

March 12, 2015

Re: Gloucester Shire Council – Rate Increase Application

The NSW Farmers, Gloucester Branch, held meetings last Thursday, 14 August 2014, and again tonight, Thursday, March 12, 2015 to discuss its members' attitudes to the proposed Community Plan and Rate Increase Application. Our members overwhelmingly rejected the application to vary rates by 13% annually for 3 years.

The following motions were passed at the meeting.

Motion 1: That the total increase be limited to 5.5% per annum, including CPI, compounded for 3 (three) years.

Discussion: There was general consensus that farmers are not financially in a position to accept a substantial increase in rates. This is the reality of low commodity prices and increasing costs of production, and is not expected to change in the future. There was recognition of the need for council to provide services. These services need to be affordable to the rate payers, and therefore we agreed to accept a lower standard of services than that proposed in the Strategic Plan. Our members felt they could manage (with difficulty) the compromise proposal of 17.5% after 3 years.

Motion 2: That Council undertakes an independent study to ensure that rates are equitably distributed between rural, industrial and urban rate payers.

Discussion: In the past the returns from agriculture enabled farmers to shoulder a greater percentage of the rate burden than their urban counterparts. The wealth distribution has changed over the years, and a review of the distribution of rates is in order.

Any questions related to this submission can be addressed to:
Don Dunlop
President

– Gloucester Branch

