

From: Mick Holz [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 4 March 2019 11:22 AM
To: Local Government Mailbox <localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Dungog Council Rate increase

To - *Local Government Team*
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW
PO Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop, NSW 1240

Dear Sir/Madam

1. I do not understand why Dungog Council wants to double my rates. Over the last few years we have been told many times that the council is too small to survive into the future. Then Council refused the offer from Port Stephens to amalgamate with them. During the 2017 council election we were asked if we wanted to amalgamate when it was always going to be too late to do anything about it afterwards. This was most under-handed. Most people wanted to be part of Port Stephens and they wanted us. We were told rates would have gone up about 23% and the election result confirmed the obvious choice was to join Port Stephens. But this did not happen and the residents of Dungog Shire were duped.

Before the elections the Mayor said that council would never double our rates and yet they are doing a back flip! I would like someone to explain why we have to do this after all we have been told in the past and with the government now promising millions to fix things that we are being asked to pay for with a huge rate rise. Wouldn't that be double dipping, and shouldn't we wait until we know what they will actually give us?

The council does not care whether I can afford it or not, and it seems that future of the council itself is more important to the council than my situation. With all this extra money that would be paid in rates Dungog Shire would still be too small. Council is saying that our rates would be similar to our neighbours, but the level of services cannot be compared. The Council might be telling the NSW government that they have consulted the community about doubling our rates, but I consider that the Council has cheated me.

2. I do not feel that I was properly asked about this proposal to increase the rates. The first I knew about it was a bulky letter with my July 2017 rates notice that did not actually say that the council wanted to double my rates.

This letter came across strangely after all the stuff that was sent out in the last couple of years about the future of the council and amalgamations. I had voted for the amalgamation with Port Stephens because Dungog Council was a basket case. Now it was going to head towards being viable?

The survey that was attached gave no option between leaving rates on hold or increasing them and asked me how to fix the budget if rates did not go up. What would I know about that if not told the cost of it all. Other people also thought that the survey was biased towards increasing rates.

A few months ago I received a phone call asking about the rate rise. It bombarded me with a long series of numbers and services and asked questions about them on the spot over the phone. When I asked what all the numbers added up to they would not say! I explained that I

was a pensioner and that I was worried about the way it was heading as it seemed to me that this phone survey was stacked against me.

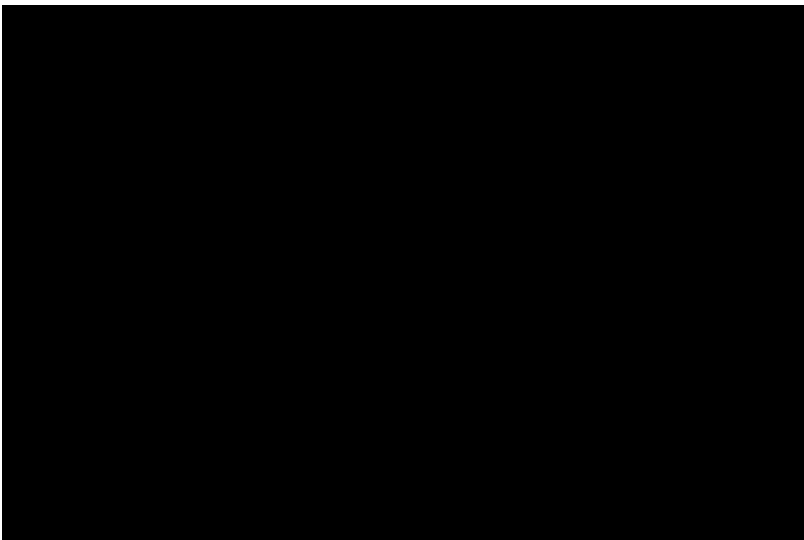
Last month I received a letter from the council telling me that my rates would double over the next seven years! Before the council elections we attended a meeting and were told that they would never double our rates so how can they do this now?

I have told the council that I cannot afford much of a change to my rates and now my only hope is to tell you people. By the time we pay our bills and modest living costs we don't have much left over. This rate rise is too much and I would like someone to explain why we have to do this after all we have been told in the past.

If you wish to discuss this further please contact me on the information below.

Kind regards

Mick Holz



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