



VICTORIAN INSTITUTE of RATE ADMINISTRATORS

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VIRA NEWS

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Now that the annual rate rush is behind us once again, it is time to look forward to the preparation of voters' rolls for the August elections. Already this year we have been put behind the 8 ball because of the timetable of dates gazetted.

Last year we had only 14 days after the final day for receipt of electoral office lists to merge all voters names, carry out a physical check in order to ensure a complete and accurate list, produce tapes and despatch them to printers who require an adequate turn around time before we can deliver the lists to display points.

This year we have 7 working days to carry out the same procedures to achieve voters rolls of a standard which will be acceptable to Council, voters and the Local Government Department. Already, many councils have expressed their concerns to the Local Government Department.

During the lead up to Election Day on August 5 this year, our Councils and Chief Executive Officers will be prompting us to

finalise the supplementary valuations return in order that the amount of rates due by Telecom and Australia Post from the 1st July can be realised and accounts issued.

By this time you should have already received notice that the claw back proposed by the Commonwealth Government has been abandoned.

I also note from the newspapers that Australia Post is preparing to increase its charges to cover municipal rates.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter, is an article from the newly formed Ballarat Region of the Institute. Ian Effrett, Borough of Sebastopol was elected to the position of Convenor, and Cheryl Mason, Shire of Buninyong was elected as Secretary for the Region at the inaugural meeting held on the 27th April last.

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Cliff Wenlock, Geoff Fleming and I attended the meeting, together with interested members from local Water Boards and Councils.

As with other regions of the Institute the Executive is committed to assist in all aspects of our field as well as to generally promote the advancement of rate/revenue and property information management. Our thanks go to Ian and Cheryl.

Whilst on the subject of meetings, at the General Meeting held at the City of Chelsea on Wednesday, 5th May 1989, Barry Adams, Shire of Cranbourne, and Ian Holland, City of Frankston volunteered to collect the office administration questionnaires which were

completed by members some time ago. Just as soon as this process has been completed, copies will be forwarded to you for inclusion in your handbook.

Judi Wilding and Betsie Young, both from the City of Knox also agree to investigate appropriate apparel for female members of the Institute and report back to the Committee.

If any of the ladies have any ideas, Judi and Betsie will be very pleased to hear from you, so don't be backward in coming forward to have your say!

GERRY PEKIN
President

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V.I.R.A. Professional Development Seminar 5th May, 1989

If we are to accept the word of Mr. Tim Neville, Chief Executive Officer for the City of Knox, then rate collectors as merely Administrators are a thing of the past. The task of a total comparison and analysis of the voting and rating provisions of the old and new Local Government Acts, which has been set by Tim Dale Muir makes this quite evident.

Mr. Des Bethke, Chief Executive Officer for the City of Melbourne reinforced Tim's remarks when he pointed out that, "Councils are currently creating the positions of rates and credit control or Revenue Administration Managers to ensure not only the timely collection of rates but all associated revenue due and payable to Council. This other revenue will assume much larger proportions when the new Local Government Act is proclaimed".

We were fortunate enough that Mrs. Elizabeth Loftus was available at short notice to present a very extensive paper entitled "How Relevant are Professional Qualifications to Rate Administrators". Mrs. Loftus, Executive

the debate over statutory positions, the status of the Bachelor of Business Course at R.M.I.T., the Dawkins White Paper on Higher Education, the findings of the Joint Working Party and professional training options for Rate Administrators.

In conclusion, Elizabeth stated that, "the type of qualifications which are appropriate for Rate Administrators depends very much on what the members of the Institute want. The real question is whether you want to be recognised as professionals. If that is your aim, then you must recognise the need to pursue qualifications which will compare favourably with those of other professions and those in management generally. The decision is yours".

We are arranging copies of all the papers presented at the seminar to assist in formulating the best possible strategies to meet the challenges which have been stressed during the seminar.

During the next couple of weeks a ques-

"The real question is whether you want to be recognised as professionals. If that is your aim, then you must recognise the need to pursue qualifications which will compare favourably with those of other professions and those in management generally. The decision is yours."

Director of the Leo Cussen Institute is very well qualified to speak on this matter, given her background in Local Government, involvement with R.M.I.T. as a lecturer in Local Government Law and Head of the Joint Working Party on the Educational Requirements for Local Government Managers. Elizabeth addressed such issues as the National Review of Local Government Labour Markets,

tionnaire will be forwarded to all participants in order to obtain your thoughts and opinions following the seminar.

The Committee, Geoff Winston and Laurie Groom have been encouraged by the enthusiasm shown by more than 100 participants at the seminar. My thanks go to all who attended and a special word of thanks to Laurie and Geoff.

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PENSIONER REBATE ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION

The verification process of eligible pensioners has always been a major concern of Rate Office staff. The task of manually checking thousands of pensioner numbers, names and addresses is not relished by any of us.

Those members who have a computer system which uses pensioner numbers as a KEY to the voters file would have the luxury of being able to use a magnetic tape supplied by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works or some other rating authority to compare pensioner records.

The truth is that very few councils have the software set up to do this job programmatically.

The two main inadequacies in our systems are related to the pensioner number. Either the pensioner number is not a key of access to the file or the council does not maintain the number at all.

For those councils who come within the area of the Board of Works and experience these problems when going through the verification process, the Board has amended the contents of the program to include the council's assessment number.

The Board maintains council assessment numbers to simplify its process of taking up our revaluation and supplementary valuation figures.

While this is not the ideal situation as is a verification of the property file rather than the voters file, it will nevertheless provide a method by which the process can be carried out more efficiently.

Mr. Jack Sabato, Manager, Rates and Charges for the Board, has assisted in initiating this amendment.

The contents and format of the tape which is presently supplied to councils are as follows.

Contents

- Board Reference Number
- Pensioner Name (abbreviated)
- Address
- Pension Number
- Rebate Entitlement Percentage

Format

- Take format type: EBCDIC
- Speed of which tape/tapes written: 1600 VPI
- Current record length: 72 characters

The contents and format will be altered slightly to accommodate council's property numbers.

ODD SPOT

The following letter arrived with a late rate payment at the Shire of Sherbrooke.

*Please find enclosed
A cheque for my rates
I'm so sorry it's late
But I mixed up the dates.*

*Interests included
In the cheque I've enclosed
So I hope all is well
And I'm "home and hosed".*

*Thanks for your patience
What more can I say
but
Sincerely Regards
And have a great day.*

NEW PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Members of the Executive Committee of the Victorian Institute of Rate Administrators have for many years suggested that each of us should visit the Rate Office of the Local municipality when travelling on annual leave. With this in mind the State Secretary, Geoff Fleming, arranged to meet the Rate Administrator at the New Plymouth City Council on a recent visit to New Zealand. The following is a short report on their meeting.

New Plymouth is a major rural city on the south west coast of New Zealand's North Island. It has a population of almost 50,000 and just over 17,000 assessments, and a staff of four in the Rate Office. Industries include engineering, ice works nearby, fishing, oil exploration and tourism. The city is also responsible for electricity supply but this is completely separate from the Rate Office.

The Rates Clerk, Mr Keith Hughes, gave me almost three hours of his time so we discussed matters of mutual interest such as instalments, rate recovery, pensioner rate remissions, penalties for late payment and differential rating. It was interesting to note though that the New Zealand Government is currently going through the process of re-drawing Local Government boundaries - amalgamations - something the Victorian Government was unable to see through here and was also the subject of our discussions. This is not to say that there are not opponents to amalgamations in New Zealand however it appears to be generally accepted that amalgamations will proceed.

Rates

The rating year commences on April 1, each year and becomes due and payable in four instalments. Instalments for the year ending March 31, 1989 were as follows: -

Quarter	Instalment Due	Last day for payment before penalty
April 1 - June 30	May 9, 1988	June 20, 1988
July 1 - September 30	August 8, 1988	September 20, 1988
October 1 - December 31	November 7, 1988	December 20, 1988
January 1 - March 31	February 6, 1989	March 20, 1989

The penalty is a straight 10% on the amount overdue including previous instalments and unpaid interest rather than as a per annum up to date of payment.

It is interesting to note that the first instalment for the year, due in May, is the equal of the last instalment of the previous year. This means that an account can be forwarded prior to Council striking a rate and then deducted from the rates leaving a balance due, to be paid either in full or by three remaining instalments. I thought this to be an excellent idea to help with Councils income early in the year and unlike in Victoria really is a payment each quarter. You will note though that there is very little time to recover any unpaid final instalments prior to the end of the financial year.

New Plymouth City Council has a number of differential rates and all are based on the land or site value. There are three rating areas and four types of rates. Rating areas 1 and 2, are for Commercial and Industrial properties in different areas of the City, and area 3 for all other

property. Added to this are water rates, refuse collections, drainage charge, "water outside the City" and "outside City connection to sewer" charges. All rates and charges include the central government "Goods and Services Tax" at 10% but rising to 12.5% from July 1, 1989.

Recovery of rates is not that different from what we know by issuing summonses and in extreme cases the sale of the property. They do not, however have the ability to place a rental demand on the occupier but thought this an excellent idea. Like us they also have the habitual bad payers who, when they leave seem to be replaced by others equally as bad.

Rate Rebate Scheme

The rates rebate scheme however is very different and makes our system extremely simple by comparison. The maximum rebate is \$200.00 and is dependent on the rates payable and the household income being no more than \$6527 for the year ending March 31, 1988. This increases by \$156.00 for each dependant living at the property not including the spouse. Income includes all money other than lottery prizes or insurance payments by any joint owner of the house living at the property. If the income is greater than \$6527 then a partial rebate is still available and reduces by \$1 for every \$8 over the limit. This means the total household income must be less than \$8127 or \$156.28 a week, provided there are no dependants, to receive any rebate at all.

as follows: -		
Income		\$7591.00
Income Limit		\$6527.00
Extra Income		\$1064.00
Divided by 8 =		\$133.00
This means the rebate will be reduced by \$133.00 thus: -		
Rates		\$493.00
Initial Payment		\$160.00
1/3 Payment		\$111.00
		\$222.00
Deduct extra income		\$133.00
Rebate		\$ 89.00
Therefore		
Rates		\$493.00
Rebate		\$ 89.00
Payments		\$404.00

Apart from this the rebate is calculated after an initial payment of \$160.00 and one third of the balance and examples are as follows: -	
Total Rates	\$493.00
Initial Payment	\$160.00
Balance	\$333.00
Payment 1/3 of Balance	\$111.00
Balance	\$222.00
Rebate	\$200.00
Balance Due	\$ 22.00
Therefore Payments \$160.00 plus \$111.00 plus \$22.00 =	\$293.00
Rebate	\$200.00
Total Rates	\$493.00
If the income level is greater than \$6527.00, say as much (or as little) as \$7591.00 then the rebate would be calculated	

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Applications must be made each year. You can see that this is an unwieldy system and for all the faults of the present scheme here in Victoria we can be thankful that such a rebate for pensioners or those on low incomes does not have to be administered by us.

Voters Roll

I was pleased to learn though that the voters roll is provided by the central government and is not a combined roll as it is in Victoria. Not for them the problems of combining a central and local roll and then trying to sort out the duplicates and remove them from the lists. This I thought most sensible however does not overcome the problem of taxation without representation, ie. having ratepayers who are denied the vote even though this happens with State and Federal taxation with these same people however this is the subject for policy makers and not totally relevant to my report.

The idea of an Institute for Rate Administrators was well received by the Rate Office staff at New Plymouth and Keith Hughes was very interested to learn more about the V.I.R.A. While he felt such an Institute would be good for Local Government in New Zealand and help raise the status of Rate Office staff generally, he felt there were a number of difficulties that must be overcome first. Paramount among these is the constant changing of rate administrator personnel in New Zealand Local Government together with the current issue of amalgamations. Added to this is the difficulty of the terrain, for although the country is not much bigger than Victoria the roads are very windy and take forever to go from place to place. Still one can only hope there are more people in rate administration in New Zealand like Keith Hughes at New Plymouth and that they, like us, will one day form themselves into an institute as South Australia has done recently.

Finally I would like to thank Keith and his staff for giving me their time and I would recommend any member when travelling both here in Australia or overseas to visit the local council and see the rate office staff. You will be amazed at the similarities and find the differences interesting and you too can pass them on to others through V.I.R.A. News.

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BALLARAT REGION

BALLARAT REGION INAUGURAL GENERAL MEETING 27th April, 1989

At a Regional meeting of the Victorian Institute of Rate Administrators in Geelong it was suggested that a Ballarat Region could be formed. Ian Effrett, Rate Administrator Borough of Sebastopol, took the initiative to contact local authorities to gain opinions and gauge support of the idea. The response suggested that a Ballarat Regional Branch would be worthwhile.

Consequently the inaugural meeting of the Ballarat Region of the V.I.R.A. was held on Thursday 27th April, 1989, at the Town Hall, Borough of Sebastopol.

In attendance at the meeting were V.I.R.A. President, Gerry Pekin, State Secretary, Geoff Fleming, and Geelong Convenor, Cliff Wenlock. We thank these representatives of the Institute for their valued assistance and advice to guide us in forming the Ballarat Region.

Office bearers were duly elected as follows:

**Convenor - Ian Effrett, Rate Administrator
Borough of Sebastopol**
**Secretary - Cheryl Mason, Assistant Rate Collector
Shire of Buninyong**

The discussion moved on to general business where it was decided that the Region would meet quarterly with the next meeting to be held on Thursday 6th July, 1989, at the Town Hall, Sturt Street Ballarat.

On behalf of all members of the Ballarat Region, I would like to thank Ian Effrett for the time and effort he has spent in organising the inaugural meeting, and offer him future support as our Convenor.

We trust we will be of benefit to all those involved.

Cheryl Mason,
**SECRETARY BALLARAT REGION
VICTORIAN RATE ADMINISTRATORS**

DONT FORGET

The Annual General Meeting of the Institute will be held on 14th July 1989 at the City of Oakleigh.
Please ring Geoff Fleming (567 3651) if you do not receive a registration form.

Perhaps members might like to know about the following amendment to the Currency Act.

CURRENCY ACT 1965 PART IV - LEGAL TENDER (As amended)

Section 16

(1) A tender of payment of money is a legal tender if it is made in coins that are made and issued under this Act and are of current weight -

- a. in the case of coins of the denomination of Five cents, Ten cents, Twenty cents or Fifty cents or coins of 2 or more of those denominations - for payment of an amount not exceeding \$5 but for no greater amount;
- b. in the case of coins of the denomination of One cent or Two cents or coins of both of those denominations - for payment of an amount not exceeding 20 cents but for no greater amount;
- c. in the case of coins of a denomination greater than Fifty cents but less than Ten dollars for payment of an amount not exceeding 10 times the face value of a coin of the denomination concerned but for no greater amount;
- d. in the case of coins of the denomination of Ten dollars - for payment of an amount not exceeding \$100 but for no greater amount; and
- e. in the case of coins of another denomination - for payments of any amount.

(2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), a coin shall be deemed to be not of current weight if it has become diminished in weight by wear or otherwise so as to be of less weight prescribed as the least current weight of that coin.



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- Experience, if any, in
- Shorthand
- Typewriting and
- General Office Work

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The successful applicant will be expected to reside in this Municipality.

The Council reserves to itself the right to terminate the appointment by a fortnight's notice.

The Council is not bound to make any selection from the applications received for the position.

J.H. TAYLOR,
Town Clerk.
Town Clerk's Office, Brighton.
29th March, 1922

A RATE TAIL

A friend of mine who is a hunter decided to take a much-needed holiday, and went off for a week's hunting. He asked the park ranger if he could rent a hunting dog for the week, and the Ranger said, 'Yes, we have an excellent dog here. It's called "Assistant Rate Collector", and the rent is five dollars a day.' The hunter thought that was a bit steep, but he was on holiday, so he took the dog. The dog was wonderful; he had the best week's hunting he has ever had. When he

came back the following year, he asked if he could rent "Assistant Rate Collector" again. 'Certainly,' said the ranger, 'but he was so good we promoted him to "Rate Collector" and he's now ten dollars a day.' 'No matter,' said the hunter. 'He's worth it. I'll take him.' The dog was magnificent, and the hunting was superb. On his return the following year, he asked if he could rent "Rate Collector" again. 'Ah,' said the ranger, 'he's "Revenue Manager" now.' The hunter was upset.

'There's no way I could afford him now.' The ranger smiled, 'You couldn't afford fifty cents a week?' Now the hunter was puzzled.

'When he was "Assistant Rate Collector" he was five dollars a day; when he was "Rate Collector" he was ten dollars a day; and now he's "Revenue Manager" he's only fifty cents a week? Come?' 'Well,' said the ranger, 'since we made him "Revenue Manager," all he'll do is sit on his ass and bark!'

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