

A decade of advancing electronic rates processes

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Buying and selling property is a complex process made all the more complicated by the sheer volume of mandatory paperwork required to close the transaction. For 10 years, rates clearance management system, Lexis® RatesClearance, provided by LexisNexis South Africa's Business Software Solutions division, has facilitated the speedy and efficient turnaround of the critical rates clearance figures and certificates issued by the local municipality, through a simple and secure online user interface.



The rates clearance certificate is an essential document that proves that all the outstanding debt on the property has been paid by the seller and must be lodged in the Deeds Office with the property transfer documents in terms of Section 118 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act, No 32 of 2000 (Systems Act).

Ewald Scheepers, Divisional Director for LexisNexis Business Software Solutions, said the phenomenal success of Lexis RatesClearance over the past 10 years was in the manner in which it has assisted municipalities using the electronic system to decrease their turnaround time significantly.

“It has been an honour to have served local government and communities alike over the past decade, enhancing the speed of property transfers and change of ownership. Today there are close to 80 Councils embracing digital transformation and using Lexis RatesClearance countrywide in an important shift away from the manual paper process,” he said.

“The City of Cape Town - a Lexis RatesClearance user since 2004 - has chopped the time taken to issue rates clearance figures down to 15 - 20 minutes, compared to an average of six weeks in other large metropolitan municipalities. The City of Ekurhuleni’s turnaround time has also decreased from 30 days to 10 days for the matters where they adopted the system,” he added.

Importantly, the cost of the system is funded through the efficiencies it brings and municipalities adopting the system enjoy significant savings..

The easy-to-use, paperless system provides a full audit trail in a secure and trusted electronic environment, streamlining communication and speeding up turnaround time for the benefit of all involved in the process of property transfer. This not only benefits the buyer and seller, but also the bank issuing a bond and the attorney doing the transfer.

Lexis RatesClearance also enables municipalities to comply with all legislation pertaining to property transfer, including the Municipal Property Rates Act, the Municipal Systems Act, the Electronic Communications Act and the Protection of

Personal Information Act (POPI). It is also supported by client training and customer support.

Scheepers said highlights during the 10 years of the solution's existence had included the launch of product developments – such as Refunds, Move In and Move Out - which made the total process in a property transfer completely electronic and eliminated the need for time-consuming, in-person visits to municipalities.

“Lexis RatesClearance has also helped to uncover fraudulent transactions, such as when an attorney firm lodged a false clearance certificate with transfer documents to the Deeds office despite the municipality not having issued a certificate due to outstanding costs,” he added.

He said there are big developments on the cards for Lexis RatesClearance in the near future.

“We’re extremely proud to have reached 10 years of serving local government and look forward to releasing further tweaks and value-adds within the platform to ensure that municipal clients can continue to extract the most efficiency and cost savings through this paperless, electronic rates process.”

Complementing Lexis RatesClearance, LexisNexis has a slew of innovative solutions for all players in the property industry, including Lexis Sign, Lexis Pay, Lexis Tracker, Lexis WinDeed, Lexis Prop IQ, Lexis Connect and Lexis Convey.

For further information on Lexis RatesClearance, visit <https://www.lexisnexis.co.za/lexisratesclearance>.

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