

18 February 2025

Scamps acts to stop rate rise

The Independent Federal Member for Mackellar, Dr Sophie Scamps MP, has called for urgent actions by the federal government to stop a special rate variation for Northern Beaches Council being approved by the Independent Regulatory and Pricing Tribunal (IPART).

Dr Scamps' call comes following yesterday's release of the Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport released its *Interim report into local government sustainability*.

"We need to look at immediate solutions that all levels of government can take to avoid a rate increase for Northern Beaches ratepayers," Dr Scamps said.

"A rate rise at this time will put undue financial pressure on households and businesses who are already struggling with high energy bills, housing costs, and everyday expenses. Another big cost increase is simply unacceptable."

Dr Scamps has urged the Minister for Local Government Kristy McBain to consider urgent actions, including an increase in Financial Assistance Grant funding to local government from 0.5% to 1%; the incorporation of betterment funding into federal disaster recovery funding arrangements and fast tracking the backlog of disaster recovery assistance payments to local councils.

Dr Scamps is also seeking an improvement in the future timeliness of disaster recovery assistance funding; mandatory assessments of the additional responsibilities and related costs imposed on local government when introducing or amending federal legislation; and mandatory monitoring of local government funding to ensure funds are used in a transparent and evidence-based way so that public money is used efficiently to meet community need.

"It is clear that local councils across the country are struggling to meet the demand for local services and infrastructure due to factors such as reduced federal funding, cost-shifting from both federal and state governments onto councils, and the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events," Dr Scamps said.

"This has been highlighted by councils in NSW and around Australia in their submissions to both the NSW and federal inquiries into the ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services and local government sustainability.

Dr Scamps has also proposed an extraordinary meeting of the Local Government Ministers' Forum to address the above actions and explore further options to support local government, including local governments' role in National Cabinet and ministerial forums; and developing a new agreement between all three levels of government, that ends the cost shifting onto local governments, as canvassed in the Interim report released yesterday.

“This is the time for tangible solutions that ensure the ratepayers of the Northern Beaches and around Australia are not burdened with extra financial pressure when they are already under incredible strain during this cost-of-living crisis.”

Dr Scamps has also asked Northern Beaches Council to undertake an urgent budget review to explore further options to raise capital and reduce operating expenditure across all Council areas, including asset management, services and staff salaries.

The Federal Member for Mackellar has requested that IPART deny Northern Beaches Council's application for a special rate variation at this time, to allow for alternative actions to be taken.

ENDS

For media inquiries and interviews with Dr Sophie Scamps MP, please contact Georgia Steele: media@sophiescamps.com.au or 0481 009 636.