

LG Submission Form 2021-2022 - Applications

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IPART Special Variation Submission Form - Applications

Industry **Local Government**

Review **(LG) Special Variations & Minimum Rates 2021-2022**

Document Reference

Council **Georges River Council, Minimum Rate Application**

If you have any general feedback regarding your council's proposed SV, please leave your comments in the comment box below.

I am opposed to Council's SRV request. My reasons for this are in the attached document which I have previously sent to Council. I will add some comments on Council's community consultation process.

Council claims that the community supports the rate increase, but I believe that the community consultation process was somewhat dishonest.

For example, my father (also a Georges River resident) was surveyed by phone. One of the questions was "do you believe that Council should raise rates by 25% or close the libraries?" I think that's called a "loaded question". Are those the only options - a rate increase or close the libraries? Perhaps instead Council could reduce spending on non-essentials - see the attached comments.

I attended one of the community feedback sessions conducted by council. I felt as if the process was designed to control the outcome rather than encouraging free and frank comment. That said, I can appreciate it's hard to gather everybody's opinion in an unrestrained format.

Your comments on Criterion 1:

Your comments on Criterion 2:

Your comments on Criterion 3:

Your comments on Criterion 4:

Your comments on Criterion 5:

If you have attachments you would like to include with your feedback, please attach them below.

[SRV feedback.docx](#)

Your Details

Are you an individual or organisation?

Individual

If you would like your submission or your name to remain confidential please indicate below.

Publish - my submission and name can be published (not contact details or email address) on the IPART website

First Name

Michael

Last Name

Karas

Organisation Name

Position

Email



IPART's Submission Policy

I have read & accept IPART's Submission Policy

I am opposed to the SRV proposed by Georges River Council.

From 2009 to 2019, my council rates have increased by 45%. Excluding waste and stormwater levies, the increase has been 49%. The CPI has increased by 25% over the same period (ABS CPI series A2325806K). In other words, council rates have been increasing at almost double the rate of inflation.

Council seeks to justify this by saying that community expectations have increased. I am aware also of the issues of cost shifting from the state level, rate caps and so on. Nonetheless, I think a large part of the problem is that councillors have become enamoured of costly projects that bring kudos to councillors, but deliver little additional benefit to the community. While some people may benefit from, or appreciate, some of these projects, the community is never given the opportunity to consider how much these projects add to our rates and to make an informed decision as to whether or not the projects should be undertaken.

Some examples:

Hydropanels at Hurstville Aquatic Centre

These were reported on by The Leader, but sadly there was no mention of cost. I note the panels retail for nearly \$4000 each, so the eight panels would have cost about \$30,000. Planning and installation costs would have added much more. At maximum daily output of 10 litres of water per panel per day for 15 years, a total of 438 kilolitres would be produced. At the current price of \$2.11 per kilolitre, that would be \$924 worth of water. I suspect that in most enterprises, an employee who "invested" so much money with the expectation of recouping so little of it would soon be looking for a new job. Being a council project, the project is instead nominated for an award.

Suburb signs and historical markers

Recently I have seen nice looking markers around the place bearing the name of the suburb. We have survived without these for so long, but now – at a time when many people have GPS navigation in their cars and most people have GPS in their smart phones – council feels the need to erect these signs.

At Kyle Bay is a small plaque explaining the origin of the suburb's name. This plaque could have been attached to the signpost that is one metre away, but instead it is affixed to a sandstone plinth of approximately one cubic metre. Why does council feel the need to do this when anyone wanting to know can pull out their smartphone and google the question? (Yes, I tried it, Kyle Bay has its own Wikipedia page.)

These projects give me the impression of bureaucrats wanting to exhaust the last of their budgets – "use it or lose it".

Sporting facilities

There seem to be a lot of new club facilities being built at sporting fields, all far grander than the ones they are replacing. No doubt the clubs appreciate these, but it is the ratepayers bearing the cost. If the clubs were asked to pay the cost themselves, then I imagine they would tell you that their existing facilities are adequate. But of course, if council (or, more accurately, the ratepayers) is bearing the cost, then the existing facility is deemed to be past its use-by date and something more modern is required.

I believe that the sporting clubs need to make do with what they have, or else fund the improvements themselves.

I believe there are many other things council does which are not required by the ratepayers. For example:

- Sister City relationships with foreign cities: are foreign relations not the role of the Federal government?
- Aid given to rural areas: perhaps it would be more appropriate to set up a bank account for such purposes and let ratepayers donate money as they feel inclined, rather than council donating money and then charging the ratepayers for it.

It is oft reported that wages are growing at about the pace of inflation. Interest rates on savings are negligible, especially after making allowance for inflation and taxes, and this impacts on those living on their savings and interest. Against this background, I believe that council needs to be more modest in its spending and in its building ambitions. Council, like the rest of us, must live within its means.

Thanks & regards

Michael Karas

