

## **Submission to IPART RANDWICK CITY COUNCIL Rate Increase 11.67% March 2024**

**Lynda Newnam**

Thank you for conducting this consultation process. Please note neither the IPART survey nor the submission process was promoted on Randwick social media channels nor in the quarterly newsletter. I alerted a few people via social media and the response was along the lines of 'we thought it was done and dusted'.

I have made previous submissions on rate rises, in 2018

[https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/cm9\\_documents/Online-Submission-Individual-L.-Newnam-12-Mar-2018-235700000.PDF](https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/cm9_documents/Online-Submission-Individual-L.-Newnam-12-Mar-2018-235700000.PDF)

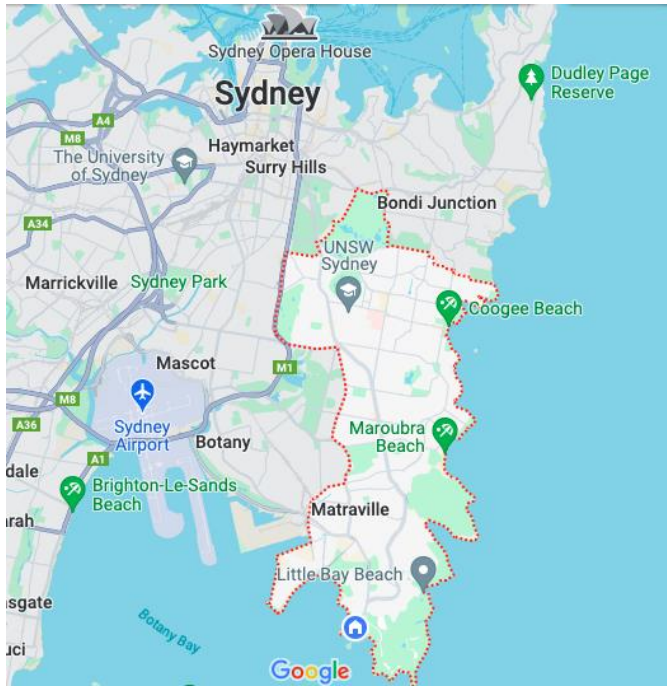
and 2019 [https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/cm9\\_documents/Online-Submission-Individual-L.-Newnam-12-Mar-2019-164353659.PDF](https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/cm9_documents/Online-Submission-Individual-L.-Newnam-12-Mar-2019-164353659.PDF)

The same arguments regarding communication and informed consent as well as efficiencies and priorities applies to this application.

I would urge IPART to test claims and audit existing practices and alignment with stated objectives for sustainability, biodiversity and net zero. For example: where are the incentives for optimising sustainable behaviour; where is Randwick best placed to utilize State Government services/facilities located in neighbouring LGAs eg. City of Sydney, and by major stakeholders, eg. UNSW, Centennial Parklands, NPWS (see map below). The last of these is currently an example of cost-shifting to Council. Where are there possible savings in operations such as Planning. For example, a 75 dwelling development which is currently under construction was opposed for over 10 years with legal, consultant and other costs of around \$1million borne by Council. The land is zoned medium residential (R3) and borders Kamay Botany Bay National Park. The recommendation during the 2012 LEP from within Council and the OEH was for Environmental Zoning to reflect the importance and legal obligations to protect Critically Endangered ESBS. It wasn't rezoned.

Is there an opportunity to rationalise stormwater responsibilities with Sydney Water Corporation?

I also suggest that IPART recognise the significant cost-shifting that occurs from State Government to Randwick City Council, particularly in providing coastal recreation. The LGA manages 29km of coastline (see map below) accommodating millions of visits each year from visitors living in other LGAs. Beach, park, traffic, water quality and waste management are major costs, as too are imposed infrastructure developments, eg. State Significant Infrastructure Kamay Ferry Wharves SSI-10049/EPBC 2020/8825, which was opposed by Randwick CC.



The current *Ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services* Inquiry could be referenced: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=3040>

With regards, Lynda Newnam



Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 5 March 2024

Please write your submission below:

I support Randwick Council in many areas where I feel they do an excellent job. However, I am opposed to Randwick Council making the environmental levy permanent. Firstly, I don't think the council has used the levy wisely and disagree with a lot of the claims made in relation to sustainability. I opposed the building of the toilet and storage facilities at South Maroubra which took valuable community green space, and is mostly used now for surf club storage. It has also become widely used by illegal campers based in the south car park, another Council construction that was opposed by many. I opposed the use, even intermittently, of the Broadarrow reserve for car parking. The overflow parking in place at South Maroubra has led to the construction of a large hot tarmac car park and expansion at the cost of green space and vegetation, encouraging further car use. As mentioned, it also attracts illegal campers who stay for several days. I believe that Randwick council does not plan enough trees or shrubs. They continue to the use of pesticides and herbicide. Council continues the regular removal of trees considered sick or old and does not replace them. I have often witnessed council workers destroy areas that have just been re-vegetated. Randwick Council also shows a lack of action on pollution - noise, (sirens, car alarms, motorbikes, loud music) foulodours from Malabar WTP, and traffic. Randwick Council turned McKeon Street Maroubra into a plaza with public support for more green space, but instead created a concrete zone with very little vegetation. My conclusion is that despite the environmental levy being in place for the last ten years, not enough has been done by Randwick Council in this area, and most of the money is wasted. I am suspicious of the consultation and submissions process and feel it has been compromised by including non-rate payers. I strongly believe the environment and sustainability projects should be catered for and incorporated into the regular operational budgets of council, even if that means spending less elsewhere. Finally, rates are already fairly high, especially when considering the cost of living crisis. I feel the environmental levy is being used as an excuse to raise rates in an area where council has underperformed. For these reasons I oppose the Randwick Council rate increase.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Sunday, 10 March 2024

Please write your submission below:

Randwick Council are requesting a rate increase to fund sustainability improvements in our community. I fully support the relatively minor increase in my personal rates for the proposed infrastructure improvements, but I do have some concerns about the capability of the council and the attitudes of some councillors to actually deliver these improvements in practice. As an example, the council recently discussed an Active Transport Strategy (Ordinary Council Meeting 2024-02-27) - an important step to reduce the emissions and resource requirements of our transport system - and yet it was opposed in part by a handful of councillors (opposing any future cyclelane projects, specifically). I'm happy to pay the extra rates to make our city more sustainable, but I expect full support from the councillors in return to actually follow through with these projects - to listen to sustainability experts, instead of allowing their own personal biases to influence decisions. Alignment with strategies from neighbouring LGAs and The State is another condition I would like to see imposed on the rate increases. In the same February council meeting, a motion was passed to adopt a Road Space Allocation policy that contradicts existing policies adopted by neighbouring councils and Transport NSW (again motivated by anti-cyclist rhetoric from a handful of councillors, resulting in a weaker sustainability outcome). Again, I'm happy to contribute more rates personally, but I believe a new accountability mechanism needs to exist to ensure the council is actually committed to meaningful sustainability improvements in a bipartisan manner, and productively collaborates with the State and neighbouring municipalities where appropriate. If that increase in accountability and alignment were to exist, or guaranteed through another means, then I'm happy to support the rate increase.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 12 March 2024

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

I disagree with Randwick's application to increase rates above the peg and to maintain, make permanent and to increase the environmental levy for the following reasons: - They have increased rates above the peg for the past 20 years - without exception - They have never published the cumulative impact of these additions [REDACTED] building expensive facilities while providing little to no community access. Eg Built Souths Rabbitohs (a private business owned by millionaires) a new clubhouse and administrative centre on public land in Herron park. The build costs around \$20m. Rabbitohs contributed only \$2m and that was in lieu of rent over the life of the 20+ year lease. South Maroubra demanded a new toilet block be built on public land in Byrne Reserve because it didn't want the public using the toilets in the clubhouse, paid for by ratepayers. Ratepayers were not consulted despite the expense. The Council has now promised to knock down and rebuild Maroubra's surf club for a minimum \$10m. There are no plans to incorporate much needed community space within these facilities which will be handed to the surf club to run. And yet, the surf club will not pay the eyewaterinw cost of insurance. That will be left to ratepayers like me. - the environmental levy is being used to build structures that have nothing to do with dealing with the climate emergency. Eg the coastal walk is not an environmental measure, it is a commercial measure, ensuring more visitors for the cafe owners and more people crowding the surf. - Council refuses to charge the surf clubs for the environmental damage caused by opening public parks to cars to accommodate surf club competitions - Council refuses to charge non-residents for parking at the beach and when it does talk about parking, it's always about restricting residential parking to the point of making it stressful to even contemplate having visitors, ensuring that the residents will reject paid parking at the beach - the environmental levy is not being used to upgrade non-rugby playing fields so that that they are suitable all year around. Instead the Council has laid down environmentally damaging astro turf on the local field as their answer to the growing numbers of kids wanting to play soccer. The ground really needs to be properly drained, with appropriate layers of soil and rock, so that it can continue to be used as we head into climate change. - the Council seems to think that it's running a resort eg. promotes ideas such as providing sunscreen at the beach for visitors - 60% of residents will not pay the \$100 additional per household costs of extending the environmental levy because they live in apartments. This means that the burden of extending and increasing the levy falls disproportionately on ratepayers. Rates are a wealth tax. I do not have any assets that provide me with an income to pay this wealth tax. It comes out of my income. It is inherently unfair, especially when the Council keeps installing facilities for non-residents who use the beach for free. I have chosen to live at the beach. I expect my rates to be higher because I can walk to the beach. However, I do not think it's fair that Randwick Council expects me to pay the price for non-residential visitors who park for free, use the showers for free, use the park facilities for free etc. Randwick Council opens its surveys to non-residents. It's about time that it starts making non-residents pay for the amenities they use. It's also time for the Council to stop building gold-plated projects [REDACTED] It needs to show some respect and work within the limits of its budget.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 13 March 2024

Please write your submission below. (Before starting, please ensure that you have chosen the correct council from the dropdown list of councils, at the very top).

The "special variation" sought by Randwick Council is to continue an environmental levy (which originally was set to expire after 5 years) for perpetuity. Such a proposal is indicative of a Council that is unable, or unwilling, to place a definitive endpoint to the levy's lifespan. It appears that the Council has simply become addicted to this stream of additional income and has not duly considered the need for expenditure constraints as many rate payers have had to do in a time of austere fiscal 'belt tightening' during this time of financial adversity. Requesting a 'forever after' "special variation" is unprecedented and IPART should be wary of signing away on such a request - there should be a finite point where significant environmental projects have been completed. It appears that Council will at some future point simply absorb the levy into general revenue. Yes, Council may argue that the community has been consulted over the said matter, but one needs to examine the efficacy of community consultation. For instance, instead of distributing pamphlets with reasons for continuing the levy in green and the perceived negatives in a red font, the Council should not be attempting to psychologically manipulate a discussion slanted towards overt bias. As well, were so called random phone contacts conducted in a manner whereby the interviewers followed the same set form of questions without any attempt to sway respondents towards a desired outcome. In all, a "special variation", by its etymology infers 'for a limited time.'

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Tuesday, 27 February 2024

Please write your submission below:

Please continue the environmental levy. It's very important and I support it. I live in Randwick.

Author name: Name suppressed

Date of submission: Wednesday, 28 February 2024

Please write your submission below:

Land value, which the council rate is based upon, has substantially increased over the last 10 years and at a much higher rate than inflation. This should already cover the so called environmental budget. Additionally cost of living pressure is already causing a lot of financial strain on rate payers. Bayside council rate is at much lower rate than Randwick, even though both are metropolitan and next to each other. There are not that many environmentally positive projects Randwick delivered. Dedicated cycleways took years from conception to actual construction and the Council claim the env levy paid for it but in fact it is largely funded by state govt. [REDACTED]



Over the past 20 years Randwick City Council has delivered on a range of environmental initiatives for the community. This has been achieved with a temporary levy, which the council has been required to consult on with the community every 5 years. This approach has served the community well.

I support the principle of an environment levy but a temporary not a permanent one.

### **Flawed consultation process on the Special Variation**

The community consultation process was flawed as the council presented only 2 options to the community – no levy or a permanent levy. It did not present the current option of a temporary levy. Further, there were no “middle” ground options presented to the community. For example, a reduced levy combined with a contribution from those outside the LGA using the facilities.

Since the levy was introduced 20 years ago, the demand on parks and beaches has increased significantly and the council needs to actively manage this and should be considering alternative funding options outside of rates. Randwick Council did not consider alternative sources of income (such as government grants or paid parking) to fund their environment program.

### **A temporary not a permanent levy is a better approach**

It was not clear why the council didn't present a temporary levy as an option. A temporary levy means that council actively consults with the community every 5 years about priorities for environmental expenditure. This seems to be a reasonable approach and gives the council flexibility to fund their Environment Strategy from a combination of rates and other sources of income in the future (which could include government grants).

A permanent levy reduces the accountability of Randwick Council's expenditure on the environment. This is because the levy becomes part of the rate base and could be used for other purposes. Once a levy becomes permanent the community does not have any redress if money is not spent on environmental projects. A permanent levy also means that the cost is built into the rate base and any rate increases will be cumulative over time with successive annual rates increases. The cumulative impact of increases of a permanent levy was not explained to the community in Randwick Council's consultation on the Special Variation.

A temporary levy is more flexible in terms of the size of the levy and gives the opportunity to fund expenditure from other sources of income in the future. Over the past 20 years, council has had a substantial capital works program and they have not explained why they need ratepayers to fund the full environmental levy going forward. Ratepayers have already funded major projects including the Maroubra stormwater harvesting project, Gross Pollutant traps, and the coastal walkway.

### **Efficiencies in delivery of the environment program**

Greater efficiencies could be achieved in the delivery of the environment program and it is important that Randwick council review their effectiveness. Implementing efficiencies could reduce the size of an environmental levy going forward.

Two recent examples in the Arthur Byrne Reserve (adjacent to Maroubra Beach) illustrate:

- An “Events” planting with the community on the edge of the oval with over 250 native tube stock plants. The site wasn't prepared properly and weeds soon overtook the

planting. The “Parks” team then mowed the area as was not aware of the planting. Council then re-planted the area with plants.

- Council planted 30 mature coastal banksia trees and other trees in the reserve. The “Parks” team then ringbarked many of the plants when they whippersnipped. A number of plants were also planted in inappropriate locations and died. Overall, more than half of these mature plants died within a year of planting. A better outcome could have been achieved with smaller plants (reduced transplant shock) in more appropriate locations as advised by the bush regeneration team.

Randwick Council should continue to engage with their community every 5 years about their environment priorities and options for expenditure. This has been done over the past 20 years through the special variations process and it makes the council accountable to its community.

Randwick Council’s consultation process with the community was flawed as it presented two extreme options – levy or no levy. It did not present the current option of a temporary levy which to date has served the community well.

I support an environmental levy but a temporary not a permanent one. Randwick Council’s proposal for a permanent levy should be rejected.