

**Sent:** Sunday, 15 March 2015 2:36 PM  
**To:** IPART Mailbox  
**Subject:** FW: Submission to IPART--Re Eurobodalla Shire Council-Special Rate Variation.

The Chairman.  
Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal [IPART]

Dear Sirs, I understand that Eurobodalla Shire Council has made a submission to you seeking approval to increase our Rates by 6.5 % gross and compounding per year-indefinitely; so as to [it is claimed] increase their General Rate Base to cover the costs of additional infrastructure and maintenance of existing infrastructure. I strongly object to this increase on the following grounds:- The additional infrastructure is a 'wish-list' [which Eurobodalla Shire Council claims is requested by the Ratepayers] that in fact is Council proposed projects which the Council would construct to further its own agendas. I do not believe that the 'surveys' from which Council claims that Ratepayers requested the infrastructure that is proposed was carried out in a fair or transparent manner; it appears that the survey questions were skewed to suit Council's required results.

The proposed additional infrastructure would I believe add considerably over time to the Council's infrastructure maintenance costs-which it claims is one reason for the additional rates; [i.e. Additional infrastructure equals Additional maintenance costs] And thereby continuing to require increasing Rates as requested. I understand, from E.S.Council's submission, that a budget deficit of \$10 million is proposed after 3 years and a budget deficit of \$38 million is proposed after 10 years. This is an extreme example of poor financial planning and extreme mismanagement. The fact that 7 out of 9 Councillors have approved of this submission indicates their naivety and lack of foresight in financial matters. According to E.S.Council's proposal and after 10 years [possibly prior to that] the Council will be bankrupt and further public bailouts will be necessary. Council's only method of paying for deficits would appear to be the increase of Council Rates & Charges and no other method of 'balancing the budget' has been proposed.

As the largest employer in the Shire they are intent on maintaining abnormally high staffing levels and the salary and wages responsibilities for this is astronomical. I do not believe that the Eurobodalla Shire Council is managing its income to best practise standards. Their staffing is 'top-heavy' and, unlike current State and Federal Departments, are upsizing rather than downsizing to 'balance the budget'. I also believe that the Council has in excess of \$50 million invested on deposit—I would have thought that this could alleviate some of their 'problems'!

Eurobodalla Shire Council also has for various reasons wasted large amounts of ratepayers money on, amongst many items:-  
Excessive retirement package to a previous General Manager;  
Excessive 'costs' for an alternative By-Pass road [which in fact was financed by State and Federal grants];  
Excessive legal expenses for legal opinions and 'unwinnable' litigation [where a small amount of mediation would probably have saved these costs];  
Excessive planning facilities costs to encourage a very large development, which was not approved by the general public and 'dumped' by the developer.  
There are many other instances of wastage which are on the record.

I have lived in and owned a residential property in the Eurobodalla Shire since 1989 and have watched my rates rise every year:- since 2008 the overall Rates have increased by approx. 21 % and the Water Usage Charge by a whopping 79 %--during that time my income has certainly not kept pace proportionate to these increases.

The annual Rates and Charges now includes:- Residential Rate; Environmental Levy; Water Charge; Water Usage Charge [billed separately]; Sewerage Charge; Garbage Collection Service; Garbage Availability; Water Management Charge; Stormwater Charge. The Stormwater Charge is the only Item which has not increased! All of these Charges will no doubt be increased each year –although this has not been specified.

The Eurobodalla Shire Council area is predominantly populated by retirees and those hoping to retire here. These people will not be able to afford continuing Rate increases of 6.5 % plus annually.

Eurobodalla Shire Council should in my opinion be able to manage their own budget within the current CPI rate increases and not depend on continuing 'bail-outs' as proposed. To be within budget Eurobodalla Shire Council is required to 'bite the bullet' and make some very unpalatable decisions such as 'downsizing' of staff, reduce the amount of new infrastructure, reduce some non-essential and lesser used services and 'space-out' some non-essential infrastructure maintainance. Council needs to 'manage' for a small population and in a more sedate manner to suit.

I therefore strongly request that you refuse the Special Rate Variation as submitted by Eurobodalla Shire Council.

Yours faithfully P.J.Simms.