

MORNINGTON PENINSULA RATEPAYERS' & RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg. No. A0034245B.
PO BOX 4087, ROSEBUD VIC 3939

Newsletter - May 2014

President: Alan Nelsen 5982 3821 Secretary: Ian Morrison 0437 460 668
Deputy President: Graham Harder Treasurer: Graeme Morrison
Committee: Mal & Doris Campbell, Debbie Peters

Email contact: alanne@ihug.com.au



YOUR RATEPAYERS' & RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Association is now in its 18th year having been incorporated in 1996. The organisation is a non-profit organisation and is strictly non party political.

The aims and purposes include:

- Protect and advance the interests of ratepayers and residents of the Mornington Peninsula Shire;
- Maintain and secure our way of life;
- Consult with other established organisations and groups for the mutual benefit of all people on the Mornington Peninsula;
- Make representations to Council and all levels of government

We are pleased that this year we have filled all vacancies on our committee. This is the first time this has happened for many years. Committee members and office bearers are listed above.

Please contact the President or Secretary by email or telephone if you believe we can help on matters of concern

THE McCRAE ACTION GROUP

The McCrae Action Group is a precinct group of the Association and focuses on local McCrae issues.

In particular it has been involved in planning and in an endeavour to retain the character of McCrae has been successful in working with the Council with the introduction of a height limit of 8 metres and two storeys in the McCrae Village and more recently in the McCrae Plaza business zone.

The Action Group is not opposed to development but has opposed inappropriate development on five occasions at VCAT.

5.9% RATES INCREASE - HOW IT APPLIES TO YOU

This is the time of year that Council sets the level of your rates for the 2014/15 financial year. It is proposed that there will be an **average rate increase of 5.9%** over last year.

HOWEVER every second year the Shire is required by legislation to value your property and this year is a re-evaluation year. This will affect you because the rates are based on the value of your property.

Note: Your annual subscription is due if a notice is included with this Newsletter

If the value of your property increases less than the average across the Shire then you may be lucky and your rate increase will be less than 5%.

Conversely, if your property value increases more than the shire average then you will pay more than 5%. In effect you subsidise those who have been lucky and pay less.

The reason the government (not the council) requires rates to be based on the value of your property is because those who have the higher valued properties are considered to be better off financially and are able to pay more. This is often called social justice.

However, while government directs how rates should be assessed it is the council which set the amount you pay and the extent of the rates increases.

OUR NEXT PUBLIC MEETING

2 pm Monday, 18 AUGUST 2014

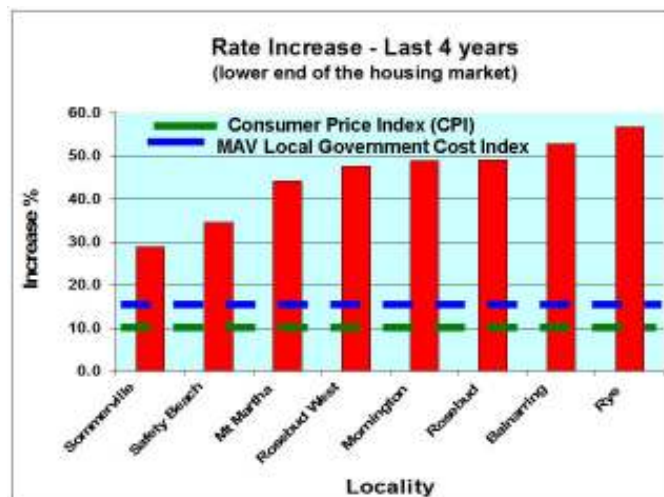
Rosebud Library Meeting Room

Rosebud Central, McDowell Street, Rosebud

(Melway Map 158 Ref D12)

THE RATES RISE RIP-OFF

The graph below shows the outrageous increase in the rates over the last 4 years on some of the lower valued properties in the shire.



The problem is that since the so called “global Crisis” has occurred over the last 4-5 years there has been less demand for the expensive top end properties and therefore they have not risen as fast as low valued properties.

This means that those less able to pay (i.e. generally the lower income families) have carried the major burden of rate increases.

SHIRE “BLOWS” \$8 MILLION OF YOUR RATES

Because of pressure from the community the Shire has been forced to release approximately **40 reports and documents** relating to the Southern Peninsula Aquatic Centre and future plan for Rosebud.

The Shire has spent millions of dollars over a period of 8 years on these Plans and there is still no action - this is scandalous.

In addition, because of the controversy regarding the location of the Aquatic Centre on the foreshore, the shire purchased the Rosebud Central Shopping Centre properties reportedly for **\$8 million** for an alternative site for the Aquatic Centre.

However on the 9 December 2013 the “Gang of six” councillors voted to build the foreshore despite paying \$6 million for Rosebud Central.

Cr David Gibb says that Rosebud Central was purchased for “strategic purposes” yet the most important consultant’s report which justifies the foreshore location on a “cost benefit analysis” is based on selling Rosebud Central

Hold on, didn’t Cr Gibb say it was purchased for “strategic purposes”. Why then is it now proposed to sell it? What rubbish and deception Mr Gibb.

Our Association has asked the shire for the report which outlines the “strategic purpose”. There is only one such report according to the FOI Commissioner and both the shire and Commissioner refuse to provide it to us.

This begs the question: WHAT IS THE SHIRE HIDING?

We are guessing that there was not a strategic reason but it was purchased as an alternative site for SPA and this is why the report has not been provided.

In addition, if the consultant’s report says the best cost scenario is to now sell Rosebud Central, why on earth did the Shire not get a cost-benefit analysis report prior to purchasing it in the first place?

It appears that over a \$million of our rates have gone down the drain through incompetence of the shire executive management.

SHIRE CORRUPTION? - YOU BE THE JUDGE.

As indicated above the shire paid \$6 million for Rosebud Central which had been on the market for over 12 months before the Shire purchased the site.

The Shire did not submit a price when tenders closed in April 2012 and did not show any real interest in the property until they hastily offered the price the owner was asking only a week before the September 2012 council election caretaker period commenced.

The Southern Peninsula News (5 September 2013) said that: “the purchase also had the effect of neutralising the issue [the location of the Aquatic Centre on the foreshore] at the election. Pool and foreshore site – supporter Antonella Celi, elected mayor last week subsequently scraped back into council in Seawinds Ward, which covers the two pool sites [Rosebud Central and the Foreshore].

We wonder how **the candidates feel who missed out on being elected** at the last council elections when as the Southern Peninsula News suggests **the CEO purchased Rosebud Central for \$-8 million to avoid the controversial council election issue** of the foreshore location of SPA.

Immediately prior to the election the Shire administration also **removed all of the reports** related to the controversial location of SPA from its website.

You be the judge as to whether the actions of the Shire prior to the council election with the purchase of Rosebud Central at a cost of \$6 million was to aid and abet the existing council at the election, was corrupt.

WE OPPOSE THE RE-APPOINTMENT OF CEO

The Southern Peninsula News (15 April 2014) reports that the councillors must decide by mid-August whether to again re-appoint Dr Michael Kennedy or advertise his \$400,000 pa job on the open market.

It is reported that Dr Kennedy has been CEO for 15 years and he has been re-appointed on four previous occasions (the last time under controversial circumstances) without the position being advertised.

Our Association is one of a number of Peninsula community organisations which believes that after 15 years that it is time for a change and the position should be widely advertised to ensure that the best candidates from around Australia apply.

COUNCILLOR CONDUCT REFORM

On 2 April 2014 the Government introduced new legislation which proposed changes to the *Local Government Act* to ensure proper conduct by elected councillors and to support good governance by councils.

But are councillors the real problem? Or is it the lack of transparency, openness and bias of senior council executives?

It is well known that council senior executives use tactics such as, engaging consultants to give so called “independent advice”, selective use of legal advisers, and presenting reports which support a biased view to influence councillors’ decisions.

Senior council executives have many years of experience and extensive knowledge of council business and this can be very daunting for new and less experienced councillors to combat.

Our Association hopes that the government will extend its review and look into the transparency and openness of the councils' administration.

HILLVIEW QUARRIES
PTY LTD

A.B.N. 52 004 723 460

John Wood
SALES MANAGER

P.O. Box 148
Hillview Quarry Drive
Dromana Vic 3936

Telephone: 03 5987 2600
Facsimile: 03 5981 0797
Mobile: 0410 567 244
Email: john@hvq.com.au

launched a review into services and funding.

In the 1970's, the State Government provided 70% of library funding which has since dwindled to about 17% on average with Councils picking up the shortfall.

For every dollar invested in public libraries, the community receives at least 3.6 times as much value in return. In 2008 the community benefit was \$681 million against a cost of \$191 million.

A libraries building communities survey showed that 10% of Victorian public library customers were in full time work. 41% were not in the labour force (at home with children, retired or students) and 36% worked part time and 13% were unemployed.

The State review is now complete and the "Tomorrow's Library Report" has been released. The Report outlines six clear initiatives for funding consideration. This is likely to cost an extra \$20 million.

The response Treasury response makes to the reports recommendations depends on us.

Write to the local government Minister, Mr Tim Bull MP with your concerns.

If this report is ignored and the original cuts are implemented, Mornington Peninsula Shire would have to make up the shortfall or cut the existing services that our wonderful local libraries provide.

Major State government funding cuts to services like home and community care, roads, school crossings etc. are having a detrimental impact on services provided by the Shire. Shire costs are spiralling.

Again these extra costs have to be made up by already overburdened ratepayers.

TOOTGAROOK WETLANDS, WEST ROSEBUD

The Tootgarook Wetlands extend from the rear of the Village Glen retirement village, over Brown's Road to Limestone Road in West Rosebud.

The area is classified as a Freshwater March and is a pearl regenerating wetland. It once covered 800 hectares but today is just 480 hectares of which 400 hectares is of state significance.

So far 129 bird species have been recorded in the swamp with at least 8 species which are listed in Migratory Bird Agreements.

The shire opposed the development and it was listed to appear before VCAT in May but the developer has withdrawn. We hope that a satisfactory solution can now be worked out by all concerned.

.FINANCE REPORT

Bank account balance 01.07.2013	\$1777.40
Income	\$ 35.04
Expenses (\$238.05)	(238.05)
Net result	(203)
Bank account balance (Nov AGM)	\$1,574.39

MEASURING COUNCILS' PERFORMANCE

The Victorian Government has been working with councils and the community to ensure that all councils are measuring and reporting performance in a consistent way, e.g. in the manner in rises, level of debt, and costs of various services are reported.

Our Association has been involved in focus groups and has made submissions.

We hope that the introduction of the reporting will enable the performance of our Shire to be compared with all other Victorian councils and this will significantly reduce the amount of spin which the council publishes in ShireWide and other information.

Below is a photograph of the president at a forum on performance measures with the Minister for Local Govt. and member for Mornington, David Morris MP.



LIBRARY FUNDING

In 2011 the State Government said that it would cut its contributions to statewide library funding. However because of a very effective "Save our Libraries" campaign the Government reversed its decision and

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Association Inc.
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Rosebud Vic 3939.**

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