

Launceston Ratepayers' Association Inc.

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

Dear Frank,

Re: Launceston City Council's increasing liability for Ratepayers.

Today's news of a subsidence of the flood levee near Cario's Bodyworks on the North Esk River, prompted an inspection of the area by members of our Association's Executive, and revives our interest in other concerns, that we have previously alerted Council to at earlier times.

We have already expressed ratepayers concerns about the expenditure by Launceston City Council of ratepayer's funds on the reconstruction of the levee system, and furthermore, the consequent liability that ratepayers are exposed to because Council has also undertaken to carry out the work, in part on behalf of other governments.

Today's reported event of subsidence of the concrete levee during work by Council's contractors, may not result in a cost impost on ratepayers, however we are registering again our concerns, and enquire as to the situation with liability for this event. We have previously reminded Council that the responsibility for the construction and maintenance of the levee system is that of the State Government, not Launceston Ratepayers.

In the newly-published **Launceston Times** of October 7, Raffaele Cario is reported as complaining about a \$50,000 shortfall in his costs to relocate his business, and of staff resignations due to uncertainties with issues surrounding acquisition of his property by Launceston City Council. This reflects poorly on the reputation of Launceston City Council and its ratepayers, for a situation that is clearly a matter for the State Government, but whose responsibility is not cited. We trust that ratepayer's funds will not be further allocated to addressing this issue of Mr Cario's concerns, but seek your reassurance that this is the case.

Following our inspection of the levee event today, we also inspected the general condition of the public boardwalk from the Charles Street Bridge to Home Point. The un-treated hardwood planking of the boardwalk and the coated hardwood handrail, shows evidence of significant decay, and we have taken photographs of the worst sections. We did not inspect the further section of boardwalk from Home Point to King's Park. Many planks have already been replaced, but have already started to decay again, and the twisting handrail looks to have recently been repaired with filler and over-painted with some form of coating.

These boardwalks were constructed in sections which were funded in part from various sources, including government grants. At the time, our members expressed serious concerns about the use of untreated hardwood materials, and the perpetual liability to ratepayers, when Council accepted responsibility for what we understand became public thoroughfares.

Accordingly, we enquire as to the liability to ratepayers for these boardwalks, and ask for specific details of what sums have been spent each year since Council took over responsibility, and what is currently expected to be spent.

The use of timber in exposed situations is in our opinion, very foolhardy and gives no regard to the liability to ratepayers. In this regard, we observe the installation of large areas of timber louvres to the exterior of the Regional Aquatic Centre, presently under construction at Windmill Hill.

Members of our Association made strenuous submissions to Council, its staff and to the RMPAT Hearing convened to consider the appeals against the RAC, that the use of timber in this situation would incur unreasonable liability to ratepayers. Those representations were ignored and the representors effectively treated with contempt, in having expressed such concerns.

Accordingly, our Association asks that the professional consultants engaged by Council, its contractors and the management staff employed by Council, each be held accountable and liable for the advice they apparently gave to Council in recommending that such materials be still utilised against the clear concerns that had been expressed by our members. We have no doubts that timber louvers will not endure the life cycle of the enclosure of the Regional Aquatic Centre, and in the future expense for the maintenance and ultimate replacement of these elements, will otherwise befall ratepayers.

We have also been given the understanding that at a recent meeting, Council authorised the surplus funds from last year's budget, to be allocated to particular projects that have cost over-runs, including the Levee Project and the Regional Aquatic Centre Project. You have previously advised that the RAC is on budget and on schedule and that no variations have been entered into that reduces the quantity or value of the Contract Works.

We object to these surplus funds being allocated to these projects, and believe that such savings should be allocated to reducing the rates burden on ratepayers.

Accordingly, we ask that you advise us specifically what these funds are being spent on, and why.

We look forward to receiving your prompt reply to each of the questions and issues we are raising in this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Max Plummer

Hon Sec & Treasurer,
Launceston Ratepayers' Association Inc.

Please forward a copy of this letter to the Mayor and each Alderman.