

RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION OF TENTERFIELD SHIRE INC

28 March 2023

All Tenterfield Shire Councillors
Tenterfield Shire Council

Councillors -

We are writing to you all to express our disgust with Mr Daryl Buckingham's letter of 16 December 2022 (Attch 2) to Mrs Joan Irwin, in reply to her web enquiry of 13 December 2022 (Attch 1).

Ratepayers' Association of Tenterfield Shire's members are of the opinion that Mr Buckingham's reply is totally inappropriate, disgraceful and unprofessional. No person who holds a senior staff position should write such a nasty and vindictive letter to any ratepayer and, certainly, not to a valued member of our senior community. Mrs Irwin's letter was not vindictive or rude in any way (Attch 1).

Mrs Irwin is a carer to her husband, Peter, who is wheelchair bound. As well, he has also been recently diagnosed with a severe form of cancer and they have to travel every week to Lismore so he can receive radiation treatment. These trips in themselves are very tiring for them, particularly as they are both senior citizens.

When Mrs Irwin received the above letter she contacted the Ratepayers' Association and asked for help from Ratepayers' Association and for our Association to act on her behalf. She simply did not know how to address Mr Buckingham's rant. She was extremely upset and emotionally distraught by the tone of Mr Buckingham's letter (Attch 2).

Our Solicitor has advised that Mr Buckingham has breached Tenterfield Shire Council's Code of Conduct and that his position is now untenable (Attch 4a).

We note the haste in which Mr Buckingham has acted to threaten legal action against members of the community (eg. Ms J. Virtue). His letter to Mrs Irwin is yet another example of the intimidation of ratepayers by senior council staff.

Councillors you, as elected officials by the community, must treat this matter seriously and take appropriate action to what is an unprofessional response by Mr Buckingham to Mrs Irwin's web question.

We also refer to a letter dated 10 March 2023 (Attch 4) from Mayor Petrie who advises that Mrs Irwin has breached confidentiality due to "*passing on material to the Ratepayers' Association*". It is inconceivable that Mrs Irwin cannot ask for help in this matter.

President
Greg Masters
M: 0402 281 001

Secretary
Jan Evans
M: 0428 577 741

RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION OF TENTERFIELD SHIRE INC

"It is considered that the complaint has not remained confidential, as required under sections 9.10, 9.11 and 9.12 of the Code. This is evidenced by your emails on the matter, including your separate email request of 28 February 2023 for referral of all communications on the matter to be sent to a third party. (Attch 4).

and - *"The complaint is unlikely to be a breach of Code and the alleged conduct is not considered to be sufficiently serious to warrant investigation."* (Attch 4).

Surely Mayor Petrie is not condoning the bad behaviour and bullying by Mr Buckingham to a member of our community.

We are astounded that Mayor Petrie, on advice from Ms Kylie Smith, would think that members of the community are bound by the rules of Tenterfield Shire Council's Code of Conduct as they are not council officials as defined in the Code. Therefore, the Preliminary Assessment referenced in Mayor B. Petrie's letter of the 10 March has no bearing on this matter.

Councillors - We ask for your reply as soon as possible and an outline of your course of action.

Yours sincerely



Greg. Masters
President
Ratepayers Association of Tenterfield Shire Inc

Attachments FYI -

- Attch 1 Web email to D. Buckingham from J. Irwin
- Attch 2 Letter from D. Buckingham to J. Irwin
- Attch 3 Email to Mayor B. Petrie formally lodging a complaint
- Attch 4 Letter from Mayor B. Petrie to J. Irwin advising of Breach of Code of Conduct
- Attch 4a Tenterfield Shire Council Code of Conduct excerpts

Cc J. Irwin
J. Saffin - Member for Lismore
NSW Ombudsman
Minister Office of Local Government

President
Greg Masters
M: 0402 281 001

Secretary
Jan Evans
M: 0428 577 741