

[REDACTED]

22nd May 2022

IPART

Re: Uralla Shire Council

Additional Special Variation for 2022-2023

[REDACTED]

Key Contact for Public Submissions

Dear Sir

I wish to strongly object to the Special Rate Variation that Uralla Shire Council have applied For, for the following reasons;

It's about affordability

I live at the above address and am a single income family. In September 2021 due to unforeseen circumstances, I became unemployed and am receiving unemployment benefits, I have permanent injuries and will not be able to return to work in the foreseeable future.

After working hard all my life these constant rate rises threatens my ability to keep a roof over my head and keep my home.

As you would be aware unemployment benefits are presently \$642.70 per fortnight, barely enough to even survive let alone keep paying out increasing charges for rates, inflation, living costs etc.

Over the past few years Uralla Shire Council have imposed levies for a sewerage which we didn't have which totalled \$449 p.a. in 2017, \$572 p.a. in 2018 and \$675 in 2020, residents including myself simply cannot pay any more (over a period of 3 years this has cost Bundarra residents in excess of \$300,000 this was for construction on a project which commenced in late 2020 and was only commissioned in early 2022).

We are at our limit and cannot pay more or endure more stress, we will all end up homeless or bankrupt!

- ***Population 348 (Census 2016) and decreasing as per Census figures 2011(402) and the downward trend is increasing!***
- ***Average income \$424 per week - \$200 less than the NSW average no growth/no job opportunities/low fixed incomes.***

85% of people in Bundarra are on fixed incomes with no ability to raise revenue.

Council cannot and should not be able to increase charges above a communities' capacity to pay.

There has been **no communication or consultation by Uralla Shire Council with the Bundarra community on the actual cumulative costs \$\$ on each ratepayer.**

1. *The USC submission does not even take into account the 10% increases in water and sewerage costs (we now pay \$675 p.a. for sewerage each year) and this is also increasing by another 10% p.a. which they intend to implement.*
2. *The 'new' sewerage system needs electricity to work – **another cost** to residents*
3. *We travel 45km to Inverell or 78km to Armidale and we need to use our own vehicles - **another cost** – especially with the rising costs of fuel!*
4. *We have none of the following in our village of Bundarra medical services including doctor hospital, chemist, post office, veterinarians, supermarket, butcher, bank, ATM, community or public transport and that is just a few of the services we don't have, **we travel at our own cost for these essential services.***
5. *Living costs have risen and will continue to rise with inflation which is already at 5.1% and rising!*
6. *Bundarra residents wrote to USC last October and voiced our objections to the draft LTFP 2022-2031 and stated that it was quite simply **unaffordable**, council did not respond or address our concerns.*
7. *We have even held public meetings and invited the General Manager, and all council staff and councillors to attend in an effort to convey to them our concerns over the continuing escalating costs - **they refused our invitation!***

*This variation if granted, will produce \$440,000 in extra revenue over the next 5 years, **USC's deficit currently stands at \$2.7m**, this leaves a huge shortfall which could only be filled by more increases to rates or services at ratepayers' expense, this can't continue!*

I ask that IPART carefully assess the situation here in Bundarra and in other parts of the shire before they grant this special rate variation especially in view of the aging population, below average income and declining population growth and especially the lack of affordability.

USC have Displayed no empathy, consideration or concern for the level of stress, financial hardship and emotional trauma that has been caused by their actions towards the Bundarra residents and in particular to the older and vulnerable residents and all those on fixed incomes who have no means of improving their situation e.g. pensioners, old aged persons etc.

