

Response to Questionnaire from the Launceston Municipal Residents and Ratepayers Association from Jeremy Ball, Greens' candidate for Launceston City Council.

1. Selling the QVMAG to the State Government for a nominal sum.

I am a great believer in accessible and educative museums however I do not believe that the Launceston City Council can sustain a payment of \$3 million per annum to support the QVMAG without impacting on either the provision of services or rate levels charged to residents and ratepayers, so I would support the divestment of the QVMAG to either the state or federal governments.

2. Selling York Park.

As above.

3. Selling Albert Hall.

Albert Hall is an icon of Launceston and a very important cultural and historical heritage asset. I could not be in favour of selling the Hall unless it was clear to whom it would be sold and for what use. I do believe that the Albert Hall is a building of state and national significance and as such its upkeep and preservation should be subsidised by the state or federal governments and I would lobby for this.

4. Selling the Princess Theatre.

As in the case of Albert Hall, the Princess Theatre is a hardworking and much loved Launceston landmark and deserves to be preserved. I do not know LCC's contribution to its upkeep but again this is an example where either the state or federal governments or both should contribute to maintaining and preserving the theatre.

5. Australian and State governments assuming responsibility for the Tamar River Levees.

Yes. In 1960 the Launceston Flood Protection Board under the (Launceston Flood Protection Act) was appointed comprising five appropriately qualified and experienced members who supervised work done by local contractors with other unpaid members of the Board meeting periodically.

The State government provided 60% of the funding, the Launceston City Council 30% and the then Launceston Marine Board 10%. In this day and age with a major infrastructure project such as The Tamar River Levees it is fitting that it be a joint federal and state responsibility to be managed in consultation with the Launceston City Council. Our Council cannot afford the \$10 million of funding it contributed to their rehabilitation.

6. Council expenditure or in-kind support of Festivale.

I believe that events such as Festivale are extremely beneficial to the promotion of Launceston and the region's food and wine industry however, in view of this, there should be substantial state government contribution to the event, through Tourism Tasmania or DED rather than local government. The event is also prohibitively expensive for pensioners and I believe that pensioners should be given free or heavily discounted admission.

7. Council expenditure on the Tourist facility/bureau/authority.

As Launceston is a tourism destination we need to provide easy to access information on local drawcards however the funding and maintenance of a bureau would appear to be more of a state government responsibility. The kind of initiative Council could facilitate would be to organise and manage a team of volunteers, dressed in easily identified colours or uniforms who could walk through the city centre in the peak holiday months providing advice and information to tourists.

8. Sister Cities program.

I believe in cultural exchange and think it can be of great benefit to all involved however I am not familiar with how much LCC spends on its Sister Cities program and what tangible benefits it brings the munisiplaity.

I would be less supportive of city officials enjoying trips backwards and forwards and more supportive of young people taking trips or seeing relationships developed with cities in developing nations such as East Timor rather than affluent cities such as Napa or Ikeda.

9. Closed Council sessions.

Absolutely! One of my central themes is to fight for a more 'Open' Council; open to community debate; open to cooperative decision making and, at the forefront, committed to open council meetings. Unless the matter being discussed is stipulated to be held in Closed Council (i.e. hiring staff, salary discussions etc.) it is imperative that council sessions remain open and the more important the session the more open the council discussion must be.

10, 11, 12,13,14,15. (Flat Rate system, reducing the mandatory AAV of 4 %, UCV and Water Meters.

I have been engaged on the issue of rates for a number of years and attended the LMRRA Forum on the issue in 2005 at UTAS Newnham. I do not know if a flat rate system for the Launceston Municipal area is necessarily the most appropriate due to the diversity of business, residential and rural properties. I am in favour of a reduction of the 4% AAV and I believe the Minister has also indicated he would look at a reduction. I see the combination of basing rates on the UCV in conjunction with fixed services charges and a two tiered urban / rural rates system as the most equitable option.

If you can't measure something you can't manage it so in principle I am in favour of all properties having water meters.

16. Artist in Residence.

I believe in the Arts and know that they contribute to a better understanding of our community and contribute to our economy. I believe some contribution to the artist-in-residence program from LCC is fair, provided it is within reason. Major funding for such a program should come from state or federal sources.

17. Extending educational bursaries.

I am not familiar with this program however believe that education is critical to our future as a society so would be happy to see cutbacks in other areas (i.e. York Park) rather than in educational assistance however would need to know more about the issue.

18. Proposed Tennis Facility.

As I understand it LCC has already committed \$400 000 to the proposed facility. In retrospect this seems an extremely large amount of money to fund a centre that is to be run as a commercial entity. Funding by LCC to community sporting organisations must be prioritised to go firstly to community, not-for-profit groups and organisations that are providing a tangible, voluntary community benefit rather than to major commercial developments. Tennis Tasmania and the State and Federal governments again would be more suitable funding bodies.

19. Elector Polls.

As the only candidate to have drafted and organised a petition causing a public meeting (Pulp Mill, Albert hall Wed July 20) which is the first step to an elector poll, I would say that it is far better to have a Council that listens to, consults with and respects community opinion so that we avoid the expense of an elector poll in the first place. Having said that I have as key platform accountability to ratepayers and so would support any initiatives that strengthened the lines between community opinion and council accountability.

20. Regional Aquatic Centre.

Please go to my website www.jeremyball.com.au to find out what I have done on this issue.

I have campaigned for a more open and transparent process on the RAC for over two years. I was a formal objector to the original DA and have written letters to both the Mayor and Aldermen on the issue as well as to the Examiner and asked numerous questions in public question time. If, as I believe, the RAC fails to meet visitor numbers the only option will be for LCC to go with a begging bowl to the federal, state or other Councils to ask for money. There is no guarantee we will get it and so we will either have to attempt to sell the facility or subsidise it. Either way the RAC looms as a burden for ratepayers for decades to come whilst not even fulfilling the needs of the community. A debacle.

Thank you very much for taking the time and effort to put together a questionnaire to canvass my stance on these issues. It is groups such as the LMRRA that strengthen democracy by probing candidates as to who they are and what they represent and providing that information to the wider community.

Look forward to being accountable to your organisation if elected.

Cheers

Jeremy Ball

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