

Jessica Shaw MLA

WA LABOR MEMBER FOR SWAN HILLS

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LGA Review

Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

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9 March 2018

Dear Minister Templeman,

RE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT REVIEW PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the review of the Local Government Act. This is a vital and long-overdue exercise, that I hope will lead to a raft of initiatives aimed at improving accountability, governance and the provision of local government services, to the benefit of all Western Australians.

The Phase One consultation paper raises a number of issues with respect to accountability mechanisms and governance models that are of significant importance to the people of Western Australia. In this submission, I confine my detailed comments to three key aspects of current Local Government operations that are continually raised by my constituents: community consultation processes, local planning processes and rating issues.

Before I go into detail, I would first like to observe that the overwhelming majority of councillors and local government employees I work with as Member for Swan Hills are hard-working, dedicated people, who often go 'above and beyond' in the service of their communities. They are often passionate about their local areas and go to extraordinary lengths to create vibrant, diverse, liveable communities that are a pleasure to be part of. A lot of their hard work often goes unappreciated. Our local regions are all better for the community-mindedness of the many thousands of people working in local government across the state.

I would also make the additional general observation that the vast majority of complaints received by my office with respect to Local Government Authorities (LGAs) relate planning processes. I am aware that the Minister for Planning is fully cognisant of many these issues and is working assiduously to address them.



Labor for Swan Hills



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Community members frequently contact my office, concerned about the lack of meaningful LGA consultation on issues affecting their lives. In particular, development applications for increased density/urbanisation, resource and industrial type activities are a source of frequent complaint for communities on the urban fringe, semi-rural and rural areas.

These areas are bounded within the Perth "Metropolitan" area, but differ significantly from urban and suburban environments in terms of settlement patterns, property types and uses, proposed development activities and community impacts. Constituents state that community consultation processes for these areas are inappropriate and do not allow for the proper consideration of local circumstances.

Block sizes in the peri-urban fringe are typically much larger than suburban, inner-metropolitan Perth. Property uses also differ significantly from urban areas. Communities in these areas also tend to form around discreet 'townships', as opposed to interconnected suburbs.

When conducting their 'consultations', constituents argue that LGAs purposefully limit their processes to a default 200 metre 'consultation zone', surrounding proposed developments, irrespective of the nature of the affected area.

I am advised that this arbitrary figure, uniformly applied by some LGAs, is not mandated by regulation – LGAs can choose to undertake more fulsome processes. Indeed, Schedule 2, Part 8, clause 64 of the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Scheme) Regulations 2015* provides:

(3) The local government may advertise, or require the applicant to advertise, an application for development approval in one or more of the following ways —

(a) by giving notice of the proposed use or development to owners and occupiers of properties in the vicinity of the development who, in the opinion of the local government, are likely to be affected by the granting of development approval, including a statement that submissions may be made to the local government by a specified day being a day not less than 14 days from the day on which the notice is given to the person;

(b) by publishing a notice of the proposed use or development in a newspaper circulating in the Scheme area including a statement that submissions may be made to the local government by a specified day being a day not less than 14 days from the day on which the notice is published;

(c) by publishing a notice of the proposed use or development by electronic means in a form approved by the local government CEO including a statement that submissions may be made to the local government by a specified day being a day not less than 14 days from the day on which the notice is published;

(d) by erecting a sign or signs in a conspicuous place on the land the subject of the application giving notice of the proposed use or development for a period of not less than 14 days from the day on which the sign is erected including on each sign a statement that submissions may be made to the

local government by a specified day being a day not less than 14 days from the day on which the sign is erected.

Whilst 200m may be a sufficient 'consultation catchment' in dense, urban parts of the Perth metropolitan area (and, indeed, in parts of Swan Hills), in the peri-urban/rural fringe, this sized catchment often does not provide all affected residents with the opportunity to provide feedback. Nor does it allow adequate consideration of the total impact that a project may have on discrete 'townships'. A proposal may have a minor impact in an urban context, but far greater ramifications for small rural communities.

The application of the 200m process, irrespective of local characteristics, creates the impression that LGA's conduct a 'bare minimum' or 'compliance-oriented' approach to consultation, rather than undertaking a genuine engagement process aimed at ascertaining local views and achieving the best local outcomes.

The types of proposals in these areas (particularly for extractive industry activities) are often of a nature and scale that fundamentally changes and/or disrupts an entire town. They have huge impacts on people's lives, property prices and their finances, sometimes deeming their properties unsaleable. They have the potential to fundamentally alter the amenity and nature of the townships in which they purport to operate.

An urban-centric approach to community consultation and engagement is wholly inadequate for peri-urban and rural communities in the Perth Metropolitan area. LGA's community consultation processes should take greater account of the endemic features of particular areas.

Aside from the application of the 200m approach, constituents in Swan Hills have also stated the view that 'consultation' processes often seem to be 'tick and flick' exercises, undertaken by local governments to facilitate pre-determined outcomes, rather than being opportunities for genuine engagement. They feel that the planning system in particular is heavily weighted in favour of proponents, who have greater access to information, resources, time and much deeper pockets. Constituents are concerned that Proponents have a far louder voice in local government planning processes than local residents, and therefore a much greater capacity to influence outcomes.

PLANNING

Planning issues are of major concern in the electorate of Swan Hills. Residents have purchased land in rural and semi-rural areas for a lifestyle change, and then often find that an incompatible land use is subsequently approved by the local government.

Local government planning processes need to better reflect the local community's values. The broader Planning framework needs to articulate clear, sequential development objectives for Perth's inner and outer metropolitan areas. This will facilitate appropriate development, manage community expectations and align state and local development goals and processes.

The planning system currently has significant shortcomings and works against sensible outcomes for local residents, local governments and industry. In Swan Hills, this is most evident with respect to extractive industry proposals.

I understand that some development proposals are being submitted repeatedly through local government, the State Administrative Tribunal or Development Assessment Panels, basically allowing some proponents to game the system, wearing down local governments and leading to poor community outcomes.

LGA's often take positions that reflect the wishes of their communities, but face repeated, costly legal appeals processes. With finite budgets, LGA's are often not able to match the deep pockets of some proponents. Local government members of DAPs also frequently find that the local community's voice is overridden, with developer's interests often dominating these processes.

Community members also feel the heavy toll from repeatedly voicing their opposition to these developments. They are worried that they are not being adequately consulted and feel that their voices are not being listened to.

Given the increased size and impact of extractive industry proposals, there are open questions about the overall appropriateness of LGA's continuing to assess and approve these activities.

Increasingly, extractive industry operations are being conducted on an 'industrial' scale. They have moved beyond small 'clay pit and bobcat' projects and are more akin to operations that are regulated under the Mining Act. They can have significant environmental and community impacts. Where a number of operations are present in a local area, their cumulative effects can also be substantial.

Planning processes (particularly consultation processes) at local government level may not elicit the best possible information to enable high quality decision-making. Given the scale and complexity of many of these projects, the ability of LGA's to adequately assess and then monitor these projects is also questionable – they often lack the resources and expertise to perform these functions.

Moreover, there is a real risk that strategic, developable resources across the metropolitan area will be sterilised by inappropriate LGA decisions that permit incompatible land uses in buffer zones or over reserves. Similarly, people who bought rural/residential properties in good faith may subsequently find mining operations are approved in areas that are inappropriately close to their homes and communities, following pressures on LGAs to either permit the projects or face the lengthy and costly appeal processes mentioned above.

Proponents likewise feel frustrated with the lack of certainty and the time taken to get proposals through local government. They experience inconsistency between LGA areas and incur a range of costs interfacing with LGA approval processes, all of which drive operating costs (and final product prices) upwards.

It is vital that Perth retains access to the basic raw material resources required for growth, but resources must be developed strategically and in a way that is sensitive to community and environmental concerns. LGAs are arguably not best positioned to make these decisions.

I am aware that the Minister for Planning is fully cognisant of these issues and is working assiduously to address them. I would urge that any review of Local Government Act also take these factors into account.

RATING ISSUES

Recently, the City of Swan announced its intent to change the rating methodology for rural properties, from "Unimproved Value" (UV) to "Gross Rental Value" (GRV).

This change may cause substantial rate increases for many residents, particularly those on properties in Bullsbrook, Gidgegannup, Brigadoon and throughout the Swan Valley. It caused much angst in my community. Over 4,000 residents were affected and I received

383 submissions and numerous emails and phone calls on this issue. I have provided further information as an attachment, detailing community comments on this issue.

The core problem was a lack of definitional clarity of the terms "rural" and "rural purposes" and how local government should consequently classify and rate properties. Residents also expressed frustration at the consultation process undertaken by the City of Swan and the timing/method of the announcement.

As outlined above, in Swan Hills (and likely throughout the peri-urban and rural fringes of the Perth metropolitan area), property uses and land-holdings differ significantly from the 'urban' parts of the metropolitan area.

People own larger properties that are both cleared and forested. Rural uses on these properties vary from hobby farming, small and large scale agricultural activities, right through to environmental stewardship and conservation activities such as native revegetation and waterways management.

Many residents move to Swan Hills hoping to live (and often retire) surrounded by nature, close enough to Perth and important services. Many property owners are long-term residents, who have raised families here and wish to remain close to extended family and friends. These people are significantly affected by changes in rateable value (particularly retirees on fixed incomes). Many may now be forced to sell their properties as they cannot afford the increases.

The City of Swan characterises "rural" as non-urban areas where agriculture is carried out. It defines "rural land" as land on which grazing, vegetable and animal production, or other agriculture or horticultural activities are conducted. There is no clear definition of rural or rural land contained in the Local Government Act.

The City's characterisation applies a strict agricultural meaning to 'rural' that does not capture the plain English meaning. The characteristics of 'rural land' are clearly broader than just conducting agricultural activities in an area or on a particular property.

Ratings should rightly look to other factors like housing density, general amenity and population, as well as the industries in an area. Another approach that could be considered would be to characterise everything outside of urban areas as being necessarily rural in nature.

A clear definition of 'rural' will provide certainty to all residents and local governments that are on the metropolitan fringe. Alternatively, a set of clear guidelines on what is and is not a rural property, which takes into account the vast range of land uses, beyond agriculture, that are characteristic of rural properties would be of great assistance.

This will provide certainty to LGAs in terms of their revenue collection and will assist residents to avoid sudden, unexpected changes to the rateable value of their property. It will also inform property purchasing decisions.

Residents in the peri-urban fringes have limited access to services that are perhaps taken for granted in urban areas (such as scheme water and sewerage, reticulated gas, footpaths and streetlights, community and youth facilities, access to public transport, limited rubbish collections, etc).

People are largely aware of this when they move into these areas, and make a conscious decision to 'trade off' these services for the many other lifestyle benefits of living in a rural

setting. Residents have, however, expressed the view that they are unwilling to pay for services they do not receive. Many commented that rates increases do not seem to correlate with an increased level of services into rural areas.

People have also raised equity concerns, insofar as people new to the area have been put on UV rates, whilst others that have been in the area longer have not. Some residents signed forms many years ago that resulted in them unwittingly moving from UV to GRV. One example provided to me was two neighbours with same land size and same land use. Under UV rating the resident was looking at rates of \$1,732, whilst the neighbour under GRV had rates of \$2,576.

Community members are concerned that rate levels could devalue property prices and many people conveyed to me that they simply cannot afford these proposed increases in rates. A fair and equitable rating system is needed that does not disadvantage the residents and ratepayers of the electorate of Swan Hills. Amendments to the Local Government Act that seek to address these issues would be greatly welcomed by the Swan Hills community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the Local Government Act Review. I hope it will consider the issues I have raised and look forward to seeing the outcomes on a range of others that will no doubt arise in other communities.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jessica Shaw', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jessica Shaw MLA

Member for Swan Hills

Enc. Community comments regarding local government change from UV to GRV rating

Local Government Act Review - Submission Attachment

Community comments regarding local government change from UV to GRV rating

How will valuation changes impact you?
Our property is on two titles which the City of Swan has the wrong way round. One will get UV and one GRV. The change to GRV rates will double our rates. City of Swan should bring in a Differential rating system for "Rural" to take in to consideration the diversity of land use. One size does not fit all. ABN and PIC numbers do not mean income.
As a property owner (purchased in 1987 before the last changes to the LGA) in the Swan Valley I have never been informed by Landgate or the Valuer Generals Office or the department of LGA that my special rural property is regarded as residential unless I produce an income from it. If this change from UV to GRV is part of the 1995 LGA, why did it take 22 years to make these changes. At a time when a review of the LGA is under way.
A change to GRV rating is likely to result in at least a two fold increase in our household rates which is unfair, unaffordable and unjustifiable given the lack of council services we receive. There are substantial costs and requirements above and beyond residential that we must meet due to our rural setting and this, combined with the lack of services and facilities should be acknowledged. #ruralisrural
A good friend will be severely impacted on her property.
Additional fees will cause me to relocate to a fairer shire. We are already paying higher power bills for the benefit of staying rural and now the COS want to be a POS and make it near on impossible to sustain a quality Lifestyle. Why not make it the Shire that people want to come to because it is charging a fair price for a great country atmosphere. More people will want to live here and more people will automatically pay more fees.
After significant research and 18 months of searching, my wife and I purchased our dream block in mid 2016 in Bullsbrook with plans to build our family forever home next year (2018) and raise our children. The reasons for this "tree change" mainly was to raise our family in this beautiful environment, become semi-self sufficient and for the healthy lifestyle this offers within the supportive community that Bullsbrook seems to have. Any potential significant raising of the rates on my single income seriously threatens this plan, our financial security and the future for my family.
As ex farmers who are on the verge of retirement and purchased here to be in an area close to services but not wanting to be on a small block wanting to still have some stock and a rural lifestyle
At present I am looking at a rates increase of nearly \$2000. I cannot afford those prices and they are completely unjustified when the shire does not provide any services to our local community.
Been rural for over 30 years so why is it being changed now, some boffin has decided he knows better
Can't afford to pay more for rates
Changed to GRV in 2008 after last review by the City of Swan. Now pay over \$1,000 more than neighbouring properties who are paying rates on a UV basis. How can this be fair? We get nothing for the extra \$1,000 we pay each and every year. We have been trying to change back to a UV basis but the City of Swan say NO. Brigadoon is part of the Special Rural Zone No. 3 "Brigadoon/Baskerville" as specified in the Local Planning Scheme 17 which until this year was clearly identified by the City of Swan as a Special Area within their Differential rate categories. However, this year, 3 UV categories were combined under the heading UV General and no mention made of the LPS 17, although these classes were only moved and their definitions not changed. We belong under UV General but the City of Swan still say NO.
Changes will affect the affordability of our young family and our ability to keep living the semi rural lifestyle.
Changing our rating will devalue our land and almost triple our rates.
Concerned it will change the rating of properties in Gidgegannup
Do not want to have to pay more for rates without better services!
Don't know -information received so far has been vague
I live in Avon Ridge in Brigadoon and the City of Swan categorise our property as if I live in Ellenbrook or Midland even though I'm on 6 acres of land. I think this discrepancy is unfair - why should people in the older parts of Brigadoon pay less than me in the new estate? I feel conned by the City of Swan. It should be one rule for everyone and it's really badly designed how they've done it. More than happy to chat about my thoughts.
Higher rates, so won't be able to stay at my property if rates were to keep rising

I am a mobile equine veterinarian, own and ride horses and moved to the Swan Valley both for my business, but also for the rural pursuits available. I do not want to live in the suburbs and chose this location for the ability to keep animals and the environment that is healthy for them and us.
I am a primary producer, albeit on a small scale. I believe that it is extremely important to preserve as much vegetation as possible, particularly mature trees. Because of clearing, mature trees are isolated and dying, and, taller than the rest, often struck by lightning. The Darling Range is the biggest uncleared forest area to the east of Perth and suburbs. If it is removed or damaged the climate effects on populated areas are likely to impinge on wellbeing and health of inhabitants between the Range and the sea. There is also the suggestion that rainfall will be reduced...no trees, no rain. None of these factors are being considered by those intent on denuding the Range to mine bauxite, or by the City of Swan who see no value in land for birds and wildlife, bee forage, and wildflowers. We do not want to follow the practice of developers who have clear felled most of the banksia woodlands, leaving nothing but wall to wall dwellings on a hot and dusty plain.
I am already rated GRV and pay \$800 more a year than my neighbours. Very unfair
I am currently renting, but it will badly affect my Landlord and probably end up in everyone having to move away, My family have owned property in Gidgegannup since the 30's, I wouldn't want to leave as it's close enough to Midland, and I love 'Country'
I am now a pensioner, it will therefore make a big difference to myself and my wife.
I am the third generation living on our property in Gidgegannup. Currently on the property there are two houses, one for my elderly grandparents, and one for my mother and myself. If the rates are to be changed to a GRV rating system, I fear that the rates could be double or triple what they are now and at that amount, it would not be feasible for us to continue to live on the property. My grandfather bought this property in the 1960s and his biggest fear was always that we would be rated out, which appears to be occurring now. We do currently we run sheep for a primary producer on our property, so we may be able to reach an agreement with the City of Swan on a fair rates method however I know there are many in the area that are not as lucky, and may be forced to move just so they are able to pay their rates.
I am unsure as to how the valuation change will effect my rates but feel that anyone raising animals, growing food or grazing animals places them in the rural category no matter how small their land. Just because it is classed as a "hobby farm" doesn't make it any less rural. People move to small acreages to pursue lifestyles that are not possible in the suburbia and are prepared to forgo the facilities of suburbia to do it. Growing and raising your own food isn't a hobby but hard work.
I can't see why my family and the others in Avon Ridge Estate should pay more than the rest of our area. This information was never noted to us when buying or building.
I can't afford to pay rates
I don't know. But am now worried, if we were to add an extension to our house, so all the kids have their own room our rates will go up. In a few years time, we might be in a less favourable financial situation. Would we still be able to afford our place? Am worried about the future and when we become pensioners or lose our job. Is this rate change a stealthy way of forcing us to subdivide in the future; rate us off our properties?
I have bought my land and spent the last 4 years every weekend and most evenings after work building my house with my own two hands. If the proposed unreasonable rate rise goes ahead, I am likely to lose everything I have worked for because my budget just will not stretch any further. Unfortunate, I can not get a mortgage on the house until the house is complete and I can not afford to finish the house if my rates increase way beyond inflation. This is causing me a great deal of stress. I'm looking out my window now looking at my ten Alpacas grazing, which is reducing the fire load because we are in a bush fire prone area and I have no idea how people at City of Swan sitting in Midland can say my property is not rural and I am not using my property for rural purposes. I also have no idea why my property would be rated on the rentable value when I live in an uncompleted house. To me it just seems like a grab for cash and I don't have any spare cash to be grabbed.
I live in a rural area without the services of a urban area, yet the City of Swan wishes to change the rating type to GRV. Given the rural nature of where we live and given the only a small part of our block has a building envelope for residential buildings, the rest is bush and creates the rural atmosphere. I therefore feel that rating should in some way match the area and use, not just use of the block.

I live on 75 beautiful rural acres that could NOT be classified as anything other than RURAL! My property is a wildlife habitated area comprising of livestock flora n fauna. I moved here 12 years ago for a rural pursuit to which I have paperwork from City of Swan stating I live on a property with rural pursuits!
I love in Gidgegannup for the rural aspect, if I wanted urban I would live in a developed area.
I personally feel that the proposed changes to rating by the swan council are a blatant cash grab. I am concerned that continued increases in rates/insurances will eventually cause us to consider selling. Should others also be thinking along the same lines we may see property values decreasing and our properties less attractive to purchasers for the same reason.
I urge the CoS to carefully consider all the facts when trying to define rural, those of us not living near the major towns have to travel further to get our groceries and the bare necessities for living, so our cost of living is already higher. We do not get the advantage of lots of public amenities. If ubereats and other retailers deem me to be living in a rural area and therefore not eligible to receive their services or next day postage then I think these things should factor into your calculations. I can't even get reliable mobile coverage in my house without installing a \$1300 approved booster. Everywhere you look points to the fact we are living rural, other than my rates notice that is!
I was changed from UV to GRV following a rating review by the City of Swan in 2008. We currently pay over \$1,000 more than our neighbours on the same acreage of land, same use of our land but with one paying UV rates and one paying GRV rates. Is this fair? I have been in communication with the City of Swan for several years and am not being allowed to submit a Land Use Declaration Form and have this form considered by the City of Swan but rather have been advised that I need to take this to The Ombudsman or SAT. I have taken this to The Ombudsman. The Ombudsman advised that as the City of Swan were currently undertaking a review of all UV rated properties then my request to have my property returned to a UV basis was not acceptable. This entire matter has been dealt with in a terrible manner by the City of Swan since before 2008. The simplest solution would have been for the City of Swan to apply an additional category under either UV or GRV for Rural Residential properties. Are you aware that until this last financial year, the City of Swan's Special Area category quite clearly stated that "The Special Area category relates to land zoned for the purpose of Rural Residential, Rural Living or Special Rural use under the City of Swan LPS 17. with Brigadoon forming part of the Special Rural Zone No. 3 "Brigadoon/Baskerville" as specified in the Local Planning Scheme No 17? I have advised the City of Swan on numerous occasions that my rates should be UV as Brigadoon is part of a Special Area but they continue to refuse to acknowledge this. I have been fighting for many years to get my property changed back. I hope you can offer me some assistance.
I will have less time to enjoy my home in a rural area as I will have to take a second job to pay for the rate increase.
I would have to sell up and move away from my favourite area.
I'm a Gidgegannup resident. My rates will unnecessarily increase significantly if the valuation method is changed. I understand the rhetoric that rates are not directly related to services provided by the shire, but it is a fee that is paid for the good governance of the residents of that municipality. Hence, I fail to understand how this rate review and what will be a rate increase serves the community, certainly in the areas where very little shire activity takes place. But there is the conundrum, what are the rates for if they are not directly related to the services provided? It just has the smell, taste and feel of a blatant money grab.
If the rates go up it will certainly put financial pressure on us.
If the rates go up like everyone is saying we will be selling our property, we might as well go and live closer to suburbia and have services on hand like water, public transport, street lighting etc, this whole scenario is disgusting.
I'm concerned changes to (increases) in rates in the Swan Valley will result in increased pressure to subdivide, which will hurt the farmers (including grapegrowers and winemakers) in the Swan Valley
Increasing my rates causing stress on my retirement. Fear of subdivisions destroying our rural lifestyle and putting stress on our already decreasing wildlife.
It is expected that a change from UV to GRV basis for rates will increase significantly and be similar to those paid by typical residential lots in urban areas of the Shire. However, this is not equitable given the lack of Shire funded infrastructure and services available at my property.
It is not fair that Avon Ridge are paying more in rates especially when we are part of the Special Rural Zone No. 3 "Brigadoon/Baskerville" as specified in the Local Planning Scheme No. 17. We are all one area so we are we paying more?
It will effect two lots of family members who moved to Bullsbrook purely for the rural lifestyle!

It will increase my rates via \$1,600 approximately and we are retired and already subdivisions are happening in the area below 5 acres which originally was not supposed to happen. Fearful/stressed not only of the hike in rates but this change will allow more subdivisions pushing wildlife out further!
It's unfair that Avon Ridge pay more for our rates when we are still part of Brigadoon.. Rural is Rural
It's unfair that Avon Ridge pays more - there needs to be clearer and fairer definitions.
Living on our property will be unaffordable
Might have to sell up, with cost of living rising, insurance and everything else we just can't keep affording to live out here with it becoming so expensive. This is the best place we have ever lived so the impact of our daily living is huge for us.
Most likely no change, just a steady increase every year.
Most probably force me off my property with all my hard effort for a natural environment to be maintained being lost.
My 78 year old mother in law has lived on a native bush block that was designated special rural when she bought it 27 years ago. It was a requirement that she submitted a tree planting program before building the house which she complied with. The block now has many native trees and plants and other natural flora and fauna such as visiting cockatoos, 28s, ted tail black cockatoos, kookaburras, blue tongue bobtails. She is now a widow on a fixed income pension and would be under severe financial duress if the proposed changes went through.
My family were early settlers in the Swan Valley and I wish to run my property well into my retirement years, happy to give up "luxuries" such as holidays etc. to spend my small income on keeping my much loved property in pristine condition. However, the rates are one of my biggest challenges, along with rural insurance and hospital cover. To raise them would put huge hardship on my resources and I would have to think seriously regarding leaving to live elsewhere.
My father bought the property as a farm over 50 years ago. I have now as well built a house on the land - it is my heritage and to help look after my parents. We would then effectively be charged double because of the two houses. But in the meantime, I have to manage the property as a farm getting people to run stock, fire breaks, weed control etc. Add in the fact that we have water tanks, limited internet, and everything else that goes with living in a rural area. This sort of stuff is not metro or residential living.
My Grandmother has a rural 5 acre property in Henley Brook , for 27 years, Any rate changes would have bad effects on her finances.
My mother in law age 78 has a rural and bush property which she would not be able to keep should the cost of her rates been changes , it would kill her to have to leave her home for 27 years
My next door neighbour is paying about 50% more than me simply because they shifted in a couple of years after me and when they property changed hands the council sneakily changed their rating method to rip more off them. It stinks
My parents bought their property 27 years ago and have turned a grass field into a rural bush block which has dozens of birds and wildlife which she cultivates to suit them , do not allow the City or state to change the way our swan valley rural sites are ruined , they would have terrible effects on the Valley.
My parents-in-law purchased lots in 1934 which was virgin bush. My Parent-in-laws, cleared these two blocks by hand and kangaroo jacks, with sheer grit and determination to start a new life in Australia for their then growing family. When the eldest sons were able to help they too joined in helping plant vines, stone fruit, almonds passionfruit and citrus trees. They had the seasonal vegetable garden complete with the chicken run to feed a family of 5 growing children. When my husband was old enough he ploughed the land with horse and plough. My husband lived on this land all his life apart from 16 years in Carnarvon, where he worked at the Carnarvon Tracking Station with the Space Industry helping put Man on the Moon. Before returning to Perth, we subdivided 4 acres. On this 4 acres we planted 90 Olive Trees, 10 Pecan trees, 10 Macadamia trees, 5 Almond trees, 6 Citrus trees, 2 Apricot trees, 3 Plum trees,, 2 Peach trees, 1 Mulberry tree and 16 Grape vines and passionfruit vines, along with our seasonal vegetable garden. The produce from the property is distributed between our family. To say this is not agriculture is beyond belief. To implement this proposal and any further subdivision will ultimately destroy our beautiful Swan Valley as we know it.
My sisters will be unable to pay the huge increase and then be unable to sell due to the unbelievable and unfair rate on her property.

Not sure but I would like to understand better how this could affect us.
Our Rates will Increase 25% but the worry is where it goes from there.
Ours has already been changed. In November 2016 the city of swan took it upon themselves to change my property to GRV. We have been back and forth with them for months about this. We were not notified nor given a chance to have our say about it. I am repeatedly told bad luck you can't be changed back. I am told that one trigger for changing our property was that I applied for a pension rebate. Now I am a single mum of two young children who struggles to afford my mortgage and my retired (but too young for a pension) also live with me and hence I am the only income earner in the household. My rates have more than doubled this year and I cannot afford to pay them but also cannot sell nor afford to move. My whole family is suffering, Mum is not sleeping well and neither am I which then in turn makes it difficult day by day to give the kids what they need. This is all caused by the COS ineptitude and complete lack of caring for anything but more money in their pockets. I fear something really bad may happen soon to one of us due to all this undue stress the COS is placing on us. There is much more to our story but too difficult and stressful to put it all here, including a particular councillor who came to visit us on the premise he wanted to help when all he really wanted was to get us to stay quiet about the whole issue. Thankyou for reading and I hope something can be done for all of us.
Potential double rates with no additional services. Our property predominately utilised for horses and sheep and as I cannot obtain my livelihood from the property I will be classified as a hobby farm hence rated under UV due to the COS definition of Rural.
Rate increase is highly probable residents are very concerned of the financial impact. Choose Bullsbrook as my home because of the rural location , we go without normal amenities and services therefore do not expect to pay more in rates
Rate increases are a lot easier to swallow if the local area actually sees some return. Why should my rates along with other locals go up over \$1000 per household when we don't see any money being spent in our local area? This is a simple money grab and incites more resentment toward the council who already seems out of touch with the community. A small increase would be acceptable, a 70-80% increase is NOT acceptable in ANY circumstance.
Retired to Brigadoon over twenty seven years ago with full understanding Council considered this a rural area. Have paid for firebreaks, fire levies etc every year with no reduction in rates. We are not suburbia and no not wish to become so. Rates will be increased, no intention to sell off any part of our land. Our house is all we have not even sheds or pool or granny flats. We enjoy the ecology of life among the gum trees please do not destroy another part of Perth which is unique for yet more cash grabs. Angry the seemingly underhanded and confusing manner in which this was attempted by Council and being told we have a house with large back yard so part of suburbia.
Significant increase in rates for little or no improvements in the area.
Significant increase to our household rates will impose financial hardship and stress to my young family. This is nothing but a cash grab from the City of Swan and is completely unjustifiable given the lack of services provided by the city. Shame on them! #ruralisrural
Since 1996 the rates have already increased every year from \$850.27 to \$2,424.63 that is as special Rural goodness knows what they would increase to
The change in rating will creating further difficulty to already tight finances. We have spent a lot of money over our 16 years here establishing more vegetation on our land as well as keeping it fire safe. It has been home to many generations of the same kangaroo family during that whole period and various other wildlife including ducks that come here to breed every year. That sounds like a rural environment to me. There are so many things to consider when living here out of the reach of the metropolitan area. We are out of the range for so many services that are taken for granted by people choosing to live in the suburbs. For instance attempting to get an after hours doctor for a family member proved futile as we are out of the radius for that. It costs so much more to have furniture delivered. It is a much longer scary wait for an ambulance to arrive. Dodgy communications, internet, mobile, landline. Higher risk of bushfire. There are so many other examples that escape me right now. Most of these have no bearing on being a ratepayer but are examples of what we sacrifice in order to live where we do. We do not live in the suburbs. We are not urban. We are rural. How we earn our living shouldn't have any bearing. By living up here we are freeing up the over-condensed housing in the suburbs.
The changes may make it unaffordable for us to remain on our property
The extra expense with no extra services being provided.
The large increase in valuation will make it hard to pay close to retirement

The local councils are going for rate grabs and it is completely unacceptable. The council doesn't provide the infrastructure in the area yet it attempts to increase the rates in the rural areas.
The problem is we have no idea
The Swan Valley is a rare gem that still retains the vital mix of diverse family business enterprises and rural amenity which could well be lost for future generations once housing density pushes out SME as smaller land holding values significantly rise which history tells us they will. Don't allow greed to ruin this vital part of our eastern landscape.
There is no way we can afford and increase in rates. We bought In Bullsbrook for the rural life. We have sheep and lots of other animals. This is a money grab.
This additional impost of nearly \$1000 p/a will be extremely difficult for us to absorb. Further, when I recently requested a copy of my rates, someone has now rated our property as "industrial," which is patently incorrect, but I am reluctant to contact City of Swan to request a change in fear of that being a "trigger" to re-rate our property to GRV. Further, we are deeply concerned that this push is a precursor to a campaign to "rate us out" of our area, permitting developers to buy up cheap if rate-hikes result in desperate home sales. We have lived in several areas where this has already happened. It is our contention that these 5 acre divided areas are by definition Unimproved Value lots. We are content to provide firebreaks and fire vigilance, our own potable water and sewerage systems. We don't want footpaths, streetlights or amenities - we are self-reliant and community-enacted people who believed that we had contracted with the City of Swan to receive limited services in exchange for reasonable rates. I am confident that we are still contributing to the lifestyle of other urban and suburban residents of the City of Swan's way of life, more than they are towards ours. This City of Swan rates "initiative" has shattered us and diminished our confidence in their motives and competence.
This is nazism 101. They are arrogant with power. We need a revolution to show what people power can do. United we stand.
This proposed review of UV properties will impact on our whole community and cause divisions
This will increase my rates
This will increase our rates, which is already hard enough to keep up with, with two small children.
Two lots of Shire rates combined with Land Tax is almost \$10,000 per annum and is close to being unsustainable for self funded retiree. Both of these taxes have been paid for 54 years (since 1963) and it has become a huge imposition.
Unclear definition of property. May change yet very few services to area
UV to GRV in the Swan Valley - will rate me out of the Swan Valley Legislated Area based on Valuations
Valuation changes could force people off their properties in Gidgegannup and change the whole character of the area, possibly leading to denser subdivision.
Valuation changes will increase the burden of rates on my family, increasing the cost of living because we have a large block of land.
We are 2 people living in a large house the rates will list likely increases considerably due to this. We often have friends come to visit because of our rural location. I am self employed and use the land to store equipment such as fence poles and tractor. It is hard enough making a living and we might be forced to sell up. But we most likely won't get a good price as over the years our home values have not increased by much if at all. We also have an easement on the land that can never be built on and we are therefore custodians of this.
We are 3 families living together on our property with our horses. A change in the rating of our property would severely impact on our financial position. We live here to enjoy the setting and lifestyle and want that to continue so our grandsons can grow up here.
We are a new young family to the area who work hard to afford basic and essential items. Financially the funds are needed to support our young children. The funds can be used more appropriately within our family to develop our block and create a safe garden space for our children
We are furious with the way City of Swan tried to bully us into signing a legal document while pretending it was a survey. Are they incompetent or evil? We just can't decide.
We are not sure of the impact at this stage, we have ten acres upon which we can only build on one small portion, we consider our property to be rural.
We are now retired and would like to see our shire rates in line with the Rural UV valuation not GRV as is currently the case in Avon Ridge. Thank You.

We are on a 5 acre block in Bullsbrook with sheep grazing on our land we are not residential for valuation
We are on a 5acre rural block with sheep grazing and an orchard. We are not residential for valuation.
We are pensioners and cannot afford a large Rates increase. We have paid for our home services out of our savings and continue to do so. Our rural life allows a sanctuary to some of the rarest wildlife in Australia. This is the predominant use of 24500 square metres of rural landscape which also serves to feed and maintain our ponies all year round.
We are retired and our rates if changed to GRV will go up by over \$800. We enjoy this lifestyle but who would like to rent up here when we have no shopping centre within 16 km, poor internet, no mobile phone coverage, minimum TV coverage, no parks, sidewalks etc. so why is the shire trying to change to GRV
We are retired as self funded retirees. We cannot afford steep rises in rates.
We are retired on a self funded super. Our returns are quite small and we cannot afford to be classified as Urban.
We are self funded retirees who have a large land holding that is purely rural. We want to keep it so.
We bought our house last year March. We have seen with the rates and taxes that our property has already been changed to Non Rural. All of our neighbours are Rural. When I phoned the City of Swan to query, they told me this has changed 4 years ago and that the other properties around us will eventually change as well. We pay more than our neighbours which gas a bigger land than us but we were told that value goes by rental income value. I don't think this is fair as we did not have any say in this and are "forced" to pay the higher tax rate as Non Rural. We, as all our other neighbours do not have scheme water but rely on rain water. When the power goes out we can not use any water. On any other mobile service provider except Telstra we don't even have reception. We really think we still classifies as Rural!!!
We cannot afford a rate hike in the Swan Valley. We are a one income family. We do not have water, sewer, or verge side collection and they want to rate us residential? We would suffer financial hardship if this were to be allowed. Suffer and see nothing for the money they take off of us.
We chose rural as so we could have our horses with us, our little boy had room to play and be a boy! Have vegie gardens. If rates keep going up us along with everyone else will not be able to enjoy this
We currently rent and run livestock on the property. I'm afraid that our rent will increase thus pushing us and our animals out of a home as we cannot afford to pay more then what we already do.
We do not expect the changes to affect us as we conduct an agricultural business, however neighbours who have purchased properties near to us for the purpose of lifestyle so that their children can have ponies. pets, chickens etc which they could not have on residential properties will definitely be affected.
We got married late in life and sold everything to buy our dream home together. We love the lifestyle and accept the lack of amenities for the space and ability to keep animals such as sheep. We were sold the block as "semi-rural", we are definitely not in suburbia. Therefore we should not be labelled the same.
We have been paying over \$1500 more than all my neighbours for the past six years we have an ABN number and use our property for re-training ex racehorses. The COS is out of touch with its ratepayers.
We have land in Ficus Cove which is the newer section of Brigadoon which still being developed by Peet. This part of Brigadoon is rated as GRV although the original part of Brigadoon is predominantly UV. This land is used in a more restricted manner, as part of the covenants imposed on this land is that no livestock is permitted to be kept. People still choose to live here as they wish to live in a rural area, why is this area treated differently for rates, when it is still part of the Special Rural Zone No. 3 "Brigadoon/Baskerville" in the Local Planning Scheme No. 17. The LPS No 17 was mentioned up until this last financial year by the City of Swan as a category under UV Special Area. The entire area of Brigadoon/Baskerville should be treated equally as UV General, which is where the Special Areas are identified under the LPS 17.
We have lived on our property for around 30 years and love the peace and space. We have a lovely community and look out for each other but respect each others privacy. The birds and marsupials love the space too and should we be rezoned and our rates increased, we all lose, our rates are high as it is, increasing them to residential will ruin most of us. I'm sure the long term strategy of the Shire is to develop our area.
We have no gas, not deep septic, no street lights, no shops within certain distance. Much less population to space. We can't clear trees to have animals due to city swan rules. When we purchased our block 2007 we were told we weren't allowed to have animals or farming as it's just an estate with spacious blocks. This is absolutely wrong on all counts. We are rural. Our land can't be used for anything so why should we be charged a rental value on it.

We have not long been in our home and have hopes to use the land more than it is currently being used. It all takes time!
Rating the land by what it is currently used would not be accurate to its potential.
We just cannot afford a rate increase, especially with no benefit to our rural community. We receive no water, sewer, verge collection from the City. There are no sidewalks, no street lights. But we are happy for that as we ARE rural. We choose this lifestyle and have paid top dollar for the privilege of owning these properties. Once you rate us out, the Swan Valley with its charm and RURAL beauty will be lost forever. It will become exactly like another Ellenbrook. Anywhere Australia.
We left the suburbs down the hill for a rural lifestyle for our 3 kids where our son can ride a motorbike, we keep chickens, pigs and grow our own food...where on a residential block can we do that?
We live on a 100-acre block which cannot be cleared (about 90 acres of natural bushland) because of salinity problems in local creeks. We are very concerned that because we don't make our living from our "rural" block (because most of it is not cleared farmland), we may have to pay increased rates. It's a joke!
We love our piece of rural paradise and go without a lot of residential amenities to have this instead. Changing the rates will mean it's unaffordable when we have so many more costs such as firebreaks, fire risk clearing, water collection and septic Maintenance.
We made the 'sea-change' to a rural lifestyle for my health and general well-being. In leaving our home in the suburbs we fully expected that would not benefit from the same services or amenities, and that our travel and other costs of living would increase. After factoring in all these known costs, including rates, we uprooted and committed to our new community in the Swan valley. We are now told that we will likely need to pay more to live in the same place and receive no additional benefits. The injustice of the situation is causing incredible stress yet how can we afford to move? And why should we when this is our home? Who benefits from this massive and unfair review?
We moved rural so our kids could live a good life. We have horses but they are for private use not business and if rates go up because of a change from being considered rural to residential then I will not be able to afford to continue living in the Bullsbrook community and this in turn means that I cannot afford to keep my and the kids horses as agistment costs would be unaffordable. I am in a single income household and already work 3 different jobs to be able to live the lifestyle we do. Rural properties are not cheap to upkeep and by increasing the rates you are essentially getting rid of a community due to affordability. Kids become obese due to being stuck inside on their iPads and having no outdoor space to play in
We own a 5 acre block in Gidgegannup. We bought into the area because we love the open spaces and privacy. Along with an excessive rise in rates, re-zoning will probably give way to redevelopment and sub division, this is not something that we want.
We shifted to Gidgegannup 15yrs ago with the aim of becoming self sufficient in food production and maintaining a more sustainable lifestyle in our retirement. We chose Gidgegannup for its rural amenity and were prepared to forgo the amenities of the "suburbs" to allow us space around us after living in rural towns most of our lives. To be now considered as worthy of rating as GRV is an affront given the lack of amenities such as public transport, reliable communications and services such as swimming pools most country towns can now provide.
We will be directly impacted. We purchased our home many years ago and with the intention of retiring here. Now our future is totally uncertain. We may have to sell and live somewhere we have avoided for nearly 3 decades.
We're moving to the area.
Will definitely increase our rates dramatically. It will ruin the lifestyle so many have chosen as we will become rated out of our rural area. We receive virtually no services but are happy for that so long as the City leaves us alone and doesn't try to gouge more money out of us simply because we chose to live in a rural area.
Will make it tight financially for us,
Will not be able to afford rates
With higher rates ...our disposable income is reduced thus less spending in the local region to support local businesses.