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Committee Secretariat
Social Services and Community Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Email: ssc@parliament.govt.nz

RATES REBATE (STATUTORY DECLARATIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

Kāpiti Coast District Council (Council) supports the intent of the Rates Rebate (Statutory Declarations) Amendment Bill to make it easier for eligible applicants to apply for a rates rebate; however, Council would like to propose an additional amendment to remove the need for customers to provide proof of income.

Council participated in the Rates Rebate Beta Trial, alongside Tauranga City Council and Hutt City Council. The online application tested in the Trial removed the need for customers to provide proof of income, but this amendment was not carried through to the draft Bill. Removing the requirement that an applicant had to attend a local authority office, or make some other arrangement, to have their application witnessed by a person authorised to take statutory declarations under the Oaths and Declarations Act 1957 *without also removing the need for proof of income is likely to result in additional administrative costs for local councils.*

Presently, the witnessing of a customer's declaration serves as a means to ensure that all supporting information has been received. Under the current draft of the Bill, councils will no longer have the opportunity to do this. As a result, councils will then need to follow up with applicants for missing information.

To remedy this, Council recommends that the Bill be amended to remove the need for customers to provide proof of income. A simple requirement to include the individual's IRD number would allow the IRD to confirm the income if needed as part of their audit process. This would further simplify the rates rebate application process and save administrative costs. While this amendment could lead to increased concerns about fraud, these concerns could be remedied with more robust protections, such as those recommended by the New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM) in their submission on this Bill.

Another issue that affects some of our residents is the requirement for property owners to own property at 1 July to qualify for a rates rebate. To ensure all residents are treated equally, we would recommend that some form of pro rata calculation be written into the legislation.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to submit on the Rates Rebate (Statutory Declarations) Amendment Bill.

Yours sincerely



Wayne Maxwell
CHIEF EXECUTIVE