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Submission: The Special Rate Variation appears to be an admission by the Council that it is incapable of managing its affairs within its Budget. We were told, as Ratepayers, when there was a move to merge Port Stephens with Newcastle Council that Port Stephens financial position was significantly better than Newcastle. Within 12 months of that Statement the Ratepayers are being asked to pay 7.5% extra each year for 7 years and then the Rates would remain at that grossly increased level thereafter. The Council says that it needs the increased funding to carry out those things which are part of normal local government obligations.

I am totally opposed to the requested Special Rate Variation as it is hugely greater than the anticipated rate of inflation over the same 7 year period. Indications are that in the current financial year that inflation will not exceed 2.5% and may be even lower. Rates are increased anyway in the normal course of events as result in the increase in the rateable values of properties. The Port Stephens Council area contains both inhabitants of a low socio economic status and also a large number of retirees many of whom are on a whole or part pension. The impact on many of the Special Rate Variation would be a huge impost on many of the Ratepayers in this Council area which would put enormous strain on household budgets.

In closing I wish to reiterate my strong opposition to the Special Rate Variation sought by the council and suggest that it better manage its financial affairs within its existing budget.