

Group Submission

Pamela Smyly for the residents of Crescent Street Urunga NSW.

On behalf of the residents of Crescent Street Urunga, I would like to submit an objection against the proposed rate increase of 11.8% by Bellingen Shire Council from the 11th of July 2014 for the 2014/2015 year.

I believe that Bellingen Shire Council have not met the guidelines published by the Office of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet. These guidelines clearly articulate that Council must demonstrate the need for and the purpose of additional revenue, evidence of community engagement and awareness and assessment of the impact on affected ratepayers.

Apparently Council had three poorly attended meetings in the local area run by outside consultants at rate payer's expense. Very few residents were aware that these meetings were organised and the feedback from the few that did attend indicated that the resident's objections were not taken seriously, but were "duly noted".

It should be remembered that much of the Bellingen shire is made up of retiree's, aged pensioners and families already struggling to manage financially in an area socio-economically disadvantaged. Unemployment is disproportionately high compared to the rest of the state.

If Bellingen Shire Council really has a case for increasing rates, surely it should be open about it and engage the community in a way that ensures everyone is aware of what is going on and why.

This has not happened, council's application for a rate increase should be rejected, until a time when they take rate payers objections seriously and make a genuine attempt to put forward their case for an increase to the whole community.

Regards,

Pamela Smyly