

Calling comeback for Bob

Continued from Page 1.

"I am deeply indebted to the President Andrew Schier and the Gilgandra Jockey Club for encouraging me to come back calling for my 59th call and hopefully my 60th in 2015."

"Colin Hodges has been heavily supportive in getting me back behind the microphone," said Mr Foran.

When he became ill a few years ago, his wife Shirley Foran was inundated with calls of support, a testament to his generosity within the community not just in the racing industry.

Other Central West Jockey Clubs such as: Carinda, Collarenebri, Gulargambone, Marthaguy, Mendoran and Nyngan have also welcomed Bob's return

and their support means a great deal to him. "I really enjoy doing it and it's great that they still want me to come back," he said.

Bob is looking forward to the January 5 race to become one step closer to the next career milestone of 60 Gilgandra Cup calls.

The 13-year-old boy, who used to call marbles, is now appropriately referred to as the 'Voice of Racing in the Central West.'

Bob Foran is a legendary race caller and an outstanding community figure in Gilgandra and the Central West region.

Gilgandra residents will hear Bob call his 59th Gilgandra Cup on Sunday, January 5, 2014.

Town stories Rates to rise



Robyn Walton with the first five of her *Coo-ee Town Stories*. Photo supplied.

The first in a series of *Coo-ee Town Stories* has gone on sale at the *Coo-ee Heritage Centre*. The idea for the little books came about during the 13 years Robyn Walton volunteered her time writing for the very popular *Coo-ee Calls Magazine*, for the residents and friends of the *Coo-ee Lodge Retirement Village*.

People passed *Coo-ee Calls* from hand to hand, sent it all over Australia, to various places around the world, and put some of the stories on the internet.

To Robyn the reason was obvious. The magazine told stories about Gilgandra and its people and that's exactly what this series of small *Coo-ee Town Books* does. They cover the natural disasters the town overcame and the people who helped the town grow.

It's been a time consuming labour of love for Robyn and just like the *Coo-ee Calls*, since word has got out that the first five in the series are completed, people want more. She has three more little books currently in the pipeline and there'll be more to follow.

If you like reading about Gilgandra and its people then these are for you. The books can be purchased from the *Coo-ee Heritage Centre* or from Robyn direct.



Gilgandra—Town of Windmills and home of the *Coo-ees*.

The *Coo-ee Town Stories* are now available

A series of small books at small prices
Written by Robyn Walton
they tell the stories of natural disasters
in the district such as

**The 1955 Flood
Rabbit Plague**
and

The 1951 Bushfire
The greatest outbreak of fire
in the District's history

as well as
covering the interesting lives of

**Fred Brook, Tony Shalhoub,
Albert Boonstoppel and Geoff Rohr**

Perfect as a Christmas gift, stocking filler
or just treat yourself.

Available direct from Robyn Phone 68472378
or The *Coo-ee Heritage Centre*

If you liked reading the *Coo-ee Calls* you'll
love the little *Coo-ee Town* books.

The Gilgandra Shire Council (GSC) has been holding community consultation meetings across the District to discuss their planned Special Rate Variation (SRV) increase. Meetings have already taken place in Armistee, Curban, Tooraweenah, Bearburg and Coboco. Last Wednesday, December 11, the final meeting was held at the Gilgandra Shire Hall.

The GSC is applying to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a three year SRV increase of seven per cent above the rate peg for General rates, excluding water and sewerage.

For Gilgandra residents this would equate to an approximate rise of 10 per cent per annum for the period 2014/15 – 2016/17 with a total rise of 33.10 per cent.

The general rate base fund for 2014/15 with the SRV would increase 9.3 per cent to \$3,933,645, and by 2016/17 would increase to \$4,759,710.

Last year IPART approved a one year SRV of 3.2 per cent, despite the previous Council's application for a seven year rise.

In 2012 a new Council was elected with six first term Councillors from a cross section of the community including those that live in town, business owners, farmers and rural residents.

This new Council has already begun a lengthy review process into the financial and strategic operations of the Council.

The Long Term Financial Plan (LTFF) 2013/14 - 2022/23 allows for an annual rate pegging increase of approximately 3 per cent, per year. The three year SRV will align with the current Councils' end of term, holding it accountable for the delivery.

A projected 23.8 per cent increase in general rate base will allow for long term financial sustainability and an increase in maintenance and asset renewal by \$3.2 million over the next ten years.

Over the three years of SRV, \$200 thousand will be put towards the current \$600 thousand short fall in the annual roads maintenance budget and the projected \$1.5 million increased cost to bitumen reseal and gravel restheet roads could also be funded.

The GSC has a Capital Works Program of \$39.7 million including a 10 year cost of \$36.8 million for asset renewals.

General rates are a direct land tax based on the land value as determined by the NSW Valuer General. In 2014/15 the rate amount payable, including SRV, is as follows: \$7,846 for farmland valued at \$1 million, \$1,291 for residential property in Gilgandra Township valued \$60 thousand, \$1,950 for businesses in Gilgandra Township valued at \$60 thousand.

Farmers will be paying nearly \$9,500 for properties worth \$1 million by 2016/17, up from \$7,135 in 2012/13.

The application by the GSC to increase rates has angered some local farmers and a group from the Coboco area have started a petition against the rise. The farmers feel that the SRV rise of 33.10 per cent is unsustainable.

Mayor Doug Batten is pleased with the way the meetings went but was disappointed about the attendance at the Gilgandra Shire Hall.

Fewer than 40 people attended the meeting last Wednesday and only a handful lived in the Gilgandra Township, the rest were from rural areas.

Mayor Batten said that the transparency of Council's presentation was to show the community the whole business of Council and allow residents to raise their concerns.

"Residents need to have faith in their elected representatives, in that we are making decisions based on the best interests of the entire community and not just for town or country," he said.

Mayor Batten feels that the current Council has a strong financial and strategic direction and is aiming to leave the Council in a stronger position in three years time.

The GSC will be accepting public submissions for the SRV until January 17.

The IPART application is due on February 24 and the decision is expected in April/June 2014.

Before approval is given, applications are evaluated on: the need for the SRV, Community and Media response, impact on the ratepayers, accuracy in the delivery program and LTFF, productivity improvements and cost efficiency. If the application is unsuccessful, the rate peg for 2014/15 has been set by IPART at 2.3 per cent, based on fluctuating council costs, productivity and the removal of the carbon price.

Gilgandra Services Club Co-op

Trading Hours: Open 10am every day with
NO entry after 10pm nightly
Phone 68472135
admin@gilservices.com.au
www.gilgandraclubco-op.com.au

It's all happening at your Club this Saturday night!

Members' Christmas Party from 3pm

This Saturday is our Members' Christmas Party. The Children's Party will start at 3pm. If you know someone who has been really good this year bring along a gift to the value of \$10, hand it to our bar staff and we will make sure Santa passes it along.

Terry Leonard will be performing from 7pm.

Monster Christmas Raffle from 6pm

Our monster Christmas Raffle will be drawn this Saturday night from 6pm. There are 40 prizes to be won as displayed in the club. Tickets are \$2 each and still available from the bar.

Last Chance to win a Christmas Ham from 7pm

This Friday night, December 20, is your last chance to win a ham for Christmas. During our regular Spinnna Winna Raffles we have half leg hams to be won.

Community Clubs Mega Draw

This week's draw is at
\$16,000

Terms and conditions apply LTFS/13/08311.

Friday's Members' Draw

This weeks draw recommences at **\$2000**

Drawn sometime between 7pm and 10pm. Permit No. LTFS/13/10938

New Year's Eve Celebrations

Entertainment with 'Tickle Me Chook Skin'.

We will be drawing two bonus Members' Draws standing at \$500 which will be drawn until won. (Permit Number Pending).

There is no entry after 10pm. The doors will be closed.

Remember, entry is for Members or Temporary Member's only. That means if you live within the Gilgandra Shire and are not a member of this club, you will not be permitted entry. Join now to avoid disappointment. Last day that applications will be received to allow entry on New Year's Eve is Tuesday, December 31 by 5pm.

Staff, Management and Directors would like to wish all member's a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. We will be closed Christmas Day and re-open on Boxing Day, December 26 at 1pm. Take advantage of our Bar Specials for New Year's Eve.

This Week's Takeaway Bar Special

XXXX Gold stubbies - \$37.99
Bundy Rum and Cola 24 pack cans - \$75
While stocks last





Landholder says state government should consider putting Gilgandra Shire into administration

Posted 5 hours 8 minutes ago

Rural landowners from the Gilgandra Shire have launched 14 petitions opposing proposed rate increases of up to 30 per cent over the next three years.

The council has proposed the increases as a way of dealing with a \$600,000 shortfall in maintenance funding.

Peter Thompson from the Collie area says ratepayers simply cannot afford the rise after previous increases during the past few years.

He hopes the petitions will be taken into account by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) when deciding whether to approve the council's application.

"It depends on what we put up and obviously we're going to argue that not only farmers, but also townspeople that we can't afford it," he said.

"It's a rural based shire, 76 per cent of the rates come from the rural producers.

"The season's not good this year, it was not good last year and now we've got an encroaching drought from the north and the west."

Mr Thompson says the government should consider putting the Gilgandra Shire Council into administration.

He says if the council is not financially viable, the government should not hesitate to act.

"One, we oppose the rate increase and two, we're asking the Local Government Minister Don Page to look at the council and the administration of it and to see if it is a viable concern," he said.

"I don't think anyone in the council area really wants to see Gilgandra pulled apart, but it's like all things, if a business is not viable then administrators are called in."

The council recently held six public meetings throughout the shire as part of its community consultation on the proposed rate rise.

A spokesman says council had hoped for a better attendance at the meetings, as it forms a crucial part of the application to the IPART.

Topics:local-government, activism-and-lobbying, regional, gilgandra-2827, dubbo-2830

Gilgandra community faces massive 'special' rate rise

By FAYE WHEELER

THE communities of Gilgandra and district face new financial pain if a bid for a 7 per cent increase each year for the next three years is successful.

Gilgandra Shire Council has proposed the trio of special rate rises that would increase its general rate base by 23.8 per cent above the state's peg by the end of the period.

The extra funds would be used to meet a \$600,000 shortfall in rural road maintenance and start to increase funding of its transport asset renewal program, the council advised the community in a newsletter this month.

Dubbo City Council has not fol-

lowed the lead of its neighbour.

"There are no current plans for Dubbo City Council to pursue a special rate variation for the 2014-2015 financial year," organisational services director Craig Giffin said yesterday.

Gilgandra shire's ratepayers already copped a 3.2 per cent rate hike above the increase allowed by the peg set by the state's independent pricing regulator in 2012-2013.

At the time the council had tried for a 50 per cent rate rise for a seven-year period but was turned down by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

The council began planning for its application after its September meeting and has announced a

series of public meetings to gain input and feedback.

Farmers would bear the brunt of the proposed increase and would have to pay an extra \$340 taking their total bill to \$3742 in 2014-2015, the first year of the rise, according to figures provided in its newsletter, recently mailed to ratepayers.

Residential ratepayers in Gilgandra would have to find an extra \$49 in 2014-2015 while businesses in the town paid an extra \$85.

The financial model also included a commitment by the council to reduce expenditure by 3 per cent in the next three years, the council advised ratepayers in the newsletter.

Gilgandra Shire Council public meetings to discuss the proposed rate rise

Armatree CWA Hall, December 2, 6pm	Tooraweenah Hall, December 3, 6pm
Curban Community Hall, December 4, 6pm	Bearbung Hall, December 9, 6pm
Coboco Hall, December 10, 6pm	Gilgandra Shire Hall, December 11, 6:30pm

Rate rise plan sparks rage for landholders

GRACE RYAN

Gilgandra council is planning to increase rates across the shire and some rural ratepayers are objecting to another increase as they believe it's not sustainable.

Craig and Susan McFetridge, Don Campion, and Phil and Judi Thompson are neighbours on the south side of Gilgandra.

They are outraged with the rates they have to pay.

"Rural landholders are paying 76 per cent of all rates," Mrs McFetridge said. "We pay \$16 122 per year, that's \$44.17 a day in non-irrigated country."

After three dry years, the farmers are feeling the pressure.

"We rely on winter cereal and fat lambs. We've had three bad years, we're hand feeding and the crops weren't that good," Mr Thompson said.

These landholders believe the council is falling short and using the farmers as a cash cow.

"They're trying to develop in Gilgandra, and they see us as a milking cow," Mr Campion said. "You can't milk a dry cow."

Mr Campion is paying between \$25,000 and \$28,000 a year for the rates on their farm.

The roads in the neighbourhood are poor quality, and these farmers are concerned they are going to get neglected even if the rate increase is approved.

"We're disgruntled from propping up an inefficient council, look after the roads fits, and then the sewage and then all the other properties," Mrs Thompson said.



Craig and Susan McFetridge, Don Campion and Judi and Phil Thompson are not happy with Gilgandra Shire Council attempting to increase the rates.

The McFetridges, Mr Campion and the Thompsons pay combined rates of more than \$50,000.

"A good grader costs \$110,000. That's what they need to fix the roads," Mr McFetridge said. "(Now) they gravel a section and then don't

maintain it and you're left with big rocks in the middle of the road."

These neighbours want to see change in the council in the form of a restructure or amalgamation, or even an administrator to see how the council works.

Gilgandra Shire mayor Doug Batten said the rate increase was for council to fix the roads, including the south side of Gilgandra.

"In establishing the 13/14 budget, we identified a shortfall in money for rural roads. It will affect some rural rate payers more than others, but our rates are comparable to the shires around us, probably a little less," he said.

The council is \$600,000 short to repair the roads, and this money will be paid across three years as rates gradually increase.

"It will be a work in progress, we're not walking away from individual roads, we will prioritise with needs, condition and traffic usage," he said.

For Gilgandra Shire Council, amalgamation is not an option.

"I am personally against amalgamation and so are the councillors, I see no benefit in it," Mr Batten said.

The council is holding meetings across the shire to discuss the rate increase. Mr Batten said it'd been a positive result so far.

"The meetings have been positive and mostly well-attended. Generally the sentiment is naturally they don't want a rate increase but they understand the situation council is in," he said.

Although the farmers need the roads fixed, they believe the money can come from somewhere else.

"Council can't seem to look at any other option than milking the farmer dry," Mrs McFetridge said.

Coddingtons claim Farmer of the Year award

Central west locals, Matthew and Cherie Coddington of Roseville Park Merino Stud, Dubbo have been named joint winners of the NSW Farmers' Association, Farmer of the Year award in 2013 last Tuesday, along with Godfrey Dol from the state's northern tablelands.

The Coddingtons are thrilled with the award.

"It's a great honour, it's nice to be recognised for our hard work," Mrs Coddington said.

This award wraps up an exciting year for the Coddingtons as they have won most successful exhibitors at the Sydney Royal show, NSW State Sheep Show, QLD State Sheep Show, the Australian Sheep and Wool Show and the Dubbo national sheep show, taking out a clean sweep of every major sheep show on the east coast of Australia.

"2013 has capped off a very successful year for our stud in so many ways."

"At all three major shows, Roseville Park Merino Stud had the supreme exhibit with a different sheep at each show.

"These were all ewes and weighed between 115 kilograms and 120 kilograms with 17 micron wool," he said.

The Coddingtons have also excelled in their renowned breeding program.

"Roseville Park progeny topped eight out of 10 of the major multi vendor sales in Australia in the last two years," Mr Coddington said.

"The two highest-priced rams sold in NSW at on property sales in 2012 and 2013 were sired by Roseville Park 14."

Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson said the Coddingtons were worthy winners of the Farmers of the Year award.

"Matthew and Cherie Coddington run a very well-managed farming operation and are leaders in the industry," she said.

"They impressed the judges with their commitment to profitability, sustainability, research, industry involvement, marketing and family succession, and their meticulous approach to breeding."

At their 2013 sale, Roseville Park sold 202 rams at auction to a top price of \$23,000 and acreage price of \$2820, the highest price in Australia for the year.

The top-selling ram weighed 155 kilograms, was 17.6 micron and produced 17 kilogram of wool.

Roseville Park uses breeding values as part

of its selection criteria and have 22 out of the top 30 ranked sires in Australia for fleece weight production.

"Roseville Park Merino Stud was the first Merino Stud to export female genetics overseas to Uruguay," Mr Coddington said.

Ms Hodgkinson was impressed with the Coddingtons dedica-

tion to agriculture.

"They are clearly very hard working, innovative and passionate about the job they're doing," she said.

"They are helping us show the broader community the incredible business management skills of our farming men and women."



Avant Agri

AUSTRALIA

Introducing - Managed Marketing Programs for Australian Grain Growers

The professionals you know and can trust: competitive, fair and efficient

Programs for all grades of Wheat, Feed Barley and Canola.

All sales insured by a major insurance company.

Programs: 3, 6 and 9 months to match your cash flow needs.

Payment options: Harvest advances, monthly distributions, and deferred payments.

EPR's net of all costs. What you see is what you get.

For more information contact:

Peter Woods 0448 929 691 peter.woods@avantagri.com.au

Malcolm Bartholomaeus 0411 430 609 malcolm.bartholomaeus@avantagri.com.au

www.avantagri.com.au

Great Value

Commercials & 4X4s

2012 SS VE THUNDER UTE SERIES II



- Manual
- 6.0L V8
- 78,123km
- Black in Colour

WAS \$26,990
NOW \$25,990

CEM61P

2005 HOLDEN VZ STORM UTE



- Red in Colour • Automatic
- Soft Tonneau
- Alloy Sports Bar
- With Just Under 80,000km

WAS \$15,990
NOW \$14,990

BV42LJ

2005 MY SUBARU FORRESTER WAGON



- White in Colour
- Automatic
- AWD
- 103,072km

WAS \$10,990
NOW \$9,990

CDC72T

TOYOTA LANDCRUISER GXL



- Bull bar
- Tow bar
- Sunroof
- Dual Fuel

WAS \$18,990
NOW \$16,990

AWR63T

2007 TOYOTA KLUGER GRANDE WAGON



- Blue in Colour
- AWD
- V8
- Automatic
- 122,098km

WAS \$29,990
NOW \$27,990

COR63P

2009 FG FORD FALCON CAB CHASSIS



- Custom Tray & Racks
- Automatic
- 86,825km

WAS \$18,990
NOW \$17,990

BNR09D

2009 NISSAN STX NAVARA



- 2.5L Diesel
- 102,321km
- Alloy Bull Bar
- Tow Bar
- Hard Tonneau Cover

WAS \$25,990
NOW \$24,990

BVG9FF

Tony Leahey

motor group since 1980
winning all the way!

DL11622

Phone: 02 6393 7200

Bathurst Road, Orange NSW 2800
www.tonyleahey.com.au

GILGANDRA WEEKLY 7 JAN 14

GHS top achievers



Deputy Principal Matthew Knowles with top students for 2013 Stephanie Frewin, Catherine Priestley and teacher Joan Stagg (Peta Bradley absent).

Gilgandra High School (GHS) had an exceptional 2013. Students Catherine Priestley, Stephanie Frewin, Peta Bradley, Laura Mathieson and Ben Musgraves have finished the Higher School Certificate (HSC) with Band Six results (top 90 to 100 per cent) and many others with Band Fives (top 80 per cent).

Twelve students also gained early entry into Universities across the country and Kate Thomas received a scholarship to attend Charles Sturt University in Bathurst to study Journalism.

"Gilgandra High School is an inclusive school that strives to help all students achieve. We are incredibly proud of all our students. This year we had the largest numbers of Aboriginal students complete Year 12, which is a very great achievement," said Deputy Principal Mr Matthew Knowles.

GHS is also proud of other former students achievements. Topia Ryan-Jones who was Dux of the School in 2012 is currently studying at Wollongong University and has achieved excellent first year results, mostly Distinctions and High-Distinction.

The top three Year 12 students for 2013 were Catherine Priestley with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank of 97.9, Stephanie Frewin scored a 95.8 and Peta Bradley with an ATAR of 93.75. Miss Bradley also finished in the top 99.96 per cent of Australia in Agriculture.

Last month, *The Gilgandra Weekly* caught up with the top scorers to talk about their outstanding results from 2013.

What drives you to work hard and be successful?

Catherine - "It's the teachers, they're just amazing, the reason that we wanted to do well, to get those scores, is that we wanted to do it for them. The teachers

What are your future plans?

Catherine - "One of the things that Mr Knowles said to me was 'We leave this world with nothing because we give it everything.' I'm not really sure what I want to do but my experience with my English teacher has really driven me in the arts direction. I don't think it really matters what either of us do in the end as a career because we are just going to give it everything we've got. That's my main goal because careers and the world are changing so fast, I've got no expectations."

Stephanie - "Now that I've got my ATAR I'm pretty sure I'll be able to go UNSW and study a combined engineering and arts degree. I'd love to be able to work overseas and build things such as schools."

Peta - "I gained successful early entry to both Charles Sturt University in Wagga, Wagga and the University of New England (UNE). I chose to enrol in the Bachelor of Animal Science at UNE, commencing in February, majoring in

Graduation



Sarah Brightman graduated from the University of Wollongong with a Bachelor of Science Psychology on Friday, December 20, 2013. Photo supplied.

Nominations closing

The Gilgandra Shire Council has received limited nominations across all categories for the Gilgandra Australia Day Awards.

Nominations close on this Friday, January 10, 2014. Gilgandra has many outstanding individuals and groups that contribute to making it a vibrant, friendly and caring community. They deserve to be recognised for their efforts and it is up to residents to nominate them.

Mayor Cr Doug Batten has urged the community to nominate and recognise these people.

"Gilgandra Shire Council only manages the awards process so we need you, our community, to complete the nomination forms and nominate the people you feel are deserving of recognition for their efforts. The selection panel can only assess those nominations they receive and it would be extremely disappointing and not be an accurate reflection of our community to only receive a handful of nominations," said Mayor Batten.

Nomination forms are available on Council's website or by contacting Council on 6817 8800.

All nominations must be received by 5pm, Friday, January 10, 2014.

Construction begins

The long awaited construction of the new Terrible Creek Bridge at Curban will be starting next week. National Park Road (Road No. 212) from the East Coomamble Road intersection, within the village of

Readers' Forum

I was recently invited to sign a petition calling for the sacking of the Gilgandra Shire Council, and the appointment of an administrator.

When I enquired as to why such action was thought necessary I was told that the current council wants a large rate increase to cover administrative waste. I was also told that the council was not fulfilling road repair and maintenance obligations in the Shire.

When I asked how the necessary road maintenance could be funded without a rate increase, I did not get a logical answer, only a vague assurance that the elimination of current 'waste' would adequately fund the necessary maintenance. Further enquiries could not elicit any figures as to what the likely savings would be from the elimination of the perceived waste, nor any idea of the cost of the required road maintenance.

It is a fact of life that economy of scale ensures that bigger is better, in modern commerce. A small shire has capital costs for plant, machinery and infrastructure that could serve a much larger shire. Gilgandra shire is, by current standards is a small shire, and amalgamation, would in theory, reduce the rate burden on rate payers, due to the savings that should accrue due to economy of scale.

However, I doubt that amalgamation would be in the best interests of Gilgandra residents, unless Gilgandra remained the administration centre of any amalgamation. Should another centre become the administrative centre about 400 jobs would instantly disappear from Gilgandra, rates would almost certainly increase, and the likelihood of road maintenance improving would be problematic.

Additionally, Gilgandra with a Shire population of 4,000 would become a backwater, with no bargaining power, in an amalgamated shire of perhaps 50,000, in much the same way State Governments are only interested in the welfare of areas east of the mountains, due to the lack of votes our side of the mountains.

I would suggest that anyone considering signing the petition calling for an administrator to be appointed, should be aware that any business administrator would almost certainly advise that Gilgandra has to become part of an amalgamated shire to survive...

Alternatively, if Gilgandra residents want to remain autonomous, then a rate rise is essential to pay for the services we would like. This will also ensure that several hundred jobs remain in the town, the Co-ee complex remains in Gilgandra's control, and Gilgandra does not become a forgotten backwater, and eventually a ghost town.

Gordon Foran

Gilgandra Computers
Over the bridge turn at Castlereagh Motel, next two lefts then right.
14 Holland Close
For systems, laptops, Internet and repairs
68470408
gilcomp@exemail.com.au
Steve Schie
Microsoft OEM System Builder

Gilgandra Bowling Club



Western Magazine

Readership: 118,592

Registered by Australia Post

www.westernmagazine.com.au • PO Box 311, Dubbo • Phone (02) 6883 2900 • Fax (02) 6884 1695

ABN 28 001 591 519

Add us on Twitter @WesternMag1

Week commencing Monday, February 10, 2014

Find us on Facebook facebook.com/western.mag



Spotlight on roads



□ Zoe Westgarth believes it's time rural roads became a priority.

GRACE RYAN

The state of rural roads has been thrown into the limelight recently with the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) speaking out about rural transport infrastructure claiming it is not up to scratch and has been an ongoing issue for some landholders.

Many rural landholders battle with ungraded and dangerous roads on a daily basis.

Craig and Susan McFetridge, Don Campion and Phil and Judi Thompson of Gilgandra Shire have been publicly requesting council to grade the roads around their properties since last year.

"They sometimes gravel a section and then don't maintain it and you're left with bit rocks on the middle of the road," Mr McFetridge said.

The McFetridges are appalled because rural landholders pay the highest rates and get the least services.

"Rural landholders are paying 76 per cent," Mrs McFetridge said.

NFF president, Brent Finlay has said in order for Australian farmers to remain competitive, rural transport infrastructure, including roads, must be up to scratch.

A report, the National Road Asset Reporting Pilot, reaffirms the need to develop mechanisms to attract private investment in rural roads, providing a much-needed boost for limited public funds.

"The report reiterates a lack of public investment in rural roads, limiting the efficiency of agricul-

tural freight flows," Mr Finlay said. "Farmers do their best to maximise efficiency on farm and after food and fibre leaves the farm gate much of this value can be lost to inefficiencies in the transport system."

Mr Thompson said the farmers on their road agreed to a council rate rise in previous years in order to get the roads graded.

"We only agreed to a rate rise to grade roads and they haven't done it," he said.

Combined, Mr and Mrs McFetridge, Mr Campion and Mr Thompson pay about \$130,000 in rates a year.

"You can buy a good grader for \$110,000" Mr McFetridge said.

Mr Thompson has appealed to the state government for help, writing to Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries.

"We've sent a petition in to Kevin Humphries," he said.

Mr Finlay believes the federal government will start taking an interest now the report has been published.

"As a key pillar in the Australian economy, we will be expecting agriculture to be prioritised on the federal government's national infrastructure and the measures in place that promote private investment to complement the government commitments," he said.

Landholders across the region are hoping the National Road Asset Reporting Pilot will indicate how the current conditions of some roads impact on their livelihood.

www.mudgeetoyota.com.au

<p>2007 TOYOTA HILUX SR 4x4 SINGLE CAB \$21,990 BX81CV 3.0 LITRE TURBO DIESEL, 5 SPEED MANUAL, Steel Tray, Bull Bar and Tow Bar.</p>	<p>2010 TOYOTA COROLLA ASCENT SEDAN \$15,990 BU50ZG 1.8 LITRE VVT-I ENGINE AUTOMATIC. Has travelled just 40076km's. Features Power windows, Bluetooth audio and 7 SRS airbags. Presents like new!</p>	<p>2010 SUBARU FORESTER "X" \$23,990 R09PFR 2.5 LITRE PETROL AWD AUTOMATIC WAGON! Only 65,000kms. Well Presented.</p>	<p>2010 TOYOTA PRADO GXL TURBO DIESEL WAGON \$42,990 BX1HCY 3.0 LITRE TURBO DIESEL 6 SPEED MANUAL. Features include 7 seats, power windows, alloy wheels, ducted air conditioning, reverse camera and cruise control.</p>	<p>2012 TOYOTA HILUX SR 4x4 DOUBLE CAB UTE \$32,990 CJF260 3.0 LITRE TURBO DIESEL 5 SPEED MANUAL. Features include Air Conditioning, Power windows, Front and Side SRS Airbags, Steel dropside tray and tow bar.</p>
---	--	--	--	---

Mudgee Toyota Ph: 6372 1799 AH: Graham 6373 2122; Ken 6372 4519; Luke 0431 982 929