

Angele Konjarski
[REDACTED]

Date:- 21/03/14

Letter for IPART in regarding Wollongong City Council's Submission.

Hi my name is Tony and I am writing this letter on behalf of my father Angele whose English is not good and who is 80 years old.

On behalf of my father, myself and the rest of our family we call upon the NSW pricing regulator to reject Wollongong City Council's bid for a special rate increase in 2014.

We know that Wollongong City Council voted on Monday 17th February in favour of a 21 percent rate rise over the next 3 years, and some drastic cuts that are to be made into council services that will greatly affect not just my family but many others that are struggling from day to day to survive.

We live in the post code of 2502 which is described as the poorest area in the Illawarra Region that includes our suburb of Lake Heights and the surrounding areas of Berkeley, Port Kembla, Cringila, Kemblawarra and Warrawong.

Our area has a large mix of new immigrants, seniors and others that live in public housing including young families. These are the types of people that live around the poverty line.

If council's plans get accepted by IPART then this will affect us in the following ways:-

- People like my father who is on a pension will not be able to afford the rate increase and the way the housing market is at the moment which is going down, he will not be able to sell his home at a reasonable price and then he will not be able to afford to buy another smaller unit/villa that he needs to move in because of his age and health.
- Services cuts we were told although as yet not confirmed include for example the reduced hours and early closer of our nearest public swimming pool in Berkeley. An area that is surrounded by residents that live in government housing. To get to the next available swimming pool is a long walking distance and it costs money in either petrol or to go by bus. The free bus service in Wollongong does not reach our area and we are also a long way away from any railway station.
- The possible charging a cost entry fee to swimming pools will affect people like me that's on a Centrelink Benefit as I am currently studying fulltime. I was advised that I should be swimming every day by the health professionals as I have health issues. I just can't afford to be paying every day to use a council swimming pool. For a family the cost would be even greater and many will either chose not to go to their local pool or risk their lives by going down the water's edge like the lake entrance where it is not patrolled by lifeguards.
- We have many local parks for our families to go to but we understand that some of them will be sold off for development by council. Where will we go then as the fewer parks available will become more congested by others that have lost their park?

These will be just some of the things in that how it will affect us. The council in our option has not consulted any of its residents but has simply chosen a so called citizens panel in to make their recommendations. We were told that the chosen panel had a reflexion of the whole of the community of Wollongong. But I doubt that any of them live in our post code otherwise they would be well aware of in how much this will affect us.

Why were not any groups such as the neighbourhood forum committees allowed in having a say in council's decision? There was no consultation, no transparency, no communication and no feedback to the community before council made its final decision.

In our local media such as the Illawarra Mercury Paper we have had many complaints from the public in the form of letters to the editor about in how much money council wastes in big grand plans such as the blue mile, the mall, the toilet block in Towradgi and what they call as the big white elephant up on Bulli Tops etc.,. And it seems to be blow out after blow out on each of these grand major plans and yet back where we live we have issues in why there is so much rubbish around the place and other things like grass not always mowed and other things neglected by council at our public places?

So in return to pay for these big mistakes we get a 3 year rate rise and many services cuts that we use daily. That's not fair, as we feel it's like the council is blaming us for its mistakes!

There are other ways of doing this and you can cut down on costs without hurting anyone and that is simply by rejecting Wollongong City Council's submission and accepting the one that has been also send to you by convener of Save Our Services Wollongong Mr Stephen Spencer. Their proposal has been modelled on the City Council of Lake Macquarie were they went through a whole different approach in how to do it and they have done it successfully thanks to their council's allowing of proper input by their residents.

We need a thorough proper examination of council's entire budget system and the way in they go about it in their day to day spending before we even should allow council to consider in one of the citizens panels options to which I don't think in that any of the them even got the full amount of information that was needed for them in deciding and recommending in anything about council's budget.

Thank you for spending the time to read my letter.

Yours Truly

Tony Konjarski