
Brisbane Association for Rates Equity Inc.

B.A.R.E. wins rates reductions for thousands of units

B.A.R.E. and its supporters have had a partial, but significant, win on the rates front – with the Council conceding that they got it wrong with their ‘parity policy’, which imposed huge, unfair penalties on unit owners that would potentially discourage people from moving into high-density unit complexes.

Almost every week since July 2008, ratepayers have addressed Council meetings to point out to the Lord Mayor and his Councillors the flaws in the proposed system. Fortunately, we’ve moved on from the Lord Mayor’s stance on 4 November when he said:

“Madam Chairman, it is difficult to respond when these issues have been raised week after week, for quite a long period of time. We’re not going to change the system ...”

On Tuesday, 9 December, the Council introduced a resolution that will provide ‘remissions’ to the worst hit unit owners. This will still result in large increases in General Rates for thousands of unit owners from 1 January. Even in the Working Example used by the Council to show how the ‘remission’ system will work, General Rates that were set to rise by a staggering 660% under the ‘parity’ scheme will still increase by more than 360% after the ‘remission’.

(At the same meeting, the Labor Party moved an amendment that the ‘remissions’ be extended so that they negate the impacts of the ‘parity factor’ entirely. However, this was opposed along party lines and defeated by the LNP majority. The Labor Party then voted with the Council for ‘remissions’ for unit owners because they offer at least partial relief for thousands of ratepayers who will be hardest hit by the ‘parity factor’.)

It has been a victory for people-power and maintaining the pressure on Council to keep them accountable to those who pay their wages. However, thousands of unit owners will still pay up to and more than double the rates of their suburban house counterparts.

The Council has certainly won the propaganda battle with their claims that unit owners currently pay far less in General Rates than suburban homes, which many people now believe. However, six months after making this announcement, they have still not provided any evidence of the research that was conducted to draw this conclusion – and alternative research discredits their claim. Their failure to produce the figures to back their claims has raised doubt in many people’s minds as to whether such evidence actually exists.

B.A.R.E. is continuing its campaign to maintain the current equitable rating system for all Brisbane property owners - to have the ‘parity’ scheme overturned and to have the 10% cap reinstated on owner-occupied properties.

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