

**From:** Marilyn Williams [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 14 February 2019 2:33 PM  
**To:** Local Government Mailbox <localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au>  
**Subject:** SRV - Port Stephens Council - Submission Against

Please reject this application – too much hardship.

Yours faithfully



4<sup>th</sup> February, 2019

Dear IPART

Since the current Council took office in September 2017, my life instead of being peaceful in retirement has been so stressful. Mayor Palmer and his Counsellors started with building heights (didn't listen to the Community then either) and now with this SRV. An example of a most outrageous long-term vision for a new \$65 million Tomaree Sports Complex Master Plan which was put on public exhibition April 2018. To facilitate this the Council works depot would need to be moved at a cost of \$10 million. Why should the ratepayers have to pay for this ridiculous grandiose idea? We have adequate sports fields. We are not a large population and also not an affluent community. Where we live, tourism and hospitality which is seasonal.

The new Council put out a survey getting feedback of what the Community would like them to do and then announced due to the feedback they received an SRV was required to meet the community's demands and expectations!

**Quote from Council's 'Fit for the Future' Application to IPART:**

Scope to undertake new functions and major projects:

'Council's vigorous fiscal discipline allows for a modest surplus going forward which Council has determined would be applied to reduction in the asset backlog (with consequent reduction in the asset maintenance required over time). **This will be achieved without the need to apply for a special variation to rates.** Under this fiscally conservative Long Term Financial Plan to 2025 Council has the

scope to undertake new projects provided that there is alignment with the Community Strategic; and value to the community and Council that outweighs other priorities. Alternatively Council will have a cushion to absorb unplanned events that negatively impact on its budget – the April 2015 storm is an example, where the net effect on the bottom line is estimated to be \$250,000.’

#### **Port Stephens Examiner October 2015**

One of only 5 Hunter councils to be ‘Fit for the Future’ Wayne Wallis, General Manager, Port Stephens Council stated that **a report from IPART has deemed Port Stephens Council ‘Fit for the Future’**. Mr Wallis stated to the Examiner that Port Stephens had been identified by both Treasury and the Independent Local Government Review Panel **as being financially viable with the scale and capacity to meet its community needs.**

“For this we can thank a rolling schedule of structured business reviews which commenced in 2011 and have played a big part in turning annual deficits into underlying surpluses” he said.

#### **Wayne Wallis, General Manager, Port Stephens Council 10 March, 2017** in his

Submission To Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees re  
Australian Senate Inquiry on the Relocation of Government Bodies to Regional Areas  
States:

**Port Stephens is “a leading regional Council in NSW in terms of financial sustainability and economic stability”.**

News of the Area 8/11/18: **Mayor, General Manager and Councillors have found a ‘hollow log’ \$25.2 million!!** This \$25.2 million is one quarter of what Council have wanted us to pay i.e. \$100 million. **Council is ‘Fit for the Future’ with over \$100 million of cash, airport land, sand mine and building assets.**

#### **News of the Area Port Stephens Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2019**

Council voted to take the 7.5% seven-year increase proposal to IPART ignoring the majority of residents feedback on the rate rise.

#### **Jaimie Abbott, Liberal member for Port Stephens stated: (News of the Area 7/2/2019)**

“The consultation was an opportunity to explain the benefits of the SRV and the overwhelming response has been against the plan.

Council needs to listen and act on the views of the community.

For this reason, I oppose the SRV. It has not received the necessary support from ratepayers who are telling us clearly they cannot afford such a significant increase. The proposed projects that were to be funded by the SRV will need to be deferred or some other means of funding identified.”

#### **Kate Washington, Labour member for Port Stephens stated: (News of the Area 7/2/2019)**

‘It’s disappointing that Port Stephens Council is continuing to pursue this massive rate hike when the majority of the community is clearly opposed to it.

No-one I've spoke with supports it. Pensioners, single parents and families are telling me they can't afford to pay more. When the cost of living is so high, and there are many families struggling to put food on their table, Council should have listened to the community and scrapped this proposal. Now we have to take the fight up to IPART."

**The Council's Hardship Policy** is a joke!! Council rates debts on private properties to accumulate with interest, and remain on the property until sold by family members. This is how Council debts work.

Council have spent a lot of money consulting the Community and have totally ignored the feedback for an SRV. Community cannot afford this rate increase.

There will be a knock-on effect. Businesses not being able to afford, businesses closing down, staff put off, higher rents, mortgage foreclosures etc. Householders already incurring increasing prices for everything. Unnecessary hardship. **Council should be accountable to protect ratepayers and other community members from unreasonable increases in council rates and charges.**

**This SRV is not necessary and should be rejected outright.**

I am happy for my submission to be made public.

Yours faithfully  
Marilyn Williams

