

From: Nikki Fleming [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 27 February 2017 1:21 PM
To: IPART Mailbox
Subject: Shoalhaven City Council Proposed Rate Rise

Dear Sir,

Re: Proposed Rate Rise Shoalhaven City

As a Residential and Commercial rate payer in the Shoalhaven I object to any proposed rate rises above the rate pegging.

The reasons for my objection are:

- Rate rises in the order of 27% over two years, and compounding thereafter, are unaffordable to rate payers, especially as the Shoalhaven has a large number of unemployed, low earnings workers and a large retired population.

- Council has a rate budget of some \$54 million dollars, the proposed increase of \$7-8 million is to be set aside for asset maintenance, however the funds committed to asset maintenance in the original \$54 million budget will be diverted into other "pet projects" of Councilors such as:

- . The purchase of an old CBD building (originally set aside for multistorey carparking) will now be converted at significant costs into emergency housing for the homeless.

- . More sporting complexes, as the proposed \$60 million North Nowra sporting complex.

- . Additional Arts and Community projects.

These Social projects are no doubt worthwhile, especially for those who use the facilities, but it is justifiable that the costs of a huge rate rise is borne by the rate payers that can least afford it. Perhaps these projects need to be justified and funded by other methods such as State and Federal Government funding and Community fundraising.

- Council has many unproductive or under-performing assets which could be sold to raise required funds and reduce Council overheads. Some simple examples are:

- . The Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre which was costly to build, and runs at a loss, could be sold and far better operated by private enterprise.

- . The block of waterfront land recently purchased by Council at Huskisson, at a huge cost, should be sold as many of our ratepayers cannot afford this luxury.

- . A large waterfront residential block at Walmer Avenue, originally reserved for a Scout Hall but a hall was subsequently built at St Georges Basin, should be sold. This land was originally maintained by Council, but has now been overgrown for years and become a

bushfire hazard. The neighbours are complaining about Councils lack of maintenance.

These are but three of hundreds of examples of unused, or underutilised, expensive to maintain assets of Council that could be sold.

- Council has difficulty in determining if they are a charity, a community service or a business.

The Shoalhaven Council runs the States largest group of Caravan Parks, develops sells and subsidises industrial land sales, takes political stances on issues, runs daycare centres, libraries, swimming pools, youth facilities, arts centres etc.etc. A review needs to be undertaken to decide which areas Council should not be involved in, not all ratepayers should be forced to contribute to services which should be provided by other arms of Government and or private enterprise.

Council need to revert to a back to basics provider of services and let others provide the add on services. Technology has also moved on some Council services could be closed, hours reduced, or services more efficiently provided.

- Council has a well known, and documented, poor track record of processing development applications. As a result many small business development applications are never lodged, or proceeded with, because of cost and time delays. Development applications are "overworked" by Council Officers making them expensive and drawn out affairs this leads to the business and potential employers moving on to another Council area. Shoalhaven's unemployment and particularly Youth unemployment is consistently the third highest in Australia which is ludicrous considering the opportunities in the Shoalhaven and its close proximity to Sydney and Wollongong.

- The most expensive area of Council is wages.

A review is required of what administrative positions are really necessary, what hours do these jobs require, is it necessary to have eight or more counter positions at the administrative block and do the public hours need to be 40 hrs or more per week.

Are some staff positions just creating unnecessary work and paperflow, a hindrance to the ratepayer.

Council has made use of technology and computerisation but administrative staff numbers continue to grow, does this mean unnecessary work is being generated.

Until a serious review of Councils saleable assets, services provided, staff and expenditure is undertaken I cannot support rate rises especially rises in the order of 27% over two years.

Yours faithfully

Peter van Ovost