

Our Shire Our Council Initiative

13 April 2022

Daryl Buckingham

CEO

Tenterfield Shire Council

Hand Delivered and by email

Ref: Collaborative Approach to protect the financial future of the Tenterfield Shire

Mr Buckingham,

As indicated by our public meeting attended by hundreds of concerned residents on 9 April, a rapidly growing group of concerned Tenterfield ratepayers and residents disapprove of the current direction, plans and operational activities of the Tenterfield Shire Council. This includes the output from the Administration team and Councillors representing ratepayers. This group do not believe the Council is focused on protecting the financial and social future of the Tenterfield Shire. We reject the proposed 109% rate rise. The community wants these concerns urgently addressed to potentially avoid economic outcomes that detrimentally impact the Tenterfield Shire ratepayers and residents in the future.

Those ratepayers and residents are now collaborating to represent these concerns to influence the existing Tenterfield Shire Council plans and actions positively. The objective is to avoid the Tenterfield Shire Council's currently projected (budgeted) financial deficit and instead build a plan to remediate the debt. The goal is to work together with the Tenterfield Shire Council to ensure a stronger financial future and beneficial outcome for all involved.

RFI Request

The plans provided by the Tenterfield Shire Council are under review by our subject matter experts, and a consolidated response will follow shortly. Please provide your updates from last weeks round of meetings so our comments are based on all information available.

The potential budget presented is of the biggest concern. We believe it gives grounds for the Request for Information outlined below. Further, we think it also requires immediate corrective action by the administration team to accurately reflect the wishes of this community – including individual and commercial ratepayers and residents.

Our Plan for Best Outcomes

Our Management Team has also been made aware by a concerned ratepayer that they HAVE written to the NSW Premier and Minister of Local Government and requested an administrator be appointed immediately.

Our initiative does not see this option as the best outcome. We hope that further consideration of the economic options available to the Tenterfield Shire Council will enable further discussion and respect for the community's wishes.

Therefore, we continue to reach out to you as the Chief Executive hoping that the Tenterfield Shire Council Administration, which serves the community, will see the benefits of and agree to this collaborative process.

Next Steps

This next step ahead for all of us is crucial and potentially our best and last opportunity to avoid administration and subsequent amalgamation.

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We have a chance for growth. We have members on this new team who have experienced similar challenges in other shires and worked with respective councils to steer administration through an economic transformation and positive future. We believe we can transition Tenterfield in the same way.

Our Core Team (plus Focus Groups) consists of a highly credentialled number of Subject Matter Experts (SME) in a wide range of areas such as (but not limited to): Finance, Accounting, LG Operation, Health, Engineering, Mining, Legal, Tourism, Capital Projects, Business Process Optimisation... to name a few.

This talent pool is available right here. Treated as a valuable resource and used in the right way, it can help make a difference for the benefit of this community—a top-shelf consulting team FOR FREE.

We trust you see the upside of this proposition and the enormous opportunity.

Urgent Actions

In preparation for a constructive collaboration, we cordially request the following information and response be prepared and submitted by your team as a matter of urgency:

- Confirmation of new financial modelling (including age demographic forecasts) and the corresponding budget outlining an immediate 15% reduction in Tenterfield Shire Council expenditure – particularly in non-core business to achieve profitability.
- Confirmation of hiring freeze and immediate review of non-core roles, including contractors and casual staff.
- Explanation of how the Tenterfield Shire Council will be reviewing and immediately reducing unnecessary expenses that do not benefit ratepayers.
- Planning a shared services approach within Council for more efficient use of available staff and financial resources.
- Guarantee all capital projects underway are solvent (self funded – not cross funded). If not, works to stop, and financial modelling is undertaken to ensure budget forecasts are met.
- Confirmation that NO council assets are being sold off without community consultation.
- Open and transparent dealings without violating commercial in confidence when required.
- Outline a fiscal plan to better manage rates being paid and recovered (rather than written off) and reduce existing rate arrears.

We expect and are looking forward to a timely response.

Respectfully submitted

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CC:

- Premier Dominic Perrottet
- Deputy Prime Minister of Australia Barnaby Joyce Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Member for New England
- Minister for Local Government, Wendy Tuckerman
- Janelle Saffin MP, Member for Lismore

This letter will be published to the OSOCI database and available on our website and social media in our pledge for open and transparent dealings.