

Councillor Question Time – answers to questions taken on notice*

Enquired regarding details of the number of residents who currently receive paper versus electronic rate notices, what the cost to rate payers was regarding this, and what council is doing to encourage electronic access for those who have this option.

(Cr Marcus Pearl)

Response

Electronic Rates Notices: Benefits and Next steps

Rates Notice background:

- 175,000 notices issued per year. This is made up of:
- 70,000 Annual notices
- 90,000 Instalment Notices
- 9,000 Reminder Notices
- 6,000 Final Notices

Since July 2016:

4,373 (6.2%) of assessments are registered to receive notices online. This is higher than other Councils bench marked for the same introductory time period.

Benefits:

If 100% of rates notices are provided electronically, we could save in excess of \$60,000 per year.

Cost per paper rates notice	Cost per electronic rates notice
\$1.09	\$0.56

- Faster access to rates notices for the customer (post vs electronic.)
Approx. three days to receive in the post vs instant online
- Customers have historical access to rates notices online
- Reduce cost for the customer when requesting replacement rates notice (we charge \$10 per replacement notice.) We receive approx. 500 of these requests per year.
- Reduce staff time for council. When customers want a replacement notice, they can self-serve rather than contacting council.
- Reduced cost for council. Printing, paper, and mail cost. \$2,500 to date

Comparing other councils:

- Yarra - 6%
- Nillumbik - 8%
- Hobsons Bay - 7.5%
- Melbourne - 7%

How we currently promote take-up

- Online registration instructions are included on all rates notices
- Advertised on auto reply emails from Rates helpdesk
- Advertised when customers call the Rates department

Next Steps to increase take-up

- Continuous marketing campaign to increase the take up of electronic notices.
- Develop an electronic new owner/resident pack promoting Council services. The new owners would automatically be placed on electronic notices and we would also send them the new owner pack as soon as we are notified.
- Introduce SMS payment reminders, assisting with debt recovery.
- We are exploring options to provide electronic notices to real estate agents who receive bulk paper notices (approx. 25% of total notices). They will also receive a payment upload file so that they can pay in bulk and reduce their administration time.

**Note: answers to any questions in Councillor Question Time which were answered at the meeting are included in the minutes of that meeting.*