

# DODGY COUNCIL SURVEY DENIED

Sutherland Shire Council has denied fudging a survey on development standards recently. It warned of “some tough decisions” to be made following a vote by councillors not to increase 2018-19 rates above the limit set by the state government’s pricing tribunal.

The council denied trying to lead residents to predetermined answers in the survey it has been conducting on how to meet major financial challenges.

The survey has come under fire from community groups and individual residents in letters to the *Leader* newspaper and in social media.

At the November council meeting, Liberal councillor Kent Johns, who is also president of the NSW Liberal Party, [described the survey as “push polling”](#) – in which questions are designed to spread negative information about certain options. The survey closed on November 4.

“Some residents are finding parts of the survey challenging, where they are put in a position to trade-off against different options,” a spokeswoman said.

“There is absolutely no intention to lead residents to pre-determined answers and there is a well thought through methodology behind each activity, that will allow council to gain a balanced and thorough understanding of what our community values.”

“As a result of Council’s decision to limit any rate increase to that set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) in 2018/2019, some tough decisions will now have to be made about services offered in the future.”

The spokeswoman claimed that feedback from the community through the survey would play an important part in future decisions.

“If residents have any concerns, please contact council on 9710 0333,” she said.

A proposed bipartisan deal for a rates rise of more than 21 per cent over three years was scuttled at a November council meeting, when the Liberal councillors who first supported the idea pulled out under pressure from Cr Johns.

Labor councillors were not prepared to support the rise, which would be well above the annual rise of about 2.5 per cent IPART sets, unless the Liberals also did so.

Under a proposal put forward by council staff, rates for houses would rise 7.2 per cent each year for three years, with a 17 per cent jump for apartments. --

<http://www.theleader.com.au/story/5094696/council-faced-with-tough-decisions-shire-residents-warned/?cs=1885>