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26 October 2017

lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au
Acting Committee Secretary

**Re: Submission Local Government Electoral (Implementing Belcarra)
and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017**

Developer Donation Ban

Dear Acting Committee Secretary,

Please accept this submission which will be 90 minutes' late due to Council commitments and late notification of this opportunity.

Firstly let me congratulate the Crime and Corruption Commission on its detailed and appropriate recommendations, which, if adopted by Parliament, will substantially place Councillors and staff on notice regarding the need to be honest and accountable on all matters of public responsibility.

As a LG Councillor for over 25 years, I have seen many things first hand, and recognize the urgent need to totally remove the right for Councillors and staff to receive gifts from property developers. There is an expectation of favour, and recipients would be mindful of this.

Our shire was a developer's smorgasboard back in the 1980's, and local papers saw the shire on the front page on a regular basis for all the wrong reasons. We even had a Commission of Inquiry where the only engineer (for water, sewer and roads) was sacked, despite his being honourably exonerated by the Appeals Court. The Council was sacked - but only for 24 hours, when political intervention overturned the sacking decision, and the appointed Administrator did not take office.

There was no fear shown by the majority of Councillors, they felt "protected" - which they were. Legal action was common, and the public foot the bill for all of Council's mistakes. Developer contributions continue to be commonplace.

The Commission's observations are correct where very few, if any, are prepared to challenge the issues of Conflict / Pecuniary Interest suspicions or failures. Four years is a long time when sitting among members one may have challenged or reported. The working relations can become quite volatile as I discovered.

The legislation and *will* to deal with wrong doing is one thing, but knowing that there is an effective mechanism to address and penalize proven acts of misconduct, provides comfort for those who are brave enough to expose it.

The lack of challenge and penalty in the past has been a real deterrent for those wanting to do the right thing.

In these events, the lack of effective challenges, has allowed acts of misconduct / criminal activity to flourish to the point that it has become common place, and ultimately accepted.

Groups offering support for the Commission's 31 Recommendations need to be applauded for their stance - they have no doubt waited a long time for this opportunity, as I have.

Perhaps now the people have reason to again have confidence in their Local Governments, but moreso, have confidence in the government which is brave enough to make the changes necessary to demand accountability and integrity.

I trust you will find these comments helpful, and I wish you success in adopting the Bill.

Yours faithfully,

Glenda Mather Clr
Livingstone Shire Council

Spectator News 27 October 2017

Pulse of the people

Nothing gets chins wagging, or tempers up faster than Councils which either misread or ignore public opinion. If it's unaddressed, there's a subtle countdown to the next election.

The vibes I'm picking up on the streets clearly reflect public concern over Council spending - where the money is going - and why start new projects when there is so much to be done to address town issues - like maintenance. I couldn't agree more, and I've been saying this for some time. Subsidized grants are welcomed by most Councils, but when debt is high, they need to be selective, and productive.

It seems everyone is experiencing hard times, and it's causing them to be more vigilant over public spending.

QTC outcome

My Notice of Motion to have Queensland Treasury Corporation (QTC) undertake a Financial Review of Council's financial position, didn't get off the ground. There was discussion on the need, given that two reviews were carried out in the two previous financial years, and one *may* happen next year - no guarantees.

There is currently a lot of financial movement taking place at the moment, due to the various projects underway, and I'm very mindful that much of the spending will *not* raise the revenue to pay for the maintenance and depreciation. Once completed, these projects will cause pressures in future budgets.

I've advised the table I'll await Council's half yearly statements in January, and if I have the same concerns then, I'll re-submit my Notice for the Financial Review.

I'm no financial guru, but it doesn't take a genius to follow the trail of assets and liabilities. If jobs can be created during the current economic climate, that's a good thing, but we must look beyond "now" to ensure our current ratepayers are able to meet these future costs.

Developer donations

The 31 Recommendations presented to the state government by the Crime and Corruption Commission (the CCC) were in response to its investigations into certain Councils, and how they conducted their business. The investigations were thorough, and the findings reflected activities which most honest people would consider, "not transparent, inappropriate.

When the integrity of local governments are jeopardised through the mal-practices of one or more of its representatives or employees, someone needs to step up and expose these events, demanding something be done.

When complaints and evidence reflect the problems are more widespread, and a number of Councils are involved, someone has to step in and dig out the cancer in the system.

Through its recommendations to the state government, the CCC has done just that.

Before reform can be achieved in local government, there needs to be a will to demand it.

I would question those opposing these stringent measures. What do they have to fear? To restore confidence in our councils, and our state, we need to be backing this reform, no matter how unpalatable it may seem. The alternative is, the cancer will return.

Until next time..