

At the Crossroads
A discussion paper

We wish to have input into this discussion paper, and we ask your indulgence as we feel that the 'Questionnaire' is too restrictive and limited. To date we have found that the population has very little say or input into the governance of this country, in particular local governance. We therefore, respectfully take this opportunity to express our views and opinions based on personal experience with 'Local Government'. Please note that this is based on collective rather than individual experience and that the number of discontented and disillusioned people is increasing on a daily basis.

The information is collated from different sectors of the communities of interest who feel that it is time that both Federal and State Governments **LISTEN** to the people. We elect all members to represent, work for us and most of all respect our rights.

Forums are not always the appropriate medium for discussion. Many of these have 'shifted' to 'hard sell' rather than an information dissemination/collection opportunity. In our opinion, we feel that until the Federal and State Governments resolve some of the serious issues surrounding Councils and governance at a local level, there should be no more expansion of Council's responsibilities or increases in funding. Specifically, Council's authority needs to be investigated and in some instances severely curbed.

In all fairness this document is based on governance in Queensland. Many of us have lived in other States but have not faced the problems we are experiencing in this State.

We have addressed the discussion paper in point form and itemised accordingly.

2

- 2.1 'These are all democratically elected in some way'. 'Some way' being the operative words. The population have consistently requested that the Federal and State Governments investigate the protocol and procedures adopted for Council elections. Firstly, these are not uniform across the country and secondly people are suspicious about the results. For example, two weeks before an election, constituents were told that all incumbent members of a certain council, except for the Mayor, would be reinstated. The electoral officer was the CEO and the results were exactly as 'predicted'.
- 2.2 The population feels that councils are ill equipped to perform their duties now - how could they possibly take on more?
- ◆ Roads - Councils constantly blame Federal and State Governments for the poor conditions of the roads - potholes, bad cambers, blind spots etc. However, when funding is available what does council do? They 'beautify' the roads with shrubs and signs, which actually endangers drivers who may be distracted by all of this beautification. Safer roads are needed - not beautification.
 - ◆ Drainage - Creeks and Rivers need dredging. Council digs 'trenches' that ultimately lead nowhere - result, massive flooding.
 - ◆ Water Supply - recent months have been a clear indication of the lack of planning and co-operation in many Shires. Again Councils blame Federal and State Governments. One has to ask what exactly do Councils do?
 - ◆ Sewerage - Perceived by the population as a revenue raiser, especially now with environmental and septic tank levies.
 - ◆ Public Health ????????????
 - ◆ Environmental Management - depending on which Shire - developers do not have to conform. Some Shires allow trees to be felled indiscriminately while others demand rigid conformities even for dead trees.

House of representatives Standing Committee on
Economics, Finance and Public Administration

Submission No: 379

Date Received: 28/4/03

Secretary:

- ◆ Local economic development - Whose economy are we discussing - Council's or the population?
- ◆ Planning and Development Control - Control being the operative word. Considering that the population has to live in and with a council's decisions - why is there so little if any consultation with the community?
- ◆ Waste Disposal/Recycling - No uniformity. Works well in some shires, a joke in others and non-existent in certain areas.
- ◆ Recreation, culture and some aspects of community services - big disaster in many shires. Councils do not have the acumen for operating in these areas. Recreation & Community Associations have been evicted from premises and cultural issues dealt with in an unethical manner. Community services have been disrupted and severely hampered by council's lack of understanding of human services.

2.3 Councils may be 'largely self-sufficient, however this is due to their Corporate.....' Rates and levies have increased by at least 300% over the past 5 to 10 years and the population is once again the bearer of this burden. However, services have not improved or in some instances not increased. It may be time to clearly define Council's status - Corporation or Government - surely they cannot be both?

2.8 'Local government now seems to be considerably more professional, efficient and attuned to local community needs'. Seems - definition Oxford Dictionary: have air of, appearance of or appear to be. When CEO's and Mayor's state that 'It must appear that we are being open, transparent and fair', then do the opposite, one does not have to wonder why the population has no faith in the system. Professional - elected Council members and officers threaten, intimidate, harass and retaliate against anyone speaking out against them - professionalism?

2.10 Lack of Recognition of Local Government in the Australian Constitution. Surely if the population wanted a three-tier government we would have requested and endorsed Council's validity in the Constitution? This lack of recognition raises the question of Council's legitimacy as a Local Government, given the enormous authority they claim. The population feels that we are over-governed and councils should be reinstated as municipalities.

2.11 Weaknesses in the system of local governance does prejudice good governance and maintenance of what many see as Australia's crumbling democratic foundation. Giving councils carte-blanc spells disaster. At present there is no entity or Government Department to monitor, evaluate or assess council. This has been proven through contact with the State's Local Government Department, the Ombudsman, the CMC and even the Attorney General. By Council's own, written, admission they have the right to do as they see fit. No appeal, no justification and no intervention from anyone or anywhere. Councils' involvement in health, welfare, education and safety - only a minority would support this. But then based on Council surveys - 300 in a population of over 170,000, there is no wonder that the Federal and State Governments are under the assumption that the population supports council decisions. We have first hand knowledge of figures blowing out from 300 to 'nearly 1,500'.

2.12 To ensure a healthy local government the Federal government needs to go below the surface. Accepting council reports without question is to ignore the truth. The truth is that the majority of the population feels that all councils need to be thoroughly investigate, restructured and if they are to be 'local government' they need to be brought in line with Government structure:

- 1] They need to be governed by a Constitution not Articles of Association
- 2] There is a great need for an opposing body
- 3] The Local Government Act needs serious amendments - in consultation with the population not just the business sector.
- 4] The portfolio for Local Government, Federal and State needs to have arbitrary powers and not just keep informing the public that 'Councils are independent and autonomous entities'.

Who monitors, evaluates or assesses Councils? Certainly not the people - we are not given the chance - elections do not always reflect the truth.

- 2.13 Councils write glowing reports of themselves whilst blaming all short falls of performance on the lack of Federal/State funding. Again this raises the issue of monitoring, evaluation and assessment by a neutral, independent body.
- 2.14 Greater scrutiny is definitely needed - not only regarding financial accountability and spending but performance and systems in local governance.
- 2.15 'Primary control of the States' - this is surely just a play on words????? State Government has no control over council; in fact we believe the reverse may be closer to the truth. If States controlled councils there would be greater intervention and true partnerships - this is not happening.
- 2.16 Roads to Recovery - does anyone know exactly how these funds are spent? Or is there a reliance on Council reports?
- 2.17 The population is asking that the Federal or State Governments **do** in fact exert greater influence on Councils - not just in financial accountability but most specifically in the governance of the people.
- 2.18 If Local Government is not recognised in the Australian Constitution and they are not governed by a constitution how can the Australian Constitution prevent the Commonwealth from intervening? Yes, the Commonwealth, in its duty of care to the Nation, does need to respond beyond funding.

3

- 3.1 Although Councils role has expanded, in many cases, it has done so **without** community support. It has also over stepped boundaries and become involved in areas beyond its capabilities. 'Support' has evolved into 'control'.
- 3.2 Devolution - is this responsibility with boundaries or unlimited power?
Raising the bar - what benchmark, if any, will be used?
Cost shifting - Does this mean Councils will place added burden on the population to raise their proportion of funds?
Increased community expectations - not even being considered now. The 300/170,000 rule applies.
Policy choice - already happening with or without population consent or support.
- 3.3 Local Government Act needs revamping and carte blanc taken away from Councils. Once again how many of the people agree with or support this Act? How many had input? Were the people ever consulted? Surely in a democratic society the people have a right to input into such a complex and powerful Act?
- 3.4 The assumption that Councils' expansion is linked to an enhanced profile and capacity is underpinned by "**appears**".
- 3.5 Not just the financial capacity has hampered Councils' in their ability to function adequately.

In order for the community to develop and sustain self-help it needs to be self-sufficient and not crippled by ever increasing charges from Council taxes and levies in addition to all the other increases.

ABS figures show that 38% plus of the population volunteer in one form or another yet we pay for non-existent or minimal services. Rates and taxes are exorbitant yet Council wages are beyond belief.

- 3.6 The imbalance between 'large' metropolitan and 'small' rural councils is not assisted by the fact that the large entities have greater resources to allocate and secure funding. It seems strange that the larger the entity the more funding it attracts while the smaller entity has to fight so much harder for smaller amounts of funding.
- 3.9 The larger Councils are expanding into areas that many of the population see as inappropriate given the poor performance and questionable behaviour of Councillors and Officers. It constantly appears that Councils act above the 'Law of the Land'. When challenged about blatant breaches the "Local Government Act" is quoted. Again it is recommended that there needs to be a system of monitoring, evaluation and assessment by a neutral, independent body, with possible intervention or supervision by Federal Government.
- 3.10 Having spoken to the Western Australian Local Government Association we learnt that they do have systems in place to monitor and if necessary intervene, however this is not the case in Queensland.

Councils need to prove their ability to fulfil their present responsibilities before assuming additional obligations. This is of grave concern to the population. We see millions of rate/taxpayers dollars spent on Entertainment and Aquatic Centres which are out of the working man's range of accessibility. Celebrations which cost the earth and we ask ourselves what are we celebrating? This proves that there is a need for boundaries, independent monitoring, evaluation and assessment.

Councils need to be curbed - they cannot cope with present responsibilities and the ratepayers cannot sustain the financial drain. If the Federal and State Governments are not sufficiently funding Councils why are there reports of some Councils netting millions of dollars profit? Also how can these Councils constantly fund overseas trips etc if there is insufficient funding?

As for Councils facing major increases in accountability and compliance - to whom? If the Federal and State Governments, then why is the Government not aware of the anomalies? As for being accountable to the population - all we get is jargon and figures that do not make any sense. We observe wastage of rate/taxpayers money without any explanations, consultation or justification.

- 3.14 -17 If the State Government is in fact imposing more responsibility on Councils then why:
- 1] Have State Ministers publicly stated "Councils should do their job - Roads, Rates & Rubbish.
 - 2] Why do Government Departments have to draw up Memorandums of Understanding to ensure that Councils do not encroach on their services?
- 3.21 Rates are not only a highly visible form of taxation but also the most crippling to most homeowners. The only institutions that used to charge interest were Banks and Loan Institutions. Councils are the only 'governing' body allowed to charge interest, and in most cases this is higher than Bank Interest, which seems to be in direct conflict with the Governance Policy. Also the power to sell constituent's home/land to recover rates is appalling and should never have been allowed - when did Councils become Banking Institutions? While Federal and State Governments encourage people to buy their own homes, Councils are making it very difficult to retain.

If Councils were 'highly sensitive' to complaints about the level of rates, why do they persist in increasing them each year and adding taxes and levies? Also the 'highly sensitive' areas of Wages - it would be interesting to compare certain Mayor's wages with those of a Federal or State Minister.

- 3.28** Queensland Councils - why do they have the freedom to determine their own levels and patterns of rating? No wonder the significant rate increases are forcing many own owners to sell up and turn to renting. Is this not a clear case for Government intervention?

There surely is a need to scrutinise some Councils' extensive spending - trips and particularly some discretionary funds. Some Councillors are given \$100,000 per year, who are they accountable to? Plus bonuses of \$20,000 each year for attending community group meetings.

- 3.34** It really is time Federal and State Government listens to the population. Members are elected to represent us, not to bully, intimidate, harass and threaten us. Queensland Councils have the worst attitude towards constituents and even though the number of complaints increase each week, no one seems to care. Councils have become dictatorial - where else in the world does a Council sell your house if you don't pay your rates? Queensland looks more and more like Iraq each day.

We the ratepayers are also constantly being asked to volunteer in cleaning and maintaining parks and roadsides. We are expected to do this without any Public Liability cover - so why do we pay rates? We mow our own verges, if we didn't do this we would not be able to see the roads and there is no reduction in rates for that.

- 3.36** The statement of 3 pools of funding is very concerning. The population is already taxed at 3 levels and cannot sustain any further burden.

- 3.37** Funding should be dispersed on a needs basis. Large Councils need to curtail some of their lavish spending as constituents are complaining about excessive spending on 'shrines; eg demolishing a \$300,000 brick facility to erect a 'futuristic' disaster [library]. Closing one Swim Centre [Repairs and upgrade estimated at .5 million], to make way for parking just to build another [3.2 million] both in low Socio-economic areas.

- 3.38** Merging two Councils may work for the Councils but has anyone considered the impact on the community? Personal experience shows that population living on the outskirts of a shire generally gets little if any benefit from having a Council at all. In many cases these areas are the largest areas of ratepayers in the shire. The larger the Council the bigger the waste of money? The more Council diversify the lower the standard of essential services become. Sub-contractors are hired and one wonders when they will become another level of government.

There is a big difference between needy and greedy Councils.

- 3.40** 'Growth Tax' - where would this come from?

- 3.41** CPI affects the entire nation and though the population does not get wage or pension increases which adequately cover CPI, everyone including Council still increase their costs and wages.

- 3.49 -54** In one Shire ratepayers have been paying a Road Levy each year since 1990. This was introduced as a 'one off' and yet it is still being charged, many ratepayers argue that other Councils do charge their ratepayers for Roads, but Council again states that it can charge what they like for whatever they want to. The outer regions of this particular are extremely under serviced. Council has not been able to keep up with the growth of this area and it appears that town planning does not extend beyond urban areas.

- 3.55 Has great possibilities as long as there is no influence exerted to create clone Councils. That is, that the large Regional Councils do not create 'metropolitan' Councils in rural areas or bring city planning to the bush.
- 3.56 Once the need for funding becomes part of a ROC then a need is created. Not only will Councils need more funding but another entity - ROC- will enter the competitive fund-searching arena.
- 3.58 If ROC's is neutral and independent [not influenced by Council or Government] it may indeed be the mechanism to promote co-operation. There are qualified and highly accredited members of the population who would have the acumen to participate - and not just business people.
- 3.59 In order to rationalise the roles and responsibilities of a Council it may be necessary to:
- 1] Define Councils status with the approval of the majority - not minority of the population. Until this is done there will never be co-operation from the constituents regardless of any arrangements with the Government. This is a very important factor for both Federal and State Government to consider.
Australians are no longer willing to abide by 3 sets of rules. They are also weary of the immoral and unethical behaviour emanating from certain Councils. Some Councils have no boundaries, codes of ethics or behaviour and this fosters arrogance and dictatorship.
 - 2] Local Government Minister's portfolios need to be visited. There needs to be some structure to include the ability to monitor, evaluate and assess Councils performance - not just administration. If this portfolio does not contain this component then it may as well become redundant.
- 3.69 If Councils seek to strengthen their positions in the Australian system there needs to be incredible changes made and the 'Local Government Act' needs to either be re-written or abolished. It appears that certain Councils use this 'Act' to not only over ride Federal and State legislation but the "Act" often appears to be in direct conflict with the Australian Constitution. In order for Councils to be accepted by the population as 'Local Government' they would need to be governed by and comply with the Constitution.
Another recommendation would be for officers and workers to be skilled in human services and it is also recommended that elected Councillors be skilled or undergo at least 12 months training.
- 3.70 Capacity building initiatives are to be commended but it is the manner in which Councils apply this to their constituents that is of concern. Councils often lack the skills to involve the population and certainly lack human service skills, therefore creating endless conflict and problems.
- 4
- 4.5 Good suggestion, however, there needs to be a more concerted effort to assist disadvantaged Councils and less emphasis on large Councils expanding or this could result in a monopoly.
- 4.9 This seems to be the trend with most of the funding granted to Councils and creates confusion and frustration in the population.
- 4.12 The population sees this as a priority. Government is demanding best practice processes from volunteer organisations who receive funding so it only seems fit that an entity as large as Council should conform.
- 4.13 We agree. This may be as a result of Councils diversifying into areas they are not equipped to deal with, plus the extra staff hired and the exceptionally high wages. If the removal of State restrictions means an extra burden on the population ie higher rates, extra levies then it will be disastrous.

4.20 Partnerships - it is time to include Australians in this process. There is not enough input from us, the people who elect Federal, State and Council representatives. Good governance is not telling the population 'to put up and shut up'.

4.23 This is of great concern to the population. Due to the enormous lack of dissemination of information, rumours and assumptions are rampant among the people. One popular urban myth is that Councils will replace State Government - this would be more devastating than any nuclear bomb. Councils are a high maintenance level of government and need greater restrictions. Councillors base their decisions on personal opinions and rely on popularity rather than professionalism to attain their status.

In closing, we the people writing this submission wish to advise that if there is a possibility that the Federal Government is considering a two tier governance, we strongly appose Council being considered as the second level. In our opinion, Councils should revert to Municipalities and be reminded that they are still public servants regardless of the fancy titles and horrifyingly high wages they have bestowed upon themselves.

It may also be time to revisit the suggestion of One Government and one man - one vote. We also ask that the Council representatives remember who they were before they became part of Council and who puts them in those positions.

Democracy should not just be a word - it is our right to live in a democratic world.

Author: Ms Felicity Senhenn
109 New Beith Road
Greenbank Q 4124

Supported by: Nan Sully
Trudy Shepherd
Carol Sami
Greg Sami
Barbara Hope
Sylvana Haynes
Megan Knight
Kay Ham
Russel Ham
Dianne Auchettl
Various community members [Logan, Brisbane, Gold Coast & Beaudesert areas]

Care with river

I would like to know just who the Logan City Council regards as residents local to the proposed Loganholme marina.

We are at Shailer Park near the Hyperdome and we received no questionnaire nor were we consulted in any way whatsoever. Nor does council appear to have made any effort at all to canvass the opinions of the current recreational users of the Logan River. Marinas such as the one proposed for Loganholme moor very large cruisers of the sort very seldom seen venturing into the Logan River at present. Should this marina go ahead, up to 300 of them would be using the river on a regular basis. Many of these vessels create such a massive wake or bow wave that it can swamp or even capsize small boats. Even my 17ft vessel has on two occasions taken on a lot of water as a result of encounters with these monster wakes, and on another occasion my previous boat had a 20mm x 60mm hole torn in its alloy when a stranded 18ft speedboat I was giving assistance to and my boat collided when hit by one of these wakes.

To encourage more of this type of boat into the Logan River is at best a joke, and at worst will totally destroy the amenity of the river for recreational boaters, fishermen and picnickers alike, not to mention the wear and tear on the river banks by these wakes. Just look at the upper reaches of the Noosa River. The river itself is ruined, not just the family's day out. We really need to ask ourselves what we want of the Logan River. A recreational area for local families or a playground for the rich.

Shane Lockman.
Shailer Park.

Albert & Logan News - 4/4/03

Council Cracks begin

By Natalie Newell

Cracks are starting to appear in Logan City Council as tension builds between the elected representatives a year from the next local government elections.

Talks of "backroom deals", political agendas and opposition to Logan Mayor John Freeman are running rife with councillors admitting to an "air of tension".

One of the most prevalent rumours circulating is that Division 1 councillor Peter Collins has the mayoralty in his sight.

A member of the Liberal party and elected to council as an independent in 1997, Cr Collins dismissed the rumours as "pure speculation".

Cr Collins said he was politically ambitious but had not considered running for position.

"This is an absolute set up," he said. The mayor has the steadfast support of Cr Russell Lutton (Division 2) who was elected as an independent in 1985 and of independent Cr John Grant (Division 3) who was elected to council in 1997.

Elected as an independent Liberal on February 14, 1998, Cr Tom Sandmann (Division 4) said while Cr Freeman had his support, he would be looking after his own campaign.

Deputy mayor Cr Graham Able (Division 5) was elected to council in 1985 as an "absolutely 100 per cent independent" ,and said he was impressed with Cr Freeman's leadership.

Division 6 councillor Pam Parker was elected in 1997 and said Cr Freeman had done a "wonderful job to date".

Independent for Division 7, Cr Lynne Clarke would not be drawn into discussion on Cr Freeman.

A Labor endorsed candidate, Cr Cherie Dalley (Division 8) was elected in 1997 and refused to confirm or deny whether Cr Freeman had her support.

Cr Phil Pidgeon (Division 9) was elected as an independent in 1997 and said the question whether he supported Cr Freeman was "unfair".

A member of the National Party and formerly a member of the Labor Party, Cr Darren Power of Division 10 said he believed all sitting incumbents deserved to be re-elected next March.

Albert & Logan News, Wednesday, April 23, 2003

Council off track

REGARDING "Scorps sent off" (Albert and Logan News November 6).

It is great to see that the Logan City Council can waste over \$100,000 in legal fees to take Mr Dennis to court for breaking a branch on a tree, but cannot help a sporting club (\$67,000) which has been helping the children of Logan City for over 20 years.

The South Woodridge Rugby League Club as it was known, provided one of the first clubs in Logan City.

The council is keen to get into the paper and tell everyone that it is here for families and the lifestyle of the residents of Logan city, but it only wants to destroy the family pets, close the sporting centres and take the ratepayers to court. Maybe it is time for a change of the people who are elected to help the ratepayers?

P Phalps,
Woodridge.

Albert & Logan News -13/11/02

Legal Action sought

LOGAN City Council has sought legal action against a church pastor they claim has been "deceitful and untruthful" about the use of his property.

Development, health and environment committee chairman Councillor Darren Power said numerous noise complaints had been received from residents living near Pastor Andrew Schmidt's Wembley Rd, Browns Plains property.

Cr Power said frequent church services and other congregational activities had caused a loss of amenity to residents. He said noisy sermons, congregational singing, band and choir practice, the influx of cars entering and leaving the property and children left in the yard were proving a problem.

Pastor Schmidt dismissed the claims as unfair and said it was his right to invite friends and family to his home. "We are entitled to have people over and enjoy a barbecue and let our kids play in the yard. I think the neighbours complain too much. We never have loud parties until late or anything like that so they must have something against church services," Pastor Schmidt said. "We have stopped having so many church activities here but we won't stop having friends and family here. This is our land," he said.

Cr Power said Pastor Schmidt, also known as Andrew Lolesio, was known by council officers who dealt with him for similar complaints at another property. He said while the property, owned by the Voice of Christ Full Gospel Church, was zoned "particular purpose" the activities were unlawful without a specific development approval.

Pastor Schmidt said he had prepared a permit application but could not afford the \$3000 required to accompany the application.

Cr Power said Pastor Schmidt was interviewed on September 20 and had promised the events would stop. However, on September 22 and 24, congregational services were held at the property.

Logan & Albert News 25/10/02

I

Many changes

I recently had some correspondence from the Premier's department about the State Government framework under which all local councils operate.

I just wonder how many people realise that in 2001 the framework was changed apparently giving local authorities greater autonomy. It would seem it is largely still void of any on-going checks and balances, say for court action on the part of the ratepayer and the same goes for code of conduct provisions on the part of representatives.

Around the same time and also without public consent terms of office were increased to four years.

This last change makes a complete mess of so-called retribution at the ballot box, because terms need to be reduced but now over the extended period they will still get paid however they have performed.

I would have thought it was hard enough getting a job these days but one with such pay and conditions and four a year no obligation trial period? Just who is kidding who?

Frank Brinkman Slacks Creek

Your Say - Albert & Logan News, Wednesday, 23 April 2003

Mayor's meeting attendance low.

By BROOK FALVEY

LOGAN City's Mayor, John Freeman, attended just over a third of all Council committee meetings held throughout the last financial year, but still received his yearly salary of more than \$100,000. Cr Freeman's attendance was recorded at just 39 of the 107 committee meetings held throughout the last financial year. Cr Freeman is paid \$107,610.45 each year, as well as almost \$13,000 in superannuation, yet he attended just 41 per cent of the meetings. In the current financial year, Cr Freeman has attended less than half of the 68 meetings.

Having attended just 36 meetings, Cr Russell Lutton (Division Two) is just seven meetings ahead of the Mayor, who attended 29. Crs Parker and Sandmann top the list for the current financial year, having attended 63 and 62 meetings, respectively.

As an ex-officio of all Committees, the Mayor is not a nominated member of any committee, but is entitled to attend all fortnightly meetings in his role as Mayor. The Mayor's attendance is considerably less than many of his fellow councillors, who are in turn, paid less.

Division Four Councillor, Tom Sandmann, attended the greatest number of committee meetings in the 2001/2002 financial year and is paid \$66,473.55 per year, with \$7976.83 in superannuation, while Division Seven's Lynn Clarke attended the least and was paid \$62,675.16 with \$5317.88 superannuation.

Logan City Council's committees are made up of five or six Councillors (one of whom is the chairperson), who meet with senior staff twice a month in the lead up to the fortnightly full Council meetings.

The committees discuss specific matters placed before them by staff from relevant Council departments and make recommendations to the full council. Matters discussed at committee level do not become resolutions of Council until the recommendations of the committee are adopted and carried by the full Council.

A Logan City Council spokesperson said that, as it had been with past Mayors, there were often conflicting civic priorities for the Mayor, which is reflected in the meeting attendance figures.

FALVEY FIRES

For six figures, do the job

Over the last few weeks, Logan City Council announced it was going to court objecting to a development in Marsden.

Now the Mayor, Councillor John Freeman, has attended 39 of 107 committee meetings. The question I would like to have answered is how are you going to make a proper informed decision on matters like going to court if you don't go to the meetings where they are discussed at length?

I've never thought it was a councillor's job to just turn up at Council meetings, which virtually rubber-stamp recommendations from the committees. Surely, when you are paying a man well over \$100,000 a year, you would expect him to attend committee meetings, so we wouldn't get involved in court cases we shouldn't be in. We would expect him to be doing everything in his power to ensure we are doing everything to ensure we can win any cases we take on.

Unfortunately in Logan council, there doesn't seem to be any opposition to what goes on at all.

Nobody seems to rock the boat.

We all want to see the council 'boat' sail smoothly, but we also expect there to be occasions when a few shots across the bows may be in order.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

If you are paid the money, do the job

- PETER FALVEY

The Reporter - 26.3.03

City 'left short' By Natalie Newell

Logan City would be left short of outdoor swimming facilities if plans to close Logan Gardens Swim Centre were carried out.

Logan Gardens Swimming' Club member Peta Smith believes the proposed 'Gould Adams Park Aquatic and Community Centre would be inferior to the 30-year-old facility.

Mrs Smith said she and her four children used the pool at least four times a week and said its greatest attribute was the 50m outdoor pool.

She admitted the new complex would be advantageous to competitive swimmers by allowing them to train year-round but stressed it could have a detrimental impact on recreational swimmers.

"Where will people take their children on hot days? A heated indoor pool is hardly the way to cool off in summer and it certainly doesn't have the relaxing, friendly atmosphere generated by an outdoor pool," Mrs Smith said.

"I can't see Australian families flocking to an indoor pool for a swim on a hot day - it just won't happen."

Mrs Smith said the pool was used extensively by local schools with between 28-40 primary schools and numerous high schools and special education facilities holding swimming classes and carnivals at the pool.

"You expect your rates to go towards upgrading facilities - not to replace them with inferior facilities," she said.

"Where are the public going to swim at this new centre if it is as well used by schools and clubs as Logan Gardens is?"

"There just isn't going to be room. It is just going to be a dreadful shame to lose such a beautiful facility for car parking."

Mrs Smith said regular pool users and club members had voiced their disapproval to her with all stating the new facility would be acceptable if it included an outdoor pool.

Close would create car parks

Logan City deputy mayor Councillor Graham Able said he was not in favour of closing the Logan Gardens Swim Centre but admitted if it was closed it would make way for additional car parking for community groups.

Its closure would leave Springwood Aquatic Centre as the only 50m pool facility in the city.

"It is going to be a hell of a blow for a lot of people - it is going to have a lot of implications for the community," he said.

"I have only known about it since Christmas or early January but I believe the only way it will be saved is if the residents get out there and lobby council."

The Gould 'Adams Park Aquatic and Community Centre will feature a 25m heated pool, leisure pool, specialised pool for hydrotherapy and a community hall. Logan Gardens Swim Centre offers a 50m Olympic pool, outdoor 25m heated pool, a 14m indoor hydrotherapy pool and a child adventure pool.

"According to the experts 50m pools are a thing of the past," Cr Able said. "I feel very sorry for members of Logan Gardens Swim Club who use the pool - I don't believe they have been consulted at all and I don't believe the community at large has been adequately consulted."

Cr Able said sporting and dog obedience groups at Gould Adams Park had approached him with reservations about the proposed pool, concerned it would have a massive impact on car parking.

A council spokeswoman said Logan Gardens Swim Centre would be decommissioned once Gould Adams Park Aquatic and Community Centre was fully operational. She said approval for the new centre followed extensive public consultation but stressed no discussions had been held about the future use of the pool site.

She said council was looking to Springwood Aquatic Centre to cater to major high school swimming carnivals.

Please note that the Community Renewal Groups [Kingston & Loganlea were aware of this as early as the beginning of 2001 and interestingly the Woodridge Community Renewal Group did not support the Gould Adams Swim Centre nor did they allocate any funds towards this extravaganza, which started as a simple request by the young people of Loganlea for a small swimming pool.

Albert & Logan News 14.3.03

Vote them out

I read with interest Councillor Power's comment on the Ollie saga. (*Albert and Logan News, November 13*)

My slant on this is one of cost to we, the ratepayers. Even though Cr Power suggests this is only a ruling to give them the right to seize the dog, why is the court ruling on the dog's breeding? Should the council lose, then Cr Power and the rest of the elected council should pay costs of both parties out of their own pockets. I don't want my money wasted on vendettas. Spend my money on patrolling and collecting dogs roaming the streets, that is where the real danger is.

We really need to vote all elected members of this council out at the next election to send a clear message that the money they are wasting is not theirs. It hurts me to say this and to do this as Pam Parker has been an excellent representative for our area, sorry Pam.

C Robinson,
Meadowbrook.

Too much power

I am writing this letter after reading about the plight of the supposed pitbull Ollie. Should we allow our councils to have so much power over our pets. Two separate vets have declared this dog to be a staffy, labrador cross and not a pitbull.

How can the council be right and two qualified vets be wrong?

The dangerous dog laws have given councils too much power and loving family pets are being destroyed unnecessarily. I fear for my pets and I think any animal lover should feel the same.

Sandra Greenslade,
Kingaroy.

No idea

REGARDING Ollie the dog.

Those council officers wouldn't know a pit bull if it jumped up and bit them on the backside.

Hannu Keskinen,
Marsden.

Albert & Logan News 22/11/02

Democracy?

JUST a little enlightener in reply to Get rid of councils (*Albert and Logan News November 22*).

Public servants are already in control and have been for years, and I believe that the buck stops with elected representatives. However, their positions have probably been usurped by a grand income with all the trimmings, and a retirement benefit unheard of in the real world.

I would ask the writers; do you really believe that elected representatives design current rules and regulations or is it just coincidental that most authorities run along the same lines even if most areas are varied. Sure, some representatives would have you believe that they burn the midnight oil, reading up on the governing acts and thereby devising the best methods of managing our city but do yourself a favour and visit the bastion of so called democracy, a full council meeting, and judge for yourself.

With transparency in government, this is the place where questions need to be asked, but literally hundreds of items, which have a direct effect on our lives, are approved without debate, and in less time than it takes to brew a cup of tea.

With regards to overseas junkets, senior officers are normally part of any contingent travelling abroad at public expense, and when did their salary packages become public knowledge? Might I say in passing, it is the standard of representative that needs the microscopic treatment, and preferably before an election and before we start throwing democracy out with the bath water, and alternatively, consideration should be given to making senior public servants run in elections, before securing their highly paid public positions.

Frank Brinkman,
Slacks Creek

Albert & Logan News 29/11/02