

Statement – Northern Beaches Council rate rise

I've spoken to many Northern Beaches residents who are understandably upset about the proposed Council rate hike. With families and households across the Beaches already struggling with high energy bills, housing costs, and everyday expenses, another big cost increase during a cost-of-living crisis is unacceptable.

With this in mind, I have publicly stated that I **oppose the proposed council rate increase and do not endorse** the decision made by the eight Councillors who voted to apply to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a rate rise of nearly 40%.

It is clear that local governments across the State are struggling to meet the demand for local services and infrastructure. Early last year nine NSW councils applied for or were granted special rate variations, including Randwick City and Willoughby, and it is anticipated this year up to eight councils will be applying.

There are a number of factors at play, including the impact of general inflation, the increasing cost of construction and the increase in extreme weather events causing damage to infrastructure and roads and disruption to services. The cost shifting to councils from the NSW Government such as the Emergency Services Levy, has also put more pressure on councils.

The problem is so widespread that inquiries into the sustainability of local governments have been held both at the NSW State and Federal levels. The [NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the ability of local government to fund infrastructure and services](#) reported in November 2024 and made 18 recommendations. The [Federal Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability](#) is due to report early this year.

What is also clear is that for three decades the major parties at both the state and federal levels of government have steadily cut direct funding to councils. Instead, they have increasingly opted to utilise community grants which have been misused repeatedly for the purpose of political pork-barrelling. That is, money being directed to projects in marginal seats to influence elections. There have been numerous public audits and investigations into this problem, including:

The [auditor-general's finding](#) that the \$100 million Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program (under Sports Minister Bridget McKenzie) had a bias towards marginal government seats and electorates that the Coalition was targeting in the 2019 election.

The [Australian National Audit Office's finding](#) that the \$4.8 billion federal Coalition's Urban Congestion Fund program was used at the government's discretion to fund projects mainly in Liberal-held or marginal seats at the 2019 election.

The [Public Accountability Committee's finding](#) that of the \$252 million allocated during a round of the Liberal State Government's Stronger Communities Fund, 95% went to councils in Coalition-held or marginal electorates, which was a "clear abuse" of the grants process.

This pork barrelling must end so that residents and families of the Northern Beaches don't have to pay the price for the waste of state and federal governments. As your federal MP, I am focused on solutions, including:

- Supporting [Helen Haines' Bill to End Pork Barrelling](#)
- Supporting the recommendation of the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Government to increase direct funding to councils from 0.5% to 1% of the total federal government tax revenue.
- Calling for local government funds to mandatorily be used in a transparent and evidence-based way to ensure public money is being used efficiently to meet community need.

Mackellar families shouldn't have to pay the price for major parties' waste.

I call on all MPs serving the Northern Beaches to stand with me in fighting for an end to the misuse of public money through pork barrelling.