To: Vic Parliament's Environment and Planning C'tee,

Dear Sir/Mdme,

Having read the submissions to the first enquiry and the Bill which has been passed, I would like to make the following points. They are made in the knowledge that exemptions can be granted. This, in my view is a cynically transparent piece of window dressing to help to justify a policy position which doesn’t pass the most basic fairness test.

1. Local Government is defined in the Local Govt Handbook as the level of government closest to its constituency. It has traditionally and should continue to set its own rate levels. Like any other level of government, it is subject to regulatory control through the ballot box, which is where control of overall rates, and differential rates should reside.

2. The capping of rates is a political tactic. No logical rationale has been set out for it which stands up to scrutiny.

3. It is ridiculously biased against small rural councils which often have less in their total rate base than metropolitan councils raise in parking fines.

4. It will exacerbate the infrastructure gap which is already rapidly widening in rural Victoria.

5. The state has progressively withdrawn support (under successive governments) for essential services (libraries, MCH, School Crossings are a few of the many) which burdening Local Government with more and more regulatory control and underfunded tasks such as administering the Fire Services Levy. Each local government, to respond to the State’s weakness in these areas, needs to be able to set its own rates.

6. There is no evidence that the original submissions were taken seriously in the final drafting of Legislation.

Finally, if the State wishes to take control of rates from Local Government, it is likely one day to suffer the legal consequences of the accidents and probable loss of life which will inevitable flow from the neglect of infrastructure.

The last government to cap rates lost its mandate to govern in rural Victoria. This government will suffer the same fate if it disadvantages rural Victoria with this sort of policy.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr William Twycross