

Ms Alison Milne,
Director, Local Government Team
Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal of NSW



12th March, 2014

Dear Ms Milne,

I would like to submit my case for not endorsing the Armidale Dumaresq Council's application for a 10% rate rise over 7 years.

The Council has not fully disclosed all the relevant information related to the rate rise application nor has it fully explained to ratepayers the impact that such an increase will have on their finances. The Community Consultation Fact sheet published by the ADC states that \$1million/year over 7 years will be spent on roads, bridges etc. Yet in their IPART application the ADC states that a total of \$5,133,756 will be spent on roads, bridges, kerbs, gutter etc. Clearly the figure of \$7M is misleading the ratepayers.

In my case, as a self funded retiree on a taxable income of less than \$30,000, I would have difficulty in finding the excess amount. For instance if my base rate is &1,000 per year then I would have to find an extra \$1,460 over 7 years.

Also the Council has not had sufficient, consultation with the electoral community & their placing the "greatest credibility of all input that has been gained in feedback" from a 300 person telephone survey is farcical. Such a survey has little statistical significance & it excluded many ratepayers such as the elderly & the infirm. Even such an unreliable report concluded the only 39% of respondents were aware of the Council's rate rise application, only 28% had read anything about the special rate variation, 41% didn't accept any of the special rate variation & only 10% agreed with the Council's preferred rate option.

Finally the ADC wants to ask for a rate increase of 10%, compounding, over 7 years whereas the following councils are requesting much more modest increases viz:
Glen Innes Severn 11.2%, 6.5%, 6.8% (24.5%)
Guyra 8.4%
Gwydir 7.5% or 5% over 2 years (15% or 10%)
Tenterfield 15%, 10%, 10%, 10% (45%).

In my opinion the ADC request must be rejected & be replaced by one that does not impose such a high financial burden on ratepayers. Also steps should be taken to rationalise the overpaid inverse pyramidal hierarchy of the ADC with one in which the employees are working more efficiently under less costly supervision.

I have been paying rates to the AC & ADC since 1960 & am now forced to conclude that the ADC be placed in the hands of an administrator charged with the responsibility of working with the ratepayers & Council employees to ensure minimal rate increases

Yours faithfully,

(Dr. Peter Fielding.)