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**Sent:** Thursday, 31 October 2019 9:23 PM  
**To:** Rating Review (DELWP) <[rating.review@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:rating.review@delwp.vic.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** DELWP

#### SUBMISSIONS FROM RATEPAYERS VICTORIA

Ratepayers Victoria wish to submit the following submissions

RPV recently had a request for advice from a couple from Central Goldfields Council (Maryborough) for advice regarding the fact that due to circumstances, such as the young wife having cancer and other matters that they had fallen behind in the payment of their annual rates to Central Goldfields council

It would seem that the council went to the magistrates court and had an order issued to sell their home to recover the outstanding council rates

The wife who rang me, I asked her was she offered the chance to have the local government act 171A implemented which says that "Waiver by financial hardship

A person is suffering financial hardship or

Would suffer financial hardship if that person paid the full amount of a rate or charge for which she or he is liable

May apply to a council for the waiver of the whole or part of any rate or charge or of any interest imposed for late payment

The young couple were not offered this waiver and until I told them knew nothing about this matter This waiver matter was brought up with Dr. Kathy Alexander at Knox last Thursday and she was very concerned that ratepayers who unfortunately have difficulty paying their rates are not aware of this "waiver clause"

RPV consider it has to be compulsory that an independent body such as the Essential Services Commission investigate the matter when a ratepayer has difficulty paying their rates that an independent body has to approve the matter before a council can go to the magistrates court and get an order to sell a home due to unpaid rates

In the Herald Sun back on the 17/3/2015 the ombudsman was critical of the handling of complaints lodged at a council and made recommendations. The then local government minister, Natalie Hutchins, said she would accept the ombudsman's recommendations and will legislate that a uniformed complaints policy be implemented. Minister Hutchins has left this portfolio and no policy was ever introduced. At present all complaints finish with the CEO of a council and if a ratepayers wants to pursue justice over their complaint they have to use their own money to defend their case, where council will use rate payers money to defend themselves. With this system councils will never run out of money but the ratepayer will. A very unfair system. Who is responsible for this "next step" has never been introduced to protect our ratepayer

In the Herald- Sun on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017, the local government minister, Natalie Hutchins, said she would introduce an independent remuneration tribunal to set the salaries of councilors and mayors and the salaries of the council CEO should be set by this remuneration tribunal also She said "I believe that councilors and mayors just like members of parliament should not set their own salaries". Minister Hutchins has again left that portfolio and again nothing has happened to introduce the independent remuneration tribunal. When some CEO's of local councils are getting more than the premier of the State of Victoria, there is something very wrong. This matter has to be addressed IMMEDIATELY

Yes it is so easy to be using the ratepayers money to pay these people

Back in July 2018 there was a draft sent through the lower house of parliament to reform the present local government act when had not been addressed since 1989 .RPV were very concerned about this draft which we considered was very bias towards council .The panel set up to set this now lapsed draft had 6 working groups made up of 63 local government and council personal ,not one personal from a ratepayer group .Due to the concerns of RPV we lobbied the upper house and crossbench members of our concerns and they rejected this draft and sent it back to the lower house for more work .Due to the State Elections in November last November this Bill did lapse .An example of our concerns was the word MAY was used 331 times in the lapsed draft ,this word give councils the right to do as they please .There was no provision for any control over the use of the council credit cards.RPV recommended that at the worst the audit committee of a council monitor these credit cards charges .Our recommendation was completely ignored in the now lapse draft and we are now been made aware regularly of the misuse of the council credit card .RPV put in over 100 submissions to the lapsed draft and everyone of our submission were ignored.

Another very concerning matter that has been brought to the attention of RPV is that councils are charging ratepayers 10% on overdue rate payments when rate charges in our community is some where between 1% and say 3%.This matter has to be addressed immediately  
RPV do represent some 3 and a half million ratepayers here in Victoria and with RPV forming more ratepayer groups every month the ratepayers of Victoria have now a voice to support them

Pass on my thanks to Julia for her support today

Your Sincerely  
Frank Sullivan  
Vice President  
RPV

