

NSW Farmers Central Coast submission to the IPART inquiry of Central Coast Council Storm water levy increase

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing on behalf of the Central Coast farming community to voice our concern over the Central Coast Councils proposed radical increase to the storm water levy charged to rural landholders.

Our first point of concern was that any public consultation for the proposed plan was woefully inadequate. Some, not all, landholders received letters with very little detail that were dated 8 October and received on 9 October when the closing date for submissions to IPART was 12 October. An extension to this date has been granted until 19 October which has allowed us to write this submission. But no form of dialogue between landholders and council has taken place what so ever. The time frame was such that our branch was unable to convene a meeting to discuss this issue. This submission, therefor, comes from the executive members.

Our second point of concern is how can council charge for something they do not supply? All farmers in this area highly value any storm water runoff that occurs. It is for this reason that it is captured in farm dams. If these are full they serve the purpose of slowing any runoff down so no harmful erosion can occur. Coupled with ground cover and diversion drains storm water runoff is controlled so as to minimise any impact on the surrounding environment. This is considered good farming practice and the cost is born entirely by the farmer not council.

Our third point of concern is that the letter received mentions that some farmers may be able to access a "low impact rate". There is no mention as to who may be able to access this or what the criteria for access may be or what process needs to be gone through. This seems to us to be a massive amount of red tape to access something that shouldn't be there in the first place. There is absolutely no clarity around this "low impact rate" what so ever.

Our fourth point of concern is that, is this area even deemed a drainage area in the eyes of the state government? It is my understanding that if this is not the case council is not even able to levy a rate on landholders let alone \$5427.

If possible I would also ask for clarification from IPART. For this I will pose the question is it possible for IPART to approve such a huge increase in a permanent charge levied by council? I understand that council may be able to raise a one off special levy to cover the cost of an abnormal or unforeseen event or they can raise rates and charges by CPI or not much above CPI. But to raise a permanent charge by such an exorbitant amount is not possible. Farmers of this area would greatly appreciate an answer to this question

In conclusion I would like to stress the concern the farming community of the Central Coast is feeling at the massive impost our council is proposing on their farming operations. I encourage IPART to see this for what it is. An unjustifiable and exorbitant increase of a levy that should not be there in the first place.

Thank you for your consideration.

I would be pleased to support this submission as required.

Yours faithfully,

Tim Kemp

Chair

NSW Farmers Central Coast Horticulture Branch