

I wish to lodge with IPART, my objection to the rate increment that Singleton Council is intending to process through IPART.

Singleton does not need it to cover poor management decisions.

Singleton Council has not been up front with the people of the Shire.

Community involvement was poor, biased and selective. The brochure mailed out late to residents simply delivers a justification for the long standing misuse of funding and the need to increase rates. The design of the brochure was to promote the rate increase and was directed by the company chosen to promote this.

The consultation with the community was biased in the brochure, the questioning of the survey and those chosen "randomly" lacks credibility.

On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015, Singleton Council advised IPART of its intention to apply for the 9.7% rate increase each year for four years, commencing 2016/17. This formal application was to be determined at Council meeting held 21 December 2015.

Singleton Council has a long history of poor judgment and wastage that has grown considerably since the amalgamation of the Singleton Municipal Council and the Singleton Shire Council in 1976. Prior to this the two councils serviced the shire meeting the needs of the community and generally operated within the limits of their respective budgets.

With the amalgamation staffing increased dramatically and led to a culture development of the excessive wastage of funds that have been demonstrated to current times.

Over-expenditure on projects including roadworks and bridgeworks often had maintenance and necessary repairs suddenly followed by total replacement when special funding was suddenly found.

The main streets and footpaths have been upgraded and modernised, the more recent was only a few years prior to the major reconstruction of parts of John Street and Ryan Avenue. I have not been able to speak to any landowner known to me who is satisfied with the recent works and the proposition to raise rates to propagate more wastage.

Council has a history of poor decisions and poor financial management reliant on the belief that exists around the expectation that the ratepayers will meet the surplus required to cover any projects. Council expectations of staff ability has not been realised and spending is what continues outside budget restraints. The solution has always been to borrow the money and pay later, in the end at ratepayer expense.

As a ratepayer I have seen a large number of projects undertaken by Council that were personally driven to suit lobby groups including mining companies, often not as necessary works. In particular the overzealous resealing of special sections of the streets and roads to the detriment of needed sealing on roads. Wallaby Scrub Road was specially prepared and sealed unnecessarily and is now to be torn up by a mining company (allegedly \$11M to be the trade off to Singleton Council). Funding for construction of roads including Hunter River Crossing at Maison Dieu was rejected (deletion of conditions of consent on mining companies).

As a rural ratepayer we have consistently seen reduced value for the rates paid. This has been evident since the amalgamation of the Singleton Shire Council and the Singleton Municipal Council. We have already seen "a special rate variation introduced last year to tackle the identified infrastructure backlog for roads and culverts." This only benefits special case roads, and does not consider the wastage present with inappropriate roadworks, fees and legal expenses.

One road, Wambo Road received no consideration, yet we had to pay the rate increase. The road has a blind narrow bridge on a sharp bend, a sharp bend onto a ramp at the end of the bitumen, and a poor gravel surface with an inferior poorly repaired ramp in the middle of the gravel.

It is about time that reality reaches Council. Unnecessary spending needs to be stopped. There needs to be a more rational reduction in executive staffing on all levels and particular focus on entitlements such as vehicle provisions and allowances. Council needs to focus on genuine cost reductions and savings rather than simply seek rate variations to meet the shortfalls.

Our land has been devalued by the impact of mining and the failure of Council to enforce conditions of consent [REDACTED] that were intended to protect our land.

Our creek and aquifers have been destroyed. We have seen no reduction in the property valuation on our rates, and no reduction in the rates we have to pay for the property which is not nearly as productive as it was pre-mining.

We have to pay Council for a septic system that council had nothing to do with and this is alleged to be necessary for protect our waterways which have been destroyed by mining, supported by Council inaction.

We have to pay council for approval to build on our land and there is no proper inspection of these buildings.

Our right to travel on local roads has been compromised by the permissions given to mines to close roads for blasting and the control of these roads by the mines during the restrictions.

We are losing the right to travel on Wallaby Scrub Road with the provision that Council is paid for the right of the mine to destroy the road and the amenity of the area.

- Instead of wasting more resources and time pushing to save an inefficient council, refuse to accept the base case and the programmed alternative and leave the rates as they are.
- Convert the invested funds from many years and put these towards future needs.
- Make further staff reductions. Be honest, if the jobs are not done make the decisions. Enforcement of consent conditions and other commitments need to be done.
- Make reductions in senior and middle management based on efficiency and need.
- Spend within a budget and reduce reliance on loans.
- Drastically reduce the wastage on legal representation and expenses- stop the stupidity of code of conduct proceeds and harassing residents.
- No more signs and banners - we know where Singleton is.
- No more bandwagon schemes- provision for indigenous developments and programs that appear. This is not what Council needs to do.
- Stop the wastage on consultants, special advisers with interests to benefit other than Singleton.
- Resist the urge to waste on projects, displays (including fireworks) celebrations and ceremonies. Place-making schemes, business development including tourism and advertising the mining industry need to be shelved in favour of providing services that need to be provided. Look to the responsibilities of council without changing focus on whims such as the need to link to country and to the community needs of villages.
- Ignore the Fit for the Future, then face reality and prepare for the inevitable.

