



Some win, some lose

Land valuations carry rates sting

By **Amanda Carlin**

THE rates burden on Sutherland Shire residents whose land valuations have skyrocketed in recent years will not be eased, after the council decided against changing the minimum rate.

The council voted at a special meeting on Monday to increase all rates by the allowable 3.6 per cent, which will be compounded by last year's big increases in land valuations.

It means residents' rates could pay up to 58 per cent more than last year while others, whose land recorded an increase below the 38 per cent average rise, would drop.

The meeting was called to discuss alternatives in a draft rates regime for the 2006-07 financial

year, including raising the minimum rate by up to 10 per cent to vary the burden distribution.

With rate-pegging, the council may increase its total revenue from rates by only 3.6 per cent but has some freedom in how individual rates are calculated.

The council will review the minimum rate in terms of economic and social effects on residents in the next six months.

Mayor Kevin Schreiber opposed the additional rise because it would disadvantage the most vulnerable residents, including the 14 per cent of pensioners who would face a rise of more than \$40 after rebates.

Cr Ken McDonell said a raising the minimum rate would benefit more people, including 86 per cent of pensioners not on

the minimum rate.

He said 99.7 per cent of properties on the minimum rate were units and almost half were not occupied by the owner so investors would benefit.

General manager John Rayner said the rate increases for some residents were out of the council's control and the new valuation list from the Valuer-General did not automatically mean individual property owners' rates would rise.

"What does occur is a shift in the rating base, with some property rates increasing and others reducing to varying extents. This increase or decrease depends on each property's relative change in valuation compared with the average change," Mr Rayner said.