

A Partnership for a Stronger Community: Empowering Ratepayers in Mossel Bay

Introduction

This document explains a powerful new partnership between four organizations dedicated to ensuring that the interests of ratepayers and homeowners in Mossel Bay are effectively represented in the Municipal Council. This collaboration between MossRates, the Mossel Bay Property Owners Association (MPOA), the Independent Ratepayers Association of South Africa (IRASA), and the National Taxpayers Union (NTU) creates a new model for local governance that is more accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the community.

In simple terms, this partnership provides a way for ordinary citizens to have a real voice in how their town is run, ensuring that their rates are used to deliver the services they expect and deserve.

The Partners: Who They Are and What They Do

This partnership brings together four distinct organizations, each with a unique and vital role to play:

Partner	Role	Contribution to the Partnership
MossRates & MPOA	The Local Representatives	These organizations are the grassroots voice of the community, representing the interests of local ratepayers and property owners. They are responsible for identifying the need for and recruiting qualified, community-minded individuals to serve as councillors.
IRASA	The Political Shield	As a registered national political party, IRASA provides a platform for independent councillors to stand for election. This shields them from the influence and pressures of traditional political parties, allowing them to remain focused on serving the community that elected them.
NTU	The Legal Powerhouse	The NTU provides the legal framework and expertise to hold the municipality accountable. They have a proven system for disputing municipal rates and service charges when the municipality fails to deliver, giving the community a powerful tool to enforce their rights.

What the Partnership Achieves: A New Way Forward

This partnership creates a clear and achievable path for ratepayers to take back control of their local government. Here's how it works in practice:

1. Finding and Electing True Community Representatives

For too long, municipal councils have been dominated by political parties, with councillors often more accountable to their party bosses than to the people who elected them. This partnership changes that.

- MossRates and MPOA will advertise 5-year councillor posts to the community, seeking out the most suitable and qualified candidates to represent the ratepayers.
- This means that councillors will be chosen based on their skills, experience, and commitment to the community, not their political connections.

2. Ensuring Independent and Accountable Representation

Once elected, councillors need to be able to represent the interests of the community without fear of political interference. This is where IRASA comes in.

- By standing for election under the IRASA banner, councillors are protected from the pressures and demands of traditional political parties.
- This ensures that their loyalty remains with the ratepayers and homeowners who elected them, and that they can focus on delivering the results the community wants to see.

3. Holding the Municipality to Account with Legal Muscle

When the municipality fails to deliver the services that ratepayers are paying for, it can be difficult to know what to do. The NTU provides a powerful solution.

- The NTU has a legally-tested system for disputing municipal rates when services are not delivered. This is based on the fact that many municipalities have illegally levied taxes by failing to follow the correct legal procedures .
- When a dispute is declared, the municipality is legally required to credit the ratepayer's account. If the municipality still fails to provide the service, the TPA (Tax Payers Association, the local arm of the NTU) can arrange for the work to be done and claim the cost back from the municipality.
- This creates a powerful incentive for the municipality to deliver the services that ratepayers are paying for, and provides a practical way for the community to take action when they don't.

The Big Picture: A New Model for Local Governance

This partnership is about more than just fixing potholes or getting the streetlights working. It's about creating a new model for local governance that is more democratic, accountable, and responsive to the needs of the community.

By working together, MossRates, MPOA, IRASA, and the NTU are empowering ratepayers to take back control of their local government and build a stronger, more prosperous community for all.