

To whom it may concern

I am emailing with regard to Dungog Shire Council's proposed Special Rate Variation and the impact it will have on our beef cattle operation, of which my husband Robert Flannery is the fourth generation to work this property. The property is situated [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in the local Government area of Dungog.

After attending a meeting in Clarence Town organized by Dungog Shire Council re the proposed Special Rate Variation which might I add was poorly advertised and did not give details of the proposed 97.8% increase until the actual meeting and those who didn't attend were therefore unaware of the severity of the proposed increase. Robert and I came away feeling frustrated by the meeting and felt management and most councillor's showed no sympathy or understanding to the cause of those present, and to add insult to the evening a councillor who spoke with Robert after the meeting suggested we should sell up or subdivide some of our property if we are not happy with the proposal.

The effect a 97.8% rise in rates on rural property owners is huge and is unsustainable. We have been told by Council this will be an average of approximately \$2,700 per year per farming rate notice, but the impact on most farmers is much more than that due to many landholders receiving more than one rate notice with multiple lots on their property. We receive five rate notices and our total cost currently is \$ [REDACTED], this will increase our rates to \$ [REDACTED], if the 97.8% SRV is approved.

We have a successful backgrounding beef cattle operation which has taken many years of managing our genetic base at quite an expense to get to where we are now. Our calves are sold through the local sale yards at Maitland to Feedlot operators where the calves are finished for the local butcher and supermarket trade. We consider ourselves good managers of our enterprise, but will find it difficult to absorb the extra rate rise as costs are continually going up and we are in a position where we have to accept what the market offers in cents per kilo for our calves and also deal with seasonal conditions. We do not have a guaranteed cash flow due to changing market prices, so a rate rise of this magnitude could make our operation unsustainable as we could no longer afford to make improvements to our property and therefore not be able to run as many cattle and our income would decrease.

If the proposed Special Rate Variation is approved the largest rate burden will fall on the minority of Primary Producers in the Shire and Dungog Shire has a long rural history with many rural properties being held in the same family for three or more generations. This identity should be preserved, but we feel many will not be able to absorb the extra costs and will have to sell up causing a flow on effect to the Sale Yards, Produce stores, Machinery suppliers and general businesses in the Shire.

Both Robert and I have attended monthly Council Meetings so we can keep abreast of any updates on the SRV and have been less than impressed by the offensive comments made by some Councillors at those meetings. One of those comments was we are causing division in the community. There is no division and why the Councillor would make such a comment is ridiculous.

We feel in the past Dungog Shire has missed two opportunities to go forward. One being the building of the Tillegra Dam and the other was amalgamation with another council. Now Council tell us it is financially unsustainable without a SRV being approved.

On 22nd February Dungog Council received a \$16 million commitment of funding for bridge and road repairs from the State Government. On page 20 of the SRV application the Council

is seeking \$14,295,000 to cover the repair costs of roads and bridges. On the same page a table shows \$16,089,750. Which figure is accurate we are unsure?

We would hope IPART will give the application from Dungog Shire Council much consideration before approving the application for a 97.8% Special Rate Variation which will impact greatly on the finances of the ratepayers within the Dungog Shire.

Yours faithfully

Robert & Marilyn Flannery

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Re: SRV Dungog Shire Council (case ref: [REDACTED])