

Submission to IPART

Re: proposed rate rise by Eurobodalla Shire Council (ESC)

From: Tashe Long (rate paying resident of ESC)

I would like to register my vehement objection to having my rates raised by 21% over the next 3 years by Eurobodalla Shire Council (ESC) for the following reasons:

1. In 2002 Council billed me \$1,236 for "rates and charges"
In 2014 Council billed me \$2,176 for "rates and charges"

This is already an increase in 76.05% over 12 years!

Notes: They were able to raise the rates by 76% by applying for and receiving previous exemptions to the rate rise cap and also by the sneaky trick of 'renaming' the rates and charges. In 2002 "rates" were just called "rates" and included sewerage, garbage collection, stormwater, etc. However, they then changed their billing system so that rates were broken up into "residential rates" and everything else charged separately- i.e.: sewerage charge to my residence is now noted at \$844 per year.

2. **The State Government has set the rate peg for 2015-16 at 2.4%.** I work for the State Government and my CPI index rise is also set around 2.4%. So why would you possibly approve a variation of 21% over 3 years. Why bother having a rate peg if Councils are allowed to override it!!! If my wages only rise by 2.4% but my bills increase by 7% each year....I am going backwards financially.
3. **I believe that ESC has misrepresented the proposed rate rise to residents of the Council.** On December 19, 2014, I received a letter from Council that informed me that if the 24% proposed rise were implemented"

“ ...the accumulative increase at the end of year three on the average residential rate would be \$212.52 or \$4.09 a week”

I believe this statement is misleading and false. If my yearly bill from Council were raised by the then proposed 24%, my bill would have been increased \$522.24 per annum or over \$10 a week! (I live in a very average residence with a total sale value of less than \$300,000.)

4. Council “consultations” were also misleading in my opinion. I just read the 173-page document detailing all the consultations they had toward the end of 2014. Sure they asked everybody what services were important to them, what were the needs of the residents, etc. Nowhere in this 173 page report was the ‘elephant in the room’ discussed. There was no question in the telephone survey about ‘how would you feel about a rate rise of 21% over the next 3 years. I believe most people would have strongly objected! The discussion of the rate rise was also absent from all the other ‘consultations’ they held!

Saying that you “would like Council to maintain library services” is NOT the same as saying you agree to a big rate rise!!

5. Survey conducted of 1050 resident by Micronax on behalf of Council in 2011 concluded that 62% of residents surveyed rejected a rate of anything higher than 5.5%. Verbatim comments such as “Everything else is going up and to increase another bill will put financial strain on my household were considered to be among the 28% they concluded were “somewhat supportive”!?”

6. Eurobodalla Shire Council is an area of high unemployment as well as a high number of families that are disadvantaged and on a Centrelink benefit.

I work for the Department of Education and Communities and run a program designed to help disadvantaged 0-8 year olds get a good start in life and at school. I cover 3 schools, all of which have around 17% Aboriginal students attending. Almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of 0-8 year olds in Eurobodalla Shire have at least one parent on a Centrelink benefit. Workers at Centrelink are telling me that the 'unofficial' employment numbers for the area are running about 20%. (This is the number seeking full time employment who are unable to get it. Some may instead get some part time or casual hours and then are not 'officially unemployed' any more).

You only have to drive down the main street of Bateman's Bay, Moruya or Narooma to see how many shops are now vacant. Every shop closure was a loss of more jobs in the town.

Also, a high percentage of people in the Shire are pensioners. \$2,500 a year is too much money for many pensioners to have to pay each year for the privilege of being able to remain in the houses they spent their whole lives paying off!!

In conclusion, I hope that you will NOT approve the ESC putting a large and outrageous rate hike on all of us residents. I am positive they can manage their affairs without this huge hike. (They could start by not paying such large salaries to their many managers for a start!!)

Yours Sincerely,
Tashe Long

March 1, 2015