

## We The People

### Program 90

#### Rates, Rights and Wrongs.



If you live on the Gold Coast Council rates are rightly a fact of life. Our rates pay for basic essential services from Council which we all need. Now these essential services are best handled by local Council at the coal face for we the rate payers. So how well do Councilors represent our interests and how well do they attend to Councils core business and what wisdom and leadership do they provide. Frankly in my view they don't like being asked or held to account and it is in this context I raise the issue of the residential rate structure.

Let's consider the majority of Gold Coast rate payers who live in suburbia and who have water, garbage and sewer provided. We rightly pay for these services and now here is the point, we all get exactly the same services, no more no less. We get two garbage bins, water piped in plus we pay for what we use and the sewer for our waste. Incidentally our electricity supply is the same but we all pay the same rate and that's fair. So if we all get exactly the same services why do we pay dramatically different amounts for these services between properties. Well it's because the rate set is calculated in part against the unimproved value of your land which is primarily the market value of the land itself and not the home or unit structure. The current formula defies logic and is certainly not fair. It favours some people and disadvantages others and it's a blunt complex instrument and according to one regular trusted Councilor on 4CRB it's a favoured wealth tax. Yes you heard correctly.....a wealth tax.

It seems there is an assumption that the more your land is worth the more you should pay for exactly the same Council services so clearly this is a biased inequitable unconscionable rating formula that considers you wealthy if your land is worth more than another's. My neighbour pays twice the rates I do yet receives exactly the same Council services as I do. A resident on the beachfront at Mermaid pays well over \$7500 a year again for exactly the same services and that's not the end of it as some rates are hysterically higher again. This is all based on the assumption that the more valuable your land the wealthier you are and so the more you pay and that's socialism. It has through some mysterious twisted logic dawned on the Councilor in question that it's not only fair but it should be expanded and further aberated to the improved capital value which would be devastating for many people and that includes pensioners and the elderly and young families struggling to get ahead. The improved capital value means the market value of the land and your home so it would be a real disincentive to build or improve one's lot in life. What's more, the Councilor claims the Council wants to go down this track and so rates will become even more inequitable for many residents on the Gold Coast. I called the Council to ask if indeed the Mayor and the Council want this to happen. I was given the runaround and some very disturbing advice which I will keep for another broadcast and they promised someone would call me back but no one has. This is not the first time this has happened and remember I'm calling as a rate payer. Maybe the system doesn't want to talk to me because of my 4CRB broadcasts and if that's the case its appalling unconscionable conduct.

Now last week live on air this Councilor advised a 4CRB caller to contact their State political representative and lobby for a change to calculate rates on the improved capitol value. In my view this was very bad advice from a Councilor who I don't think has thought the issue through and she apparently favours a wealth tax. I phoned in and put it to Councilor Critchlow that the current rating system was unfair and I asked on what basis the Councilor thought it was fair. I have to confess I did not understand the answer and as a friend happened to record the talk back program I have placed an accurate transcript of the conversation on the Gold Coast Sentinel web site. Put simply if the entire rate revenue required by Council was divided equally amongst all residential and unit owners then it would be a very fair system and far, far cheaper to administer within council. We would all pay the same for the same services. Rural properties would pay a proportion of course. It would take courage and foresight to change but the system would then be fair and surely that's what the Council would want ..... wouldn't they. Let's hope we see a new dawn regarding rates. **Until next time this is Kent Bayley.**