



# ***V.F. & N.C. Jupp - Riverdene Nurseries***

IPART submissions re proposed rate rise by Dungog Shire Council

12<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Dear Sirs

The future and strength of Dungog Shire is linked directly to our Councils ability to manage the Shire. Our Shire area encompasses a range of small towns and villages but the major proportion of the shire consists of rural landholdings. Over the past few years Dungog Shire Council has had several opportunities to address the financial shortfalls that they nominate as the reason for the application to effectively double our rates. These previous opportunities such as the Port Stephens merger proposal included very moderate rate rises and a very sound business case that would have seen this Shire receive long term benefits from a partnership with another LGA.

Proof of community support for that merger proposal was evident from the positive result of the referendum held at the last council election and should have indicated a clear path for this council, however instead of pursuing that merger proposal which would have addressed the current backlog of works and provided enough financial stability to support growth of the shire into the future, the current Council has proposed to double the rates of their landholders to raise a finite amount of funds that by their own admission will only produce enough funds to simply maintain the existing assets and will not provide any scope for growth and improvement of the shire.

Dungog Shire Council squandered a perfectly reasonable and highly effective opportunity to address the current and future stability of the shire that involved a small financial impost and in its place have brainstormed a solution that effectively puts a temporary bandaid on the problem and will do nothing more than hide the situation for a few more years until it becomes someone else's problem to solve.

The Council was supposed to have a community consultation on this rate rise proposal but has failed badly in this regard. The meetings they organized were poorly attended and to date Council not presented the public with the full details of the rate rise in a way that they can understand. This rate rise proposal will have an extremely negative effect on shire businesses particularly the traditional rural properties such as dairies and beef cattle producers that dominate the shire. These businesses require large holdings and often multiple holdings and the accumulative effect of this proposed rate rise will render those businesses un-sustainable overnight and such a deliberate disregard for community well-being by a Council is unacceptable.

Dungog Shire Council need to go back to the drawing board and address their financial issue with a view to protecting the long term viability of the ratepayers currently residing in the shire and comments from current councilors that have publicly stated that our local community have the option to either sell all or selected portions of their land off to afford the rates bill is ridiculous and insulting to say the least.

Dungog Shire Council failed to act on the wishes of their local community regards merging with Port Stephens Council and they have failed to provide a viable and sustainable alternative. The lack of adequate consultation and disclosure of the likely impacts of this rate rise proposal to the local community is the third failure on this matter, therefore I would ask that IPART does not grant this proposed rate rise request from Dungog Shire Council.

Sincerely,



Noel Jupp OAM, Dip Hort, QP Dept Ag & Fisheries



***Working for a Better Environment***

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