



## News letter for February 2012

Ratepayers Victoria (RPV) first committee meeting for 2012 was held On January 23<sup>rd</sup> at that meeting it was resolved to make the following issues our priority for 2012.

The committee discussed and agreed that **PRIORITY ONE** is capping rates and fees to CPI. or lesser

Ian Watts ( Knox Ratepayers delegate) is to write a draft letters in relation to rate increases and present said draft to the committee to be forwarded on to the minister and all council's

Ian Watts will also develop a project sub-committee to formulate a plan to work on restricting rates and fees to CPI the sub-committee to consist of 5 persons with Ian Watts as Chair and to report back to the committee with their recommendation.

The association has formulated a uniform template to give to financial member associations to provide issue of concern; we will provide a link on our web page of their web site.

At the annual general meeting several large community associations have become members we now have a very large member data base and using the old cliché **“United we stand.”**

Basically the issues facing most ratepayers mainly relate to rates matters, and building approvals that are not consistent with planning regulation and Vcat seem to be able to ignore local council planning regulation an issue we have had to live with for far to long.

## Transparency and accountability

What a joke concerning governance matters! During the general meeting we approved in principal to financially support a ratepayer's organisation to take action in the Supreme Court against a council that sold land and a library that they valued at \$40 million and sold for \$10.9 Million. After 3 FOI's application we were told that the sale-transaction was a cash one and required no Auditable entries in the council ledger to account for the new budgets' reallocation/ reutilization of received cash funds.

The same council allegedly did not comply with the regulation of exercising transparent procedures during the election of the mayor and there were non-compliant intervention involved

In another Council it is alleged that a credit card fraud was investigated by the Federal Police but no action was taken as one of the councillors was the Mayor at that time and was a member of the ruling political party.

We have all encountered many questionable ethical and transparent behavior's of some of our Councillors, it now time to stand up and make them be responsible and hence take public accountability for their action (or lack of)

### Disgruntled Councillors

We plan to have a forum of disgruntled councillors. We as RPV will approach the Minister for Local Government Jeanette Powell to change the Local Government Act and give Ratepayers more say in the matters relating to council's and shires and especially ensuring sound governance and open government through future and highly effective community engagement.

### RPV Website

#### **We now have an expert who will redesign our site**

We anticipated that it will be up and running by the end February.

Our new email address is [ratepayersvictoria@gmail.com](mailto:ratepayersvictoria@gmail.com)

**The old email address [jack\\_d@iinet.net.com.au](mailto:jack_d@iinet.net.com.au) will continue also for the time being.**

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We urge all Ratepayer groups and Association to come on board  
The larger the membership the louder our voice.

The new fee structure is \$7.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for

Associations for more information; Email to : [ratepayersvictoria@gmail.com](mailto:ratepayersvictoria@gmail.com)

Have your say

Question(Q) What are the major issues that concern your area

Answer.(A) .....

Q. Would you support capping rates to CPI.

A. ....

Q. Should council's reduce staff and over head

A. ....

Q. In your opinion what should be the formula for CEO appointments.

A. ....

Any other issues of concern that affect your area

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Replies to Ratepayersvictoria@gmail.com

Is this why we pay Rates

The aboriginal funeral idea is out of line with directions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's national Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) framework. This RAP framework prefers organisations to pursue reconciliation through clear actions and commitments focussed on respect, relationships and opportunities (The Australian 2012). Dr Calma (Reconciliation Australia co-chair) states that "RAPS are helping to build a nation that understands its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural roots and that's something that benefits all Australians".

The aboriginal funeral expense reimbursement decision agreed by several Councils recently showed evidence of poor, irresponsible and discriminating Council decision making because:

- As an advocate for multiculturalism, Councils should know better that Australian indigenous people are made up of 2 distinct groups – the Aborigines and Torres Straits islanders. By excluding Torres Straits indigenous people in the Councils' consensus decision, they have violated racial equality in their decision making and created disharmony in RAP execution.
The consensus decision creates public conflicts that divide the indigenous people and other Australians in the ratepayers community
There is no disclosure of financial funding and sound management to ensure no impact on future rate rises, which may also result in controversial public debates that adds to the unnecessary divide of the indigenous people and the wide Australian community.

Council decision makers are community leaders and not understanding the governance requirements and public harmony of their consensus decision is no excuse. They should resign or be asked to not stand for the next election, or even be sacked as they are not capable and befitting to represent their ratepayer communities.