

Dear Panel

I attended the Councillors session on the Rating System Review in Seymour recently [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] These are purely my own views which I am sure reflect where I come from and my life experiences in general. I can safely say I come from a rural background and I am sure this would subconsciously be reflected in my thought process as I guess would be the case of Councillors with an Urban or a particular town background.

My submission does not particularly focus on the Ratings Review, it is hopefully going to provide you with what I feel is relevant background information. I feel that some of the frustration that is reflected in the attitude of many Rural people towards the current Rating System can be put down to the lack of representation of their issues in the current Council System. (Mitchell Shire Council. 9 Councillors. 3 x Councillors per Ward.)

To provide clarity to the above, most people who aspire to become a Councillor do so for certain reasons. (personal opinion.) For me it was a number of Rural type issues.

1. Lack of rural representatives. (on the previous Council I was the only Rural representative. The Council previous to that the 3 North Ward Councillors All came from Seymour.

2. Lack of focus on Road infrastructure.

3. Limited focus on Fire Prevention and Mitigation.

4. What appeared to be poor Financial management and the behaviour of Council and Councillors.

Once on Council it is indeed a learning experience and you definitely need to look at the bigger picture, while still focusing on your core goals.

Some facts that relate directly to the North Ward of Mitchell Shire.

1. A figure of slightly over 30 percent of the population comes from small towns and rural areas outside of the main town Seymour.

2. Rural and Small Towns supply 52 percent of the rate revenue for North Ward.

3. Many rural and small town residents don't feel they get an adequate return of this revenue.

4. Small towns and rurals get excluded from most Government grants as they are designed for the larger Communities. (a small amount of money can go a long way in a rural community)

5. Even with issues such as Roads, and Roads Funding it is sometimes hard to get Urban based Councillors on board. (they have their own particular agenda)

6. Most small rural Towns don't have many of the services of the bigger towns (and cannot expect them) but in many of these towns the basics such as footpaths, curb and channel

and drainage simple do not exist. Council and Council Staff appear to focus on the larger communities.

7. There are rural residents out in the far west of North Ward Mitchell Shire (Mia Mia area.) the only service they receive from our Council are Roads. (Many of them are currently in very poor condition.) There is no garbage collection or any other service. The main Council contact point would in most cases be over an hours travel time away. (one way.)

8. I am sure that some of the above will apply to many Councils across the State. However I must add that overall Mitchell Shire is currently a very cohesive Council and most issues and communities are getting heard and currently roads and other issues are being addressed.

The above does not directly reflect on the level of rates paid and how these rates are calculated but more on the frustration with the level of service delivered for those Rates. The other point as I see it is the amount of representation on a Rating dollar value. Rural property owners pay a far larger rate burden , as do many businesses people and in my opinion sometimes do not get adequately heard by Councils. Regards

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Dear Panel

Further to my original submission as a private individual, and after reassessment I would like the following to be added for clarity.

I feel that one of the major frustration with many rural ratepayers and residents is the funding allocated to rural Roads infrastructure.

State and Federal Government's are funding huge Roads and Public Transport Infrastructure Projects in our major capital cities.

1. Major Transport funding is basically spent in the cities.
2. Transport funding is critical for al Victorians and there needs to be some level of equity between Major Urban and Rural area spending.
3. Very limited public transport in rural areas.
4. Road infrastructure is critical to Agricultural production, and other production from rural and regional areas.
5. How much is this production worth to the Australian Economy both domestically and internationally? What percentage of the total GDP. comes from Rural and Regional area's?
6. The Dairy Industry have done a study on the cost of poor Road infrastructure to that Industry.

Spread this over other Rural and Regional Industries.

7. Not just the local rural people use a Rural or Regional Council's Road network.

Thus the State and Federal Government's need to take far more responsibility in this space, especially in the way of increased funding for Roads infrastructure. Again I would like to reinterate that these are my personal beliefs and opinions made at this point in time.

Regards

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