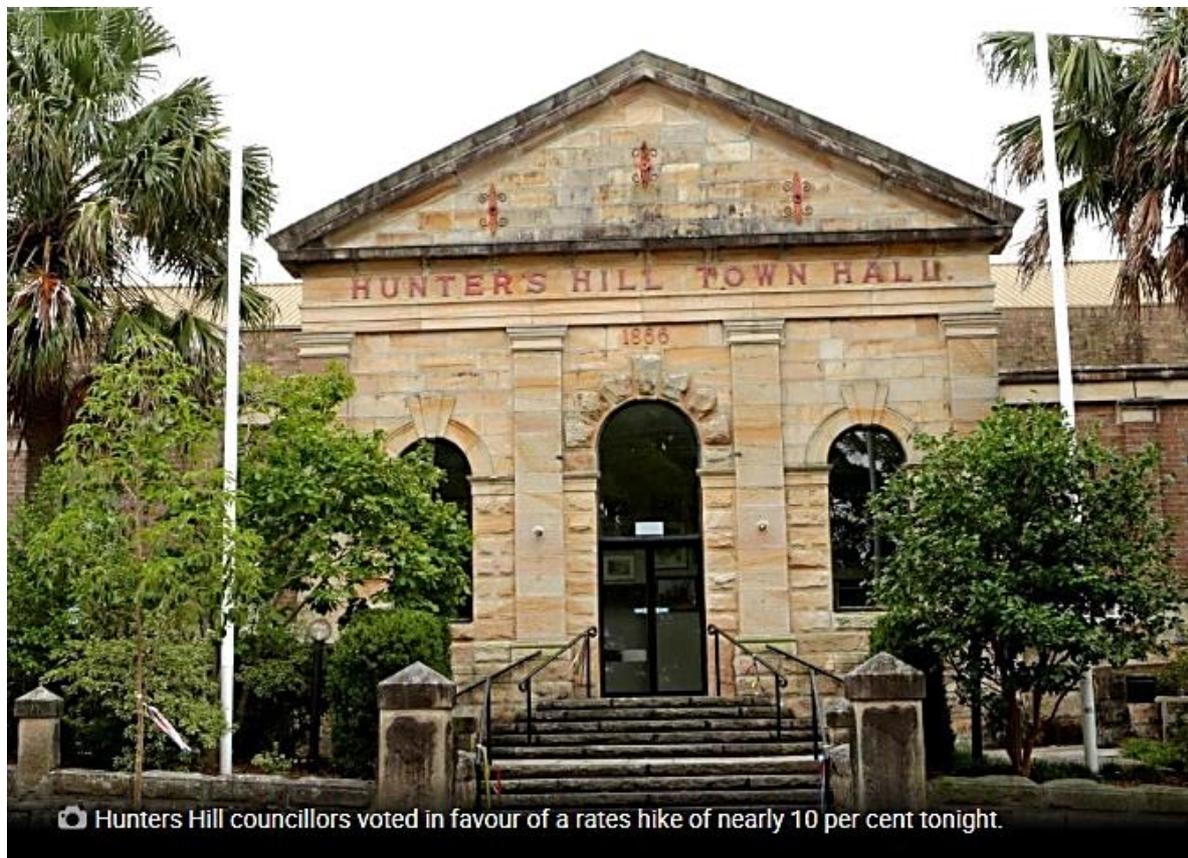


# Hunters Hill councillors vote in favour of 9.74% rates increase

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Matt Taylor



Hunters Hill councillors dodged taking a pay cut themselves before giving the nod to slugging ratepayers a hefty 9.74 per cent rates hike from next year at a fiery meeting tonight.

Mayor Mark Bennett's motion to bump up rates to help pay for asset maintenance and improved facilities in the state's smallest LGA — which had an estimated population of 14,747 in 2017 — was passed, thanks to the dominant independent voting bloc.

Liberal councillors Ben Collins and Zac Miles were the only dissenters.

Clr Collins was heavily attacked for his strong opposition to the rates rise, particularly around his calls to stop the "\$350,000 overcharging" for library services each year by Ryde Council.

A fired-up Clr Jim Sanderson raised eyebrows when he shouted: "Don't you know contract law, mate."

Clr Sanderson later apologised for his personal crack at the Deputy Mayor.

In outlining his reasons for the “need” to increase rates by an average of \$117.26 a year, based on a median land value of \$1.53 million, Mayor Bennett said the council’s costs had increased as it was frozen out during the State Government’s failed amalgamation attempt.



*Hunters Hill Mayor Clr Mark Bennett*

“Our rates have not kept pace with our costs,” he said. “We have ageing assets and we are moving to a different time.

“We live in a litigious society and our costs are increasing.”

He also said Hunters Hill had “a lot of unrateable property” and a relatively high proportion of public housing — both of which affected council’s bottom line.

Clr Collins then put forward an amendment to the Mayor’s motion, calling on all councillors to take a pay cut equivalent to the percentage rate increase passed on to residents.



*Liberal councillors Clr Ben Collins and Clr Zac Miles.*

He said the council had “failed” to reform over the past year, revealing the audit committee took a year to hold a meeting and the library committee, which he is also on, had not met yet.

“Now we ask the community to bail us out?” said Clr Collins, who is a qualified accountant.

The pay cut push was voted down by councillors, but the Mayor said it would be raised at a later meeting.

Councillors now earn \$19,790 each and Clr Bennett receives the annual mayoral salary of \$43,150 for a total of \$62,490.

The Local Government Remuneration Tribunal’s recommended pay for councillors on small councils is between \$8970 and \$19,790.

Clr Miles said after the meeting that council’s decision “may be worse than getting a chunk of coal for Christmas”.

“This is a band-aid solution to our long-term financial problems,” he said. We need to address these problems and address them quickly.”

Hunters Hill is one of 14 councils across NSW seeking a special variation to increase their general income above the rate peg in 2019-20.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal will begin assessing the applications against criteria set out in the Office of Local Government’s guidelines from February.

#### ADDITIONAL ARTICLE

- [Rate rise is the 'easy way out': Deputy Mayor](#)

[https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/northern-district-times/hunters-hill-councillors-vote-in-favour-of-974-rates-increase/news-story/7180d9e7e6e85b4ad6a551d0aa958192?fbclid=IwAR01rAUr5Z8\\_q9Tk\\_7gzc10pSgkoWod4apJ1VG7uXmRP1pScYDSzc5aURvQ](https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/northern-district-times/hunters-hill-councillors-vote-in-favour-of-974-rates-increase/news-story/7180d9e7e6e85b4ad6a551d0aa958192?fbclid=IwAR01rAUr5Z8_q9Tk_7gzc10pSgkoWod4apJ1VG7uXmRP1pScYDSzc5aURvQ)