

Revenue raising by any level of government cannot be reviewed in isolation. Responsible and accountable expenditure of that revenue also needs to be considered.

Traditionally local government (council) was the final facilitator of day to day community services e.g. waste collection, street cleaning, road & footpath repair, parking control, local planning etc. Over time councils have become politicised so that now we have three levels of government policy-making that overlap and are often conflicting. This politicisation has led to the diversion of funds to non-core activities to appease the 'party' constituents. The forum of council is being used as a soap box to criticize the opposite side of politics. Many examples can be found on the council websites.

While councils' CEOs and their staff may be professional bureaucrats, the overriding policy and directions is governed by the councillors in the chamber. The chamber is too easily hijacked by ideologues with little real world experience. This is a reflection of the low pay that councillors receive. Voters have little choice.

This desire to socially engineer the community comes at the expense of ratepayers. Examination of budgets reveal expenditure on fringe issues or issues that councils cannot control such as climate change (if indeed it is an issue at all).

Until local government is de-politicised and diligent well qualified people are attracted to the role of councillor, local government's existing revenue raising options should be critically assessed in terms of accountability and productivity, and not expanded. Alternatively local government should be overhauled and run as a branch of state government, or super councils formed with appropriate remuneration to attract the right candidates. Once an efficient and non-political structure is in place, only then should revenue raising capacity be reassessed with a view to broadening capacity.