

We purchased the above property as a holiday home in some 16 years ago and retired there permanently in 2011.

We discovered that the Shire rates for our property and other properties at Venus Bay, are extremely high. High rates are exacerbated by the fact that very little of this rate income is spent at Venus Bay, but rather in Leongatha, the location of the Shire Offices.

Looking at the Council budgets, it seems that much of the rates collected is spent on salaries and senior executive salary packages.

I wrote several times to the Shire and had numerous letters published in local newspapers. I even met with the Shire [REDACTED] but all to no avail.

The population of Venus Bay is approximately 600 with many retirees and high rates cause everyone serious financial stress.

An example of how high these rates are in relation to the Capital Improved Value (CIV) can be seen by comparing our residence in Venus Bay with our property in Elwood:

Elwood Council Rate is \$1,485.55 - (0.00185694 \$ on CIV)

Venus Bay Council Rate is \$1,969.40 - (0.00491133 \$ on CIV)

The rates in Venus Bay are nearly 2.7 times higher than the inner Melbourne suburb of Elwood. A visit to the City of Port Phillip, reveals a great range of projects that include sophisticated public works and facilities. Venus Bay rates are at the level of exclusive Melbourne suburbs such as Brighton, South Yarra and Toorak.

Rate payers are under constant financial pressures but have no recourse to solutions that are available to the Shire. Many of us are on fixed incomes, working or retired and face the constant pressures of ballooning costs in every aspect of our lives. Few of us have the option of demanding an increase in income and must adjust our expenditure accordingly.

The Shire must live within its means, just like the ratepayers.

- Reduce the number of staff;
- Reduce the remuneration of those remaining;
- Rationalise and review the services provided;
- Review the efficiency with which such services are provided.

High rates in country areas, make mockery of the government's desire for decentralization. It is very expensive to live away from the metropolitan areas and council rates are not the only high expense.

Perhaps country councils need greater subsidies from the government.

Regards,

