

## We The People

Program 2 (Revision 3/3.5 minutes)



### Council Rates and Equity

Much is said about reform at all levels of government but surely 'we the people' often wonder what actually happens and how does it affect our lives for the better. Reform is needed to ensure the rules by which we live in society are fair and appropriate for the times.

Now the politicians and bureaucrats have become ruthless and wayward in their retention of power and seek short term adoration by the public. This is no way to run a region or a country and just being popular seems to be paramount but it seldom produces results.

Gold Coast City Council is chartered with managing our city and we are represented by 14 divisional councilors. As far as I can tell not one of these councilors is raising the issue of inequitable rates. By this I mean the charges levied against rate payers to generate the income needed to help run the city. Put simply, the rate structure is wrong.

The general rate is calculated using the value of your land so this means the more your land is worth, the more you pay. So to reveal a big problem let's consider Mrs Smith who has lived in her home at Southport for 30 years. As things changed over time her land became more valuable so her rates go up disproportionately even though the services she receives from council are exactly the same. Now Mrs Smith can't pay the higher rates so she is forced to move and leave her home and the area she loves. How is that fair and why is the general rate on residential property based on land value and not on the services supplied. It's clearly wrong.

The general rate is really just an evil wealth tax because it is assumed the more your land is worth the wealthier you are and so you should pay more. What absolute rubbish and why do the current councilors continue to support this unfair and inequitable approach. The reason is they are held hostage to popularity and have willingly become part of the general malaise in order to retain power and keep their snouts in the trough. So why do 'we the people' vote them in again and again.

In Rotary's pledge the question about every day actions asks, "Is it Fair?" I have always thought that the Rotarian who wrote that simple line hit the nail on the head. Fairness is an essential part of a civilised society and a philosophy that Gold Coast City Council would be well advised to apply to rates. Why is it that we must pay more if our land is worth more. We are supposed to be paying for services and in reality every residential property should share the rate burden equally. The way it works now is not fair and is certainly not equitable yet the silence for reform by councilors is deafening and in fact things are getting worse. The Mayor's current plan to set a standard early rates payment discount of \$100 again favours the lower valued land owners. He says that 60 percent of the ratepayers will be better off but ignores the 40% who will be worse off and who may be the least able to pay. Again unfair and shows the thinking of Council at its dysfunctional core. So let's hear about real reform from councilors and let's start holding them to account every day. First up let's reform Council rates so every household pays the same because we should be paying for services provided.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley

End