

Hawkesbury landowners get extended deadline for review of their land value

Description

“In this episode, a climactic meeting with the Valuer General, plans to secede from the Hawkesbury, and a ray of hope for people who have endured massive rate rises, but only if you act now.

In my last video I described how thousands of Hawkesbury ratepayers have been hit with a big rise in their Council rates. I described how the 23% of our landowners whose rates have gone up, are now paying 35% of Council rates, and how that just isn't fair.

I explained how the biggest part of that rise came from changes to land value as calculated by the Valuer General. An important development has occurred recently that you need to know about.

Hosted by Council, a representative from the Valuer General's office came to a very well attended meeting at the Windsor Function Centre on August 30th.

Present were hundreds of angry ratepayers, stung by the rise in their rates, and who generally had not availed themselves of the opportunity to apply for a review of their excessive land valuation before the 60 day cutoff – the period that began after everyone received their valuations earlier this year.

At that meeting, the Valuer General made two concessions. The first is that Hawkesbury Residents have now had the deadline extended, and they can apply for a review of their land valuations until the end of September 2017.

If you live in the Hawkesbury and your rates have gone up, I strongly suggest that you apply to ask for a review of your land valuation.

[The details of how to do that are at the link on the Valuer General's website.](#) My hope is that if enough people do this, some pressure can be brought to bear.

The second concession was that no landowner asking for a review in this round will have their land valuation put up. This is important because when you ask for a review, it could go down or up, and this makes the process of asking for a review a no-risk proposition.

However, unless you cite the right reasons, your application for a review may fail.

“I don't like this” or “I'm on fixed income and can't afford to pay” aren't likely to get much traction, even if they're true.

As I see it, there are three grounds for review, especially if you live in the Oakville, Maraylya, or Vineyard area.

The first is that real-estate values are being distorted by adjacent development caused by the North West Growth Sector.

Of course, one riposte may be that, even so, they are current the real-estate sales values, and that the Valuer General's is merely applying their formula, and that's that.

However, residents attending the meeting at Windsor were alarmed to find that only around ten sales

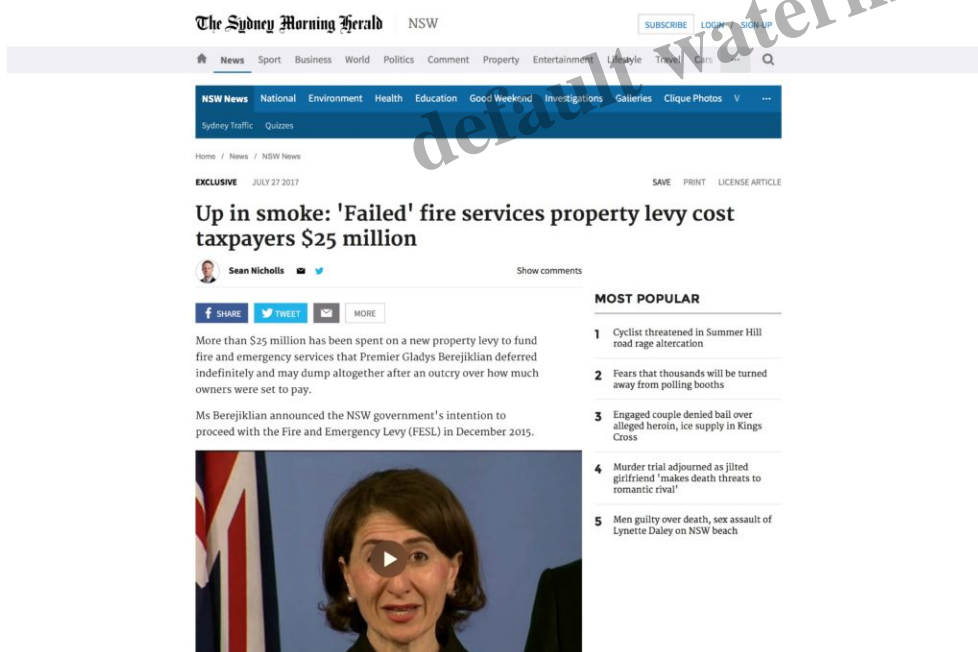
in the area were used to define the values for the whole suburb, which is over 1200 properties in Oakville, Maraylya and Vineyard. This sample space is too small to be representative. Similar properties are grouped together into statistical units called Components. Nearby components separate to the Oakville component are cheaper, despite both containing acreage properties with similar aspects and uses. In my opinion, the Valuer General's methodology is flawed.

My second concern is that land value should be reflective of what people can do with it. [This instructive video from the Valuer General](#) acknowledges that things like whether the land is sloped, or has an ocean view, has good soil, or is subdividable, all affect land value. Overwhelmingly, your land that has risen in value so sharply can only be put to the same use that it could be put a year ago, and no subdivision is in prospect. The Valuation of Land Act states that land must be valued according to its "highest and best permitted use". But what happens when land is bought, at inflated prices, on the basis of speculation that it will be rezoned in the future for a different purpose?

The Valuer General should be prudent enough to mitigate against the effects of speculation in the market.

The third concern is that the Valuer General should acknowledge that changes as severe and rapid as this are socially and politically intolerable.

When you think about it, there is some precedent here. Look at what happened with the recent Fire and Emergency Services Levy.



You will recall this was introduced with great fanfare by the State Government in December 2015, only to be withdrawn in July this year, precisely because the government's modelling was flawed. When it came out that the change in tax to many property-owners, based on land valuations from the Valuer General, were too steep, too unfair and too rapid, the whole program was put on hold.

Political intervention was justified there, and is here too, and for exactly the same reasons. Your Liberal Councillors, including myself, have stood up for Hawkesbury residents on two fronts. To the degree that Council can affect change, we will continue to push for it, all the while continuing to bring these concerns before our State colleagues as well.

I'll end by answering a remark I've heard at more than one community meeting. Ill-feeling is bad enough among some to suggest that parts of the Hawkesbury feeling this financial pain should secede from the Hawkesbury and apply to join the Hills Shire, or that the whole question of amalgamation between the Hawkesbury and the Hills be re-opened.

I'm not sure what you'd call that. Following the model of Brexit, should it be Hawkes-xit? Oaks-xit?

Frankly this is a nutty idea. Firstly, Hills Shire council never saw a development they didn't like, and if you want the whole of the Hawkesbury to look like Rouse hill or Kellyville, then... please see your GP to change your medication.

Secondly, you would be no better off. The Hill's rating structure is not so different to our own. To join the Hills Shire, where people may or may not eat their babies, would be at best a Faustian bargain that we would regret.

The Hawkesbury is a special place, and it deserves to stand on its own and determine its own destiny. I regard our corner of the world as a bulwark against the encroachment of what I call ant-hill Sydney. It is a valuable region of the greater Sydney area that is still most valuable for its amenity, open space, agriculture and heritage. If people can't afford to live on acreage allotments because the rating structure is unfair, those on Council who have engineered this change might care to accept some of the blame when landowner's thoughts turn to selling up to developers.



Category

1. Uncategorized

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Date Created

September 9, 2017

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