

## **Councillor Question Time**

---

### **Question from Councillor Clark:**

This question was raised via the MAV and CIV recent discussions, and my question is would it be possible to have an opt in charge box on the rates so that people can tick the box saying they voluntarily support climate change initiatives, and it could have a value of fifty dollars or one hundred dollars or a chosen amount?

### **Response:**

#### **Rates Notice and General Practice**

The LG Act prescribes information that must be contained in the rates notice such as details on rates charges (general rates, municipal charge, service charge), due dates and payment options.

Like most other councils, we use the rates brochure to educate and communicate important messages to our community. We will be seeking councillor feedback on the 2022/23 rates brochure as part of the budget process.

The Act does not explicitly prevent Council to include additional information in the rates notice.

That said, strong caution needs to be taken on providing information not rates charge related in the rates notice. Our strong preference is to use the rates brochure in all instances.

**Can we have an opt-in charge box on the rates notice for voluntarily support on climate change initiatives (value of \$x or chosen amount)?** All charges in the rates notice are compulsory payments. A ratepayer failing to pay by the due date will be subject to late penalty interest charges. It will also be charged against the property.

If council is to consider an opt-in charge box (voluntary) mixed with compulsory charges, this may place unforeseen pressure on ratepayers to pay. If legally challenged by any members of our community, it is likely that Council has step outside its boundary with the use of the rates notice.

As mentioned above, the rates brochure would be more appropriate.

Further, we are not sure how practical and efficient this can be administered.

- A tick box is not sufficient authorisation to direct debit from ratepayers (we seek legal issue)
- There are different methods that ratepayers receive their rates (paper, portal and via real estate agents). Managing requests by different means may cause administrative burden.
- If Council is expected to provide return paid postage/envelop, if so would result in additional cost to council.
- Additional resource will likely to be required to reconcile ratepayer accounts (noting there are over 74,000 accounts)

Other options may be available to collect donations such as using Trybooking, donations directly to a dedicate bank account, groupstogether applications etc... Further analysis needed (risks, benefits, costs etc.) if these options are to be considered.

*\*Please note: answers to any questions in Public Question Time and Councillor Question Time which were answered at the meeting are included in the minutes of that meeting.*