

THE RATING OF TELSTRA AND OPTUS CABLE NETWORK

The Appeal to the full bench of the Federal Court by Telstra and Optus was heard in Sydney from 28 – 30 May, 2001. The Appeal was vigorously opposed by the group of 20 Councils which included the original Core Group from Victoria of Moreland, Yarra, Bayside and Frankston.

The primary Appeal grounds adopted by Telstra and Optus were as follows:


Discrimination – In that the Councils were not rating other carriers in a similar manner.

Excise Duty – The Appeal maintains that the Councils were actually rating a service not improvements to land.

Improper Purpose – That the Local Authority has taken a statutory decision for a purpose extraneous to the enabling legislation.

The case ran the full three days and a decision is not expected to be handed down before December.

Ian Holland



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is my final Report as President of the RMA and as the Annual General Meeting is fast approaching, it is a good time to reflect on what has been a fairly hectic year .

Our Annual Country Meeting held at Rich River Golf Club on Friday, 30 March was a great success with over 90 Members and guests attending. The venue was excellent and was complemented by an array of very professional presentations from Sponsors and other Guest Speakers on a range of interesting Topics. Our thanks to Australia Post, Lane Print Group, Clickdocs and Hann McKenzie Valuers and Property Consultants for their generous sponsorship, which enabled us to secure such a great venue. The weather was also extremely kind to us providing a nice sunny day.

The past year has seen the completion of the first ever computerised General Valuation which, in many municipalities, has resulted in a higher than average level of ratepayer enquiries and Valuation Objections. Many have had difficulty coping with the onerous reporting requirements required by Valuation Best Practice and a number of Councils have not fully completed the Revaluation processes due to problems with Valuation Contractors. In other cases, some have failed to reach agreement with the SRO on reimbursement for provision of the Revaluation data in Format A . The MAV has convened a Working Party, which is looking at ways of improving the Revaluation process. This will take time as the new Contract for the 2002 General Valuation should already have commenced and most Contracts have been locked in for at least a four year period.

The recently released Auditor General's Report reviewing Local Government procedures has been critical of both the valuation procedure and the performance by Councils in returning the first computerised revaluation. There is further suggestion that the Revaluation should not be used for rating purposes until a Certificate of True and Correctness has been issued by the Valuer- General. The MAV has sought a meeting with the Auditor General to discuss the issue.

The Review of the Local Government Regulations has been completed and copies of the Regulations are now available. The initial Review of the Local Government Act has also been completed and the Discussion Paper has been released to Councils for comment. A Regulatory Impact Statement which includes draft changes to the Valuation of Land Act has been released by the Valuer General. The Municipal Valuers Group together with the MAV Valuations Working Party are negotiating with the Valuer- General on this issue.

Finally, the past few weeks have given me time to reflect on the past six years as President of the RMA. From a personal point of view, I have particularly enjoyed meeting many Members at our meetings and have been heartened by the positive comments received regarding the Committee's efforts to continually provide new and better incentives for our Members. Over the past six years, we have seen the Association Membership grow from 90 to 185. The development of our Logo and our own Association Letterhead and Certificates has cemented our identity as an Organisation which is known and respected both within and outside Local Government Circles. The opening of membership to encompass Service Providers to Local Government has been of great benefit to our membership by changing the culture of our Association. Marketing has been another area which has increased the profile of the RMA to a point where these days, approaches are made from every conceivable type of Company wishing to present to our Members. The Newsletter has is now sponsored and professionally printed and provides Members with a communications link to keep abreast of activities of the RMA and news on changes to Legislation and other matters affecting our particular sphere of influence. Our Members continue to take up the opportunity to advertise in the Newsletter. Perhaps the one disappointment has been our failure to provide Members with a fully maintained Website. This issue has been a constant source of concern to the Committee and will hopefully be given the highest priority by the new Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the current Committee, who are a hard working and dedicated group, for all the help and support provided to me over the past year. Furthermore, I would like to thank all past and present Committee members for their support, friendship and selfless efforts to make the RMA the success that it is today.

Ian Holland
 President



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LAND VICTORIA'S RURAL ADDRESSING PROJECT UNDERWAY

Of the 2.4 million properties in Victoria, it is estimated that there are around 100,000 rural properties that do not have an address. Many people have experienced the frustration of trying to find an unfamiliar address in a rural location. Directions along the lines of *'the place with the red roof ...about two and bit kilometres down the road ...second turn on the left'* are confusing.

The **Rural Addressing Project** is a new initiative by Land Victoria to complete rural property addressing for Victoria.

Under the project, Land Victoria will work with local government in the 55 affected municipalities to name roads, allocate numbers and clearly signpost property entrances.

The project will enable clearer identification for emergency services trying to locate an emergency, improved commercial delivery of goods, postal deliveries and administration by utility authorities.

The project is seen as a natural extension of the successful **Property Information Project**, which has been embraced by Councils as a partnership with Land Victoria in developing and improving land information in Victoria.

Councils joining the Rural Addressing Project are eligible for grants under the project's capital works funding. The funding is directed at an agreed program of works to improve the quality and content of address information in their land and property records.

The level of funding required is determined as part of a consultation with each eligible council after it formally expresses interest in joining the project.

The first phase of the project has already been completed. Land Victoria project officers have visited the 55 eligible municipalities and conducted an assessment of their rural addressing status. In principle agreement to join the project has been received by 44 councils. Of these councils, 23 individual co-operative service programs have been developed, and are now with councils for final review.

Clearly marked and logically sequenced numbering of properties, benefit everyone. In an emergency situation, delays in dispatching and arrival of emergency services such as ambulance, police and fire brigade can be avoided when properties are clearly numbered - Rural Addressing can help save lives.

For more information about the Rural Addressing Project, contact Colin Salmon, Project Manager on 9269 4530.

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The Members of the RMA committee for 2000/2001 wish to express their thanks to all members of the RMA for making it a great year.

The RMA Committee are there for you, so speak to one of the Committee members if you have any suggestions to help improve the RMA or if you need some information relating to the RMA.

For Membership details or changes to membership contact Rod Leith (03) 5320 5518 or email rodleith@ballarat.vic.gov.au.

For Newsletter details contact Vanessa Faulkner 9433 3286 or email vanessa.faulkner@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

See you all at the next A.G.M. Meeting on 24th August 2001, see registration form for further details.



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