

**Submission
No 110**

**INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY AND VALUE FOR
MONEY OF NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS**

Name: Mr John Knight
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Helen,

I would like to thank Steph Cooke for helping bring attention to her poor performance as the Member for Cootamundra via the front page article in the Gundagai Independent on 19 February 2021.

The article she is complaining about was the direct result her media release the week before saying the 53.5% proposed increase in rates was the fault of everyone else except her.

Steph Cooke has been the Member for Cootamundra for over three years now and she has promised a lot and delivered very little. The council amalgamation is the big issue but what about the sale of the old Gundagai hospital to a developer when the community offered more money to use the site as an aged care facility, or the dangerous at grade intersection near the 'Dog'. I'm sure Cootamundra has similar issues.

There has been some pork barrelling, some like the preschool extension and the playground in Carberry Park have been good, but also a lot of tax-payers (our) money was wasted on projects of a dubious nature and due process was not even followed. I know of several Gundagai organisations that were contacted and asked if they could use \$25,000. When they (obviously) said yes, they were asked to be at an announcement the next morning. No applications, no due process.

All of this pork barrelling has given the Council a maintenance problem for the future.

Steph earns over four times the average Gundagai income but doesn't seem to think she should be accountable. Last time I checked Australia is still a democracy and our elected representatives are still accountable to the electorate.

And now we have a 53.5% rate increase, not to improve services in either community but just to stand still. If this is not approved Council will have to lay off staff in both towns or cut services and probably both. Maybe Steph would like to nominate the staff to be laid off or the services to be cut. We could start by closing two swimming pools.

All of these problems with the amalgamation were predicted and no-one listened.

The Gundagai and Cootamundra communities have had enough. Two Councils that were very financially secure are now broke and the blame rests solely with the NSW government, of which you are a member.

I think back to the not so distant past and wonder if the Liberals and Nationals would have done this if Alby Schultz was still the Member. I strongly doubt it. And going back a little further I wonder if either of the Sheahans would have lay down on such an important issue.

The least you can do is move to the cross bench and support any motion to allow a de-amalgamation.

Both communities have had enough and we expect you to become proactive or resign and allow us to vote for a Member who will have the guts to act. There is a private

members bill being introduced into parliament regarding the Central Coast council and we expect you will have us joined in it and support it.

Barilaro was prepared to 'blow up' the government over a couple of gum trees last year. Maybe we should have saved the money from the court challenge to donate it to the National Party. Seems it's the only way The Nationals will support rural and regional communities.

John Knight
Gundagai