



ILLAWARRA BUSINESS CHAMBER

'OPPORTUNITIES FOR A NEW ERA'

A FIRST ROUND RESPONSE

by

Greg Petty – Lord Mayoral / Councillor Candidate – Ward 1  
Dr. Ray Robinson – Councillor Lead Candidate – Ward 1

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the above referenced IBC Paper.

I am preparing a submission; it would have been helpful to know the following;

- Number of IBC members by postcode, by industry.
- IBC members average financial turnover, staff numbers (including male and female), break up between Small, Medium and Large (<20,20><200,200>).
- IBC new members joined in last year and members resigned in last year (reason for leaving IBC).
- What project/s has IBC initiated and the progress thereof in last 2 years?
- What industries are represented on IBC executive committee?

Without this information, it is difficult to comment on the The Illawarra Business Chamber (IBC) paper "Opportunities for a New Era".

We as most other community members, including most Councillor candidates, have been unable to engage interactively with the IBC and therefore without evidence we tend to be at a loss to clearly understand the substance that underlies your policy positions.

As a business executive and owner with other 30 years experience, these basic questions surely are a "must have" before embarking on any analysis of a business paper.

That notwithstanding we submit the following comments:

1. Civic Leadership

- 1.1 Agree strongly with your eight [8] points on "The new Council must'
- 1.2 "An ethical Council ..."

ICAC found ethics wanting at the Councillor / political level, the Staff level and with the private business sector.

Three and one half years of Administrators has allegedly addressed the ethically and efficiency of Council operations. Ethics and integrity is at the forefront in the mind of voters and candidates in the forthcoming elections.

To assist the transition from Administrators to elected Councillors and indeed Mayor, it is important we move forward understanding the past blemishes. For this reason, we announced the appointment of an Internal Ombudsman employed, by, paid by and reporting to ICAC and the people of Wollongong.

***The substantive question now is what has the private sector done, such as the IBC, to address ethical behaviour and substantive discipline among its members?***

1.3 “The new Council should” –

IBC appear to have missed State Legislation that requires Councils to prepare and implement twenty year Community Strategic Plans [CSP]? Wollongong Council is months into developing our CSP.

1.4 “Council engaged ...& held accountable”

Unless we misunderstand your reference to KPI’s it is common knowledge that KPI’s have been around for about two decades and are operational at Wollongong Council.

***The substantive question now is what is the private sector intending to do or has put in place with respect to accountability on issues such as***

- \* ***continual lobbying for ratepayer funds to be expended in the Mall against the public preferences of the community?***
- \* ***a draft strategic vision for the Illawarra for open public interactive discussion?***
- \* ***protecting our local tradesperson from exploitation by national firms?***
- \* ***substantive apprenticeships and employment of the young?***

That is we, in the absence of information from IBC, are expecting a relatively more active leadership role and investment by the private sector in the profiling and imaging of the Wollongong Local Government Area [LGA], rather than expecting Council to carry the full load

2. “Open for Business”

2.1 “Businesses .. commit ...if Council [commits .. create a pleasant place..”

IBC appear to have a perspective and knowledge that is not available to most residents of Wollongong.

From a resident viewpoint the main forms of “unpleasantness” in Wollongong are:

- a) Purchased but undeveloped sites, unfinished developments, untidy industrial sites, and Crown Street west of the Mall through to Gladstone Avenue.

***When will IBC put in place a code of conduct that ensures leadership in street front attractiveness?***

- b) The continual lobbying by the private sector to spend ratepayer funds on capital expenditure in the Mall. There was a time that Council had to buy a development to rescue that which the private sector could not handle.

***When will IBC, seek a release of membership resources and put in place a leadership initiative to refurbish shop fronts and hold attractive events for residents and visitors?***

2.2 “Planning ...frustration .. Councils not meeting process times set by [State] “

Pleased to see that IBC has said “planning delays .. generated by proponents “

***Agree with the “review of the planning process”***

The “timing and frustration” issues are indeed important and shall be reviewed. However, as part of the review further considerations could also include:

- a) Proponent interactively working with residents and others who may be impacted before the DA is submitted to Council. Indeed the whole development will be expected to have little or no objections from the community if they are continually informed and given the opportunity to contribute;
- b) Proponents may have a false expectation of how long a particular project will take to achieve approval.

‘process times set by the state’ how naïve is that when the plethora of complexities arise plus uncontrolled delays from other statutory authorities.

- c) International and national developers should not expect similar processing times for all LGA’s. Clearly there may well be a wide diversity of resources to address a DA among the Councils.

***Will the IBC membership participate in such a review and reorder expectations to a ‘friendly and encouraging’ level.***

- 2.3 “Productivity Commission .. regulatory burden of Local Government on business”

***Agree well worth a look and study.***

- 2.4 “ .. asset maintenance “

IBC will be aware that Wollongong Council, since the advent of the Administrators, has been successfully addressing a \$200 million backlog that occurred arising from the excesses of the previous administration.

***We submit for IBC consideration that the new Council should not be again driven by those same policy excesses that in part was initiated by the private sector, and in part accepted by Council and then went to ICAC.***

- 2.5 “increased information on asset maintenance “

***Could the IBC identify what additional information is required apart from the annual Management Plan that covers a forward rolling three year program?***

***No IBC input has been observed or published for the past three years?***

### 3. “Coordinate Services & Advocacy”

- 3.1 “Increased co-operation Wollongong, Kiama & Shellharbour Councils”

***Agree.***

- 3.2 “IBC ...economic development ... ideas to Administrators are being put into place..”

***Not public knowledge. Would IBC be prepared to identify them to us prior to the election?***

- 3.3 “increased co operation among three Councils”

***Would IBC be prepared to identify where there is conflict in goals and operations?***

- 3.4 “Advocacy”

Given the apparent inability of Regional Development Australia – Illawarra [RDA –I], on which IBC has Board members and members, to attract infrastructure funding, then it appears rather quaint that IBC would expect a combined council lobby to be relatively more successful than RDA – I, even though they access different funding pools.

***Would IBC provide information and examples of how relatively more effective a combined council approach when there may well be competing priorities and issues?***

Before closing, I would like to table my efforts for an open and transparent Council.

Provision is made for candidates to ask questions of the current council. Here is a list of questions asked.

**Questions with answers**

- 1 Could you please forward a copy or links to the job role and responsibilities, including reporting criteria?
- 2 Could Council add the name including Ward/Mayor candidate of the candidate/s requesting information to the response page shown on the website under Candidate Information?
- 3 The Wollongong Against Corruption website requests a series of [document](#) disclosures. In public interest and transparency of process, I request this information be made public by close of business 19 August 2011?
- 4 Has the DA 2010/1358 for a BWS Packaged Liquor License been transferred or requested to be transferred to a new applicant?
- 5 Please supply copies of all submissions (except those identified as residents) to the DA 2010/1358 BWS application ?
- 6 What is the date and title of the Job Specification prior to the Professional Conduct Coordinator dated 11 August 2011?
- 7 Has Council been notified or investigated explosions in the 2508 area both recently and around February – March this year? If yes, what was the outcome?
- 8 Please supply copy of drainage easements for Henry Halloran Park at Stanwell Park?
- 9 At a combined Neighbourhood Forum (NF) /Administrator meeting, a request for DA lodgements to be emailed to NF conveners immediately the initial administrative recording process is completed, was positively discussed. Has this been or when will it be implemented?

**Questions awaiting answers**

- 10 Can Council provide the dissection of revenue by rates by postcode for year ended 30 June 2011?
- 11 Can Council provide the dissection of revenue by rates for residential and business for year ended 30 June 2011?
- 12 Can Council provide the dissection of public works by postcode for year ended 30 June 2011?
- 13 Can Council provide the number (and by category) of and amount of revenue received by way of enforcement fines for the years ended 30 June 2009/2010/2011?
- 14 How much of section 94 funds (excluding Dapto) were received for the years ended 30 June 2009/2010/2011?
- 15 How much of section 94 funds (excluding Dapto) were spent for the years ended 30 June 2009/2010/2011?
- 16 What was the break up by postcode of these section 94 funds spent?
- 17 Are all Development Applications (DA) posted on the Council Website? If no, what reasons would a DA not be posted?
- 18 What is the average time between lodgement and listing?

- 19 Professor Percy Allen reported a \$192 million Council infrastructure renewal backlog in 2007. What was the figure in dollar terms at 30 June 2011?
- 20 What was the amount for road pavements in dollar terms at 30 June 2011 that were below an acceptable standard (as defined by Professor Allen)?
- 21 What is the Council infrastructure renewal budget for year ended 30 June 2012/2013?
- 22 In accessing a Development Application for a packaged liquor outlet (PLO),
- (a) What is the minimum distance before approval does Council require of a PLO to an existing:
    - 1 School or Preschool
    - 2 Community Centre
    - 3 Church Service
    - 4 Ambulance Station
    - 5 Youth Centre
  - (b) What is the required number of parking spaces and what access to these parking spaces is required?
- 23 How many complaints have been received concerning uncovered railway wagons? How many were uncovered coal trains?
- 24 How much was received from projects such as Metropolitan Colliery for road maintenance? Where was this money spent/ allocated and why?
- 25 How much is the cost of the gateway centre at Bulli Tops per month to council? Has Council made representations to the RTA to change the access?
- 26 Can Council provide details on Voluntary Planning Agreements lodged since 1 January 2009; namely
- How many have been submitted and approved?
  - How many have been submitted and rejected?
  - How many are still under review?
- If yes, please provide details of the applicant's name, the title of application, date of application, date of approval/rejection and the location of the Voluntary Planning Agreement?

Thank you for the opportunity and look forward to the meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

Yours sincerely

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