

SUBMISSION TO IPART RE BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL SPECIAL RATE VARIATION PROPOSAL

Attached is the submission lodged by the Lismore/Alstonville Branch of the NSW Farmers Assn on behalf of members who are Ratepayers of Ballina Shire in response to the Ballina Shire Council (BSC) Special Rate Variation (SRV) Proposal.

As an adjunct to this submission we submit the following comments, to support our request for IPART to reject the Ballina Shire Council SRV Proposal.

- 1) Council, through an email from the Mayor, advised those who made submissions that 90% rejected the Proposal and 70% of respondents to a survey rejected the Proposal. This obviously was irrelevant to Council's decision process.
- 2) We note IPART has requested additional Technical Information and granted an extension to Council to this end. Surely this supports the Dot Point in our submission regarding a lack of finalised details in the Proposal which resulted in Ratepayers being unable to make a fully informed decision on the Proposal.
It is worth noting that in the 2015-16 IPART approved SRV Proposal, in relation the Swimming Pool upgrades, costings for the works, given to Ratepayers at a Public Meeting, proved to be inaccurate and in subsequent public comment, following actual quotes for the works, the costs were incorrect.
- 3) Of concern is the fact that both the 2015-16 and 2017-18 SRV proposals are cumulative with no sunset clauses. Does this mean that BSC now considers it normal practice for Ratepayers to be subjected to extra financial imposts above the IPART Review stated Rate pegging percentage, by submitting a SRV proposal every year? What is the point of Rate pegging if this is the case?
- 4) We note that since our submission to BSC, the State Government has changed their position on forced amalgamations. We draw your attention to the Dot point in our submission, where we objected to the veiled threat by Council, of forced amalgamations, as a supporting argument for the SRV proposal.
- 5) It can be assumed that Base Rate Revenue for BSC will increase considerably if the substantial increases in updated UC Valuations currently being received by members, are reflected throughout the Shire. Would it not be fairer to the Ratepayers for the SRV Proposal to be rejected and for Council to address this increased income source in the first instance? Despite the ad Valorem Rate applied to primary production land, the income from use of that land for primary production, by comparison with a comparable UCV holding of apartments for example, does not equate to an equitable financial impost on the business given a possible marked variation of potential income from a property.
- 6) The introduction of the ESL based on UCV of a holding is also noted. Of concern is the issue of any Ratepayer with more than (1) holding being required to pay multiple ESL levies, with a

subsequent financial impost. Although not directly part of this IPART process it is worth noting that members believe that multiple holdings in one Shire area, would be more fairly treated by grouping and only one levy paid on the highest value UCV. This would also be significant for retirees whose holdings are their income.

- 7) The final issue in our Branch submission of interest to our members who do support a healthy river system, raises the important point that the River transverses multiple Shires and an SRV in one Shire seems to be a very inefficient proposed works concept.

We request IPART to reject the Ballina Shire Council SRV proposal and members support a Project for a Healthy Whole River System Concept and funding for this concept, to be through an Environmental Grant from either or both State and Federal Governments.

- 8) Surely a specific Levy for a Specific Project, would be a much more acceptable concept to Ratepayers, showing equitable impost for equitable community and environmental gain.

For further information please contact:

[REDACTED]

Hon. Secretary

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Lismore/Alstonville Branch NSW Farmers Association.

12TH March 2017



Secretary: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

LISMORE/ALSTONVILLE BRANCH

3rd February 2017

General Manager
Ballina Shire Council

RE: Submission to Council Possible Rate Variation 2017-20

Dear Sir

At a meeting of the Lismore/Alstonville Branch of the NSW Farmers Association held on Wednesday 1st February a motion was ratified:

“That a submission be made to BSC stating concerns of members who are Ratepayers of the Council.”

The following points were raised by members of the Branch:

- We oppose the proposed Rate variation. The General Rate is able to be increased by the rate peg determined by IPART and it is unacceptable for Council to be seeking a variation to that Rate, particularly over multiple years.
- Ratepayers in general, budget to function within the limits of the income they anticipate receiving in a year. Why does Council not apply these same criteria and work within the guidelines of the yearly increment and determine Council activities within that budget, rather than continually seeking an adjustment to that amount, from ratepayers?
- How does Council address the apparent, but not itemised, increasing costs of administering Council? What specific areas have incurred cost increases? How is Council prioritising each of these areas to ensure that Council priorities benefit to overall ratepayers, not one particular section of the community? Projects for use of funds included playground equipment-would these costs not be covered by Section 94 contributions.
- The Proposal Letter does not provide all information which members feel should have been finalised prior to notification to ratepayers of Proposal. For example: Complete Information of Benefits to all ratepayers across Shire requiring further financial impost; Break Down of Final Costings, including Administration Costs; Finalised, Guaranteed Contribution from any Co-Agency; Comprehensive Information regarding any proposed Alliance Organization and previous completed projects.
- Given the recent comments from the State Government on forced amalgamations, it would seem inappropriate for Council to cite an imaginary threat of a forced amalgamation, as an argument for the proposed Special Rate Variation and therefore the concept should be aborted.
- There are many State and Federal Grants available for environmental projects, therefore the imposition of inequitable costings on ratepayers is unnecessary.
- The Richmond River transverses several Shires-Surely any ‘River Health System’ concept should be a joint venture with all shires to have any overall enduring beneficial effect.

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NSW Farmers' Association

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- Council last year sought a levy from all ratepayers in relation to swimming pools. Presumably this was due to an oversight by previous Councils to have a contingency fund for ongoing maintenance. When ratepayers who were going to bear the greatest impost, questioned why an equal amount could not be contributed by each ratepayer, Council's stated that it was not permissible. In checking with Nambucca Shire, I was advised that all ratepayers contributed the same amount, to an environmental fund. The premise being, equitable impost and equitable benefit.

Members request Council not proceed with this Proposal, until the Issues raised can be shown to have been satisfactorily addressed.

Members also request to be advised, in a timely manner, if Council proceeds with an application to IPART, for the Rate Variation Proposal.

Please feel free to contact me, if required.

Yours sincerely,



Hon. Secretary

NSW Farmers' Association

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