

Local Government Rating Systems Review

C/o Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Level 35, 2 Lonsdale St
VIC 3000 Australia
T (03) 9948 8533
E rating.review@delwp.vic.gov.au

Consultation questions – local councils

Councils are invited to respond to the following questions as part of their submission to the Rating Review. These questions are largely administrative in nature. Councils may also wish to consider the broader policy questions in Chapter 5 of the Rating Review Discussion Paper, available at www.engage.vic.gov.au/rating-review.

The Panel also encourages councils to include any other matters they wish to raise in their submissions. Please keep submissions to a total of 5,000 words or less.

If you have any queries about these questions or about making a submission, please do not hesitate to contact the Rating Review Secretariat at rating.review@delwp.vic.gov.au

- 1. How regularly does your council assess occupancies for each of the non-rateable exemptions under s154 of the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act)?**
 - What policy criteria do you apply?
 - By property category, in your municipality, how much in rates do you estimate would be raised if these non-rateable occupancies were rateable?
- 2. What rates and charges does your council declare?**
 - Do you have a revenue and rating strategy to help determine rates and charges under s155 of the Act?
 - How do you engage your community in determining rates and charges?
 - If you use a municipal charge, how do you calculate its level?
 - What exemptions do you apply for municipal charges? How many, and what is the total value?
- 3. How often have you issued rate notices to the occupier, or mortgagee in possession of, the land under s156 of the Act?**
 - What are the problems that you have experienced issuing notices under s156(3)?
- 4. Do you issue separate notices for Special Rates and Charges, or do you combine them on a single notice?**
 - What are the challenges of providing prescribed information on rate notices?
- 5. How does your council determine general rates (uniform or differential)?**
 - What criteria does your council use in their application?
 - What evidence does your council consider when determining the rates in the dollar for your differential rating categories?
 - Does your council consider what services should be paid for with other income (e.g. municipal/service/special charges)?
- 6. What administration issues have you experienced when creating and administering special rates and charges?**

Local Government Rating Systems Review

C/o Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Level 35, 2 Lonsdale St
VIC 3000 Australia
T (03) 9948 8533
E rating.review@delwp.vic.gov.au

7. Please describe the payment options your council makes available to ratepayers?

- Do you provide other payment options (in addition to offering a choice between paying in four instalments or in a lump sum)?
- Do you provide any incentives for payment of rates such as early payment? What are they?

8. Do you provide any rating rebates and concessions (in addition to State government concessions)?

- What are the criteria in your council for providing these rebates and concessions?
- What is the total annual value of these rebates and concessions?
- How do you monitor and report on the community benefits?

9. Do you have a policy for deferment of rates and charges?

- What is the current total of rates and charges that are currently deferred?

10. Do you have policies regarding waiving rates and charges?

- What types of waivers do you provide to ratepayers and what is their estimated annual value?

11. Do you raise the amount declared under the *Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983* of 10 per cent for unpaid rates and charges?

- If not, what rates do you apply?

12. What issues do you face when rating by occupancy?

13. What issues have you determined when applying rates to land that is becoming, or ceasing, to be rateable?

- Annually, over the past 5 years, how many supplementary rates and charges notices have been issued?
- For each of these years, what was the total income for these occupancies?

14. Do you have a policy regarding treatment of unpaid rates and charges?

- If you do not, how do you treat ratepayers that live in their properties?
 - Do you treat non-residential properties differently?
- Annually, over the past 5 years, how many ratepayers have you issued complaints on for unpaid rates and charges and to what total value?
- What amount of interest do you charge on unpaid rates and charges? Do you raise the amount declared under the *Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983* of 10 per cent?
- Do you have any additional administration fees and charges for managing ratepayers with unpaid rates and charges?
- What type of collection activities do you use to recover unpaid rates and charges?

15. What is your council's policy regarding selling land to recover unpaid rates and charges?

- If no policy exists, how do you apply the relevant legislation?
 - Do you apply the same approach regarding selling land where ratepayers live in their property?
- Annually, over the past 5 years, how many times have you undertaken this process?
 - How many properties have you sold?
 - How much has this cost, per instance?

Local Government Rating Systems Review

C/o Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Level 35, 2 Lonsdale St
VIC 3000 Australia
T (03) 9948 8533
E rating.review@delwp.vic.gov.au

- How many times have you claimed land instead of selling land?
 - How much did this cost, per piece of land?
- What issues have you encountered when selling or claiming land?

16. What issues have you encountered in providing information for Land Information Certificates?

- Do you provide any updates (verbal or otherwise) to applicants for these certificates?
 - Have you experienced any privacy issues in providing updates? If so, what were they?

17. Do you have a policy on how you apply the rates section of the *Cultural and Recreational Lands Act 1963*?

- How many occupancies in your municipality are categorised as cultural and recreational lands?
 - Annually, over the past 5 years, how much have you received in lieu of rates in relation to cultural and recreational property?
 - How much would you receive if you were to assess these properties under the *Local Government Act 1989*?

18. How many occupancies make payment in lieu of rates under the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* in your council area?

- How much revenue do you collect and approximately how much is forgone as result (compared to rating under the *Local Government Act 1989*)?

19. Other questions

- How many public inquiries on rates do you receive each year? What are some common themes of those inquiries?
- What software do you use to administer your rating system?
 - What is the estimated annual hardware/software cost to maintain rates using this system?
- How many staff do you employ to administer rates and charges?
 - What is the total FTE and costs for the rating and revenue function in your council?

