

HUNTERS HILL SPECIAL RATE VARIATION

PHIL JENKYN – 12 December 2018

SUPPORT FOR OPTION 3

I strongly support 'Option 3' – The rate peg of 2.7% plus Community Facilities 4.04% plus Operational 3.0%.

In my view so do many other members of the community – those that know the true facts. It is clear however from submissions favouring 'Option 1' that there are residents who are unaware of some or all of the following facts.

1. RATE-PEGGING

NSW is the only State that has rate-pegging – an artificial State control over what monies local councils can raise to meet their communities needs and aspirations. Rate-pegging has been kept at around CPI while actual costings well exceed that amount. It is designed to control local government and its financial capacity.

2. RATES

Rates across NSW remain at relatively modest levels compared to other states because of rate-pegging. The majority of residents' rates in the Hunters Hill Municipality are lower than for similar properties in neighbouring areas.

3. COST SHIFTING

The Government continues to offload its responsibilities on to local councils without any or sufficient recompense. This it has done to Hunters Hill so that now 15% of our income is used up in this way.

4. COUNCILS TARGETTED

The Government put councils through a lengthy, time-consuming and damaging process over forced amalgamations, including the necessity of a court case, before then admitting that it got it wrong. It hasn't repaid any of that cost, nor has it paid the reasonable costs of the court case it lost - that it was ordered to pay a year ago. It also targeted councils challenging in court, like Hunters Hill - preventing them from applying for special rate variations.

5. STATE GOVT CONTROLS PLANNING

The State Government has stripped away from local communities and councils any real say or control over strategic planning and decision-making. This applies to the sections of Gladesville near Victoria Road – where it has a deliberate policy of overdevelopment and lack of infrastructure. Over population, increased densities, traffic congestion, noise and pollution – the fault lies with the State Government through bad planning laws and policies. Unfortunately, the Minister responsible is our local member Anthony Roberts.

6. HUNTERS HILL FIT FOR THE FUTURE

IPART recently found that Hunters Hill Council was sustainable and efficient – indeed it passed all financial criteria. With the value of land as it is, it will always be sustainable if allowed to raise what the community needs and wants.

7. COUNCIL'S CAREFUL MANAGEMENT

The fact is that this Council, the previous one and many before, has managed the council's budget and finances – carefully, prudently and professionally. It does share facilities with other councils where that is appropriate, including insurance, waste and library.

8. COMMUNITY'S EXPECTATIONS

The Hunters Hill community has time and time again in surveys and submissions indicated that it wants its public facilities and buildings, its parks and bushland, its roads and footpaths and its services to be well maintained and cared for. The Council manages \$209 million worth of assets. It needs the special rate variations to achieve community expectations and to be financially prudent and responsible.

9. SUBMISSIONS AND RESEARCH

Many of the submissions against the rate variation in favour of Option 1 give reasons that are not correct, not factual. Submissions in favour indicate reasons that are – and a level of greater understanding.

The IRIS Research is therefore relevant and illuminating. It is professionally carried out with checks and balances. The 'Summary of Finding' states that there is relatively strong ratepayer support for the introduction of a special rate variation levy to help maintain community infrastructure at an acceptable level. If I can quote at page 34 - "The importance of maintaining infrastructure is recognised by ratepayers with 78% rating it 'important' or 'very important' to maintain existing and build new infrastructure."

10. CONCLUSION

There is strong community support for Council to act prudently and responsibly in seeking a special rate variation as set out in 'Option 3'.

I am certainly one of those who strongly support Council in so acting.

Phil Jenkyn OAM

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