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I would like to put the following before the Rate Review Committee for consideration.

The present method of financing councils is broken, unfair and needs drastic alteration. The present model goes back to Middle

Ages England when the more tenant farmers a landowner had, the more he had to pay to help when they retired in old age and village care. The same applies today - where a high valued farm has to pay more to the local council even though the value has little to do with its capacity to earn an income. This is particularly evident where high prices are set by sales to the so called tree changers, where farms are close to Melbourne.

Farms that have often been in a family for generations are now being taxed off their land by high municipal rates. High rate bills in my municipality means that the average farmer on average, pays four times the rates that the average house owner in the town pays. This is despite the natural financial disasters that farmers face that could be drought, fire, are unable to sell produce at a profit, or not at all, but the rate account continues to come in often leaving little or nothing on necessary improvements or maintenance that goes to eventually produce more food.

In my local town because there is a lake, the people who live on the south end of the main street have to pay more than a similar house to those in the north but they have no more rights or the ability to pay more. The so called wealth tax is a sick unfair joke.

Why is it that a house with five adults living in the same dwelling all owning cars and use all the facilities that councils provide pay no more collectively than one person living in a similar dwelling that they occupy and own. Question - where is the fairness in this situation?

If this unfair tax is to continue it leads to the breaking up of the farms that farmers do not want to sell but are forced out through this tax. This often leads to the farm that has been used often being lost for food production. I believe that land that is used for the production of food should not be included in the rate being paid. Only the house and curtilage. I understand that farm land used for food production is not taxed anywhere else in the world. Surely the sheep do not use a swimming pool, nor do they vote. Nor does the haystack drive cars, nor do they vote. The finance should be raised fairly from those who do use equally. If one owns an expensive car they do not pay more in fuel or registration than someone in a less expensive car, or if they dress and present well they do not pay more for goods and services.

The present system is not only unfair but is stupid in the extreme. Why should someone who has their property looking nice and well presented pay more in tax than someone who doesn't. A business can operate out of a shed with millions of dollars of income earning equipment in it and only pay rates on the value of the shed but a farmer is taxed on the very land they need to earn a living.

A fair tax should be on the people who use the services and natural justice should be applied with fairness. It is the general practice of councils to increase rates often by putting them up by percentage, again which is a disadvantage to those who pay more. The state government some years ago allowed for a municipal charge to be applied which helped rate paying farmers with some relief but this still leaves farmers paying a most disproportionate amount in council's coffers.

Perhaps every one on the election roll who are eligible to vote at council elections should all pay an equal amount to finance council services.

It is my hope that this enquiry will bring equity and fairness to the financing of local government. If the present system continues many more farms will become lifestyle homes with little encouragement to provide food.

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