

I am sending this email today on behalf of myself and my husband Kenneth. Our family has lived and produced beef in this district for over 100 years. We have farm land in Dungog Shire Council, New South Wales and the adjoining Shire of Port Stephens Council.

We are strongly objecting to the proposed Special Rate Variation (SRV) Dungog Shire Council is seeking of 97.8% over a 7 year period. As ratepayers of this Shire we attended several of the community meetings held to discuss this SRV rise. These meetings were poorly advertised and unfortunately many ratepayers were unaware of the impact this rise would have on them financially.

At a monthly Council meeting in Dungog, which we attended. Council spoke of a phone poll they conducted late 2018. Through this poll Council indicated that the SRV increase was widely accepted.

We don't know what questions were asked in this poll or how many people were polled. We certainly were not contacted and have spoken to many families in our area. The ratepayers we have asked have had no idea of the phone poll regarding the increase. This raises many questions, as to how selective they were in their poll. Eg: Did they deliberately not contact farmers???

The effect this SRV rise will have on rural property owners, who earn their income from producing beef is enormous. Just because we have enough land to produce our beef for resale, this doesn't equate to having a greater income than the person living on a town block. We also have mortgages. As landholders we do not use Council's facilities or their infrastructure any more than any other ratepayer.

We currently receive 3 rate notices from Dungog Shire, due to owning multiple lots in Dungog Shire. This year's rates to Dungog Shire for our family was \$11,119-67. If the SRV is accepted at 97.8% we will be paying over the 7 years an increase of \$10,875-03. This will mean at the end of the 7 years our rates will total \$21,994-70. This is a heavy burden for us as farmers, we feel we are going to be impacted most based on land size.

With the current drought situation and low cattle prices this increase means we will have to scale back on maintenance and any improvements to our farm to afford the added cost of the proposed SRV.

The Dungog Council has stated that they are financially unsustainable without the SRV. Dungog Council had the opportunity to amalgamate with another Council in 2017, which the majority of ratepayers were in favour of but Council made the decision to stand alone. Council has brought this financial burden on themselves.

Please give this application from Dungog Shire consideration before IPART approves the SRV rate rise of 97.8%, and take into account the concerns of the ratepayers. This will be a huge burden on not just us as farmers but all ratepayers, business people, families and pensioners.

Regards

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