

Hepburn Shire Council higher cap application

Submission received via email

Date submitted: 10 April 2025

Submission written by: Name withheld

I write to oppose the Hepburn Shire request for an increase in rates above the CPI increases. We, the ratepayers, have been constantly paying for bad management and governance practices, as well as poor financial management by Hepburn Shire Council. Increasing our rates only endorses bad governance and financial management practices. I personally believe that we, the ratepayers, would be better served by disbanding this Council and dividing up the area amongst adjoining LGA's.

Over the last 12 years I have seen my rates increases from \$2,700pa to \$4,000pa. A 48% increase. I have not undertaken any works on my property which have triggered a price increase. I can't afford that. I can't honestly say that there has been any noticeable improvements in my area as a result of Council works.. Most monies appear to be spent on tourist areas within this municipality.

In 2024 my dog registration fee was \$35. My 2025 fee is \$48. A 33% increase in a municipality which doesn't even have a dogs off Leash Park.

My observation is that there has not been any corresponding improvements to our municipality other than those funded by external grants. And often these grants are used to fund the employment of a short term person or consultant who undertakes a "study". There are rarely any actual physical improvements resulting from these studies.

Cr Brain Hood, our former major, stated at a community meeting that the 10% rate increase will not solve the financial problems of the Hepburn Shire Council. Ref Trentham Trumpet, April edition, Councillor's Report p 9 &10. <https://www.thetrenthamtrumpet.com.au/>

"Ratepayers would be paying 10% more for 12.5% less serviced"

"Even in that scenario Council, as an organisation, would not have the surplus funds to buffer against unforeseen emergencies (eg fire, floods, storms), would not have surplus cash to make co-

contributions should grants be secured from other tiers of government, and would have no cash to fund the construction of new assets.”

In my opinion (the author of this email) I do not think the Hepburn Shire Council is a well-managed and financially sustainable Council for the following reasons.

Governance.

Systemic bad governance practices by Hepburn Shire Council resulting in huge financial losses.

1. Loss of \$5.65 Million. Purchase of the Rex building in Daylesford and the later sale of this building resulting in a financial loss of \$5.65 million. Our community are outraged and the recent “sorry” from the Hepburn Council has not dampened community anger
<https://www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/Council/News/Latest-news/Statement-by-the-Mayor-Councillors-and-Chief-Executive-Officer-%E2%80%93-Hepburn-Hub-at-The-Rex> It took a leaked LGI report to prod this Council into “sorry” and an admission of poor governance, project management and lack of transparency.
2. Loss of \$250,000 plus uncalculated staff time. In 2023 Council spent \$250,000 on consultant’s fees responding to community concerns about lead and chemical contamination of the Glenlyon Recreation Reserve by a gun club. This land is crown land within the township of Glenlyon and managed by Hepburn Shire Council. The first consultant reported significant contamination so Council then funded a second report which drew different conclusions. These costs should have been born by the gun club involved and the lease agreements should have considered the issue of contamination and included conditions which indemnified us, the ratepayers. Another example of a Council who lacks good governance protocols.
3. Undisclosed losses subject to confidentiality clauses. Council are the legally appointed Committee of Management of most Crown lands in this municipality. Council did not review the usage of the Crown land containing the Victoria Park caravan park to ensure that the Council appointed managers were compliant with legislation in relation to time limitations of 30 consecutive days’ stay on Crown lands. When new managers were appointed they understood the legislation. 11 elderly long term residents then faced legal eviction. Council supported these 11 folks at huge (undisclosed) legal expense, to remain at the caravan park or be relocated. Another example of appallingly bad management/governance of Council managed Crown lands. We, the ratepayers, end up paying for another Council stuff up.
4. Hepburn Shire management slammed in report RENE ROBINSON 78 Sep, 2011 10:76 AM

HEPBURN Shire Council management was named and shamed in a Victorian Auditor-General's report tabled in parliament on September 14. Hepburn Shire Council was one of four councils across Victoria to be randomly audited by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office this year. The 50-page report concluded that Hepburn Shire Council required considerable

improvement before it's executive could provide adequate assurance to ratepayers that their rates were being spent appropriately and effectively.

Perhaps most damning of all, the report highlighted Hepburn's decision to invest in the construction of three elderly persons units without a business case, which resulted in it committing \$591,000 in its 2010-2011 capital budget to a project that it later discovered was not feasible on the selected site.

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Yours sincerely

