

[REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 11 March 2019 1:56 PM

To: Local Government Mailbox <localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Dungog Special Rate Variation Increase Proposal

I am a ratepayer in Dungog Shire Council Area and owner of [REDACTED] Dungog.

I am not in favour of the high rate increase suggested by Dungog Shire Council to ratepayers in the Shire.

I believe there is a need to increase rates to improve services in the area since Dungog is now a stand-alone Council.

The roads and bridges in the area are badly in need of maintenance, however, the council had an opportunity to join with Port Stephens Council during the amalgamation of councils and did not do so.

With the National Party offering – rather promising – to return many of the roads in the area back to the State Government for maintenance costs (that is still only a promise!) this should provide some relief on the council budget to assist in the repairs and maintenance of infrastructure within the council boundaries.

Will this help alleviate the pressing need council is building its claim upon for such a huge rate increase in record time?

When the ratepayers were first informed of the intention to raise rates I thought we would be given several options from which to choose.

That was NOT the case and I think there should have been more options given for a much more informed decision process to be implemented by council.

Ratepayers were told – you can have this option for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) or rates can stay as they are now with a general 2.5% rate cap increase each year.

These two options have been taken by council to be the ultimate choice for ratepayers. That is just not good enough!

There should have been a more thoughtful plan presented, to allow a ratepayer to consider a staggered method of increases over time and not all one after the other, until an absurd figure of close to 100% increase (97.8%) to be effected within 7 years is proposed. Even though the intended increase does include the cumulative increase of 18.9% from the rate peg increase the figure is going to be beyond the means of most people in the whole of council area. Ratepayers will be forced to pass the increase on to tenants, who will incur large rental increases – which many will not be able to afford and could find themselves unable to find affordable accommodation in an area in which they have lived all their lives.

As I stated previously, I believe there is a need to increase rates given the council chose to stand-alone during the amalgamation period. (A choice not fully supported by many ratepayers either.)

However, surely it must be recognised that to hit the ratepayers and consequently many tenants, with too big an increase in the next two years, will be difficult for many in the shire to pay and therefore needs tapering back to within a more reasonable increase over time.

Therefore, I propose that when *ipart* is considering all the proposals put forward by both council and its ratepayers, that common sense should and does prevail, and *ipart* considers granting a more modest SRV increase, over time, instead of an immediate 15% (2.5% rate cap + 12.5% SRV) over the next two years as proposed by the Council.

Yours sincerley

[Redacted signature]