Submission to the Environmental and Planning Committee on Rate Capping.

I am a resident of Moorabool Shire, a Peri-urban shire located between 3 very large shires viz. Melton, Wyndham and Ballarat.

The issue of rate capping is to be applauded however shires similar to Moorabool do not have critical mass to meet the needs of residents and even if rates were increased considerably they will never meet the requirement for Shires that have vast area with low ratepayer numbers.

These Shires are neglected by State Governments if they are in a marginal seat and rely heavily on rate income to be sustainable. The funding is insufficient and this leads to inefficiencies in spending that do not meet ratepayer needs. A vast percentage of the rate funding is tied up in employment costs, inefficiencies and the inability to provide services that exists in the larger shires such as Melton and Ballarat.

Bacchus Marsh is the only major township in the shire and rates from here are used to fund smaller townships and rural areas across the shire – a shire that extends 50km to Ballarat. To this end we see huge population expansion at the expense of infrastructure with traffic issues that will reflect problems currently being experienced in the new suburbs in Wyndham-Tarneit, Wyndhamvale, and Williams Landing etc. Unless infrastructure is improved we are only duplicating inherent problems.

While I understand that this committee is considering rate capping, it is plainly obvious to me that we need to consolidate shires and reduce duplication and provide funding to cope with growth. With Bacchus Marsh now being under pressure to rapidly expand it will soon be another suburb as Melton is now infilling between Caroline Springs. It is now time to look at redistribution of boundaries and creating shires that have critical mass to cope. Obvious redistribution would be to move Caroline Springs to Brimbank and Bacchus Marsh to Melton, and then Ballan and the west of Moorabool to Ballarat.

I do not believe that rate capping should be considered in isolation. You need to consider shires impacted in growth corridors and look at better distribution of the rate base not the rate increase. We will never achieve infrastructure needs to meet the huge expected population. We are currently building single lane roads with little or no connectivity to major road networks and are being overlooked as State & Federal funding is going to the major partnering shires. I believe you need to address the rate issue differently for shires like Moorabool where even if rates were doubled we would not reach critical mass.

Thank you for calling for submissions

Sincerely

Russell Hendry

12th August 2017