

The Big Picture

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“News to use & amuse”

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Editorial – Punishing the poor

In June/July 2010, the Launceston Council (Tas) raised its rates by 5.5% which represented a raise of over 40% because Council's costs had just been reduced by \$25 million per year as a result of the transfer of water and sewerage responsibilities to a different authority.

For a typical low income household, the bundle of services were included in the rates in 2009 which cost typically (approx) \$1,360 p.a. which included water, sewerage, other services such as roads, and a whole list of expensive optional activities such as swimming pools, football grounds and a museum.

In 2010 the cost of that same bundle of services rose to \$1,940 as water/sewerage was charged separately at \$500 and rates rose to \$1,440 – a total increase of 43% (\$580) per year for exactly the same services that were supplied last year. No reduction in rates was offered despite the Council having more than \$25 million dollars less work to do after the transfer of water and sewerage to another group.

An increase of 43% for the same bundle of services!

It is clear that neither the State government (which controls Councils), nor the Council itself, regards the affordability of such increases to poorer families, particularly those on fixed incomes like pensioners. Home owners have the asset of their property, but retirees don't have the cash to pay these rises. The effect is to drive them deeper into poverty, and strike at the poorest working families.

Who can afford increases of over 40% for the same services?

The [Examiner](#)...

Opposition Leader Will Hodgman has seen his pay increase from \$217,161 to \$223,964 - about \$613 a day.

Greens Denison MHA and new Secretary to Cabinet Cassy O'Connor has picked up an extra \$33,490 to take her overall package to \$173,416.

New Franklin Labor MHA and minister David O'Byrne has bypassed the backbench to step straight into a job worth \$223,964.

Labor's backbenchers earn differing amounts due to the size of their electorate allowances.

New Bass Labor MHA Brian Wightman earns \$150,537, Lyons MHA Rebecca White \$158,789 and Denison MHA Scott Bacon \$139,926.

The electorate allowances are much higher for geographically large electorates like Lyons, but all lower house members start on the same base rate of \$111,633 a year.

New Bass Liberal MHA Michael Ferguson gets \$150,537, the same as long-serving Bass MHA Peter Gutwein and Greens MHA Kim Booth.

Health Minister Michelle O'Byrne gets \$228,680.

Isn't it time that community leaders such as Mayor Van Zetten and Premier Barlett controlled the costs of government so that they didn't rise any faster than the cost of living.

That Was The Week That Was

Governance + spin

Gillard 'top down' methods no better than Rudd's [TheAge](#)

Same old Labor under Gillard [Australian](#)

Tas govt car pool couldn't organise a ride in 2 yrs [Mercury](#)

Forestry/Food/Agriculture

Climate/water/energy/resources/environment

Soil carbon key to future [ClimateSpectator](#)

Australia in denial over greenhouse effects [SMH](#)

\$2 bn power price rises result of lack of carbon price [Telegraph](#)

Biodiversity on the balance sheet [ClimateSpectator](#) (log in)

Political green hypocrisy on show in Vic: Davidson [TheAge](#)

Health & education revolutions/communication/defence

Understaffed health agency stunts medical services [SMH](#)

How our brains threaten democracy [BostonGlobe](#)

Australia's quality of death rating [CanberraTimes](#)

Economy/social/shelter/transport/free speech

Skills shortages an economic risk [Australian](#)

World & GFC

Costs of China manufactures set to soar [TheAge](#)

Historian warns of sudden US collapse [ICH](#)

Just so you know

The Tasmanian Local Government Act states..

28. Functions of councillors

(1) A councillor, in the capacity of an individual councillor, has the following functions:

- (a) to represent the community;
- (b) to act in the best interests of the community;
- (c) to facilitate communication by the council with the community;
- (d) to participate in the activities of the council;
- (e) to undertake duties and responsibilities as authorised by the council.

How a 40%+ rise in the costs of services is 'in the best interests of the community' is yet to be revealed by Mayor and Council.