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Date of submission: Tuesday, 5 March 2019

Submission: I believe the Special 98% Rate Rise is unsustainable for a lot of rural rate payers.

A lot of moderately sized rural properties that were previously dairies and were devastated by dairy deregulation, have now turned to small beef operations, and don't have a large turnover.

This rate increase will take the cost of rates from approximately 10% to 20% of turnover, this is before any other farming or living expenses.

I believe this will lead to mature aged property owners being forced off their properties, as property owners, most of these farmers are ineligible for pension.

The option of selling off a small portion of the land, to generate capital, is often not viable, because of the complexities of Planning restraints as set by Councils and Government Agencies and the costs of creating smaller lots.

These farmers are shouldering a bigger burden, than residential rate payers.

The dire straits that Dungog Shire finds itself in is largely due to cost shifting of main roads and other services from State Government to Dungog Council.

Council has a large area of land that is owned by Government Agencies, that pay no rates and use Council Infrastructure.

Dungog Council has a small rate payer base and this small population has little capacity to shoulder this onerous burden.

I believe Dungog Council should have merged with a larger Council.