

To whom it may concern,

In light of the review of the act I would like to share my experiences and make a few suggestions.

I have lived in City of Swan my entire life however have had very few positive dealings with them as we have always lived in the rural areas so have always been treated as if we were second class citizens and thus expected to pay for services that we do not and will never receive. We do not have street lights, paths or even decent drainage (an issue that since I have moved to Bullsbrook has become so bad we have had to build our own levees etc as the shire continue to not complete the job sufficiently to keep street water and other properties water off our block). We do not even have mains water or sewerage and must travel relatively large distances to access any facilities. We also need to have in place our own fire safety plans and complete firebreaks and maintenance to ensure safety. I agree that all of this is a lifestyle we have chosen (and an expensive one at that) and I have absolutely no issue with all of these things that we have to do for ourselves as we moved here because we want to be away from all that. The main issue I have is that we have to pay for it all as well as have massive rates to pay for the urban facilities that we do not receive.

My rates are currently over \$3000 per annum which brings me to my next problem. In approximately November 2016 my property was changed to GRV value and my rates subsequently went from approximately \$1200 to over \$3000. Now the first and only communication I received about this change was a rates bill. Upon challenging this change I have experienced bullying by a particular councillor, complete disrespect and mixed information from COS (each time you speak to someone you get told something different), and also complete apathy and uncaring treatment from councillors and COS staff. This has been a very stressful and dragged out process with still no solution. The COS did not follow procedure in the local government act which says that the householder needs to be informed of possible changes to take place and the possible effect it may have. None of the surrounding properties pay such large rates and all are similarly set out building wise and land use wise. This from my point of view is INEQUITABLE, UNFAIR, COMPLETELY NOT TRANSPARENT and the way it has been handled by all departments has been completely INEFFICIENT and everyone you speak to passes the blame onto someone else.

I have always been led to believe that council and the shires were supposed to be working for us and bettering the community when in fact all they do is pretend they care and do nothing to help anyone, continually 'passing the buck' onto someone else when they get questioned. No-one in the shire nor the Council take responsibility for anything that happens and because of this they are essentially ruining peoples lives.

This brings me to my suggestion. I believe that rates billing needs to be completely reassessed and have a complete overhaul. The best way I can see to charge rates fairly and equitably would be to charge each property a flat fee. The GRV rating method needs to be abolished as it is ridiculous to believe that a house in the back end of a rural area will receive the same amount of rent as the exact same house built in the middle of an urban area. It is also ridiculous to believe that someone that has a larger house can afford more than someone with a smaller house. These are the things that GRV ratings assume. There should be allowances for those that have to supply all their own services etc. A flat fee per property in a given area is the only fair and equitable way to charge rates, then every property is contributing equally

towards the shires expenses. The urban areas should be paying a higher rate than the rural areas due to the services and accessibility to services that they receive.

The Councillors and shire staff need to be more transparent and also trained the same to be able to provide residents with consistent information and they also need to be held to account when treating residents poorly. Council is elected by the residents and are supposed to be working for the residents however the majority seem to just be there to earn their money and are completely apathetic to how residents feel or have a complete lack of caring whether anything even happens. I was bullied by a particular councillor prior to the most recent election in a plan of his to stop the rates issue getting out to the public before the election. This frightened me and subsequently he was re-elected and has pushed the increase of rates forward. He has even been heard saying to someone I know that the rate rise wont affect him as he can easily afford it so who cares if it goes up. This shows the complete lack of caring on this councillors behalf.

In conclusion I call for:

Rates to be applied fairly and equitably to all ratepayers in a given area, i.e. every property contributes the exact same dollar figure to the shire

Putting a rule that rates cannot be increased above the CPI for any given year.

Council and shire staff be held to account for their behaviours and actions. Also to be trained appropriately to give consistent information to residents

Shires to be transparent and efficient and to find ways to minimise spending. The shire bonus structure to be based on how much they can minimise spending instead of the current structure of getting more bonuses because of how much they increase expenditure.

Give residents more power for appeal in decisions and actually be listened to instead of bullied and ignored.

A limit on the number of councillors a shire has as I do not see the need for COS to have 15 councillors all of which collect a significant wage that we as residents have to pay for.

I thank you for your time and respectfully ask that you consider my suggestions during the review

Regards

Heather Muir

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