15 July 2025

Rates figures fail to tell full story

Media articles published yesterday claimed WCRC's cumulative rates increase over the past three years was the highest in the country.

West Coast Regional Council chair Peter Haddock says the articles were based on flawed figures.

"Our cumulative rates increase was over 10% less than reported in the media. It was still high at 55% over three years but there are very good reasons why Coast rates have increased."

"Firstly, we've come from a position where Council was starting to fail on delivering mandatory work programmes as its costs were being driven down. We also had an unbalanced budget with expenditure being covered by mining deposits and prudent reserves held on behalf of ratepayers."

"As a Council, we couldn't continue this approach which amounted to 'kicking the can down the road."

It would mean the next generation had to pay for unbalanced budgets just to make increases in WCRC rate requirements look better on paper," he says.

"Many people will also recognise the impact Te Tai o Poutini Plan, Westport Flood Protection, Franz Josef Flood Protection, Hokitika Flood Protection and so on have on our rates.

"I know West Coasters are doing it tough, and I know average incomes for many people are considerably less than the rest of the country. But I also know kicking the can along isn't good business practice.

"We will not kick the can down the road and live beyond our means. The Government expects us to be financially prudent, and more importantly, so do Coasters. We've worked hard to rebuild Council and ensure it is positioned to deliver for the community.

"In a nutshell, WCRC's role is to create the environment for our community to live, and for businesses to thrive. Our environment is dynamic, without flood protection people and property would be at risk. We've been investing heavily in flood protection work to ensure our communities remain safe and businesses can keep operating.

“WCRC’s role is complex, ensuring we get the right balance between development and management of effects. It’s particularly difficult when the effects are not fully understood or take a long time to appear. What we must all recognise is that our role isn’t just about now, it's also about ensuring future generations don't have to pay for our mistakes.

“For 2026, our total regional council rates requirement increases 18%. How that impacts on individual ratepayers will vary. Those with properties with a higher capital value will pay more rates than those with a lower capital value, that is fair.

Peter Haddock says as Council completes revitalised flood protection schemes, and finishes building new ones as needed, the costs passed on to the community are anticipated to significantly reduce.

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