

IPART submission re proposed rate rise by Dungog Shire Council
Submission by Rosemary Wall [REDACTED]

13th March 2019

Dear Sirs

The residents of Dungog Shire elected nine Councilors in 2017 to speak and act for their best interests and ensure that they have a viable and sustainable future. Unfortunately a majority of these Councilors have failed to respect the wishes of the shire residents even when those councilors were provided with the clear and indisputable mandate that Dungog Shire should merge with Port Stephens Shire to provide a sustainable financial future for this local area. That mandate was provided by Mr. Pippins Final Amalgamation Report on the Port Stephens/Dungog Shire merger which indicated that 76% of submissions received supported that merger and it was further confirmed by the results of a poll conducted by the NSW Electoral Commission to ascertain the wishes of the ratepayers moving forward to the current term of Council.

The results of the poll are still accessible via the following link to the electoral commission website

<http://pastvtr.elections.nsw.gov.au/LGE2017/dungog/poll/summary.htm>

The poll result records that a majority of 55.42% of voters nominated that they wished to merge with Port Stephens LGA and that result has not changed in the past 2 years yet the current council has continued to ignore the wishes of its ratepayers and have not followed the path that was directed by the people that put their trust in them in the first place.

The merger with Port Stephens Council was documented and presented to the residents of Dungog Shire by that organisation and was shown to have an end result that would not only have addressed the current backlog of works in Dungog LGA but it was also shown to be capable of providing both financial stability and financial growth within the shire and well into the future. Alternatively, Dungog Shire Council has proposed to double the rates of their landholders which is an action that they have admitted will raise a less than adequate level of funds that will only maintain our existing and failing assets in their current state and will not provide any other benefit such as long term financial stability or growth and improvement throughout the shire.

I attended the public meeting held at Gresford by Dungog Shire Council that was supposed to advise residents of the proposed rate rise. Attendees of that meeting were told by Dungog Shire Council that we could not be advised of the level of the rate rise???? That meeting was an absolute joke – no community consultation regarding the level of rate rise was undertaken because no information whatsoever was provided.

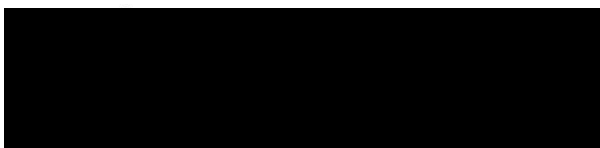
As a result, many people in the district have had to rely on rumors, pub-talk and innuendo regarding what is going to happen to their rates. To this day (13th March 2019) there are residents in Gresford that refuse to believe that their Council could ever undertake such an “outrageous action”. Other local residents I have spoken to are under the mistaken impression that the proposed rate rise percentages over each successive year will be calculated on the current 2019 rate amount each year instead of the accumulative amounts and those two calculations methods yield a vastly different end result.

If the community of Dungog Shire Council had been adequately consulted and advised throughout this process there should be absolutely no confusion whatsoever amongst the general public regarding what the council is proposing. I cannot think of any product available to me that would not create an extreme and negative impost if its cost were to be doubled, however unlike consumables that can be replaced by cheaper options, Shire rates are a mandatory payment and the only way to avoid the cost is to sell your home or close your livelihood down. A council should work for the benefit and security of its residents and businesses therefore a proposal that has the potential to force the majority of the local population out of their homes is ludicrous. Dungog Shire Council should be protecting the long term viability of the ratepayers currently residing in the shire and the businesses that support the residents and the threat of having to sell the homes many have worked to obtain for a lifetime because they will not be able to afford the rates bill is not acceptable at any level.

Dungog Shire Council has not proven that doubling our rates will provide a viable or sustainable solution for the Shires financial problems. There has been no assurance that cost shifting this huge financial burden onto the residents of the Shire will result in any improvement in the long or short term strength of the Shire. Instead of pursuing a path chosen by the majority of the Shire that would have provided those assurances at a moderate and affordable financial impost, the current residents and business are faced with financial ruin at the hands of the people that are supposed to provide economic success and stability at a local level.

Doubling the rates of the good people of Dungog Shire is not a solution to the current economic situation and it certainly does not provide any viability or sustainability for the future. With that in mind, I would request that the rate raise application proposed by Dungog Shire Council be denied.

Kind Regards



Rosemary Wall

