

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 10 August 2018 10:57 AM
Subject: SRV & FFF ATTENTION CORALIE NICHOLS

Good morning All

I read with sincere interest your information handout on "SECURING OUR FUTURE" and noted among the challenges faced was the "small population base with large road network."

I also note and applaud the efficiencies and initiatives Council has taken to try to more closely align expenditure with income.

Whilst I appreciate the SRV positive outcome is important to achieve this aim (and we support the SRV increase push) there seems to be NO plan to increase the population by encouraging an influx of potentially new rate payers. Dungog is a great place and probably one of the best kept secrets in NSW. Perhaps this is why we seem to be excluded or minimally treated from State & Federal government grants. I don't know- maybe they don't know too much about us.

Does Council see this as a matter to be addressed and if so has Council any plans to implement a strategy to encourage growth in the population ?

Just a thought
[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 16 July 2018 2:12 PM
Subject: special rate levy meeting Saturday

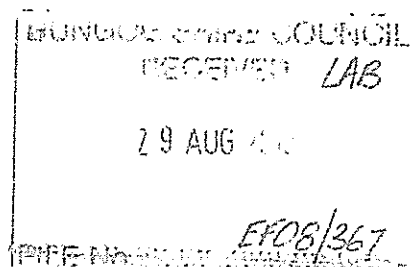
Just a quick note to say how pleased I was to attend the SRV meeting on Saturday. Very clear, and positive. Thank you for taking the time to be there to explain it to us. You converted me from somewhat against, to in favour.

Thank you again,

[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 27 August 2018 9:49 AM
To: SRV
Subject: Survey



Dear Madam,

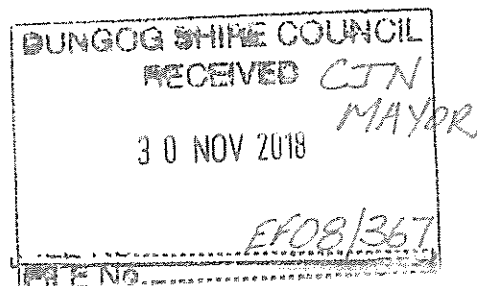
Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Dungog S.C. proposed Special Rate Increase over 7 years.

I accept the need for an increase and would suggest a maximum of 40%(plus rate cap)increase over a shorter time period, say 4 years, would be a more reasonable approach.

Some suggestions to help improve the bottom line would be to continue to dispose of Council's assets, including Abbots Flat. Consider the closure of some of the bridges that have alternate routes, including Fosterton, Thalaba and Banfield Bridges and maybe there are others in the Gresford, Paterson districts. Introduce a system of spraying the sides of the roads in lieu of regular slashing, similar to a number of other Council areas currently undertake. Government Grants have proven to be a very good means of increasing the level of road upgrades etc. and support Council in its effort to obtain additional funds in this manner. Recommend a concerted effort to raise the unfair and disadvantaged status of the Dungog L.G.A. with all levels of government in relation to the road funding criteria (Government elections are coming up in 2019. A petition and media attention might be a good place to start) rather than expecting the people living in this area to carry this huge burden alone.

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Ms Coralie Nichols
General Manager
Dungog Shire Council
Dowling St
Dungog 2420



Thursday 29 November 2019

Dear Ms Nichols

I'm writing to support Dungog Shire Council's seeking a Special Rate Variation from IPART in July 2019.

I've lived in Dungog Shire for the last 14 years and I'm an active member of the Greens party. I take an interest in local, state and federal politics. I spoke in favour of DSC remaining stand-alone at the three NSW Government consultation sessions over proposed amalgamation. I hear over and over again the main conversation amongst local residents; DSC needs more revenue, to put it simply.

I notice the library opening hours have been reduced in the time I've been here, the roads have deteriorated dramatically, the timber bridges are not coping with the increased weight of commercial trucks transporting essential agricultural products. So I understand that to be sustainable, to attract more people to our region and provide the services we need, DSC must increase its revenue.

I congratulate DSC on the efforts its making to advocate for our region particularly at the state government level. There is no doubt that cost shifting over the last decades has left DSC bereft of funds. Due to being deemed "not fit-for-the-future" the Council can't access T-Corp funding; this works against many attempts made to initiate projects to benefit our shire, forcing the council to borrow on the commercial market. State funding formulas work against small rural councils such as ours. We only receive 18% of the levy we pay to the state government for waste management services. Federal Assistance Grants have reduced, we don't have any road deemed a State road.

There is no doubt that a substantial rate increase is necessary to complement the lobbying efforts for increasing DSC's revenue and to finance essential services. It was during the early 1980's drought that some rates in the Shire were reduced to relieve hardship amongst farmers. Probably an essential policy then but very soon after, due to rate pegging, there was no possibility of catching up. Subsequent councils either didn't have the courage or simply couldn't bring about necessary rate increases. Consequently the shire has suffered. Our infrastructure backlog has simply multiplied with no possibility of ever catching up.

Amongst the people I speak to there is general agreement on a rate increase. We recognise the importance of a well resourced, well functioning rural sector. This region is a wonderful place to live and can make an important contribution to Australia's economy if it is well resourced. State and Federal governments must come to the party as the community is prepared to do the same.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Corbett

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 3 August 2018 10:15 AM
To: SRV
Subject: FEEDBACK

Whilst my wife & I agree that DSC does need a SRV, the amount decided on as your example/offer, in our opinion is too high. This may be acceptable to people on a decent income or even an average income but it would be a strain on the budget of a lower income family.

Council's own SRV literature included with the rates notice states that "the cost of delivering services to the community has increased significantly" as the reason for needing a SRV, but please remember that the SRV is not the only increase a family faces.

Insurance premiums for vehicle insurance, home & content insurance each have risen by about 15% per annum. Private health insurance increases around 7% per annum, but incomes generally only increase by CPI levels which falls far short of the increases in expenditure. (In the case of those who were affected by the 2015 flood, their insurance premiums would have increased far higher.)

My fear is that if council rates become too high then more people will default on payments or cut back on insurance policies which means they have to rely on the local society to help them if the unthinkable happens.

Perhaps the "All or nothing" survey with the rates notice should have had a compromise offer.

Kind Regards,
[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 2 July 2018 2:17 PM
Subject: RE: Your email

Dear [REDACTED]
Thank you for your email about the proposed Special Rates Variation.
I hope you are able to attend one of the Community Conversation meetings to be held over the next few weeks as I believe that many of your questions will be answered and I hope your concerns can be addressed.

These sessions will take place as follows:
6 pm, Tuesday 3 July at Doug Walters Pavilion, Dungog
6 pm, Thursday 5th July at Paterson School of Arts, Paterson
6pm, Tuesday 10 July at Clarence Town School of Arts, Clarence Town
6 pm, Thursday 12 July at Gresford School of Arts, Gresford
2 pm, Saturday 14 July at Doug Walters Pavilion, Dungog
6pm, Thursday 19 July at Vacy School of Arts, Vacy

Please note that you are welcome at any of the sessions. We ask you to Please RSVP to [REDACTED] so we n send you an information pack prior to the event. This pack will explain why Council is seeking a rate variation and what this will mean for you.

I look forward to meeting you if you are able to attend.

Regards
[REDACTED]

COUNCILLOR
DUNGOG SHIRE COUNCIL
[REDACTED]



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 2 July 2018 2:02 PM

Subject: [REDACTED]

Dear councillors and [REDACTED]

I have addressed this email to as many of the Dungog regional representatives as I could find in the hope that it is read and considered instead of ignored.

I am writing to express my concern about the rate variation/General rates assessment/rates increase that is scheduled in the near future.

As a recently new member of this electorate, I have been aware for some time about the tumultuous status that the council is currently in. I do not completely understand all of the reasons behind why the council is

not functioning as it may have in the past, however, I find it a bit ridiculous that due to decisions made by people to elected positions and their mismanagement of funds it now falls on to us, the residents of this region to fill up the bucket.

I live in Paterson and due to the inappropriate number of trucks that go through this small town to the quarry there is so much damage to the local roads that the potholes are now causing damage to my vehicles. Why would I support paying a change in rates when something as simple as a maintained road cannot be currently done. Why would I recommend a lifestyle change to this region if the council cannot pull its weight in keeping this beautiful part of the world livable and affordable?

Why do you need more money off the residents?

In addition, I would like to challenge Mr Johnson as to why the State government is not providing the council with sufficient funds to run the region and instead of making them put an increase on to its residents.

I do not believe that this is acceptable and I ask you to consider carefully your decision to ask for more money as I can let you know that there are many who I talk to that are very unhappy with this proposal.

Regards,



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[REDACTED]

From:

Sent:

[REDACTED]
Sunday, 25 November 2018 4:09 PM

Subject:

The Impact of Proposed 98% SRV on Farming Families

Dear Councillor

I am writing to express my disappointment, as a member of the public gallery at the meeting last Wednesday evening, at the failure of the Council to accept Cr Low's paper on the impact of the proposed SRV on farming families for discussion at the workshop to be held on Monday 26th Nov.

While I understand the present council has been left in a difficult financial situation, I believe the proposed SRV is extremely UNFAIR and INEQUITABLE to farmland ratepayers.

As pointed out in Cr Low's paper, a major portion of the increased rate rises will be borne by the farmland ratepayers in a manner that is out of proportion to other rate classifications.

I, and everyone else of the Shire's farming sector that I have spoken to in recent days, fully support Cr Low's paper. While it may be considered by some as "an opinion piece" it is however based on factual numbers that Cr Low is prepared to support.

Unfortunately, as pointed out in the paper, the value of farmland in Dungog Shire no longer bears any relation to its agricultural earning capacity. We have long since become "the rural getaway destination" for people with substantial finance from Newcastle and Sydney, causing a rapid rise in farmland values.

As I recall, this rapid increase in all values across the Shire, but in particular farmland, in the '90s caused the Valuer General's valuation of property to rise that much that the ad-valorem rate had to be adjusted to keep rate rises within the rate peg limit. I believe this was the cause of the slight difference in the ad-valorem rates referred to by the Mayor at the meeting.

Unfortunately, a rise in the value of a property does not correspond to a rise in the income derived from that property. As a predominately beef farming area, income is tied to the prevailing livestock market which has been, more often than not, depressed or sluggish over the past forty years. Production costs however, have not been so slow to rise. Increases in rates and other government imposed fees, levies and charges have been among the worst.

The argument that farmers are bearing the major burden of rate income in rural shires is also becoming heard in wider circles than Dungog Shire.

A report on the ABC's AM program on Saturday morning 24th Nov (yesterday) focused on exactly this problem in Victoria. (This report can be accessed on the ABC's Listen app)

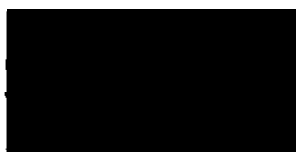
As it was the Victorian state election day, the Victorian Farmers Federation had made this topic its major policy plank in its approaches to the various political parties. Both Labour and Liberal parties agreed to set up enquiries into the problem. It will be interesting to see if the re-elected Labour government follows through on their promise.

Having just finished reading Peter Fitzsimons "Eureka, An Unfinished Revolution", I could not help but notice the correlation of the miners problems to this situation, but in reverse.

In 1854 the Govt was controlled by the wealthy landowners and Queens Governor who imposed onerous licence fees and accompanying fines on the disenfranchised miners causing them to rebel, resulting in the loss of the lives of over 30 people. Now, it is the landholders turn to feel the sting of the (local) Government. Hopefully this will not end with, perhaps, a UTEreka blockade.

In conclusion, I again appeal to the Councillors to consider this and Cr Low's paper in the interest of FAIRNESS to all the Shire's residents.

Yours sincerely



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