

IPART submission

RE: Special rate Variation – Dungog Council.

To Whom it may concern,

My husband has been a resident of Dungog Shire and I have lived in the Shire for the last thirty seven years and we are farmers.

We strongly object to accepting a cumulative rate increase of 97.8% over seven years for the following reasons.

1. These rate increases are unfairly rated to farmers who will bear the brunt of the increase. The agriculture sector has been very difficult over recent years due to the prices received by farmers for their produce, whether it be beef production or milk production. On top of that, farmers have endured at least two years of drought conditions. There are no pointers showing that the agricultural sector will improve in the next seven years. These rate increases have the real possibility of sending struggling farmers out of the industry, or at the very least, out of the shire.
2. Dungog Shire Council have given no clear indication of how these extra funds are going to be spent. I strongly feel that already there is much inefficiency in the way existing funds are spent, and I believe Council need to meet specific benchmarks for our roads and infrastructure before their request for more funding is granted.
3. Dungog Shire Council have no roads in the shire that are classified as state roads. This needs to be addressed as there are many visitors that come to the area with caravans and fishing boats etc, that in no way contribute to the upkeep of the local roads they use. Many of these roads are used by people travelling to state parks and forests – very little income would be derived from these visitors to the Shire. The Shire is unfairly expected to maintain hundreds of kilometres of roads with a very small population base to charge rates to.

For the sake of the Dungog Shire's economy, I ask that you decline Dungog Shire Council's application for this rate rise and set an increase more in line to what farmers earn, otherwise I fear the Shire will lose its farmers and rural identity. Dungog Shire Council should be calling the state government to account in its responsibility for funding maintenance for major roads in the shire and not unfairly taxing a proportion of its ratepayers.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the submitter.