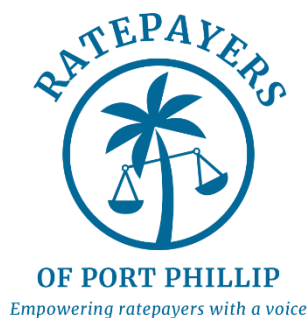


## Newsletter 12 December 2018



### What is happening in RoPP?

Our committee met with mayor Dick Gross and councillors Bernadene Voss, Tim Baxter and Andrew Bond on 3 December. The purpose of the meeting was to share our concerns about the high cost of council rates and establish whether the council members are open to working with us to reduce rates and council spending.

We are pleased to report that our meeting was productive and the councillors acknowledged that rates are a very important issue and they have agreed to meet with us once a month during 2019 to work on a plan to reduce rates and spending. Our goal is to bring Port Phillip spending into line with our neighbouring councils of Bayside, Glen Eira and Stonnington as a starting position. We are hopeful of a constructive and collaborative relationship and we will evaluate the success of this initiative by evidence of a meaningful rate reduction for the 2019-20 financial year.

### Invitation to attend a public meeting of RoPP

Members and guests of RoPP are welcome to attend our first public meeting at the Mary Kehoe Community Centre, 224 Danks Street, Albert Park at **6:30-7:30 pm on Wednesday 30 January 2019**. Please be aware of parking restriction in the area.

Please RSVP by sending an email to [cdspence@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cdspence@optusnet.com.au) before 5pm on Thursday 24 January. We will share our objectives, action plan and hear what you have to say.



### Council wage hike exposed

We have been given an interesting newspaper article from the Herald Sun (13 May 2018 - see below) that exposes a massive blowout in wages costs for councils across Victoria. Port

Phillip Council is no exception as it has budgeted wages expenditure of \$95.6 million for the 2018-19 year which represents a 9% increase over the prior year wages of \$87.8 million. The CoPP has budgeted to pay the salaries of 875 full time equivalents in 2018-19. The article recognises that *'at a time of stagnant wage growth, when ordinary Victorians are tightening their belt, the extravagant increase in labour expenditure warrants greater examination'*.

This article reflects the views of RoPP and we whole heartedly agree with the following two comments in the article:

*"Councils are increasingly populated by activists with delusions of grandeur who spend ratepayers' resources to grandstand on issues of national and international significance, issues that have little to do with local government business"*

*"Long-suffering ratepayers would appreciate councillors refocus on core council business that affect the daily lives of Victorians including the traditional three Rs of local government: rubbish, roads and rates".*

SUNDAY, MAY 13, 2018

OPINION 53

# Council wage hike exposed

**A**N extraordinary blowout in council wage expenditure is a concerning development for Victorian homeowners.

A *Sunday Herald Sun* investigation of the draft budgets of 31 municipalities has revealed that wage bills are accounting for close to 44 per cent of council revenue. In some big-spending councils, the figure is significantly higher. The figures do not include funds paid to external contractors meaning the total spent on manpower is even higher.

A number of factors including population growth, a boost in executive salaries and new workplace agreements have been blamed on the surge.

Moonee Valley council's draft budget shows plans to spend \$84 million — or 54 per cent of its budget — on 861 staff next financial year, jumping from \$55.4 million just five years ago.

Meanwhile, Cardinia Shire spent less than a third of its revenue on staff salaries.

The figures show a remarkable 25 per cent increase on staffing costs since 2013-14 across

30 metropolitan Melbourne councils and the City of Geelong.

At a time of stagnant wage growth, when ordinary Victorians are tightening their belt, the extravagant increase in labour expenditure at local government warrants greater examination.

The third tier of government has for too long escaped the level of scrutiny state and federal governments routinely receive.

And yet dozens of council officers in Victoria earn more than Premier Daniel Andrews.

Councils are increasingly populated by activists with delusions of grandeur who spend ratepayer resources to grandstand on issues of national and international significance, issues that have little to do with local government business.

In recent years we have seen councillors from the City of Monash debate whether to officially acknowledge the Armenian genocide, which occurred a century ago on the other side of the world, while Yarra council voted to fly the Co Vang flag despite warnings from the Federal Government that it could jeopardise trade with Vietnam.

Moreland council has debated a treaty with Aborigines, an issue far removed from its province, and has in the past defied advice from Victoria Police, the State Government and local business owners to back protests by masked troublemakers.

Yarra, Moreland and Darebin councils have formally dumped Australia Day celebrations on

January 26, despite the national holiday being supported by the overwhelming majority of the population. La Trobe council raised the ire of ratepayers earlier this year by spending \$21,000 to send a contingent, including mayor Darrell White, to Asia to visit wind and solar farms.

The waste is nothing new, in 2015 Mornington Peninsula ratepayers paid thousands to send councillors on a junket to Paris to attend a United Nations climate change conference.

Global and national policy discussions are not matters for local government. It's little wonder that ratepayers are sick of their hard-earned being used by councillors to play politics on matters well above their station.

The pet projects of activist councillors should not be allowed to monopolise council time and waste valuable resources.

Australian policies on border protection, same-sex marriage, climate change and Australia Day are not issues that concern the third tier of government.

Long-suffering ratepayers would appreciate councillors refocus on core council business that affect the

daily lives of Victorians including the traditional three Rs of local government: rubbish, roads and rates.

Victoria's growing population does not justify the blowout in council wages, particularly when looking at the percentage of total revenue spent on staffing costs.

There needs to be far greater accountability to stop councillors and council staff from falling into the gravy train mentality.

Addressing the expenditure on salaries would greatly reduce pressure to increase rates.

Indeed, it could lead to a decrease in the amount property owners contribute in council rates and allow local municipalities to provide greater funding for services such as roadworks, parks and libraries.

The mindset that wage costs and hence rates must rise every year is counter productive in creating efficiency and cost savings.

Most hardworking property owners do not have the time to analyse council documents including annual reports. That's why we are exposing the soaring wages bill of Victorian councils — you deserve to know and the *Sunday Herald Sun* exists to serve you.

**Sunday Herald Sun EDITORIAL**

## New Members and Donations Welcome

We are continuing to grow our memberships through word of mouth and thank you for telling friends and neighbours about RoPP and sharing our newsletters. We encourage you to continue spreading the word. We know that many ratepayers are not aware of the massive rate rises and suggest that you ask your friends and neighbours to check their rates notices over the last 2 or more years.

Also thank you for your donations and for joining the Ratepayers of Port Phillip which is a not-for-profit incorporated association. Your donation will be used to do everything possible to reduce your rates. RoPP committee and supporters are volunteers and the funds will be used to get the message out there, not Christmas parties, overseas travel, personal self-development, virtue signalling or vanity projects.

Your donations to help fund our activities such as maintaining the website, printing of materials to promote further memberships, hold meetings and to elect new Councillors who support our objectives.

We would appreciate any donation (say \$10, \$20 or \$50) no matter how small. Please make your donations to the following bank account:

**BSB: 063188**

**Account no.: 10461095**

**Account name: Ratepayers of Port Phillip**

Please note your donation is not tax deductible. Your support is vital in being able to bring these issues to the attention of ratepayers and to make the necessary changes within the council to reduce your rates.

## **Are you a social media guru?**

We are looking for a member with social media skills to help our communications through newsletters website, Facebook and Twitter and another with a legal background to ensure we comply with relevant laws. If this is you, please contact us by emailing [cdspence@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cdspence@optusnet.com.au) or [www.ratepayersofportphillip.org](http://www.ratepayersofportphillip.org) or calling 0414386198.

## **Flyers for letterboxes**

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to help distribute flyers. We should have the flyers in the next few days and I will be in contact with you to give you the flyers and a map of the areas that require a letterbox drop.



And finally, our committee would like to wish all the ratepayers and residents of Port Phillip a safe and enjoyable Xmas with family, loved ones, friends and others.

Remember there are a number of volunteer activities available to assist others and places where food is welcomed if you have over catered.