

Author name: Anonymous

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Submission: Dear Ipart,

I would like to strongly object to Dungog Council's request for a special rate variation. My family runs a small cattle operation in the shire and this rate rise will make the farming operation insolvent. It will possibly lead to the family property needing to be sold. The proposed increase in rates will cost our family about \$5500 per year (once fully implemented) and based on a turn over of around \$35,000 we will not be able to afford to stay on the land. This will be on top of increased fodder prices and a crippling drought that we are currently enduring.

We also take great offence to the fact that the council was offered an amalgamation with Port Stephens for which they rejected. It is my understanding that the need to have such a hefty rate increase would not have been necessary had this amalgamation proceeded. Why should my family suffer because of the incompetence of this local council?

I can not see how such a high rate rise could be justified so high above the CPI levels. Perhaps the council should be placed under administration due to its mismanagement and so its financial situation can be properly assessed and alternatives looked at so that farmers will not be forced off the land.