

**Submission  
No 45**

**INQUIRY INTO 2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

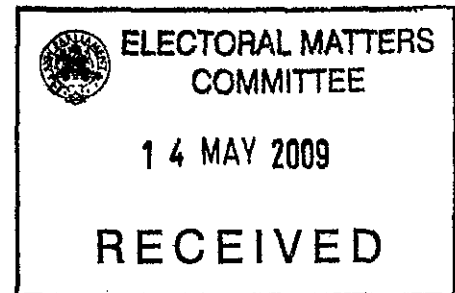
**Name:** B R Gray

**Date Received:** 14/05/2009

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# JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE

**ON**



## ELECTORAL MATTERS

**CLOSING DATE: 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2009**

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000.

Committee Members,

1. As a lifetime resident of the Western Suburbs of Sydney I have for some time been concerned about the actions of some Western Sydney Councils, their subsidiaries and those working within the Local Government system regarding their failure to address or even acknowledge community concerns particularly involving Community Health, the diversion and possible misappropriation of ratepayer funds for political and electoral purposes the frequent attempts to deny the community their democratic rights to determine the future of their community and even the right to address their civic leaders on local issues.
2. I have no Political affiliations, have never belonged to, contributed to or donated to any Political Party or individual candidate and having observed several Councils in action over the past six years through three Local Government elections I believe I am totally INDEPENDENT and well qualified to comment on these issues.
3. It is my belief and the belief of others that Councils and those within are presenting the views and strategies of political Parties and not those as in the traditional independent capacity that the community expects and demands of them. Elected and employed Councils are representatives of the community not the State or Federal Government.
4. Some appear to believe that Councils exist for their own or their parties benefit, that they are above community scrutiny and report only to those within their cocooned world. Their support is recognized in a protective cloak of secrecy with Council and State support.
5. Some in Councils not only represent big business they are big business and are said to carry on their business activities using Council (Community) resources. They are immune from and ignore obvious 'conflicts of interest' and vote on relatives and friends DA's without the required declaration. These conflicts of interest are known to others in council but no voice is raised by them in the voting process. Action only arises when a member of the community complains with the end result a meaningless counselling.
6. Many Councillors are using their election to council as a stepping stone to riches. Where else would one get a retainer while approving development applications of their friends, family or possibly even their own.
7. Their aspirations of Monetary reward is obvious in the rotational 'musical chairs' style election of Mayor where agreements are made by Councillors to serve for a period and then resign the position so another agreed person can perform the role and share the Mayoral salary, allowances and the perks that come with that Office.
8. In several Councils, Councillors including Mayors, are in fact property developers, real estate agents or investors but these Pecuniary Interests are not declared in Registers because the company is held in the name of the spouse, child(ren) or other relatives. The excuse put forward is that there is no conflict of interest as the spouse is independent despite this States Inheritance and Divorce laws that distribute estates between survivors or spouses.

9. *This practice is widespread especially in business practice. It is straight out dishonesty should be removed by banning all developers, real estate agents and other similarly engaged from the Local Government Election process.*
10. *Some major Councils still record very abbreviated typed minutes of their meetings despite the availability of cheap and reliable continuous video/audio recording equipment being available. Strange when this equipment has been available for at least twenty years and is used at Federal and State Level within the Political and Legal arenas and in many Councils within NSW. Why not? Is there a fear that they might say something that can be used against them later or upon which the behaviour might be judged?*
11. *Most State and Council documents express the need for community consultation and involvement in Council matters but in practice nothing is further from the truth and the community is being excluded and ignored.*
12. *Some Councils have taken to Caucusing on public interest issues, performing pantomimes in public meeting and holding meetings in private for no apparent reason other than to exclude the public. Attached hereto are public admissions by Councillors from different areas saying that. (ATTACHMENT 1).*
13. *Why doesn't Council and the State Government want Community involvement. Obviously it is so they can operate under a veil of Secrecy that allows unhindered determination of Development applications of private and corporate donors and others. Closed Councils only encourage community distrust and suspicion of wrong doing.*
14. *It is my belief and evidence points to the fact that the need for 'Urban Consolidation' is nothing more than a political strategy to inflate corporate and party profits under the pretence that assistance is needed to fund election strategies*
15. *The money is of course going into the coffers of Political Parties, unelected groups of often faceless people, providing only a coordinating role in the running of candidates at election time. Having used the corporate and private donations the Party receives Taxpayer funds from the Electoral Funding Authority in compensation. My view is that Political Parties are profiteering from donations and Electoral funding.*
16. *Strange isn't it that while rural NSW is struggling with drought and loss of numbers as Farmers walk off the farm and the young move to the city in search of employment our State Planning Department is focused on Metropolitan Residential Developments which until this government came to power was the domain of Councils. Could that be because some people promoted through the Local Government System do not want to lose their Local Government relationship or a steady income stream for the Party .*
17. *There is growing evidence that supports the view that donations coincide with Development Approvals at State and Local Government Level, acts that are illegal and may be actionable when those involved are identified. While in many cases the developer, the development and the donation can be identified the only missing links are those who made the arrangements.*
18. *Even with recent legislative changes relating to political donations it appears that there are still candidates/Branches receiving donations from developers that have not been declared. If the donation is made to the candidate for his use only then the responsibility is on the candidate. If it is for use by the Branch then it supports the view that Branches are receiving donations direct that are not being declared to the NSW Electoral Commission as required.*
19. *State Government changes to planning and other laws means that there is very little work being done by Councillors and except for one or two on site meetings Councillors are treating meetings as a social event. Attending being fed, running a farcical meeting in which decisions have been made prior to*

the meeting. Then it is back to the bar for more conviviality with developers and other Council 'groupies'. For this privilege the community is asked to pick up the tab.

20. While there are an adequate number of Councils in NSW there are just too many Councillors within the System ranging from seven in rural areas to fifteen in major metropolitan areas. This Government's future plans to 'Regionalise' Councils by merging smaller councils with larger ones is poor thinking and a backward step. These types of Councils will become more distant from the residents they are supposed to serve and make it even harder, if that is possible, for the community to take part in the building of their community.

21. Fifteen Councillors in one local government area of 92000 enrolled voters is clearly too many. While most Councillors work in real occupations of a daytime, are self employed or work in the offices of State and Federal MPs they are spending little time meeting with their constituents to discuss local issues.

22. Most Council contact with the community is in reading 'Resident Panel' surveys or through the Development Application 'objection' process but as determinations are now made in pre-submission interviews these objections are being ignored, even those that raise serious health concerns supported by documentary evidence.

23. Many Councillors claim that they are overburdened with council work, claims that do not ring true when they are seen in action at Council Meetings. (See also attachment 1 for confirmation). Because the general public are not invited to Council dinners their work rate cannot be assessed. The overwork is more due to their business and daytime occupations than to Council business. All of Council business is done by an ever increasing number of Council employees with the majority of their recommendations being adopted by Councils without comment or debate. Hardly overworked.

24. It appears also that even Council Zonings and Development Plans are being conceived in the offices of Major Property Lobby Groups with Senior Council Management embedded their Planning Section. So we have a Lobby Group Council and Senior Council Management developing their plans in secret, that are then 'Councillorised' by the Manager and placed before Elected Council for the usual rubber stamp approval. How many Councils have their Senior Staff secretly embedded with Property Development Groups determining Zoning and Development Plans to the disenfranchisement of the community?

25. The membership and composition of this group shows that they the majority of members are donors to Political Parties individually as well as through the Lobby Group and particularly to the ruling party.

26. Onsite meetings are dwindling and often attended by only one or two Councillors and an employee of Council. One Councillor I know is on record as saying that he will not attend meetings, including onsite and workshops, because they are not held on the night of Council's meetings. At over \$600.00 a night for a councillor and \$1000.00 a night for the mayor that is not a bad retainer.

27. I believe that the community is becoming sick and tired of the current 'Secretive and Dictatorial' style of State and Local Government leadership and there is obviously a need to return to a 'Constitutional style Democracy'.

28. The current system of complaint handling by Councils also needs to be reviewed. In this day and age the practice of Councils investigating themselves should not be tolerated. It is not acceptable in Government Departments such as the Police Force who have five separate groups looking over their shoulders yet local Councils investigate themselves. There are even instructions on how to handle people who do not accept their answers regardless of whether the answer is right or wrong.

29. Councils are responsible for billions of dollars of Community assets and finance. Councillors and staff deal almost daily with people involved in the development industry and are apparently allowed to accept gifts from Council clients yet they investigate themselves.

30. The majority of complaints against Councils involve Developments and Development Applications, however complaints appear to be investigated and dealt with 'in-house'. Complaints to the Ombudsman are generally referred back to Council. Complaints to ICAC are a waste of time.

31. One of the most dishonest acts that occur at election time is when members of major parties fill their pre selection group with one certainty another with a chance of picking up a seat on council due to the 'Donkey Vote' and another no chance of getting elected and then fielding other candidates as **INDEPENDENTS**.

32. In one election a member of a particular Party is said to have complained that because he had been moved down the pre selection panel he intended to run in the same Ward but as an **INDEPENDENT** despite the fact that he had considerably more personal voter appeal than any of those pre selected.

33. With the party on the nose in that particular ward it was expected that voters would swing away from that Party. It was no surprise that the Candidate got sufficient votes, more than three times the preferred party candidate on his own while the chosen one had to rely on the 'Donkey Vote'..

34. For years he has worked in an official capacity in the office of and as the representative of several State and Federal Ministers and Members of Parliament and it is still active in that area. It is obvious that he never intended to resign from the party and that the exercise was nothing more than a cynical play to fool voters and to draw disenchanting party voters to his so called **INDEPENDENT** stance.

35. The Dictionary defines **INDEPENDENT**, inter alia, as :**"FREE FROM THE INFLUENCE OR CONTROL OF OTHERS; SELF GOVERNING, OBJECTIVE, SELF-CONFIDENT, SELF-RELIANT, NOT ADHERING TO ANY POLITICAL PARTY, NOT CONNECTED WITH OTHERS, A PERSON WHO IS INDEPENDENT IN THINKING, ACTION, ETC, ESP. IN POLITICS"**.

36. While his loyal supporters may have known of his intention to retain membership of and support for his Party the people who would not have known were the non aligned voters recording their vote on the Ballot Paper at the Polling Booth . Following his election he continued to move, support and vote along party lines as if he was a Party representative. A successful Party strategy no doubt and definitely dishonest.

37. This is obviously a manipulation of the electoral system that is not supposed to happen in a democracy. It is dishonest, probably unlawful and completely against any form of procedural or electoral fairness that should have been identified and acted upon then by the NSW Electoral Commission and the State Government not to mention the State Branch of the Party coordinating their candidates.

38. It is believed that a number of Candidates in the 2008 Local Government Election also presented themselves to the Community as **Independent** in a similar manner and for similar reasons. This practice should be banned and if a Party Member wants to run as an Independent then there should be a gap of at least one election from the time of resignation from the party.

39. Oner Council had Seventy Candidates seeking election. Would all seventy share the same community spirit to solve the communities problems or are some of them party members masquerading as **INDEPENDENTS**. I have no doubt that several would be Real Estate Agents or Property Developers.

40. Because of this increasing 'Conflict of Interest' future candidates for all elections should provide a complete and accurate Personal Profile including a their Pecuniary Interests as well those of the spouse to be lodged with and available for perusal by the Public before the election.

41. If elected this personal profile should be regularly updated or immediately with the purchase of any property capable of being developed or business interest as well as those of his spouse.

42. *Pecuniary Interest registers are a community mechanism for keeping Councils honest but Pecuniary Interests can interfere with the decision making process. In support of this I mention a Western Sydney Council who ignored their responsibilities as outlined in the United Nations and Australian Federal Government Agreements, State Legislation and Guidelines and even their own Policy. They ignored expressions of concern from the community, supported by documentary evidence, to design and approve multi unit developments along major arterial roads within their area.*
43. *The documentary evidence identified the harmful effects for humans of particulate matter identified as PM1.5 (Not PM10 as some Government Experts like to proclaim) The documents explained that exposure even for a short time could have harmful effects and here was a Council ignoring those issues. Here was a council exposing residents to the harmful material twenty four hours a day.*
44. *The design incorporated residential units for three floors above ground floor commercial premises and the main road and at only two metre setback with windows and patios opening onto and exposed to the motor vehicle pollution from the thousands of motor vehicles passing along the road daily.*
45. *The potential danger was recognized by experts from within the State Governments own Departments of Health, Planning, Environment and Climate Change who made recommendations to the Government two years ago which is quite a long time for a government to ignore community health issues.*
46. *The whole process was worthy of a James Bond movie with all of the drama and intrigue of spying, lying, forging and uttering, missing documents, abuse from managerial employees who strangely had no visible involvement in the Development Application process, Political overtones, Legal advising based on nothing more than conjecture, suspicious development companies and applications, and possible money laundering and more, much more.*
47. *The Carr Government stated an intention to redevelop Parramatta Road after the problems associated with heavy volumes of traffic using the road had been sorted out and motor vehicle pollution issues were resolved. ie the M4 East.*
48. *Other arterial roads were not mentioned until quite recently but this Council's actions have seen the duplication of the problems of Parramatta Road with the added problem of residential units built at two metre setback and above the roads.*
49. *The Planning Departments watered down version of the results of the long past meeting between the Departments of Health, Planning and Environment and Climate Change quite rightly suggest that there are a number of roads in Western Sydney that are not suitable for residential development. It also suggest that roads carrying in excess of 22,000 vehicles per day are suspect.*
50. *The council had at their disposal the medical expertise of the Western Sydney Area Health Services with whom they have a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MOU). In fact they would have had the most up to date information on motor vehicle pollution and Community Health as one of the members of the meeting between the Departments of Health, Planning and Environment and Climate Change is said to be none other than the Director of Community Health for the Western Sydney Area Health Services.*
51. *My reasons for mentioning these issues is that it highlights the fact that fifteen members of a Council ignored Community Health concerns expressed by objectors supported by documentary evidence of numerous Medical and Environmental Exerts to whom access for assessment staff was a mere local telephone call away. Community involvement in the development process is to identify local issues that might affect the development and future residents.*

52. Why would a council ignore their responsibilities, design and approve these type of developments. Was it to do with the ownership of properties along these roads. Some Councillors appear to have significant Pecuniary and family interest in properties along these roads. Some of these properties appear to have been swallowed up in Mixed Use Development.

53. While ownership of property along main roads by Councillors, their family and friends is not an offence I would suggest that there might be a case to answer if the area was specifically rezoned and designed to financially benefit Councillors, their relatives, friends possible even Council Staff. Initial Perusal of Pecuniary Interest Registers did not indicate any such interest. That all changed after the initial viewing by objectors when suddenly one company partnership became three.

54. To see the results of their collective decisions I would suggest a look at the attached photographs (ATTACHMENT 2) :-

55. **Photograph 1** is of an almost completed Mixed Use development clearly showing the exposure of commercial and residential units overlooking a main arterial road at this point carrying about 50,000 vehicles per day.

56. You will note also the pollution traps of recessed doorways and patios to home offices and residential units above a section of road that reduces in width to two lanes and to a 40KPH speed limited for the School Zone.

57. This section of road is about 150 metres from a set of traffic control lights that results in a build up of stopped and idling traffic often to this point.

58. You will note also children walking toward their school. When these and other Units are fully operational numerous children will be walking along this section of roadway where frequent collision occur resulting in vehicles mounting footpaths and crashing into existing premises.

59. **Photograph 2** also highlights the pollution traps created by recessed patios. The heated motor vehicles emissions rise and drifts toward the buildings. Particulate matter does not fall to the ground at the gutter as certain documents would have people believe.

60. **Photograph 3** is of a similar development with the recessed patios, entrances to commercial premises and on the ground floor at the far right of the building is a covered void extending to the rear of the building where the doorway faces the rear of passing motor vehicles.

61. **Photograph 4** shows the proximity of heavy diesel powered vehicle to the building at a point where traffic volumes are about 55,000 or more vehicles per day.

62. There is no suggestion of any impropriety on the part of Developers as they may well have been misled. There is also no guarantee that the Developers were aware of or even saw all of the written objections raising the pollution issues. It comes as no surprise though to find that a number of the developers involved are contributors to local political party candidates.

63. Some Councils are so concerned about community interest that they have made some records that are supposed to be available for public perusal confidential documents. Records such as the Ratepayer List because of valuation details. The same information is available to Real Estate Agents and every Saturday morning on 2GB a Real Estate Agent discusses with member of the community the actual price paid by the owners over several changes of ownership.

64. Why are these documents being kept secret, obviously to avoid revealing the actual owners of properties involved in Development Applications. Of course the suspicion is that the owner names appearing on Development Application are not always those of the actual owner.

65. To view other documents like 'Pecuniary Interests' or the Recent 'Developer donations declarations' members of the public have to make an appointment to view the records and then only under strict supervision. Actions obviously designed to deter inquisitive members of the community.



66. *Members of the Community have a right to privacy. Elected community representatives are required by Law to complete these documents and by standing for Election to Council forgo any privacy in respect to this information. If they don't like it they should not stand for Public Office and public scrutiny.*
67. *For the reasons outlined above certain occupations and ownerships should be banned from running for Council Election. Developers, Building and Development Consultants, Town Planners, Strategic Planners, State or Local Government Employees and any person within the Building and Construction Industry who frequently submit Development Applications through the Council for the area for which he wishes to seek election to.*
68. *There are a number of people employed in occupations that prevent them from running for Public Office unless they resign from their employment because of Conflicts of Interest. Surely people involved in the Building, Construction and Development Industry should not be determining the Development Applications of their relatives and friends companies.*
69. *Control of all Councils should be returned to Elected Councils and General Managers returned to their core role of managing Council Staff and Assets. General Managers and employees are not elected by the Community but while so employed are responsible to the Community. The Community cannot show displeasure at the Ballot Box for their disloyalty, incompetence or mismanagement.*
70. *One Metropolitan Council's Secrecy and Protectiveness manifested itself recently when a Senior Manager was summarily dismissed for serious breaches of Council Policy. No other information was provided, no public Ethics Committee hearing.*
71. *As the employee had occupied several Management positions and breaches of Policy are often to the disadvantage of the Community, attempts were made to obtain the reasons for the abrupt dismissal. Council has refused to provide an explanation other than it was not a criminal matter.*
72. *Here we have a Judge, Jury and executioner meting out summary justice to an employee of the Community without giving a reason to the Community. I would assume that the decision was made on Legal Advice but no legal advising was published for the information of Elected Council. I could not imagine any circumstance under which an Elected Councillor would not be informed but when a Public Forum request was made the enquirer was told the questions were out of order. So much for Public accountability and open government.*
73. *There are serious community concerns when Council employees conduct pre submission interviews with Developers before the community is advised of and had an opportunity to comment on the development application. There is even more concern when particularly controversial development applications are recommended for approval with little or no explanation or reason presented for ignoring valid objections.*
74. *These application are approved by elected Council after being referred to them because of the number of objectors with no comment or discussion in the Public Meetings to which they are referred. If there are no objections or the number of objections are under a certain number they are approved by 'Delegated Authority'. There is no way of knowing how many poorly assessed and potentially health damaging developments have been approved under 'Delegated Authority'.*
75. *After seeing a Senior Development Unit Manager and a Senior Town Planner leaving a Council Meeting with their arms draped over the shoulders of a developer after his Development Application had been approved gives rise to the suspicion that something more is going on than a normal Council/Client relationship.*
76. *If this behaviour is taking place at Public Meetings what is happening during private pre submission meetings with Developers in the confines of Council buildings out of view of the public. These*

employees were determining outcomes for potentially unhealthy and in some cases life changing developments, ignoring, lying to and misleading objectors, censoring documents and recommending approval of developments.

77. Not that it really matters they could present a bus ticket for approval that would be rubber stamped by elected Council or the Land and Environment Court.

78. Some Councils have employed Crime and Corruption Managers or an Internal Ombudsman but there will always be the suspicion that the selection process for those positions will be based on Political affiliations rather than the ability to independently investigate complaints against Councils

79. I know of one particular case where an internal promotion decision appears to have been made based not on experience and/or knowledge but as a reward for their ability to 'fix the hotspots' of community conflict.

80. To fix these 'hotspots' appears to have required the skills of failing to properly assess objection based issues supported by scientific and medical evidence, failure to fairly produce and/or present documentary evidence (provided to Council by objectors) in planning reports to Council and the Land and Environment Court.

81. While the delegated authority is required to declare his pecuniary interests the delegated authority might not be the person who actually assessed and recommended it. The consistency of comment in planning reports indicated possible coaching by others as opposed to 'due diligence'.

82. It is obvious from the 2008 Election results in one Local Government Area that the community is very disenchanted with the performance of their local council when more than one entire ward votes informally or does not vote at all.

83. When a voter is disenchanted with a candidate of Party they vote in many cases for an INDEPENDENT little realizing that the Independent may be a member of the Party that he didn't intend voting for. The 'Donkey Vote' of only putting the number 1 in one box above a line indicates only a lack of quality candidates across the ballot paper.

84. This preferential voting system not only favours the big parties but it also ensures that sooner or later those with little ability or knowledge of the requirements of their position rise to the top of the ballot paper based on their ability to raise ethnic, religious and donor support for the party.

85. The process often eliminates highly qualified, talented and enthusiastic candidates who do not have the same ideology as the major or other parties. Candidates that can work with and raise community spirit, that develop Policies consistent with the wishes of the community and work out a compromise where there are competing objections.

86. Sadly there are many councils that cannot achieve this compromise with fifteen Councilors and we have seen the recent arrogance of one Council who prepared and endorsed plans for their city development without having obtained ownership of all of the properties required.

87. When attempts to negotiate a purchase price failed and resumption failed the council appealed to the State Planning Minister to introduce draconic resumption laws against the owners of these premises. It was amazing to see that the Planning Minister was actually going to introduce such legislation however on advice changed their mind to allow the High Court to decide. The High Court unanimously decided against Council.

88. It seems that Council intended to resume the land and then on sell it possibly at a profit to one of the Developers involved in the Construction. It is not surprising to learn that the Developer is a donor to State Branches of Political Parties.

89. Having wasted millions or ratepayer funds in the process the Council has indicated that it intends to lobby the State Government again to reintroduced those resumption laws.

90. From the General Manager down all employees of Councils are employed by and representatives of the community, not Councillors or the State Government. The community pays the salary and wages and expect the energies of those employees to be directed to their community interests and concerns. The interaction of many employees with the Community gives the opposite impression and that they are a working for a private company of Developers.

91. The State Government appear to believe that Councils are just another State Government Department to manipulated and direct at their will. The State Government should butt out and let the community and elected councils work together for the betterment of the Community and not to fill the coffers of political parties.

92. It is also suspected that in some council areas the engagement of Senior Management is by Political preference and that decisions made are often slanted toward their political masters and not in the community interest. If General Managers are to take Control of Councils then they should be included in the election process particularly where some General Managers are said to be Developers themselves.

93. The costs of running Local Government election should be paid for by the State as many of those employed in Electoral duties are in fact State employees, These functions were once carried out by the State Government at taxpayer expense and now in another case of costing shifting is being paid for by ratepayers, double dipping in other words .

94. A report by Professor Twoomey and other documents clearly show that Political Parties are not Constitutionally recognized and in practice merely act as a coordinating mechanism for likeminded Candidates. They are therefore are not legally entitled to receive taxpayer funding except where those funds are assigned to the Party by the candidate.

95. Candidates at all elections, AND ONLY Candidates, should receive electoral funding assistance but only to the cost of their campaign and only to a PROSCRIBED limit. Candidates may if they wish ASSIGN their funding to their party provided appropriate receipts are kept.

96. The current system is flawed, disadvantages true **INDEPENDENTS** and minor parties and capable of being manipulated. To overcome those problems and restore democracy I make the following suggestions that I believe are a fairer, cost effective, practical and community acceptable method of producing an effective Community representative Council .

97. Because it is within the State Government's power to legislate the electoral and operational procedures of these 'Constitutional' councils and rather than create regional Councils they should consider the following.

98. Councillors are considered to be 'Trustees' of community assets however there are too many Councillors for the effective running of a Council. The number of Councillors should be reduced to four for major councils and three for minor councils.

99. The four Councillors (Trustee) positions become full time positions and at election any member of the community can nominated or be nominated for the positions, except for those mentioned Developers, Real Estate Agents and those employed by Development Corporations or working within Councils

100. The elections be run on a first past the post for the four or three Council positions. The one polling the most votes takes on the Ceremonial Mayoral role for the duration and the position filled by one of the other elected Councillor (Trustee) for the purpose of Leave or Representative duties elsewhere.

101. Full time Councillors would greatly reduce the processing times for Development Applications, create quality management control, with the ability to objectively and independently investigate

*contentious controls and Development Applications and hold more regular Council Meetings where the community can express their concerns verbally on any issue and the hear the Mayor answer those concerns directly instead of through employees as is happening in some Councils.*

102. *If a Mayor cannot answer all questions asked by members of the Community in Public Forum situations then they are clearly not on top of the job and lack the knowledge, skill and ability to run a Council.*

103. *The General Manager should return to his rightful role as manager of Council's employees and core business activities and not be trying to usurp the role of defacto Councillor as is the case in many Council Areas. The roles should be purely business management not development approvals.*

104. *Abraham Lincoln once stated that Government was of the people by the people for the people commonly referred to as 'DEMOCRACY' something that it appears is being eroded at all levels of Australian Politics. Democracy should now be restored starting with Local Government and Local Government Elections.*

105. *This submission is made in the Public Interest and there are large volumes of documentary support available. Should the Committee require any further information or the production of related documents I can be contacted on telephone [REDACTED] or mobile [REDACTED] at any time.*

106. *Should this submission be published on the internet I merely ask that my home address and telephone details not be published.*

Respectfully



B B Gray

19/4/09

**Stinky Meeting AROUND THE COUNCILS**

# Rushed agenda, no question

By CARMEL MELOUNNEY

WEEKLY local council meetings should be concise and to the point, but for democracy's sake should surely last longer than 10 minutes.

The issue is being raised by Liverpool residents after their council set a speed record by rushing through its agenda.

"I was in the gallery, and I couldn't believe it," Liverpool Action Group member Ian Bailey said.

"When it ended, mayor Wendy Waller said: 'Oh, we can all go home now and watch television.'"

"Liverpool needs a lot of work

done, and the Liverpool Council is really not performing very well. What are they actually doing?"

The meeting agenda included the proposed reclassification and sale of land at Eboringsea Park, tenders for the provision of road signs and pavement marking services, the placement of landfill and the council's code of conduct and investment report.

Involved are the same councillors who, only three months into the job, voted to increase their pay to the maximum for their council's category - \$19,250 a year per councillor, and \$61,300 for the mayor.

Liverpool was run by administrator Gabrielle Kibble for four years after the previous council was sacked for incompetence. A new council was elected last September.

Councillor Gary Lucas said he believed there was no debate because the three councillors who normally asked questions, including himself, were absent.

"The others just sat there warming seats," Councillor Lucas said. "It's easier to just sit there, say nothing and rubber-stamp."

"The meeting should have some much bigger than that. There was some meaty stuff on that agenda."

But Councillor Anne Stanley said that despite the 10-item agenda, "there was nothing that needed to be discussed."

Councillor Jim McGoldrick said the councillors had asked any questions they needed to at a private briefing session held a few days before the council meeting.

Mayor Waller said the meeting had actually lasted 11 and a half minutes - "no quibbling".

She said she did not believe briefing sessions should be open to the public, despite ratepayers getting the impression their councillors did not ask any questions.



Time for TV: Wendy Waller

## New regime leaves half-baked legacy

THE new Liberal/Independent regime in Parramatta has put developers back in control of the city.

On a Monday night in March, what appeared to be a caucus (even though caucusing on development issues is not allowed), voted as a block to rezone huge areas of the city.

The first residents will hear of this is an informal consultation - a process that has had only lukewarm endorsement from the Planning Department.

If you live between Parramatta Rd and the M4, prepare for a concrete jungle of flats.

If you live in Rosehill, prepare for even more high-rises along James Ruse Drive and spreading down Prospect St.

If you live near, or care about, Australia's oldest building, Elizabeth Farm, you will shudder when it is swamped by bulky townhouses.

That group of councillors, as well as one of my Labor colleagues, rejected my calls for the proposals to be deferred for detailed reports on the possible impacts on traffic, heritage and waterways.

Instead, a whole range of half-baked ideas became policy - like no more dual occupancies at all in areas of single houses, not even if you live on a corner block.

It became clear many of them had no idea what they had agreed to later in the meeting when Crs Garrard and Chedid moved that a detailed policy be prepared on houses of worship in residential areas, only an hour after they both voted to ban them all together.

## Signs could cost charity \$1.1m



HOENSBY council has wanted a charity run by former media mogul Dr. James Wright that it could face fines of up to \$1.1 million for posting signs without permission.

The medicine has been the not-profit Medi-Mid Centre Foundation, which runs retirement villages for 25 years.

In February, the foundation's consent had

Warned Dr Wright

charity received a council demand to remove the signs because consent had

Advertiser

April 23, 2009



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