

Essential Services Commission 2015, *A Blueprint for Change, Local Government Rates Capping & Variation Framework Review — Draft Report Volume I*, July 2015.

*Submission #3 by: Joe Lenzo*

22 August 2015

After the presentation by Dr. Ron Ben-David at the Victorian Local Government Association rate capping forum on 20 August 2015 it is quite apparent that the Rate Capping Variance process was of high concern. Actually it is a concern to RatePayers also.

Simply put, it is simply a matter of putting forward a good business case to justify the variance.

Another issue brought up was whether the requests for Variance would be published on a web site. There was a great issue of fear on the part of councils that this part of the process would be transparent.

Upon giving it a great deal of thought I think all requests for variance should be published with the business case and that the decisions of the panel on the variance be published also with the reasons why or why not the variance was approved.

I might add that Dr. Ron Ben-David handled this issue brilliantly.

Publishing on a web site would address the concerns of councils knowing what business case will be approved and which will not and why. It will give all a transparent insight to the process.

Again “Consultation” raised its ugly head and the variance panel must insure that proper transparent consultation has taken place. Should there be an option for submissions to the approving authority on the issue of proper transparent consultation only, not on the request for variance?

Joe Lenzo, the only non-council representative attending the conference, presented a brilliant discussion about transparent consultation and community engagement during the budget process and suggested that if there were community engagement and the principles of participatory budgeting in play the issue of Rate Capping would have never come up.