

HEIDELBERG GOLF CLUB

8 MAIN ROAD, LOWER PLENTY VIC 3093

PH: 03 9433 5300 F: 03 9433 5353

WEB: WWW.HEIDELBERGGC.COM.AU EMAIL: INFO@HEIDELBERGGC.COM.AU



Heidelberg Golf Club Rating Review Submission

The Heidelberg Golf Club has been located at its current site since 1927. Prior to this the Heidelberg Golf Club was located in Rosanna near the current site of the Rosanna Station.

After the Heidelberg Golf Club left the Rosanna site it was then used by The Rosanna Golf up until 1962 when The Rosanna Golf Club was forced to move due to a rates imposition of 10,000 pounds per year charged by the Local Council. This equates to approximately \$2 million per year in today's terms. The site today is mainly filled with housing.

Given the excessive rates being charged at the time and the problems they were causing to CRL properties, the State Government then introduced the Cultural and Recreational lands Act 1963.

The Government and Opposition at the time were conscious that if the status quo remained, recreational groups would be rated off their land due to Melbourne's booming property values. From reading the preamble and debate from 1963 Act, it is clear the government had to do something to protect these lands. The goals of the Act included:

- Protecting the city of Melbourne from becoming a concrete jungle
- Protecting recreational land from being rated out of existence
The rating for recreational lands should be minimal so these lands can be enjoyed by people from all socio-economic backgrounds.
- Having large areas of open space for people to enjoy will create lungs for our great city.
- The outlawing of using 'value of land' to rate these spaces.

Unfortunately, these ideals have diminished away over time and it would seem even forgotten, especially on the part of local government.

Over the past 5 years, the Heidelberg Golf Club has been battling the Banyule Council and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning over the level of rates which have been charged to the club. The troubling issues which became evident during this period were:

- Golf and Bowls are the only sports which pay rates in Banyule
- While the Golf club has many environmental overlays and significant trees and bushland, the Council and DELWP believe that the land **does not bring any environment benefit** to the community.
- The land that the Club sits on is not valued as "in-use". Their valuation methodology implies the probability that the property could be a housing estate.

- The council has a legal right to charge interest on rates which have been levied contrary to the terms of the Act and without regard to the fact that the amounts concerned are under formal dispute (in terms of the Act).

Banyule Council has admitted no liability in respect of gross overcharging of rates to the Heidelberg Golf Club from 1993 to 2016. The amount of overcharging is in the vicinity of \$500,000 over a period where this 'not for profit' organisation recorded substantial trading losses. The Club was also forced to sell land to continue in operation. Over this same period, the Rosanna Golf Club for instance paid less than half the rates charged to Heidelberg Golf Club. Indeed, more than one half of rates paid relating to CRL in the Banyule municipality came from Heidelberg Golf Club.

We offer these comments to support in the strongest terms any initiative to bring about change in the rating of Cultural and Recreational lands. We also applaud the comments made by the Minister:

Quotes attributable to Minister for Local Government Adem Somyurek:

“This is about ensuring we have a rating system that is fair, equitable and effective for all Victorians.”

“The system we have now is complex and in need of review – we need a contemporary rating system that gives people a fair deal.”

“I look forward to working with Dr Alexander on this important review and building on our Fair Go Rates System.”

In our municipality there is a large divide between sports held on local government land and those which are not. For instance, the City of Heidelberg Bowling Club are charged over \$6,500 in rates but the council leases land out for three other bowling clubs for \$104 per year with no rates. The other issue is that Council does not support the community owned land holders with funding through rate revenue like it does to all sports on council land.

56 years have past since the Act was introduced and it is clear that we are seeing the same issues now which CRL Act was meant to stop!

Our recommendation is that not for-profit recreational land holders should not have to pay rates at all. The reasons are as follows.

- Their benefits to the community far outweigh any cost to the municipality
- The users of these lands have already contributed to rates through their own individual rates.
- It is hypocritical to suggest that household rates go towards sport and recreation in the local community when the local council is charging sporting clubs high levels of rates.
- Other public benefit land holders like churches, schools and RSL's current enjoy rate exemptions.

Lindsay Bell
 General Manager
 Heidelberg Golf Club
 8 Main Rd Lower Plenty 3093