

## **Submission**

### **Council rates;**

The basis for rates is definitely, and clearly, biased and unfair.

It is, without any shadow of a doubt, a Land Tax.

All charges are on property holders only, not on the population generally, including visitors.

Council is utterly unable / unwilling to detail actual costs for 'services' supplied.

An "independent" valuation company is employed by council, which creates therefore, a clear and strong reason to provide valuation levels that provide more funds and thereby please council.

Any dispute with a valuation must result in an expensive revaluation with the overt stated threat (by the council's valuing company) that any revaluation will/may result in a higher valuation.

Councils should definitely not be involved in any part of the process or decision making regarding the amounts ratepayers are charged.

### **Council arrangement, activities, etc;**

Council is not elected and is run by a CEO.

There is no oversight by ratepayers at all.

Elected officials are purportedly involved in 'policy' and have no say in the day to day running of council nor in the actions of council staff. At most they may have some influence.

Any disputes between ratepayers and council must go to court – a very expensive process that still does not examine the methods and behaviour of council staff, and rarely results in any clear outcome, with a definite bias in favour of the council position.

The Ombudsman will not examine the methods and behaviour of the council and its staff because the dispute resolution system consists of council being taken to court.

It is also very common practice for staff members, and elected councillors, to set up private 'consulting firms' upon their retirement, resignation, end of elected term.

These consulting firms then use their 'connections' to 'smooth' the process of dealing with council. This is clear corruption, of the 'revolving door' type.

Further, there is the councils compulsory consent process. Building consents have no need to be compulsory and definitely should only be optional. Council staff claim that these consents are for the benefit of the building owner. This is clearly not true as proven by the simple fact of compulsion.

There is already an extensive building code which all registered builders must follow. To have an extra layer of legal control only creates more cost for the building owner for no benefit at all, other than to boost, yet again, council coffers.

I think that having council staff conducting both investigations and decisions regarding both building and resource consents is a cause of corruption in the system. Investigations and the decision making process must be kept entirely separate, ie the decision process must not be in the realm of council staff.

**Council amalgamation;**

Obviously, the previous amalgamation of many small councils into a few large councils was for the benefit of those few who profited massively and for the purpose of setting up these council owned corporations that now control and decide all aspects of local government without the annoying interference of those of us who have to actually pay the costs.

**Result;**

The current local government / council system has degenerated into an undemocratic, autocratic and corrupt system of mini empires sans any sort of oversight by the people. Any reading history will see that a system of tax without representation has historically led to overthrow of said system.

**Solution;**

Break up the corporation, break up the these massive councils, and restore the system to actually local councils, town by town, with elected members, fully answerable to the electors, actually running the council activities on a day to day basis. Council costs can be supported via a 'user pays' system, not a blanket, unsubstantiated, charge system. Any and all large projects must be approved by a 75% majority vote of the community that will be paying for it.