

**From:** IPART  
**Sent:** Thursday, 28 February 2019 10:36 AM  
**To:** Local Government Mailbox <localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FW: Comment on Dungog Shire Council Special Variation Application

**From:** RJones [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 28 February 2019 10:19 AM  
**To:** IPART <[ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipart@ipart.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** Comment on Dungog Shire Council Special Variation Application

Here is our comment on the proposed SV application currently under review with IPART.

Regards

R & E Roberts-Jones  
[REDACTED]

#### **IPART submission 28/02/2019**

##### **RE: Special rate Variation – Dungog Council.**

As you are aware Dungog Council has submitted an SRV which seeks approval for a cumulative increase in rates of 97.8% over 7 years

We have been residents of the shire for the past nine years and are concerned whether the increase proposed will actually solve the council's problems. This is especially so when the income base of rural ratepayers is based on grazing beef cattle on what was once relatively small dairy farms.

Council believes that only an increase of this order is sufficient to provide a sustained revenue base capable of supporting their maintenance budget on roads and bridges. At best this increase simply plugs another hole in a leaking ship.

Complicating this is the fact that Council is burdened with road classifications which shift all maintenance responsibilities onto them. Rate increases are not the solution, this is a matter which can only be resolved by State politicians pushing for re-classification and changes to the road funding formula.

Council's tourism plan 2015-2108 proudly claims that visitors to the shire total around 200,000 per annum and contribute \$47m to Dungog shire. While the revenue figures are suspect and suggest that the shire is creating multiple millionaires, we can confirm that visitors, (day trippers) are overwhelming our roads in their desire to reach the forest and park areas at the head of the rivers. Further taxing rate payers to cross subsidise these visitors and the businesses who supposedly receive the \$47m is unfair and especially so as these Government forests and parks contribute no rate revenue. This is a matter for State funding so that both rate payers and visitors share the costs equitably.

In summary we submit that this proposal will not solve the infra structure backlog. In our view it would be counter productive as it defers attention from the need to reclassify roads and for the State to step up and accept funding responsibility for the defacto main roads used increasingly by the 200,000 annual day tripper visitors to the shire. It also defers attention from the need for Dungog Council to acquire more professional civil works expertise and to implement the efficiency and completion benchmarks in use at other Councils

**In our opinion the only solution going forward for Dungog Shire is amalgamation. The council simply does not have a rating base sufficient to run a council with reasonable efficiencies and scale. It is not sustainable and will never deliver efficiencies or effective local government off its current base. Amalgamation with a**

**bordering council is vital. For this reason we think the rate increase is a Band-Aid solution that does not protect the long term interests of the shire.**

**Name:** Richard and Elizabeth Roberts-Jones

