

## Gympie Regional Council Meeting – 24 July 2024

A big thank you to those that turned up last Wednesday to the Gympie Regional Council meeting.

Prior to the General Meeting starting, a number of councillors came up to the group and discussed the emails forwarded to all councillors and Mayor with regards to where the discussion of the Fluoride Petition was, as the CEO stated in the April 2024 General Meeting when the item was raised off agenda by the council officers, that the CEO would hold a workshop in July for councillors to inform of Fluoride in the town water and a vote to be taken by councillors as to whether it remained in town water. As the agenda for the 24 July meeting did not contain any item of the workshop or discussion, emails were sent by several members to advise the CEO would be in breach of the standing orders of committee meetings if it was not discussed.

Several councillors came and spoke with the group with two advising they knew nothing about it, with only Cr Lahn saying she had followed this up with council as nothing had been planned. Cr's Lahn, Milne, McEwan and Curran advised they would be requesting the workshop be held so the matter could be brought back to the table for discussion and vote.

### **Another massive Rates Rise for 2024-25**

Well, it just keeps getting better. If we thought ratepayers across the region would need to dig deeper into their pockets this time last year, then the ratepayers are going to be absolutely gobsmacked with the council finally revealing by how much more they will be paying now. Council has advised the rates increase for year 24/25 will be 9.3%!!

Although this major event occurred the day before at a budget meeting, nothing was mentioned publicly to the ratepayers present at the meeting or those watching on the live stream. What did the mayor have to hide that he did not comment on the largest increase in rates which was almost double last year's rate rise.

This Council General Rates **increase of 9.3% is on top of the 5.5%** in the 2023 budget. This is on top of a 4.77% rate rise in the 2022 budget, and a 3.2% rate rise in the 2021 budget and if not for Cr Polley not a word would have been spoken about it the pretty ORDINARY meeting yesterday.

Cr Polley asked if the Mayor or CEO would like to explain to the public who have not been in the workshop meetings as the rate rise is well above CPI and is a hell of a rise!! This rate rise is three times the CPI rate. Can you please explain what we get for our money? The CEO was more than happy to pass this onto the Mayor to explain.

The Mayor stated that he doesn't know where anyone is operating at 3.1% CPI and that council generally operates at a higher CPI than the rest of the world and the rest of the community!!!!!! We will get investment into future planning!!! Where has this been for the past twenty years?? Investment into sewage and water!! Where has this been for the past twenty years?? This is a demonstration of poor management for a number of years and this is an example of why rates keep increasing more and more each year.

Look at the forecast of budget and long term planning, your rates are intended purposely to rise each year under the future planning. In the next nine years the planning is for the budget to increase \$50M, Rates to increase \$50M, Wages to council to increase nearly \$20M.

There is no hard planning to reduce costs to the ratepayers. They only plan to drive ratepayers out of the region where pensioners will no longer be able to afford to live in their own homes. It is time the people were involved in budget planning and stop the excessive use of consultants who only create investments for themselves at the ratepayers expense.

Ratepayers deserve better than this corporate money-making empire. What a difference an election makes. This time last year the Mayor was making calls and meetings with the Local Government Minister and Department calling for a review of the 5.5% rate rise. This year, NOT a peep from the Mayor with the largest rate rise in recent history.

Enough is enough, we the people need to take our stand against this rouge **business**. This business runs free of competition.

The Councils primary reasons for the above rate increase include a water treatment plant that is desperately in need of repair. The Mayor was quick to say there was no money in the budget to upgrade the facility but one would have to ask what forward planning is undertaken by this council?

Attached is the link to the [Gympie Regional Council 2024-25 Budget and Long Term Financial Forecast 2025 to 2034](#). Item 3.6 [2024-25 Budget and Long Term Financial Forecast Paper](#) states in the Consultation section of the paper, that extensive consultation has been undertaken across council in preparation of the 2024-25 budget. Yet NO consultation has been undertaken with the ratepayers to advise that if they demand more than they will be paying a higher rates bill. The public are being informed as to what this corporation is doing behind closed doors and then refer to the defence of the obligation under the Local Government Regulations to increase rates.

These increases are forced upon the ratepayers by a Qld government legislative requirement to councils that we the people supposedly agreed to contract under.

Item 6.1 Cr Milne identified there was no table in the report identifying the number for rates in arrears. The Operating Revenue table Pg 3 of 9) shows a gap of \$276,000 between the actual amount received from rates and charges compared with the budgeted amount to be received. Expenditure on the State Government's voluntary home buy back scheme (VHBB) represents \$14.7m of the total capital spend. The current capital program includes a budget of \$14.3m for the VBHH scheme.

#### Item 6.4 2023-2024 Operational Plan Fourth Quarter Update

The purpose of the report highlights progress of each of the 32 key activities identified within the Operational Plan 2023-2024. It is noted that work is progressing against the Operational Plan 2023-2024. Over the past financial year, only 56 per cent of the key response actions outlined in the Operational Plan have been met.

The most discussed item of the report was the Delays and Revisions Item 4 - Advocacy Plan to be delayed until next financial year.

Cr Lahn asked for more information on the advocacy plan from the Director and CEO.

Cr Milne asked the question of where the report got discussed with councillors as she could not remember it coming to councillors for discussion.

The Director advised that it will be discussed with councillors later in the year. It would appear the council is trying to pass information off to the public and councillors where no consultation has been undertaken.

#### Item 7.1 Community Sustainability Directorate Report

The issue of fire ant management and illegal vegetation clearing was discussed. Cr Maudsley stated he had undertaken the fire ant training program and suggested everyone should be doing it. It takes 20 minutes to view.

Cr Maudsley stated that we should have a "dob in a dumper program" to stop the illegal dumping.

#### 7.3 Proposed 2024/2025 Community Grants Program

**Increasing the Environment Program category** maximum grant amount to \$30,000 (increased by \$10,000 from 2023/2024) while reducing the Environment Projects category maximum grant amount to \$10,000 (decreased by \$10,000) to reflect the higher costs of program delivery as compared to one-off projects in the environment sector; The 2024/2025 Community Grants Program is designed to:

- provide an equitable and transparent process by which Council supports community organisations and eligible applicants to deliver initiatives;
- deliver a grants program that is accessible to applicants with clearly defined rounds of application; and
- be administered by officers in accordance with the Council approved Community Grants Policy, guidelines and budget.

#### 8.1 Proposed Renewal of Lease - Lease Area "N" on SP166006, Gympie Aerodrome, 20 Lobwein Road, Kybong to Stevens and Appleton

Council voted to the recommendation that council offer a new lease to the current tenant of Lease Area N at the Gympie Aerodrome, The hangar is used to conduct flight training and storage of aircraft and associated equipment. The Lessee would like to renew the lease for a further 20-year lease term due to further investment they are undertaking at their hangar.

For anyone operating a commercial lease to see the value of the public facility being gifted at the annual rate of \$4,200 plus GST, I am sure that many commercial businesses wish they had a lease at that value and conditions of the following.

Freehold Lease format to include the following terms and conditions:

- a) Term of Lease – 20 years;
- b) Annual Rental – \$4,200.00 (plus GST) per annum plus annual CPI increase at the commencement date of the new lease and yearly on the anniversary of the commencement date of the lease. Market Reviews every 5 years from date of commencement;

- c) Use – Aircraft and/or glider hangar and storage of associated equipment. Once the special conditions have been fully satisfied, then Flight Training will also be a permitted use;
- d) The Lessee to hold Public Liability Insurance in a sum not less than \$20,000,000.00 or such other amount Council shall determine from time to time; and
- e) All costs associated with the preparation, stamping and registration of the Lease are to be borne by the Lessee.

### 8.3 2024-28 Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program (LGGSP) Application

The purpose of this report is to gain Council's approval to submit the nominated projects under the 2024-28 LGGSP

The 2024-28 Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program (LGGSP) is a \$115 million Queensland Government funding program to support Local Governments deliver priority infrastructure projects. This report is seeking Council's agreement to submit applications under the 2024-28 LGGSP for the following projects:

**1. Gympie Water Treatment Plant Renewal - Business Case and Design Development**

**2. Gympie Civic Centre Renewal.**

The council used the reason to increase the rates nearly three times CPI because of the poor long term management of its assets. This report states that council is seeking to apply for funding in the capital works on the treatment plant but still slugged the ratepayers with an exorbitant rates rise. The GRC is seeking \$5M towards building a business case and design development of the water treatment plant. I am sure there are many more people in the community that think \$5M is required or necessary to build a business and design the water treatment plant.

The ratepayers are now paying one of the highest rates, fees and charges to councils in Qld and this council under the pretext that it is obligated to review and increase rates, fees and charges annually in line with CPI as defined by the Qld government and is doing exactly as what is expected of the Qld government and that is to make a profit at the expense of the ratepayers.