



Mr. Neville King  
[REDACTED]

July 20, 2015

Att. To: Dr Peter J. Boxall AO  
Chairman  
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal  
PO Box K35  
Haymarket Post Shop  
NSW 1240

Dear Peter:

I have read Lismore Council's submission to the tribunal members for this review.

As a ratepayer of Lismore for 27 years I find their submission as their opinion only and not necessarily representing the opinion of the residents/ratepayers of Lismore and contrary to their claims .....ratepayers have not been engaged.

They have not followed the guidelines as set out in the methodology for assessment of Council 'Fit For the Future'.

Re: *Executive Summary*

*3.3.2 Infrastructure & Service Management*

*4.2 Council Consultation on FFTF proposal.*

The tribunal needs to assess Lismore Council's submission, and consider the ratepayers as Lismore Council's performance leaves a lot to be desired.

If Lismore Council was listed on the stock exchange and the ratepayers were the shareholders I believe we would want answers for their performance over the past years.

Re: *Executive Summary*

*2.2 Key Challenges & Opportunities (Strengths and Weaknesses)*

*3.1 Become/remain FFTT, 2016-20*

*3.2 Infrastructure & Service Management*

Council is proposing a \$500,000 'Special Rate Variation' in 2016/17 against the wishes of the ratepayers after October 2015.

When Council invited the ratepayers for submission 'yes or no' – Overwhelmingly the Ratepayers said NO.

Council is now proposing a \$2m S.R.V. 2017/2018 to fund its FFTF on to the Ratepayers when it was identified in their report 'The ability for Ratepayers to pay for the first S.R.V.', this is yet to be approved.

Many residents of the Northern Rivers (Lismore) are in the low socio-economic bracket with low average incomes also with insecure employment either casual or unemployed due to lack of work within the region plus over a 1/3 of Residents/Ratepayers are pensioners or on a disability pension.

Council is owed \$4.65m in rates and charges with approximately 1 in 10 unable to meet their commitment to council.

Lismore has the highest rates/business rates compared with our nearest Council (Ballina) with a similar number of Ratepayers and population with a wage drain to the coast. Low population growth over the last 10 years has allowed our roads and other infrastructure to deteriorate. Lismore Council has more than double the staff than Ballina Council.

This Council needs to be called to task, listen to its ratepayers, live within their means and not burden 18,000 Ratepayers with proposed ongoing rate increases.

Consider 'are ratepayers Fit For the Future?'

As for Lismore to stand alone on its past performance I question?

Within a radius of 30km we have four other Councils servicing a limited number of Ratepayers all playing for our dollars with very little infrastructure such as roads, bridges replaced over the last 25 years.

So I ask the tribunal members to consider us the Ratepayers and I ask you to consider a proposal for a merger of Ballina/ Lismore/Casino to be called 'Northern Rivers City Council' and 'Tweed Heads/Byron Bay/Kyogle' to be called 'Border City Council'.

Maybe this way the Residents of the Northern Rivers will have an affordable future, the cost of Council will be shared by many not just a few.

I wrote an article in the Northern Star back in July 1999 'Can we afford this Council?'

Those words I penned then could easily apply to today's current State government proposed local Council mergers!

Yours Sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Neville King.

Neville King