

Launceston Ratepayers' Association Inc.

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3 June 2008

The General Manager
Mr F. Dixon
Launceston City Council
Town Hall
St John Street
LAUNCESTON 7250

Dear Sir,

We refer to your public notice advertising for representations in relation to your proposed Strategic Plan 2008 – 2013.

At the outset, we must say that we are disappointed with the very short period given to commenting on your proposal.

It is interesting that one of the things you do acknowledge as not doing well is community consultation:

'Communication and consultation are noted by both the community and Council as having improved, however, both groups believe there is more work to do.'

With respect, you could start an improvement in communication, by giving the public more time to contribute to your Strategic Plan process. For such an important 5 year strategy, it takes more than a couple of weeks for the community to obtain, read, make enquiries and then prepare a response.

- Accordingly, we ask that this consultation period be now extended by a further 4 weeks.

An important focus of our Association, which you do not elect to include in your focus on your five key areas, is the implementation of a fair and equitable rating system. The only reference to be found in your Strategic Plan is at 5.4, where you make the simplistic statement as an indicative action supporting Priority Area No 5 Governance Services, that to Ensure the City is Managed in a financially sustainable manner you will in 2009.... Prepare a new ten-year financial plan ...**'with an appropriate rating structure'**; and Review funding sources by undertaking an **'Annual Review of funding opportunities and rating strategies.'**

For over 3 years, our Association has made impassioned requests to you for the unjust AAV system of rating to be changed and Council to charge on a fairer 'fee for service' or 'user-pay' basis. We have asked Council to principally concentrate on core activities as at a minimum are required by the Local Government Act, and to not engage in extra-mural activities and services which are costing the ratepayer dearly. We note your own undertakings as General Manager and the undertakings of candidates at the Municipal Elections, that there will be a review, and that rates will be fairer, but due progress has not been achieved, other than a minor adjustment for the sewerage rate.

We note the advancements that have been made in southern municipalities, at Devonport and now debated at Georgetown, but here in Launceston, you point-

blank refuse to even facilitate a public forum on the topic, and have declined invitations to attend meetings of our Association to explain your intentions and take submissions from ratepayers.

It is simply not good enough for you to demand an increasing rate income from Launceston ratepayers for the next 10 years, because you say that your present 10-year plan incorporating the Launceston Aquatic Centre, compels you to do so. That development project, which you say aspires to serve a community way-beyond the Launceston Municipal boundary, has not, in spite of your lavish advertising campaign, been given overwhelming support by your 28,000 ratepayers. If you say it does, then prove it once and for all by including a questionnaire in the 2008/9 Rates Demand, showing ratepayers a clearly itemising statement on how their rates are spent, and asking the simple question.

- Accordingly, we ask that a particular priority be included in your Strategic Plan, ***Implementing a fair and equitable rating system that has the specific endorsement of the overwhelming majority of ratepayers.***

In direct reference to your stated priorities for your Proposed Strategic Plan, we make the following submissions :

Priority Area 1: Natural Environment

1.1 Reduce levels of air pollution in Launceston and the Tamar Valley

Add actions that aim to remove industrial air pollution, ensure that all-year-round air monitoring is conducted, and encourage a comprehensive expansion of the natural gas reticulation system to encourage its use as a significant energy source.

1.2 Contribute to enhanced river quality

Add actions to encourage a significantly increased environmental water flow through the Cataract Gorge, if necessary by re-establishing the Duck Reach Power Station; to stop funding and managing the dredging activities in the river, demanding that the State Government properly resume this responsibility;

1.3 Enhance and maintain parks and recreation areas, including river edges

Add actions to deal with all river edges and riparian reserves throughout the municipality, and include for a basic level of management planning for all major recreation lands (Royal Park, Kings Park, Bald Hill Reserve, Corra Lyn, Lilydale Reserve, Punch Bowl Reserve, the North Esk, including St Leonard's Picnic Ground, flood plains etc.).

1.4 Initiate Council and Community action on Climate change

Add actions to communicate the meaning of the CCP Program and gain community acceptance of its role and responsibility.

1.5 Protect and enhance the enjoyment of the Cataract Gorge

Add actions that will go way beyond just recognising the place for its visitor experience. Specifically acknowledge the requests from the Public Meeting inspired by the overwhelming opposition to the adverse development of 33 Quarry Road and ensure that planning controls will unquestionably prohibit such future developments. Solicit non-rated funding to acquire that adverse development for its eventual removal.

- 1.6 ADD a further strategy that aims to protect landscape and hillsides throughout the urban area and prominent rural landscapes.

Priority Area 2: Built Environment

- 2.1 Facilitate a sustainable approach to enhanced access to and within the municipality

Add an action to seek outside funding for the completion of a comprehensive transportation study of all areas of the municipality; ensure that bikeways and trails are included in all subdivision developments and make spaces available along existing major frontages.

- 2.2 Facilitate enhanced flood protection for the Invermay and Inveresk Precinct

Add an action to include areas in the Lower Charles Street , Esplanade and Lawrence/Racecourse Crescent/ Elphinwood areas.

- 2.3 Establish a long term solution to the movement of traffic and heavy vehicles through the urban areas of Launceston to reduce congestion and accommodate growth.

Add an action to incorporate a transport roadway through the Lindsay Street area so as to incorporate the available land due to land acquisition for the flood levee, such east-west connector to extend from the Northern Outlet at the Charles St bridge along Lindsay Street and via the Inveresk Precinct land to join up with Henry St/Racecourse Crescent and eventually the Elphin Road bypass to Hoblers Bridge Road.

- 2.4 Implement initiatives which recognise the importance of the municipality's built heritage to visitors.

Add words to expand this to include Cultural, not just built heritage.

- 2.5 Ensure Council's assets are adequately developed and maintained by delivering on Council's 10 year Major Works Plan.

Add words to keep the public informed on what is involved with this program.

- 2.6 Ensure Council's assets are adequately maintained and renewed by ensuring asset plans are current.

Add words to include all of Council's assets, as the Princess Theatre and Town Hall, Macquarie House etc. are not included.

Priority Area 3: Social and Economic Development

Other than by the references to the Planning Scheme, little of this priority has anything to do with core activities and ought to be reduced in priority in comparison to the various omissions we are drawing to your attention.

Priority Area 4: Cultural Environment

Similarly, much of this priority draws the same comment as to Priority 3. Waste Management and recycling ought to be top priorities ahead of some sections.

Priority Area 5: Governance Services

Add more to this to reflect a real, open and transparent governance system.

Add words to facilitate a public forum in 2008 to develop an appropriate information system for ratepayers and the public generally.

Add words to restrain regional activities, because although altruistic for Launceston as a major municipality, this function ought to be principally funded by State Government and be more at 'arms length' to Launceston.

We look forward to receiving positive feedback from you as to our submission, and in the interim ask that all submissions be made publicly available and that this submission be forwarded to all Aldermen at this initial stage.

Yours faithfully,

Kelvin Jowett

Vice President

For and on behalf of the Launceston Ratepayers' Association Inc.