

St George District Residents Network Inc

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Georges River Council

We, the signatories to this letter, wish to request some specific information, perhaps a copy of the letter, which the General Manager of Georges River Council has claimed as being the communication imparted from the Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) in relation to the rates harmonisation procedure undertaken in late 2019 and 2020.

The initial process for the rates harmonisation requirement at the amalgamated Georges River Council was undertaken in November and December 2019, that was when the community consultation was conducted. Brochures were made available prior to and during these community consultations, and advertisements in the local newspaper, *The Leader*. The vote at an extra-ordinary Council meeting was held February 10, 2020 to reject the 10.6% one-off rate increase.

In September 2020, GRC invited 200 randomly selected ratepayers from the LGA, to be the community consultative group to advise on rate harmonisation, the revised proposal. The brochures on the revised rates harmonisation proposal were distributed to ratepayers with the quarterly rates notice in late October 2020. The webinar, which I participated in, was held November 7, 2020, at which there may have been 5-7 other participants. That webinar from November 7, 2020 was uploaded onto GRC's website. There were supposedly another 3 webinars, which we did not attend, and which were not uploaded to the website. Public submissions were called for, the closing date was end of November 2020.

The webinars were promoted as being community consultation, although attendance/participation was not displayed at the webinar held on November 7, 2020. There were definitely about 4-5 persons judging by the number of questions posted on the screen after the presentation, although the first question, to start the audience came from an employee. That webinar was conducted jointly by Sue Weatherley and Danielle Parker, from GRC.

To the best of our memory, during a webcast of a Council meeting the General Manager made reference to the information/letter received from IPART which indicated that the community consultation held in late 2019 would suffice, be acceptable to IPART, for the next phase of the revision of the rates harmonisation procedure. There was a strong suggestion that community consultation would be unnecessary in this next phase, they would build on what had been presented before.

The request. Is it possible that IPART gave a tick of approval for the community consultation process undertaken in late 2019, and which would now suffice as the community consultative stage for the revised rates harmonisation. It seemed an unusual approach from IPART considering that the proposed rates harmonisation differed between 2019 and 2020.

Yours sincerely,



30/01/2021