



PORT MANDURAH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

PO Box 1339
Mandurah WA 6210

24 March 2009

David Prattent,
Manager, Financial Services,
City of Mandurah,
PO Box 210,
MANDURAH WA 6210

Dear Sir

Specified Area Rate

The following recommendations from the Port Mandurah Residents Association (PMRA) have been compiled from feedback from the committee and members who received your letter, 5 March, 2009, regarding the review of Specified Area Rates (SAR).

Early responses from members to the PMRA Committee indicated that knowledge of the Specified Area Rate and PMRA's function in its development and application were not well understood. We felt that this situation needed to be addressed and the PMRA Committee decided to circulate an email to its members who had provided an email address. This email provided a brief history; the current financial status and function; as well as future directions that the PMRA Committee feels should influence the review process of the SAR.

PMRA believes that the City Of Mandurah (Council) has the right and obligation to levy an SAR and that the process that currently administers the funds and the reserve accounts are adequate and appropriate. PMRA also feels that the present system does involve participation of the ratepayers, and that the reserve account mechanism should remain in place.

Recommendation One:

That the city continue to collect a Specified Area Rate from the Port Mandurah Canal Estate and that an amount be held in reserve that will cover forward estimates of expenditure on specific canal waterway related issues.

Only about 50% of members are on our email list (about 100 families) and responses received by the PMRA Committee generally reflected a view that the City receives an inequitable proportion of its rate revenue from Canal residents relative to services provided and expenditure required in the canal precincts. PMRA has one of the highest ratepayer membership ratios of any council area in Australia.

Recommendation Two:

That a brief summary of the Port Mandurah Specified Area Rate; the number of properties to which it applies; the formula for its calculation; the net income received; the balance of Reserve Accounts and, the budget for expenditure estimates shall be provided with the annual rate notice.

Recommendation Three:

That the proportion of the total residential rate that is collected from the properties from which the SAR is also levied, shall be also provided with the annual rate notice.

Although we asked for feedback specifically for the SAR review, PMRA members made it clear that a strong case can be argued that the contribution of residential rate of canal residents, Port Mandurah in particular, is disproportionately higher than the rest of the households in Mandurah. The high proportion of self-funded retirees, professional and independent residents and absentee owners invariably make less call on the services provided by Council, than in other areas of Mandurah.

Additionally, it can be argued that the proximity to established infrastructure, advanced internal infrastructure of the estate design and initial high cost of establishment means that recurring costs of the Port Mandurah Canal Estate to the Council is probably significantly lower than the older areas of Mandurah. Recent residential developments also require Council-supplied infrastructure.

These points alone, coupled to the higher rateable property values indicate that our pro-rata contribution to the direct finances of the City is disproportionately high, quite apart from the contribution to the economy, tourism and through support of local services and businesses.

The biggest single issue, a fact recognised by Council, is the magnitude and uncertainty of the dredging and access to the Northern Entrance of Port Mandurah. The importance of the canal estates to tourism and access to other canal estates and the Estuary is underestimated by Council. The safety issues of grounding through lack of strategic acceptance of the need for safe navigable passage at the Northern entrance to the Port Mandurah canals must be addressed as an urgent priority.

There is general consensus among the membership of PMRA that responsibility for the changing status of the Fairbridge Bank should not be the responsibility of the Port Mandurah residents and Council alone. The Department of Planning and Infrastructure (now Department of Transport) must accept that it is their activities at the ocean mouth of the Estuary that are causing the sand redistribution on the Fairbridge Bank.

Recommendation Four:

That no SAR funds be expended on dredging north-east of a line extending across the Northern entrance to the Port Mandurah canals between the Eastern extremity of the War Memorial site and Henry Sutton Reserve, until settlement of DPI's responsibilities are resolved to the satisfaction of PMRA and the Council.

The Port Mandurah Canals Waterways Advisory Group (PMCWAG) was set up as a committee drawn from the Port Mandurah Residents' Association to advise the Council on the appropriate expenditure of SAR funds. It prepares and reviews the annual budget and acts as a conduit to the Council on all matters that relate to the canal management. Significant professional, administrative and communication costs are contributed by PMRA members on behalf of all Port Mandurah ratepayers. Some recognition of the inequity and financial impost should be addressed. Summaries of actions and activities of PMCWAG are published in the PMRA newsletters and on our website.

Recommendation Five:

That the Port Mandurah Canals Waterways Advisory Group (PMCWAG) structure be maintained and where appropriate PMRA be recompensed financially for tangible support to communicate to all residents and meet Council requirements. The actions of the committee should be given wider publicity and accountability to stakeholders.

An additional impost to canal residents is to pay DPI an annual jetty licence fee for which DPI provides no service or benefit. PMRA believes that regulation responsibility should be transferred to the Council as PMRA feels that jetties within private canal estates that have mooring envelopes within the titled area of the property, should be solely managed by the Council under conventional building guidelines and any costs associated with that responsibility be covered by the SAR budget process.

Recommendation Six:

That Council accept responsibility for regulation of Jetties and Boat-lifters within Port Mandurah Canal Estate

If you would like further information to support these recommendations we are prepared to make a formal presentation.

Yours sincerely,

F. John Randall
President
Port Mandurah Residents' Association