

Council slammed for charging waste levy on useless beach blocks

By [Gabrielle Costa](#)

26 September 2018 – 11:41am

The council at the centre of a long-running battle over thousands of useless, worthless beach blocks that cannot be developed is billing owners for a "waste infrastructure charge".

The impost has appeared on notices sent out recently, enraging owners who say they have been [paying rates for years on land that cannot be built upon](#), and which are, in many cases, worth almost nothing.



Seng Tan, who now lives in Perth, bought a block on Ninety Mile Beach in 1970.

Photo: Supplied

Seng Tan, who bought a block at The Honeysuckles for about \$970 in 1970, said that

his waterfront property was now nominally worth \$1000 – and he had been paying the rates for decades.

Mr Tan has no waste collection on his property and no use for any waste infrastructure, as his land, which was once zoned residential, cannot now be developed because of changes to planning rules.

Now the Wellington Shire Council has levied the \$55 waste infrastructure charge, Mr Tan questioned whether it was in a bid to try to "scare people into surrendering their properties".

"They charge me rates to put pressure on me to sell to them," he said. "I am holding off. I do not give up easily."

2018/2019 ANNUAL RATE NOTICE		ABN 18 420 243 468	
for the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019		18 Desailly Street Sale VIC 3850	
WELLINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL		Telephone	1300 366 244
Date of Issue: 14/08/2018		Facsimile	(03) 9477 1111
Property Description: 1960 Shoreline Drive THE HONEYSUCKLES VIC			
3851 LOT 1400 LP 79440			
Arrears Brought Forward & Account Rounding	\$0.00529700 on	\$1,000.00	\$5.30
General Vacant	\$55.00 on	1.00	\$55.00
Waste Infrastructure Charge			\$0.00
Pension Rebate (if applicable)			\$0.00
50% Concession (if applicable)			\$0.00

Seng Tan's rates notice, with the waste infrastructure charge highlighted.

Photo: Jamie Brown

Mr Tan's rates notice says the waste infrastructure charge is to help the council "comply with the Environment Protection Authority requirements, state legislation and sound waste management practice ... to specifically fund sustainable waste facilities".

The Age is aware of other owners also being billed for the waste infrastructure charge on similar blocks. One said simply: "But what do I have to pay this for?"

A spokeswoman for the Wellington Shire said all ratepayers in the municipality were charged the levy "for the provision of waste infrastructure for the benefit of the broader community".

"The charge is to cover the cost of regenerating, EPA compliance and operating the transfer stations and tip sites within the municipality. All tip and transfer stations are available for the use of all ratepayers."

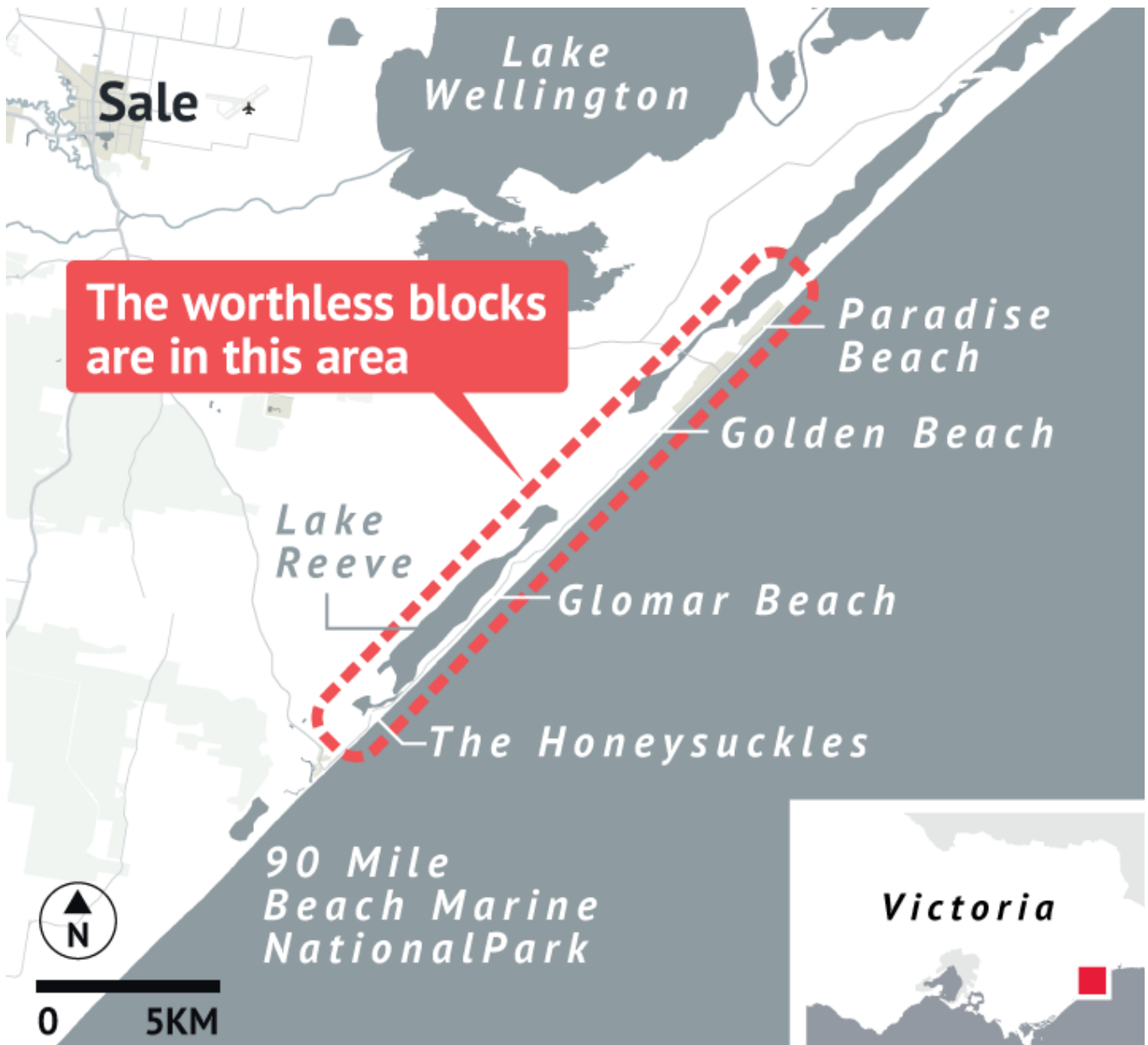
The council has plans to ask people in some parts of Ninety Mile Beach to hand back their blocks next year. There are 2800 subdivisions in the area that will be subject to the "voluntary assistance scheme".

Anyone giving their property back will receive no compensation.

The council spokeswoman said Mr Tan's block was not in the area subject to that voluntary assistance scheme but in a separate coastal dunes section and that Mr Tan had been "provided with an offer for the transfer of the land". The offer was for an assistance payment of \$1500.

The beach-blocks saga is often referred to as Victoria's longest-running planning dispute.

A private developer sold 11,800 blocks in the 1950s and 60s, mostly to newly arrived migrants, along a 25-kilometre stretch of coastline within the bounds of what is now Wellington Shire.



Shortly after people bought the blocks, they were told the land could not be developed.

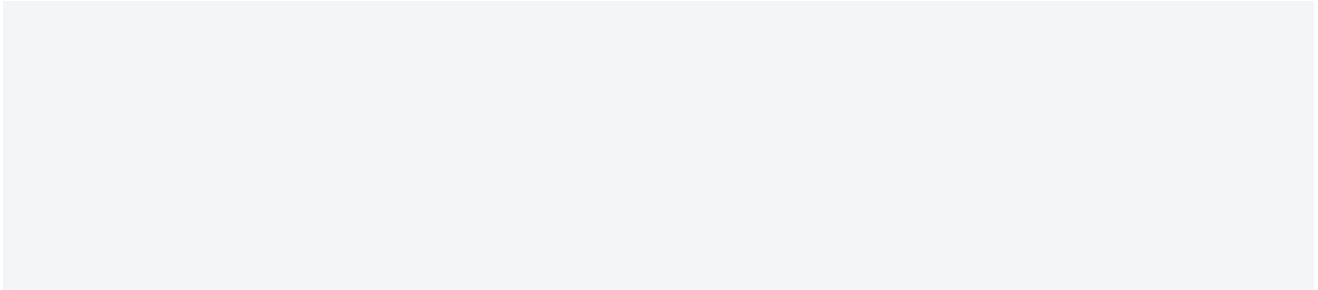
Essential infrastructure that had been promised on what was touted as Victoria's own Surfers Paradise was never built.

Since then, planning regulations and state and council policy governing the area has changed many times, creating confusion and worry among landowners. [Many have given their blocks back under a series of buybacks](#) and some properties have been compulsorily acquired. Some owners, however, are holding on.

There are some parts of the original subdivision where development is allowed,

subject to regulations that stipulate blocks be joined together to create a larger lot. And it was [recently revealed that some of the blocks in those areas](#), which had been acquired by the council in the past, would soon be sold off for a significant profit.

Gabrielle Costa's grandfather bought a block in nearby Paradise Beach. She has no financial interest in it.



Gabrielle Costa

Gabrielle Costa is a homepage editor at The Age.