

Sent: Friday, 28 August 2009 10:45 AM
To: IPART Mailbox
Subject: Rate Pegging -IPART interim report July 2009

I regret that this email is late, however I have only just become aware of the report and the closing date.

Option B suggests that councils will have to demonstrate broad community support, rather than pockets of support for their fiscal strategy, and that there would be clear guidelines on what councils needed to do to demonstrate this community support. For example, where councils relied upon community surveys, IPART proposes that at least 25-30 per cent of ratepayers would have to participate in the survey with 50-60 per cent support for a council's proposal for it to pass.

Greater Taree City Council has just introduced a new domestic waste system which was allegedly supported by TWO surveys. The first survey was some time ago and apparently involved a very small number of ratepayers without any specific (or general?) reference to probable rate increases. The alleged second survey result has apparently not been released.

This year's domestic waste charges have jumped considerably. For example our house jumped from \$190 in 2008/9 to \$300 in 2009/10. Our duplex in nearby Wingham jumped from \$380 in 2008/9 to \$535 in 2009/10. These would be typical.

The Council is providing everyone with a THIRD wheelie bin, allegedly to address environmental considerations imposed by NSW government authorities.

There have been many complaints to Council, including letters to the editor in the local paper and to the mayor.

This latest rate increase follows a new stormwater management charge introduced in 2007/8, and a large infrastructure loan before that.

I strongly oppose any significant changes to rate pegging on the following grounds:

1. On the evidence above re new domestic waste charges, there is little to suggest Greater Taree Council (for one) will be influenced by your Option B survey guidelines.
2. Ratepayer disposable incomes are finite. On a percentage basis, annual incomes including pensions appear to be less than increasing service charges from authorities such as councils, water, and electricity suppliers. At least with water and electricity it is theoretically possible to reduce usage - if not charges.
3. Increased council, etc, charges flow on to rent increases for tenants and to less disposable income to be spent in local shops, with ongoing implications for local employment.
4. There is LITTLE OR NO EVIDENCE that this council is prepared to trim expenditure to live within its means. For example, if the priority is roads and bridges (used by 100% of the population), then it may be necessary to close, curtail, or charge for such services as libraries and art galleries.

MF Forster