

# Nambucca Shire Council



Enquiries to: Mr Michael Coulter

Phone No [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Mobile [REDACTED]

Our Ref : SF1950



19 March 2014

Mr Nick Singer  
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal  
PO Box Q290  
QVB POST OFFICE NSW 1230

Dear Mr Singer

## **NAMBUCCA SHIRE COUNCIL—PROPOSED SPECIAL RATE VARIATION—RATE PAYER SUBMISSION APPARENTLY OVERLOOKED BY COUNCIL**

Please find enclosed a copy of a letter and email from Susan and David Hedgecoe of 63 Logans Road, Valla.

Mr and Mrs Hedgecoe sent Council an email on 8 February making a submission to the proposed special rate variation. For an unknown reason, the submission was not incorporated in Council's record management system and it was not reported to Council or IPART.

Council would be pleased if you could consider the submission of Susan and David Hedgecoe in considering Council's application for a special rate variation.

Yours faithfully

**MICHAEL COULTER  
GENERAL MANAGER**

MAC:ms

Enc

COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
44 PRINCESS STREET  
MACKSVILLE NSW 2447  
ABN: 71 323 535 981

Email - [council@nambucca.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@nambucca.nsw.gov.au)  
Website - <http://www.nambucca.nsw.gov.au>

All written communications to be addressed to General Manager:  
PO Box 177  
MACKSVILLE NSW 2447

General Enquiries: (02) 6568 2555  
Facsimile: (02) 6568 2201

David Hedgecoe [REDACTED]

Feb 8

[REDACTED]  
Michael

Dear Mr Coulter

I am writing on behalf of my wife and myself to oppose the proposed rate variation as it relates to farmland. It is our belief that farmland should be exempt from any rating increase for the following reasons:

1. Farmland comprises just 5.2% of rated properties by number but already contributes a disproportionate 9.25% of rate income. (Source: NVSC website)
2. Families on farmland generally speaking derive less benefit from Council expenditure than town dwellers. For example, farming families derive no benefit whatsoever from Council's very substantial expenditure on the Off River Water Storage Facility since we rely on our own water tanks for both water and sewerage. There are many other examples.
3. The difficulties being faced by the rural sector across Australia have been widely canvassed in the media and farmers in the Nambucca region are not exempt from the double whammy of increasing costs of inputs and lower farm gate prices and/or falling production.

In the Nambucca region the two principal farming activities are beef cattle and macadamia nut production. According to a recent Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics report\* "The average financial performance of Australian beef cattle producing farms is estimated to have declined in 2012/13."

So far as macadamia nut production in the Nambucca Valley is concerned, the very wet conditions since 2009 have seen production fall from nearly 600 tonnes in 2008 to under 200 tonnes in 2013. You would no doubt be aware that Nambucca Macnuts Pty Ltd has had to scale back its operations due to the difficult conditions and many growers are facing an uncertain future.

4. The Nambucca LGA has one of the highest unemployment rates in New South Wales. It would be a perverse logic indeed to exacerbate that situation by further increasing costs to one of the few sectors in the region that actually makes a productive contribution to the local economy and provides much needed employment, despite the difficulties described above.

In short, while we acknowledge that Council faces a challenge in balancing its budget, it has to realise that farmers are facing significant problems too. We do not have the luxury of being able to arbitrarily increase our prices to cover our ever-increasing costs. We have to match our spending to our means and it is not unreasonable to expect Council to do likewise rather than look upon ratepayers as a kind of Magic Pudding.

Finally, you might recall that the last time I had correspondence with Council it was necessary for me to invoke the assistance of my Member of Parliament to elicit a response from you. I would like your assurance that these representations will not be met with the same arrogance and contempt.

Yours faithfully

David and Susan Hedgecoe

\*Research Report 13.8 by Martin, Phillips, Leith and Caboche for Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics.