

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 17 of 2021 House of Assembly

The petitioners ask the House to:

The petition of the undersigned residents and ratepayers of the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Municipality, Tasmania express their discontent with the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council following its recent change in Municipal Rating Methodology from Average Area Rates (AAR) to Assessed Annual Value Rates (AAV) Rates.

It is noted that the Council implemented a massive change to the rating system, during an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, with no meaningful community consultation and with a high degree of stealth and secrecy.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the House to call on the Minister for Local Government to:

1. Convene a public forum between the Council and ratepayers so that the Council can explain its recent lack of governance and the implementation of the AAV rating methodology for 2021/2022 as opposed to the previous AAR method used since 2012;
2. Require the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council to attend the meeting and freely communicate all relevant information requested;
3. Require the Council to rescind the 2021/2022 Rates and revert to the previous AAR methodology;
4. Stand down the Council until a new election is held, if the Council refuses to rescind the 2021/22 Rates and revert to the previous AAR methodology; and
5. Re-instate the 4 wards to the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Municipality and place a cap of 2 Councillors per ward to ensure equal representation across the Municipality.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

RESPONSE:

- The Tasmanian Government is aware that the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council (the Council) adopted a change to methodology for calculating residential rates from an Average Area Rate to the Assessed Annual Value methodology in June 2021.
- The Tasmanian Government acknowledges the concerns raised by community members, including that there was limited consultation with the community before the decision was made.
- The Tasmanian Government understands that through the Council's strategic planning process, it was identified that the previous rating strategy was financially unsustainable. The decision of the Council was to change the method upon which rates are calculated and increase rates significantly in 2021-22.
- As Minister for Local Government and Planning, I do not have the authority to require the Council to attend a meeting; to direct the Council to make any changes to its rating; or to stand down the Council on the basis of its refusal to amend its approach to rating.
- The former Minister for Local Government and Planning and the former Director of Local Government have, however, been worked closely with the Council to improve their performance.
- The former Minister spoke with the Mayor of the Council and met with concerned residents. The former Director of Local Government also met with the General Manager and the Council's leadership team.
- In February 2020, the then Director of Local Government conducted an audit of the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council's plans, strategies and policies, including those required under the *Local Government Act 1993*. A significant number of deficiencies were identified.
- In July 2020 a Performance Improvement Direction (PID) was issued by the former Minister for Local Government and Planning in accordance with Part 12B of the *Local Government Act 1993*. The PID required the Council to correct deficiencies with its strategic documents within a specified timeframe.
- The strategic documents provide the Council with a strong understanding of its current budget position as well as the impact current policy settings may have on its financial sustainability and capacity to provide services to the community.
- The Council has advised that all actions required by the PID have been completed.

- To promote community confidence in the Council, the then Director of Local Government instructed the Council to provide ongoing six-monthly reports to the Director and me as Minister on the implementation of their strategic, asset and financial management plans, including how these plans are informing decisions by the Council.
- The reports are also to include advice on strategies and actions to promote community confidence in Council, including consultation.
- As with other parts of the petition, I have no authority to re-instate wards in the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Municipality other than in response to recommendations from a review undertaken by the Local Government Board.
- The current Future of Local Government Review being progressed by the Local Government Board is the appropriate place to consider the merits of re-introducing wards within the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Municipality. I encourage all members of the community, including the signatories to this petition, to engage with this Review.



Michael Ferguson MP
Minister for Local Government and Planning

Date:

9/3/2022