

25th October 2019

Re: Latrobe City Council Rates

I believe the rates in Traralgon are high. I know it goes by the value of the house but that is my point, I believe the calculated rate is too high. Many people are able to afford the rates and just pay BUT that does not mean the rates are fair.

Over the years my **Capital Improved Value** has been higher than the actual house price. I know this because I have had my house valued by local real estate agents and tried to sell it. It was valued about \$40,000 less than the CIV and I still could not get this.

The annual increase in rates is unfair. My CIV jumped from \$285,000 in 2017 to \$313,000 in 2018, an increase of \$28,000. A huge increase since I had done nothing to improve my property. When the economy is flat and house prices have not gone up or have even gone down, particularly in country areas, the rates still continue to increase. I have even been told by Council house prices have gone up, but the real estate agent has told me they have gone down.

Another issue is that my CIV remained at \$320,000 but the next year the rates still increased by \$235.06. This was due to increases in other charges, eg. garbage charges, a fire service levy but also a general rates residential increase which I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

If I object to the rates I fill in a form and wait months to hear and am expected to do this each year if I disagree. In fact I had to make 5 phone calls. I was told an Objection Notice was in the mail but did not receive it so I had to ring yet again. When I did apply I put in a slightly higher value for fear of being knocked back. Frankly I got fed up with objecting even if they are too high each year as I feared the valuer would get sick of me and ignore my objection, so this favours an unfair system again.

A drive-by valuation means a well-maintained home can be valued at a higher rate than a home that is neglected and so becomes a penalising disincentive.

I have been told part of the valuation is the so-called "potential value" of the property. This is unfair as this is subjective. For instance someone could say that a property owner could build a multi-storey residence or several residences on the property but the owner may not afford or want this and may just want a garden to enjoy!

It is unfair when people have lived in a house for years to find they cannot afford the rates. For instance pensioners, where rate increases have been very high compared to increases in the pension and so find they have to sell as they cannot afford the rates, this is cruel. **POOR PEOPLE AND PENSIONERS NEED TO BE PROTECTED FROM LOSING THEIR HOUSE.**

About 3/4 of Traralgon Rates go to Morwell and Moe since they are part of Latrobe City Council. Traralgon is however the booming town of the three with an faster increasing population and so it needs it's rates to pay for it's own infrastructure etc.

People talk about the difficulty of owning your own home and blaming house prices, however high rates also make it difficult/impossible, not to mention other costs such as expensive electricity bills and Water Rates. (Our Water Rates are about \$800 dearer than other places to pay for the water factory, also

needs investigation).

I have noticed that the cap of 2 years or so, that was put in place to protect homeowners, has disappeared.

Apparently commercial mining companies and commercial forestry do not pay rates and they should to help reduce the rates for the locals. I believe power generators pay rates based on power generation capacity under the Electricity Council and not land value which works out relatively much less compared to the people's rates. We have power stations with huge open cut mining areas and a Paper Mill with huge forests. It is also not fair on farmers and small businesses that pay rates.

It is sometimes unfair when people have to pay higher rates for facilities they do not want/or cannot use, in some comes cases it should be user pay at a reasonable amount.

Another issue is the proposed Energy from Waste incinerator they want to build here. Will they be paying rates! The incinerator could contaminate farm land/livestock and the population with dioxins, furans, mercury and other toxic chemicals, including toxic ash which they have not found a way of dealing with YET. This company needs to pay fair rates in case they need to pay compensation for injury/damage in the future. Will this be like the asbestos health issue Latrobe Valley has?

