

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

4 February 2021

DON'T IGNORE US!

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC), mayor Cr Abb McAlister will lead a deputation to Macquarie Street Sydney next Tuesday.

The Mayor along with CGRC General Manager Phil McMurray and councillors David Graham, Penny Nicholson, Charlie Sheahan, Leigh Bowden and Deputy Mayor Cr Dennis Palmer will make the trip to NSW Parliament House in an attempt to speak with the State's leaders, including Premier Gladys Berejiklian, Minister for Local Government Shelley Hancock, Member for Cootamundra Steph Cooke, the NSW opposition leader Jodi McKay and opposition Local Government MP Greg Warren.

The delegation will voice the Council's case in regard to the merger of the former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shires, the detrimental effect the merger has had on the respective communities, and the severe financial crisis Council is now facing as a result of the forced merger in 2016.

"They just aren't listening. Our residents are angry. We've done everything we can to bring to the attention of the NSW Government, over a period of four years, that this merger just isn't working," Cr McAlister said.

Although Councillors discussed the trip to Sydney at January's ordinary Council meeting, the decision was decisively made following yesterday's extraordinary meeting, where Councillors resolved to make a submission to IPART for a Special Rate Variation (SRV). The SRV will see Council seeking a 53.5% rate increase over the next four years.

"We spoke to the Minister, Shelley Hancock, in 2019, and predicted this financial predicament, we asked for assistance, and we asked for the opportunity to sit down and work through the situation to look for solutions. Ms Hancock just wasn't interested," Cr McAlister said.

"Every year since the merger, at NSW Local Government conferences, in front of the very politicians that made this disastrous decision, we have argued our case, we have put the facts and figures up, we have talked about the negative effect the merger has had on our communities. They just don't care."

"We might only be a constituency of 12,000 voters, but we have a majority of residents who are angry, dissatisfied and disillusioned. The financial impacts of this SRV will be detrimental to the region across the board. Homeowners will suffer, investors in the property market will be forced to increase rents, which in turn will force hardship on the vulnerable and disadvantaged."

"As a Council, we will have to look at cutting back services, and certainly will not be able to introduce new services, initiatives and innovative programs. This flies in the face of our vision statement – A vibrant region attracting people, investment and business through innovation, diversity and community spirit." Cr McAlister added.

Letters and emails have been sent to the Premier, the Minister for Local Government, the Member for Cootamundra, and the NSW opposition leader Jodi McKay and MP Greg Warren, asking for an audience. To date no responses have been received from the Premier or Local Government Minister. However, responses have been received from the opposition agreeing to a meeting.

"We will be standing out the front of Parliament House on Tuesday morning, making our plea to all who will listen, regardless of whether meetings are arranged." Cr McAlister said.

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For interviews contact: Mayor Abb McAlister 0428 441 300

Picture and caption:

CGRC Mayor Abb McAlister is calling for a meeting with NSW State Government's, Premier Gladys Berejiklian, Minister for Local Government Shelley Hancock, Member for Cootamundra Steph Cooke, the NSW opposition leader Jodi McKay and opposition Local Government MP Greg Warren to discuss the Council's perilous financial situation attributed to the Government's decision to merge the former Cootamundra and Gundagai Shire Councils. A deputation will travel to Sydney on Tuesday.



Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council
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