

Author name: B. Doran

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Port Stephens Council is one of 13 councils across NSW to apply for an SRV and a significant one at that. This means 115 councils have their houses in order and are living within their means. So, rather than asking for an SRV shouldn't Port Stephens council be asking why cant we, we have 115 other councils to learn from? Perhaps, if they asked such questions during the Local Government Council Conferences, which the ratepayers of Port Stephens fund our delegates to attend, they would have avoided this in the first place.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I am making this submission Against the application for the 31.2% Special Rate Variation (SRV) made by Port Stephens Council based upon councils failure to consider the long term and cumulative effects of decades of infrastructure neglect, failure to offer sound financial options outside an SRV, failure to consider the long term and cumulative effects on current and future generations financial position and mental health, questionable financial management during hard economic times. Failure to consider the long term and cumulative effects of decades of infrastructure neglect: Our council has openly fessed up to neglecting our LGAs infrastructure by failing to provide adequate funds and maintenance over many decades. This is hardly a strong recommendation for those individuals seeking more money. Many of the individuals who made those decisions which culminated in the neglect of our roads, bridges and footpaths are still on council or part of the Corporate Council entity. To reward them by approving this SRV would be a total travesty of justice and would only reinforce an Us and Them paradigm. The long term financial plan reinforces the position that this council is not financially mature enough to manage a finite budget based around our rates. Increasing that rate base will only signify that IPART endorse their previous behaviour of funnelling resources to other non-infrastructure projects.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Failure to offer sound financial options outside an SRV: During the lead up to the last council elections in 2021 there was no mention that the council was in financial difficulties. It wasnt raised by the sitting councillors or by Corporate Council of the day. This only came to light once the elections had finished and the new council had been sworn in. Who is going to be held accountable for this decision??? Approving this SRV will only proclaim that IPART endorses deceptive behaviour by government entities. The Consultation period which Council is ever so proud of, was little more than a fixed race. The council only offered financial solutions based upon the income generated by our rates. There was no mention of other avenues which could generate far better long term income streams. Ideas such as building a council owned Asphalt plant as there are only two within the Hunter and both are south of Newcastle. Charging an airport transit levy that is exclusively to be spent on the LGAs roads or charging a similar levy on the Sand mines and quarries based on tonnage moved by road. Again, solely to be spent on road infrastructure. Finally, charge the so-called Over 55s villages a land tax based upon the number of sites each has, rather than the current system of charging them a much lower single business rates charge. The residents of these facilities still use the roads, buses, libraries and other council services, yet they are exempt from contributing to the upkeep of these services. These are very doable ideas. I asked the local member, [REDACTED], if the council needed state government approval to use such measures and was told by her that the council could approve such ideas at council level and move forward from there. No need to ask the state government's approval. Although, [REDACTED] did say she would not support any initiative which could have a negative impact on those living in Over 55s villages. Many in the LGA believe our council should step up and lead the way through financial innovation for local governments in the 21st century and not rely so heavily on individual rates to fund our social needs. If such a system were successful the council could effectively reduce residential rates to remain compliant with the legislation. This would also allow for the opportunity of the current system of growing Local Government budgets to be overhauled.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Failure to offer sound financial options outside an SRV: During the lead up to the last council elections in 2021 there was no mention that the council was in financial difficulties. It wasnt raised by the sitting councillors or by Corporate Council of the day. This only came to light once the elections had finished and the new council had been sworn in. Who is going to be held accountable for this decision??? Approving this SRV will only proclaim that IPART endorses deceptive behaviour by government entities. The Consultation period which Council is ever so proud of, was little more than a fixed race. The council only offered financial solutions based upon the income generated by our rates. There was no mention of other avenues which could generate far better long term income streams. Ideas such as building a council owned Asphalt plant as there are only two within the Hunter and both are south of Newcastle. Charging an airport transit levy that is exclusively to be spent on the LGAs roads or charging a similar levy on the Sand mines and quarries based on tonnage moved by road. Again, solely to be spent on road infrastructure. Finally, charge the so-called Over 55s villages a land tax based upon the number of sites each has, rather than the current system of charging them a much lower single business rates charge. The residents of these facilities still use the roads, buses, libraries and other council services, yet they are exempt from contributing to the upkeep of these services. These

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Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Questionable financial management during hard economic times: Council talks of the ...efforts into productivity and cost containment but there are no examples provided to the community. They didnt fill some positions and they did something else but I couldnt explain what that was. They havent stopped providing vehicles for staff to take home at night, over weekends and holidays. The ratepayers are subsidising these individuals to get to and from work, which in times of plenty may be acceptable however, once things get tight this should stop and council employees should find their own way to work. Council volunteers dont get money for fuel or a subsidised vehicle servicing yet council would not be able to do half of what they proclaim to do without Volunteers. In the area I live, there are three Port Stephens council employees that park council vehicles out the front of the houses all year round unsecured. What would the insurer say if they knew these vehicles were not being secured in a compound or does the council self-insure because it wont happen and its not our money.? Another example of this council's idea of productivity and cost containment was shown on Sunday the 12 February this year. This council was mowing the centre median strip on Nelson Bay Road at Anna Bay. To complete this task they had One Contract Traffic control vehicle with two personnel, five (5) council traffic control vehicles each with one staff employee in it, two (2) wide cut industrial mowers (the kind they use to mow ovals) each with a driver and two others collecting rubbish ahead of the mowers. This median strip is about 1.5 metres wide on average. Explain to me and the community how this is cost effective or best use of resources. This is nine council employees and two contractors all on Double Time rates to cut a section of grass that two scouts and a push mower could have done with the same result and with less fuss. Today I watched the council mow a small park near me, perhaps 1000sqm, with two of the same oversize machines, in the rain, why I have no idea. Why each mower wasnt given an area to mow within the location only god knows but council will tell you that the way they do things is always in the best interest of productivity and cost containment. Personally, I dont buy it and neither should IPART.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The surveys were designed to skew the results in favour of the SRV by asking indirect questions and providing limited options in the answers. You could not answer in the negative, only in the positive from "Slightly in Favour" to "Completely in Favour". Any comments were taken as a subordinate statement to the survey results.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Failure to consider the long term and cumulative effects on current and future generations financial position and mental health: One of the big ticket items in the council's application for the SRV, is the: Capacity to Pay. Council believes the community has the capacity to pay the SRV based solely upon Port Stephens sociodemographics and ratepayer profile. It is therefore asserted that the increase sought within this SV application is reasonably within the community's capacity limits. Being that the community's capacity to pay is only asserted there is no empirical evidence that this SRV will not add considerable financial stress to many in the community. With considerable negative health and wellbeing impacts that would follow. The only empirical evidence the "Capacity To Pay" report provided was that this council has not managed its finances well enough to head-off this current financial disaster. The council is trying to justify the SRV by saying businesses, farms and rentals can claim their rates on tax. Eligible Pensioners can get a Per Annual leg up of \$250 and someone on Newstart will receive two (2) annual inflation rises which will Mitigate the impact on the community. What poppycock. This is an example of Robbing Peter to pay Paul, which if you read the Quarterly Budget Review - 31 December 2022, Employee Benefits and On-Cost, appears to be one of council's primary financial practices. Is IPART going to support such a philosophy? The Council goes on to say ...In this instance and in the context of financial need the SRV is necessary along with productivity and cost containment measures; however, they fail to outline anything that resembles cost containment or a productivity gain. Nor do they explain what the context of financial need is other than maintaining the status quo. Unfortunately, the status quo is unacceptable to most in the community. Finally, council stated in the Port Stephens Examiner that they would consider forgoing the rates on a yearly basis as they could recover outstanding rates from ratepayers estates if things got really bad. Where is the moral compass of these individuals and the council as a whole?? Try and imagine the mental stress and soul destroying negative impact on the health of someone from a generation that loathed debt, who ends up with a growing debt hanging over them like Damocles Sword! Not to mention the adverse impact it will have on their children. Family is ment to inherit the gains of ones parents/grandparent life long labours, not the council.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

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Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

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Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council talks of the ...efforts into productivity and cost containment but there are no examples provided to the community. They didnt fill some positions and they did something else but I couldnt explain what that was. They havent stopped providing vehicles for staff to take home at night, over weekends and holidays. The ratepayers are subsidising these individuals to get to and from work, which in times of plenty may be acceptable however, once things get tight this should stop and council employees should find their own way to work. Council volunteers dont get money for fuel or a subsidised vehicle servicing yet council would not be able to do half of what they proclaim to do without Volunteers. In the area I live, there are three Port Stephens council employees that park council vehicles out the front of the houses all year round unsecured. What would the insurer say if they knew these vehicles were not being secured in a compound or does the council self-insure because it wont happen and its not our money.? Another example of this council's idea of productivity and cost containment was shown on Sunday the 12 February this year. This council was mowing the centre median strip on Nelson Bay Road at Anna Bay. To complete this task they had One Contract Traffic control vehicle with two personnel, five (5) council traffic control vehicles each with one staff employee in it, two (2) wide cut industrial mowers (the kind they use to mow ovals) each with a driver and two others collecting rubbish ahead of the mowers. This median strip is about 1.5 metres wide on average. Explain to me and the community how this is cost effective or best use of resources. This is nine council employees and two contractors all on Double Time rates to cut a section of grass that two scouts and a push mower could have done with the same result and with less fuss. Today I watched the council mow a small park near me, perhaps 1000sqm, with two of the same oversize machines,

in the rain, why I have no idea. Why each mower wasnt given an area to mow within the location only god knows but council will tell you that the way they do things is always in the best interest of productivity and cost containment. Personally, I dont buy it and neither should IPART.

Submission to IPART

I am making this submission “Against” the application for the 31.2% Special Rate Variation (SRV) made by Port Stephens Council based upon council’s failure to consider the long term and cumulative effects of decades of infrastructure neglect, failure to offer sound financial options outside an SRV, failure to consider the long term and cumulative effects on current and future generations financial position and mental health, questionable financial management during hard economic times.

Failure to consider the long term and cumulative effects of decades of infrastructure neglect:

Our council has openly fessed up to neglecting our LGA’s infrastructure by failing to provide adequate funds and maintenance over many decades. This is hardly a strong recommendation for those individuals seeking more money. Many of the individuals who made those decisions which culminated in the neglect of our roads, bridges and footpaths are still on council or part of the “Corporate Council” entity. To reward them by approving this SRV would be a total travesty of justice and would only reinforce an “Us and Them” paradigm.

The long term financial plan reinforces the position that this council is not financially mature enough to manage a finite budget based around our rates. Increasing that rate base will only signify that IPART endorse their previous behaviour of funnelling resources to other non-infrastructure projects.

Failure to offer sound financial options outside an SRV:

During the lead up to the last council elections in 2021 there was no mention that the council was in financial difficulties. It wasn’t raised by the sitting councillors or by “Corporate Council” of the day. This only came to light once the elections had finished and the new council had been sworn in. **“Who is going to be held accountable for this decision???”** Approving this SRV will only proclaim that IPART endorses deceptive behaviour by government entities.

The “Consultation” period which Council is ever so proud of, was little more than a “fixed race”. The council only offered financial solutions based upon the income generated by our rates. There was no mention of other avenues which could generate far better long term income streams.

Ideas such as building a council owned Asphalt plant as there are only two within the Hunter and both are south of Newcastle.

Charging an airport transit levy that is exclusively to be spent on the LGA's roads or charging a similar levy on the Sand mines and quarries based on tonnage moved by road. Again, solely to be spent on road infrastructure.

Finally, charge the so-called "Over 55's villages" a land tax based upon the number of sites each has, rather than the current system of charging them a much lower single business rates charge. The residents of these facilities still use the roads, buses, libraries and other council services, yet they are exempt from contributing to the upkeep of these services.

These are very doable ideas. I asked the local member, [REDACTED], if the council needed state government approval to use such measures and was told by her that the council could approve such ideas at council level and move forward from there. No need to ask the state government's approval. Although, [REDACTED] did say she would not support any initiative which could have a negative impact on those living in "Over 55's" villages.

Many in the LGA believe our council should step up and lead the way through financial innovation for local governments in the 21st century and not rely so heavily on individual rates to fund our social needs. If such a system were successful the council could effectively reduce residential rates to remain compliant with the legislation. This would also allow for the opportunity of the current system of growing Local Government budgets to be overhauled.

Failure to consider the long term and cumulative effects on current and future generations financial position and mental health:

One of the big ticket items in the council's application for the SRV, is the:

"Capacity to Pay". Council believes the community has the capacity to pay the SRV based solely upon Port Stephen's sociodemographics and ratepayer profile. It is therefore **asserted** that the increase sought within this SV application is reasonably within the community's capacity limits.

Being that the communities capacity to pay **is only asserted** there is no empirical evidence that this SRV will not add considerable financial stress to many in the community. With considerable negative health and wellbeing impacts that would follow.

The only empirical evidence the "Capacity To Pay " report provided was that this council has not managed its finances well enough to head-off this current financial disaster.

The council is trying to justify the SRV by saying businesses, farms and rentals can claim their rates on tax. "Eligible Pensioners" can get a Per Annual leg up of \$250 and someone on Newstart will receive two (2) annual inflation rises which will "Mitigate" the impact on the community. What "poppycock". This is an example of "Robbing Peter to pay Paul", which if you read the Quarterly Budget Review - 31 December 2022, Employee Benefits and On-Cost, appears to be one of councils primary financial practices. Is IPART going to support such a philosophy?

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Questionable financial management during hard economic times:

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They haven't stopped providing vehicles for staff to take home at night, over weekends and holidays. The ratepayers are subsidising these individuals to get to and from work, which in times of plenty may be acceptable however, once things get tight this should stop and council employees should find their own way to work. Council volunteers don't get money for fuel or a subsidised vehicle servicing yet council would not be able to do half of what they proclaim to do without Volunteers.

In the area I live, there are three Port Stephens council employees that park council vehicles out the front of the houses all year round unsecured. What would the insurer say if they knew these vehicles were not being secured in a compound or does the council self-insure because "it won't happen and it's not our money."?

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Port Stephens Council is one of 13 councils across NSW to apply for an SRV and a significant one at that. This means 115 councils have their houses in order and are living within their means. So, rather than asking for an SRV shouldn't Port Stephens council be asking why can't we, we have 115 other councils to learn from? Perhaps, if they asked such questions during the Local Government Council Conferences, which the ratepayers of Port Stephens fund our delegates to attend, they would have avoided this in the first place.

Author name: B. Mackenzie

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

It would seem a rate rise is seen as fix for the inadequacies of the council in not meeting the standards of its budgets What priorities it sets would seem to Bo off target for my \$3000 plus contribution a garbage collection and a patchwork of tar seems ridiculous

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

No communication has taken place The council foreshadowed a rate rise Then at the height of the Covid bubble applied this valuations as a norm

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

No consideration is given the the demographic of this affected being largely retired or on fixed incomes such precipitous increases are both shocking and unrealistic, our case the building would represent a 1/3 of the block value

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. There is no consideration of capacity and surely the valuation rise is too steep to reflect true value

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

There has been no communication from council other than a press release some months back for shadowing a rise as a softening up of the issue while going ahead with an inflated valuation

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I dont know

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Given how little we get get from council in the way of devices other than garbage collection and throwing a shovel of tar in a hole after a storm Its hard to see how they spend money other than wages

Land Valuation History

Valuation Type	Valuation Date	Effective Date	Valuation Amount
Unimproved	01/07/2022	01/07/2022	\$1,250,000
Unimproved	01/07/2021	01/07/2021	\$879,000
Unimproved	01/07/2020	01/07/2020	\$687,000
Unimproved	01/07/2019	01/07/2019	\$619,000
Unimproved	01/07/2018	01/07/2018	\$645,000
Unimproved	01/07/2017	01/07/2017	\$620,000
Unimproved	01/07/2016	01/07/2016	\$574,000
Unimproved	01/07/2015	01/07/2015	\$541,000
Unimproved	01/07/2014	01/07/2014	\$541,000
Unimproved	01/07/2013	01/07/2013	\$541,000
Unimproved	01/07/2012	01/07/2012	\$541,000

Objections to SRV requested by Port Stephens Council for 2023/24

We are residents of Port Stephens

The Council has decided to increase rates in a SRV once again.

This is the second time that the Mayor Ryan Palmer has tried to have a SRV , first in 2018 and now in 2023.

In both cases it was:

We have to have it to stay viable.

However, there is NO Community Awareness of Their Plans, as it is shrouded with words that mean nothing.

The mayor and councillors refuse to explain the projects and associated costs.

Also what projects have External state or federal funding'

Council do not listen to rate payers, they state that they have consulted, but never show who they consulted with and who were agreeing to their proposals

The section 94 money appears to just go into Council consolidated revenue without any transparency to those who paid the contribution and to the community generally.

Council claim "Port Stephens Council is facing increased pressure to provide enhanced services and facilities to meet the high standards our community expects". The document does not refer you to surveys etc to identify; -

1. Who is applying the increased pressure –
2. 2.what are the enhanced services and facilities requested - what are the high standards our community expects
3. The council statement is a motherhood statement that offers absolutely no basis for its justification and no mean of verifying it. It is therefore impossible for rate payers to conduct any scrutiny on the claims made by the Council
4. Again, Council offers no reference to surveys, Council conducted meeting to get feedback etc to see who, what, where, when and how the community is "telling us". Surely this justification, if it is genuine, would not be difficult to provide.

Council has not communicated what are the specific projects that the SRV is required for – it is just buried in a 'wish list' of projects Council is asking IPART to approve an SRV.

Council don't even know themselves or they would have decency to tell the Community and IPART) So to cover Council's uncertainty of knowing how much expenditure is actually required and having doubts of how long it will take Council to build the projects, Council are asking IPART 'make the rate payers pay the increased rates covered by the SRV in perpetuity'.

The Land Values have increased and this in turn earns additional rates and charges

Council needs to submit evidence of where the projects came from other than that is **what the community wants** Need to categorize the projects into 'must have, should have and nice to have' categories.

Council does not know how much money they need for the projects and that they don't know how long they will take to complete but they do know how much they want to increase my rates by.

The council want to cover their incompetence of managing projects.

As a project manager, had to have weekly meetings to go through a Cost analysis and answerable for any deficit.

Yet when I asked for this to be explained by Mayor Palmer, was brushed aside.

Council has not prepared a document identifying projects they want to do, identifying why it needs to be done now, the benefits of doing the project, alternatives to what they propose and cost benefits to the community.

The new Mayor Palmer in early 2018 claimed projects **being asked by the community** offered the following benefits: • Town centre redevelopment • Stimulate the local economy • Drive business growth • Attract more visitors • Fill empty streets • More events in Port Stephens Shire

All of these projects have the obvious direct benefit of financially helping business people. There was no supporting documented evidence that the rate payers had been asking for these projects other than the Mayor saying 'this is what they told me'

When you look at the costs of Shower/Toilet facilities at the Sports ground, a cost of \$2 million is excessive

The council ignores the wishes of the majority of the ratepayers, yet are wasteful and have no accountability'

1. Yet the Mayor palmer has just spent \$50000 on a new vehicle exchange, when there was no justification.

2. Had asked for the Council to look at reducing costs yet was informed that they were very trim. Yet on several occasions, have seen the Council workers come to the park at 7:30 am and do not move from there till 8:30 am. Sitting in their trucks. We pay for this.

3. Again the council removed the DA plans in the local Paper, and was told it was to save \$18000 per annum. It was only after objections by 2 councillors that it was reinstated.

4. Road repairs are a joke. After the heavy rains etc, saw on Several occasions. Trucks using Cold mix being applied to holes FULL of WATER.. This means that within a few minutes the hole is again open as cars drive over. Absolute waste of time.

5. The bridge on Foreshore drive was replaced with a new bridge at a cost of over \$300000. However, this now only has a Limit of 3 tons. Another waste of money.

6. Pavement open dining was set up in Shoal Bay yet was objected to by the shop owners. Was then torn down and removed. A waste of the Grant

7. The original plan for Yaccaba st extension was for 2 way traffic to allow the movement of traffic around the shopping centre, This is now only a single way. Again wasted monies.

8. Stockton st and Yaccaba st turned into 1 way streets, despite several objections from residents. Also a safety hazard, as you have to reverse to drive out, and creates a hazard. Set up by the Council to get more parking space and more revenue. Also asked for what the revenue was being spent on, as it was to be for improvements, yet got no reply from Mayor palmer.. Now the Council want to extend paid parking to Little beach/ Shoal bay etc.

9. Shoal bay Foreshore development went ahead without any proper consultation.

What rates are payable in other Councils is totally irrelevant to the rate payers of Port Stephens Council. It is disgusting that at such a late stage in the process the Council takes out an advert and offers the rates relative to other Council Areas for the only justification for the SRV rate increase. It confirms the total disdain the Council has shown towards the rate payers in this process.

In my case the cumulative increase sought by the council will increase my rates compounded yearly

I do not receive any pension by the Federal Government and therefore do not qualify for a pensioner rate reduction. This rate increase will have a significant impact on me.

Why won't council listen to the majority (over 70%) of respondents who were against the Council proposal. There is something sus with what the Council are trying to do with 'ramming it down our throats'

It's clear that Council has a strong capacity to secure and utilise outside funding, demonstrating that there is no need to increase rates to fund these projects.

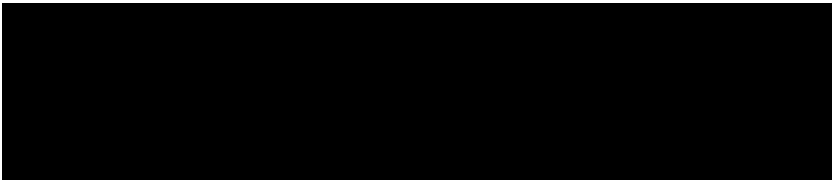
When the first SRV was proposed, at our meeting, and even in submissions told the Council, that as we are supplying the areas in NSW with sand excavation, to the tune of over 5000000 tonnes, that at a modest increase of \$1 per tonne, would increase revenue, Yet had no reply or response from the Council

With the continued waste of monies by Council, do not see why they should be applying or obtaining a SRV from IPart.

Regards

Bryan martin





Subject: SRV Objection submission for Port Stephens

Hi

I am attaching my Objection to Port Stephens SRV

Objections to SRV requested by Port Stephens Council for 2023/24

We are residents of Port Stephens

The Council has decided to increase rates in a SRV once again.

This is the second time that the Mayor Ryan Palmer has tried to have a SRV , first in 2018 and now in 2023.

In both cases it was:

We have to have it to stay viable.

However, there is NO Community Awareness of Their Plans, as it is shrouded with words that mean nothing.

The mayor and councillors refuse to explain the projects and associated costs.

Also what projects have External state or federal funding'

Council do not listen to rate payers, they state that they have consulted, but never show who they consulted with and who were agreeing to their proposals

The section 94 money appears to just go into Council consolidated revenue without any transparency to those who paid the contribution and to the community generally.

Council claim "Port Stephens Council is facing increased pressure to provide enhanced services and facilities to meet the high standards our community expects". The document does not refer you to surveys etc to identify; -

1. Who is applying the increased pressure –
2. 2.what are the enhanced services and facilities requested - what are the high standards our community expects
3. The council statement is a motherhood statement that offers absolutely no basis for its justification and no mean of verifying it. It is therefore impossible for rate payers to conduct any scrutiny on the claims made by the Council
4. Again, Council offers no reference to surveys, Council conducted meeting to get feedback etc to see who, what, where, when and how the community is "telling us". Surely this justification, if it is genuine, would not be difficult to provide.

Council has not communicated what are the specific projects that the SRV is required for – it is just buried in a 'wish list' of projects Council is asking IPART to approve an SRV.

Council don't even know themselves or they would have decency to tell the Community and IPART)

So to cover Council's uncertainty of knowing how much expenditure is actually required and having doubts of how long it will take Council to build the projects, Council are asking IPART 'make the rate payers pay the increased rates covered by the SRV in perpetuity'.

The Land Values have increased and this in turn earns additional rates and charges

Council needs to submit evidence of where the projects came from other than that is **what the community wants** Need to categorize the projects into 'must have, should have and nice to have' categories.

Council does not know how much money they need for the projects and that they don't know how long they will take to complete but they do know how much they want to increase my rates by.

The council want to cover their incompetence of managing projects.

As a project manager, had to have weekly meetings to go through a Cost analysis and answerable for any deficit.

Yet when I asked for this to be explained by Mayor Palmer, was brushed aside.

Council has not prepared a document identifying projects they want to do, identifying why it needs to be done now, the benefits of doing the project, alternatives to what they propose and cost benefits to the community.

The new Mayor Palmer in early 2018 claimed projects **being asked by the community** offered the following benefits: • Town centre redevelopment • Stimulate the local economy • Drive business growth • Attract more visitors • Fill empty streets • More events in Port Stephens Shire

All of these projects have the obvious direct benefit of financially helping business people. There was no supporting documented evidence that the rate payers had been asking for these projects other than the Mayor saying 'this is what they told me'

When you look at the costs of Shower/Toilet facilities at the Sports ground, a cost of \$2 million is excessive

The council ignores the wishes of the majority of the ratepayers, yet are wasteful and have no accountability'

1. Yet the Mayor palmer has just spent \$50000 on a new vehicle exchange, when there was no justification.

2. Had asked for the Council to look at reducing costs yet was informed that they were very trim. Yet on several occasions, have seen the Council workers come to the park at 7:30 am and do not move from there till 8:30 am. Sitting in their trucks. We pay for this.

3. Again the council removed the DA plans in the local Paper, and was told it was to save \$18000 per annum. It was only after objections by 2 councillors that it was reinstated.

4. Road repairs are a joke. After the heavy rains etc, saw on Several occasions. Trucks using Cold mix being applied to holes FULL of WATER.. This means that within a few minutes the hole is again open as cars drive over. Absolute waste of time.

5. The bridge on Foreshore drive was replaced with a new bridge at a cost of over \$300000. However, this now only has a Limit of 3 tons. Another waste of money.

6. Pavement open dining was set up in Shoal Bay yet was objected to by the shop owners. Was then torn down and removed. A waste of the Grant

7. The original plan for Yaccaba st extension was for 2 way traffic to allow the movement of traffic around the shopping centre, This is now only a single way. Again wasted monies.

8. Stockton st and Yaccaba st turned into 1 way streets, despite several objections from residents. Also a safety hazard, as you have to reverse to drive out, and creates a hazard. Set up by the Council to get more parking space and more revenue. Also asked for what the revenue was being spent on, as it was to be for improvements, yet got no reply from Mayor palmer.. Now the Council want to extend paid parking to Little beach/ Shoal bay etc.

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In my case the cumulative increase sought by the council will increase my rates compounded yearly I do not receive any pension by the Federal Government and therefore do not qualify for a pensioner rate reduction. This rate increase will have a significant impact on me.

Why won't council listen to the majority (over 70%) of respondents who were against the Council proposal. There is something sus with what the Council are trying to do with 'ramming it down our throats'


It's clear that Council has a strong capacity to secure and utilise outside funding, demonstrating that there is no need to increase rates to fund these projects.

When the first SRV was proposed, at our meeting, and even in submissions told the Council, that as we are supplying the areas in NSW with sand excavation, to the tune of over 5000000 tonnes, that at a modest increase of \$1 per tonne, would increase revenue, Yet had no reply or response from the Council

With the continued waste of monies by Council, do not see why they should be applying or obtaining a SRV from IPart.

Regards

Bryan martin



Author name: B. WATSON-WILL

Date of submission: Monday, 13 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Our council is empire building, claiming Covid losses, bad weather their incompetence and anything else, especially when it was Fit for the Future, just 3 years ago.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No PROPOSED RATE RISE of 9.5% FOR PORT STEPHENS RATEPAYERS CONTINUING FOR 3 YEARS and COMPOUNDING (Plus 4% existing Drainage Levy ongoing) Proposed $9.5\% \times 3\text{yrs compounding} = 31.3\%$ (Plus $4\% \times 3$ existing Drainage Levy ongoing) $= 31.3\% + 12\% = 43.3\%$ IPART's recommendation is 4.4% which is factored into the 9.5% Hence P.S. Council's recommendation is a 5.1% increase over the rate peg base land rates but does not include the annual 4% Drainage Levy in perpetuity. This ongoing Drainage Levy is and has always been ignored by Council and IPART.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. We have been offered the opportunity to respond to what we consider biased, Council surveys. We find this totally unacceptable in this day and age. There has been no attempt to spend cash assets, commercial properties land assets. \$10m in unspent grants and \$15m in unspent developer contributions. \$69m in cash in September 2022. 25% ownership of Newcastle Airport, Williamtown NSW, valued at \$300m. Buildings assets in the tens of millions of dollars. Our Council is empire building and IPART doesn't have the power to assess these claims. NSW legislation doesn't allow this. (Zoom question to IPART 4/11/22.)

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No. Council ignored this information. Our current land rate valuation is \$368K and is expected to increase by at least 30% well over \$400K after recent high land and property sales with a new VG due in April 2023, just before this proposed rate increase would take effect on July 1, 2023. Some waterfront ratepayers pay 3 and 4 times higher rates than residential sites and there will be more B&B and holiday property rentals on these, as the owners realise land rates at \$5K-\$6K per annum.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. Only going through the motions with nearly more staff attending than the public.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

No action. Ignored during the debates on the SRV. Only separate community submissions in the councillors' room.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Not reasonable at all. Will be a burden on all ratepayers. IPART recommends 4.4% which is factored into the 9.5%. i.e. council's increase request is 5.1% over a 3-year, annual application review periods.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

With increasing interest rates, VG increases, high food, fuel and medical prices increasing council should live within its means and not be empire building, especially when they have cash, commercial buildings and land and airport share assets.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Not well enough and we never hear of any hardship cases, only than failure to pay land rates will incur interest rates debt on that property when it is sold off.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Council presented coloured brochures and their information to try to justify their application. Only what we read in the media.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Our council failed a 7.5% x 7 years increase just 3 years ago and are still empire building.

**PROPOSED RATE RISE of 9.5% FOR PORT STEPHENS RATEPAYERS
CONTINUING FOR 3 YEARS and COMPOUNDING**

(Plus 4% existing Drainage Levy ongoing)

Proposed 9.5% x 3yrs compounding = 31.3%

(Plus 4% x 3 existing Drainage Levy ongoing) = 31.3% + 12% = 43.3%

IPART's recommendation is 4.4% which is factored into the 9.5%

**Hence P.S. Council's recommendation is a 5.1% increase over the rate
peg base land rates but does not include the annual 4% Drainage Levy
in perpetuity**

13/2/23

We are retired and have an average, home in Corlette.

**We have been offered the opportunity to respond to what we consider biased, Council
surveys. We find this totally unacceptable in this day and age.**

**Our current land rate valuation is \$368K and is expected to increase by at least 30% well
over \$400K after recent high land and property sales with a new VG due in April 2023, just
before this proposed rate increase would take effect on July 1, 2023.**

**We find it amusing that an independent, previously, non-disclosed, consultant had
recommended the most-costly for ratepayers and residents 10.5% over 3 years,
compounding to 34.92%, conveniently forgetting the annual 4% (Drainage Levy cleverly
hidden in Council's Annual Budgets, in perpetuity and compounding).**

**What a windfall for our Council. This scenario does not comply with IPART's requirement
for a current one-off rate increase of 4.4% NSW Rate Peg for our Council and having to
reapply annually for any future rate increases. The recent financial years saw an approved
rate increase of 2.5% from the 0.7% first proposal by IPART.**

**Council stated it would be required to employ more short-term managers to carry out
proposed works within the LGA, as was stated and proposed when the 7.5% x 7 years
maximum of 66% allowed when last applying for an SRV, pre-Covid-19, just 3 years ago.
This proposed SRV rate rise was rejected by the community and also IPART.**

**The reason we include the Drainage Levy is because it has been cleverly hidden in
Council's Annual Budget papers for over 30 years @ 2.5% compounding over the last 3
decades and now equates at around 4% having to rectify extremely-poor Council DA
decisions and lack of planning and correct drainage works in the first instance. (The
[REDACTED] is a classic example of one of the major stuff-ups costing upwards of
\$25m-\$30m in losses and court costs, retention and revetment attempts with ongoing
mechanical pump-out solutions as recently witnessed.)**

The 9.5% + 4% (drainage) = 13.5%.

Our Council has also recommended to IPART that all councils should be able to claim the maximum of 2.5% increase for waste and recycling services. Finally, we are also expecting a green waste bin for those who apply.

The Drainage Levy and the proposed increase in domestic waste removal has only come to light recently when questioned by ourselves.

During a zoom meeting we asked IPART: “Does IPART question or factor-in NSW councils’ cash wealth, land and building assets to assess if said councils were empire building?” The answer was a firm: “No” from IPART as NSW Government legislation does not allow this.

The 4.4% recommended by IPART for the next Financial Year 2023-24 for Port Stephens, is acceptable and a special SRV on top of that for one year could be acceptable as interest rates are constantly rising along with inflation and VG land valuations due next April 2023.

2022 has seen our Council’s cash assets at almost \$69m at the September meeting and increasing, also with over \$10m in unused Grant Funds and over \$18m in unused Developer Contributions, all earning rising interest rates on fixed terms and Council is now blackmailing – for want of a nicer word – our community into these proposed rates rises with vastly deteriorating roads and potholes not being constructed and repaired professionally in the first place using spray seals and hotmix bitumen.

Having participated with IPART’S November Zoom meeting and asking if IPART participates in checking the wealth and assets of NSW councils prior setting their recommendation for a base rate peg, we were informed that IPART doesn’t have the NSW Government legislative power to check the cash wealth or otherwise of councils or ask for banks statements, property and vacant land wealth.

With all the above information it would appear that our Port Stephens Council is continuing empire building, as just 3 years ago we were Fit for the Future.

Our Council doesn’t always have its priorities correct, demolishing existing buildings, sub-standard road repairs and resurfacing in the wrong places and not maintaining our beautiful residential and tourist environment well enough. We suggest that our Council show some good will to our community by selling-off some of our buildings, land and airport assets from the Property Portfolio – currently estimated over \$200-\$300 million with over \$100 million from Salamander sales alone and still having spare vacant land (our community can’t always see or understand a breakdown of our property assets portfolio, including buildings assets in Newcastle) – carrying out repairs and reconstructions to our roads, parks, foreshores and waterways assets which, if repaired and maintained remain as assets that don’t require expensive, ongoing maintenance. Our Council has always been Fit For The Future, just 3 years ago, with previously-wise investments and is now supposedly asset rich and cash poor.

Brian attended the one of the first 5-option briefings, (also a zoom meeting), and there were some participating accountants who just wanted to cut white-collar indoor staff and didn't speak of Council's waste or how higher rates would affect our community.

We now see a title change from SRV (the first proposal) to Sustainable Futures and now a Rate Rise for further empire building, now knowing full-well that one of the original 2 options were what financial Council staff wanted in the first place. We have now witnessed pathetic 1-hour sessions at various outdoor points where inclement weather was expected due to La Nina. Council forwarded a loaded SurveyMonkey survey on social media, with just 2 options, either 26% for one year or 10.5% x 3 years and no mention of the existing 4% Drainage Levy.

At a meeting on 4/10/22 it was confirmed that ratepayers who live permanently within the LGA are subsidising the residential, commercial, B&B operators as well as the Over 55 villages in rural residential zones. These concerns require NSW State laws being repealed for rural residential properties where there is cluster housing.

Thanks now go to councillors who saw-through the earlier misleading name proposals to what we now know and are considered as Rate Rises. A much more modest rate rise of 4.4% (NSW rate peg over 12 months 2023-24) would possibly be more acceptable within our community as we are already paying the 4% Drainage Levy. Furthermore, Council be required to approach IPART for annual future Rate Rises beyond the 2023-24 Financial Year.

We can only see a way out for those claiming hardship payments struggling to pay their rates, mortgages, and higher interest rates rises would be to pay weekly or monthly instalments garnered from direct debiting their incomes thus causing more work for our contractors whom Council hire to mail out our rate notices causing them to increase their costs which would be passed-on to ratepayers.

**Brian [REDACTED] Watson-Will, [REDACTED]
(Councillor 1991-1995 and 1999-2004)**



From: Donna Austin [REDACTED]

Sent: Friday, 3 March 2023 4:40 PM

To: IPART <ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Reject Submission- Special Variation rate Application Port Stephens Council 2023-2024

Dear Ipart,

As a retired community Port Stephens member, contributor and rate payer I strongly **object** to the Special variation rate increase proposed by Port Stephens Council.

My reasons are as below:-

Any council rate increase above CPI on a fixed (pension) income is simply eating into a fixed budget and decreasing expenditure on other essential utilities / health costs / grocery and fuel which are also skyrocketing . We simply are forced to decide if Port Stephens is our forever home.

I feel there are implications council have not considered and don't appear in any spreadsheet about keeping the community in balance...

Those who rent will feel excess weight of this , although not paying rates directly, but ultimately indirectly as landlords pass on the increase through rent.

And, low /fixed income earners such as myself that own their own home.

So our community decreases in diversity and accessibility and talent. These people contribute skill sets in our regional area and will leave if living costs become too high.

I need these people in my community!

So ultimately, the investors gain ground and the permanent businesses revert to seasonal trade which Port Stephens Council expend a great deal of their budget to offset. You can appreciate the irony.

Port Stephens Councils budget deficit by their own admission will not be solved by a special rate variation or continuing variations.....it needs to reconnect with community to adapt...and this application shows a disconnection.

I ask IPart to consider the emotional health of the community when deliberating on this issue, as well as the financial one.

For this reason I ask Ipart to **reject** Port Stephens Council Special Variation Rate Application 2023-2024.

Yours sincerely
Donna Austin

Corlette NSW

Author name: G. Cooper

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

From: Jo Cooper Sent: Sunday, 26 February 2023 12:53 PM To: IPART Subject: Port Stephens SRV Dear IPART, I wish to express my concern regarding the Port Stephens SRV, I am concerned that 31.3% is too much also given our land value has more than doubled this year alone. My husband and I are self funded retirees and this amount of money is out of the question.

Regards Gary & [REDACTED]

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

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Author name: G. Zarrella

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

From: robyn west Sent: Wednesday, 1 March 2023 11:22 AM To: Local Government Mailbox Subject: OBJECTION TO SRV PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL Dear Sir I STRONGLY OBJECT TO THE SRV BY COUNCIL.MY RATES ARE NOW \$2114 and i have just received a revaluation and the value has gone from \$300,000 to \$855,000, which will increase my 2023 rates heaps. How could the council increase the rates again by 31,3% on top of the new valuation increase. this council will not listen to the ratepayers ..a couple of years ago they tried to increase our rates by 66%and 72% of ratepapers protested...and ipart refused their application....but here we go again...same thing....why can the council keep putting ratepayers thru this stress.. We are pensioners and struggle to pay the bills as it is. Please REFUSE THE SRV... [REDACTED] [REDACTED] ZARRELLA [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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28 February 2023



IPART

Email: ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir

I am writing with concern about the proposed special rate variation in Port Stephens, and would like to voice my objection for the following reasons:

Increases to the Commercial Property Base Rate are Regressive.

When this was considered in 2019 I made a submission in relation to the inequity that the increase would place on commercial property owners. Rates on commercial properties are currently much higher than residential (4 x base rate, and 3 x the UCV rate). The proposed special rate variation will also be applied to the commercial base, which being a flat charge, is a regressive tax. I have attached my earlier submission with further detail on this point.

Recent Valuer General Updates reduces the need for an SRV.

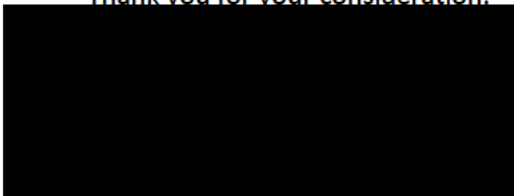
New valuations have just been completed (property owners got the letters last week), with most properties roughly doubling their unimproved capital value. This alone will result in quite an increase to rates, even without the SRV.

Rental Pressure and other contributors mean it is poorly timed, and effects some parts of the community more than others.

As everyone is aware there is a rental crisis occurring in many areas, including Port Stephens. I have been a Real Estate Agent for 29 years in this area and am on the "front line" in this regard. While some parts of the media are quick to point to "greedy landlords", I can see that many investors are struggling too. There are several reasons for this (interest rate increases aside).

1. Many leased properties are strata title; and over the last 12 months building insurance in strata buildings have risen drastically. 100% rises are common. For example, a block of 10 townhouses at 244 Sandy point Rd, Salamander Bay. The insurance has risen from \$8000 in 2021, to \$10,000 in 2022, and now \$22,000 in 2023. This is passed onto owners via their strata fees.
2. The higher UVC (see above) will also move some investors over the Land Tax threshold.
3. **Add to this an SRV and the pressure to raise rents as much as possible to cover some of these costs is undeniable.** This funnels much of the burden directly to the parts of the community that can afford it least.

Thank you for your consideration.



Nelson Bay Real Estate

Bach. Commerce (Newcastle University)

Dip. Business – Class 1 Licensed R/E Agent, Stock and Station Agent and Auctioneer.

NSW Justice of the Peace

Nelson Bay Real Estate Pty Ltd ABN 59 001 980 016 trading as



45 Donald Street
Nelson Bay NSW 2315
Ph 02 4981 2655
nelsonbayrealestate.com.au



2 / 71 President Wilson Walk
Tanilba Bay NSW 2319
Ph 02 4039 9800
tilligerryrealestate.com.au

10 March 2019

IPART
PO Box K 35
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240

Dear Sir

RE: PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION - PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL

Thank you for reading my submission. While I agree with PSSC that we need an increase to residential rates to provide further amenities to our area, **I am very concerned on the effect that the variation will have on our small commercial districts.** Through-out Port Stephens we have quite a lot of small commercial zones with many of the shops owned by small businesses, and “mum and pop” investors.

The current **Base Rate for Business** zoned properties in Port Stephens is significantly higher than the Residential Base and is therefore somewhat inequitable (currently \$1557.00 per annum versus \$369 for residential. **Over 4x**). Accordingly, it is **an imposition on business development in Port Stephens.** On top of this is, of course, the high UCV rate for Business rated properties compared to the Residential rate eg .008513 v .003033 [**almost 3x**].

While I understand that the range of services provided maybe higher for commercial areas, this is already reflected by the status quo.

Even without the rate variation, this inequity is having an impact.

- The high Base rate for Businesses has a particularly strong impost on businesses that occupy small sites. **A large “flat” charge (the base rate) is a regressive tax,** having greater impact on small businesses. The smaller the shop size, the larger percentage is being levied of the UCV.
- As an example, there is a particularly high vacancy rate in Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore which is primarily small sites and could be for a number of reasons, but I believe that the business rate expense [which forms a key part

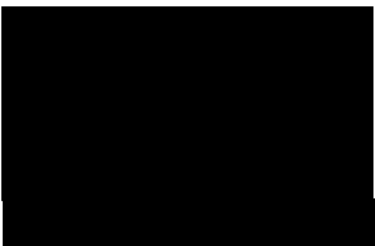
of the outgoing component of a tenant's lease] is contributing to the high vacancy level.

- The disproportionately high rates on these properties has further impact, as these **small premises are the incubators of new business in the area.**
- Businesses that could be occupying these spaces move out into residential areas (home industries) and operate with the lower costs.

It is my understanding that the proposed SRV will apply to the entire rated amount, including the Business Base, worsening the already high and disproportionate commercial rates in the area, with a direct impact on small business, small investors, occupancy and small townships in general.

For these reasons, with the commercial/residential mix that the Port Stephens council currently employs, I do not believe that the SRV will have a "reasonable impact on ratepayers".

Our region does need the investment that the SRV could provide, and an equitable (and affordable) increase will bring many necessary improvements to our commercial districts and the Port Stephens area in general, but the rating mix should first be reconsidered.



Managing Director

Nelson Bay Real Estate & Tilligerry Real Estate

Bach. Commerce (Newcastle University)

Dip. Business

Licensed Real Estate Agent



Subject: Port Stephens SRV

Dear IPART,

I am writing with concern about the proposed special rate variation in Port Stephens, and would like to voice my **objection** for the following reasons:

Increases to the Commercial Property Base Rate are Regressive.

When this was considered in 2019 I made a submission in relation to the inequity that the increase would place on commercial property owners. Rates on commercial properties are currently much higher than residential (4 x base rate, and 3 x the UCV rate). The proposed special rate variation will also be applied to the commercial base, which being a flat charge, is a regressive tax. I have attached my earlier submission with further detail on this point.

Recent Valuer General Updates reduces the need for an SRV.

New valuations have just been completed (property owners got the letters last week), with most properties roughly doubling their unimproved capital value. This alone will result in quite an increase to rates, even without the SRV.

Rental Pressure and other contributors mean it is poorly timed, and effects some parts of the community more than others.

As everyone is aware there is a rental crisis occurring in many areas, including Port Stephens. I have been a Real Estate Agent for 29 years in this area, and am on the “front line” in this regard. While some parts of the media are quick to point to “greedy landlords”, I can see that many investors are struggling too. There are several reasons for this (interest rates increase aside).

1. Many leased properties are strata title; and over the last 12 months building insurance in strata buildings have risen drastically. 100% rises are common. For example, a block of 10 townhouses at 244 Sandy point Rd, Salamander Bay. The insurance has risen from \$8000 in 2021, to \$10,000 in 2022, and now \$22,000 in 2023. This is passed onto owners via their strata fees.
2. The higher UVC (see above) will also move some investors over the Land Tax threshold.
3. **Add to this an SRV and the pressure to raise rents as much as possible to cover some of these costs is undeniable.** This funnels much of the burden directly to the parts of the community that can afford it least.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely,

Heath Jones

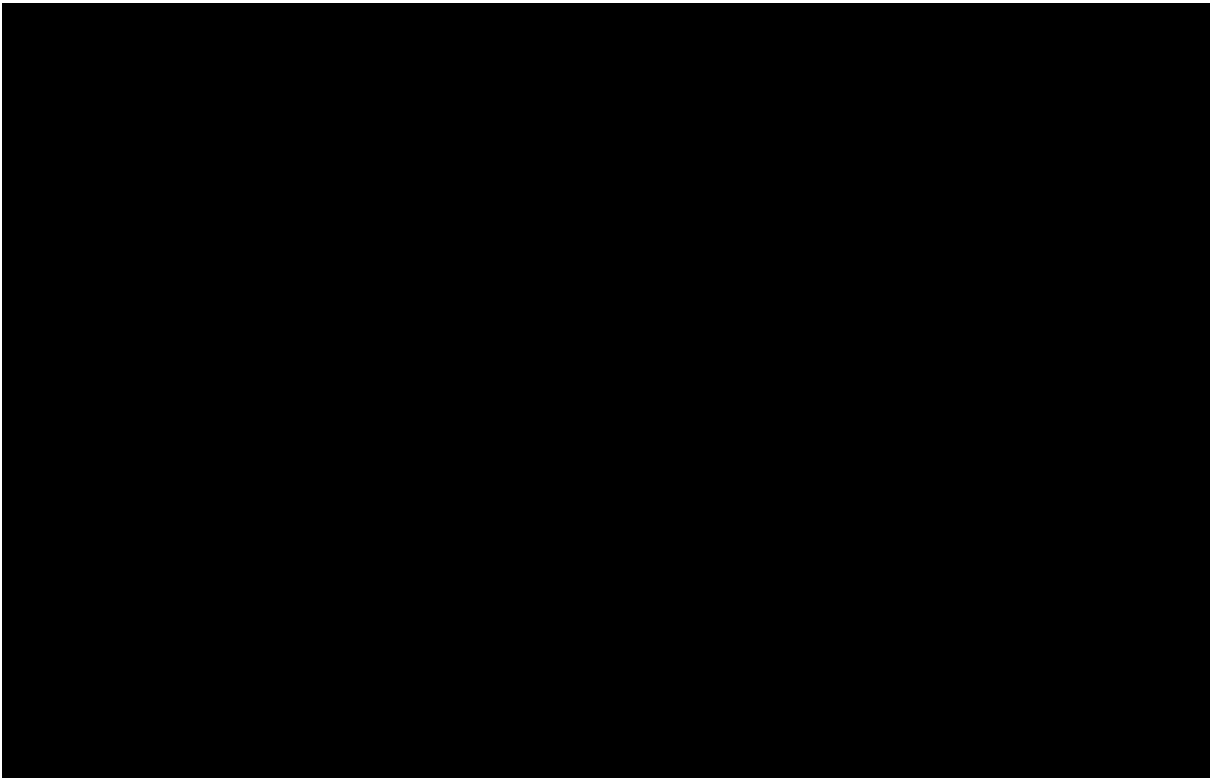
Managing Director

Nelson Bay Real Estate

Bach. Commerce (Newcastle University)

Dip. Business – Class 1 Licensed R/E Agent, Stock and Station Agent and Auctioneer.

NSW Justice of the Peace



PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL

General SRV Feedback statement from a Nelson Bay Resident.

Half the people who live in the Port Stephens headland are retirees, who want a quite sea side village atmosphere, and not visitors and their vehicles everywhere. Once the peninsular was a quite fishing village, but lost that atmosphere very quickly many years ago. Local residents would prefer all the visitors to politely get lost !!.

All the businesses on the other hand want it turned into another "Surfers Paradise" or "Gold Coast", to greatly increase their business profits.

All these extra people and vehicle traffic damages our roads more then half the locals who only drive to the shops, and have to suffer with all the traffic during the holiday periods.

I personally would not like to live in "Surfers Paradise" or the "Gold Coast" as I see them as a long way from paradise. High rise, noisy, too many people, violence, parking problems, vandalism, drunks & drugs...etc.

Why don't you charge visitors (not Shire residents) who come to Port Stephens peninsula \$2.00-\$5.00 per car, by installing a Toll Gate, and use that money to improve and upkeep the facilities that they are continually using including our roads. Not sure how one legally does this, but was done some time ago to gain entry into National Parks.

Our ex-Mayor does not help the condition of our roads with the continual flow of heavy vehicles carrying sand from his business [REDACTED] premises at [REDACTED].

My wife could drive her small Mazda 3 car to Newcastle and back for years and would not damage our road as much as any one of these many large truck and trailer combinations does in one week.

Then you have the [REDACTED] contaminating and stuffing up people's farms and possibly hurting/damaging our water catchment areas. At [REDACTED] there is a sign that states not to dump rubbish in the Catchment Area and [REDACTED] dumps poison just up the road.

There appears to be double standards in certain areas. Does it depend on who you are, or a government body which gets exemptions?. Why should the normal resident be paying for these Shire destroying costly problem operations, which should have nothing to do with our normal Councils duties.

I have worked most of my life and now as a self-funded retiree get zero assistance from the government, therefore costing them nothing. As retirees we only have our fixed income to rely on to survive. This income is currently going backwards losing money due to inflation and our locked-in fixed term deposits which are at extremely low interest rates.

Now our Council could basically almost double our rates over the next nine years if get several of these type of approvals. You must be kidding!! How can residents like us afford this extra expense?. In fact, how can most people and families afford this extremely large increase with ever increasing food prices and home loan interest rates.

Every cost is more expensive in NSW than any other State or Territory. Why?.

From the supplied documentation it states that Port Stephens is a rapidly growing area. So, there are more costs involved in infostructure than a development in an older established area. All these costs should be attached to the developers not the existing residents.

TO IPART

02/03/23

RE PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL RATE RISE 30% per YEAR OVER 3 YEARS.

I WAS A CONTRACTOR FOR PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL FOR MANY YEARS AND WITNESSED BAD MANAGEMENT DECISIONS ON PROJECTS WHICH RESULTED IN COST BLOWOUT 3 TIMES THE BUDGET, RATE PAYERS PAY THE COST OF BAD COUNCIL DECISIONS, THIS IS NOT A ONE OFF CASE, SAME RESULTS IN MANY JOBS.

THIS COUNCIL HAS A CULTURE DO MORE COURSES DURING WORK HRS GET PAID MORE BY DOING LESS AT RATE PAYERS EXPENSE

PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL MAYOR WAS A PART TIME JOB NOW IT IS PERMANENT JOB WITH ANEW CAR WITH ALL EXTRAS AND [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] AT NEWCASTLE AIRPORT WHICH NEWCASTLE & PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL MANAGE FOR \$50000 FOR HIMSELF THAT MONEY SHOULD GO TO COUNCIL, THESE ARE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THEY WASTE MONEY BECAUSE ITS NOT THEIRS SELF INDULGENCE IS A PROBLEM WITH MANAGEMENT.

PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL HAS A NICE PORTFOLIO OF REAL ESTATE WHICH RATE PAYERS HAVE PAID FOR IF THEY SOLD SOME OFF THAT WILL PAY FOR EXTRA PROJECTS INSTEAD OF MORE RATE RISES THROUGH BAD MANAGEMENT.

SHOULD PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL GET A RATE INCREASE NO AS NOTHING HAS CHANGED SINCE 2019 WHEN THEY LAST PUT IN FOR A RATE INCREASE MAYBE

PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL SHOULD BE PUT IN ADMINISTRATION AND ONLY THEN WE THE RATE PAYERS WILL HAVE MORE COST EFFECTIVE MANAGED COUNCIL.

REGARDS

KEN LATHAM

Author name: L. Hamilton

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I feel it is criminal and should not be permitted that a council can request a SRV in an area where land valuations have almost doubled in the last 3 years. An SRV added to increased rates added to increasing interest rates added to increased costs of living and inflationary pressures are untenable for the average resident and will have disastrous impacts on the local community. This council has a history of manipulating data to its own advantage whilst blatantly ignoring residents' wishes and public opinion. This process is also biased towards council who have the means to hire professionals to write and submit their applications whilst the average resident does not have access to these resources. The submission process is time consuming, intimidating and overwhelming for the average ratepayer.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Whilst the council may have established the need for and purpose of a different revenue path in their application, I as a local resident do not support their belief that a SRV is required, justified or the appropriate solution as council's reasoning is speculative and not based on cold hard facts. I accept that council like many others in the community, has experienced financial setbacks due to the effects of the Covid pandemic and natural disasters but these effects are temporary and not guaranteed to occur again unlike the detrimental effects a permanent rate increase would have on residents. Unlike the average resident, council still holds many assets that have the potential of returning significant financial gains over the coming years which would aid them in recovering from the impacts of the last few years. The average resident does not possess this earning potential thus the impact on residents of paying for the council's financial misadventures through permanent rate increases would be a much higher financial burden on residents than it is on council. It is very bad business practice to expect your customers/ residents to pay for your financial misadventures and does not lay the foundations for a sustainable future for either party.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Yes the council did canvas alternatives to the rate rise but as the council clearly outlines in its application these alternatives were taken off the table between round 1 and round 2 of community consultations so appear to have been a token gesture on council's behalf. When residents were asked to vote in round 2 of the community engagement process the only 2 options presented were a choice between 2 different levels of rate increases. Residents were effectively forced to vote for some form of rate rise despite residents indicating in round 1 of community engagement that they preferred to take a cut in services. This council has a history of manipulating data and processes to their advantage and blatantly ignoring the majority of residents' wishes in their decision making. This can be seen in the attached screenshot 1 and 2 where council has repeatedly ignored a majority of residents' disapproval, (95% against in one case), to approve height increases on planned developments which exceed the allowed height limits. In its IPART application council liberally uses the term "strong" support for the actions it has taken but this is not backed up by any actual figures on what this "strong" support actually equates to?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes council did communicate this information but there was a lot of figures involved which I suspect the majority of residents don't fully understand. You only have to look at discussions about rate issues on our local Facebook groups to evidence that a lot of residents still don't have a full understanding of how rates are actually calculated. As mentioned in my previous response this council excels at manipulating facts and figures to their advantage.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes I believe council has generated appropriate community awareness in phase 1 and 2 of their consultation process but not so much in phase 3 involving residents submitting their unbiased and unmanipulated views to IPART.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

As I have mentioned in a previous response I believe council has been manipulative in their response to phase 1 of the community consultation. In phase 2 of the consultation we were asked to vote on only 2 options which both involved a rate rise. We were not given the choice of voting for no rate rise and alternative measures, such as a cut to services or a cut to council employee wages, being implemented to achieve financial stability.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I disagree with council that their proposed SRV is reasonable. In a time where families and individuals are struggling with the financial burden of increased inflation including increased energy and grocery prices it is not reasonable to expect residents to take on the SRV as an additional financial burden. On top of the SRV land values in Port Stephens have approximately doubled

in the last 3 years meaning residents are already facing a massive increase on their rates due to the Covid pandemic causing an over inflated boom in the property market which the majority of residents did not benefit from but will now pay for over the next 3 years!

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. I ask you how can the General Manager of Port Stephens Council who earns a salary of approximately ██████████ p.a. truly understand the community's capacity and willingness to pay? An individual on this income can not fully appreciate what it is like to slog your guts out for a minimum wage only to be continuously faced with the increased financial pressures of inflation, rising energy prices, rising fuel prices, rising grocery prices, rising interest rates rising property prices and rates and then on top of that be asked to stump up extra money for a SRV. We already have a growing homelessness problem in Port Stephens and I fear the detrimental effects of an SRV on top of all these other increases is only going to force more people onto the streets. Something our General Manager will never have to worry about on that wage. Smacks of hypocrisy!

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

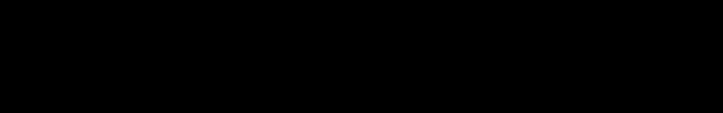
Whilst I acknowledge council has a hardship policy in place I wonder how well this policy will hold up if the SRV is approved as there will be a lot more residents requiring hardship assistance. I hope this will be financially sustainable for council? Would it not be better practice to not push vulnerable ratepayers into hardship by not requesting an unreasonable SRV in the first place? Not to mention the impact this will have on renters whose landlords will pass increased expenses down to them and who are not eligible for the hardship policy.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Whilst I commend council on the cost containment measures they have already implemented I have some further suggestions for cost containment:- 1) Slash the General Manager's and other executive staff's salary to more realistic levels in line with residents wages. 2) Don't allow the Mayor to use ratepayers money to buy a top of the line, customised 4WD as his mayoral vehicle. 3) Slash unnecessary spending on free community activities such as entertainment and zumba in the park. Whilst these are nice to have, they are accessed by a minority and it would be much more useful for residents to still have money in their pocket to pay all their bills rather than paying it out to pay for unnecessary services funded by a SRV.



Subject: Opposition to Port Stephens Council Ipart Submission re: Proposed Rate rise

Dear Ipart,

Please find below reasons for my **objection** to a proposed rate rise as lodged for consideration by Port Stephens Council.

Firstly and most importantly...any rate increase to my personal rate calculation will cause me financial hardship.

I cannot increase my income to cover a proposed 31.29% increase on rate base which far exceeds any cash interest rates rise or personal income raise.

It will also add to inflationary pressures.

My land value has increased by 25% through market forces not under my control so Council would already be getting a modest increase from my rates without any supplemental rate increase.

And I am not alone....I think Ipart understands that most of the Port Stephens area land values have significantly increased over the last 3 years due to market demand during the pandemic.

And although the pandemic cut streams of income for many councils, I first handedly witnessed no slowing of Council spend and many major projects and mayoral indulgences with no ROI projected or expected, commenced and completed during this time.

If I were judgemental I would say this was fiscally irresponsible.

I have no confidence any increase of income to Council would be expended responsibly and as promised with community.

I ask IPart to **reject** the submission by Port Stephens Council based on my objections above.

Kind Regards

Nicole Austin

Shoal Bay NSW 2315

Author name: P. Butson

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

From: peter_butson Sent: Monday, 27 February 2023 10:12 PM To: Edward Jenkins Subject: Port Stephens Council Rate Rise Objection Dear Edward, I wish to object to the latest attempt by Port Stephens Council to raise the rates on my home again. The last time this happened (last year) we were presented with a fait accompli choice of an immediate 30% increase or three increases of about 15% over three years. Fortunately they were only able to get a more modest increase but this still pushed my annual rates to over \$2300 pa. To add insult to injury we just received our new land valuation so I fear having to pay close to \$3000 pa. As a self funded retiree I find this level of rates exorbitant and scratch my head to see what I get for the money. Its the largest bill i receive each year, larger than all my insurances combined or the aggregate of my utility bills and frankly I see very little value for my money. Honestly we get a reasonable garbage service but local road maintenance is appalling and the maintenance of local parks and green spaces is nothing to write home about. From what I have seen the local council is building a reputation for abortive wasteful projects like the unused Koala underpass on Port Stephens Drive (Koalas climb trees and avoid tunnel I think,) and the abortive dining booths erected at Shoal Bay which had to be removed within weeks of completion. The proposed rate rise will simply exacerbate the drain of middle class wage earners and small business owners from the area currently occurring from rising interest rates with the properties being taken up by investors as short term Holliday rentals. Certainly I cant see me being able to continue to afford living in Salamander Bay or in fact anywhere in Port Stephens. Yours Sincerely Peter Butson [REDACTED] Sent from my iPad

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Application Type

Special Variation

Special Variations Criteria

Criterion 1 in the SV Guidelines is:

The need for, and purpose of, a different revenue path for the council's General Fund (as requested through the special variation) is clearly articulated and identified in the council's IP&R documents, in particular its Delivery Program, Long Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan where appropriate. In establishing need for the special variation, the relevant IP&R documents should canvass alternatives to the rate rise. In demonstrating this need councils must indicate the financial impact in their Long Term Financial Plan applying the following two scenarios:

- Baseline scenario – General Fund revenue and expenditure forecasts which reflect the business-as-usual model, and exclude the special variation, and
- Special variation scenario – the result of implementing the special variation in full is shown and reflected in the General Fund revenue forecast with the additional expenditure levels intended to be funded by the special variation.

The IP&R documents and the council's application should provide evidence to establish this criterion.

This could include evidence of community

10 need/desire for service levels/projects and limited

...resources for services, roads, projects and other council resourcing alternatives.

Evidence could also include the analysis of the council's financial sustainability conducted by Government agencies.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

NO, Port Stephens Council has not established a need for a RSV rate rise, The council has made this application under false pretence and have not supplied a full income statement for years 2023-2024-2025 and state that the 9.5% srv is for a forecast long term financial plan, but has not supplied a budget or a costing for the plane and has NOT told the rate payers or IPART and the businesses of Port Stephens shire. The council has NOT made it clear to the rate payers if the SRV includes the 4.4% base rate rise in the the proposed 9.5% SRV, or if

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The Port Stephens Council have not told of alternative income, the NSW state government and the federal government give Port Stephens council large grants, such as \$2.3 million for sports grounds, \$3.3million for a sports complex at Tomaree Sports field, \$845,000 for a Koala Management plan, \$251,105 to fix pot holes, plus \$1,333,225 million to repair local roads and lots more

Criterion 2 in the SV Guidelines is:

Evidence that the community is aware of the need for and extent of a rate rise. The Delivery Program and Long Term Financial Plan should clearly set out the extent of the General Fund rate rise under the special variation. In particular, councils need to communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms, and the total increase in dollar terms for the average

the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer, by rating category. Council should include an overview of its ongoing efficiency measures and briefly discuss its progress against these measures, in its explanation of the need for the proposed SV. The council's community engagement strategy for the special variation must demonstrate an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness and input occur. The IPART fact sheet includes guidance to councils on the community awareness and engagement criterion for special variations.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

NO, The Port Stephens Council dose not seem to have people working at the council to be able to communicate with the public or calculate in terms of percentage of the proposed special variation and what part of the general rates would the SRV apply to, There has been NO calculation on a dollar term of what it would cost a rate payer, or for a rate payer to cost out what the SRV would cost them, This means a lot to a landlord how would have notify there tenants of a increase pending on the council rate rise

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

NO, On the 14th September 2022 Port Stephens Council endorsed the exhibition of its draft for a plane for a rate rise. the community could attend a drop in session, but the first sessions was held on Tuesday 27 Sep 2022 a 5pm in a [park]at riverside park , Raymond terrace , the second on Wednesday 29 Sep 2022 at Boyd Oval park , Medowie 5 Pm ,Third , Saturday 1 st Oct 5Pm Apex park Nelson Bay , Forth Tuesday4 Oct 3Pm to 4 Pm Port Stephens visitor information , Five , Tuesday 4 Oct, 4.30

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Port Stephens Council has not taken any action on any response from the feedback from the rate payers, The Councilors do not return phone calls or emails. The council have stopped council reports in the Port Stephens news papers, The council has not given a full and truthfully response on the special variation.

Criterion 3 in the SV Guidelines is:

The impact on affected ratepayers must be reasonable, having regard to both the current rate levels, existing ratepayer base and the proposed purpose of the variation. The Delivery Program and Long Term Financial Plan should:

- clearly show the impact of any rate rises upon the community
- demonstrate the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay rates, and
- establish that the proposed rate increases are affordable having regard to the community's capacity to pay.

In assessing the impact, IPART may also consider:

- Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) data for the council area: and
- Whether and to what extent a council has decided not to apply the full percentage increases available to it in one or more previous

years under section 511 of the Local Government Act.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Most of Port Stephen shire people are working families with mortgages and have to travel out side of the area , there are a lot of pensioners and the pension has not gone up to cover more costs , a lot of pensioners go with out food now , even some school children go to school lunch, The council would do well with out the special variation rate rise

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The people of Port Stephens Shire do NOT want a special variation rate rise . Port Stephens Council intend to rise council rates three times this year 2023 with the peg rate rise of 4.4% ,Valuer Generals valuations of land in Port Stephens Shire on the 1 st July 2023, the land valuer has gone up in Port Stephens from 20% to 500% in new estates in Medowie , Raymond Terrace , karuah, were new housing estates are built are built on farm land, The 3rd rate rise in Port Stephens Shire is that the council are introducing green waste bins on the 1st July

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

yes , The council tells the people they can pay off there rates, but in the long run the Council can take there property and sell it off



Criterion 4 in the SV Guidelines is:

The relevant IP&R documents must be exhibited (where required), approved and adopted by the council before the council applies to IPART for a special variation to its general income. It is expected that councils will hold an extraordinary meeting if required to adopt the relevant IP&R documents before the deadline for special variation applications.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

yes , Councilors voted ,



Criterion 5 in the SV Guidelines is:

The IP&R documents or the council's application must explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period.

Councils should present their productivity improvements and cost containment strategies in the context of ongoing efficiency measures, and indicate if the estimated financial impact of the ongoing efficiency measures has been incorporated in the

council's Long Term Financial Plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Port Stephens Council can not explain why it needs to obtain a special rate variation truthfully , Port Stephens Council has a large amount of commercial properties, Port Stephens Council owns 50% of Newcastle Air Port and receives income , The State and federal governments give large grants to the area ,What ever containment strategies the council had in the past do not apply now as every thing has changed since the covert in the past two years .

Other Comments and Attachments

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Port Stephens Council has made a false application for a Special Rate Variation of 9.5% over 3 years, it has not explained to the the rate payers of what the 9.5% rate is for, the neg rate on the vast management. They have told the people what its for , The Council have not given a true costing of the application for the special rate variation or of any projects, the Council on Sep 14, 2022 proposal for 10.5% per year for 3 years and the was at times where rate payers could not Stephens Council have not told the rate

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Maximum 2000 characters (600 remaining)

I Peter Cooper make this submission agents a Special Rate Variation of 9.5% of Port Stephens Council on the conditions that Port Stephen Council will have [3] three rate risers without the SRV. The first, The GEG rate rise was 2.5% , BUT was increased to 4.4% , [2] second , Valuer General's valuation will come out 1/7/2023 and will increase the value of land and the pegged land rates , [3] third Port Stephens Council are introducing GREEN bin waste and will increase the waste bates This council has not been upfront with the ratepayers and tried to hide concitations times and dates, and have them at times were people can not attend/The council has wasted millions of dollars dead end projects, The council has not told the people of Port Stephens the amount of grants that they received from State and Federal governments to fix roads, potholes, sporting complexes , Port Stephens Shire has about 70% of bush land , farms and sand dunes were there is no roads and there for les roads than most other councils.Port Stephens Council owns half of one of the largests a county eara Air Port's in Australia , Newcastle AirPort and receives large amounts of revenue from , also at Newcastle Airport there is a major Air Force base which has over 3000 people working there which brings millions of dollars each year to Port Stephens Shire , from workers and Governments,Port Stephens Council has not tolled the people of Port Stephens of a propper Budget and forwoud projets . Port Stephens Council has over 550 people wowing for them plus contractors , Port Stephens Council Management and councillors need to work with in there budgets the same as all other people.

To all councilors, managers and staff of Port Stephens council. It is a shame that the stand-in acting manager [Tim Crosdale] for Port Stephens council has him self in a position between the councilors and the rate payers . A lot of the rate payers are doing it tough at present, with pensioners trying to live on around \$400 a week , families having to trim there food bills, clothing , schooling , and with so many people getting sick with covid and the flu, gust take your self along to the out patients of any hospital and have a look at how hard people are doing with life , It is the wrong time to even think of raising the land rates. The council has approximately 500 employees plus contractors working for the council , it's time for the council to be more efficient and stops making mistakes and wasting money and to sell of unprofitable assets , The previous council borrowed a large amount of money after they could not obtain the 7.5% rate rise through greed and bad management. like spending \$6.3 million on a white elephant club house at medowie, Smart parking at nelsons bay was a waste of money and pushed people away from the area , pulling down the car park at nelsons bay was a waste of money that could have been sold off as is. The compound at the back of the council chambers raymond terrace used for the use of storing council trucks should have been built in a industrial area .The rubber bollards that was put in car parks in Williams st Raymond Terrace what fell apart in a short time and had to be taken out ,a waste of money. A NEW timber stand being built on Whilliom st at the pedestrian crossing is a sample of waste of money. This stand is a safety hazard to all pedestrians and mainly disabled people , people driving vehicles along this road have not got a clear vision of people stepping on to the pedestrian crossing , if someone gets hit by a car at this crossing the insurance companies will have field day claiming compensation from the council. The councilors and management put up [5] five different rate increase options from 26% to 45% to just confuse all , IPART will not be impressed and have been informed of the intent to raise the land rates. This council ,Port Stephens, needs to be more efficient and cost effective. Managers can be sacked and replaced. The council does not need councilors to operate and can be laid off , maybe that's one way to save money. Central Coast council went down the wrong path and administrators were put in to manage the council. [REDACTED] should not be making these decisions to raise the land rates of Port Stephens Shire. I just hope you get the message and wait until the Valuer General's do their valuations next year then you have something to work on as land values have gone up.

TO The MAYOR and ALL the COUNCILORS OF PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL.

The Council has decided to introduce green bins for green waste , by taken out the green waste out of the red bins will cause a lot of problems to the breaking down the solids that placed in the red bin's, when green waste is mixed with red bin waste it starts the fermentation all most start away and the solids brakes down in much shorter time, in some cases without this fermentation, it will take 50 to 80 years years for the rubbish that is placed in the red bins to break down,it is not common sense, Central Coast Council have green bins and the people hate them.and most of the home owners do not use them, Port Stephens shire has one of the best waste systems where the green go in to the red bin to brake down the solids , and if a rate payer has extra green wast of shrubs and threes they can take it to the dump them selves on a green wast date and time,. Modern super markets have change in the past two years with cutting out butchers and bakeries and going for prepacked meat and frozen cakes from from the bakery , even the fruit and veg are prepacked,All the packaging in the meat section is of a plastic tray and then a plastic film to seal the meat, all this go's in the red bin , and we have not started, SHOPPING BAGS , Coles supermarkets and WOOLWORTHS, sell over 1 billion bags a year , these will all go into land fill though red or yellow bins , you must have something to start the fermentation such green waste or other wise the council will have to use hard CHEMICALS , this would be the worst scenario . Times have changed since the green were introduced years ago, lawn mowers are battery powered and they even mulch grass ,... By introducing green bins you are about 10 years out of date, and this will put the waste management rates UP, this will mean there will be three rate risers in six months. I gust hope some of the councilors think hard about this as things are changing with every thing being a throwaway and most of it go's into the RED bins, YOU NEED THE GREEN WASTE IN THE RED BINS not chemicals,, My Name is Peter Cooper [REDACTED]



pedestrian obstruction Raymond Terrace n.s.w

Peter Cooper
Draft

Sun, Aug 21, 2022 at 11:58



It should not have come to this in contacting you, but some people just do not look at the safety of pedestrian and law and rules of n.s.w, as well as wasting rate payers and taxpayers money. Port Stephens Council are constructing a diocese, or platforms at the pedestrian crossing in the main shopping street, William street, of Raymond Terrace n.s.w 2324. The n.s.w road rules and law a pedestrian crossing is that there is to be NO obstruction within 10m on the approach and 3m on the exist, in some cases it is 20m on the approach and 10 on the exit, In any case there must be clear vision available for the pedestrian and the drivers of a vehicle. Port Stephens Council are constructing 4 platforms 2 on each side of the road, butting up to the side of the pedestrian jutting out from the kerb at least 5m and 5 m wide [a road starts at the kerb not the centre of the road] these platforms are built up off the ground on steel piers and will need safety rails at a minimum of 900mm high as people can fall off the platforms. There are steps and ramps to allow people to get on the platforms to stand and sit, this will stop any vision for vehicles and pedestrians. The pedestrian crossing is the main crossing between two shopping centres and people with disabilities, children aged people, and people that just don't look each way with their safety will be at risk. for any accident that occur between vehicles and pedestrians at this crossing. These platforms could have been built anywhere along William street but not butting up to a pedestrian crossing. Port Stephens Council are running without a general manager and is very hard to have any answers out of them and communications, I have sent a email to Port Stephens Councilors. the Mayor, and the acting manager on the 10th of august 2022 of the pedestrian crossing platforms. This construction should be stopped, pulled down and removedyou may contact me Peter Cooper



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Chemmart

Compounding
Pharmacy

Mutual

The
Mutual
Bank

Talk to us....



**Raymond Terrace
Town Centre
Rehabilitation Works**



Raymond Terrace Town Centre Rehabilitation Works is a major project to improve the town centre and surrounding areas. The project includes the construction of a new pedestrian bridge, the renovation of the town centre, and the creation of new public spaces. The project is expected to be completed in 2025.

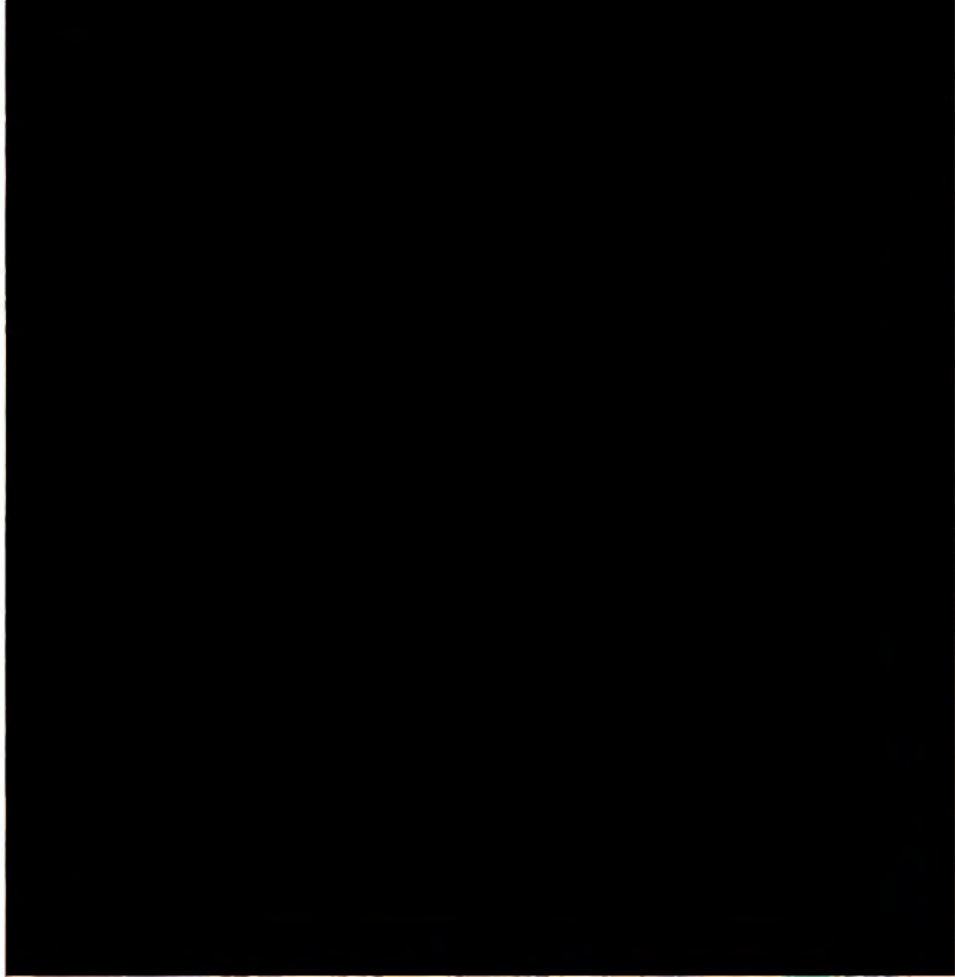
For more information, please visit www.raymondterrace.com.au or call 08 9447 1234.

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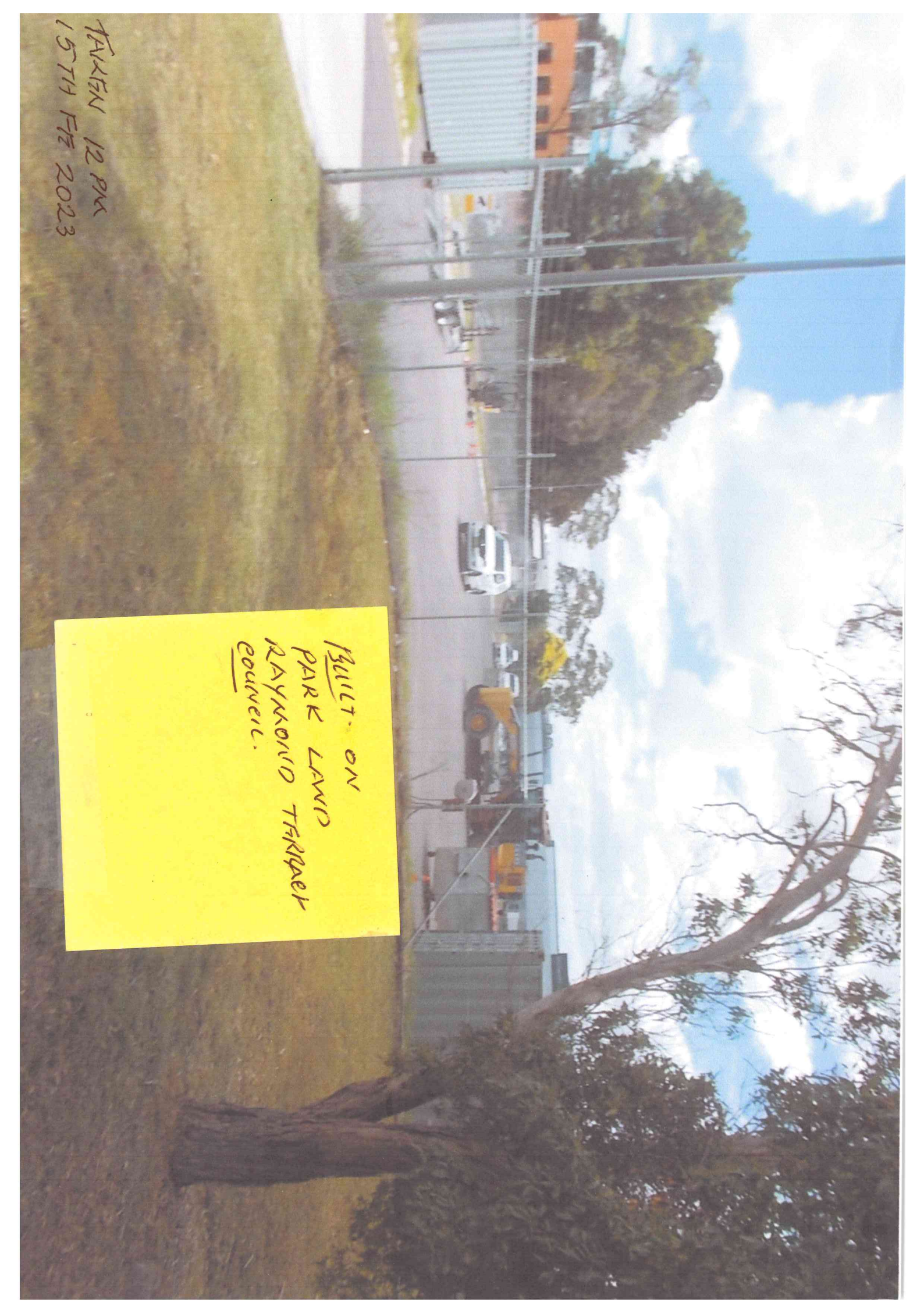
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COUNCIL.





Subject: Special Rate Rise

To Whom it may concern,

We write this email as concerned senior citizen's of Fingal Bay, (which falls under The Port Stephens LGA), in regard to the Special Rate Rise of 9.5% per year for 3 years.

This rate rise is ridiculous, with no real outline of its justification given, other than that it is needed for its ongoing sustainability. They have provided no plan to the general public to support this decision. To quote IPART in the recent local paper "IPART set its council rate peg for the 2023-24 financial year at 3.7 percent, well above the usual cap of about 2.5 percent".

Fingal Bay is often left off the Councils budget with regard to upkeep and improvement, compared to every other area. I.e. Raymond Terrace, Nelson Bay, Salamander etc. The only regular service that we really see at present is garbage collection. A lot of streets in Fingal Bay don't even have kerb and guttering and that often leads to flooding, road damage and parking issues in times of holiday crowds.

Has the Port Stephens Council looked into its processes to see where they can make reductions? Maybe we need a total restructure of the Councils systems and management. The increase certainly appears to be far to high given the status of the world economy.

As self funded retirees, we are living on a fixed income that is not increasing at the rate of 9.5% per year. The young families that live and work here, their wages are not going up by 9.5% each year. The investors (holiday rental owners) in the region have suffered income loss due to Covid. Their returns have not increased to 9.5% each year. Retail have suffered immensely, and certainly cant afford the increase either. These guys are working hard to get tourism back on track to get the economy back on track in our local areas.

As citizens of Fingal Bay we DO NOT support the Port Stephens Council decision to Increase the forecast rate rises.

Regards,



[REDACTED]

Subject: Objection; PSC SRV application

Good morning,

I wish to register my objection to the granting of a Special Rate Variation to Port Stephens Council now or at any time in the foreseeable future.

My objection stems from many aspects of my 23 years as a ratepayer in the Port Stephens shire and relates to my conclusions that this Council is dishonest, secretive and by no means transparent in its spending of ratepayers monies.

I believe PSC is a victim of its own poor management protocols and I also refer to the questionable appointment of the new General Manager from within Council ranks. This appointment did not occur openly and transparently and it would move ratepayers to suspiciously ask "what are they trying to hide".

I also refer to the wastage of some \$700,000 spent by Council on the installation of an al fresco dining area in the Shoal Bay shopping precinct that occurred without any input or consultation of the residents, shopkeepers or ratepayers. This construction was vastly excessive in cost and was ultimately removed and scrapped after only a few months in situ due to the inconvenience and disruption it caused to the area in which it was installed.

I further object to the SRV on behalf of the many pensioners in this shire (a guess would put this class of resident in the majority) who already are reeling under the burden of the existing rates levy and will have to deal with the increase already awarded by ipart. These residents are grappling with the increased cost of living caused by inflation and other world events and many other insidious reasons, corporate and commercial greed not being the least.

I have attached several documents that refer to the wastage of hundreds of thousands of taxpayers monies fighting a resident couple over a \$5000 privacy fence. PSC have repeatedly escalated their legal actions against these people racking up outrageous expenses and costs that they have poured into the coffers of a few select legal practitioners.

I refer to the unconscionable and devious methods PSC resorted to in a blatant effort to try and hoodwink the ratepayers of this shire into supporting their push for the SRV. Given a choice to put a gun to your head or jump off a cliff is not a choice anyone would consciously make but that was what PSC put to the ratepayers with their so-called SRV survey. Ratepayers were not given any opportunity to reject the SRV grab in this survey and reflects PSC's complete disdain and lack of respect of the ratepayers.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Fletcher.

[REDACTED]

Author name: R. West

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

From: robyn west Sent: Wednesday, 1 March 2023 11:10 AM To: Local Government Mailbox Subject: SRV PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL Hi, I STRONGLY OPPOSE the proposed rate increase. My rates are now \$2,114.31 for which I receive very little service. Our income for year 2021-2022 was \$6,140, as our money is in term deposits, at nearly zero returns. We are self-funded retirees in our 80s. The valuation of our land has increased from \$384,000 in 2019 to \$807,000 on 1-7-2022...that will be a massive increase for our rates this year 2023...surely that increase should be enough for the council, without a further SRV increase. There are many other elderly people like us, struggling financially, but do not use the internet, so cannot submit an objection, and most do not know about IPART, because our local paper has had limited delivery this year. This is a very badly run council, they have paid millions on court cases that should not have happened. The mayor Ryan Palmer recently bought himself a new SUV for \$80,000 with ratepayers' money, we drive a 2002 model car...I beg you, do not allow this INCREASE, the stress it is causing people is terrible. Robyn and Arthur WEST

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: S. Carruthers

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I have filled this submission out 3 times only to have it disappear for various reasons, 1 was through internet failure the second was through a power surge due to a storm and the third was again through an internet failure. This document should have had a SAVE ability for cases like this. instead of wiping the document clean. It was such a complex submission that that should have been mandatory. to auto save. I don't have the energy to redo this submission as it was like being back at school and having examinations again. I have lived at my current address for 44 years and have seen numerous councils and Councillors come and go, but this current council is by far the worst, even worse than the council that was dismissed and an administrator but in place. This council and the managers are so bad that I cannot find words to describe them, our arrogant mayor purchased a \$85000 car for himself when a more moderate car of half the value would suffice for his needs. The neglect of major assets like Corlette Beach erosion is while putting the public at risk is just one example, I have included photo's below of the entry to the beach from Conroy Park a disgrace and dangerous. Also a picture of a storm water outlet on the beach that has created enormous amounts of sand build up along the beach and killing acres of sea grass in the process. When I first moved to Corlette the beach was pristine with sea grasses full of marine life, now it is a desert. The approval for the [REDACTED] was given with a court ruling that the owners of the establishment be responsible for sand transfer and cost involved and recommended to be done annually. This has only been done once after the community complained about the state of the erosion on Sandy Point but the council canvassed the state government to fund it when it should have been the [REDACTED] just another council failing to do the correct thing. I could go on about the miss spent fund and how any to rectify SACK EM.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

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Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.











Author name: A. Donaldson

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I feel that this needs to be scrutinized more thoroughly. I am sceptical that this will be endorsed by anyone that would be trying to live on one income let alone from myself as a working couple.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

If I read correctly an extra 15million approx over 3 years is required by council. I feel that while roads contribute a significant cost that other revenue areas have not been thoroughly explored & thus the revenue path appears more a cost based approach rather than a business based approach.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

As above, and I would add that with current increasing costs that while having been through a council amalgamation some years ago a restructuring or further streamlining could be tabled.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I have seen more on social media re the proposed changes and not any publicity campaigns from council. I note that as a resident of more than 20 yrs I can confidently say this. The percentage increase was communicated but I had to read up on the plan to identify the actual fiscal cost in dollars.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

I do not believe so, there are a small number of major food outlets in the LGA covered by volunteer organizations when required funding / financial input from locals is required and Ive never seen council put a front foot forward here for community engagement. Other than a stand at the local library you would not know.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

None known

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

While most rate payers will be negatively impacted financially, as a school teacher married to a frontline worker this will be a significant cost to us personally in the face of rising interest rates and costs of living rises also. I thought we were in a reasonable financial position. Perhaps port Stephens is not the best residential address .

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I feel with social media that the mayors consideration of a ford ranger fully optioned as the best vehicle to support his needs in council was a misuse of position if Im to believe the social media network. Am I to trust further that he is making good decisions for the LGA?

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I dont feel that this was well developed, again alternate revenue areas from a tourism prone area could be better explored.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The productivity in past has mainly come from the sale of land and property assets that have been held long term and are not replaceable in the current financial time. This alternate Re venue is merely meeting operational costs. The focus seems to be shifting into making money through higher taxes not good business management

Author name: A. Lewis

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I believe that the Port Stephens Council proposed rate variation increase is excessive and will place an unacceptable financial impost on a large number residents. Many residents like myself are retired and on Aged Pensions. We are already feeling the pressure of increased cost of living and for many, the proposed massive increase in land rates could be the straw that breaks the camels back. A significant number of retirees like myself have resided in the Council precinct for a number of decades and have no control over increased land values but we do have some control over exorbitant and unreasonable Council rate increases. As retirees we have to live within our means and we expect our Council to do likewise. I strongly recommend that the Port Stephens Council proposed Rate Variation Increase be rejected.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Very limited information on Council's future planned expenditure. The Council has basically said that more money will result in improved facilities and services. What facilities and services? Empire building?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The only alternative canvassed is whether the rate variation will be introduced in 1 year or 3 years. No alternatives to a rate variation has been canvassed.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I haven't received any communication from Port Stephens Council which informs me either the percentage or dollar increase in my future land rate charges. A general calculator on the Council website indicates a close to 100% increase after 3 year. A \$2000+ increase.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Some meetings and some information in the local paper. Engagement methods appear to have been information dissemination and very limited attempts to gather rate payer opinions.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I am unaware of any Council action in response to community feedback. Council has appeared to just continually expound the same message from the beginning.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The proposed rate variation on top of the recently advised Land Valuation increase has come as a financial shock to say the least. For many, including myself, land values have virtually doubled.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I am not aware of any Council consideration of rate payers capacity and willingness to pay exorbitant land rates.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

As a rate payer, I have not been advised of any hardship plan that relates to me. As a part age pension recipient the additional \$2000+ will cause me substantial financial stress.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Any Council application exhibition has bypassed me. I am unable to comment on this aspect of the issue.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I am not aware of publically available information on any Council attempts to improve productivity or introduce cost containment strategies.

Author name: A. Murray

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

With the increase in Land valuation our rates will increase much more in percentage than the 30% the council are quoting. I object to the rate increase. I believe that paying the extra will be no benefit to us and council should reduce their salaries instead. As a pensioner any increase in rate premiums will effectively cause me massive budgeting and welfare concerns.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: A. Roehrs

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This council has been lazy in making applications for finding grants. They want the easy road of squeezing the constituents for an excessive rate rise. The mayor purchased a new vehicle costing some \$100k and not even from a local business. They have champagne tastes and I don't believe that the excessive rate rise is warranted. The rates will increase anyway as the land values have skyrocketed, as mentioned my valuation is now doubled.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No the council just keep saying that they need more money to complete extra projects and are focussed around Nelson bay

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The council has other options in funding grants

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The council put out a video to explain the rate rise and why. It was condescending. We were giving a survey. However, to move past question 1 you had to nominate either one of the two rate rises. You could not opt for not rise above the usual % rate. I feel that this would give false quantitative data, as it appears that you approve of one of the two rate rise choices. This would greatly alter the outcomes. Also, the land values have just come in this week and my land value has doubled. This on top on a rate rise, will be financially crippling.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Th meetings are not held in out of business hours, stopping working people from attending. The online survey is skewed in how it gathers the data, as you are not able to select no rate rise, only choice of two rate increases.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I had no reply from my submission in complaint regarding the unethical questions, apart from thank you for completing the survey.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

All we have been told is that, if you are having financial difficulties they have a seniors rebate. No good if you aren't a senior. Not everyone is coupled or have dual incomes. Im a mortgagee, single woman and moved to this area for the reasonable rates. Love at Karuah. Majority of revenue from council goes to support the wealthy suburbs in Nelson Bay. My land value has doubled in the 3 years since last valuation. That on top of a rate rise is criminal

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. There has been no consideration. They have only provided two options and both are very big, 30% ! That is well above any reasonable rise. We are currently heading into a financial abyss with interest rates escalating by the month. This rate rise is excessive.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Hardship support is only for a select group.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I wouldnt know. There has been a few things on social media and a condescending video about how we have to pay more, because everyone else does.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

From what I understand, if the rate rise does not go ahead, they will still be able to provide all current services as required by council. They may not be able to build new council sheds, or something along those lines. Or other big plans for the tourist hub in Nelson bay

Author name: b. elliott

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. The council has always maintained it has insufficient funds to conduct its business rather than living within its budget. The main issue for residents is the appalling state of the local road network. The State Government has provided the Council with additional funds just to repair the roads. The Council is top heavy with administrative staff and understaffed at the level of action.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I am aware of. But note ratepayers last week received their Notice of Valuation for their property. Mine increased by exactly 100% between 2019 and July 1 2022 versus a 60.357% increase between 2016 and 2019. Because land values increase every time Valuations occur the Council has an inbuilt mechanism for rate increase without having to request for a special rate variation. Additionally the Council's revenue base increases by an average of 3500 households every 4 years and this is predicted to continue.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

In part only. The proposed intended rate increase was communicated by an article in the local paper (Port Stephens Examiner) Feb 16 "Council applies for 31.3% special rate rise" with rate increasing by 9.5% each year for the next three years. I received no other notification nor did the Council indicate specifically what the increase was to be used for. The article quotes the General Manager " the key purpose of the SRV application is financial sustainability". No mention of efficiency, living within its means, doing what any other business would and looking at staffing levels etc.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

None that I am aware. The local paper article was my only way of finding out.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Not sure it took any. It would have expected almost universal objection as has happened when previously seeking unfair increases which fortunately were not approved .

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The proposed special variation does not take into account the increases in land valuations which will result in massive increases in the council rates to be paid by ratepayers. I documented above the increase in valuations for my last two valuations , viz 60% and most recently 100%.. Not only is the valuation increase unreasonable so too will be the increase in my council rates as a result without the additional 9.5% for the next three years as being requested by the council. The Council should be made to estimate the rates expected taking into account the revised land valuations.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The Council is considering offering an additional one off \$250 to pensioners and \$500 to non pensioners. Big deal. I anticipate with all the increases my Council rates will be \$200 per week. I am a pensioner and it is likely I will have to sell. Port Stephens has an above average incidence of retirees and over 70s. Past efforts to request special rate increases by this council indicate there is little capacity or willingness to give the council more money

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The Council recognises "the high cost of living may make it tough for many within Port Stephens community to take on more expenses. We have several existing hardship measures in place to help" The extra \$250 is not much help.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I assume so. It would be unprofessional if they have not

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

There has been no such response or if their has I have seen no evidence of it.

Author name: B. LOVEJOY

Date of submission: Friday, 24 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

WE HAVE LIVED IN FINGAL BAY FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS AND IT SEEMS WE ARE ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF PART STEPHENS SHIRE. COUNCIL HAVE NOT MADE ANY IMPROVEMENTS FOR AT LEAST THE LAST 5 YEARS. APART FROM CUTTING THE GRASS AND CLEANING THE PUBLIC TOILETS THE COMMUNITY HAS STOOD STILL. WE WERE PROMISED NEW PUBLIC TOILETS AND ADDITIONAL LANDSCAPING AROUND THE BEACH FRONT AND THE ROAD IN FRONT OF MY PROPERTY IS APPALLING. I CANNOT AFFORD THIS INCREASE AND THE COUNCIL MUST THINK WE ARE ALL FOOLS TO ACCEPT THE INCREASE WHEN THEY FAIL TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY. THE INCREASE IS A MONEY GRABBING EXERCISE AND EFFECTS RATE PAYERS FINANCIAL BOTTOM LINE.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

IN MY MIND COUNCIL HAS NOT MADE CLEAR THE REASON FOR THE SPECIAL RATE RISE

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

NOT TO MY KNOWLEDGE

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

NO COUNCIL DID NOT COMMUNICATE FULLY FOR THE PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE RISE

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

NO

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

VERY NEGATIVE RESPONSE FOR THE RATE RISE.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

WE ARE A RETIRED COUPLE AND ON A FIXED INCOME AND THIS INCREASE DOES AFFECT OUR OVERALL COST OF LIVING.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I THINK COUNCIL ASSUMES MOST RESIDENTS CAN WELL AFFORD THE INCREASE.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

THE PLAN DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH AS THERE IS ONLY SOME SMALL BENEFITS FOR THOSE ON A PENSION

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I ASSUME YES.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

NOT THAT I AM AWARE OF.

Author name: B. Lowe

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

In the Port Stephens News of the Area published 23/2/23 there was an feature on the growing homelessness in Raymond Terrace. This will only get worse if Council are allowed to increase our rates by 31.3%. Landlords will raise rents to cover this increase and struggling young couples will lose their homes. We are on the brink of a recession. The cost of food, fuel, energy etc. is increasing every day. We are pensioners and are struggling to cope financially. What do the Council think they are doing? It has never been fully explained what they intend to do with this money. Many people we have spoken to do not even know about this intended increase. We are TOTALLY against this increase. If council have money problems why was the Lord Mayor allowed to spend such a substantial amount on the Mayoral car? We also know that Council have various assets that could be sold to finance whatever it is they want to do. It is a big NO from us.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: B. Rudel

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Council has been very selective as to what they make publicly known. I feel they would be aware of the backlash a massive 30% increase would make and thus have chosen not to ensure residents are educated. Dirty deceitful tactics. Again I stress I can understand that an increase will be due as the cost of operating has gone up but 30% over 3 years is ridiculous especially when my income will not reflect this. Not to mention I have just received my land assessment which has significantly increased meaning my rates will already be directly increased as a result

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No I have not received anything to date that could justify such an increase

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

They have not advised me if they have, and I dont believe that they have

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I have not received anything to indicate to me the costs being increased unfortunately I have found out through social media

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Again lack of communication/ No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I have not scene any communication from the council about the potential increase nor a response to the community about their concerns and impact of said increase

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Increasing rates by 30% over 3 years is too much, especially when we have had to recover from the loss of income during covid and not to mention the impact from increases to electricity, personally my bill has increased by 40% alone. Plus food, I understand the need for an increase however this is too much for a standard household. Bare in mind my income has not had a single increase to help compensate for all these price rises

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I dont feel the council has done anything proactively to truly seek any information about the impact of a rate rise, I have not heard of any fellow residents being contacted personally to speak about their personal situation, I dont recall receiving anything asking if I would like to comment on the rate rise as I dknt believ I received anything about the rate rise it all feels underhanded

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I cant comment as I am unaware of the plan. I can also assure you that I dont feel that the council would make the ability to address hardship well known

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I would not know

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I can not comment as I am not aware

Author name: C. ALLCHIN

Date of submission: Thursday, 23 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
We will not pay the rate rise this will and is a abuse of our rights

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Ignored by all rate payers

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I think it is evident

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

None taken. I will not be paying

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

None given

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

None given

Author name: C. Arnott

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
I do not support a rate increase in the current economic environment.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Yes but I do not support a rate increase in the current economic environment.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not sufficiently.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes but I do not support a rate increase in the current economic environment.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes but I do not support a rate increase in the current economic environment.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council should have put more effort into identifying alternatives to raising rates.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I don't think the rate increase is reasonable given the economic difficulties being faced by people in the community.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I think that inflation has increased significantly since the work was undertaken on this proposal and that people will have less capacity to pay now.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I don't think Council's hardship provisions are sufficient.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes but I do not support a rate increase in the current economic environment.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I think the Council could have done more to address expenditure and increase non-rate revenue without needing to resort to a rate increase. An example is a millions of dollars in the last couple of months for roadworks in grant funding.

Author name: C. Luks

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
I really feel very strongly opposed to the Mayor buying a \$86,000 inappropriate vehicle.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

There has not been any communication. There was communication several years ago which we voted against. Since then, the Mayor has seen fit to purchase an \$86,000 inappropriate vehicle for his use.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Port Stephens Council area is full of pensioners who are unable to afford increases of rates.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.
I dont think the Council has any idea of the community's ability to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

What plan? Were unaware of this increase and as I said earlier, they tried several years ago and we voted against it.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I have no idea if this has been displayed as weve been away.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: C. Mahoney

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

With the recent land valuation properties in this region, have almost doubled so therefore council will be reaping the benefits from this increase. So therefore with this extra revenue it should be able to operate quite well. It just needs to stop spending rate payers money on its botched development applications, unnecessary law suits and its massive contribution to the Koala sanctuary.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

None

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The rate increase is excessive and will have a major impact on the number of aged pensioners living in the region also many of the families already struggling with mortgage rate increases

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't think they have given much thought to the impact of the increase in rates

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

no

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

The first time I read about it was in local paper dated February 16th not much notice at all

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council is doing nothing extra that I can see



Darrin Jones



13 February 2023

Dear IPart

I am writing you this letter to you to oppose the SRV sought after by Port Stephens Council (PSC), on behalf of myself and many other workers on low incomes who live in the Port Stephens, Local Government Area.

PSC are saying that rate payers can afford this massive rate hike, this is simply not true. How can they claim to know this? I have not been surveyed nor has anyone I know! PSC seem to hold public meetings at times when working people are unable to attend as they are at work (VERY UNDER HANDED).

PSC claim they have suffered financial loss due to the Pandemic, I'm sure they have, but haven't we all suffered? No one suffers more than low paid working people. We are still playing catch up!

PSC say they need to balance their books, I'm sure they have teams of people better qualified than me crunching their numbers and giving you good reason why they need the money more than us rate payers, they have other ways of raising revenue. For example: Government grants, properties, land, rented venues. Parking meters, land rates etc and also a large regional airport which they get rent on, not too many other councils have this luxury. All we have is one low paying job. When do we get a chance to balance our books? Financially I was better off 20 years ago, and I am still in the same trade.

What is the point of having a council with balanced books, if many living in that LGA are financially stressed, or on the edge of financial collapse, how is that fair?

Being trade qualified as a mechanic and being on the grand hourly rate of \$24.80, I'm beginning to question why I get up each morning to try and help this great nation of ours ticking over. Many of my workmates are saying they same thing, with fuel stations, water boards, power companies, banks, gas companies, insurance companies, health funds, car regos, council rates, not to mention supermarkets and the cost of living. A lot of the guys I work with have cut non essentials, eg: home and health insurances, family holidays and doctor visits, just to try and budget we don't get to keep none of our pay packet.

PSC have a history of wasting rate payers money, being arrogant about failed ridiculous legal battles, poor financial decisions, for example the Wetlands disaster and so many more. The recent approval for an overpriced vehicle for the Mayor is just rubbing rate payers noses in it. I could only dream of owning a vehicle like this. It once again is a waste of rate payers money. Its not a good look for a Council that wants more money off their rate payers.

Also some of the statements from some of the Councillors, after the last SRV failed to get through, were not what we would expect from so called professional people. They just seem to know how to get rate payers offside.

I apologise for this letter being in the negative, I'm simply outlining the position a lot of us workers in PSC LGA are in, our last lot of council rates went up \$100 per year, that is the cost of a visit to the Doctors for us. It may not be much for some, but it's a lot of money to us. PSC want 30% of they next 3 years, sorry but we don't have that sort of money.

In summary, I'm sure you at IPART probably have a revolving door of councils with a list of demands that they want you to consider. Well I'll give you a list of demands low paid workers in PSC LGA want. We want at \$90,000 4WD, with someone else to pay for it along with the servicing and on road cost. We want a 30% pay increase over 3 years, we want a guaranteed 2.5% increase every year, regardless of our work performance or regardless of world financial circumstances or pandemics. We want PSC to stop wasting the money for rates they already receive. We want ourm lives and holidays back, we want our moment in the sun!

I thank you for reading my letter. Please feel free to contact me.



Darrin Jones



Author name: d. lancaster

Date of submission: Friday, 17 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This is a really bad idea. Council needs to focus on the basics. I do not want or need extra fancy stuff. I live in "old" fern bay. We don't even have gutters or pavement in my street. And you want me to subsidise street improves for Nelson Bay, and dogs that listen to children read. [REDACTED]. Just to clarify, I strongly object to any rate rise.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not adequately.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not clearly

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. Even this form was ridiculously hard to find

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They ignore the people's opinions. Remember, they tried this [REDACTED] a couple of years ago. Public gave a resounding NO.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

People are already struggling. This will break people.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

As above. They are not adequately considering hardship

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Rubbish plan. Who qualifies for the 250 dollars? 250 dollars does not cover it. Part payments, deferred payments are STILL PAYMENTS. This reflects the lack of diversity on our council . Too many rich, white folk.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I have not seen anything in my community. Council is being very sneaky, doing it quite hidden online.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

No.



Subject: Port Stephens Council SRV submission

My wife and I have lived in the same street, in Salamander Bay, for nearly **50 years**. We have raised our children here and we have now been in retirement for the past **22 years as PENSIONERS**.

We live at the western stretch of Foreshore Drive, which is structurally and aesthetically different to the eastern end e.g. Road surface, Speed Humps (8), Gutters, Concrete Footpaths and Driveways

We petitioned for 2 Speed Humps, years ago, and were rejected, also years ago we were promised a concrete path along the foreshore (still waiting), we have no Concrete Footpaths, we have a damaged concrete gutter only on one side of the road. The only time we see the Council workers is when they come to patch and repatch the ever-growing number of potholes. The Council has discontinued stocking Sandbags which residents use to maintain the ongoing damage to the foreshore. **After living here for 50 years we cannot imagine Council spending any of their windfall from a Rate increase on our section of Foreshore Drive.** The majority of residents in Foreshore Drive are elderly retirees.

The Council has a **Track record of losing enormous amounts of money in Court cases and Bad Investments.**

We do not trust this Council to handle the exorbitant amount of money that would be generated by their proposed SRV.

Over the years we have witnessed money wasted on many projects because of the Council's incompetence in Design and/or Construction.

A recent example was the demolition of the well patronised overhead pedestrian walkway above Victoria Pde. The design and construction were not fit for purpose.

The Council's latest show of incompetence is a newly constructed ROUNDABOUT on PORT STEPHENS DRIVE at TAYLORS BEACH. This road has 80 km/h speed limit. A Truck with attached Dog, and all other vehicles have to slow down when navigating around the **very narrow** Roundabout which is not fit for purpose.

The latest council's controversy is their proposed new **Toilet Block** for Little Beach which they estimate will **cost \$840,000!!!** Does it have Air Conditioning, lounge suites, hot and cold water etc., ???Here again the Council is ignoring the ratepayers' comments.

The Council has described different forms of financial assistance available to financial struggling ratepayers. At two of their Forum meetings with ratepayers, about various SRV Scenario proposals, I made the comment that "**not one of your proposals has made provision for increased land values**", and it was suggested by a Council executive, at one meeting, that "**you may need to reverse mortgage your home**" to meet your financial obligation.

Why do we have inexperienced and arrogant people in the Council who do not like listening to the public's criticism or heeding their advice?

It appears that the Council is determined to create their own **HUGE BANK ACCOUNT**, at the expense of the RATEPAYERS, and to look after the Fat Cats.

The ratepayers will suffer in that their reduce deposits have lost the earning of Bank interest.

Now, we know the AGENT GERERAL's land valuations for the year 2023 for Council to determine the proposed applicable RATES.

Council has so far refused my request to reveal the value of my new RATES.

It is obvious to me why they will not tell me the new Rate value, because **I WOULD USE IT IN THIS LETTER TO THEIR DETRIMENT.**

My land valuation [REDACTED] for Year 2019: \$1,730,000
for Year 2023: \$3,410,000

This is an increase of 97.1% in Land Valuation.

There was **no consideration, by Council, for any amount to be included for increased land values or shown in their calculations** of the SRV options that they proposed at their various FORUMS and consequently the **ratepayers were misled and kept in the dark.**

We suggest that in this instance you should refuse approval of this ridiculous SRV Proposal.

The previously IPART approved 4.4% Rate peg should be implemented without further discussion.

We thank you for giving us the opportunity to express our concerns.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Author name: D. Sait

Date of submission: Saturday, 11 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The council has been wasting our existing rates, increasing them without showing productivity, and numerous examples of largess means we are putting good money after bad

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, the council has not established the need for a different revenue path, to date, savings could easily be established that haven't been factored including the mayor spending \$75k on a vehicle for himself, which could easily have been a \$30k to achieve the same outcome.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I do not believe so, the towns surrounding the council are used primarily by tourists. It would be easy to impose a levy on short term accommodation rather than Jack up rates for locals.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I haven't seen either of those in direct communication, I found out via a Facebook group

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Absolutely not, as above, I found out via a Facebook forum

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Non-existent

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The local community are mostly elderly, with the already astronomical increase in the cost of living, this is a further nail in the coffin.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I would suggest the number of people on the local forums and submissions you're likely to receive will speak for itself

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

We ultimately have to pay, extensions are hardly likely to help overall

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I am unaware, no communication

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

N/A

Author name: D. Schaefer

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

It is of my opinion the Council has been too quick to look at increasing revenue versus addressing prudent financial management within. There is no evidence of an appetite for Council to achieve any savings.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

The Council has failed to demonstrate any ability to manage within existing budget but rather is requesting a substantial SV rate rise to repair the budget. No new works or initiatives are indicated. No areas of savings have been identified and communicated to rate payers.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Council did survey rate payers on different SVs. There was never an option to save money. The survey was ultimately skewed towards approval for greater spending. In discussing the submitted SV rate rise Council has only compared the SV to the Base rate increase of 4.4% to 2024 and then 2.5% increase onwards. Council has advised that under the Base Rate Scenario there will be substantial increase in debt if Council was to continue to provide existing services. No discussion of revising services.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Council has a rate rise calculator and has explicitly explained the impact of land valuation changes on total Council revenue however there is wide variety of land value increases (102% to 75% that I am aware of). I cannot discern what the actual impact will be or who will be most affected given that total Council revenue is pegged to IPART because all ratepayers will be levied same residential rate. This calculator does not include all other charges eg waste management charges the total from the calculator it is not quickly comparable to last year's rate notice. This leaves the opportunity for many people to misunderstand the final outcome of the SV.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes there has been various options for community involvement albeit the rate rise survey was disappointing and many community members commented that they did not respond because ultimately a response was seen to be supporting a substantial SV rise.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Developed a FACT Sheet and rate rise calculator available on the Council Website. Only recently have I become aware of the IPART submission process. Prior to this I had believed the SV rise was locked in by Council.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

There has been no reference to affordability which is greatly concerning given the cost of living debate and interest rate rises. There is a considerable aged population within the Port Stephens LGA particularly in the Coastal suburbs which have values increased by over 100% since the 2019 base value. It appears this this section of the population will bear the majority of the Council's substantial total revenue increase with an obvious impact on their lifestyle and may well force some residents to leave their homes. My mother is greatly concerned.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Nil shown

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Deferred payment options are offered and "Council has partnered with some financial counselling services to provide ratepayers experiencing financial hardship with access to limited financial assistance. Assistance of up to \$250 may be available to individuals or families who do not already receive a Council pensioner rate concession." Accordingly, pensioners, of which there are many in this LGA, only receive deferred payment options.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I assume so. I was previously of the opinion that the rate rise was locked in.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and

cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Nil provided. Indeed the current year deficit of \$1.1m is after \$86k (almost 10% of the deficit) was spent on a new Ranger Raptor vehicle for the Mayor who didn't need a new vehicle. I am amused that the Council is offering Financial Counselling to rate payers suffering financial hardship which would include ways for these people to better manage their funds however nowhere are we seeing how Council will better manage Council funds. The Council Fact Sheet outlines that under the SV rise Council will be back in deficit by around \$100,000 in 2034.

Author name: F. Graf

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

We should limit the contract time for General Managers to 1 year not 5 years. I am against the rate rise due to hardship - the poorer are getting poorer.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes I knew about it

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Any percentage rise is not reasonable to me.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

High ratio of unemployment in the Hunter compared to state average is taking away food from young and old if this rate is imposed.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

People cannot understand why the need for a rate rise.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

It needs to be clearer.

Author name: G. Arndell

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
Leave us alone. Do your jobs better and maybe well think an increase is possible.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

no.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not as far as Im aware.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Oh Im sure theyll take feedback but they will then do exactly what they like, Then theyll say but we consulted.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

When you see the state of our roads you wonder what possible good giving them more money would accomplish. Its unreasonable to increase the pain to ratepayers with no prospect of improved service.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Seriously. As if they care.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Hardship is relative. With increasing interest rates and inflation they need to pull their heads in. We dont need another government putting their hands in our pockets.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Who knows ?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Just more obfuscation.

Author name: G. Sdao

Date of submission: Saturday, 18 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

My husband and I are Aged Pensioners. We are facing increasing hardship due to inflation and the rising cost of living including food, energy, insurances etc. We do not think this is the time for Council to increase our rates to 9.5% from the 4.4% suggested by IPART. It appears our country is on the verge of going into recession. Many young couples are finding it difficult to pay their mortgage and hang on to their homes. Do we need more homeless people? Landlords will increase rents to pay for the increase and it is hard enough now to find an affordable place to rent. In our opinion Council did not make it clear to residents of this Council area what this increase means. Many people we have spoken to do not even know about it nor that it is to increase each year for 3 years. We know Council have assets they could dispose of some of them if they need to. Our Lord Mayor recently spent something like \$60,000 on a Mayoral car. NO, WE DO NOT NEED THIS EXTRAVAGENT RATE RISE.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Dear Sir

SRV Submission.

Objection To Port Stephens Council applying to increase our Council Rates by an extra 30% over three years on top of the normal 2.5% per annum.

1. Port Stephens rate payers have not been informed by Council about this planned rate rise they are applying for. Yes, they have had council meetings, however these meetings have taken place during business hours, where rate payers cannot attend the Council meeting to voice their objections, due to work commitments.
2. The council have not notified rate payers by mail explaining that they have applied to you, and their reasons for this huge rate rise. Therefore, rate payers have no idea the Council are applying for this increase.
3. And families and pensioners cannot afford this either, with mortgage rates sky rocketing and cost of living rising. They are struggling and battle as it is.

For these reasons I am objecting to Port Stephens Council submission for this huge rate rise. I am asking you to please think about the thousands of households in Port Stephens that will be greatly affected, causing more hardship in their lives.

Thank you for allowing me to make this submission. It is something that causes me great concern.

Yours Sincerely



Author name: J. Ballantyne

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I am convinced that the SRV as I currently see it is based on a "made up number" and is therefore based on a false premise. Despite multiple face to face discussions with the financial controller, the general manager and the mayor I am none the wiser as to the true state of this council's finances and have little confidence in its management.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

The council has provided no explanation for the extraordinary ten year forecast deficit of \$80million when for the last ten years it has maintained a small but consistent surplus despite many approaches direct and indirect. (source: Council publication "Our Funded Future") Additionally the council has refused to give specific intentions of the purpose for this sudden and extraordinary increase in rates.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

It has offered alternatives to the rate rise amounts but the survey did not include "no rate rise" which meant that many respondents declined to submit (me included). It has turned out that those who declined to submit were counted as in favour of the seemingly lower amounts. No alternative means of addressing the apparent financial difficulty was canvassed.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No! Not clearly. Many people interpreted that the "10.5% over the next three years " meant that rates would revert back to current levels in three years! The only dollar terms used were to describe the total ten year forecast deficit. (This figure on its own was of no use to determine the whole state of the council's financial position) Residents owning high value properties are extremely concerned about the impact of these rises. When expressing these concerns the council was offering a "rates calculator" which I have not yet seen.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

There were many engagement opportunities but they all followed the same form and delivery, i.e. a single powerpoint presentation delivered by the same presenter. (I visited four of these sessions which, except for one, were poorly attended).

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

At the ordinary council meeting on October 25 2022 a printed booklet was distributed which summarised all of the feedback submissions. There were not enough to provide copies to the small number of visiting attendees at the meeting. The feedback was overwhelmingly against the SRV. Later at that meeting the council resolved to continue the SRV at the "10.5%" three stage level.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The three stage level proposed by the council amounted to an approximate 30% increase with the added IPART granted 4.5% "bonus" rise. This totals to an extraordinarily sudden increase in household costs not equaled by any other product or service increase I can think of, neither could the General Manager when I asked this question of him at one of the engagement sessions. The general opinion (in my estimation) is that the council is trying to solve its financial deficit "in one go".

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

As far as I am aware the council has made no study to ascertain the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The prevailing comment from council has been "if you want the potholes fixed you need to vote for an SRV" No other specific use has been declared by the council.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I am not aware of any provision for hardship apart from the existing pensioner discount

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I am not sure if the council has actually submitted its SRV application, if it has I have not yet heard of it being on exhibition. (I must acknowledge that I have not perused the council website for such an exhibit)

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and

cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

While I am not aware of the council's strategy I have to acknowledge its admirable financial management to be able to maintain a small but consistent surplus over the past ten years, especially the last 3 years through Covid, La Nina and a war in Europe. This makes it an even greater mystery of what may cause the forecast \$80million (\$8million per year) over the next ten years! I remain mystified even after reading the volumous report prepared by Professors Dollery and Drew who were consulting to the council and were the source of the forecast \$80 million deficit.

Author name: J. Gill

Date of submission: Thursday, 23 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Councils should first of all look in house to make savings, rather than ask cash strapped constituents some of whom are struggling to make ends meet, before asking them to pay more, at such a challenging time.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

In my opinion, the council has not established the need for a Special Variation to increase rates. The high increase in new housing just in the area I live would in my estimation have increased the rate of revenue by at least half a million dollars on top of what the council was already receiving. In the 14 years I have lived in the same area, the road maintenance work carried out by the council is disgusting, considering only the one main road through seems to be (occasionally and poorly) maintained. The numerous pot-holes are just filled and lightly pressed, then on the first rainfall, out comes the filling (just like a badly filled tooth). The side roads and streets, because they don't carry large amounts of traffic, are just left to get worse, or are the council hoping that the residents on those streets will patch the holes themselves? It's not as though we can invoice the council for the damage caused to our car, due to the poor condition of the roads.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I didn't know the council was applying for a special increase to the rates over the cap of 2.5%, as I rarely read newspapers. It was just by accident I found out from someone who mentioned it, and I have not seen anything about an alternative rise to rates. I have just seen the alternative options in their SRV application, those being to increasing fees and charges, reducing service delivery, selling underperforming assets, removal of the residential paid parking exemption, and continuing efforts to seek grant funding.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Supposedly YES, but 108 pages are too much to digest. They don't mention the waste the council themselves incur, such as the purchase of a NEW MAYORAL VEHICLE, which is supposed to be only used on mayoral duties. Especially one that is not a car but a 4WD Ford Ranger, that is obviously for the personal use of the mayor, and when his term is ended, he will no doubt buy it from the council at a greatly reduced price.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No, not everyone reads the local Port Stephens Examiner, many are just left on the home driveways, only to be put straight into the rubbish bin. Considering I receive our rates invoice online, it would have been easy for the information about impending rate rises and special rate variations to also be sent online or included with the mailed rate invoice, but this would mean EVERYONE would see their request for an increase.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

With only just finding out about the SRV, I have not seen any feedback from the community.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I don't think the council have given much thought about the ratepayers, in my opinion, they must think we are all on the sort of income the council are on.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The council has shown no consideration whatsoever for the smaller community, they just want to do what everyone else is doing, PUT PRICES UP. There are higher rents, houses are more expensive to purchase, and then the increase cost of food and fuel. Being a small community, we have limited options when purchasing anything, especially when buying food. If we want clothing or household goods we have to go out of the area, which means time-wasting travel, especially if public transport is to be used, and even that is very limited, one bus an hour (with a two-hour break over lunchtime), even less transport on weekends.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

It states that reductions would be given \$500 for non-pensioners and \$250 for pensioners. This I cannot understand as pensioners already get \$250 reduction. It would seem that pensioners have been given no consideration, as they are on a fixed income.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted

by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?
Not known, due to only just finding out about the SRV.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

It would appear to me that the council has probably got its priorities wrong, considering having known others, in another state, one being a council worker, and another being a mayor. Spending on overpriced vehicles, and probably other lurks and perks, should be looked at before asking for a special rate increase.

9th February 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

Submission to Ipart re Port Stephens Council SRV rate rise. Could you please reject this excessive rate rise ie 9 1/2% cumulative each year for 3 years. We in Port Stephens are also going to be hit with large land valuation rises, a large percentage of residents are pensioners and self funded retirees living in Port Stephens. We have to cut our spending and so should council in this very tough economic climate.

A lot of residents are going to find it quite tough to find these extra funds if council succeeds securing a large rise in rates, council could find 80,000 plus to purchase an unwarranted Ford Raptor 4wd for the Mayor, but cannot find the funds to fix our run down infrastrucuter.

The Council would be more financially viable if they had not wasted so much money getting involved in legal stoushes, and poorly performing investments. Also they too top heavy with highly paid administration staff.

Regards

John Jarvis



Author name: J. MITCHELL

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

We would like to object to the rate rise submitted by Port Stephens Council. We have been rate payers to Port Stephens Council since 1975. Port Stephens residents consist of a large number of Pensioners and Self Funded Retirees, and many will find that an increase in Land Rates a struggle, especially now due to the current crisis. Renters will probably find that extra land rates will flow onto increase in rent. The Council seems to be performing poorly with their poor investments and ongoing legal battles. Parts of Port Stephens are a tourist mecca but council do not seem to consider the permanent residents who patronize local businesses.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?
not to our knowledge

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?
Only read what was in local newspaper

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?
not sure

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.
not sure

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.
The current crisis will make it a struggle for many in the Port Stephens area.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.
Don't know

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.
Dont know

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?
Don't know

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.
No information was received by us as residents

Author name: J. Newbery

Date of submission: Wednesday, 22 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I have been a ratepayer and resident of my property in Raymond Terrace since 1980. Council claims that a higher income is needed for itself to achieve its long term plan and insure financial stability. While I'm not aware of the magnitude of these plans, apart from the continuation of current everyday services, my concern is the amount of extra income the Council is seeking. Looking at the three year scenario sought by Council; your proposal of 4.4% on the 2022/23 rate levy, of say \$47M, plus two years at 2.5% would provide additional income of \$9.9M over those three years. Council's request of 9.5% each year for that period would provide additional income \$28.5M. An additional \$18.6M over your proposal and it will be built into the rate base forever. Based on standard rate pegging the following five years would ensure an additional \$54M, and it doesn't stop there. Current inflationary pressures are being felt by all and due to the uncertainty of world events those pressures are effecting living expenses for many residents. In view of this, I would suggest that any increase be restricted to no more than one year. Even then, the increase should be moderate at maybe 7% in lieu of the 4.4%. This would provide a further \$1.2M annually and could ease pressures to maintain necessary services and/or meet the interest charges on any loans taken out for urgent projects.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not clearly, but there has been snippets in local newspaper.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Selling assets and reduced basic services have been reported.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not aware, but newspapers reported proposed percentage increases allowing you to do your own estimations.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Earlier, I can recall seeing notices regarding meetings in several towns of the shire.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Selected the 9.5% over 3 years as against 10.5% over 3 years and 26% for 1 year.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It can be seen as just a low \$1 per week in the first year raising to \$4 per week in the third year but it still another ongoing increase to to face with other living costs.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Most ratepayers begrudge increases and Council would know this.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Suggestions of debt deferral until sale or against the estate after death can be a major concern and worry for the person needing to prove hardship.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unknown

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The occasional Mayoral reports claim achievements in various activities and projects but there is no measure for the ratepayer to know otherwise, other than what we see in the street and ponder

Dear Sir

SRV Submission.

Objection To Port Stephens Council applying to increase our Council Rates by an extra 30% over three years on top of the normal 2.5% per annum.

1. Port Stephens rate payers have not been informed by Council about this planned rate rise they are applying for. Yes, they have had council meetings, however these meetings have taken place during business hours, where rate payers cannot attend the Council meeting to voice their objections, due to work commitments.
2. The council have not notified rate payers by mail explaining that they have applied to you, and their reasons for this huge rate rise. Therefore, rate payers have no idea the Council are applying for this increase.
3. And families and pensioners cannot afford this either, with mortgage rates sky rocketing and cost of living rising. They are struggling and battle as it is.

For these reasons I am objecting to Port Stephens Council submission for this huge rate rise. I am asking you to please think about the thousands of households in Port Stephens that will be greatly affected, causing more hardship in their lives.

Thank you for allowing me to make this submission. It is something that causes me great concern.



THIS COUNCIL DOES NOTHING
FOR THIS AREA.

Author name: K. Davies

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Council have indicated they need more money for a range of generalised community priorities and a rate raise is the most efficient way to achieve their budget shortfalls.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Allegedly they have had discussions with the community. Think this means requesting feedback from single focus groups.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I am not a reader of the council website or social media pages, so I am unable to categorically confirm or deny communication took place.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Unable to comment. Dont recall being approached to provide feedback.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

In my opinion the increase is unreasonable and will have a major impact on a lot of people. Weve just come out of 2 years of job insecurity and uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic with ratepayers just starting to get back to some for of normality and will be hit with another rate rise.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I dont believe a lot of time was spent considering the communitys capacity and willingness to pay. I suspect the amount of time considering the communitys feelings was commensurate with that given to approving the Mayors new car.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Looks good on paper. Can it be realistically achieved??

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unable to comment.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

In realising its achievements, Council certainly has done a good job of placing patches on patches on the regions bad roads. The future plans are to do pretty much the same, with or without the SV.

Author name: K. FLETCHER

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This area does not have large scale industry and infrastructure which support high quality jobs. Many residents are retired or work in low paying jobs. Current living expenses are escalating rapidly. Many residents simply cannot afford increases in any costs, especially when these increased costs will be permanent. No business nowadays gets away with over 30% increases in costs. If it means less services, then that is what residents will have to accept. Why is it that council cannot find other means to cover their projected expenditure. For example, the area has a large industry digging up and selling sand. Most residents get no benefit from this industry, and the number of large trucks daily using our roads can only be detrimental to road conditions. I feel council should be looking to levy a royalty on this industry, which would more than meet ongoing council costs, and would give local residents some benefit from the sand mining. Ideas like this have not been investigated by council.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I am not sure what processes have been followed

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Absolutely not. There have been mentions of the excessive rates rise in local newspaper, but other than that, no community notification. These same rates rises were sought for around 4 years ago, they were not approved by IPART. The reasons why this should not be approved have not changed, in fact they are worse, with very large increases in all living costs, especially food, fuel and energy and property prices. The new local government has no mandate for implementation of these increases. Many of the local residents are retiring or retired, and have no way to meet 30% escalation in rates.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The proposed percentage increase has been communicated, but not the dollar value (although this can be worked out obviously)

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

no, there has been no council outreach or communication with the community

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

there has been no council action, as they have not communicated at any level with local residents and ratepayers

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

To expect many retired people to accept a 30% increase in rates is unacceptable. Many of us have fixed level incomes and no access to future increases in income. The area also does not have a lot of high quality jobs which enable residents to meet such large increases in costs

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The council has not listened to community response from the last special rate variation request. The councilors at recent local council elections did not seek for or secure any mandate for such increases.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have no idea how the council intends to alleviate hardship, nor who would be eligible for assistance. I doubt council can provide any assistance to almost any residents.


Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not that I am aware of. No residents I have spoken to have had any communication from council; the only information we have is what has been published in Port Stephens Examiner.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I am not familiar with measures council has taken. I am sure they have endeavoured to contain costs and improve productivity

Karen & Dave Harley



15 February 2023

Dear IPART

I am sending you this letter to say NO to the Special Rate Variation that Port Stephens Council have applied for.

As a family on a much lower than average income with two children at home, the cost of living is bleeding us dry already. We have trouble paying the rates as it is, they want 30% more, is this a joke! Plus 3.5% they get every year that 38.5%, they can't be serious.

My husband has been trying to get a 3.5% pay increase for the last 8 years and his workplace keep rejecting it, that's no pay rise in 8 years, sorry but we don't have that extra 38.5% for their rate increase.

This council has a history of wasting rate payers money as it is, for example the \$20 million legal bill for the recent Lagoons Estate debacle, and recently in the paper they are set to take another Port Stephens developer to court in another ridiculous legal battle. Just another waste of our money.

How did the mayor wrangle a luxury \$90 000 4WD as his council car, is beyond belief. No rate payer voted for that, let him drive Toyota Camry like us mere mortals. It is very much on the nose and does not pass the so called pub test.

Also there has been little or next to no consultation with the public on this matter. Out of the 50 close relatives and friends I've spoken to about this only 15 knew anything about it, they all live in the Port Stephens LGA, they are all horrified and worried sick if this gets through.

If PSC really wanted to know how rate payers feel about the SRV they could have easily send a survey form in everyone's rate notice (no, way too easy) but they won't/haven't for 2 reasons; 1 they know the SRV is not wanted by most rate payer and 2 it will alert people who don't know about it. It seems they want this to go through under the radar of most rate payers.

In short with the cost of modern living at the end of the week there is nothing left for us with every dollar that gets ripped form my family budget, along with a little bit of life's magic seems to go with it.

A 30% drop in council rates is what we need to try to claim back our lives and standard of living.

Please do not grant this SRV for my family and so many more like us that I've spoken to we can't give what we have not got.

Hope you make the right decision for the greater good of all rate payers.

Thank you



KAREN & DAVE HARLEY



Author name: K. Leybourne

Date of submission: Friday, 24 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I just dont have the time to waste , I am not paid to undertake this objection as all the elected representatives. I have become aware that many locals just dont know about what they are attempting to inflict upon them, so without a general outcry the iPart submission will probably succeed in their favour.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No The council has not clearly established much dialogue at all. There have not been different revenue paths considered at all.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No, I have not seen these details presented by council

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No, definitely not. the whole process has been by stealth with minimal community consultation.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council asked for which proposal would be favoured, not offering the option of 'No SRV'

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

At a time when inflation, relentless interest rate increases, job losses, cost of living increases are causing most families grief the councillors think that they can slug us further.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. They have not at any time considered the communities capacity to pay. Meanwhile the Mayor has council provide for himself the top of the range SUV for his personal use

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

It is young families that are suffering the most , there is no hardship relief for them.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I have never seen them displayed

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council should look closely at productivity improvements in all ares of their operation before simply asking residents to fund their pet projects

Author name: K. Soderlund

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The only comment is that the rate increase is too high for a large majority of the shire especially who live on the Tomaree Peninsula.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not that I'm aware of

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

With the arrival of the latest Notice of Valuation, no there has been no example of the average increase to the ratepayers

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

If you live in Raymond Terrace

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

From what I can recall the council gave two scenarios on how to increase the rates. I'm sure the preferred one was chosen by the council

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

As there is a sizable percentage of pensioners living within the Port Stephens Shire, increasing the rates to a ridiculous 13% will have an enormous impact on them all. With the increase of living rising, it will have an effect of driving the elders out of the area

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

After living in the area for the last 28 yrs. and previously 3 yrs. I had never found a council so intent on making money and not showing anything for it. There is no proper planning for work to be done and the state of roads within the area is deplorable. Cleanliness of public toilets are a disgrace and parks are left overgrown for weeks at a time. It appears that it is fine for the mayor to purchase a new 4-wheel drive vehicle without consulting the council members when there were vehicles already available from the stable of vehicles owned by council.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have not seen any example of hardship payment options. By making the ratepayers pay off their rates will only contribute to the already burden of living in the area

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

How can they be presented before the publishing of the higher valuations applied to the shire.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Have not seen any proposed productivity improvements and cost containment strategies from council.

Author name: K. White

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I certainly understand the the cost of living is increasing and inflation is increasing BUT 116.6% increase in land valuation which will have a direct flow onto council rates is simply not justified.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not that I am aware of. The land valuation we have recently received has increased by a staggering 116.6% which will result in a significant increase in land rates and revenue for the council. I feel that this is significant and there has not been any clear purpose proposed for this with inadequate consultation.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I am aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not that I am aware of. The land valuation we have recently received has increased by a staggering 116.6% which will result in a significant increase in land rates and revenue for the council. I feel that this is significant and there has not been any clear purpose proposed for this with inadequate consultation.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Not that I am aware of. The land valuation we have recently received has increased by a staggering 116.6% which will result in a significant increase in land rates and revenue for the council. I feel that this is significant and there has not been any clear purpose proposed for this with inadequate consultation.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I am not aware of any action taken by council in response to feedback. I am not aware that council asked for feedback from the community and if it was it would appear inadequate.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I feel that a 116.6% increase in land valuation is grossly unreasonable. This will significantly increase council rates which will be direct revenue for the council. I am unaware of any specific compelling need for such an increase well above other councils and normal increases. To my knowledge there has been no natural disaster that requires significant funding.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't believe that any consideration has been given to communities capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I am not aware of any plan to address hardship caused by the special variation

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I am not aware of rate payers being notified of any such documents being exhibited for comment. I have received no correspondence on the matter

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I have not been made aware of any of the above. There is probably something accessible on line but if there is it has not been brought to my attention through any correspondence.

Author name: L. Clark

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Recent Valuer General increases in land valuation together with Council rate increases need to be taken into account as a whole. As this is the cost impact on landowners. In my case VG increase is from \$753,000 to \$1,630,000 plus council want an increase of 27% This will make more than 100% increase in my rates.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

As a rural ratepayer earning an income, the increased cost of a rate increase of this magnitude will provide hardship, given other factors impacting rural communities in the last few years particularly droughts and floods and fluctuating cattle prices and increased costs to run the farm. as well as cost of living increases along with the general population.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Not sure how rural communities were consulted and responded to

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I wish to submit an appeal against the forthcoming rate rise from the Port Stephens Council. We have been residents here for the last 12 1/2 years and are pensioners and feel it is extreme. The majority of residents are seniors and are finding it a struggle to live on a day to day basis. We are fortunate enough to own our own home but the residents of the over 55 villages are going to find it difficult as no doubt their fees are going to rise substantially to cover the cost of the large rise that it will incur. I understand that the council have a large hole in their budget but I feel that they are trying to push us older people out and bring higher wage earners in.

Their roads no doubt need a lot of work but feel if they were done properly in the first place it wouldn't be necessary to have to keep returning time and time again to repair them.

Regards



LYNETTE LEWIS

Author name: L. Rump

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I did not read anything about it in our local newspaper Examiner I was not informed by letter from the council. All I know is that they sent a letter writing that they had to increase the council rates again like every year, but I thought it was a huge increase. 10 years ago my council rates started with one hundred, this year, we are already in the three hundred. No alternative was offered or ideas invited!

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I know of!

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No, the council did not, as I am aware of!

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Definitely not! If there is no transparency or information for their reasons to get permission for special variations on council rates, there cannot be any awareness of the public! I just heard about it through a letterbox drop by a concerned private person. I'm already upset about the increase which I had to pay yesterday. With all the other extra costs through RBA interest rate rises, the much higher cost of living - virtually every aspect of finances - it is a very steep special variation I am not happy about and hope IPART will not allow!

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

No information, no feedback, no response action by the council!

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I am sure that every person living in Port Stephens is affected by inflation, high percentage of people in the workforce, insane rental increases, higher prices for everything to do with everyday life and therefore is an increase of council rates, especially over 30% over 3 years a high burden for every household. And there are a lot of retired people in this council who have no means to increase their monthly income to afford any rise in any cost!

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I am sure the council does not care if people in their shire are not happy about such a rate rise. Capacity and willingness is just not there for most of the people, I am sure. I live on a disability pension and it has been hard enough the last few years to pay the rates, but this increase just can't be covered with an extra \$35 per fortnight, which the government is adding to help with the higher costs all around.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have no idea what kind of plan the council came up with to help people like me to alleviate the hardship, which arises through this huge rate increases. I didn't even know that such a possibility even exists.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I do not know!

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The road conditions in the area from Williamstown to Shoal Bay are appalling. Potholes are everywhere and it is a farce how these repairs to holes in the road are repaired. I know that some workmen are sent out onto the roads and they shovel tar into the holes as they are, no extra preparing work, and it is done even while it is raining. I saw it with my own eyes and this is ridiculous and it's wasting the Council rate money, we're paying, because at the next rain, this shortest term repair is gone again. The council can achieve to have extra money they think they might need just through wiser use of the money they get already now. The mayor buying himself a over \$80,000 car from people's money does not help in having more money for projects,

which might be beneficial for people living in Port Stephens!!

Author name: M. Dobson

Date of submission: Friday, 17 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. They have not specified why they want to raise the rates.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. They gave 2 alternative of 2 rate rises but no choice to the level of the rise.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No they didn't notify any rate holders was just made aware through word of mouth

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. Pretty sure they were hoping no one would notice.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

When asked about the rise they only gave the option of 33% rise immediately or over 3 years & even though everyone who was aware voted no didn't make a difference.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

People are doing it tough now and cannot afford a rate rise to beautify parks etc. Rate holders do not want and cannot afford to pay the rise.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

They have not taken it into account at all

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

There plan for hardship is to take funds out of your estate when you die.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unless you attend the meetings when they are scheduled when people work or attend the council chambers you would not be aware

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

No-one wants to pay for park beautification and bbqs they will never use.

Author name: M. Harding

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

One letter

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Personal at breaking point with mortgage and cost of living. No services or upgrades should be forcing people into further financial hardship

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

None know

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Havent heard of plan

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unsure

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Poor response nothing tabled except helping there costs

Author name: M. Mitch

Date of submission: Saturday, 11 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Now is not the time for any more rate rises! People can only take so much. The community is hurting as it is. Medowie itself has so many more home being built which will provide the council with more funds. This really needs to be shelved for another time. If this goes forward my assumption of council only caring about lining pockets was correct. NO PSC RATE RISES!

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No I don't believe they have.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Once that I am aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They forge ahead whether we like it or not, no regard to community wishes.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Hahaha this question is hilarious, there is NONE. They do as they please.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

They truly don't care as long as their pockets are lined.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I haven't seen it therefore can't comment.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Haven't read it as I don't believe a word that comes out of their mouths.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They can explain and propose all they like, this does not guarantee that they will follow through with it. They tend to bend the rules to suit what works better for them.

Author name: M. Smith

Date of submission: Thursday, 16 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

As an aged pensioner I am struggling to make ends meet, having to withdraw money from our small savings to pay bills. I believe this would be similar to most residents. With the high cost of living. Any rate increase will be vary difficult to meet.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, there are other avenues to pursue ie staff levels, council functions, donations and better efficiencies in work practices.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I am aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not all residents are computer literate, especially the older generation who do not have access to social media to receive information and feedback.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No, the information I saw in local paper stated given options of 31% first year or 10% for three years. There were no alternate options.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Have not seen any feedback back from council. Port Stephens council has always requested the highest rate increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The cost of living has escalated with inflation close to 8%. Food, petrol, rents, medical have all increased substantially. Wages and pensions have not.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Statements like "it will be tough but we will assist by smaller but more frequent payments" do not help.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

As above.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No comment.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

No comment as cannot understand what they are envisage.

Author name: M. Tamsett

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No they have not, with inflation, low wages and power rises the last thing that anybody needs is a rate rise, how can they warrant that, with the lord mayor buying himself a hotted up SUV as a work car it just rubs salt in the wound

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No not clearly

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No they did not

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No not in any way or form

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

With the valuer general just raising the value of our properties and a 30% rate rise it is a double hit for everyone except the wealth property owners who mostly live in Sydney, I live in my house and along with inflation, power, fuel it seems to be some kind of evil joke, this should not go ahead, if we have to go without services so be it but no we should not have a special rate rise

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Hunger, living without prescription drugs, living without heating in winter

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I just cannot pay

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

No not at all

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: M. Wilkinson

Date of submission: Friday, 24 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I fully support the special rate variation - and I did the last one which was knocked back via a concerted political campaign. We needed the SRV back then and we need it even more now. I do expect that the large proportion of this will be committed to improving our roads and drainage works and amenities block at our main concert area (no disability access for goodness sakes!) and other old amenities at popular beaches. They haven't received much attention because it's not that fashionable to cut the opening tape on a loo..... or a patched up piece of road!

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Yes - there have been consultations with the public last year about the need for the rise and they brought in independent consultants to prepare a report which I've read. If people haven't heard about the consultations then, they have their heads in the sand and are being driven by a semi-political agenda based purely on affordability at this time. There will never be a right time.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I've been a regular communicator with Council over many many years and have noticed that the main work that gets done is purely through grant applications. These come with strict requirements and are not transferable to other projects. Council needs to have a ratepayer pool of funding bigger so that the system becomes much fairer and a proper priority system is able to be implemented. For now, it's all about grants and then not much else can happen. Sure there has been waste (Lagoons Estate) inherited from previous Council errors and now being paid for. We are on the pension and this will not help us financially - however - it is necessary for the great good - so we will manage. Our roads are all in a terrible state of disrepair and a large proportion of this rate rise would, I would expect, go towards improving them.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes, this was well communicated after the Council meeting and one Councillor has asked for a report back annually to ensure Council is meeting the criteria. Only the media and the one Councillor (politically driven) is highlighting the full figure. - 10% over 3 years doesn't sound quite as bad as 33% (with little mention of number of years this is over)

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes - apathy reins supreme in Port Stephens. Most people recognise that maintenance has gone to the pack around here and our roads need attention. We are falling behind other Councils. If people haven't been listening or observing, they have been living under some kind of rock!

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Some Councillors approached individual members of the public (including me) for feedback on the various options which were presented to us in October forums. The conclusion they came to is, to me at least, a good one. the 25% first year would have been a stretch too far.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Our socio economic issues are no different to many other Council areas along the eastern seaboard. Council has included hardship clauses into the proposals. We're on a pension and we'll manage - just as we've had to manage all the increases whacked on us by greedy supermarket chains.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Hardship clauses have been included and only a small minority will have the capacity to pay. As for willingness - tough!

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

It was a fair hardship clause (and always was) Older people should start to get used to not leaving so much inheritance and if they can't afford their rates while they are alive, they can defer it until after they have passed away or put the cost against the value of their places. Far too much is being inherited by rich kids already!

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes - and well discussed - and excellent provisions made by one Councillor. The main Councillor pushing the No vote (again!) is politically motivated. Of course it's easy to encourage people to say "No" - especially as they are only being told half the

story about the true financial position of Port Stephens Council!

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council budgets have been cut to the bone over many years and they have been living on grant funding. They were hammered during COVID because revenue comes from holiday parks and the airport - it will take a lot of time to recover from that setback. Meanwhile our roads are falling apart all over the Shire and only getting patch up jobs done. Maintenance is at a minimum and the budgets for environmental projects have been hammered more than they should be. Volunteer Landcare groups take up a minimal amount of the slack as most are now ageing or will not come out after COVID. The turnover of Managers of Environmental staff in recent years has been appalling - obviously from a lack of respect and a proper budget to get anything done.

Author name: M. Williams

Date of submission: Sunday, 26 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I would like to reiterate that I find the SRV unacceptable due to: 1) the number of state and federal funding grants available to local councils to assist in meeting their additional cost burden 2) the significant increase in land values of Port Stephens land will by default lead to increase revenues for council 3) Everyone is experiencing additional financial stress due the the cost of living crisis, surely the council should also bear a portion of this pain.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not that I can find. There has been very little information provided to ratepayers justifying this increase.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I can find. I find this increase request difficult to understand. There have been a significant number of Commonwealth and State Government grants made available to Councils to assist with the additional costs they are experiencing due to the unprecedented rain events. If Port Stephens Council did not manage to receive any grants, which I find hard to believe, why should the ratepayers be punished for their neglect

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No, I havent received anything. Apparently they did put something in the local newspaper which a significant number of residents no longer receive. My expectation is the very least they should have the local councillors communicating directly with their constituents to gain an overall view of the community.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

If they have had a community engagement strategy, it mustve been very limited, as no one I know was aware of this. Fingal Bay has a group which was formed to liaise with council and their president knew nothing about the rate rise. That says a lot to me.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

No idea. Again no direct communication.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I would find it hard to coment on the reasonableness of the SVR given it is 9% over three years which to total 33% given it is cumulative. We are currently experiencing a cost of living crisis and to Impose this level of additional costs on young families and the elderly is reprehensible. It should also be noted that my land value has increased by 142% in four years, this will by default result in additional revenue for council. Is that not enough?

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

It would appear they havent. Given my comments about the impact of increased land values plus a SRV would place a significant burden on community members.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Allowing residents in hardship pay off their rates via instalments is not a solution. If you didnt add to the burden of already financially stressed communities then this would not be a consideration. Once again the significant increase in land values will burden already stressed community enough. Why add to it?

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I would assume so.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I am unable to do this

Author name: N. Dobson

Date of submission: Wednesday, 15 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No not to my satisfaction it appears to be a money grab due to councils mismanagement.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No we got to choices a lump sum increase and an over three year increase. When ask about a straight out No vote there was no reply.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No just percentage.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No the online vote had two options both for an increase one as a lump sum and the other over a period of time.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

No response to my questions about an outright No and just a peg increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Council is clear that they will be introducing the rate rise and not considering any opposition or discussion about alternatives.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Council has expectations thT rate payers will foot the bill for there on going plans as the cannot generate funds any other way.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The lack of two way communications tell me that this is only lip service.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

The only meetings are mid week when only a limited number can attend would love to see a weekend on so we can all attend

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They have communicated that they have no funds for ongoing works projects But neglect to say where the current funds are going Checks and balances.

Author name: N. Dobson

Date of submission: Friday, 24 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

In this current climate when the community is and has been expected to restrain in spending. Prioritise the finances you have and basically live within your means council have opted for the rate payers to help them live within their means this money grab is totally unacceptable.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No in my opinion it is clear that with new and existing rate payers the existing revenue path will sustain council moving forward as you would know land values have gone up which council can and will reflect in rate rises.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

NO council has not done this in a reasonable way as to include all stakeholders the over spending in areas that clearly do not require financial assistance.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The council has not been forthcoming with real information and how they have wasted ratepayers money. The survey that was issued online did not reach out to all stakeholders and only had two answers 1 a lump sum increase 2 an increase over three years. What about the opportunity for a NO to both proposals.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No a major portion of the community have no idea this is taking place and those I have discussed this with have difficulty navigating the I part sites to have there say.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I am still waiting for my questions to be answered.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The port Stephens council has not taken into consideration the affordability of the rate rise particularly in the current market with high cost of living and interest rates. Also the demographics of the area with a high population of low income households.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

At no stage has council considered the communities capacity to be able to pay a rate increase as it was clear on the survey.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

So they will not apply the increase to rate payers who have applied for hardship but will take it out of the property if and when sold this clearly tells me it's a money grab.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I would not even know who to ask to sites these documents there has been no news letter to inform me how or were I could sites a IP&R document.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The council in my opinion has fallen short of being able to quantify criterion 5 as in the past they have a poor financial history.

Narelle Jones

16 February 2023

To IPART

I am making this submission to say no and state that I and many other people in my street and area say NO to the SRV Port Stephens Council are trying to inflict on us.

I am guilty of not keeping up with local government matters but I knew nothing about this, I found out only by accident so I approached my neighbours and other people in my street and they didn't seem to know anything about it as well. Most of us a busy trying to make ends meet at work, I guess we should pay more attention.

So I rang Port Stephens Council hotline and asked what was happening about this SRV, they were most unhelpful. They told me to go to the PSC website and you can have your say. On visiting the website they gave you only 2 options; 1 Do you want a one off increase of 26.5% or 2 30% increase over 3 years. There were no provisions to say no to it or any other comments, if you did, the site closed. How is that "having your say". I told other residents in the street what they are proposing and I think I scared the [REDACTED] out of most of them especially the older residents.

I work in aged care and I don't make a lot of money, there are many low socioeconomic areas in Port Stephens LGA, yeah sure Nelson Bay and some surrounding areas are a tourist mecca and quiet wealthy but you don't have to drive to far from there to find poorer areas. I live in one of the poorer areas, a lot of these workers in this area are low paid, and like I have to drive a long way to Newcastle and beyond for work. I clock up 500-600kms per week and the price of fuel is killing me.

We vote these councils in with good faith, we trust them to do the right thing by the majority, we don't expect them to try and gouge money out of us, we already have fuel stations, electricity companies and banks doing that. We don't expect them to waste money we give them, we don't expect them to buy over priced 4WD for their vehicle at our expense as our mayor did, then has the hide to put his hand out for more of our money! The arrogance of this council, we don't expect them to treat us as a cash cow.

In finishing this letter one thing I do remember from a few years ago, when faced with a forced amalgamation, this council was deemed future ready and fit for the future, they spruced on about how much money they had and how well they were doing. Well, what the [REDACTED] happened? Did they waste all that money? Or do all councillor's want a luxury 4WD at our expense?

Thank you for reading my letter.

NARELLE JONES



Author name: P. Andrews

Date of submission: Tuesday, 14 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This Council are very good at wasting rate payers money. My husband and i strongly object strongly to the proposed increase. Given the current cost of living issues It will put even more financial pressure on us. I am hoping that their application is refused.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not at all

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not in my area

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I have received no information from the Council

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I have no idea if Council have taken any action?

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Port Stephens rate payers get little or no improvements to infrastructure especially in the Tilligerry Peninsula area.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I think the majority of rate payers are against the Councils current application. I know I am.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have no idea how the Council intend to address hardship for the elderly residents or those on government benefits. A rate increase will impact greatly on these people.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I have not seen any IP&R documents posted in the area of Port Stephens I live in.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The Council are not very forthcoming with information in the part of Port Stephens (Tilligerry Peninsula) where I live. They spend very little revenue in this area.

Author name: p. cooper

Date of submission: Saturday, 18 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Port Stephens Council has made a false application for a Special Rate Variation of 9.5% over 3 years, it has not explained to the rate payers of what the 9.5% rate is no, the peg rate or the waste management ,They have told the people what its for , The Council have not given a true costing of the application for the special rate variation or of any projects, the Council on Sep 14, 2022 put out a proposal for 10.5% per year for 3 years and the consultation was at times where rate payers could not attend ,Port Stephens Council have not told the rate payers of there income from the Newcastle Air Port , witch Port Stephens Council owns 50%, and other commercial property ,Port Stephens Council has not told of the RSL and Sporting Club building that was built at a cost of \$6.3 million of public money and let to a restaurant, The council has not the cost to the people, of the crossing construction in William st, Raymond Terrace The Port Stephens council has not told of the wage subsidies for there workers, it received from the Federal Government during covert and still received the full land rates from rate payers,Port Stephens Council has applied for a rate rise of 9.5% per year for 3 years under false intent and this maybe fraud or is the same as a to obtain money. The Mayor and Management of Port Stephens Council should be stood down until a full enquiry is made.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

NO,Port Stephens Council has not established a need fore a RSV rate rise , The council has made this application under false pretence and have not supplied a full income statement for years 2023-2024-2025 and state that the 9.5% srv is for a forecast long term financial plan, but has not supplied a budget or a costing for the plane and has NOT told the rate payers or IPART and the businesses of Port Stephens shire.The council has NOT made it clear to the rate payers if the SRV includes the 4.4% base rate rise in the the proposed 9.5% SRV , or if it is extra rate rise no top of the 4.4%, Because the base rate will change in 2024.The Port Stephens council have NOT told the rate payers if the SRV is included in the Waste Management Service Charge

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The Port Stephens Council have not told of alternative income , the NSW state government and the federal government give Port Stephens council large grants , such as \$2.3 million for sports grounds,\$3.3mollion for a sports complex at Tomaree Sports field , \$845,000 for a Koala Management plan,\$251,105 to fix pot holes, plus \$1,333,225 million to repair local roads and lots more

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

NO, The Port Stephens Council dose not seem to have people working at the council to be able to communicate with the public or calculate in terms of percentage of the proposed special variation and what part of the general rates would the SRV apply to, There has been NO calculation on a dollar term of what it would cost a rate payer, or for a rate payer to cost out what the SRV would cost them, This means a lot to a landlord how would have notify there tenants of a increase pending on the council rate rise

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

NO, On the 14th September 2022 Port Stephens Council endorsed the exhibition of its draft for a plane for a rate rise. the community could attend a drop in session, but the first sessions was held on Tuesday 27 Sep 2022 a 5pm in a [park]at riverside park , Raymond terrace , the second on Wednesday 29 Sep 2022 at Boyd Oval park , Medowie 5 Pm ,Third , Saturday 1 st Oct 5Pm Apex park Nelson Bay , Forth Tuesday4 Oct 3Pm to 4 Pm Port Stephens visitor information , Five , Tuesday 4 Oct, 4.30 pm Salamander Bay shopping Centre,Six Thursday 6th Oct, 9am Raymond Terrace market Place,,,,All these placers are where rate payers are at work or times where people could not make, The Independent Recommendation Scenario was for 10.5%rate increase for 3 years

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Port Stephens Council has not taken any action on any response from the feed back from the rate payers , The Councilors do not return phone calls or emails. The council have stopped council reports in the Port Stephens news papers , The council has not given a full and truthfully response on the special variation .

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Most of Port Stephen shire people are working families with mortgages and have to travel out side of the area , there are a lot of pensioners and the pension has not gone up to cover more costs , a lot of pensioners go with out food now , even some school children go to school lunch, The council would do well with out the special variation rate rise

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The people of Port Stephens Shire do NOT want a special variation rate rise . Port Stephens Council intend to rise council rates three times this year 2023 with the peg rate rise of 4.4% ,Valuer Generals valuations of land in Port Stephens Shire on the 1 st July 2023, the land valuer has gone up in Port Stephens from 20% to 500% in new estates in Medowie , Raymond Terrace , karuah, were new housing estates are built are built on farm land, The 3rd rate rise in Port Stephens Shire is that the council are introducing green waste bins on the 1st July 2023 and this will mean a rate rise on waste management, BUT the Port Stephens Council has not been up front with the people .

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.
yes , The council tells the people they can pay off there rates, but in the long run the Council can take there property and sell it off

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?
yes , Councilors voted ,

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.
Port Stephens Council can not explain why it needs to obtain a special rate variation truthfully , Port Stephens Council has a large amount of commercial properties, Port Stephens Council owns 50% of Newcastle Air Port and receives income , The State and federal governments give large grants to the area ,What ever containment strategies the council had in the past do not apply now as every thing has changed since the covert in the past two years .

Author name: P. Daniher

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Council must learn to forward plan and be fairer in its budgeting capacity in relation to all towns in their shire. Home owners BUDGET to live according to income; council must do the same. Home owners should not have to contribute to council cars, council's mismanagement of rate payers' money, Christmas functions, parties and lack of work productivity. More quality control in all areas of council work. Council must look to selling their investment properties as appropriate rather than overcharging already stressed out rate payers.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

NO because the council wastes our rate-payers funds and clearly does not distribute these fairly throughout the shire. FINANCIAL sustainability can be BETTER achieved, not through such a huge rate rise, but through amalgamation of managerial roles within council, more quality control of work projects including doing a job properly so that it does not need replacing sooner than should. Also Work productivity is lacking within our council. The recent eye-sore construction, which is scorned by local residents, is not only a safety hazard right near a pedestrian crossing, but an unnecessary construction that cost an appalling hundreds of thousands of dollars of rate payers money. Poor quality control necessitated that parts be pulled up after construction because they forgot to lay power. these concerns obviously show that council wastes money and needs to make rate payers pay for it. WHY? What about forward planning and the abolishment of Management requirements for expensive private cars, which included approximately, a \$100,000 Raptor. Rate payers pay for these and most rate payers could never afford one for themselves. Why would a council manager require a vehicle like this?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No!!! Council does not liaise enough with the rate payers. As pointed out above, there are definitely alternatives to this excessive rate rise, but council has not considered any of them. Council must forward plan their budget as rate payers must budget weekly to survive.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No!!! Council needs money, but they should be looking from within their foundation and not to struggling rate payers to pay their debts. Why can't they look to selling some of their INVESTMENT PORTFOLIOS because our rates have already increased enough. We would like to know how much money council is receiving from the sand mines on Cabbage Tree road Williamtown, NSW. The list goes on eg Newcastle Airport.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

We are not aware of a variety of community engagement awareness, which has certainly not been included in our local paper, "The Examiner."

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Our previous letters to council rate rises, have never been answered. It would seem that only positive reactions to rate rises are published and accepted.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

We are considered a very diverse community here in Raymond Terrace with a lean toward low socio-economic living. We believe that the Council does not consider our community's capacity and willingness to pay rates or the fact that some rate payers may not even respond. Such an increase is just too steep and not affordable for many many families at this point in time.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

We feel there is no consideration. Council must learn to live within their means and work FOR the rate payer and not AGAINST. Look within the financial management system to cut unnecessary council spending ie Christmas bonuses (council is not a private enterprise), the purchase of managerial cars for their convenience and the unnecessary accumulation of investment properties. Sell Investment properties before rate rises, because many rate payers are struggling already.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Pensioners and non-pensioners are getting the same increase in rebates???? Hardships will still exist unnecessarily. in fact it is interesting to note that the new Notice Of Land Valuation as of 01/07/2022 has more than doubled the evaluation of properties generally, and any rebates from council in lieu of rate increase will be, in fact, eaten up by this substantial increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

We rely on our local paper for Council information, as we do receive correspondence from Council as would be appreciated. We live out of town and even the paper is not delivered regularly. So we are not aware of response to IP&R documents.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Well, not many improvements ever happen in Raymond Terrace. Our local area is unfairly neglected at the expense of Nelson Bay and its close surrounding areas. We often ask council to make Raymond Terrace beautiful again as it was years ago (Tidy Town). Raymond Terrace is an historical town with a magnificent river front and it used to be visited by travellers, but there are not the numbers now. We have lived here 44 years and not much has changed in Raymond Terrace.

Author name: P. Freeman

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This Special Variation of 31.3% over 3 years, will cripple the majority living in Port Stephens. In this current climate with EVERYTHING increasing in cost, this would be a criminal act on their constituents. Shame on council! Please also consider that our land value has nearly doubled in the latest Valuer Generals Notice of Variation. This impacts, in their favour, on councils rates and would be a considerable increase to funds for Council that has not been taken into account. Spare the community more heartache impacting on their finances. Thank you

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Council have said the rate rise is needed for its financial sustainability for the future enhancement of roads, public space, natural environment and waterways/foreshores. But no specifics. Since this statement was publicised Port Stephens Council have received a grant towards fixing our roads and each residents' land value has risen (ours by 87%), which will on its own force our council rates up. Has this grand total been accounted for?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not to my knowledge.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Going by real estate values at the moment, I would assume that Council used below average prices to use as an example. Would be eye watering to know the new rates with our just released Notice of Valuation (on land) from the Valuer General. Has the new land values been accounted for in the 31.3%. Or should this be deducted?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Since council stopped placing DAs and other ads in The Port Stephens Examiner, to support our local newspaper and inform the local community, we hear mainly second hand information through community members or groups that inform through social media such as Facebook. People are time poor and cannot scour the Council website on the off-chance that there may be something to rally behind or object to. Only recently through much debate by some councillors, DAs will again be in the local paper. Our council is still learning to inform all, not just the minority. It is far from transparent.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I have not heard or seen any council response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation. The media have presented more information than council on the application to IPART and how to make a submission. Councillor Arnott has though, through the media, informed many on how to object if they choose to, and understands that this rate rise of 31.3% over 3 years will cripple most people in today's climate.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Sorry but there is absolutely no reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation. Life is a challenge at the moment for many. Most people have been impacted already with the increases in price on everything that we do and need. This special variation will compound more debt, more cuts to necessities and the health and well-being of many will suffer. Breaking News - have the new land values offered up the Valuer General been accounted for in the 31.3%. Double dipping?

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't think in honesty that council has thought about the compounding hardships that they will impact on the lives of the majority of the community. I certainly am not willing to pay a 31.3% rate rise over 3 years.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

That's a laugh! So many people will not be able to afford the new council rates, with everything else that has impacted on the cost of living. How will council afford to provide assistance to those in hardship, when that number will exceed Council's expectations. Support your community Port Stephens Council; pull in your purse strings just as we have to.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No idea!

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I dont know exactly where is to be beautified, enhanced or implemented. I see a generally vague strategy for the plan but no evidence or real data of plans. This is what residence need to know. Even so, it is far too much to expect from the community.

Author name: P. Keeley

Date of submission: Sunday, 19 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

One of the problems with Port Stephens Council is that they are unable to efficiently manage their current income as it is. Last year they closed a road in Medowie for over two months to resurface about 400 metres of that section. Within two months of those works being completed they were back repairing several sections of those roadworks because of potholes and the edges breaking up. Their excuse would have been the unprecedented rainfall. That excuse is unacceptable and does not hold water (unlike the roadworks). A rate increase of this nature would only give the council more of our hard earned money to waste.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I am aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Most of the information I have received is through the local newspaper. With a rate hike of this magnitude I think the council should have email details of their proposal to all rate payers. They have emails address of most rate payers because rate notices are sent by email.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I am not aware of the feedback from rate payers, but I would have thought this large increase would have would have significant opposition.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

At this time of very high inflation the impact would be enormous on many rate payers. At this time we have to live within our budget, so should the council.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't think many rate payers would be willing to pay this large hike over three years. Obviously the council have not listened to rate payers otherwise they would not have lodged this application.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Their intent to address hardship is only a band aid solution. Deferring payments, more regular and smaller payments, deferring payments for pensioners so it could be added to their estate. At the end of the day it still has to be paid. What relief is that?

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unknown

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Unknown

Author name: P. Lord

Date of submission: Friday, 24 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I live in Salt Ash pay \$479 per quarter and I receive none of the following services: Water supply - on tank water Sewerage services - on septic Domestic waste management Stormwater management - non gutters or drainage. Road maintenance - our road has not been maintained in 2 years. We have had to replace tyres, windscreens and suspension issues. There is a form for compensation that everyone has filled out, never heard of anyone being compensated.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No!

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Yes, but whether they listened to any of them. I dont think so.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The Council tends to mismanage funds eg. Buying the Mayor a new 4 wheel drive while holding their hand out for rate increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

We are aware they want extra money all the time. We would prefer for them to live within their means like the rest of us and stop spending on unnecessary infrastructure.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

None!

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

We are all doing it very hard in this day and age, our Council wanting at least a 30% increase is way too much, maybe 5% at the most.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They have received so much extra funding for roads as Port Stephens was recognised as a disaster zone at least twice and received plenty of extra funding, yet our road hasnt been maintained in 3 years.

Author name: P. Paul

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

They did not listen to the community when they informed us the last changes were coming through, they asked for community feedback on how to implement the changes and went against our requests. The council's spending is not being held to the same budgeting needs as the community residents' households need to do with all of the increases to our cost of living. This increase is well above what personal incomes have increased, wages and salaries have not increased by that percentage even over a 10 year period while the council has had an increase multiple times already. Taking into account the increase in mortgage interest rates, health cover, insurances, electricity, fuel, groceries just to name a few the now proposed rate increase for the council for the second time in a short period does not match the community's ability to afford this extra expense on household budgets.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No the council has not sought or established the need with its LGA. The council has not communicated with its LGA where the previous increase that was just approved and implemented has and is going to justify another increase within 12 months.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

If the council has canvassed alternatives they have not sought community advice to the alternatives to the rate rise. The council has not proven to the community the justified need for the increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No the council did not communicate with the community. This has been kept quite by the council and not communicated in any form. The previous increase communication was kept to a minimum just as this one is.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

If there has been an engagement with the community it has been a very select few this has been engaged with. I personally do not know of anyone in the community that knows about this increase proposal.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

There has been no action taken and the community doesn't know about the proposed variation to respond. Communication has purposely been kept to a minimum by the council to prevent feedback.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I cannot see any reasonableness of any of this special variation as the impact will be hard hitting on the community and its current struggles with the cost of living.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

There is and no consideration on the council's part, the very recent increase already pushed people to the edge as they did not listen to community feedback.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The plan by the council is all just a well written proposal, they honestly don't care when in reality people do ask for help. As usual they will carry on as normal once they get what they want without being held to account for their actions.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No they have not been exhibited, I only found out about this when the local media did a news story about how this is being quietly pushed through without community knowledge.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They honestly cannot quantify this as the latest increase has just only been approved, there is no way there is enough current data to back their claims.

Author name: R. Ball

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The Valuer General has indicated an 85% increase in land value, hence a substantial rate rise is imminent despite an SRV. All economies took a hit during Covid, check out the national debt, but the economy is turning around. Income for the council will be improving as visitors start flying in and utilise parks. With inflation and interest rates which are tipped to still rise this year, times are tough for everyone, let alone rate payers on low incomes. This SRV is not needed if the Council puts aside its entrepreneurial ventures and gets back to core Council responsibilities and learns to work within a set budget, as they have done previously for 37 years. This same council tried ramming a SRV through a couple of years ago despite community angst, which was thankfully rejected. I hope this will also be rejected until we can elect some competent, responsible people.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. From their submission, without a rate variation they have turned an \$8 million deficit in early 2021 to \$583,000 surplus in 2023.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I can see, and surely the doom and gloom of Covid where income from council parks and the airport plummeted must surely be reversed now. Did any councilors try to book into Halifax Park at Shoal Bay over Christmas?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

There is a confusing table showing 'Rates Movement Breakdown' which is totally unintelligible other than to indicate that Residential, Business and Farmland rate cost seems to have doubled dollarswise, despite a supposed 9.5% rise (Residential).

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No one from Council has contacted me as to how I can pay this extra amount. It has been presented as a fait accompli, like it or lump it.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

If councilors dragged themselves away from the chamber and listened to what I am sure a MAJORITY of ratepayers think of this sort, this submission would be withdrawn. Seeing as it is to proceed, one can only presume they really don't care.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Ask a young couple paying a mortgage in the current interest rate sham, or a pensioner trying to keep himself fed with dairy products going up 12%, or a tradie trying to keep abreast of fuel price increases what is reasonable. Now the council wants to raise your rates 30%? No, that is quite reasonable, it won't have any affect whatsoever.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't know if our current councilors are all millionaires, our mayor couldn't wait to tell us that he will not have any remuneration for the job, but I really think collectively they have no idea how we are supposed to pay for this as they don't know our individual financial position. I can guarantee the majority of people are not willing to pay it.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have lived and paid rates here for 37 years and no previous council has had to propose a 'hardship clause' to address an SRV. I have no intention of looking at their plan as I find it an indictment of their own incompetence in being able to manage their financial affairs.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I think the initial SRV was outlined in the local paper once with a dearth of information since. Council may well have jumped through all the hoops before presenting their submission, but it was lip service to the community who has to foot the bill.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

All I could get was a diatribe of bleating about Covid. Productivity improvements? Is that where a cast of thousands repair a

road then repeat the exercise three months later after a heavy fog? Cost containment strategies? Does that mean the mayor is going to back trade the ratepayer funded fully optioned, top of the range Ford Ranger for a Corolla? No I am thinking it is likely more town beautification, cycleways, great footpaths adjoining goat tracks (Avenue of the Allies), and sponsored Koalas.

Author name: R. DICKENS

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

WAITING MONEY ON TOWNS ETC RAYMOND TERRACE PROJECTS EG MALL & PROJECTS LIKE BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS FOR TOURISTS INSTEAD OF RATEPAYERS NEEDS EG REQUIRED ROADS AND DRAINS MAINTAINENCE ISSUES

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

NO

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

NO

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

NO

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

NO THEY HAVN'T

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

IGNORED THE GENERAL POULATION

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

NO CONSIDERATION

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

DON'T CARE

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

DON'T CARE

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

WE DON'T KNOW

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

NO THEY ARE SPENDING MONEY IN THE INCORRECT AREA AND NEGLETING RATE PAYERS NEEDS FOR ROADS AND DRAINS ETC

Author name: R. Donaldson

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I believe that some councilors overspend on items for personal use underwritten as workplace expenditure. ie vehicles use. The purchase of all caravan parks in the port Stephens area shows a commitment to standards in the delivery of accommodation but fair competition should also be allowed. The approval of rival swim centers is also concerning given approval of alternate swim centers was denied to ensure success of council owned and operated ventures is successful. With a commitment to monopolizing markets I feel our council is becoming a little distant from its residents.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I dont think so, I havent seen greater plans for cod or outer lying areas even after amalgamation

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Again, as with previous I have not seen evidence of this, no announcements, no plans, no infrastructure development other than the hospital. In short no.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I feel that the cost amount for the individual / home owner has been almost actively hidden. The 2.5 % sounds like a smaller number than actual dollar figures.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No definitely no.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Nil; unaware of any. Where would I find this? Phone them?

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The general cost of living impacts are significant. I feel that all sectors of our community with a mortgage and rising costs of living expenditures would have considerable difficulty in warranting a rate rise in the current economic climate.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. As above, with significant concerns for pensioners, disability provisioned members of the community, single parent families and low income earners.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I feel that it would reflect poorly on me as part of a working couple earning in excess of 180 thousand to claim hardship based on a monthly mortgage repayment of \$5500 and supporting teens to adults into the workforce. However this is the likely reality or downsizing and alternative LGA living requirements.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes, I have seen these after looking on hyperlinks from this site before I made comment here. I became aware of this through social media.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Sale of assets that have been publicly owned have not been well advertised prior to sales nor has purchase of investments moving forward. Council could improve their social media public relations to be more transparent. (personal opinion from my experience)

Dear Sir

SRV Submission.

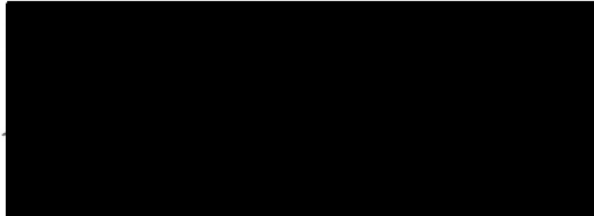
Objection To Port Stephens Council applying to increase our Council Rates by an extra 30% over three years on top of the normal 2.5% per annum.

1. Port Stephens rate payers have not been informed by Council about this planned rate rise they are applying for. Yes, they have had council meetings, however these meetings have taken place during business hours, where rate payers cannot attend the Council meeting to voice their objections, due to work commitments.
2. The council have not notified rate payers by mail explaining that they have applied to you, and their reasons for this huge rate rise. Therefore, rate payers have no idea the Council are applying for this increase.
3. And families and pensioners cannot afford this either, with mortgage rates sky rocketing and cost of living rising. They are struggling and battle as it is.

For these reasons I am objecting to Port Stephens Council submission for this huge rate rise. I am asking you to please think about the thousands of households in Port Stephens that will be greatly affected, causing more hardship in their lives.

Thank you for allowing me to make this submission. It is something that causes me great concern.

Yours Sincerely



Author name: R. Godfrey

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

We are in a period of significant financial hardship for a large number of ratepayers. For council to expect rates to pay an extra 31% is both disingenuous and disappointing given that no indication at all was given prior to the local council elections.

Please, for the financial welfare of ratepayers, do not allow Port Stephens council to do this as they have no ratepayer mandate to push us into greater financial hardship.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

There has been no significant interaction with rate payers regarding the increase. Firstly council claimed the increase was required to fix the state of roads after significant rain. When state government Announced funding for councils they then changed their rationale to sustainability.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No definitely not; other than vague statements about need reducing services to ratepayers.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No I have not received any information from council regarding my future rates bill should they be successful.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Definitely not: in fact our mayor joked at a recent presentation to school children about the cohort of rate payers who have expressed their concern regarding council.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Platitudes about system in place for those unable to afford the proposed increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Port Stephens has a large retirement population, who are facing increasing pressure due to inflation to afford day to day costs. To inflict a 31% rate rise on this cohort is unconscionable.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Within my social circle I know of very few who are able to pay the proposed increase and nobody who is willing to pay. We are all struggling to make ends meet and had no indication prior to the local elections that there was any intention to increase rates beyond IPART percentage.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Platitudes, 5 will get you 10 that very few ratepayers will see any assistance from council. No income levels are stated just vague assurances that everyone will be looked after.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I assume so but they were not provided to ratepayers nor was there any correspondence saying where same was available. I have not seen any correspondence regarding this. However, I would point out that council spent about \$80,000 on a top of the line 4WD for our mayor. Not questioning the legality of this but question the morality of this expense just prior to seeking a 31% rate increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Havent seen any indications that council is serious about cost reductions.

Author name: R. Guinness

Date of submission: Saturday, 25 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

With rampant inflation and skyrocketing interest rates any increase will mean a heck of a lot of families will lose their homes.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Definitely not.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Never

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

You are joking

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

What action ?

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Totally unrealistic - the new UCV valuations will give council an undeserved windfall without increasing the base rate.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Does not exist.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Again - you are kidding.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not known but doubt it.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Productivity - they probably can't even spell it.

Author name: R. Mcilwain

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

It is ridiculous that I need to read about this proposal on Facebook, and the day that the submission ends! Not telling people about it and then making them navigate this form to give their say is also wrong. This form and all its questions will turn people off. Wages are not going up 30% over the next 3 years, so why should rates? How are people going to adore this? The council is making living in port Stephens unaffordable.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No! They had not even let us know their proposed rate rise of 30%! Not happy!

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No, we have heard nothing. Every local I have spoken to didnt know this was happening.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

NO

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No! Again I do not know anyone who knows about this.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I do not even know if they sort feedback. First anyone has heard about this. Its like they are trying to put it through without anyone knowing so their is no opposition.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

30% is too much. People are already struggling with inflation and interest rates. People already can not afford their mortgages and food in the area. Many are using food bank. This rate rise will effectively push families to not be able to feed their children. People will leave the bay for cheaper places to live. No consideration for the little people by local government.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

People are not willing or able to pay. Again people will leave. It will fast become one of the more expensive areas to live based on the greed of the council who puts money into wrong things!

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Fist Ive heard. Im sure it wont be attainable for most people.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Havent seen them. Why wasnt this sent to every residence? Only knew about it because someone on Port Stephens notice board (Facebook) posted about it this afternoon!

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council wastes a lot of money. Dodgy patch up jobs of roads that then need to be redone again and again and again.

Playgrounds for kids are desperate for a redo - Its embarrassing when you see what other LGAs have in comparison. Ask the public what to spend money on, they will have very different ideas.

Dear Sir

SRV Submission.

Objection To Port Stephens Council applying to increase our Council Rates by an extra 30% over three years on top of the normal 2.5% per annum.

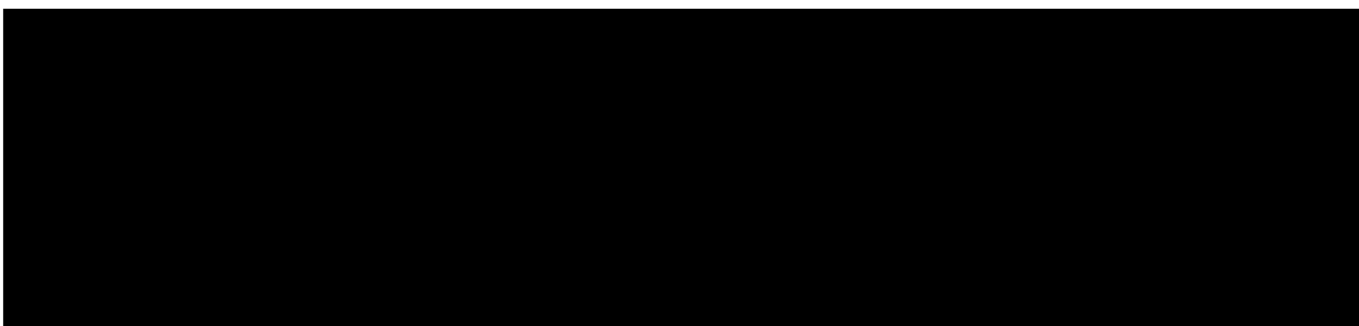
1. Port Stephens rate payers have not been informed by Council about this planned rate rise they are applying for. Yes, they have had council meetings, however these meetings have taken place during business hours, where rate payers cannot attend the Council meeting to voice their objections, due to work commitments.
2. The council have not notified rate payers by mail explaining that they have applied to you, and their reasons for this huge rate rise. Therefore, rate payers have no idea the Council are applying for this increase.
3. And families and pensioners cannot afford this either, with mortgage rates sky rocketing and cost of living rising. They are struggling and battle as it is.

For these reasons I am objecting to Port Stephens Council submission for this huge rate rise. I am asking you to please think about the thousands of households in Port Stephens that will be greatly affected, causing more hardship in their lives.

Thank you for allowing me to make this submission. It is something that causes me great concern.

Yours Sincerely

Rhonda Tillman.



13 February 2023

Dear IPart

I am sending this in the post and via email as we found it extremely difficult to navigate our way through the submission section on your website.

We are writing to you to oppose the SRV of Port Stephens Council.

We are on an aged pensions and find it difficult to survive on a week to week basis with the cost of food, fuel etc due to inflation.

We are finding it difficult to pay the rates as they are now without having an increase in rate rises. Why do over 55 retirement villages not have to pay rates? Would this not be an advantage to Port Stephens Council to collect rates off these residents? Therefore not having to have a rate increase!

When Council waste money on stupid things, for example; the parklets which were installed at Shoal Bay, when residents complained, the council when moved them 61km to Karauh, which is the other side of the shire. We feel that this was a waste of rate payers money, time and effort on the council's behalf when the money could have been spent on repairing the roads in the area.

Everyone we have spoken to are unaware of a rate increase, therefore we believe Port Stephens Council have not consulted the majority of residents in relation to this rate rise.

Port Stephens Council have public meetings at times when most people are unable to attend due to work commitments.

If Port Stephens Council are saying that they are strapped for cash why are they giving so much money away for Grants & Sponsorships.

Community Support Fund	Up to \$6000 per application
Micro Grant Fund	Up to \$1000 per application
Vibrant spaces Fund	Up to \$6000 per application
Aboriginal Projects Fund	Up to \$6000 per application
Community Event Development Fund	Up to \$3000 per application
Major Event Sponsorship Fund	Negotiated upon consultation
International Womens Day Scholarship	\$1000 scholarships available
Mayoral Funds	Up to \$30 000 per financial year at the discretion of the Mayor and adopted by council
Rapid Response Fund	Up to \$500 per application

This was advertised in the Examiner local paper on 2 February 2023.

The footbridge in Victoria Street Nelson Bay was let go too long without any maintenance from Council, the original cost to have if repaired was approximately \$400 000, instead Council had it removed for \$100 000, therefore there is no pedestrian access over the busy road. Pedestrians now have to use the pedestrian crossing which causes major delays at the nearby traffic lights.

Port Stephens Council has history of wasting rate payers money, with failed legal battles, poor financial decisions, such as the mayor having a \$90 000 4WD as his mayoral vehicle paid for by rate payers. This is not a good look for Council who want more money off their ratepayers.

Please IPart consider the ratepayers who are already financially struggling with everyday cost of living, not to mention house and health insurances and vehicle running costs.

Kind Regards

[Redacted signature area]

Robert & Kerri Wilson

[Redacted contact information]

Author name: S. Almazan

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I find it extremely hard to comprehend how Council can put their hand up and seek to increase our rates when we are already paying over \$6000 (not a typo) in annual rates for a 525sq/m residential block of land. We have recently received the current land valuation from the Valuer Generals Office, it has doubled in value since the last Valuation 3 yrs ago, I can only imagine what that will do to the next round of Council rates will be , given the new Valuation. I am retired , the thought of going out and getting a part time job , just so I can afford my Council rates is a sorry state of affairs. Council need to STOP using rate payers as an ATM and start being more financially responsible.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: S. Anderson

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

We are not willing to pay the special variation. Our mortgage cost is up, electricity and petrol are up. We can not find the extra money for the special variation rate in this climate. We simply wont be able to afford to keep our house. The community does not have the capacity to pay. We have young families and and elderly citizens who are doing it tough. Lots of older citizens are not even aware of this increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

We are not willing to pay the special variation. Our mortgage cost is up, electricity and petrol are up. We can not find the extra money for the special variation rate in this climate. We simply wont be able to afford to keep our house.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The community does not have the capacity to pay. We have young families and and elderly citizens who are doing it tough. Lots of older citizens are not even aware of this increase.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Dear Sir

SRV Submission.

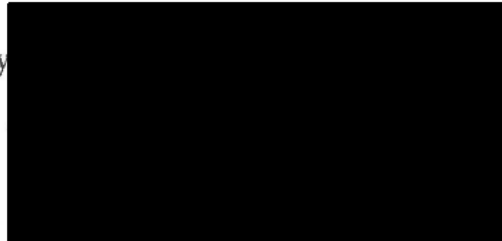
Objection To Port Stephens Council applying to increase our Council Rates by an extra 30% over three years on top of the normal 2.5% per annum.

1. Port Stephens rate payers have not been informed by Council about this planned rate rise they are applying for. Yes, they have had council meetings, however these meetings have taken place during business hours, where rate payers cannot attend the Council meeting to voice their objections, due to work commitments.
2. The council have not notified rate payers by mail explaining that they have applied to you, and their reasons for this huge rate rise. Therefore, rate payers have no idea the Council are applying for this increase.
3. And families and pensioners cannot afford this either, with mortgage rates sky rocketing and cost of living rising. They are struggling and battle as it is.

For these reasons I am objecting to Port Stephens Council submission for this huge rate rise. I am asking you to please think about the thousands of households in Port Stephens that will be greatly affected, causing more hardship in their lives.

Thank you for allowing me to make this submission. It is something that causes me great concern.

Yours Sincerely



Author name: t. irwin

Date of submission: Monday, 20 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

i timothy patrick irwin as a aged pensioner could not pay my council rates if the increase by port stevens council went ahead at 30%.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

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Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: V. Watson

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I would like to see honest and hard working people working for the people, not getting in on false pretences and becoming all of a sudden having memory loss. These people earn very good money, unlike many that will not be able to make ends meet and end up in poverty. Those rate payers who are extremely wealthy building huge million dollar homes, why can they not be charged more in rates, they can well afford it. Definitely a class war in Nelson Bay.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Unaware of increase in rates until 1 week ago.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not to my knowledge or many others in the area we live.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Unaware

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

To date, council have not responded to the community that I'm aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The port stephens area have a high number of elderly, young families and homeless, there is also a large gap between the wealthy and low income earners. People are struggling with absolutely all the basics of life to survive so how can a council increase rates by such a huge percentage. Council seem more interested in giving developers the green light to build high rise and over the normal height [REDACTED]. With interest rates on mortgages rising constantly, how can council justify to hit the pockets of those who are struggling to find more money. Wages definitely do not keep up with inflation, pensioners do not get pay rises. Complete greed by the Port Stephens Councillors.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Obviously council do not have consideration to the rate payers in their area or otherwise they would not be raising the rates at a ridiculous increase. Only time one hears about what they are going to give us is when an election is looming. Afterwards all that was promised is conveniently forgotten.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

They know there is hardship but still intend to apply. It's not rocket science and sounds like a ploy to get ratepayers in a false sense of trust in them. We all know it's rubbish.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not seen or aware.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Where is all this information and why only now we see it on social media.

ON PORT STEPHENS SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

I believe that this is the third attempt by Port Stephens Council to increase the rates beyond the normal rate increase. I note that they are spending considerable amounts on their own infrastructure at this time. This includes new workshop construction is on the old site, which is within a residential area. It looks impressive, however its value is hard to understand as much of Council's work is undertaken by contractors.

The Valuer General has just determined new land valuations for Port Stephens. They have increased by 50%. Therefore the Council rates will increase by 50% without an annual correction for the CPI. Valuations are done every three years. If the Council gets its way rates will actually increase by 65% in the first year. After three years, rates would be 200% greater than they are now.

Not a bad windfall for a bunch of people who have trouble spending wisely now.

An example:



This is the William Street Beautification Project. It's neither beautiful, or useful and has been under construction for about a year. A pedestrian black spot. As you can see pedestrians step directly onto the carriageway from behind a dark fence. The Project included other features which have since been removed as unsuitable for the job. By the way the speed bumps don't slow wide tracked 4WDs and delivery trucks.

Regards



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

An increase in revenue is necessary but the council has not chased all avenues to raise revenue fairly. I refer to the multiplying lifestyle villages. These places, officially caravan parks are only rated on the UCV of the entire block. They are advertised as no council rates, and yield a typical rate value per dwelling of less than \$200 per year. Therefore the 2500 people living in these places currently are making no contribution to the provision of council services. I have no problem with the individuals making no contribution but a way must be found to leverage a greater contribution from the developers each year. The minister says that in his view the council could determine a sub category of rating property and charge these operators more. The council could gain an additional \$3million per year, offsetting the need for some of the 10% rise they are seeking per year. Latitude One, (Ingenia lifestyle) under current rates and values pays about \$40,000 per annum. As the place contains 200 units that is \$200 per dwelling per year. That is a joke. Nominally affordable housing but as they are now approaching \$1million per unit they are not affordable when including the \$200 per week they charge residents for services. They are an aberration and are exploiting loopholes in the Acts. For example the houses are not relocatable. The government should also be looking at the considerable tax loss because these houses (caravans) change hands with no stamp duty. As at September 2021, there were approximately 518 communities in NW on the register of land lease communities, housing over 36,000 residents. Ninety-five per cent of all residential land lease communities are located in rural and regional NSW. 25 of those and 2500+ residents live here. The problem is large and growing. He also wrote Councils can choose how they calculate and distribute rates between properties in the council area. Make them do so. See attached letter.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

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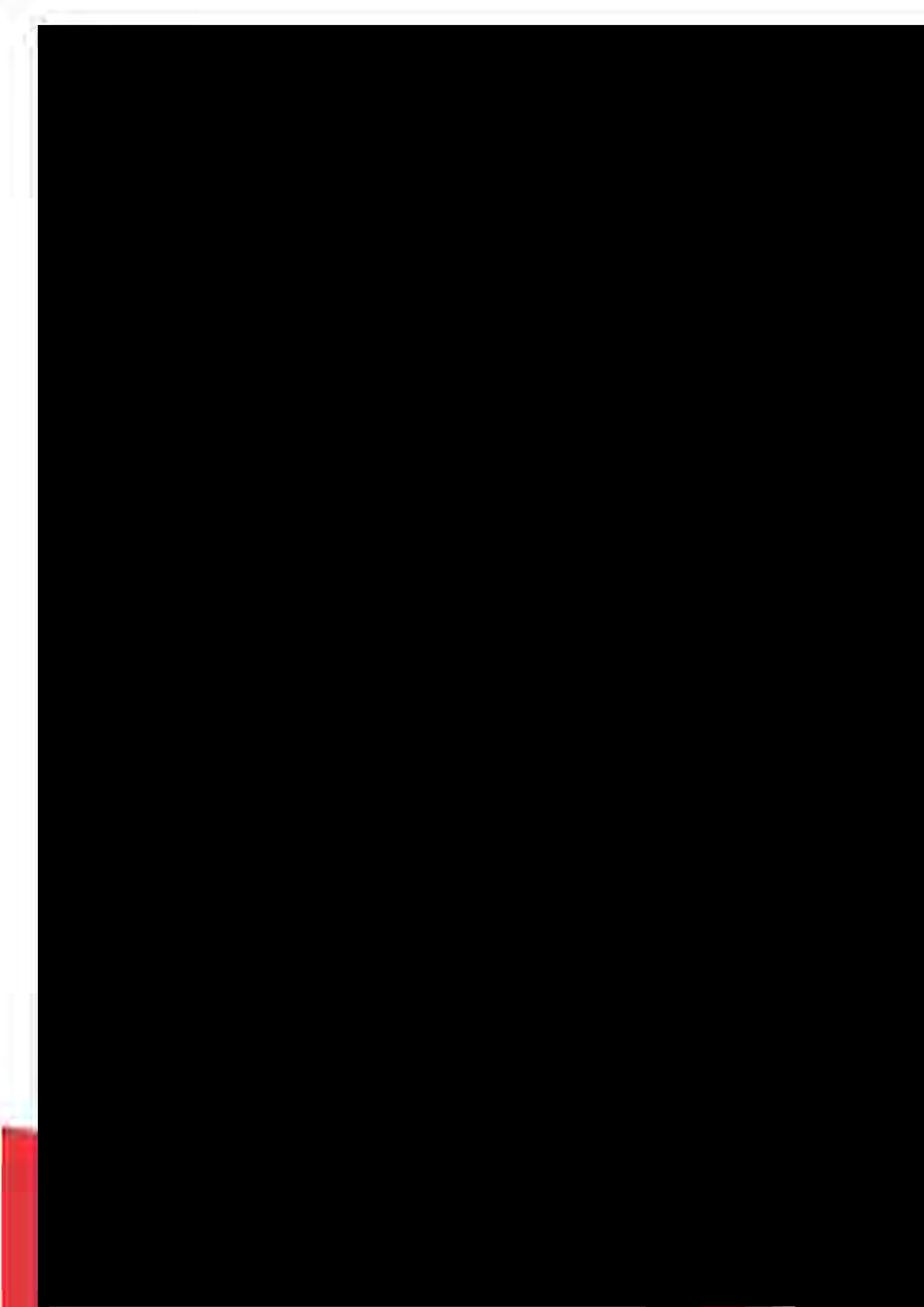
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Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.





The Hon. Victor Dominello MP
Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government
Minister for Small Business
Minister for Fair Trading

OFFICIAL

Our reference: COR-00242-2022

Ms Kate Washington MP
Member for Port Stephens
By email: portstephens@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Washington

Thank you for your representations on behalf of the local residents of Port Stephens about council rates for residential land lease communities. I note the concerns raised and can appreciate the reasons that prompted members of the Port Stephens community to write to you.

Residential land lease communities

As you would be aware, residential land lease communities are ones in which residents often own the home they occupy, but lease the land where the home sits from a community operator. Home owners pay rent in the form of site fees for the right to occupy the site. Other residents may lease the home as well as the land.

As at September 2021, there were approximately 518 communities in NSW on the register of land lease communities, housing over 36,000 residents. Ninety-five per cent of all residential land lease communities are located in rural and regional NSW, with only 23 communities located within the Sydney metropolitan area.

Communities offer a variety of services and facilities and some have a mixture of tourists, tenants, long-term casual occupants and home owners. Operators of land lease communities range from 'mum and dad' investors, to commercial developers and larger corporations.

Residential land lease communities have become an important part of the housing mix in NSW, adding diversity to the mix of available accommodation. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in residential land lease communities as an affordable long-term housing option. This is in part due to the decline in housing affordability, as well as some older residents preferring the communal lifestyle and informal care networks that develop in communities which may enable them to live independently

All residential land lease communities in NSW are covered by the *Residential (Land Lease) Communities Act 2013* (the Act). The Act provides the framework for the regulation of land lease communities, including the relationship between community operators, home owners and other residents of permanent sites in residential land lease communities.

Council determines the rates paid by a residential land lease community

In residential land lease communities, operators are responsible under the Act for paying all rates and taxes.

However, residents of these communities pay council rates indirectly, through fees they pay to the operator for the right to occupy the site. This is comparable to the situation in residential tenancies under which a landlord is always responsible for the payment of all rates, taxes or charges levied by governments.

OFFICIAL

Councils are required to determine the combination of rates, charges and fees that it needs to fund the services they provide to the community. Councils can choose how they calculate and distribute rates between properties in the council area.

More information about this is available on the Office of Local Government's website: at <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/about-councils/laws-and-regulations/rates-charges-and-pensioner-concession/>

Land tax applicable to a residential land lease community

In certain circumstances, residential land lease communities may be eligible for reduced or waived land tax. To be eligible for these reductions, the community must primarily be occupied by retired people and be registered with NSW Fair Trading.

The land tax applicable is determined by the percentage of residents who are retired, or over 55 years of age and use the home as their principal place of residence.

More information is available on the Revenue NSW website at <https://www.revenue.nsw.gov.au/help-centre/resources-library/rulings/land/lt071v3>

Review of the Act

The Department of Customer Service completed a [statutory review into the Act](#) with 386 submissions being received. These submissions were carefully considered in preparing the *Residential (Land Lease) Communities Act 2013 Statutory Review Report* (the Report) which was tabled in Parliament on 29 November 2021.

The Government is committed to implementing the reform opportunities identified in the Report and I have referred your representations to the relevant team so it can be considered as part of that work.

I trust this information has been of assistance.

Yours sincerely



The Hon. Victor Dominello MP
Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government
Minister for Small Business
Minister for Fair Trading

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

██████████ Sent: Friday, 3 March 2023 2:21 AM To: Local Government Mailbox Subject: Port Stephens Council application for a Special Rate Variation Hello ██████████, Please attach this to the submission made by me last night as you have offered.. My primary concern is the fact that any increase above the normal allowable Council Rate increase will add stress to the households that are already experiencing unexpected costs. I am aware that there are measures that can be access by those suffering difficulties but many will not find these sufficient if their rates are increased by an extraordinarily high amount. The proposed SRV seems excessive. Council does need funds for necessary infrastructure but perhaps they need to refine their costs to the necessities for the near future. Regards, ██████████

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.


Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

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Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

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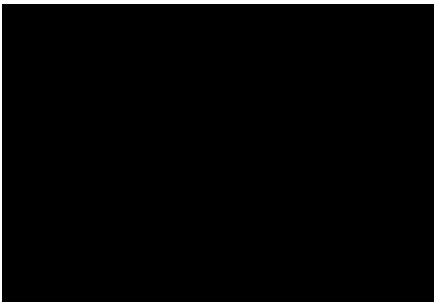
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Submitted on Thu, 2023-03-02 18:29

Submitted by: Anonymous

Submitted values are:



Your Message

OBJECTION to the SRV that PSC is requesting as most residents of the Shire are pensioners or low-income families and the amount of 30% over 3 years is financially too much for the average family who are still suffering financially from Covid times.
Assets bought from rate money need to be sold.

1st March 2023

Dear IPART,

RE: Special Rate Variation (SRV)

We are writing to advise of our strongest objection to the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) by Port Stephens Council.

We provide our reasons as follows.

Recent Valuer General Updates eliminate the need for a SRV.

New unimproved property valuations have recently been issued by the Valuer Generals Department with property values roughly doubling in their unimproved capital value over the last few years.

For example our current Valuer General's Notice of Value is \$2,800,000 whereas in 2019 it was \$1,340,000. Whilst the increase in our property values can be seen as a positive thing, we don't have a similar increase in income. In fact most of our neighbours are retired and are on fixed incomes with most of them on the age pension.

This increase in our land values will result in a significant increase in our Council rates, therefore providing Port Stephens Council with a significant increase in revenue from rates.

Rental Pressure and other contributing factors mean the proposed SRV is poorly timed, and will adversely affect some parts of the community more than others.

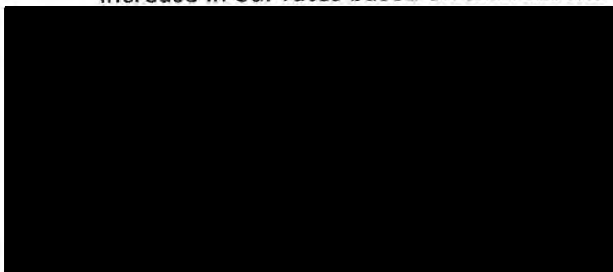
As everyone is aware there is a rental crisis occurring in many areas, including Port Stephens. While some parts of the media are quick to point to "greedy landlords", we know that many investors are struggling with huge increases to mortgage interest rates plus other cost of living pressures.

If property owners are hit with a SRV, the inevitable result will be to increase rents as much as possible to cover some of these increased costs. This will have a significant adverse impact on people who are renting and these people are often the ones who can least afford it.

Furthermore, as the world returns to normal after the Covid pandemic, Port Stephens Council's revenue is also returning to normal with peak occupancy rates occurring over the summer months throughout all of the Council owned holiday parks in the Port Stephens area plus the Council will also receive dividends from its part ownership of Newcastle Airport as air travel returns to normal.

These factors combine to provide Council with its highest revenue income in the last few years therefore avoiding the need for any SRV.

We thank you in anticipation of IPART's support by refusing Council's application for any increase in our rates based on the reasons outlined above.





Dear IPART,

We are writing to advise of our strongest objection to the proposed special rate variation by Port Stephens, Council.

We provide our reasons as follows.

Recent Valuer General Updates eliminate the need for an SRV.

New unimproved property valuations have been issued by the Valuer Generals Department with property values roughly doubling in their unimproved capital value over the last few years.

This will result in a significant increase to our council rates, therefore providing Port Stephens Council with a significant increase in revenue.

Rental Pressure and other contributors mean the proposed SRV is poorly timed, and affects all parts of the community more than others.

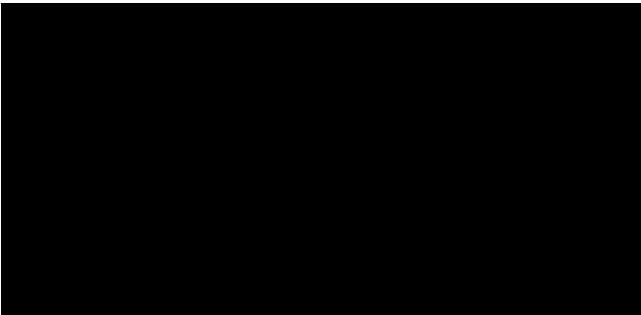
As everyone is aware there is a rental crisis occurring in many areas, including Port Stephens. While some parts of the media are quick to point to “greedy landlords”, we can see that many investors are struggling with huge increases in interest rates and other cost of living pressures and add to this a SRV and the inevitable result will be to raise rents as much as possible to cover some of these costs. This funnels much of the burden directly to the parts of the community that can least afford it.

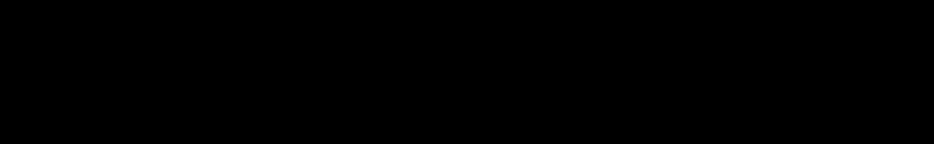
As the world returns to normal after the pandemic, Port Stephens Council’s revenue stream is also returning to normal with peak occupancy rates occurring over Summer throughout their Council owned holiday parks plus the dividends the Council receives from its part ownership of Newcastle Airport.

These factors combine to provide Council with the highest revenue income in the last few years therefore avoiding the need for any SRV.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely,





Subject: Proposed special rate variation by Port Stephens Council

To whom it may concern

I'm writing to you to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed SRV that Port Stephens Council are considering.

I have recently received my Land Valuation notice and it has increased nearly 2 fold in 3 years!! I find this to be quite absurd and ridiculous and just more of a revenue earner for government. As the land value has increased nearly double, that will no doubt mean that the council rates will follow suit resulting in the council earning double the amount of money from the local tax payers. Therefore, there is no need for the SRV of over 30% as they'll already be receiving a lot more funds that can be spent in the LGA.

This potential 'double increase' has caused my family and I much stress as we will totally struggle to pay the extra thousands of dollars per year in council rates, basically putting unnecessary pressure on us in an already precarious situation potentially destroying my family in the process.

I can only imagine that there will be many many other families in similar (or worse) situations - already stretched to the limit with rising mortgage repayments, fuel costs and grocery/essential costs all skyrocketing- that are currently in financial stress and this additional blow will just tip the scales and be completely unaffordable.

I implore you to carefully consider so many people's fragile financial and mental health and stop the additional SRV from being implemented.

I thank you for taking the time to read this email.

Kind regards



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 13 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
I have attached a word document outlining my concerns..

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I do not believe they have

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

in late 2022 council engaged two consultants (Professors of Local Government for UNE) to assess and make recommendations on their financial situation. The report included 4 options; 1. 10% on fees and charges, once off for 2023-24 = \$400,000.00
2. Remove free resident parking exemption = \$1 Million per annum
3. Continue efforts for grants = 62% increase
Sell underperforming assets = \$5 million over 5 years
Reduce service level - Discuss with the community. None of these options have been put forward to ratepayers.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The council did offer various engagement opportunities with low participation.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Possibly

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council has reported in their Part B of SVR submission that 80% of survey respondents agreed on a sustainable council. Of course, they did. They also reported that 790 people visited the survey and did not complete it. I was one of the 790 people and the reason I did not complete the survey was there was no option to say no to the SVR proposal. The survey gave two choices for svr, I didn't agree to either so choose to opt out of completing the survey.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

This increase will impact on struggling families and older residents on fixed incomes or a pension. With the rising cost of interest rates, fuel, energy, food and the fact that no medical centers offer bulk billing, we are forced to pay \$80-\$100 for a visit to the Doctor I believe the cost on residents is unreasonable.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The council in my opinion has misinterpreted the survey feedback, 80% support council financial sustainability does not mean they support a rate rise of this amount. Also, when they were asked this they were not aware of Part 1 allowing PSC to increase rates by 4.4%.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

In my opinion the plan is complicated and quite harsh

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I'm not sure

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They have offered a very vague outline of proposed works and nothing specific with a deadline.

SRV Submission - Port Stephens Council

I am writing to reject the SRV proposed by Port Stephens Council. It is my understanding Port Stephens council are proposing a rate rise of

9.5% over three years cumulative to 30% to remain after this.

The need for this rate rise has been based on a report from two external consultants engaged by the council to assess the council financial

position. The cost of this consultation fee has not been made public and the outcome by council was to report a projected need for \$80M over ten years.

I find this astounding and wonder what organisation can base their budgets over a 10 year projection?

What also concerns me is this need for \$80M was arrived at before the council received funding from the state government. The funding received for 22-23

Is;

\$1,333,225 Million for roads

\$251,105.00 for potholes

\$200,000.00 for coastal management

It seems obvious this funding would have improved their budget however the council has not adjusted their costings or projections.

There is a distrust of this council who have been very secretive about the real cost of a prolonged and costly legal battle over the lagoons estate after being advised not to proceed and ending with council being libel for legal fees and costly drainage.

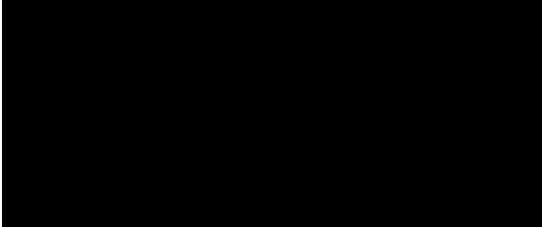
The Mayor has shown lack of restraint or leadership by purchasing a costly \$86,000.00 Ford Raptor truck unsuitable for a mayoral vehicle after the financial situation was reported and causes me to wonder what other waste has been allowed.

I feel this cost will place extra financial burden on residents many who have home loans or receive a pension. 30% of residents are over 60 years of age and facing new costs of paying for a Doctors visit of \$80 to \$100 due to bulk billing being removed across the LGA and rising energy and fuel costs as we have to travel longer distances.

The burden of this council's poor financial management should not be placed on the residents who are already under financial stress.

I am on a fixed income and this extra cost is in my opinion unacceptable and not necessary.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns.



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I am trying not to be emotive in this reply, however it hard not to be. Putting it simply. We all have budgets to live with, the council should too. With cost of living spiralling upwards, incomes/pensions losing their buying power, it seems just plain greedy of the council to request this SRV (especially after their own survey results indicated the majority of ratepayers do not want it). One thing that hasn't been accounted for is the boom in housing in the shire. Medowie alone has seen thousands of homes built. That expected increase in revenue does not seem to have been calculated into the SRV. Also, the council has bemoaned the fact that COVID has reduced their income. But what they haven't factored in is the now COVID free travel restrictions have been lifted, and this has seen a huge increase in tourist dollars. The council also has shares in the local Newcastle airport, revenue for this is increasing dramatically, and will continue to grow with the implementation of International travel coming online at the airport.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

The councils own "survey" clearly shows that over 60% of respondents do not want this rate rise. This was also demonstrated by the previous SRV request, also denied by IPART.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Other than the questionnaire in the survey, I know of no other alternative methods put forward by the council

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes. However, they did not declare the impact of the recent land Valuation increase. In my case a 54% increase in land value. So therefore effectively a 54% increase in my base rates calculations. This council then want to add an additional 32% base rate rise.....!!!!

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Apart from a couple of information sessions, no. These sessions did not have much detail of what the "future funding" was to be utilised for.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

As far as I know no action has been undertaken. My own research/questioning of many locals has revealed that I know of no-one who wants/can afford these increases.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Starting with the obvious - cost of living. Food, groceries etc have gone up exponentially. COVID, Floods, fires have all played a significant part of the general cost of living. Vehicles. Comprehensive insurance has gone up by 10%, fuel 30%, cost of vehicle maintenance (tyres, servicing etc) 10%. As a self funded retiree, my superannuation fund has suffered because of COVID, world and Australian markets falling. My assumed 6% return on super has been in reality a 9% fall. Many military veterans live in this council area, their DVA pensions have only recently been increased by 3.5%. Aged pensioners and invalid pensioners have only received miserly increases. So most of the ratepayers could not possibly see the SRV request as reasonable. Adding the SRV on top of these rising costs is NOT reasonable.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

One issue I have with respect to council consideration for ratepayers is their distinct uncaring attitude to expenditure. As exemplified by the "Mayor New Car". Although the new car was within the guidelines, the Mayor obtain at ratepayers expense a hugely expensive four wheel drive car. Surely a council considerate of ratepayers funding would have chosen a smaller/economical vehicle to be utilised by council staff (staff pool car). There are many other examples of this councils' poor fiscal management.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The hardship plans are very sparse on details, eg how to apply, who can/cannot apply. They also appear to be a delaying tactic, no a real hardship consideration.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Possibly at the councils office. However I have seen nothing on the actual SRV. Especially no 'survey' results were published.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Not aware of productivity/costs reductions etc.

Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal

PO Box K35

Haymarket Post Shop

NSW 1240

Dear Tribunal Members

Re: Special Rate Variation Application – Port Stephens Council

This submission is supplementary to my earlier submission.

PSC like any organisation facing difficult financial futures should be identifying mechanisms to either escalate revenues or to curtail expenses. Unfortunately, however PSC has placed an imbalanced focus on the former as it is perceived as the easiest way forward, as it does not necessitate any structural management reform, or upset the status quo, and only has to deal with a disparate, unco-ordinated and somewhat lethargic community. Council sees the SRV application approval as the easiest way forward.

It has followed a structured orchestrated approach to achieve that end by following a step by step strategy to align with the IPART assessment criteria. To do this they have engaged consultants to formulate their submission to achieve a SRV approval. In fact, the selected consultant in their proposal submission to Council cited their success in achieving approval for an SRV for other councils.

There has been scant focus on reducing expenditures by:

- a) Reducing the range of services it provides to the community
- b) Reducing the standard of service it provides
- c) Deferring optional capital expenditures which do not generate direct revenue

PSC should adopt a strategy of withdrawing from service delivery areas which are available from other providers in the market. Emphasis should be on core services which are universally beneficial to the whole community, not just to small segments of the community. These core services would relate to roads, footpaths, drainage and public reserves. Waste collection is also a core service but is not funded through a SRV. No one else is providing these services, unlike

tourist accommodation, child care services, libraries, building and development certification, and community events. I have commented previously on the non-core aspect of Newcastle Airport.

Reducing the frequency of street cleaning, mowing of parks, painting and cleaning of public buildings, opening hours of libraries or replacing library resources, and replacing plant and equipment and reducing community events are the types of service standards which could be modified. Linked to the standards of service issue is also the opportunity to utilise contractors to address peak seasonality- weather and tourist visitation for example.

At this point in time a delay to funding of major capital works would have two benefits. Firstly, it would allow redirection of a portion of the funds to preventative maintenance works to enhance asset condition, and secondly it would defer the demand for revenue to a future (perhaps less challenging) time. The qualification to this approach is where complementary grant funding is available. Also, on this point Council should be making strong representations to the grants commission to make grants "untied" (not fixed to a specific project).

The SRV application by PSC should be rejected as it has failed to fully explore the alternative approach of reducing services and costs.



16 Feb 2023

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I am unaware of the Council proposing a different revenue path other than a massive increase in rates. the only alternative has been a 30+% increase in one hit or over 3 years.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I am aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

They have advised in percentage terms but not in dollar terms.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Not that I am aware of.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I am not aware of any response from Council on this.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I believe that the impact of the proposed rate increase will be far worse than initial indications now that property values have gone up in line with notice just received from the Valuer General. In an area that has a large population of retired people the financial impact will be great.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Not sure there has been any consideration from Council in this grab for cash particularly with inflation rates out of control. Given electricity and fuel prices are also on a steep uncontrolled increase the communities capacity to handle this increase in non existent.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Not aware of it.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I do not know.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Can't comment on this.

Local Government Team
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW
PO Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop,
New South Wales, 1240

Re: Port Stephens Council application

Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 9.5% per annum over 3 years

Panel,

I would like to share with the Panel my investigations into the application made by Port Stephens Council (PSC) for a Special Rate Variation, and why this application should be fully investigated as to its merits, and I believe should be ultimately rejected.

1. Financial Fitness

- a. The Office of Local Government recently assessed Port Stephens Council as financially fit. I would concur with this assessment. The statutory accounts for 2021 showed a net operating profit of \$2.817M and 2022 of \$8.853M, and Comprehensive Profits of \$43.9M and \$135.5M respectively. These results do not indicate a Council in distress, a growth rate of 314%.
- b. Rate collections in the statutory accounts were in 2020 \$56.804M, 2021 \$59.324M and 2022 \$61.596M. In the PSC submission, worksheet 2, a notional income of \$47.995M has been put forward by the Council for 2023. **The reduction in notional collections makes no sense.** The statutory accounts note that the property valuation for 2021 was used by Council to calculate their 2022 rates. For our property the Valuer General has recently advised an increase in freehold land value of 39% for 2021 to 2022. **As Council use these increased valuations, the operating profit will enormously increase.** It is therefore not necessary to grant a special increase that in effect would **result in double taxation.**
- c. Operating Expenses 2021 \$127.601M, 2022 \$131.154M increased by only 2.7% roughly in line with inflation for the period. With desperately needed improvement in oversight of project management and less reliance on external consultancies, in other words becoming more self-reliant, operating expenses could be comfortably contained well less than projected temporary inflation, and in all likelihood services may well improve.
- d. It appears Capital expenditure could be ignored in review of this application. Port Stephens Council are very accomplished in securing grants for these needs. Additionally, recycling of investments may well address future capital needs, and may also reduce their exposure to future risk.
- e. Between 2021 and 2022 Full Time Employees (FTE) increased by 13, (560 – 547), 2.3%, and Employee Benefits per FTE grew from \$94.4K to \$94.6K, also 2.3%. Key

Management Personnel benefits, after deducting for termination benefits, grew from \$4.073M to \$4.392M, 7.8% growth, demonstrates a degree of inequity that may represent a cultural issue and in turn an opportunity for improvement in staff churn, especially in middle management and supervisors, that may reinforce improvement in service.

A comparison with adjacent LGAs revealed:

Comparing Employee Benefits to Total Operating Income

Port Stephens 2020 – 33.9%

Maitland 2019 – 22.1%

Mid Coast 2020 – 24.5%

In the 2022 statutory accounts the ratio for **PSC remains at 30.6%**. This indicates either a higher number of employees, or rates of pay are too high, with **no improvement** to correct this difference between LGA's.

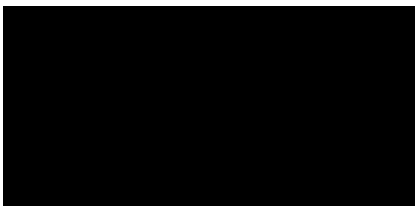
2. The Projects List

- a. In the last SRV application a proposed list of projects (totalled \$112M) is no longer provided, as I have not found it within the worksheets. I conclude that PSC have now formed the view that the community did not support the projected capital expenditure that was justification for the last application.

3. The application ignores increased income due to population growth, which is substantial in this LGA.

- a. It also neglects to advise that a substantial portion of the LGA is attractive to existing and potential residents that are on fixed retirement incomes. This SRV proposal by PSC has the potential to cause financial anxiety to this group.
- b. Compounding this trend, the number of fixed income residents grows with council recently approved over 55's style permanent accommodation developments and conversion of caravan parks. These residents also require all of the services that PSC supply, but PSC are unable to fund these needs from this group of residents. This requires legislative change and should not be addressed with a proxy SRV that is born by the wider community.
- c. With regard to point (b), it is noteworthy that reductions in pensioner rebates are shown in the accounts for 2021 (\$1.067M) to 2022 (\$0.969M). This is inconsistent with the above developments and the wider population throughout the LGA.

For these reasons, I request that the Panel carefully consider and reject this application.



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I have already made a submission but since then received our new VG valuation and this strongly reinforces my view that the increase sought is simply excessive and not needed. I would like to add these comments. In our case, our UCV has increased by 74% and when this flows into the 2022/23 rate calculation, would increase our rates by some 36% alone - over \$1000. My understanding talking to other residents is that similar increases are occurring with many higher than this so the impact is across the whole LGA. To add the SRV of 31% on top of this increase is simply unsustainable for ratepayers and unnecessary. I urge IPART to carefully scrutinize this request from PSC and reject the quantum. The increase in revenue that the PSC will receive from the recent UCV increases together with the standard rate peg amount is even too high. I also urge IPART to look into the extraordinarily low rate that over 55 retirement villages pay in rates. Some of these villages in this area have hundreds of individual dwellings but are rated as an individual land holding. The effective contribution from residents per dwelling when apportioned through the land owners rate payment is a small fraction of what other individual residential property owners pay. The occupants use all the same services in the LGA, but are not making an equitable contribution. Addressing this inconsistency would be another option the PSC should be considering to ensure all residents are making a fair and equitable contribution to the cost of running the Council. This is an issue across many LGAs and needs to be addressed across the state.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Council needs to consider land valuations, which have just increased, some by 100%. Ours is 86.2% increasing our rates because of the land valuation by \$800 a year. That & with other costs does not warrant the large % Pt. Stephens council have requested. Please reconsider, as is a massive hike for lower income people.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

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Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This application for a SRV in the current financial climate is preposterous. The application is an updated repeat of the previous SRV that was clearly not acceptable to this community. It was also rejected by IPART. It was initiated by an outgoing council, with a strategy to define and structure wish lists to support it. It has been driven by council staff, kept under cover of the election by all councillor candidates, some councillors of the former rejected SRV council did not seek re-election and the former General Manager resigned from council during this current process. For reasons outlined in this submission I believe that this SRV should be rejected and that the current councillors and staff get on with good management in an area where their revenue streams have improved. I would also state that I and others take offence to one aspect of Council's original re-birth of the SRV. That was that Council stated that services would be reduced or restricted if the SRV did not proceed. Threats such as that, particularly, in these trying times for the community need to cease.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No! In my opinion, the Council staff have prepared a submission at the direction of Council. The submission was prepared in association with external consultants (professors). The submission has been prepared to satisfy IPART requirements and comprises wish lists that have designated plans in long-term financial plans, etc. As an individual ratepayer, I could prepare the same plans as a wish list to do renovations to my residence. The plans and costs could cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. I do not have the means to pay and would love to be able to get ready finance such as council proposes. Thus, the council does not have the wish list money and wants the underfunded ratepayer to pay for the same.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Council talks of alternatives such as grants, raising fees etc, and they have looked at alternatives. At the same time, the council state that covid and natural disasters as well as airport revenue have affected their financial status. I note in Council's financial reports ended 30th June, 2022, that the State Govt Auditor in part stated that The council's operating result from continuing operations (41.8 million incl depreciation and amortisation expense of 18.2 million) was 9 million higher than the 2020/2021 result. The net operating result before capital grants and contributions (8.9 million) was 6.1 million higher than the 2020/2021 result. These results were mainly attributable to increase in revenue from Rates and annual charges and grants. The 2021/2022 financial year Yielded a modest surplus.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No! The increase was expressed in percentage terms. However, I haven't seen examples of the increase in \$ terms relative to rating categories.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No! The Community Awareness program was very disappointing. The council has four awareness sessions. Phases 0, 1, 2, and 3. Reach for each phase was 119,416, 122,929, 121,999, and 55,599. Participation was 1401, 6547, 7957, and 288. Very disappointing figures in percentage terms. SV support moderately supportive 50% Totally supportive 14% Totally opposed 17%. I consider that the above figures can not render support to the SRV. I attempted to participate in a short survey monkey, and I found it was clearly driven to agree with the SRV. I was prevented from commenting to do the survey. How many others found a similar result to me.?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I don't agree with council's comments. Based on the above, I don't see that the community's changed its attitudes from the past attempt and rejection of an SRV that went to IPART. Published letters in the local press do not support the SRV.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Council has not listened to the ratepaying community. Council state their needs based on figures, wishlists, and plans. The Council put forward their loss of revenue streams through covid, natural disasters etc. The Ratepayers and community have also suffered and face additional costs through higher cost of living pressures, high interest rates, property price increases, higher building costs, statutory price increases, and low wages increases. The SRV is not affordable. The council is rushing this application through. I have lived in this Council area for nearly 30 years and have paid rates for over 40 years. I have observed the current capacities of Council parks, childcare, and Newcastle. Airport They are now performing at record levels. Can we get updated figures.?

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

For the reasons stated above, I don't believe that this has been done. If it had this, this SRV would not be on the table.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The council did not publicly release its plan. I found it on the council website. This SRV would have a disastrous effect on the community. Concession holders to get \$ 250 extra if approved. Non Concession up to \$500 if approved.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes, I read same on the council website. I refer to the same as a contrived wishlist with a lack of community consultation and support. I only found out that this was submitted to IPART back in November 2022. I only became aware two weeks ago, and more importantly, we were told in the press that submissions to IPART close on 3/3/2023. Very poor communication from the council, yes. I honestly thought that the process was ongoing. Again, typical of this council, they support Non Communication.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I have read of cost containment, the hard working council staff procuring grants etc. I regard this as a fundamental aspect of employment, particularly when you work for your constituents. I have seen the salary being paid to the incumbent General Manager. I would expect nothing short of optimal performance from all staff at all times

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Prior to this Mayor coming into Council, the Port Stephens Council was fit for the future, run like a business and fiscally responsible. The new Mayor has run the Council into the ground with overspending on unnecessary desires and beautification as opposed to essentials only. Council hands out rate payers money through various grants. Grants are available from tax payer base, why give away rate payers funds that should be going to maintaining parks, roads and garbage.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, not adequately. Council canvassed the community about desired service levels but unfortunately they were not honest in the survey. Not once did the Council advise that any aspiration for increase in service level would result in exorbitant rate rise, as proposed.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. Council has a substantial income potential in Newcastle Airport. However, they have downplayed the income available from this investment. COVID is over, travel is returning to high levels and the airport is expanding further increase income.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Clearly articulated in a percentage and down played by fooling rate payers into the significant cost burden by splitting it across three years at 10%, but this 10% is compounded, another hidden fact Council has failed to emphasis.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Not adequately. Councils survey only gave two options, both not suitable or acceptable to the community.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Ignored feedback but essentially limited the feedback to two options as detailed above.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The rate rise is by no means reasonable. Mortgages are forever increasing, electricity/water are up, cost of food is rising and wages are stagnate. Council engaged Professors to determine if the community could afford it. Professors earn substantial income, what would they know about being pushed to the financial limits. The proposal is by no means reasonable, particularly when Council wastes money.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Council has not taken the communities capacity and willingness to pay into consideration. They have just steam-rolled ahead without making financial management improvements within.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Council does have hardship mechanisms in place but paying rates should not in anyway be a hardship if Council better managed its finances. So rate payers need to draw hardship mechanisms to pay their mortgage, gas, electricity, water and now rates due to Council greediness and financial mismanagement.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No idea but I assume so given Council would not jeopardise an opportunity to increase rate beyond the norm.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council cost containment strategies seem token. Just from a community observation perspective, contractors/workers are mowing lawns on a Sunday (double rates). A well managed/frugal Council would ensure this is only undertaken Monday to Friday to reduce costs. Council engaged a Traffic Management company to control traffic at a tourist beach (Anna Bay) where I live. For the entire time over the holiday period these people sat in their vehicles and did nothing except put up a sign. What a complete waste of rate payers funds. Council has replaced the locality signs with large flash (no doubt super expensive) signs. These are just a couple of examples where Council is clearly wasting rate payers money and taking the easy path by making us

pay more. The saying goes mind the cents and the dollars will look after themselves. Council needs to do much better at managing finances before imposing over the top rate rises on the community.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

In summary, I find this application to be exorbitant, unreasonable and onerous on the ratepayer. I believe that little to no consideration has been given to the community's capacity and willingness to pay this SRV. The added impact of inflation, the rising cost of living, energy prices, and low wage growth have placed more pressure on the household budget. Add to this the SRV. There was no mention of this SRV proposal at the time of the latest Local Government election, and the Council have applied for a more exorbitant SRV in the past, which was widely condemned by the community and ultimately rejected by IPART. This is not the time for the Port Stephens Council SRV.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Although Council may have established the need for a different revenue path, some of the reasoning for the purpose I find to be unnecessary and moving away from the Councils core services.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No, I don't believe that the Council has explored other alternatives to the SRV adequately.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I do believe that Port Stephens Council has communicated this adequately in my personal situation.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

While some forms of community engagement has occurred, I believe that many ratepayers are yet unaware of the proposed SRV, and the full impact it will have on household budgets. I began a council online survey on the topic where I found the questions to be skewed to the councils desired outcome.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The Council have taken some feedback onboard, but I think that they are set in their agenda.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I believe that the SRV proposed by Port Stephens Council to be exorbitant, and onerous to the ratepayers. Considering the pressures posed by the rising cost of living, high inflationary pressures, and low wage growth. Such a proposal is unaffordable, unreasonable and unsustainable.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I think the Council has not considered this adequately. In fact, I don't think that they have considered this at all.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I find that any mention of the Council hardship plan to be merely lip service. Why force people into hardship in the first place?

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

If the Council has been doing so well with their productivity improvement and cost containment strategies in the past, I would suggest that they continue down that path rather than that of an SRV, and concentrate on core services.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

We strongly object to the rate increase because of lack of service due to inconsistent rate income from rate payers ie over 55 park resident Also it encourages poor council budgeting and it will cause financial hardship to many people in the area

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

It is unclear to me why IPART uses a base rate peg of 2.5% and then varies based on council area and development (resulting in 4.4% for Port Stephens this year). 2.5% is below historical inflation rate resulting in relative income reduction for councils each year. PS council has used 4.4% for the first year and then 2.5% for remaining years as per IPART direction, but this provides uncertainty in the out years. Perhaps a review of IPART rate pegging is warranted.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

The council has developed the need for the SV citing study results received from two 'independent' analysts contracted by the council. The individuals had no government or commercial firm affiliation but rather were academics working directly for the council. Their product confirmed the status and needs of what the council had put forward.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The council has outlined their limited alternate sources for income generation. The result of Covid restrictions and associated reduction to tourist numbers had a negative impact on council income generation over the last two years, though this is not unique to this council and is showing positive signs of reversal. Limited alternatives to a rate rise have been offered other than an as yet undefined reduction to projects and services.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The council has made available information on the proposed increase in percentage and dollar terms.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

The community engagement strategy has not been adequate as evidenced by the small number of participants at events and returns to surveys. The council has primarily relied on people accessing their website or following the council on social media. If one does not routinely check the website or have a social media account following the council then information on the studies or information sessions is likely to be missed. I have had discussions with friends who were unaware of the proposed rate rise until reading the Port Stephens Examiner article on 16 Feb 23.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Participation in sessions and surveys has been minimal (~1000 responses from a population of 76000). Council states that the majority were in favour of a rate rise rather than a reduction to service. True, though a 53% for vs 47% against of a small sampling is hardly overwhelming. Even then, the majority of those who were in favour of a rate rise preferred the 26% one year increase over the 31.29% over three year increase, which was rejected by the council.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is said that timing is everything and in this instance council timing for an SV could hardly be worse. With the combined effects of increasing inflation, wage stagnation, spiralling costs of living, rate rises and state property value assessment increases of 84.4% on average, the proposal comes across as tone deaf.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Council stated that rate payers were under a 'fiscal illusion' as to the council's ability to meet financial demands. I suggest that the council may be under the same fiscal illusion with respect to rate payers. The area has a large number of pensioners and self funded retirees who have essentially fixed incomes. The current inflationary environment has added to cost of living stressors. Families with mortgages are under additional financial pressure with the continuing rate rises. The council maintains that the majority of the population can afford the increase. Whilst that might be true it will undoubtedly be at detriment to residents' other living matters. A zero sum gain and potentially local businesses and charities will receive less support.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

That the council has increased response options to address hardship suggests that council is aware that a rate increase will also result in an increase to hardship cases. Provision of upto a \$500 rebate for non-pensioners experiencing financial hardship caused by an average \$380 increase seems odd. Other measures such as lower payments at more frequent intervals or collection from estate after death don't assist in the debt to be levied.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted

by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The council has provided description of their productivity improvements, containment strategies and results of the past years. My opinion is that council has done good work to date, even realising a modest surplus over the last tough two years; however, their future view is overly pessimistic. Reduced tourist numbers and continued natural disasters are used in the forecast, which results in lesser income that will potentially be recognised. Council has projected that without the SV projects and services will need to be cut but has left that for future community consultation. With SV approval there will be service enhancements and developments of the 'Plus Plan' of projects. What is missing is the rate adjustment required to maintain/ retain, rather than enhance, the business as usual.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

As indicated earlier, PSC submission does not take into account the recent new land assessment that has in some seen a doubling of land value. In our particular case, based on the 22/23 base rate we would see an increase in \$600 in rates without considering the increase to other charges. As a self funded retiree, there are no rates assistance measures available to me. The impact on the community, I don't believe has been fully explored given the community is already suffering from increased energy costs, increased home loan interest rates and an increasing cost of living expenses. This rate variation should be refused and a standard variation approved. Like the rest of the community PSC should work within it's means

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I don't believe the Council has fully established a need for a different revenue path. Our land valuation has just doubled and my calculation on the 22/23 rate calculation increase the council revenues by approx \$600 per rate period. PSC needs to closely review it's expenditures, particularly discretionary expenditure such as Mayoral scholarships and community grants

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I don't believe they have canvassed or fully reviewed alternatives Port Stephens Council appears to routinely give out largesse in areas I would not consider their basic responsibility, for ex a child burnt down a school building in the LGA and Council donated \$10000 to the rebuild. Surely that is a Department of Education responsibility

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I don't believe they have. There was limited engagement. I have just used the Councils website Rate calculator and even though the old and new land values were entered it only gave the value of the base rate without the other added charges

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

There has been an appropriate ranges of engagement , however as stated, I think the public meetings were too limited

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Nil comment

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I don't believe the proposed special variation will be reasonable. With the doubling of land values under the Attorney Generals valuation, on the 22/23 rate with the new valuation will see and increase of nearly \$600 without any changes to the other charges on the PSC rate notices. By increasing that by over 9% for three years will be crippling for those on lower incomes of retired. For those with home loans who are seeing increased interest charges this will be devastating

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't believe they have considered the community willingness to pay, all proposals seem to centre on an earlier land valuation. I would rather see PSC work on basic council responsibilities and work within their means. The rest of the community has to work within their means or do without.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The plan is limited and provides no support for self funded retirees

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

They have been on the Council website

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I don't believe they have clearly specified positive improvement and containment strategies. Their is a lot of corporate speak about there plans and programs

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I totally disagree with this proposed rate rise The area has been mismanaged and money wasted by Port Stephens Council. They pursued a developer when advised by their legal team not to. They lost costing us rate payers huge amounts of money and then spends \$85000 on a 4wd vehicle If anyone should be paying extra its the developers Single dwellings , with a family may have one or two cars, are developed. The property next to mine has been developed to two dwellings for holiday rental and is occupied almost all year. He advertises each dwelling as suitable for three couples and dogs So what use to be a two car block is now potentially a SIX car block and 12 people. This is whats putting a massive strain on our infrastructure Maybe they should be paying extra for this as they are making the big money Not only is it next door but across the road advertises as an eleven bed rental So next door on both sides are rentals across the road and behind me are rentals making huge money in holiday time and very good amounts other times Times are extremely tough financially for everyone at the moment and this EXTRA FINANCIAL BURDEN could be too much for most

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not really

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not to my knowledge

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Very difficult to find information except on local television news

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Not sure

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

None that I am aware of

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

With very difficult times at the moment rate payers can not afford the extra cost

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Lack of consideration

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

There are some concessions but to activate them is extremely difficult These concessions are not adequate and most dont qualify

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not sure

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

As in my comments this council is renowned for wasting money

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

As a resident of Port Stephens for over 45 years, I am completely against such a large increase in our rates. Our council has wasted our money fighting developers in court, when they were advised not to proceed with a case they wouldnt win. Our Lord Mayor spends \$85000 on a vehicle for him to drive around in. People are struggling to pay their bills and our council wants more money from us after wasting so much. There are many people in this tourist area that are making a fortune by renting out dwellings and these are rented 24/7. Maybe these people who would be making over \$5000 a week (and thats a modest estimation) should have their rates increased. Not the ordinary family or single parent or self funded retiree who all have limited incomes and are struggling to keep their head above water. Our council shows no interest in the ordinary person and we are getting very little from our council.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not sure

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I have seen

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Very little information was easy to find

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Not sure

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

None that I am aware of

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Impact will be enormous for the average rate payer

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Our Council doesnt consider anyone

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

They offer about 10% discount on rates to single parents and discounts to pensioners at the moment but an increase will just make it harder for all people even with the council addressing peoples hardships

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not sure

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Our council just wastes our money

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The rate rises are unaffordable. We are not receiving value for our rates paid. I believe the council are not spending their funds effectively eg expensive cars and travel junkets for general manager, staff and mayor. Money wasted on useless projects like the parklets at shoal bay fiasco. Port Stephens council need to be transparent with their projects and spending. They need to look at their own spending and curb their wastage and not make land owners pay for their extravagance.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Given the current economic environment, the raise is well above what can be considered reasonable. Salaries may have increased in Sydney but that is not the case here and so the population is unable to support such a rise in rates.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The work they have done is not sufficient. No one I know has been contacted and no survey has been conducted by the council. Blacktown council conducted a survey on their website to test rate payer willingness and capacity to pay. No such survey has been done by Port Stephens.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Council's plan is insufficient. A rise of this magnitude will affect people beyond those identified by the council. There is no mention of any support for the day to day person.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not that I am aware of. Surely council is obligated to make sure the exhibition is widely advertised in advance?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council's response is insufficient. No mention of the mayor's new car has been made.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Please Please Please ask yourselves are any of the people making the decisions on behalf of our community in a similar financial situation as the average rate payer? And then ask yourselves if you truly could understand the impact and everything that comes with it?

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Absolutely not.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not at all.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

None..Silence

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Reasonableness 1. sound judgement; fairness. 2. the quality of being as much as is appropriate or fair; moderateness. If they were in touch with the community they serve they would realise that the impact is so far removed from reasonable.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Ha..I almost choked. Consideration 1. careful thought, typically over a period of time. Again if they were in touch with the community it would not have taken much consideration at all to decipher our capacity. Whether we are willing or not matters littlewe all want better if everyone..most if not all I speak to lost all confidence, that our money gets used with consideration, long ago

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Help me, help you..to pay me more OKEY-DOKEY

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I wouldnt know

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Strategies. Plans. Neither are tangible..why believe now

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I can not afford this level of rate increase and I am sure that I am not alone in this situation. Council should be made liable for their own misuse and mis-management of funds instead of simply passing on the costs to residents. Some recent instances of note bring to light a shocking level of waste and an agenda clearly fuelled by personal greed. The following are but a few that come to mind:- - The selling unsuitable land for residential use and then suffering the legal consequences to the tune of many millions of dollars - why should I pay for that? - Our local mayor saw fit to purchase himself a Ford Raptor with all the trimmings and tried to pass it off on a line item as "fleet". This sort of embezzlement should be investigated and punished. - High specifications and annual replacement of council staff IT equipment; An office laptop does not require gaming specifications and costs should be amortised over 3 years not one. Dispersion of funds across the council areas is also clearly not equal. For example at Fingal Bay (where I live) we barely have sealed roads and what we do have is never swept and poorly maintained. The council see fit to sell off land in this area and use the funds in Raymond terrace or Salamander Bay projects. SOLUTIONS Seek creative ways to generate and save money, not punish the the residents. Full transparency, open book accounting and frugal vs lavish should be rewarded. Build and repair roads and paths that locals require, not multi million dollar projects that only appeal to tourists. Charge for parking in more areas for non-residents who by the way do the most damage to our infrastructure. LEAD BY EXAMPLE Electrify the fleet of vehicles needed by staff as and when they need replacement. Not only would this send a positive message but would save thousands annually on service and fuel alone. Plus electric vehicles can be in service for twice as long due to having such low maintenance drive trains.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

unsure

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

no

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

no

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

no

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
They dont deserve the extra cash splash at my expense

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No not to me no letters or any correspondence

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No not to my knowledge again no correspondence

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No not to me no correspondence

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No not at all they are a goven to them selves

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

What action None

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The money will be used to get a car for the mayor and use rate payers money. They dont fix anything in the community at all pot hole not fixed, street lights not fixed, make the rate payers pay for an green waste bin cut back on waste disposal. They will just use it to give themselves a pay rise stuff the community

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Not at all suck it up and pay thars what they say..

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Yep right if you cant oay you get a fee put on your rate thats fair and reasonable not at all this rate ruse isconly benefits the council and the mayor not the community

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I have no idea as they dont communication with the community no correspondence at all

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Well if they have i dont know anything about it,cause they dont communicate with the community well at all just like the things they built in the main street which is very dangerous as it block your view at the pedestrian crossing well someone got hit by a car. So they didnt as the community about this structure so why do you think they would consider communicating with the community about where the money for the large increase on my rates will go i just have to find the large amount cash and if i dont pay on time lets give us a fine and lets charge interest on that too.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Port Stephens council time and time again have gone against public interest. They've gone ahead with projects that the public clearly didn't want. They've let our roads go to waste over the last 10 years by ignoring them and doing the patch job till next rain repair. They'd rather new cars and new toys for its staff then make the public happy. They are so far out of touch it's nuts. These members and past members all need to be investigated for fraud and misleading and wrongful use of public funds while being completely negligent of the councils responsibility and only caring about themselves.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Unfortunately our council has wasted millions and millions on useless projects not wanted by the community which has led to out roads being neglected to the point our council can't fix now

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Yes and no, made it look like they have but are set on the raise.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Been vague

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

To ignore the people they are meant to serve but to e expected sadly when you spend 130k on a car for the major but say your almost bankrupt makes no sense

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Port Stephens has a high % of lower working class that a rate raise will mean the difference between feeding kids, paying bills or having to sell up or risk losing the house anyway. Not many can afford rise in the current financial crisis a d cost of living going up every day

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

There has been none at all they've made it clear pay or will do nothing for the you while they waste money on themselves and pointless projects that make the community gasp with disbelief that our council is so out of touch with its community

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

This is a token plan to make it look like they care but they dont

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Id say they had to approve it but the community definitely didn't

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They want us to bail out the wrong doings of their and previous councils actions. And review into them is needed and not the punishment of the community because our councils are out of touch

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Despite the 4.4% increase already granted council has pushed for an additional SV. The need for this is based on reports done by Professors Dollery and Drew who were commissioned by council for this. In all documentation provided the main argument forefront has been the need for council to become Financially Sustainable. The SV was to improve council's underlying financial position for the general fund. On the other hand, if an increase is not applied for, council would face operating deficits in future. All Australians, not just Port Stephens Council, have been impacted by the economic difficulties faced. The cost of living (mortgages, fuel, electricity, gas, food to name a few) is increasing at such an alarming rate whereby ordinary people find themselves in an impossible situation: most households face Budget Shortfalls. I oppose the SV being sought.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Yes, council has considered alternatives to the rate rise. Smart Parking is a welcome one. Council also has sold assets and continues to pursue this line. For example, Lot 109 Foreshore Drive, Salamander Bay: this lot forms part of a Wildlife Corridor and has been used as a park for many, many years by locals and visitors alike. This shows what little consideration council has for wildlife, the environment and the local community. The community vehemently opposed this sale and council has yet to make a final decision on this. It is unclear to me why the revenue from the Airport will in future be placed into the Resilience Fund rather than continue to be used to pay council bills. Surely with the rise of interest rates revenue from council's holiday parks etc must increase, therefore council has the capacity to continue to operate financially as evidenced in Council's 2021-2022 Annual Report that recorded a surplus of \$586,000 (page 62 of Application).

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

With respect to a rate increase, Council did use various methods to communicate what their intentions were. I took part in the two (2) online surveys which I found somewhat difficult. Most questions were based on what "extent of rate rise" was acceptable and any disagreement was only possible in the comments. I did become aware of the % extent of the rate increase being sought. However I was unaware that it would be cumulative and what the total increase in dollar terms was.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Council has used a variety of methods to communicate their intentions. With reference to the awareness summary tables on page 35 of the Application, I disagree with council's claim that those figures confirm the effectiveness of the communication and engagement program to create awareness in the community for the need and extent of the rate rise. Percentage wise, namely Phase 0: 1.17%, Phase 1: 5.32%, Phase 2: 6.5% and Phase 3: 0.52% do NOT support council's claim.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council was determined to proceed with a rate rise. From the Extensive Survey Phase 1, on page 37, I note that 425 people completed the survey and another 790 people visited the survey but did not complete it. Surely this does NOT indicate community's increased awareness for the need and extent of a rate rise. It is merely an assumption.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Council's survey questions were geared to seek at what level of rate rise was acceptable to the community. It is obvious that council's intention was to proceed on the assumption that the rate rise was acceptable to the community and the only decision required was the extent and level of the rate rise. As for the impact of the rate rise being reasonable, council argued that even with the SV Port Stephens' average rates would still be lower than the OLG averages. Is there a need "to keep up with the Joneses?" According to a dictionary "reasonable" means showing sound judgment or not making unfair demands. At a time of increased financial pressures on most household and business budgets, for council even to contemplate a rate rise above the 4.4% already granted is not reasonable, in fact, it is unconscionable: therefore not acceptable.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Community's capacity and willingness to pay has been arrived at through sophisticated econometric modelling. Where is the human factor in this? The report generated indicated that the increase sought "is reasonably within the community's capacity limits". Council alludes to welfare recipients having their pensions increased twice annually, businesses can claim a tax deduction and if self-funded retirees have been assessed by Centrelink as having sufficient assets or income, therefore not needing Commonwealth support are less likely to require hardship assistance. I am a self-funded retiree and received a Gross CPI increase of \$29.27 per fortnight: I do not have the capacity to pay the additional rate rise being sought by council.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Council acknowledges that proposed rate increase is for the key purpose of financial sustainability and any special variation will have an impact on ratepayers. To mitigate the impact council has proposed several ways to do this as outlined: flexible payment options, flexible repayments of overdue rates & charges, interest reduction, financial assistance in the year following a general revaluation and rates assistance program. It is noted that the rates assistance program is dependent on the rate rise being granted.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I understand the required documents were approved and then placed on council's website. At the age of 80 years of age I find it difficult to read lengthy documents online, hence I did not access those documents referred to in this criterion.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council refers to various strategies it has used over the last 10 years to increase the quality of services whilst pursuing efficiencies. One successful strategy is the "budgeting approach" (Treasury Model). This has enabled council to achieve a financial recovery over the last 10 years (page 75 of Application). This approach has enabled council to succeed even during the COVID pandemic. Council's 2021-2022 Annual Report shows a surplus of \$586,000: for this council is to be commended. Throughout community engagement council's principle focus has been to achieve financial sustainability and a rate increase. In those conversations community's priority, however, is the condition of our local roads with an increased expectation to fix the potholes. The community's confidence in council managing our resources declined significantly in 2022: 2022 saw the lowest overall score of 64%. As I stated before improvement of our roads was the most frequent comment in feedback.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No, I was not aware of this until a neighbour told me about it

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council has not consulted the community effectively. It is unclear what action council has taken due to the lack of transparency from council.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The impact on rate payers is excessive given the current economic climate.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The council has failed to consider the community's ability to pay, but has particularly neglected to consider the capacity to pay, given the socio-economic status of the port stephens lga.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

It does not consider the effects of the majority of households and only addresses those already in financial hardship

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The response fails to take into consideration the excessive spending of council on current projects that have occurred largely without consideration to the residents.

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Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I personally think the biggest issue here is those that pay rates and those that do not Over the past few years we have had an explosion of granny farms I am thinking conservatively 100,000 new people to the area using our roads ,public amenities ect and not paying rates just sounds unbelievable and very unfair fix this loophole and we would probably have excess

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No wants versus needs

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No this is the easy way

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No lots of people are unaware that valuations are coming and our rates will increase just with property values

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They have chosen to ignore the community

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Lots of retired people on fixed income already impacted by low interest rates on savings and high costs of power and food It will increase rents as well as owners try to make ends meet New home buyers also have the extra payments with high interest rates on loans

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The people living on beach front properties would have no issues but the rest of us will

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have found over many years I personally never seem to get this I would not apply I do not like giving up personal information and I do not feel the \$20 would be worth it

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I do not know my access to council chambers in Raymond Terrace is limited

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I have not seen it

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No PSC is only looking at increasing the rates. PSC has been paying City Metro fees for the dumping of their rubbish when it should only be paying for a rural area. This is just one type of mis-use of ratepayers funds by not doing their job properly on the expense of the ratepayers.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No although the community have given other ways where PSC could increase their rates they have not bothered to do so. They keep approving DAs for Over 55s when the payment on those homes is not sufficient for what other elderly people pay. They have not approached the State Government to have this levy raised so that Councils receive more from Over 55s estates.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

YES but residents were against this as most residents in Port Stephens are retired pensioners or low-income families and the amount of increase PSC is asking is too high. Many people are still trying to get back on track after financial losses during Covid.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

YES community awareness BUT the community are against such a high increase PSC has assets which were purchased from previous paid rates so if they are suffering from a lack of funds NOW is the time to sell some of those assets and do the projects they want without hitting the ratepayer. We seem to put in a lot of money for an airport that seems to pay zero dividends. Most residents would like to see the 50% share of Newcastle airport sold rather than increasing the rates.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

There has been a lot of feedback to PSC against the SRV as it is too high. Other ways of getting funds (list above) were put to the Council but they seem not to listen as the easiest option is to hit the ratepayer and this is totally unfair and unacceptable. PSC management appear to get paid far more than they would working in other Councils which seems odd for a rural council. They seem to leave the roads, rubbish and reserves on the bottom of the list when this is all residents want them to do. Increasing assets and placing money on deposits is not what we pay our rates for.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Many if not all ratepayers would be impacted as PS Shire permanent residents consist of retired elderly and low-income families. People are struggling after Covid and they are struggling even more with the cost-of-living necessities and a big increase which is 30% over 3 years and then no doubt would stay at that level is too much for many to absorb.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't think PSC actually thought of the suffering of many residents when they put forward for this SRV. At community meetings the senior management were comparing the increase to the price of a coffee each week. Not a professional explanation BUT many people in our community do not have the price of a coffee each week and many are short in their budget as it is. We have a voting Council that just go ahead with what they want without due consideration of how people are going to pay for it.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I think the Council's hardship plan is not sufficient enough or communicated in transparency. to reach those that will require it. At the last Council meeting the mayor of PS was putting forward to give \$6400 to the NB Masonic Group to fund their rates. Their excuse was their members were senior and therefore membership funds were low due to members budgets. If the Mayor can look after a Masonic group that many residents knew nothing of its existence, then I do not think PSC should hit the ordinary pensioner and low-income family with a big rate increase that would cause them more stress financially.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not sure

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and

cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

As so many residents have experienced an enormous increase in their land values over the past few years (in our case an increase of nearly 300% in 8 years) our rates are already leading to so many residents struggling to cope with the costs. It also leads to landlords increasing rents to cover their increasing costs and so many residents are already having to move away from the areas they have called home.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not to my knowledge.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

As with the Council's previous attempt to introduce a special variation, Council ignores feedback which is not aligned with its wishes.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

As so many residents have experienced an enormous increase in their land values over the past few years (in our case an increase of nearly 300% in 8 years) our rates are already leading to so many residents struggling to cope with the costs. It also leads to landlords increasing rents to cover their increasing costs and so many residents are already having to move away from the areas they have called home.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Council disregards the effect on its community.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Insufficient and not broad enough.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

From comments and letters in the local papers and discussions with a variety of locals, it seems that several of the Council's decisions and expenditures have not been greeted favourably by residents. Just two examples are the parklets at Shoal Bay which were opposed in the planning stages, implemented briefly and then dismantled amidst general derision, and the Mayor's choice of Council vehicle.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I get constantly frustrated to see council mowing sections of busy road median strips on a Sunday, with 2 mowers and at times up to 7 other council workers in other vehicles following them. To say it is for safety is untrue as the extra vehicles may make traffic behind aware of the upcoming mowers however traffic travelling towards the mowers at 80km/h have nothing to make them aware, and could argue this is more risk to the operators of the mowers. All this being done on a Sunday when workers would be paid a penalty rate, and a day when the road is busy with tourist traffic at its highest.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not that I am aware of

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Havent seen any evidence to support this

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No, I was only made aware of the councils intention via local Facebook groups, I havent seen any communication from council to rate payers.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Very little if any response

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I do not believe it reasonable to expect council to demand more money from rate payers with how I see some funds being spent

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Have seen no evidence of councils taking into account any potential impacts on the community and certainly not extensive research on communities ability to pay higher rates

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

If so they have made no effort to inform rate payers of this, and have ensured it has been kept to the minimum communications to public

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Not taking into account the current financial hardships being faced by the community. The councils inability to manage its funds in a responsible manner means they just demand more money from residents rather than look at cost saving exercises.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Whilst they may have put forward reasons for the rise. They have not take. I to account that all land values have increased significantly which will increase the amount of funds they recieve from rates. I can't see why they need more when they are going to get more, through.land value increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Unknown.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Again, I am not sure they knew at the time they made the application, land values were going to go up so much.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

If not for the local paper,I would not have know about the increase request.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Unknown

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Times are already hard, this increase for home owners is significant and could have an impact on the ability for people to met their financial obligations.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The local people I have spoken to have all indicated this increase will have a significant impact on them.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Very little difference to what is normally available.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No comment

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

No comment

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The previous councillors in this council engaged in a spending spree through borrowed funds during their last term without any sound business cases or arguments after their last application to ipart was rejected. I believe many councillors said, money is cheap so lets borrow lots to build monuments like sporting fields etc. In 4 short years this council has gone from financially stable to a basket case. The whole shires roads have been appallingly neglected and as such will now cost significantly more to repair than maintaining . There are serious questions to be asked about how in a few short years the council has managed to effectively become insolvent if you believe their full claims. I do not believe that the mayor, councillors or senior management have been transparent or genuine with the community about the situation. Whilst I have no issue with an SRV to ensure a fair and reasonable amount is paid, I have zero faith in the elected officials or management to be able to manage the funds appropriately and for the communities benefit. I was initially supportive of a 25% once off SRV, I do not believe that the funds will be managed in a fiscally responsible way.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Potentially yes, however funds have been reallocated from the general fund to other purposes such as the port stephens resilience fund which has removed funds that had normally been part of the general fund. One example of this is the dividend from the Newcastle airport being redirected to the resilience fund.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The ability to provide feedback throughout the process focused on pre determined outcomes by council. There was limited opportunities to provide alternatives and in many cases council dismissed them

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes this was communicated

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

I would say somewhat no. There was a reliance on social media and surveys which unless one is interested in the council business there is limited awareness.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Im not sure there was any action taken. Council options were presented in a gun to your head type scenario of pay more or tell us what you want us to sacrifice. The end result of feedback was that council submitted a SRV amount that was not even consulted to the community.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Whilst Im not opposed to paying a fair amount for rates, this council has engaged in poor practices such as borrowing 20 million dollars to fund non/minimal revenue producing assets that will require maintenance.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I think the process of consultation was a lot of lip service and box ticking. Survey statistics analysis was at times an exercise in spinning to get the result they wanted.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I still have not fully understood the cost containment measures that they have undertaken or efficiency measures. The payment of 70,000 to 80,000 to an academic to prove they have no money seems an excessive waste of funds, but it does support an application to ipart for an SRV. Council have just about blamed everything on covid and natural disasters without any acceptance that they have contributed to the financial situation.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Hard to believe the Council is trying for a SRV and failing to realise the financial hardship this will impose directly on home owners and indirectly on renters. Just like a household Port Stephens Council should operate within its budget and be more considerate of the welfare of its residents. I strongly object to the proposed SRV and hope IPART soundly rejects it. Thanks

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This special rate rise of 30% should NOT be granted. How is the extremely poor management of this council the residents fault. Residents in the area are struggling already with the cost of living and I have no confidence in this council to support all residents with regard to hardship. To increase the rates so high is just not fair and should be illegal!

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No they constantly waste money on projects

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No again they waste so much money on projects like redoing road upgrades 3 or 4 times over as they are never done correctly the first time

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No. We have to live within our means so what gives the council the right to up our rates by 30%

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. Not one resident I know in the port stephens council area can justify the 30% rate increase. It's a joke seriously!

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I found out by word of mouth. There have been no community consultation by the council. No letterbox drops, no advertising in the local newspaper I honestly believe this council just wanted to sneak this through without the residents feedback

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The 30% rate rise is NOT reasonable. Who can afford that with the cost of living these days. This rate rise is not fair. No residents are willing to pay an additional 30% because I guarantee this council will just waste that money too and then ask for more

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

They haven't considered this is the answer to this question. None of the residents can afford such a high rate rise. I bet the mayor is exempt from paying rates. What a joke!

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Well that's news to us. This council has not even attempted to advise the residents of the rate rise let alone how they apply for financial hardship. This council is an absolute joke!

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No again we haven't been advised of this application to increase rates other than by word of mouth....

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I can't comment on council plans that I have never seen or be given an opportunity to read through. Our council will waste any rare rise they are granted. Guaranteed!

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Waterfront owners are forever being punished for owning such valuable land. We pay the highest rates and never get compensated or thanked for the continuous job of making sure Council's patch out on the beachfront is always ready for anyone to enjoy. Quite often people make rude comments or we read about owners treating Council Land as if it's their own, when the truth is that Council have nothing to do in maintaining the land from the owner's boundary to the water's edge. Take a stroll along any grassy walkway and you will see gardens that are planted, weeded, watered and cared for by waterfront owners. Who mows the grass? Waterfront owners do it themselves or pay someone to do it for them. When all the new homes go up, people are ready to complain about something. Do they ever consider that we have paid for turf, laid it, top dressed it each year and mow it sometimes twice a week, just so people can sit on the grass under the trees and enjoy our beautiful surrounds. All these extra costs go unnoticed by Council and the general public and we are now having our rates increased. We own a duplex just up from Roy Wood Reserve and have never complained about the number of locals who sit out the front of our place. It's there for others to use and during the busy Christmas holiday season it's extremely packed with people sitting in the shade of the paperbarks which line the foreshore. When it's the king tides, there's no room to sit on the beach and we have people setting up camp for the day right on our boundary. We have never made someone feel as if they're not welcome to use the space and I know many other waterfront owners who are the same as us. Imagine the complaints if we left the grassed area for Council to maintain! We also have an overgrown verge that we try to maintain at the back of our place where the laneway is too narrow for garbage trucks to drive down to collect bins. Raising our rates is no way of saying thankyou for your generous efforts.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Now is not the right time to be asking rate payers to dig deeper. The costs of living are already hitting people hard enough. Also on Council's website, they reference lockdown during COVID having impacted revenue from Newcastle airport, their childcare centres, holiday parks and so on. That's all well and good, but we are passed that point. We are not in lockdown and from what I've seen particularly with their holiday parks for at least the last 2 years, they have been operating at full capacity (visual observation). How are they spending the money they are getting now? Clearly not on roads (or not very well on roads). I acknowledge the impact of extreme weather events but council could be accessing the Regional and Local Roads Repair Program (RLRRP) to assist with road repair.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Their website provides their view of why they think it is needed.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I can't comment on the other criteria however for this criteria I believe the basis for determining affordability of the increase has suddenly changed in recent weeks. In recent weeks the valuations from the Valuer General have been released. These valuations across at least the Tomaree Peninsula have skyrocketed. Any feedback from the community prior to receipt of the latest land values would not have taken into account the prospect of the base rate amount payable being higher without the special increase. I personally seen an increase from a valuation of \$285,000 to \$555,000, but in no way has my capacity to pay the rates that will be calculated from this new value, changed. I know from talking with other residents, that my story is not unique and we would regard our properties as being at the lower end of the scale in terms of value. As rates are calculated based on land values I believe, this would suggest Port Stephens is about to reap a significant windfall from the latest valuation increases without needing a special increase. An increase now would put further pressure on home owners that are already experiencing increases in interest rates and other costs of living, on top of higher rates that will come from the new land valuations. Surely the increase in projected rates payable will cover what the council is seeking.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. I believe any consideration that council may have given to capacity and willingness to pay would need to be reviewed as any assessments that were done, I would suggest are now outdated as they would have been done prior to the property valuations that have only been coming through residents in the last 2 weeks

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Their website <https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options/rate-rise-options> suggests very little change in how debt would be handled. Much of what is stated appears to also focus on support for primary producers.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The Council have not communicated this rate rise to ratepayers. Many are finding out via local Facebook groups. Despite high property prices in this area, many are on low incomes. We have many retirees on static incomes and wages in this area are low. Not one word has been heard from Council on this matter. The cost of living is biting hard and people just don't have the money for this. Renters will also be impacted as costs will be passed on to them. The Council soeng \$85k on a car for the Mayor. They clearly do have spare cash. A lot of people are angry about that. This rate rise is completely out of touch with the situation people are in right now.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

THE RATE RISE IS NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE RATE PAYERS AND RESIDENTS. IT WOULD BE PRUDENT OF THE TRIBUNAL TO RULE FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN A FULL INVESTIGATION INTO THE MAYOR AND HIS COHORTS ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. The council have not made an appropriate effort to spend current monies appropriately. The Mayor recently bought himself a personal luxury 4WD with council funds. This shows that even if the council plan a spending, they Mayors personal agenda takes priority and the boys club supports him. When the Mayor is investigated properly for his [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED], then the residents may consider this,.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The council continue to spend frivolously. A large portion of workers are employed via labour hire at exorbitant rates, all staff seem to be no where in sight. Pot holes continue to grow, facilities continue to be in disrepair, council themselves avoid answering phones, and emails. There is no transparency in their actions and they are ready and willing to block all efforts to unveil the truth.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Until tonight, at 9.15PM 2/3/2023, I was unaware that this was an issue Port Stephens is once again being subjected to. It was found on a FaceBook post that someone had received an anonymous piece of paper, with very simple details on it. Over 30 people were unaware on this small group post. Comments also stated how hard this form is for our community. Many are poorly educated of low socioeconomic status, or aged and unable to work computers. Even some others like myself who are educated and know how to use technology have struggled.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. Most of the area do not know this is on the table again.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They continue to ignore. I wonder what the Mayor really wants this money for? A pay rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

They have clearly not looked at the impact to the majority of residents. We are living week to week, barely able to afford the cost of living. We already have an extremely large cohort that are homeless. This rise will make that number grow significantly, drop property values and leave the middle class between a rock and a hard place. The people of this area predominantly can not afford it. People should not have to choose between food and shelter. Australia is already negligent and not meeting the UN Human Rights of many, a rate rise, especially of this magnitude will only feed into creating more division amongst the socioeconomic classes we have in the area and allow more people to drop into the underserved.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. They continue to ignore the community. They continue to line their own personal pockets and only strive to meet Ryan Palmers personal interests that include a brand new luxury model 4WD utility vehicle.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Many on council have not experienced true hardships in their white privileged lives. Their intentions and actions also continually contradict each other. AGAIN, the community is not being heard, comprehended or respected.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No. Until, 2/3/23, I, like many residents had not seen or heard of this proposal.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The majority of these costs could have been achieved with more diligent financial management and the mayor not purchasing the luxury vehicle. The majority of council forget to remember that they are to SERVE THE RATE PAYERS. NOTHING in their plans, past, present or future SHOWS a RESPECT to this.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 2 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Buying in Soldier Point 18 years ago we were told we would have curb and guttering within 18months. We still do not have it but the council is keeping our rates in line with streets that do. We have had to spend thousands of dollars on drainage solutions. We have had to claim flooding with insurance each time our garage goes under water. Please stop increasing our rates but not giving us the luxury of curb and guttering.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The council is self serving and is dominated by councillors who own or are associated with building and development companies. Some of the approvals of building are mind boggling - including building on flood prone land. The council approving building on flood prone land then costs the ratepayers. A classic example is [REDACTED]. It is a swamp. The council approved building on it (I wonder why?) and has since spent over \$15 million in legal fees around a drainage dispute. If the building was never approved, ratepayers would be \$15m better off. But of course the builders wouldn't be as rich as they are. [REDACTED]

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. The council are fixated on spending and pay no attention to revenue whatsoever. Car parking fine revenue has fallen substantially even though they introduced "smart parking" meters in Nelson Bay which should make it much easier for them to identify and fine people overparking.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. The council havent considered alternatives, like introducing car parking fees on a user pay basis at local beaches. The council is fixated only on increasing spending. They want to build libraries - it is 2023, not 1950 - it appears they havent heard of the internet.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes. But they also didn't take into account that the NSW Valuer General just increased land values in Port Stephens by 30%+ in February 2023. This will greatly increase the ad valorem rates the council receive.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. The council has made no effort to encourage people to submit objections and they havent drawn any attention to this IPART submission process. The council has tried to push this through and minimise objections.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The council has ignored any feedback that doesnt support the proposal. Note the council elections weren't that long ago, yet NONE of the councillors took the proposal for a special rate rise to the election. If they had, they wouldn't have been voted in. I say let them take the proposal to the next council election and let's see how well they fare.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Most ratepayers have seen their land values increased by the NSW Valuer General by 30% in February 2023. A special rate rise on top of that would likely result in rates increasing by ~50% in the 2024/25 financial year compared to 2022/23. This is completely unreasonable.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The council doesn't care. A lot of the ratepayers are retirees on fixed and/or limited incomes. Including myself. In addition, the valuer general only in February 2023 increased the average land values by 30%+ for many ratepayers. This means the ad valorem component of rates will increase by 30%+ for many ratepayers from 1 July 2023. It would be double dipping to then put a second rate rise on top.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The plan doesnt help self funded retirees on limited budgets. The council doesn't care about anything or anybody else other than themselves.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

No. The council cannot contain its costs and has no effective plan to do so. They want to increase spending. And they dont try

to increase revenue other than through rates. There are millions of dollars of uncollected parking fine and parking revenue available to them, but they are too lazy to reach down to pick it up.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I do not believe that PSC has taken into consideration the vastly adverse impact that the recent increase in land values (over 200% in many cases) will have on the well-being of the local land-holders, many of whom are self-funded retirees of average or low income, and whose rates will increase by some \$5,000-\$7,000 per annum in the next four years. Their incomes have not risen by anywhere near the proposed SRV, combined with increased interest rates and general cost of living increases. Nor do I believe that PSC has been prudent in its spending, ie. not cutting back on community grants and general expenditure, and councilors' unnecessary expenditure on luxury and inappropriate motor vehicles and educational activities (and which do not meet the 'pub test') PSC's spending priorities (or lack thereof) for local works are very evident, eg repairing pot-holes in local roads damaged by recent weather events, repairs to roadways damaged by recent rain events (eg, Marine/Pacific Drives Fingal Bay), removal of beach access stairs at Shoal Bay, and alternative exits to single entry townships in the LGA. One question whether monies raised by the instalment of parking meters in the Nelson Bay CBD are being returned to local residents in the form of improved local works and community improvements. And PSC is contemplating installing such meters at Salamander Bay, Shoal Bay and Fingal Bay. To most Port Stephens residents, PSC is not being transparent in its community plans, and is not seen as taking full consideration of the strong adverse affect which the SRV will have on the majority of local residents.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Port Stephens Council (PSC) has attempted to do this, however, I do not believe that all factors have not been considered.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

PSC has said it has done so, but with little evidence supporting its claims.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No. The recent increase in land values has not been taken into consideration in communicating the full cumulative increase in the special rate variation (SRV).

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Not particularly. Results from so-called community meetings and community feedback appear to have been skewed in favour of PSC's position.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Very little action by PSC appears to have been taken, and appears to be skewed in favour of Council's position. Reports by Councilors in the local newspapers do not reflect the true impact of the SRV on local landholders.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The SRV totaling 31.3% is unreasonable, in consideration of the relatively low socio-economic demographic in the Port Stephens area. The full impact on local landholders of the SRV, together with increases in interest rates and cost of living, will no doubt cause much hardship and likely cause many to be forced to sell their properties. Household budgeting, in most/many cases, will not be sufficient to overcome these cumulative increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

We do not believe that PSC has taken much consideration at all of the community's capacity and unwillingness to pay the SRV. This is very evident from community feedback as highlighted in letters to the editor in local newspapers, other media outlets and social media.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

All we have seen from PSC is a general comment that applications for hardship can be lodged with Council.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

We understand that this is so.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation

period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I believe that this, from PSC, is not evident and has not been fully communicated to the local community.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I beg of you to decline this rate rise to listen to community members that we do not need this rate rise. What we need is a Council that understands that these are tough economic times for everyone just not Councils. Engage with their community members who live here to identify what feedback for facilities is from holiday makers or residents and be open and transparent about it and work together to be financially viable. This is a Council who is reactive and in my opinion that's why the budget does not balance.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

In my opinion no, many community members do not agree on the need. Many community members would like to see Council manage current assets within the current budget and not introduce new infrastructure that requires ongoing maintenance and increased dollars.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No they conducted a survey that was options with a rate rise. Not the option if there was no rate rise.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

There were no information on consultations held for people from a. cold background. Nobody met at Mallabula and spoke with me.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

In my opinion no did not meet the needs of the CALD community or people with a disability.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Councillors are ignoring that the majority of community members do not want the rate rise. Instead they offered a survey for community members to choose a option with a rate rise and did not offer a survey that asked yes or no to a rate rise. In my opinion they have manipulated the data that can represent to IPART that a percentage of the community chose yes for a rate raise when that was not what was asked on the survey it was rate rise option A or rate rise option B. There was no survey for yes or no.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is not reasonable and many people have provided the feedback that they don't have capacity Unfortunately this was not an option in the survey Council conducted. They assumed we have capacity but they do not know what our costs of living are they just know the ABS data for income.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The Councillors have a track record for ignoring the community members in Port Stephens and misleading us. We have been informed they were financial sustainable for the future and then we hear from them now we are not. I would be very interested to see what the Councillors would say if they were informed that any Council who requests a rate variation would need to have an Administrator appointed and Councillors relieved of their responsibilities for that period. Please please make that a requirement for Local Governments who believe they can no longer manage the business within a budget.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Hardship is addressed , it would be beneficial for Councils to detail what profits they make Re: hardship and repayment plans. To make public the feedback from the people who apply for hardship of course their names being anonymous of their experience and what it meant financially for them. Another comment if you already have community members access a rate repayment plan what are these per centres and how on earth are they going to ever catch up if rates are increased.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I believe so.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation

period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I don't disagree that Council has explained this, but I do believe that productivity can continue without a rate rise.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Our council took a resident to court and cost the taxpayer millions. Even when they were told they wouldn't win. The mayor bought himself a new car worth over 80k. Land in Fingal Bay were sold by council and the money was not put back into Fingal Bay but put toward development in Taylor's Beach. Our rates are already high. People are struggling. Rate rises like this will cripple some families

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not properly or transparently

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Definitely not

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Provided a survey. Most of our residents are elderly and struggle with computers.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

People are struggling with the increased cost of living and mortgage rate hikes. This increase will put far too much on ratepayers

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Many of the residents are elderly on a fixed income. Increases of this amount are not something that can fit into many people's budgets

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

PO Box K35

Haymarket Post Shop

NSW 1240

Dear Tribunal Members

Re Special Rate Variation Application Port Stephens Council

This is my third submission which has been prompted by information which came to hand today and has significance on the application.

Its impact affects all ratepayers.

Today I received notice from NSW Valuer General advising of a revaluation of my property from \$298,000 (2019) to \$541,000 (2022). This equates to an 81% increase in valuation, or a 20% increase per annum over the 3 years.

If the SRV is approved this will mean an increase of 99% to my rates bill for next year!

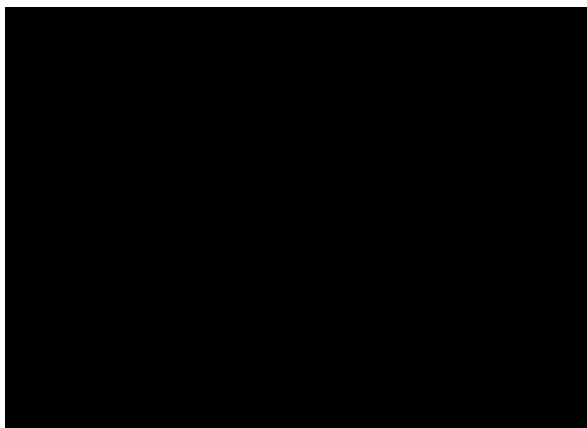
Over the 3 year period of the proposed SRV I can expect my rates to rise by **230%** assuming the valuation rate increases continue.

This is totally unacceptable.

There are three points I would like to make:

- a) I would expect that few ratepayers would be appreciative of the ramifications of the combined effects of upward land valuations factored by the SRV increases,
- b) The Tribunal if it decides to approve any SRV could specify an upper limit on the scale of change for individual ratepayers and
- c) I cannot determine how such substantial changes in land valuations have been accounted for in the forward revenue projections of PSC. I question whether the purported dire shortfall in council's financial position has been substantially overstated by not accounting for significant land valuation increases.

I presume that the Tribunal would either undertake their own modelling of these forward revenue projections accounting for land revaluations or require PSC to present such projections.



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Left blank

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Council has described they need to do it, but I wouldnt say the need has been clearly and widely presented to ratepayers

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Just said alternatives not feasible

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not clearly, and I am very financially and organisational governance literate

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

no, this has been limited in scope and promotion

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Cannot comment

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Unreasonably high impact given the demographics of the area - particularly fixed income households already under stress. I am not in this cohort, however even then there are flow on effects as large reduction in area disposable income impacts the wider community economy

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The consideration seems very limited, that "this is the only way"

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

No comment

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not exhibited in a way that most ratepayers have been able to easily access

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Unable to comment

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The Council should trim the "useless quango mentality" Trim the fat so to speak and definitely drop any their perceived obligations to " preferred contractors" employed at useless so called enhancement works and get back to basics.. as in basic needs o the community.. We have enough money cobbling useless council endeavours to look at and suffer as it is.. The Special rate Variation should be denied and a modest standard rise commiserate with both the communities expectations and IPARTs more than generous offer in light of these economic times

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

no

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

no

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

no

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

no

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

not supported by community but PSC has ignored the real opposition and erroneously claimed the community is in favour.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It the SRV application is an unreasonable and unnecessary overreach at an extraordinary level . Please also not the Valuer General has just this week delivered to residents an 80% land value increase (circa July 2022) which is now the new figure for rates.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. No consideration other than you suffer the rate rise we are after and if you cant pay or are burdened we have " support facilities" for those struggling but you still pay nonetheless as you will still have a recoverable debt....appalling

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

see question 2 above

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes but not easily accessible physically or electronically for much of the community

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The PSC has built its capital works and service base by using " preferred contractors" These preferred contractors we have seen state a small affairs and grown into very large and contract hungry endeavours across all of councils past and proposed endeavours.. It is for the ratepayer a " runaway business model" . Projects must get bigger more costly and without any real need just to feed the " preferred contractors and their large and growing workforce not to mention the inflated upper level managements profit bottom lines.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I don't wish my name and associated email to be in the public place as this is how scammers glean information.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I believe the need for a different revenue path has not been clearly established as the Council, while stating it lacks funds, will purchase an \$80,000 Mayoral vehicle (or so it seems), even though one half that price would allow the Mayor to travel around like all other ratepayers do.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I don't believe the council has been willing to prune its own extravagances. Furthermore, it seems the council pursues expensive court processes even though the person defending the case has already abided by council approved directives. Council needs to integrate its left and right hands of procedures before asking to dip into ratepayers pockets.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes, but it didn't make clear this was not a temporary increase. I've since learnt (not through Council sources), that this rate hike continues to be multiplied in years to come, becoming part of the base rate if approved. This gives no incentive for councillors to be prudent in their spending.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

I am not aware of much community engagement. I see more pictures of the Mayor parading around Nelson Bay and Salamander (but have never seen him locally, despite being in one of the higher rated streets) than I do of him talking to residents. All he is interested in is business development in the tourist areas.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I am not aware of any change in stance. They have an agenda to fatten their pet projects with money under the pretence it funds community projects. Disallow the increase and make them better use the money they have, putting aside their pet projects.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Those on fixed or low incomes have no way to meet the increase without reducing expenditure elsewhere. Often those who pay the highest rates are on fixed incomes, having moved to the area a long time ago - the rate rise increases the likelihood they will have to move from their current abode because of Council's submission, and yet, unless you live in the pet project areas, they will see no benefit from the increase. We've lived here over 40 yrs but are lucky to get even potholes filled in our street, yet we are asked to pay even more.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't think they care or even think about it. Otherwise they would not chase the tourists with pet projects that we are being asked to fund, which will either have no benefit for us or worsen our lifestyle by increased people in the area.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

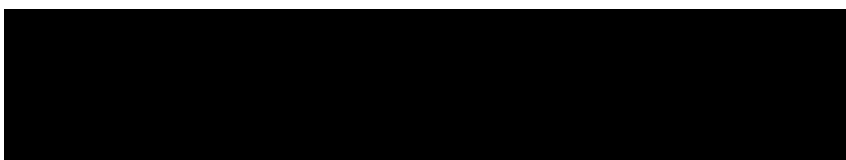
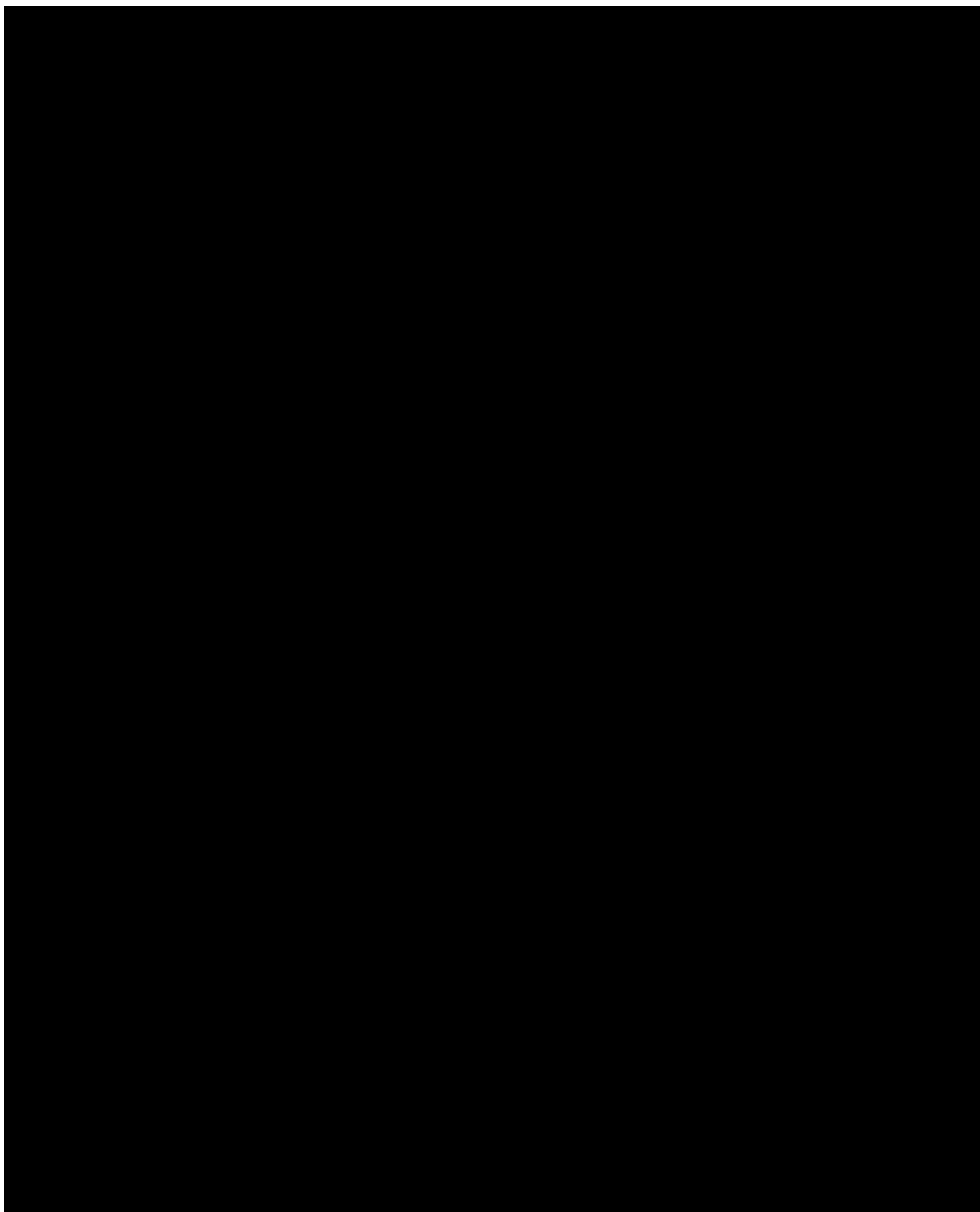
I haven't seen this. Did it include reducing their personal expenditures and needless court cases? I would be surprised if it did. Usually it is just a promise to put you in debt to the council to be reclaimed when you die.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I don't know. I haven't seen them posted anywhere in Tanilba Bay.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I am not aware of anything along these lines but haven't seen it in action. Potholes are cheaply filled - a little more care would save a return visit in a few weeks. That would be productivity Communicating between departments so that approvals given by one arm of local government are not opposed by another. That would be productive. Do I have personal experience of this? No, but that is the impression one gets from reports.



Hi All at IPART

I am making this submission against the proposed rate increases in my area Most of my submission is the same as a submission I sent to you before because really not much has changed for the better and the issues raised are relevant

The Port Stephens council does not deserve a special rate increase at least not this big and not for 3 years-the council has other means to get funding that it chooses not to pursue However as I realise excessive weather recently has made road damage that requires a higher level of funding this year and I do not know how liquid or fast council could raise funds without a fire sale so I would not have complained about a one year more modest rise as the extent of damage cannot be for-seen

However given the luxury of choice I feel this council would build a boat ramp rather than repair the road to it -the distinction is that every one uses the road but only a few use the boat ramp

This council has for fifty years that I know of them personally, have been spending the more discretionary part of its budget in the Nelson Bay combined bays areas neglecting projects that have been Identified in the more rural areas of the electorate

There has been a project I know personally that attracted enough interest and its own money to be spent and at the eleventh hour the money was redirected to a project in the bay area, that project has not been addressed since—I think this has been done twice to this one project with different councillors—I highly suspect there have been several of these scenarios that have been used to prop up projects for tourism that in there own criteria would not have passed muster

A councillor many years ago ██████ said to me the council has a belief that money spent in the bay areas on tourism will eventually result in lower rates for all of the shire—I have not seen evidence of this —rather the opposite —that was a personal conversation that was later spruced by another councillor at a small meeting

This council under the current Mayor seem to be business focused instead of services focused wanting to develop the areas or more so redevelop the areas that have already been developed neglecting other rate payers ammenities and providing more tourism style ammenities and attract a higher population base to the shire but only in the peninsula area

the Koala population is in decline -rapidly Port Stephens drive has been particularly damaging to the Koala population —the proposed Fingal bay access route will also I fear be as damaging This population decline could have been massively reduced in the Port Stephens Drive design however it would have cost much much more to make the road Koala friendly

It appears but no evidence to support this that the council would welcome the extinction of Koalas from the peninsula so it no longer has to deal with these issues in development or include a budget for Koala control

I have not seen a dog pak problem in the Peninsula but some dog damage to Koalas is a problem so I do not know if council actively and quietly controls dogs in numbers in the Koala areas I do suspect that some body does-no cat control programme is evident to me

I am aware of the strain that rate pegging has had on councils —it was a good idea in high inflation times —but it should not have been kept in place or at least eased in long periods of low inflation to give councils a chance to level the income / spend balance—the State government had control of this aspect —it would appear that it was not in the states interest to allow councils to gain more of the taxable base money

This is body of the previous letter

①



Dear Sir/Madam,

RE SPECIAL RATE VARIATION
-PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL

Back in Nov. 22' we submitted our views + comments on the proposed SPECIAL RATE VARIATION by PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL. We were advised by your office to re-submit after PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL submitted their proposal in Jan./Feb. 23', thus we re-submit our views + comments.

We submitted our views + comments on PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL 'Special Rate Variation' back in 2019, our submission was on the 11/2/19 + you should have + our then submission on file. Someone rang us from your office to ask if we wanted our views to be made public, we said 'No' as there was some personal information in our submission.

Our views have NOT changed from our 1st submission in 2019, i.e. we disagree with PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL with their current proposal to increase rates.

(2)

The cost of living has increased enormously since 2019 + although we received a modest increase in our pension it does not cover the increasing costs (inflation running at 7%) we. miurances, health fund, food, fuel electricity interest rates etc. Recently we received our Notice of Valuation from the Valuer General + our land value has increased since 2019 by 90%. This inturn will increase our Council rates (but not to the extent of 90%)

We are living within our means as mentioned in 2019 + it is becoming more stressful as we have both chronic health issues + we seem to be getting poorer + poorer.

Since our last submission on 11/2/19 PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL approved the purchase of a new 4WD vehicle for the MAYOR to the value of \$70,000, ratepayers were fuming at this purchase as ratepayers are struggling + the plight of the homeless is growing.

PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL have tens of millions of dollars tied up in properties + real estate + we suggest some of these assets to be sold off to pay for Council maintenance + infrastructure projects etc

PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL + NEWCASTLE COUNCIL have joint Custody of NEWCASTLE AIRPORT + share the profits, it appears the AIRPORT will be developed into an INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, which means PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL will receive income well in above the ONE MILLION ~~they~~ dollars they receive now in Landline fees.

(3)

As we said earlier our views have not changed since 2019, we are not in favour of a SPECIAL RATE VARIATION & many low income persons feel the same way. Please refer to our submission on 11/2/19, which explains in more detail our plight.

Thanking you

P.S. We give permission to IPAAT to release any of the above comments.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 3 March 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Port Stephens Council has failed to show the impact of recent Valuer General property "unimproved land value" increases before applying for such a large variation compared to the status quo option. If land value has increased by 20% or more in most cases, then there will already be a large increase in rates. Council has not attempted to communicate why over 30% has been sought on top of rises they would have known were coming. Values were assessed prior to Council's vote and to not consider these upcoming rises demonstrates a lack of process and an abject lack of honest communication of the impacts of changes in their modelling.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Council has failed to design methods of increasing the rate burden on "lifestyle" or retirement village residents despite approval of numerous new developments in the Council area. Adding many new residents who use roads and services but selecting residents who pay the lowest share of rates by approving so many villages unfairly places burden on individual property owners. While villages advertise themselves on television as being "low Council rates" Port Stephens Council should investigate ways to fairly spread the rates burden rather than lazily, greedily or cynically increasing rates on families. Council has not looked at so-called "short term rental" levies either. I therefore believe Council has failed to justify a 30% rate rise on homeowners as either a reasonable step nor a necessary first step.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Council did have graphics that attempted to demonstrate rates compared to other Councils but failed to demonstrate the increased revenue Council will receive from increased property values. Council failed to demonstrate a need for such a massive imposition on families and homeowners in the context of the current economic climate, the impact of rental and property value increases on demographics and the resulting impact on the social mix of our communities. Has Council considered and communicated any impacts other than dollars? Not to my knowledge.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Certainly not effectively. Council's website requires knowledge of what you want to find or you cannot find much. The information mailed out was selective self-justification. Any community meetings were not advertised to working people. Nothing like an email campaign. A talk at a low Council rates lifestyle retirement village is no use to those expected to actually carry the burden

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Impossible to answer as I have not seen any response to feedback. I have checked the Port Stephens Examiner local newspaper every week but do not recall any response to feedback. Telephone calls to Council have ended frustratingly at the admin desk as those who may be able to answer a question are never there at the time. Especially when working ratepayers have time to call.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Council has not demonstrated any reasonableness with regard to family budgets. Council has shown it approves retirement villages in large numbers where residents are paying \$900,000 in some instances for a home on leased land yet who do not pay an equivalent share of rates for services. Families with children by nature have tighter budgets and we've seen families squeezed out already. Changes to the family and child demographics of the Tomaree and Tilligerry peninsulas is evident in primary school enrolments and lost classes already. None of this is evident in modelling nor is how to service the community needs after these changes. Ask a GP/dentist/physio/chiro how hard it is to recruit younger health professionals and the answer is that it is more difficult than 5 years ago. How will these changes encourage anything other than more "low Council rates" villages and Air BnB owners?

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Council has shown a complete disregard to the ability of the broader community to afford their proposed changes. This is evidence by the complete lack of demonstrated and communicated research into all options. Had council dinner research and communicated the impact of other levies on lifestyle villages, short term rental properties or other strategies we would be able to better understand why there is a need for any more than the inevitable rise from increased property values before deciding on the magnitude of any variation.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

One has to qualify for hardship. Do I remove my children from the local fee-paying school so I can afford the rises? Is that a reasonable "choice" to be asked to make before qualifying for hardship? No normal family budgets for interest rate rises, rent rises as this have been and considers Council rate rises of what may be over 40% in total. This so-called mitigation of hardship is a distraction from the reality that the rise proposed by Council is simply excessive.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No comment as I was unaware of the magnitude nor impact prior to the IPART application

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

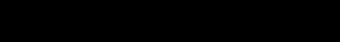
Council has shown inconsistent ability to provide quality upgrades and a general inability to deliver projects that reflect community expectations even when they try. Foreshore Drive, Salamander Bay, had a bridge upgrade after speed bumps and resurfacing. The impact is a road in worse condition than before. Taylors Beach shopping and homemaker centre has a new roundabout at Shearwater Drive. It is a farcical design that does not allow reasonable traffic flow through or around it. Medowie Road past the new Catherine Macaulay College is in poor condition in less than a year. The Medowie shipping precinct is a hodgepodge mess with bad traffic flow and worse quality roads. Raymond Terrace seems forgotten, run down and unwelcoming despite a streetscape upgrade. I see nobody using the seats or "stages". Council's website jobs available proudly states that full time work is 32 hrs per week. Have we seen efficiency improvements so that employees are getting the same work done in 32 hours as they previously did in 38? Where is that published?

1st March 2023

IPART
PO Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Application by Port Stephens Council For A Special Rate Variation

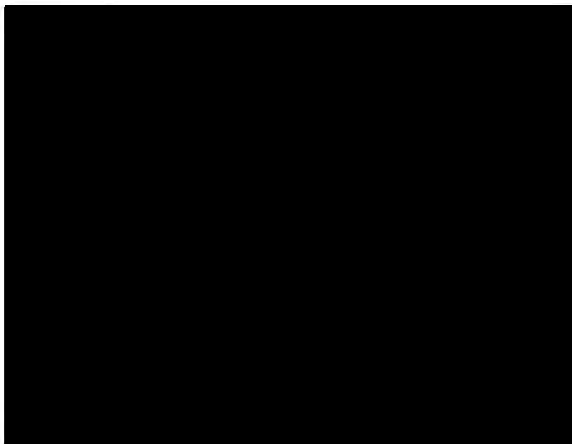
 and I'm a long term resident of Fingal Bay which is in the Port Stephens LGA.

I am extremely concerned that if the proposed Special Rate Variation by Port Stephens Council is successful, I and many other ratepayers will be pushed to a financial breaking point.

As our land valuations have doubled in the past 3 years this will just add to the expense of already very high council rates. I currently pay \$5,000.00 p/a and with that said, the SRV that PSC are pushing for will financially ruin myself and other residents.

Please listen to us ordinary working people...life is extremely challenging with the cost of living pressures and we simply cannot afford any more increases.

Kindest regards,



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 10 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

If this rate is approved, please allocate some to road repairs and upgrades e.g Fingal Bypass that's been in planning for decades.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not directly. I found out about it on facebook

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

No communicatiin so unknown

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

At over 30% this increase is completely unreasonable. This is not affordable to the community. Interest rates and electricity are at a 20 year high and this will put further pressure on the community resulting in families loosing their homes.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The holiday rentals owned by Sydneysiders will be fine because they will increase their rental fees. This will further reduce affordable housing in the community. Many locals who own property will be forced to sell due to this increase.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 10 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
Please use common sense when assessing this rise it is very excessive

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No the council has not been wise with finance Long and expensive legal battles which they clearly could not win and still paying to resolve orders which have been slow to action. I think council needs to come clean on this wastage with a plan to stop it before asking for more money.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Council gave loaded choices with no scope to discuss or disagree

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

It has been done in a marketing way of agree or we will cut services

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

It was poorly advised evident by the lack of submissions back to them. Allowing them to say they have support but only from a small sample group

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Very difficult for working people to attend information nights

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

With inflation and interest rates It will add to the family budget extra stress. The current financial climate is already causing hardship

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Not well considered in my opinion due to the current financial pressures facing the community with increasing inflation and interest rates

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

They are just words there is already people living in cars in port stephens due-to hardship There is no plan for them some who cant afford rent because of increased costs to landlords the rents have skyrocketed leaving them homeless. This excessive rise will only make things worse

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I have not seen them or been advised to where I can

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Where is the cost cutting measures. I think they first need to show they can responsibly use rate payers money before there handed more to waste

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 11 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This large increase is excessive and unnecessary. Just putting more strain on hard-working middle class people to fill their own pockets.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I don't recall being provided a dollar amount the increase would be.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

At times when interest rates and cost of living is becoming way too hard for families I don't believe this rate rise is fair or necessary. Our roads in Port Stephens are rarely fixed in a timely manner and when they are it's a half assed job which requires redoing soon after. Public areas are rarely maintained, mowing is rarely done and when we do see council workers there's more shovel leaning than working. I don't believe an increase in rates will alter the work being done in a more timely manner. I feel the extra funds will just make our lord mayor alot richer at the expense of us middle income hard-working residents. His recent purchase of an overpriced new unnecessary vehicle from rate payers money shows his greed, not his desire to lead and ensure a great life for his residents paying his wages.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Completely unreasonable. We are all struggling financially with increases on mortgages and cost of living.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I cannot afford this rate rise.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Council does not care about us or financial hardship. They just want more money in their pockets.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I don't believe so.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Our council have proven they do not work hard to fix current community issues so I don't believe a rate rise will change this.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 11 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Information from PSC has been sporadic and not well defined, there has been minimal information on what the additional revenue will provide above normal services.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The council has not adequately investigated alternatives, the only alternate option was to cut services to the public to save money.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Percentages were shown, I don't recall seeing information in monetary terms

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

I have not seen all methods, information was available in their website

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

There has been significant angst within the community regarding the SV. Previous surveys etc did not adequately allow community to decline the SV as an option (they all forced members to HAVE to choose a rate rise option)

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is a significant rate rise. The cost of living pressures on an ageing community are increasing. Adding up to 30+% in rate increase may well be the catalyst for financial stress in a portion of the community

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't feel that PSC actually considered the community impact. Their unsustainable financial situation appears to be the driving force for the request, not an increase or improvement in community.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have not seen this information.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

This information has been difficult to find

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I have not seen this information

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 11 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The community works rather pause plans for improvements if it meant avoiding this increase. We cannot afford it! Better planning from council will see us through. Another example of wasted money the work completed at Raymond terrace, which took away parking spots, would have been very expensive and the only people that use it are jobless drunks who now linger at the shops which is very confronting for families and dangerous! All that money and for what? Council have a lot to answer for - just filling their own pockets while our roads are filled with pot holes!

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No I do not believe so. Council should review current inhouse spending example purchasing a \$75,000 utility4wd vehicle NOT from a local dealership however instead from a [REDACTED]. If Council controlled their in-house spending it would allow for the savings to be spent in the community.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No!

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

No action taken. They have not listened to the ratepayers.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

In the current economy families are struggling and are making sacrifices going with out just to make ends meet. Council needs to be realistic with their spending and there wouldn't be a need for this horrible increase.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. They have not considered this at all. How families will afford this is beyond me when people are struggling to pay home loans, food etc.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The plan is not realistic and will have people jumping through hoops.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 11 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This increase is far too excessive for the average ratepayer to afford. Interest rates energy prices and food bills have skyrocketed while wages haven't changed. We cannot afford it!!!!

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. It is too much for the residents to afford. Perhaps the mayor should not buy expensive 4x4

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

As a rate payer I have not heard any relevant reason for this excessive rise.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No they have not!!!! We cannot afford it.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. We were told they want to do it.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Once again this council has ignored all feedback from residents.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

How does council think I is affordable???? Our mortgage interest rate has tripled, our grocery bills have nearly doubled and my wages haven't changed!!!

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

They have NOT listened.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

They have no plan except to line their own pockets.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not that I'm aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

This council has never listened to the ratepayers.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 11 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
This mayor is corrupt, inefficient and should be investigated

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Ni

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No and they did not really do public consultation... Every single person I speak to and every single person on social media groups in our lga oppose it, so do not know where the public were from that were part of the engagement. And interesting, in the survey's I completed, we were only given options for three rate variations that were high. We were not given the option to disagree with all So their analysis will be inaccurate as we had to pick the lesser of the three increases to complete the survey, even though we disagreed whilst stating in comments that we disagreed.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No, I have only seen percentage increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. First I knew of it we had been engaged and had three options and I am on all the social media pages where you would expect to see it.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

It's ignored by our mayor.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

How are people on fixed incomes, eg aged pension to afford such an increase?. This is a large retirement area. People have moved here to retire and are on fixed incomes. This will also increase rents in low social economic areas like Raymond terrace

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The mayor will not listen to opinion that is alternative to his and will block everyone who disagrees, including polite disagreement with his views from his Lord Mayor Facebook page which shows he is thin skinned and won't listen to alternate view

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The mayor would not know hardship if it bit him you know where. A small increase of concession rebate will not make much difference

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I do not know

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I have asked repeatedly for evidence of cost cutting within council and get nothing. This is a council led by a mayor, who decided he needed to update his mayor vehicle to a ridiculous top of the range ford ranger at a cost of over 80k from council funds because he needed a suitable vehicle to transport dignitaries... Note, any dignitary with a dicky knee would not be able to climb in to that vehicle. This was purchased whilst the council apparently did not have enough funds to fill potholes. He could have got a mid range SUV for half of that and spent the rest on things if the council is in that much strife. This shows to me gross [REDACTED] of corporate governance. The mayor should be [REDACTED] for such a expensive purchase and then turn around and cry poor and go to increase rates a ridiculous amount. Yes, maybe a modest increase, but he had not demonstrated cost efficiencies to get my support.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. If anything, the council has created concern and a need for a review of finances and wasted monies. They have wasted substantial money on multiple court costs that we have no say in. Mayor Palmer has stacked the voting with "his buddies" and since their departure has avoided implementing changes as he wouldn't get the numbers to go ahead.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The canvassing began with maybe 5 options. Then a second canvas was done with less options and forcing people to select from the previous unpopular options only. By not voting you didn't have a say in what they put forward, but by voting you were bit given options you wished to choose as reasonable.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not that I have seen.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No council has snuck out surveys. The awareness quiet often was brought to our attention by a concerned rate payer sharing a link to social media.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

No concern. They previously tried this and we got by fine without the rise. Covid obviously played a role with Airports, tourism etc. Still we are open again and those revenues have returned in droves.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Cost of living has gone through the roof. Mortgage repayments continue to rise. Homelessness, foodbanks and other charities are screaming out for support from the public. Increasing rates like this will only see more people unable to cope and lose their homes.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Mayor Palmer appears to be self serving regardless of the area being addressed. That or he goes missing to avoid dealing with important issues.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Helping people pay off payments that are already out of reach for many will only increase peoples debt and risk their homes.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No idea.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Improvements wont help people pay bolls and feed their families.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Medowie has helped the council rake in at least rates from over 2000 new houses yet they can't manage that extra cash and from other council areas. They need to go and I don't approve the proposal or 31 percent rate rise

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not at all. Mismanagement shouldn't be a reason for a 30 odd percent rise.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

They just want money, as if there would be any other negotiating.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No they haven't.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Cloak and dagger, all sneaky decisions made behind closed doors.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

With the cost of living and home loan rates putting people on the financial edge, this would ruin families and businesses.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

They don't care.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

They will put in more red tape to make it near impossible to get a reprieve.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I assume so.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They have so many excuses for financial mistakes and mismanagement of funds.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 12 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This council is a joke. I believe that if an election was held now with the rate increase as a mandate, the entire council would be voted out

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I do not believe the council has met this criteria. Their expenditure need looking at prior to a rate increase. Funding of woke programs should be revoked prior to charging ratepayers more.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I do not believe so. Council has been spending thousands of dollars on a mayoral car and funding programs that achieve nothing more than virtue signaling. Bring back roads, rates and rubbish.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No they didnt. Lets be honest, facing an increase of a third in the rates should be taken to the people before its implemented.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. Take it to the vote

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They just do the usual, ignore public opinion. Take it to a vote. Thats democracy.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Its both ridiculous and offensive.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The council has put forward no consideration at all

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

What plan? They are acting arbitrarily and have no idea of how hard the average person is struggling at the moment.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I have no idea. Im just astounded by their arrogance

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

What response?

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 14 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The works programme can be bewildering and doesn't seem to address ratepayer priorities. Foreshore Drive is a great example.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Nothing has been submitted to rate payers

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No nothing communicated directly to us as ratepayers

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

See above

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Not aware of any council reaction

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

A 28% increase is way beyond reasonable and no evidence that council has considered other means on reducing or better channeling expenditure has been provided.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Largely been ignored

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Hardship is subjective and council cannot judge every ratepayer's capacity to pay. The issue here is magnitude of the proposed increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not known but expected that council staff would follow procedures

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Very sketchy and fails to canvas options in sufficient detail. Council has failed to adequately consult its stakeholders

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 14 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The proposed increase is a lazy and unsustainable proposal that has been through a charade consultation process. Many residents cannot afford such an increase in the current cost of living crisis, or at all. Any increase, if granted should be modest, one off and not rolled into the rate amounts on an ongoing basis. If any additional increase is granted, it should be specifically designated for clearly identified purposes with clear and unambiguous milestones and deliverables that must be reported back to ratepayers and allow them to judge the effectiveness of the council. The current proposal should be rejected as was the last proposal from council.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Apart from engaging external consultants to provide their view, the Council has not demonstrated a need. The external consultants have provided similar reports to other councils and have a clear predisposition to supporting council views on finances and do not explore logical alternatives. See further comments on this below. Part of the Council's logic is about the impact of COVID. Based on the level of visitors and occupancy in Port Stephens since the end of COVID and particularly this Christmas, that effect is now over.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

The Council has run a charade consultation process where all options were increases of varying large amounts narrowed down to two very large amounts. The survey conducted did not allow a submission for no increase over and above the regular increase already approved by IPART. With property value in the LGA, there is already a significant overall increase in rate receipts given Council rates are substantially based on the UCV of properties. Port Stephens LGA has seen a huge increase in the number of multi dwelling over 55 retirement developments using a long leasehold for residents - ie they own the dwelling and lease the land. Based on current rating practices each of these dwellings pays a very small fraction of what other ratepayers pay for residential land and strata dwellings. Based on the limited information available, this is approximately the equivalent of \$150 per dwelling and yet these residents have access to the same council services such as roads and other infrastructure. In fact the proponents clearly advertise that residents pay no council or water rates or even stamp duty on purchase and sale. An alternative for the Council would be to seek to vary the level of rates for such developments to ensure they are making a more equitable contribution to the LGA costs with a minimum rate amount per dwelling.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes they did, but as noted above, the final two choices were both very significant with the only real difference being either one increase or spread over three years.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

There was reasonable engagement but as already noted the final options were bad and worse. An option for no increase was not provided in the survey / feedback method nor were one time special purpose increases considered.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Given the very limited choices the Council effectively prevented meaningful feedback through the survey / feedback mechanism.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Based on census data, the average age of Port Stephens ratepayers is high with a significant proportion being either pensioners or self funded retirees. Increases such as proposed do not take into account capacity to pay for these cohorts. There are already significant cost of living challenges for the entire community in the form of mortgage rate increases, food, fuel, gas and electricity increases. A rate increase of this magnitude simply adds to the pressure on all households at a time of significant financial stress.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. See Question 1 criteria 3 above.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

This assumes that residents that do experience hardship know they can seek assistance or will seek assistance if they do know. People experiencing financial hardship are often not aware of such options. Payment plans assume that the hardship is a matter of timing, for many people experiencing hardship it is a way of life juggling bills and deciding whether to pay a bill or eat

properly. Rate increases of this magnitude place more residents into this position.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

There has been insufficient detail on these requirements. Having COVID in the time period distorts any true comparison and this is not addressed. As noted above, increasing rates substantially has been the starting point and other strategies have not been sufficiently addressed. It is also clear that the NSW Government strategy of pork barrelling (their words and they claim it is perfectly legal) LNP held seats has significantly affected funding to Port Stephens Council at many levels given the state electorate of Port Stephens has been held by Labor for a number of years. The state of roads in the LGA is a disgrace and the total failure of the state government to progress key road initiatives in a timely manner (such as the duplication of Nelson Bay Road promised at each of the last three elections) has a flow on effect on Council expenditure trying to maintain third world quality roads.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 14 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Charge triple rates on short-term rentals. Done. Fixes the tourist and empty nest problem and should incentivise actual residency and encourage long-term healthy investment from council and business groups.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, not at all.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I think they paid a consultant to tell them what they want to hear. So, also no.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Lol no.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

They put more stuff on the website, but I wasn't notified via any channel until this ipart issue was raised. On facebook, by a stranger.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Some roads are undrivable in this region. Those people shouldn't have to pay raises as they already have to pay on car repairs. Also the elderly. Not reasonable.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

They don't care.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

They did? It's not easy to find. Here it is: <https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/council/rate-rise-options/rate-rise-options> The "rates assistance program" is entirely opt-in. Do the people who need it most even know about it? I doubt it.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I don't know.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The quantify part of this requirement is light. I.e. they don't really do into details. At least, none that are readily available. The council website and the newspaper seem to be the main sources of information. The rates calculator on the website is relatively easy to use though.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 14 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Basically, I believe the council decision for the reduced independent recommendation scenario would help the community. However, with current financial instability with bank rate rises and inflation with the cost of living; I do not agree with the council decision of the 31.29% Cumulative Increase at this time.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

yes

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

yes

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

yes

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

yes

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It will impact low to middle income house holds. For example, with todays current bank rate increases and current inflation; low to middle income rate payers will be impacted.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Low to Middle income households will find it hard to pay. The council has proposed additional affordability measures only for pensioners.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Council of hardship considerations for primary producers. There is no consideration for residential households.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

yes

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 16 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

How can the Port Stephens Council seriously believe they acknowledge or care about the rising cost of living when they propose this 9.5% increase to our rates. We're not all rich that live in this council, and personally I'd rather keep my house than have a few more pot holes temporarily fixed. Sure, increase rates, but how about we get realistic about what's fair and important to your residents PSC.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 16 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

If the council's proposal is adopted, then financial hardship will hit ratepayers in this community harder than most. We already have inflation well above published figures, and the current rises to food, mortgages, power and fuel are biting hard. The full effect of rate rises is yet to be seen by the general public, without a huge jump in rates as well, well above inflation rates, and unsubstantiated by council. Even if they get the rise, there is no showing that it will be utilised wisely and for the projects that they intend. If they concentrated on keeping within budget, like we all have to do, and run the business as it should, instead of utilising it as a bottomless purse, then maybe we will see some sense to the management of its funds.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. The special variation is not backed by the council's reports. Spending should be within their budget, it certainly has to be within mine! There has been no great calamity within council areas to qualify the increase. Roads need repair, but can be done within current guidelines and state govt assistance that has been provided.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. There is no evidence of this that has been provided to ratepayers.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No. Very little publicity has been passed to ratepayers and the public in general. They have kept it very quiet. I have not seen any dollar amounts for the proposed increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Council have shown very little engagement. Publicity for this proposal has been kept low and people are only finding out about it from local sources.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Little feedback and low publicity for the proposal means that we have been kept in the dark over this whole matter.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Impact on us the ratepayers will be dramatic. With mortgage rises already hurting the community, and inflation hitting the pockets of all, including pensioners like myself, is already hurting. Real inflation, particularly with home repair costs, mortgage and food costs hitting our pockets every week show that these costs are way above published inflation figures. The monopoly enjoyed in the food supermarket arena shows that they can increase prices without any guidelines and no government intervention. In particular, Bunnings have increased prices, in most lines to 20%+. Food is about 15% and the high price of fuel impact our pockets tremendously. Further increases above inflation will have a dramatic impact for ever.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

There have been no considerations to this matter.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

What plan? Again, no publicity and many council meetings are held in secret. There has been no consultation to my area. Period!

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

None shown within the broader community.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council have shown repeatedly that they cannot control their budget, and do basic management of assets. Pet projects go ahead without regard to the cost to the community and generally for small sections of that community. Ratepayers get little input to council spending or control over which projects will be funded or not.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 17 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The council can afford to buy the Mayor an \$85000 vehicle (4wd fossil fuelled) when other councils are investing in much lower cost hybrid/electric vehicles. I think Port Stephens Council are wasting money in places where they shouldn't be!

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

We are being hit by rising interest rates, rising Elec costs, low wage increases and rent prices that have increased approx \$200 a week over the last 4 years. The Rate rise is totally unacceptable and will force hardship onto families.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Nil consideration-as a rate payer I have not heard anything from the council in regards to how we are to try and pay the huge increase.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Friday, 17 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
Council ran a survey with no option to decline a rate increase to deceitfully sway results in favour of an increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. Council ran a survey with no option to decline a rate increase to deceitfully sway results in favour of an increase.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council ran a survey with no option to decline a rate increase to deceitfully sway results in favour of an increase. The ratepayers overwhelmingly do not want a rate increase, unfortunately council does not listen to the people they are supposed to represent.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Unaffordable. Ratepayers can not afford a SRV.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

No consideration at all. Council have been continually deceitful in trying to pass a rate increase.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

They have no plan that would help in the real world.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not to my knowledge.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Yes, it's easy to spend other people's money.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 18 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I have four main objections to this proposal: 1. Having been recently rejected by IPART, the council did not accept the decision of the arbitrator and simply used it as an excuse to waste more of its valuable revenue on expensive consultants to make another attempt. This borders on unconscionable behaviour and someone needs to bring this council into line. 2. At a time when everyone is being asked to cut back on spending and households are really struggling with high inflation and rapidly rising home loan repayments, this council wants to embark on a spending spree with their constituent's money. This could result in significant hardship for many constituents, and it is clear the council has no regard for them, are totally out of touch with reality and seem hell bent on making themselves look good. 3. The council says they need the rate increases as projections show they will start running at a loss in the coming years. They aren't running at a loss now, so the only way they will do so is by failing to manage their money - i.e. failing to do their job. They need to manage within their means, just like their constituents. 4. The projections on which the council based its proposal do not appear to factor in the windfall they are about to receive through the extraordinary increase in land values from the Valuer Generals latest valuations.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. The council is currently spending within its means. It has tried to make a case that it is not doing as much as it would like for the community, but that is not its purpose. Its purpose is the same as any household - manage expenditure within its means and that is what we pay it to do. The only way it will start to run at the loss it predicts is through its own poor management and inability to do its job. Moreover, in the projections it published, I do not recall seeing any consideration of the fact that land values, which translate to rates, have gone up 65% in the latest Valuer General valuations. This will avail the council of considerable funds, well in advance of even our current high inflation.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No. Indeed, it has decided to waste money on expensive consultants in order to deliver a business case, publicity campaign and constituent survey after its last very recent application to iPart for a rate rise was rejected. They just don't get the message. Rather than accepting the umpire's decision, they took it as an excuse to waste what must be millions of dollars on a very expensive campaign for another IPART submission, instead of using that money to fix the roads. In my opinion, the whole council needs to be set aside so that someone who knows how to manage replaces these people who only know how to be popular.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The council did embark on an extensive campaign to try and garner support. Though it did articulate to some extent the financial impact, it was more focused on the services that it would be able to provide with the extra funding. What it did not articulate was the extra increase to rates that would come with increased land valuations.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No. I only found out about it when I saw an article in the local paper. There was no mailout or email notification, despite the council having everyone's email for rates purposes.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I have not seen a detailed, neutral analysis of the survey they conducted, nor how many responses they received. Only selected snippets seemed to have been publicised, which of course were chosen to make it look like support. Eg most people surveyed (god knows whether that was 1% or 90% surveyed) were in favour of spending more money on roads (of course they are, given their terrible state after the rain!)

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The timing of this proposal shows just how out of touch this council is and proves it is only concerned with its own image, which of course more money will allow them to advance. Most of the people in this council are either retirees or young families. These groups are being hit hard with high inflation and high interest rates. They can't just ask someone for more money, so why on earth does the council think it can. The Reserve Bank is wanting everyone to cut back on their expenditure, but again this council doesn't think that applies to them. They have outlined a program of expansive spending that will drive inflation higher, and they expect the poor home owners within the council to fund it.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The council has shown a total disregard for the community's capacity to pay. As stated above, most people in the Port Stephens's

council area are retirees or young families struggling with high inflation and even higher home loan repayments.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I don't believe the plan adequately assessed the number of such people. Interest rates have continued to rise sharply, and the number and severity of people in hardship will now be grossly underestimated.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Don't know.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Any marketing spiel selectively chooses favourable examples, and without independent and holistic assessment, aren't worth the paper they are written on.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 18 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

It is my opinion that the ratepayers cannot afford this much of an increase on top of all the cost of living rises that are happening at the moment, we are having monthly rate rises on our mortgages, the cost of living has risen with increased pressure on people who are still earning the same. I do not think the people running the council have put enough thought into the hardship they will cause instead of managing the money they do receive better. Did the mayor really need a \$60,000 dollar vehicle for council business? Their view is not to manage on what they get with a lesser rate rise, but to push this through. Their survey did not give the option of a lesser amount, it was 9.5 over 3 years or 28 percent in one year. There are five new subdivisions going on here in our town surely more rates would be coming in? Has the council considered selling some assets to lessen the burden on the rate payers.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

They have said they need more finances to run the council but I find the rate increases they are asking for to be very high in the financial climate we are in

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

They did have a survey but it only gave the options they wanted for a rate increase, eg 9.25 over three years or a one off raise of 28 percent,

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

They only gave us the percentage rate, and I do not believe in this financial climate we are in people are struggling with the rise in inflation extra costs in food electricity, mortgage rate rises every month that 9.9 percent is acceptable

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

They have done this but really we had no choice in the rise they want the people weren't given the choice of a 5 percent rise only 9.9 or a one off rise of something like 28 percent

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I believe that they have not listened to people's comments on their feedback form

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The rate rise proposed does not consider the current financial burden being placed on people, we are dealing with interest rate rises on our mortgages monthly, the cost of living has increased with rises in power, services food. People should not be expected to tolerate a rise in council rates of 9.5 percent over three years, that is a rise of 28 percent. The council needs to realise that our wages are still the same, it is not acceptable to ask for so much of a raise.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

It's not their willingness to pay, we cannot afford this much of an increase, it is wrong to think that all people from pensioners, to young people starting out can or should tolerate this submission for such a huge increase. I am on my own with a mortgage and my pay has not increased, this means with 6 interest rate rises, the council did not consider the rate rise of 4 to 5 percent.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I have not heard of a plan to address the hardship they are causing with this intended rate rise but it will I believe cause a great deal of hardship, people's ability to pay is not there, you can't keep asking for more, have they considered selling some assets to help the financial burden of their rate payers, or perhaps selling the car the mayor has? Council should spend the money they do get more wisely.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I know they have had them up but didn't really give the ratepayers a choice in the matter

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 20 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I do not agree with the special rate variation. My wife and I are in our 60s and we are both retired and on the pension. We pay enough in Council rates and we struggle to pay that. This SRV of, 31.3% increase on top of what we are already paying now is not affordable by the rate payers. Not only is this, not affordable, but if passed would become a permanent fixture and financial burden every year. We feel that council is trying to do too much, and is too ambitious. All my working life I have been told to live within my means. I feel that council should do the same. Council needs to live within its means and not be spending our money on pet projects and political issues. Council needs to concentrate on core areas such as roads, rates and rubbish and get its nose out of politics. The reason councils everywhere are trying to get more money is because they are spreading themselves too thin and not concentrating on the basic essential services that they were elected to take care of. If we as ratepayers, keep feeding this insatiable beast, it will just keep growing and growing until our council rates are completely unaffordable. This SRV is coming at an extremely difficult time as we have been flogged by Covid for the last few years with the loss of jobs and businesses. The cost of living is through the roof and interest rates are up and going further thus forcing mortgages to become out of reach for working class people. We urge IPART not to give into this application by council. Thank you.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Im not sure about this all I know is that these increases are unaffordable by the average ratepayer.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Possibly, however, they have not canvassed the idea of living within their means, and not spending money that they dont have

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes, they probably did on both counts. However, these figures are masked within other terms and it is not mentioned with enough clarity, the actual dollar figure that is to be imposed on unsuspecting ratepayers. Furthermore, if this is approved by IPART these rises will be permanently added to the rate base. This means that we will be paying 31.3% on top of the rates that we are paying now.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Im not sure about this we found out about this via the local paper. If it wasnt for the local paper we would not have heard about the SRV. We are not on any social media. Furthermore, what is the point of making us aware when at the end of all this council is just going to ban together and fight this through and not listen to us rate payers when we are clearly saying that we do not want this.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

We feel as though we have been totally ignored what I mean by this is the council make all the appropriate necessary noises to show that they listen and care, but at the end of it all, the councillors band together and vote this thing through, despite the fact that we, the ratepayers have told them that we are opposed to it and dont want it.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

This is not reasonable council is wanting to charge us an extra 31.3% on top of what we are already paying in rates at a time when interest rates have pushed mortgages through the roof, and the cost of living has risen above with many can afford this SRV is extremely harsh, especially when those rises are to be a permanent fixture every year.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

As far as we are concerned, council does not care at all about the community's capacity to pay. The only thing that council can see at the end of all this, is more money to spend on their pet projects. Council does not care about our capacity to pay, their attitude is it doesnt matter your properties have exploded in value. You should just pay up and shut up . As far as willingness to pay is concerned. Council does not even consider this. They know that we do not want this.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

We dont care about the councils plan rate payers do not want loans That they cannot afford on top of all our other living expenses. People are sick and tired of being gouged by councils. We just want to be left alone and not constantly harassed. Elderly pensioners, and other retirees do not want to have to beg borrow or steal just to pay exorbitant council rates.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I have no doubt that the relevant IP &R documents would have been exhibited, approved and adopted by council as council would have done everything in its power to cross the Ts and dot the Is so that this thing would go through.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I dont know if the council has done this I can only guess that it has. Im sure that the councils bean counters and administrators would have made sure that this requirement was met. This is typical of councils and other bureaucracies that obfuscate and hide or cloak what they are doing in language that is not common to the every day person, trying to make sense of this.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 21 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Port Stephens Council has and continues to squander ratepayers money. Historically, millions lost on an upmarket eco resort, Tens of thousands on fill conceived outdoor dining parklets that had to be removed. The mayor having his maximum spend on a upsped. Ford Ranger Raptor, also environmentally inconsiderate with high fuel consumption. Premium Economy air travel is also still available. The above are just a few examples of a wasteful council prepared to take food off the table of the many struggling families and further disadvantage residents. SRVs just encourage further poor budgeting and in this case the Port Stephens Council proposed SRV should be soundly rejected by IPART

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

An outrageous exploitation of residents, there is nothing reasonable about the SRV

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Inconsiderate, with the SRV posing severe hardship on most of the residents due to far more modest wages growth and many on fixed income.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

This is just a token exercise, trying to smokescreen a large money grab.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

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Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

They have apparently demonstrated their engagement strategy, however most residences I have spoken to were unaware .. their methods for informing us in sub par and clearly is not working when you only have 55 people turning up to you 3 face to face meetings.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The consensus is that it is putting strain on an already strained population.. 30 percent over a 3 year period I unacceptable .. perhaps the mayor could sell his nice Ute he received (at rate payers), expense ? I plead that this rate rise is overturned .. this is going to hurt a lot of families, landlords, tenants and homeowners.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

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Date of submission: Wednesday, 22 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The community of Port Stephens is not all rich - there are many living on pensions and week to week. Renters will see rents increased pushing them onto the streets if this increase goes ahead. We simply cannot afford this rate increase and Council should have offered a smaller rate rise that reflects the current state of the nations inflation, interest rates and homelessness.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No - Council have not in my view established why they need this money - they are delivering things that are not core services and hiking up rates with gay abandon without any consideration to the fact that cost of living is soaring and many will lose their homes. I believe Council went out of their way to pay thousands of dollars to a university to get a report that says what they want it to say - the report was in no way independent and the organisation paying for the research stands to benefit the most.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Council conducted a very brief and limited set of alternatives without reviewing existing service delivery for areas of cost cutting. Council only offered rate rises of similar amounts to the community - it was a choice of fork out thousands more no matter which option was given. there were no options for cutting back and saving funds. These alternatives were all based on the skewed results of the university report commissioned by council for councils benefit.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes and No - there is information and examples which are related to a property valued well below the median price. Therefore the examples don't show the true amount of what you will be paying under the rate rise. There is also no tool for calculation of the pensioner rates.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

There were several engagement methods - however at all of these there was a strong push to say that no matter what we as residents want Council must have either 29% next year or 31% over 4 years.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Council continually harped on the need for the rate increase and created infomercial style social media campaigns all telling the community one message council needs a rate rise and the only choices are 29% or 31% and that residents have no choice other than to accept a rate rise. I felt that Council responded to queries on rate rises v cost cutting with deaf ears.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The rate increase requested is in no way reasonable. There is already a homelessness issue in the region. Inflation and interest rate increases are squeezing families and the rates keep going up. Many will struggle with the 2.5% increase let alone 31% - This is massive and unjustified. Council needs to stop spending money on non essential things - pair back the budget and get back to basics. Yes it is nice to have a mural - but NO we don't need one on every street corner if it means people are not able to afford to feed their families! I live in a household with two disabled people and we can not afford more rates!

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Council have considered all the shiny bright projects and sports complexes that they would like to deliver not what we already have that doesn't even get used! The Mayor is focused on big development and high rise and he wants this rate rise to fund projects that will make developers come to the region. Council is not listening to people about their capacity to pay the rate increase in view of the current cost of living crisis, pending energy cost increases, mortgage rate increases and more people going to charities for basic help to feed their families. NO we can't afford to pay this increase.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Yes but Council's definition of hardship is different to many peoples and will see members of the community suffer loss of dignity to claim it and some will not qualify and go without food or be asking for a hand out so they can pay these rates.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

These documents all rely on the council funded university report designed for a rates grab by Council - the data is skewed.

Author name: Name suppressed

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Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

While the previous two years have been challenging for most councils in relation to damage caused by extreme weather this should not be the reason for an extraordinary rate increase. There are various assistance funds available from state and federal government to make up shortfalls to assist with infrastructure repair. Port Stephens Council has long demonstrated that it is willing to spend money in the tourist oriented areas while the rest of the shire gets only a token consideration in regard to services and repairs. I would like to register my opposition to the proposed increase as put forward by council.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, council has not shown a clear need for the increase.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Council has used models of varying percentages of increase, but has not explained why a lesser rise is not acceptable.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Council has been very reluctant to pass on information about the total amount that this would come to.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Council has been very quiet about the whole process hoping that the rate payers will forget about the application.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The impression I have gotten from the limited information available via media releases is that it is a done deal.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The response to the impact is more like a cut and paste effort used by all councils applying for this increase.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Public meetings have been very vocal against any such increase given that a large percentage of residents of the shire are retirees with a fixed income and who cannot just pull extra money out of thin air.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The intention to address any hardship caused by the increase comes across as very vague so as not to appear helpful at all.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

While the plan for the increase has been made public there has been very little effort made to justify it at public forums because council fears a backlash to the proposal and as such has made only minimal effort to explain itself.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

It is very hard to believe that council will abide by any undertaking to implement any form of containment strategies, as there will always be an extenuating circumstance that will cause variation to any proposal.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 22 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

If it is not already clear, I strongly disagree with such an aggressive rise in rates. As mentioned, 4.4%, as granted by IPART is FAIR and MANAGEABLE. Port Stephens Council have attempted once previously to ramp up their income at the Ratepayer's expense, yet remain financially irresponsible, choosing to spend a State grant to construct a useless deck to clog up William Street, Raymond Terrace, rather than reconstruct badly decayed roads. Further, we still do not have a footpath on our street (in 2023)! I hope you decide in the ratepayer's interest! Thanks!

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I believe the Council has clearly established a need for a different revenue path, HOWEVER I do not believe they have established a purpose for the funding. They have briefly glossed over the areas of expense where the extra funding will be applied, but I do not believe there will be any notable improvement should the rate rise go ahead. i.e., given the current income for the council, they have still failed, year-on-year, to maintain our basic roads to an acceptable quality. The recent wet weather has become an over-used excuse for the poor/dangerous condition of some roads (Fairlands Road, Medowie is a good example of neglect).

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I do not believe the Council sufficiently canvassed alternatives to the rate rise. They know what they want, and they are determined to push it through. This is the second attempt by the current sitting Mayor (Ryan Palmer) to introduce an exorbitant/unrealistic rate increase. To quote Part B of the Council's Application Form, "It was clear from the community engagement there was a lack of support for the base scenario and any reduction in services." This statement is misleading, as if I remember, the majority of the Community demanded the base scenario. Further, the Council failed to offer a "Business as usual" scenario in their survey, driving participants to a Council-desired outcome.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I believe this was sufficient.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

The Council appeared to use numerous platforms to engage the Community, however the survey questions were clearly weighted in their favour.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Quoted from the "Survey" section of Criterion 2: "Of the 425 participants who completed this survey in Phase 1, it is also important to note that a further 790 people visited the survey who chose not to complete the survey. This demonstrates a high awareness rate but lower motivation on providing feedback on the topic." Again, this information provided to IPART is misleading. Community comments around this survey at the time, noted that the reason 790 people chose not to complete the survey was not due to "lack of motivation" but rather "lack of options" other than a large rate rise. In other words, the Council deliberately steered away from survey outcomes that were unfavorable to their agenda. Further to this, on Page 9 of the Council's Part B Application, it is stated that: "Council undertook a number of key steps in reaching a decision to apply for a SV. It did so with a data-driven management lead strategy that ensured the community was at the heart of decision-making." CLEARLY the Community opinion was disregarded, as their own survey suggested, 61% of responders preferred a Single Year Rise, while only 39% preferred the Independent Scenario. Council has still opted for the independent recommendation. So, the Community was NOT at the heart of decision-making.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I will begin here by saying I have no issue with the standard rate peg provided by IPART (4.4%), as it is generally in-line with inflation. (I get that). However, as mentioned already in Criterion 1, Question 2, this is now the second attempt at an exorbitant rate rise by the current Mayor. The question stemming from the Community here is, if they are in such financial trouble, how can the Mayor gladly accept delivery of an \$80,000 Mayoral Vehicle? This being a top-of-line Ford Ranger Raptor. I am sure, like myself, many rate payers would love to indulge in a new car such as this, but the fact is, most cannot afford it!

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I mention again, the general Community feeling surrounding this proposal and willingness to accept it, is not honestly reflected in the Council's submission. I am extremely surprised at the Council's "positive spin" that has been placed in the application. This is in direct contradiction to the vibe put out on Social Media (on the Council's own page) by the Community at large. There

is much anger and frustration, with comments that the current Council are incapable of responsible spending. I agree.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I note, in the Council's "Notification of Intent to apply SRV" letter to IPART, they make note of including details of their "Hardship Policy", knowing some ratepayers will struggle to afford this. (refer points 7 & 8 below): 7) Subject to the approval of a Special Rate Variation endorse the inclusion of the proposed additional affordability measures into the Debt Recovery & Hardship Policy to further support ratepayers should a Special Rate Variation be approved. 8) Requests the General Manager to provide information regarding its hardship policy & the process on the Rates Notices. Yet they still push the maximum benefit of 31.3%.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I believe so.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

No comment

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 23 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

As an aged pensioner I strongly oppose the SRV by Port Stephens Council (see following examples to support my case.

Example 1 : Current rates (2021 - 2023) valuer generals property value \$494,000 councils residential rate 0.0026800 x 49400 = \$1416.79 councils base amount \$403 waste management \$110 domestic waste management \$500 total rates \$2429.79 with rebate \$2179.79 Example 2 : Projected rates in 3 years council proposes a 31.3% increase by then current property value \$922,000 proposed rate (0.00286800 x 31.3)/100 = 0.00089768 0.00286800 + 0.00089768 = 0.00376568 new residential rate 0.00376568 x 922,000 = \$3471.96 plus other charges based on 2022 = \$1013 total rates minimum \$4484.96 rebate of \$500 = minimum \$3984.96 The examples above shows a minimum increase in rates \$1805.17 in 3 years. This is an unconscionable money grab by council to cover wants and not stick to their core responsibilities in this harsh economic times. While the cost of everything is escalates my pension is not keeping up at present and I assure that my pension will not increase by \$1800 in 3 years to cover rates. What are they trying to achieve, put more people into debt and homelessness as this will affect all people with home loans, pensions, renters and low income earners. This council needs to concentrate on what it needs to do and have some consideration of others. Conclusion Surely the current almost doubling of land values in the area would give the council sufficient funds to carry out their business without the obvious money grab. I also note some large grants given to council by the NSW government.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Before I answer some of the following questions I find this submission process very daunting and probably a lot of other people as well, some may even give up.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Percentage terms were stated but not the total increase in dollars.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

yes

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The current system seems to have flaws as the council asks residents to submit what they want council to do. This allows vested interest groups to push their agenda which puts the council in a position as to how we fund this. The council comes up with funding option which these groups vote on and the rest of us have to pay when we are happy with the core business.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

With land values in the tomaree area almost doubling since last year and the councils 31.3% increase in 3 years will add a minimum increase in rates of \$1800 after a promised \$500 dollar rebate and with the current harsh economic outlook, I doubt that my aged pension will increase by that amount or that of low income earners. There are a large number of pensioners in this area who have lived here for some time like I have for 28 years. This increase is going to hurt us.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I do not think the the council has considered the community's capacity and willingness to pay. They tried a Very similar thing with the previous SRV.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The councils hardship measures are poor, if you cant afford the increase how are regular payments going to achieve anything. As for deferring rates against your estate, it is not on because this would greatly affect our children in the future.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unknown

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation

period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 23 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The media has reported that council is to receive \$1.3m from the state government for road repairs. As such, this needs to be part of any consideration of the submission. I totally OBJECT to any rate increase that is over the 'rate peg' figure, particularly where the aim is more than double the capped figure. The cost of living in Australia is rapidly increasing and swift increases in home loan interest rates / monthly repayments are adding huge burdens to family and household expenses. In this current economic environment rate payers are having to reduce their expenditure, etc in order to manage their own budgets. Council should do likewise! An additional increase in rates at this time is totally wrong; council should be working to support rate payers, not adding to their financial/debt burden!

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Although the council states its desire is 'financial sustainability' and 'modest enhancements' in four areas of existing services, I am not satisfied that the council has established (i.e. demonstrated) the need for the proposed additional rate increase. In my view, the focus has only been on "our costs (and potential debt) are rising, how can we get more money to cover this?", rather than putting in place any real and sustainable changes to actually reduce/cut council's overall running costs. (See answer to Q.2 - criterion 1)

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I remain to be convinced that the council has actually canvassed any real alternatives. Yes they looked at possible increases in service charges etc, but that was still with a view to getting more income, rather than critical examination of where costs can and should be cut. It is my opinion that councils should only be involved in providing traditional CORE SERVICES and functions. That is, councils should not be involved in anything that is the responsibility of other levels of government or private enterprise!

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I have seen details of the proposed increase in percentage terms. However, I cannot recall seeing, at the time of consultation, any dollar figure related to the proposal.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Council did undertake community engagement but in my view there were shortcomings in the process and my experience left me sceptical about the entire consultation. I attempted to make my submission on the proposal via the on-line survey but was forced to make my submission via email because of what I saw as bias in the survey questioning. In Q1 of the online survey there was only the option to indicate support for one of the proposed rate rise options; there was no option for me to indicate that I did NOT support any of the proposals. When I could not answer Q1, I could not complete the survey! Further, regarding any community consultation, it is my opinion that the views and input from rate payers should be requested and assessed, SEPARATELY from those of non-rate paying residents, developers and organisations. After all, it is the rate payers who are and who will be burdened with the costs. It is easy for anyone who doesn't have to pay the bill to ask or agree to anything! Finally, I am unsure how well the 'consultation' was advertised across the areas. I have heard anecdotally, after the event, from a number of residents and ratepayers that they were not aware of the consultations until after the closing date!

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

To the best of my knowledge the only action taken in response was to post on the council website summaries of the various consultations. I am not aware of any process being put in place to address any issues of concern raised via the consultations. Having said that, with the focus of the consultation ONLY being which of the proposed rate increases do you support, without an option to say 'none of the above', were concerns really canvassed? (see comments against Q.2 - criterion 2, above)

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I have not seen any report giving specific demographics or the socio-economic situation of the rate payer population in Port Stephens LGA but rely on my knowledge of the area, in general, regarding these aspects. I believe that residential ratepayers fall into different categories - workers who have young families and others without; aged pensioners with concessions; self funded retirees with no concessions; others who rely on the meagre rates of unemployment benefit and there are landlords. In addition there are business ratepayers and others who derive an income from their rateable property. I consider that the proposed increase, which for the first year is much more than double the 'rate peg' is, in the current economic environment, completely unreasonable. It is exorbitant and would have too great of an impact on ratepayers, in general. (Please see response

to Q.2 - criterion 3, following)

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. On page 52 of the submission it says: "Council commissioned a Capacity to Pay report that provided empirical evidence that demonstrated that existing levels of rate income for Port Stephens Council are inadequate." I think this missed the point; in my view this statement does not demonstrate capacity to pay but merely states that, in the opinion of the report writer, council rates were too low! Further, the council submission says that the report was commissioned in late 2021. Needless to say, that was more than a year ago and since then significant issues have arisen that are adversely impacting ratepayers and their household finances. The two biggest issues are the rapid rise in the cost of living, and ever increasing interest rates on home mortgages. Both of these are impacting, and will impact into the foreseeable future, ratepayers' capacity to pay. For years the LGA has grown following the development of numerous housing estates and I believe that most ratepayers living in those estates are starting to have difficulties meeting the increased cost of their mortgage repayments; those who have bought into older established housing would be equally affected. The increasing cost of living for other goods and services is another financial hit for them to try to manage. The council submission dismisses self funded retirees (who don't qualify for Centrelink payments) as having sufficient means so as not to be affected. However, it should be noted that the extremely low rate of return on savings and investment that has persisted for quite some years past has seen the income of most of these ratepayers go backwards. This group too is impacted by the rising cost of living. Business owners are also subject to increased loan interest and repayments as well as rising costs of doing business. In addition, there was (and is) the impact of COVID-19 over almost the last three years. Not only were businesses left with no income, some closed. Workers too lost wages due to illness or quarantine requirements. I cannot see where the council has considered any impact related to ratepayer's financial recovery from COVID-19. The pandemic was considered and mentioned in the report along with increasing inflationary pressure. However, the issues were only looked at in the context of how council finances would be affected. This is a similar distorted perspective of the submission as is given in relation to the statement about rate payers capacity to pay. Both look at the situation from what it means for the council, not the potential impact on ratepayers

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The submission states that community concerns were raised about the current economic situation and it does propose minor alterations to the hardship provisions. However, in my view the changes are a slight tweaking of the 'status quo'. I could not see anything that specifically addresses almost certain hardship resulting from the proposed exorbitant increases.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

The documents are currently exhibited but I cannot say whether they were posted on the council website BEFORE being submitted to IPART.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The council submission contains a lot of words, management theory processes and it gives details of 'plans' and 'reviews' to do 'things'. It also outlines productivity improvements in what I would term smarter use of IT to do certain tasks. However, I consider the stated dollar savings to be quite small and only a drop in the bucket. The savings outlined in case study 2.3.a - Duty Counter (page 91) is interesting. The stated savings are approx \$13,000 but is it really an overall saving when, as the submission states, "This time has been reinvested in to priority work within the section"? In my view to be 'savings' the equivalent salary funding should have been removed from the budget so as to be truly recouped. As for salary and staffing costs, I have heard anecdotal reports that council administration staffing (not outdoors workers) has grown in recent years and some believe there has also been 'classification creep'. It would be helpful to see a comparison of, say, the last five years of the average staffing levels, by classification, in the administration side of the council's operation. The average staffing level is not a simple head count but is an adjusted figure that shows the full-time equivalent of any part-time and casual workers. One would hope such a report would show that the council has reaped the benefits of the various IT efficiencies, etc. and has truly attempted to achieve real savings. However, if the anecdotal reports are correct, the situation must be in reverse! If so, this is an area where council should be looking to making cuts; after having adopted all the various 'smart practices', there must be real savings!

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 23 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This proposed increase is simply unaffordable for the majority of rate payers in the Port Stephens LGA, combined with the increase in cost of living and mortgage interest rate rises it will place many families, including my own, under financial strain.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. There is a strong feeling amongst residents that Port Stephens Council has in the past misused funds for purposes not benefiting rate payers (for example, purchase of vehicles for council members personal use), and are now trying to raise funds directly from ratepayers pockets.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I am aware of, or that have been communicated effectively to ratepayers.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No - I have seen no such communication from Council.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No - most residents have been made aware of the proposal by word of mouth and rate payers sharing information about the proposed rate increase on social media, this is certainly how I became aware of it.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I not aware of any action Council have taken.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The proposed increase up to 30% over 3 years is unmanageable for most rate payers. Many in the Port Stephens LGA are from low socio economic backgrounds, are elderly/pensioners and are struggling with the post Covid increased cost of living. Our LGA is facing a housing crisis and people are struggling with recent multiple interest rate rises. Most residents simply cannot afford the proposed increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. They clearly havent considered it. There quite possibly hasnt been a worse time in the last decade to propose this increase, in terms of rate payers ability to take on the increase in rates, when we are already dealing with the biggest rise in cost of living in 20 years.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I cant comment - I have not seen this information disclosed by Council

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 23 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I understand increasing costs affect Councils ability to supply services to rate payers, however increasing costs also affect my ability to pay for the basic every day needs. As a pensioner I am already struggling to keep up with increasing costs, I have no way to increase my income so an increase in rates will be very difficult for me.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Do not know.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Not to my knowledge, reading ipart submission an increase of 9.5%pa for 3 years totaling over 31%.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Have learned of increase in local paper through editorial comment.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

not aware of council response.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I am worried as there seems to be no let up of price increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Not aware of communities ability to pay only my own.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Not aware of any help from council. Also have been unable to find or download part B of council submission from ipart web sight.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

With the easing of covid restrictions I think council is under estimating its future income from the tourist industry, including its income from Newcastle Airport, caravan parks etc.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 23 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

We have bad roads, terrible bin service, unmown parks, parks without water fountains or lights and the general manager can spend a hundred grand on a new car. pSC doesn't do right with the several million it gets a year.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Yes

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

None!

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Our home loans have quadrupled, now you want to hit home owners even harder on land they bought and paid for. We struggle enough.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

None

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

It's not enough, the raise isn't necessary. The general manager gets paid enough.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Nil

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

None, the increase is not justified.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Thursday, 23 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I see no alternatives, put forward by the government, just keep digging into our pockets

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Very little communication has come our way

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

I see no community awareness community is struggling, adding a financial burden is not going to help the situation

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

This proposal is going to put families in financial stress, cause mental hardships

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

I am in a two income household we are hard workers and still struggling this rate rise will be devastating to us familys are doing it tough its hard enough to get your own home to pile this on top is just adding so much financial stress I feel this will negatively effect familys and home owners

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

We all want a great community but adding this financial burden onto the ratepayers is ridiculous. We are all struggling most families living week to week. This massive increased is just not achievable and family budget.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The council is not capable of considering each families. Individual needs of circumstances we are all different. Well have different needs to grow percent to one category is insanity.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Having an open honest conversation with the family, some residents of the peninsula would be a great start. This will be devastating to everybody.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

We still have roads covered in pot holes limited medical access no bulk billing public transport the drops at children when theyre not meant be doesnt fulfil the full route. Its ridiculous to add more rates when were getting such poor service already.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Saturday, 25 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I strongly oppose the councils application. The majority of Port Stephens ratepayers do not want or cannot afford this increase in rates as the cost of living continues to increase significantly.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Nil

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Unreasonable increase to ratepayers

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The council needs to understand the majority of the community do not support this increase, many ratepayers do not have the capacity or willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

A plan to gradually pay off an unreasonable debt is not acceptable.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Does not justify an increase

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 26 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

This rate increase of 30% over 3 years is just another example of corporate greed. Surely Council has financial people who can set budgets that Council be forced to adhere to.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 26 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

* Before making this submission, I read and digested all 114 pages of Port Stephens Council's Part B of their application and wished many times I belonged to an LGA such as Hornsby, so I only had to read and digest 63 pages! * controversy around the purchase of the mayoral vehicle combined with allegations of a personal tax benefit in May 2022, impacted on many residents judgement of the whole organisations financial management. When commenting during community engagement, many responses linked a rate rise to the mayors new car (acknowledged in Communications and Engagement Report page 10). * Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission relating to the application for a Special Rate Variation by Port Stephens Council. When I looked for it (two weeks before the closing date), there is no promotion or details provided on either Councils website, News page, Facebook page or in Your Port February newsletter, to raise the rest of the public's awareness of this opportunity to make submissions to IPART.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

I have found it difficult to verify the validity of each reason given in Port Stephens Councils application for their need for an SRV. It appears there was no financial analysis undertaken by a government department. This was explained as Council did request a copy of the latest TCorp credit assessments but was declined as the work cannot be shared externally (SRV application page 26). I believe an analysis by a government department would have been useful as, in this case, they are generally trusted over consultants. Prior to the SRV application, I relied on the external auditors reports for true and accurate reporting of Councils financial situation. I felt confident in early 2022 that Port Stephens Council seemed to have come out of the pandemic relatively unscathed. Port Stephens Annual Report 2022 painted a positive picture of Councils budget that met the financial sustainability target of a surplus - strong and stable achieving an annual budget surplus of 1%. with a modest surplus of \$583,000 (Annual Report 2022) It was suggested this good result was because of good financial management. At Councils meeting a few months later that seemingly had changed overnight to a financial crisis and a forecasted shortfall of \$80million. I was surprised when Councillors passed a motion for staff to be instructed to provide a monthly report to Council on the state of the budget rather than waiting for the usual Quarterly Report. My confidence plummeted as I grappled with the question why Councillors (most with backgrounds in finance and management) clearly felt they hadnt been kept informed through the usual channels. * I noticed the negative impact of rising interest rates on Council debt burden is presented without any data on the corresponding positive effect of rising interest rates for funds held in bank deposits and the Resilience Fund. The difference in the debt interest rate vs deposit interest rate isn't expressed in the application. * At the Council meeting of February 14th 2023 it was a revelation that Council has been assessed as metropolitan when paying fees for waste disposal for a long time. This potential for cost savings from a reduction in waste disposal fees would have a positive effect on future budgets but hasnt played any part in SRV discussion.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

* I do not believe Council has given proper consideration to the implementation of other options in the consultants report presented to them a targeted campaign to educate ratepayers so they were no longer under fiscal illusion, abolish ward structures, review corporate structure, service level review, Council led internal efficiencies.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

* our recent land value notice has revealed the rateable land value amount of our residence has increased dramatically. Councils application reflects an average increase across the LGA of 84% for residential rates since July 2019. I don't feel that the effects of this change have been explained adequately or in dollar amounts. Given that the land values increased by such a large amount, it is logical that the percentage of ratepayers that are eligible for the revaluation relief will go above 5% and Council hasn't demonstrated what happens to those ratepayers when an SRV is applied. * the changes to the percentage of SRV proposed by Council during the consultation process was clearly communicated but didnt remain the same for long. The scenarios changed from 5 choices to 2 choices and then to 1 choice. The terminology was difficult to keep up with. As well as being blamed for their "fiscal illusion", ordinary people were expected to interpret the base scenario, single year scenario, independent recommendation scenario, cumulative and annual statistics, planned services, enhanced current services, instant or gradual enhanced services, econometric modelling and data envelopment analysis, rate rise options, embedded in the rate base, reduced services options, rate caps, rate pegs and difficult to read graphs that resembled intertwined coloured snakes.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Criteria 2. Community Consultation: * I usually engage in any opportunity to provide feedback to Port Stephens Council, relevant to my interest in the environment, volunteering and my local community. As a survey participant and then member of the Community Focus Group, I was involved in the community feedback provided that informed the new Community Engagement Strategy 2021-2024. The principles of this Strategy were supposed to have been implemented for community

engagement regarding an SRV. I agree with Council that - As part of this process, Council engaged extensively with the community to ensure that it has adequately captured the community's priorities and reflect on their consultation regarding any application to IPART. (Delivery Program 2022-2026 Operational Plan 2023-2024 Revised for a Special Rate Variation, page 35) However, given the effort and presumably funding, that was put into developing the new Community Engagement Strategy in 2021, I was disappointed to see that, while the community were certainly engaged in a variety of ways, the results of the engagement around an SRV were not a true reflection of ratepayers' opinions or statistically valid conclusions. * I noticed on Social media (Council's Facebook page) that many comments reflected a growing frustration with the whole engagement process. The drop off in community interest is demonstrated during the General Managers video of 7th October. There was a sharp drop off in attention from the initial audience of 72 people, measured by Facebook. When the Council meeting on 25th October deferred discussion on the outcomes of engagement and submissions to their next meeting I believe most people had tuned out and were suffering from severe consultation fatigue. * introducing the concept of an SRV being used as a remedy for dispelling dangerous levels of fiscal illusion was introduced to the public early in the consultation process. When talking to my friends and neighbours, I believe the concept is not generally understood and not Plain English. * A very small number of people participated in the community surveys and community workshops in begun in June 2022 (Our Funded Future Engagement Program Phase 0 and Phase 1). I realised that I wasn't the only one who didn't understand the subject being discussed. Council acknowledged that ratepayers were confused. In August 2022, after demands from one Councillor to be more transparent, the engagement was renamed to the far clearer title of Rate Rise Option (Phase 2). Our electronic rate notice of July 2022 does not include an attachment of the two page brochure as referred to on page 35 of Council's application Part B. I don't believe I have been given clear information of how Council would fund services if the SRV application was not approved. * While statistics of the Phase 2 round of surveys and workshops were used by Port Stephens Council in their application, the number of people who were engaged directly is a very, very small percentage of the total population of Port Stephens LGA. I interpret the results as being 355 responses that went on to inform both the direction and the choices offered in all future consultation. Similarly, the Snap poll labelled SV Support Result (page 36), is said to establish how the community workshop process had informed them. The conclusion was based on a poll taken by only 30 people of whom 15 people (50%) were somewhat supportive of an SRV. * In the Annual Report of 2022, the current Community Satisfaction Survey reported the percentage of respondents being somewhat satisfied with Council's services fell from a five year average of 75%, to 64%. This impacted on the community's willingness to be involved in consultation around what, for most people, was an unpalatable topic.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I completed the new, transparent, decentralised Edemocracy digital platform and engagement tool named Ethelo. The process was interesting because you could see other people's comments in real time. I have attempted to do the sums and add up the responses from the snap poll and surveys of the three phases of engagement (Phases 0, 1 and 2). I estimate the data was based on the choices of around 500 people out of a possible 75,200. As this is such a small sample, I believe any conclusions are unreliable. * At Council's meeting on 23rd August 2022, during Phase 1 of consultation, Councillor Peter Kafer was reported to have "Shamed Council's lack of communication with Aboriginal and Toress Strait Islander people" (News of the Area August 31st 2022). The results of the next phase (2) showed an attendance of only 3 people at the Wahroonga Aboriginal Corporation meeting. There were very low numbers of attendance at the rest of the community drop in sessions and interest group meetings (tables 6 and 7 Attachment 10 Community Engagement Report page 15). I do not believe that sufficient numbers of people attended these engagements to establish community opinions. The scenarios presented to the community changed when the consultation process was still underway: * the increase in the level of the rate peg from 2.5% to 4.4% in the middle of the consultation period further invalidated any previous data, since it was based on respondents choosing scenarios that presumed the lower rate cap of 2.5%. (page 2 Phase 2 Rate Rise Options Fact Sheet). It was not made apparent what difference a 4.4% rate peg would have made to the cuts in services. The scenario with a 2.5% rate peg was described as Our assets will deteriorate and we will look at reducing or ceasing services, such as more potholes in our road network, shorter hours at our facilities, longer processing times for customer requests/applications and fewer community events (page 2 Rate Rise Options Fact Sheet). No fact sheet followed with what the service cuts would look like followed the 4.4% rate peg change. * The Capacity to Pay Report presented to Council in March 2022 doesn't specify which rate cap it refers to but is presumed to be the lower cap of 2.5%. Accordingly, it is recommended that council apply for an increase at least equivalent to eight percent (8%) above the cap for each of three (3) years. (SRV application Capacity to Pay Report page 52). * Port Stephens Council's application does not make clear how the increase in the rate peg was communicated and how community responses were considered in the outcomes informing their application for an SRV.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

* when deciding how an SRV will impact its residents, I suspect Council's application relies on socio demographic and ratepayer profile statistics from the 2021 census. The application does not reflect the very different community capacity limits in 2023 or a forecast into the next 6 years. While Council uses natural disasters, rising cost pressures, inflation, rising insurance, building and transportation costs and increased Superannuation Guarantee, it fails to acknowledge that exactly the same increased costs also apply to residents and business. The difference is - residents and businesses don't usually have the opportunity to quickly increase their income by way of an SRV nor do they have a Resilience Fund to fall back on. * Port Stephens Council's application to IPART for a Special Rate Variation will lock ratepayers into an extra cost to their families

budget until 2026 but no one expects rates to decrease in 2027. My family can afford a rate rise but it has a disproportional effect on vulnerable people. Support services in the LGA are inadequate (see Public Access presenter in webcast Council meeting Feb 14th 2023).

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.
3. Community Capacity to Pay: * Port Stephens Councils reasoning that Councils rate bills are low and that they are lower than neighbouring areas, is of little comfort to families experiencing rising costs in all areas of their budget. * for a lot of families Councils Hardship Policy or Rates Assistance Program will not be enough. I am wondering what will happen if the demand for relief to pensioners and non-pensioners outstrips the funds allocated by Council. I suspect that as the effect of rising bills begins to bite, taxpayers will have to fund further State and Federal government cost-of-living relief programs. * it is unclear how Council will manage the inequality in rural land revaluations that they acknowledge has occurred in 2023. It isn't clear what will happen if the budget allocation of \$20 000 is not enough to provide real relief to the top 5% of ratepayers who are severely impacted by each land re-valuation.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The implementation of the consultants recommendation in the Capacity to Pay Report to change the rate structure, will come too late for many. Upon receipt of the report, Council has created an internal working group on this matter and commenced initial investigations and data analysis on various change scenarios to the rates structure and its potential impacts to seek a greater distributive justice within the rates structure (Capacity to Pay Report page 60). * whether they are ratepayers or not, each and every person in Port Stephens will be impacted by a rate rise. It affects ratepayers, landlords and therefore renters, first home buyers, mortgage holders, businesses, rural businesses, charities and non government agencies. I have seen in recent months that the small businesses in my own community have been impacted to the point where shops have closed and no new business has taken a lease. For some a rate rise will just mean a rise in their rates but for others it will be the straw that breaks them. I believe this should be the consideration that is given priority over all others.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes. The documents went through the required process but regular changes to the SRV scenario was difficult to keep up with. There was limited opportunity to provide feedback to the final list of SRV funded projects, presented to Council in December 2022. * there is very little evidence in the application that residents wanted an SRV to fund Enhanced Services, apart from road repair. * the list of projects in the IP&R documents to be funded by the SRV changed. The final list of projects proposed for SRV funding was summarised into areas - road maintenance, condition of public space, natural environment and waterways and foreshore. * It is easy to challenge Council's assertions on page 30 New projects are only added to the SAMP and LTFP when funding is secured and Councils SAMP prioritises funding towards renewals over new assets and is reflected in prior years results. I do not agree that this policy has been applied to every project funded by the SRV or the Capital Works Programs of the past. * There has been no suggestion from Port Stephens Council of the intention to scrutinise the Capital Works list to identify projects that are repeated every year and classified as essential. Some have remained on the list for decades. Clearly they have not been essential. Council have not reduced the value of their Capital Works Plus program nor have they considered whether applying for grants for new capital works that are not essential is responsible financial management. A perfect example is the addition of project \$1.6 million for co-funding the construction of a new Marine Rescue facility in Lemon Tree Passage to Community Advocacy Priorities. Council hasnt consulted with the community, given justification for this project or provided a dollar amount for the ongoing commitment to maintaining the new facility. Projects such as this impacted negatively on the level of community engagement, as it added to scepticism that Council would spend a rate rise wisely.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Criteria 5. Productivity improvements and cost containment strategies: There are many aspects of the reasons given for financial need that are questionable based on current circumstances and my experience as a resident: * the need for a rate rise because of decreased revenue from Newcastle Airport, holiday parks and because of lockdown restrictions during the covid 19 pandemic, is no longer relevant. The latest Destination NSW data (Sept 2022) for the Hunter area and unofficial results from tourism operators suggest a sharp increase in tourism and a return to at least pre-pandemic levels. * I do not believe Council has given proper consideration to the implementation of other options in the consultants report presented to them. Namely a targeted campaign to educate ratepayers so they were no longer under fiscal illusion, abolish ward structures, review corporate structure, service level review, Council led internal efficiencies. The recommendation to Port Stephens Council by consultants that - "Within the Capacity to Pay report, it was recommended that base rates should be either eliminated or reduced substantially to improve capacity to pay and increase distributive justice. The report acknowledged that changes to the rate structure are a time-consuming exercise, have political implications, and also requires substantial community engagement and deliberation. Upon receipt of the report, Council has created an internal working group on this matter and commenced initial investigations and data analysis on various change scenarios to the rates structure and its potential impacts to seek a greater distributive justice within the rates structure" (Application Part B page 60). This explanation does not set out any timeline or

plan for real action. Nor does it quantify the recommendation, even though the outcome of "a greater distributive justice within the rate structure " is surely worth more effort and needed urgently. * the cost of responding to past natural disasters and the need to have funding reserves for future natural disaster is cited in the SRV application. In October 2021 this reasoning was duplicated for establishing a Resilience Fund (also named Prosperity Fund). The reason cited for the establishment of the Resilience Fund is so Port Stephens Council can respond to a natural disaster faster than the NSW State Government. I contend that that this reasoning doesn't apply to any major natural disaster as Council's Resilience Fund should never hold enough funds to pay for that level of resources. * Projects for building in weather resilience have not been identified for funding by an SRV. * an inability to obtain government grants to address the infrastructure backlog is listed as a reason for the SRV application. I think this is at odds with the creation of a grants officer position, forecasted to increase the revenue available from grants. The forecasted increase in the number of successful grant applications should help to fund essential capital works and therefore free up funds for the backlog.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 26 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Just received Notice of Valuation for my property. Increase of 72% on previous value. This will increase the rates on my property even before this variation comes into effect if it happens. Isn't that ample enough of an increase.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. Majority of residents in my area are elderly let alone young families on ever increasing mortgages. They will not be able to afford it. You don't have to be smart to work that out

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Big deal. Easy for council bureaucrats to say that on good salaries. Typical for government agencies.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 26 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

With the new property valuations from the valuer general the rate are going to rise as the value of most properties increased by over 40%. this is going to increase all rates in the Port Stephens Council area.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No they haven't outlined it completely and should be looking at other revenue streams like the caravan parks and airport which they own

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No and this is going to change with the new valuer generals property valuations

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 26 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No!

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No!

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No!

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Its not needed. We already pay high rates & nothing is done with the money. Our roads are s█. Hospital is s█. Tourists ruin this town as well.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Are you serious? Look at the cost of living. Nobody can afford this rate rise!

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Were not going to pay it

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Council sucks

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

I dont have all day to complete this █ form.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 26 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

In addition to VG increase & cost of living, ratepayers are expected to adopt hefty council hikes for minimal return. Local infrastructure is suffering. Residents expect increases but not the percentage that council proposes

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Increase notified by percentage but not dollar terms. Most ratepayers wouldnt equate this to a dollar value & therefore would not oppose the increase

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Port Stephens is an aging community & the impact of increased rates upon pensioners will affect their lifestyle as the cost of living exceeds their income.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. The capacity & willingness to pay has been ignored as rate rises are applied/passed by council & not the people

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Hardship wont be granted to all residents as most just unwillingly accept without question

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I have read the above criteria which I assume Council has applied in their request for a special variation. Respectfully I would request IPART to consider the following in determining a decision: 1. Land Valuations have clearly increased substantially in the latest assessment. This will already increase rates well in excess of inflation. This will already present financial hardship without a further variation. Increases in land valuation is beneficial only to an investor 2. Nelson Bay demographic analysis will indicate a major percentage of the local population is at retirement age (60+ years) and on State pensions or Centrelink support 3. As a community, we understand inflationary pressures have an impact across all sectors, however Port Stephens council needs to demonstrate its strategies to cut operating costs, work smarter and enhance productivity with existing resources (the same as would be required from any competitive commercial enterprise). 4. Council has attempted on previous occasions to apply rate increases far in excess of inflation. Fortunately these were rejected by IPART. 5. I am aware that both Federal and State governments have contributed significant funds to upgrade and reseal roads in the Nelson Bay area. This should be taken into account 6. Existing rates already exceed those rates paid by many of Sydney's councils with much higher land values? Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Not really as far as I'm aware

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I E been asked

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

They have informed on the increase, but not what it is to be used for

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

They have engaged over social media and local newspaper.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The council has been adamant on the rate rise, but has not specified on what the exact purpose it is to be used for. And when asking for input about the rise, did not present an option for no increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is unreasonable to increase the rates on top of the regular rate rise and increased mortgage repayments as well as other cost of living increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The councils consideration has been to basically ignore any concerns about the community's capacity of willingness on broader scale.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

There was no details in how financial hardship would be addressed.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Not as far as I'm aware.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

They haven't.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, I do not believe so. Only a few years ago, the Port Stephens Council vehemently opposed a forced amalgamation with the Newcastle City Council on the basis that the Newcastle City Council was only after the funds that the Port Stephens Council had in reserve.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I do not know however surely the proposed rate rise is too big a rise for the average ratepayer considering cost of living expenses that everyone is facing at the moment.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Yes

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Yes

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The Port Stephens Council has ignored the general public and is pushing ahead with the proposed rate increase.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

A 9.5% increase per annum is totally unrealistic for ratepayers. I believe that this increase, should it be approved by IPART, will see many people unable to pay the rate increase along with current cost of living increases.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. I believe that they are not considering the community's capacity and willingness to pay. This will be reflected in the number of applications that IPART receive objecting to the increase.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

It is my believe that the Port Stephens Council has tunnel vision towards the proposed increase and only the proposed increase of 9.5%p.a.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I believe so.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The Port Stephens Council has not been a functioning Council for several years. They were in control of reserves that other Councils envied and now are looking for a massive increase to cover the inadequacies of the Port Stephens Councils poor record even allowing for the effects of Covid 19.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Our council's downturn begun when they lost courtcase after courtcase in the Land & Environment courts, costing us tens of millions of dollars. The sheer waste has continued unabated & unchecked to this day. it is disgusting! Council staff & councillors should be held accountable & forensic accountants be engaged to conduct an independent investigation. Our funds have never returned & they have chased their tails ever since. Now they have turned to us community members trying to get blood from a stone. It is their position & bad deals that have got us to where we are today. We are the innocent behind this. People need to be held accountable. Where has the money gone? Why do they waste money? Who has all the fancy new toys? Who are the favoured groups or clique's? Are people sitting in a nice comfy chairs behind nice mahogany desks making the correct decisions for us, or someone else? Therein lies the questions that should be asked by a higher authority. PLEASE. These people or on the stink & they are getting away with it, while us 'common folk' just have to bear the brunt of their behaviour.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No certainly not. Our council operates on smoke & mirrors. They tell us one thing before elections, then change tact afterwards. The elected councillors who have fought against this are in the minority. The others operate by very dubious moral standards at best. In the public interest or their own? This is the question that the state government should be asking.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

They have in their own sneaky way. eg, when we could have our say by public submission, we didn't have the option of choosing 'NO' to the SV. We had the options of choosing alternatives that nobody wants. Death by firing squad or death by hanging = same result!

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

In my opinion, no they have not. They are telling us what they want us to hear.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

The council does not operate with the community's best interest at heart. They treat us like idiots. All of the opposition amounts to nothing from us plebs. All consideration is given to property developers.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

There has been little to no care factor in our opinions. The passed decade has seen a clear disregard by council & the elected officials. There have been too many personal agendas & private hand-shakes furthering vested interests.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

We just don't have the means to pay more. It is as simple as that. We are a very working class community, many of us don't have disposable incomes, or incomes that can support additional fees or rates. Council & the Mayor don't care about this fact. They mention various aids for payment, but at the end of the day we still have to come up with this money. If we don't earn enough, from where do we get the extra from? Are they forcing us out of our homes & our area?

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

They DO NOT LISTEN to us. They are the elite, continually treating us plebs like idiots. Their waste & mismanagement of council/my funds is beyond belief.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Much of the community will be on 'hardship payments'. We are not an affluent society here. We are ordinary mums & dad's struggling in today's society to make ends meet as it is. Where will the extra come from???

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

They exhibit them in the chambers or squirreled away online. Public transparency has never been on their agenda. They are hoping it happens fast for them at our expense. Even more ordinary folk will have to sell-up, move to a caravan park or live out of their cars.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and

cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council have their priorities all wrong. This has been a steady decline for some time now. Our community questions why good money is continually being wasted on frivolous items or projects while others remain stale. They should just concentrate on providing funding for projects within their charter of providing the necessities for our communities. ie developers have quite the say in the direction of our councils decision making. Should developers be sitting on council as an elected official?

ABSOLUTLEY NOT. This is the height of vested interests.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No. I don't believe Council has genuinely demonstrated the need for a special rate rise. They also haven't demonstrated good value for money or wise management of current revenue to justify a rise rates above the standard rates.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

I don't believe council has done with integrity or competence. The proposals put to residents of what it would mean to not have the special rate rise were done in quite a manipulative and non transparent way.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

I believe the cumulative rise was communicated but I don't recall seeing anything for ratepayers by rating category.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Council did use a variety of engagement methods however they also have a very strong track record of ignoring community responses and feedback, as evidenced by their proceeding with the previous special rate variation despite 80% of residents rejecting their proposal

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I have not seen any response from council other than a generic 'if we don't get the rate rise you won't get any services' type of engagement and communication.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Given the rapidly changing economic circumstances facing the community, with increasing grocery bills, mortgage payments and electricity, the proposed rate rise is unreasonable and will put many families under extreme duress and financial hardship. In all fairness I do understand these economic issues weren't an issue when council began this process however I think continuing under the current circumstances shows a complete lack of care, concern or understanding of the local community.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay. There has been none. The community outright rejected a similar proposal in recent years yet council went ahead with their application then. It was only IPART's intervention then that stopped it. Now the situation is even more desperate.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Council's plan is not far reaching enough given the changing economic circumstances which now sees a much broader segment of the community impacted by financial hardship

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Yes

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council did provide information on cost containment strategies

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No, the council has just sent out new land values and the new rates that will be paid will be much higher than a 30% increase. This shows that their application for a special rate rise is now unneeded, at first i was for it, now it doesn't make sense.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Yes, in the new land valuations. That is their alternative needed to bring them their extra revenue.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No. I only heard about this from people complaining about it on social media. Not once was it advertised to me, everything else they do somehow does. As said before i was for the rate increase to fix up our roads and improve our area though it is no longer needed.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No, they haven't communicated well.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Well they are going ahead with it even though the community doesnt want it. Considering the evidence that they dont need it anymore, it is appalling they would do this to their residents when living costs are already sky high.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is unreasonable now land value has gone up. Adding two big increases will send people broke.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

While some members in the community are well off, a majority cant afford two increases in a short time. Only the land value increase is now needed and the council pushing ahead for both is proof that they have no consideration for our capacity to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Again, new land valuations should make this whole thing redundant.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

I believe they had work arounds for the documents.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

The council wastes a lot of money, they need a full audit to show where our \$33 million in rates is going each year. Now with the increase i believe an auditing process is needed. Their strategies don't mean nothing, most things they say don't get achieved.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Im very worried for the many families and vulnerable members of the community relying on government assistance that this rate rise above inflation will cause immense hardship and loss of housing security. Inflation is at an all time high and many families are already going without basics to make ends meet. The port Stephens council has time and time again proven to be reckless with OUR money and splurge on unnecessary items that are wasteful. They need to tighten their belts like the rest of the community and make do for the 2 years until inflation settles then reasses.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

The community consultation did not provide an option for a SRV - all options listed were additional % increase therefor many community members did not complete.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

The community consultation didnt provide an option for no increase - therefor excluded participation from many community members.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is unreasonable when many residents of our community are living below the poverty line to increase rates above already scheduled rate rises.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The council need to stop splurging on luxury cars like limited edition Ford Raptor Utes for the mayor and expect the community to pick up the tab when many are barely scraping by feeding, housing and affording an education for their children.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

A large portion of the community are living below the poverty line - pensioners, single parents and single income families. The council plan to address hardship will not help those vulnerable people in our community falling on hard times.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unsure

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

N/a

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.
Find other ways to raise funds maybe look at more dog rangers

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Monday, 27 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Council only appears to achieve half of the things they set out to do and waste money. Sub standard road repairs so money wasted. Too many employees on road works crews doing nothing or performing to low standards of care. Events not advertised so poor attendance and money wasted. Large allowance for Mayoral vehicle which the rate payers do not benefit from. Here is a lot of financial deficit. Many of the things council do achieve are benefitting tourists not ratepayers. Where is our transport and assistance for our elderly ratepayers? Where is the street cleaning crew? All I seem to receive from my rates are the garbage services so why should I pay more?

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Yes they have

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

yes they have

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

yes they have

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

yes they have

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I have seen no action in this area.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

It is unreasonable to put ratepayers under huge financial stress brought on by the special variation while council mismanage their funds in the way Port Stephens mayor has done.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I can see no consideration at all

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

I feel applying for financial hardship is not the answer.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

yes they have

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Disappointed and concerned about our much higher increased costs for the next year. At a time when inflation is approx 7%, it appears our rates will increase in excess of 100% due to the increase in UCV. This will all be income for Port Stephens Council. Why then should they be approved for further increases? I can see no reasons that would make this acceptable.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

As a ratepayer I have received no special information from Port Stephens Council about the need for additional funds. It may have been added to advertising brochures which I do not read. Separate letters to residents outlining their proposals would have been the way to inform the community.

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Not that I am aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

This has not been made clear to me.

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

As a resident, I am not aware, so I would suggest the council has not adequately informed the community.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

I have no knowledge of this

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

The recent Land valuations notices I received for my property has shown an increase of 116.6% in UCV. This across the board increase in UCV, across the local government area will result in a massive increase in rates collected by PSC. There is no need to further increase rates on top of this increase. Therefore it is highly unreasonable for PSC to seek further increases. It is just greed.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

The council has taken absolutely no account of the pressure this proposed rate increase will place on residents. This is a time of rapidly increasing interest rates which impacts on families with mortgages. Then, the Valuer Generals massively increased UCVs will put at least a doubling to our council rates. This is before any additional rate increase as sought by PSC.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

As discussed, I have received no special information from PSC

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

They may have, but my attention was not drawn to it. It has been quietly swept in.

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

This aspect is a disgrace. Council projects are overstaffed and poorly planned. Private contractors would be a better option as they would have stricter budgets to meet. Council seems to waste a lot of money then expects the community to provide more. As one of just 13 councils in the state requesting this approval, there have been no major events or natural disasters that have greatly increased Council costs and responsibilities (like for example in the Lismore district). Nothing is different yet they want more at a time when they will be receiving increased rates income from the public as a result of the much higher UCVs.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I am totally against the proposed rate rise in the Port Stephens LGA. The Council proposed an increase, which they describe as a %, not in dollars. I've just received a Notice Of Valuation on my property from the Valuer General. My property has increased in land value considerably as have all the properties in the area. As a result, the proposed rate increase will be more in dollar terms and the Council has either not factored this into its calculations or it is not telling the rate payers the consequences. In my opinion, the Port Stephens Council has NOT closely looked at ways of saving money in areas that are over budgeted. They are not trying hard enough to prioritise between the core duties of council, and frivolous extras (such as failed parklets in Shoal Bay and tourism marketing when we have never had more tourists!) The Port Stephens Council has NOT taken into account the community feedback in previous surveys and feedback sessions. EG, the building height allowance in Nelson Bay. The council sought feedback from ratepayers. The ratepayers overwhelmingly voted against the allowable height increase. Council disregarded the feedback and went ahead with a height rise anyway, completely against the feedback advice. The Council are saying they are struggling to fund their works budget claiming inflation, the effects of Covid etc. Well, so are the majority of the ratepayers! Inflation and cost of living combined with small real wage growth has left a lot of ratepayers struggling to make ends meet as it is. A further rate rise will see a lot of local people either selling up and moving or having to rely heavily on charities in the area and leaves us with no real solution to balancing the future funding of the Councils budget. It will only get worse and the LGA will become solely relying on tourism and State Government hand outs. Respectfully, please register this letter as a NO to the SRV proposed.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?
No. Not in my opinion.

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

The new values general valuations will more than compensate council and lead to I creased rates without adding a further 30% on top.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

No

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

No

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

No

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

No options were given in the Council's survey apart from substantial rate increases. Most properties in the local govt area have received new land valuations of up to 100%. These new valuer general assessments will in themselves see substantial rate increases providing council with a huge windfall in increased rates. To add a further 30% plus on top of this is excessive.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

Greatly increased land valuations will increase rates without add I g a further 30% on top.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

Council's survey questionnaire was flawed in that you had no option to agree to the minimum increase of approx 25%. You could not proceed past this 1st question unless you opted for an ncrease. This was greatly deceiving and any result of the survey is flawed.

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

The council is grossly mismanaged and should look to hiring private contractors to get major works done. Poor supervision of council workers leads to excessive costs.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unaware

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Council's cost containme strategies are a joke. Council workers are unsupervised and which leads to wasted resources.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

Port Stephens Council needs an auditor going through it to further highlight the poor budgeting. The proposed SRV will place many under more financial stress with rising interest rates and cost of living expenses, while wages growth is negative in real terms. The situation will become even more dire for people on fixed incomes such as pensions. The Council is showing a callous disregard for the well-being of many of its residents and IPART should soundly reject this SRV. Thanks

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

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Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Please provide any other comments on the council's application that you would like to make here.

I find it disgusting that mis-management of public funding (necessitating out of the ordinary rise requests) results in further pain for a community getting slugged from every angle currently.

Question 1 (Criterion 1) - Has the council clearly established the need for, and purpose of a different revenue path for the council's General fund?

Question 2 (Criterion 1) - Has the council canvassed alternatives to the rate rise?

Question 1 (Criterion 2) - Did the council communicate the full cumulative increase of the proposed special variation in percentage terms? And the total increase in dollar terms for the average ratepayer by rating category?

Question 2 (Criterion 2) - Has the council's community engagement strategy demonstrated an appropriate variety of engagement methods to ensure community awareness?

I don't believe so as I have only become aware of this via a FB community group with no affiliation to local council. As a local ratepayer of over 20 years I don't feel they reached out to me and made me aware of the intent, reasoning and options explored.

Question 3 (Criterion 2) - Please comment on the action taken by council in response to feedback from the community on the proposed special variation.

There is backlash at a high level it seems, however no word from council as a response that I am aware of.

Question 1 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the reasonableness of the impact on affected ratepayers of the proposed special variation.

This is kicking people while they are down and jumping on the everything is going up bandwagon. The council needs to demonstrate fiscal cost cutting and efficiency before slugging the ratepayer as the measure to raise revenue to enable the highest specification of 4x4 ute to be provided for the mayor. There is no practical reason this type of expense can be warranted giving the financial pressures we all are facing over the coming years.

Question 2 (Criterion 3) - Please comment on the council's consideration of the community's capacity and willingness to pay.

I don't actually think they care. We have a high percentage of pensioners in the community who have little to no control over their income. I don't see pension rates increasing over 30% in 3 years...

Question 3 (Criterion 3) - In its application the council outlined how it intended to address hardship caused by the proposed special variation. Please comment on the council's plan.

Question 1 (Criterion 4) - Have the relevant IP&R documents in the council's application been exhibited, approved and adopted by the council before it applied to IPART for the proposed special variation?

Unsure

Question 1 (Criterion 5) - In its application the council is required to explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies the council has realised in past years and plans to realise over the proposed special variation period. Please comment on the council's response here.

the council's response is words and not actions. recent expenditure has not demonstrated a tightening of the belt needs during these fiscally challenging times.

Friday 03rd March 2023

Pages Total: (17) Seventeen

Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal

Level 16, 2 – 24 Rawson Place

Sydney NSW 2000

E: ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL – SPECIAL RATE RISE 2023

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

On behalf of the public this submission objects in the strongest terms to the desired rate rise of this Council, and I take the opportunity to report to you a portion of its [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which I believe is crucial information for your consideration in this matter.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



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Yours Sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

Telina Webb, Bachelor of Criminology & Criminal Justice Candidate



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