



We The People
Program 48
The View Tax

A few days ago I spoke to listeners about the crazy rates notices put out by the Council recently. The mayor said publically the rate increases for this year would be about 2.5% and yet there are examples of people having to pay up to 17%. I called the Council and the explanation given was simply not believable and grossly unfair. I was told that similar properties were grouped together but they could not tell me how or indeed who makes the decisions about similar properties or what that means. There are plenty of examples where the land value is the same and yet a lot of rates have risen way beyond the 2.5% average the Mayor led us to believe.

There is something terribly wrong about this councils rates structure and I have a feeling they rate you against your apparent wealth which is alluded to in an internal email sent to all operators in the Councils call center. So by this I mean if you have the apparent ability to pay more, then you do so. The trouble with this is that it's a wealth tax yet there is no measure in place to identify a person's real worth, not that its relevant anyway because we pay for services. An assumption is made that if your property is worth more, then you are able to pay more. Sounds like socialism to me.

I had one elderly lady call me who has lived in the same house for 35 years. Her rates are so high now she will soon be forced to sell and as her husband died last year her pension has fallen. The woman is anything but wealthy but that doesn't seem to matter according to Gold Coast City Council. This Council and all its processes are too complicated, too expensive, too bureaucratic and councilors appear to lack the courage or will to change the base logic for rates. Whatever happened to fairness and the desire to serve the people properly. The Mayor seems philosophically away planning a cruise ship theme park and fountains in the Broadwater while the real meaningful issues of Council appear to go unattended. What counts is rating equity where all residents pay an equal share of the rates burden and the Council bureaucracy should be down sized dramatically because we can't afford it. This is something Julia Gillard and Labor have to learn and that is you can't keep borrowing to live. There should be a government review into the decision making process of the Council such is the level of non compliance, flawed decision making and a manifestly unfair rating system.

So listeners if you want more proof of inequity take the View Tax. Yes that rights a 'view tax' if you live in a high rise apartment. The actual technical name for this is 'differential rating' but what it means is that you pay more the higher up you live. The only extra a high rise resident gets is the view so it's perfectly correct to call it a 'view tax'. Again, I had another elderly woman call me to tell me of her inequitable rate increase she received along with her view tax. What complete insanity. It's time the new Mayor and the Councilors stepped up and addressed these issues and fast. I predict that before the end of this year there will be a major occurrence within Council because the heavies at State level will make sure of it. Bring it on and in the mean time Mr Mayor you are invited to 4CRB to take calls from real people with real lives and real concerns. It's up to you Mr Mayor.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley