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IPART

Re: Uralla Shire Council  
Additional Special Variation for 2022-2023

[REDACTED]  
Key Contact for Public Submissions

Dear Sir

I wish to state my objection to the Above Submission by Uralla Shire Council for the following reasons;

In fact, the LTFP plan shows considerable cost cutting of services with no improvement. The key thing about Bundarra is the demographics – 85% of residents are on fixed incomes! The general consensus in Bundarra community is we cannot afford and are unwilling to pay for the increases and proposed costs in the LTFP.

***USC have Displayed no empathy or consideration for the level of stress, financial hardship and emotional trauma 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.***

*Population 348 (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*

***There are no growth or opportunities in a bankrupt village – this is what will happen to Bundarra if they are able to go ahead with these unfair/outrageous charges we will lose our homes due to our inability to pay!!***

Over the last 3 years we have been subjected to special levies on sewerage '***for a sewerage system that we didn't have***', this has totaled approximately \$1800 per person plus the additional costs of decommissioning septic sewerage systems.

As you would be aware ***people on fixed incomes have no ability to raise more revenue*** and we are already at breaking point, in fact some residents are already in the process of selling their homes and moving to another area, unfortunately this is not possible for everyone and there are people here who have lived here all their lives and know nothing else and this is our community and we don't want to be forced to move.

Over the last 3 years' residents have continually written & contacted Uralla Shire Council and councillors objecting to increases in rates and charges and complained about a lack of transparency and open and honest communication.

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 of the continuing escalating costs, they refused our invitation!

When the draft LTFP was put on display last October many Bundarra residents wrote and objected, *No information has been provided about the community feedback received on the draft LTFP 2022-2031 in October 2021 despite the [REDACTED] stating in the November 2021 newsletter that a report on community feedback will go to the new Council.*

**Have they forwarded our objections on to IPART together with the application for the 2.5 permanent rate variation??**

*As they have certainly not addressed the objections with the community either here in Bundarra or in the rest of the Uralla Shire!*

1. The plan submitted doesn't consider the financial impact of 10% p.a. increase in water rates or the 10% increase in the sewerage levy.
2. Savings and revenue raising aspects of the plan doesn't indicate where the money will be spent
3. **Poor financial management by council should not be a driving force to raise rates above IPART recommendations to compensate for their inefficiency.**
4. The community had little or no knowledge of the understanding that the original (SRV) was 45% over 3 years commencing 2022-2023
5. The plan doesn't define any improvements or projects of significance just revenue raising
6. ***Council must accept objections or alternate views from ratepayers in good faith when calling for submissions – THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN!***

Council have not taken into consideration the state of the general rising cost of living - *Interest rates, petrol, food, health etc.* and how this affects everyone but especially those on fixed incomes.

The impact of these costs must be reasonable and affordable.

I note that in USC's application that the ***GM stated that Council has considered the impact on ratepayers and the community in 2022-23 and future years, and considers that it is reasonable***; This is from the GM who earns in **excess of \$252,000** per annum when the average income of Bundarra residents is fixed at approximately **\$22,000** so there is a total disconnect with reality on councils' part.

1. Not all residents have access to online services, internet services here are intermittent at best!
2. There is no indication on USC website where their submission to IPART would be available for viewing in each area of the shire – this limits submissions, or of councils' efforts to recognise impacts on residents
3. We do not have equality of services or facilities with Uralla township – yet we are rated the same, this has been raised with USC many times with no result or resolution. We have no bank, no post office, no atm, no community transport, no banking facilities, we have to travel to Inverell 45km or Uralla 72km for any services. USC have done nothing to address any of these issues.

We would like IPART to carefully assess our situation here in Bundarra and in other parts of the shire before they grant this special rate variation especially in light of the fact that USC have been in deficit for several years and this year to the total sum of \$2.17m.

This variation if granted is only a stop gap as the revenue that council could raise with this variation, as stated, in their minutes, is \$440,000 over the next 5 years, this leaves a huge shortfall which could only be filled by more increases to rates or services at ratepayers' expense.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]