That makes a mockery of calling for expressions of interest.

In February this year, the newly formed MCC said that it did not need an SRV due to its strong financial position. Now they state they need a 28.5% SRV over four years because they have found a \$160 million hole in their funding. I wouldn't trust those people with my personal finances.

In February this year, legislation was in place to stop merged councils from applying for rate increases. How then did MCC under administrator John Turner circumvent that legislation and apply for an SRV when no other merged council in NSW could?

The MCC commissioned a survey to gauge support for their proposed SRV. The result showed 55% of people would be "inconvenienced" by the rise. Somehow MCC now state that 80% of people can afford it. Is this what Donald Trump calls the alternative truth?

Imagine if people had been asked "will the proposed SRV when combined with the flagged huge hike in power prices, health insurance....inconvenience you." The answer would have been a definite yes.

A few years ago I heard the then General Manager of GLC Glenn Handford giving reasons for a planned SRV. Included in those reasons were that pensioners do not pay full council rates and that GLC was no longer in control of Mid Coast water which had been a cash cow. Glenn Hanford is now interim General Manager of MCC. Mid Coast Water is being merged with MCC. Will MCC apply for an SRV on our water rates to hit us rate payers with a double punch.

Because rate payers in the former GLC area already pay higher rates than those in Gloucester and Greater Taree, a percentage increase will mean more actual dollars paid by us in the old GLC. Accordingly, in all fairness to the ratepayers of the former GLC and the future viability of MCC, I suggest that SRV2017 be granted but only applied to the rate payers of the former Gloucester and Greater Councils and that SRV be in place until such time as there is rate parity within all areas of MCC. The Legislation should not be a problem because it has already been shown by administrator John Turner how to get around it. Our case should be considered unique because it is a case of a formerly financially sound council being saddled with two basket cases.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Byrne

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