

Level 15 2-24 Rawson Place

Sydney NSW 2000

**RE: Inquiry into Local Government Rates System**

As a very concerned resident of NSW and one that has been forced to accept the amalgamation of my council, **I am opposed** to any decision being made with the number of Local Government areas having no democratically elected council and politically appointed caretaker Administrators being in charge of such critical legislations for all ratepayers.

I believe that no decision should be made by this tribunal until all amalgamated councils are duly elected by the ratepayers, with any decision being made after 2018. It was the NSW Government who unceremoniously sacked most councils as they were unfit to govern. I do not believe that any one person such as a caretaker administrator should be in a position of making such decisions that directly impact on all ratepayers.

It was only a few years ago when Wyong Council held public meetings and chose to increase rates by 6.9% over four years. It was widely reported that council had failed to keep up the maintenance on infrastructure and had a \$30 Million defecate on infrastructure and to date many ratepayers are still waiting for improvements to our parks, beaches and local roads. Local Governments are quick to acknowledge major infrastructure improvements, yet when investigating where the funding came from, it is nearly always Federal or State funding..

Rating categories based on socioeconomic grounds or how certain regions have flourished due to other factors, is a dangerous practice that will have many ratepayers falling through the cracks and being unable to pay increases in rates, as they may have lived there way before the region was a hot spot for development.

The projection of equity and transparency is nothing but a furphy that most ratepayers have had to endure for years. Ratepayers have lost all confidence in Local Government, as they systematically change legislations for financial gain by transferring Community Lands into Operational.

The allocated \$10 Million for mergers to streamline administration falls apart with tokenistic leftover dollars to go to community projects that should have been addressed previously with the four year 6.9% rate increase. Not only will we have every bureaucrat putting his or her hand in the pot pushing the need for their own streamlining, I would be amazed to see any funding being allocated to community projects.

I am totally opposed to Unimproved values (UV) V Capital Improved Value (CIV) as there are many factors that are out of the hands of the general ratepayers of any region.

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Ratepayers have tokenistic opportunities to have their say on development, be them in favour or against.

My own experiences before Commissions of Inquiry or various Planning Committees have allowed me to express my feelings, yet very little notice is taken, as in most cases government departments and or councils have already approved the development in principle and only look at the economic factors and not the impacts on ratepayers as they tick the boxes.

Local Governments and state departments have other issues to contend with, one being their Disability Inclusion Plans under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014. I do not believe that any attention to these matters have been included in any proposed rate variation. Australia has 18.5% of the community living with a disability. This does not include those living with mobility, health or aging issues that restrict their capability to pay increases in rates. 32% of people in Australia are within these statistics (ABS).

In my local area of the Central Coast, Government predictions have estimated that we have the third highest aging population in NSW. Planning strategies have also predicted that over 20,000 new dwelling will be constructed under the North Wyong Structure Plan over the next twenty years for only one part of the Northern Central Coast that already lacks many services.

We do not have an accessible railway station (Wye), yet government has earmarked it as a Transport Hub. Buses and taxis are tokenistic or too costly for the 32% of the population. We live one hour drive from Australia's largest city and yet infrastructure is close to third world standard.

Many of the streets in the Northern part of the Central Coast have no kerb or guttering. Drainage is a major problem due to unsustainable overdevelopment with many stances of hard surfaces adding to the problem without any understanding of groundwater flows into our lakes system.

I am totally opposed to any changes until we the ratepayers have the opportunity to elect a new council.

Yours sincerely,

*Gary Blaschke*

Gary Blaschke OAM

  
