

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, 11 February 2019 3:57 PM

To: Local Government Mailbox <localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Submission Against Port Stephens Council rate increase

Dear IPART

I wish to register that I object to Port Stephens Council's ridiculous proposal to increase rates by 66% over 7 years.

Over 70% of submissions to Council's proposal were against the increase. Over 2,000 people made their voices heard. Council ignored every single one of these people. Thousands more locals have signed online and paper petitions. Local businesses are against this proposal.

There is, poor awareness about Council's proposed projects. This lack of awareness has been fuelled by Council changing amounts of money being allocated to projects, between when this proposal first went out for public submission, and what has been submitted to you.

This includes \$25 million less over 10 years for roads. Perhaps the 30% of people who indicated a willingness for a rate rise in the first round of consultation may have opted for no increase had they seen the most recent proposal from Council.

There is no evidence that any of the projects proposed by Council are 'needs'. Rather, they appear to be 'wants'. I agree that most of the projects would be nice to have, but none of them are essential to Council continuing to operate. Council has, in recent years, demonstrated a sound capacity to fund large-scale projects without the need for a rate increase.

The councils need to increase rates seems to me rather convenient considering in 2016 during the merger talks with Dungog Council; Port Stephens Council stated rates could stay on hold for 4 years. Why has this now changed?

My husband and I both work full-time, with current rates, mortgage payments, increasing price of groceries and power, school expenses and medical intervention for our son we have recently had to claim superannuation just to pay our rate arrears. An increase to this would almost cripple us.

Other families I have spoken to are already deciding between turning the heater on in the dead of winter, or not spending that money so they can pay bills. Parents are already deciding whether they can afford to buy bigger shoes to send their kids to school in, or whether they can afford a bigger school uniform. This is without a rate increase!

Port Stephens Council has ignored residents, and I ask that you listen to us when we say: this rate rise is unnecessary, unaffordable, and will cause extreme hardship for many. I ask that you reject this application outright.

Regards,

Samantha Winter

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