

Update from the GRC Meeting 22nd Feb 2023

What another good turnout today. Thank you to those that could attend the Gympie Regional Council meeting to hold them accountable to the people. We had around 25 members turn up again today forcing the council to have to again extend the seating for a second meeting in a row. Hopefully they will have to extend the meeting area soon as we grow in numbers and take over their space.

Well, the corporate council didn't let us down with several alarming statements made during the meeting. Here is a brief summary for those that couldn't attend today.

- The financial Report offered the first insight into what this council is all about, deceit and fraud. The question was asked by a councillor to the finance team representative, had the removal of the rates discount affected the rates payments. The finance officer advised that it hadn't and that council is currently receiving around a \$1,000,000 per day payments.
- Another councillor made the statement they had attended a meeting recently and had explained to those attending that there never was a rates discount, the amount was added into the rates. The mayor used the analogy that it was similar to a company that marks up the price of a product and then marks the product back down. He stated there is no ability to give a discount when there isn't any money to give back. He stated that people would get to understand that.
- The Budget Review offered there is an increase in cash reserves due to the higher interest rates for the \$70M in unrestrained cash reserves. The finance team offered that this is standard policy to hold three months of operational costs. The total budget highlight reported in the previous rates notice for 2022-23 was \$115.79M. Therefore, to hold \$70M in cash reserves does not meet an operating budget for three months. For a second meeting in a row there is no identification of the benefits of the higher interest rate on the cash reserves to pay down the reported \$17.13M debt held by council.
- Discussion on Item 7.3 of the agenda was held regarding the **Draft Wide Bay Regional Plan**. The Plan identifies three key strategic priorities:
 - "growing our people and places"
 - "taking charge of our economic future"
 - "sustaining our environment and lifestyle"
- This is very much a plan for the future of where government decides where people will live and where farming land will be designated between Gympie and Bundaberg. This plan is state policy under the Planning Scheme. Non-land use elements are proposed to be implemented via a Regional Infrastructure Plan, Economic Development and Tourism Strategies and Regional Transport Plans identified as actions to be completed by the Plan. **Does this sound like they are planning our future locations?**
- **Have your say in our future.** The **consultation period ends 24 February 2023**. Attached is the link for you to access and comment. <https://haveyoursay.dsdlgp.qld.gov.au/wide-bay-burnett-regional-plan/widgets/263905/faqs#92420>
- One councillor was not supportive of the second GRC Submission Letter of Attachment to Item 7.3, that originally identified there was no need for additional rural residential land in the region. The councillor moved that this be removed from the letter to the minister as the people from this region have a better knowledge of the area needs than the state body.
- What is very interesting is other items included in the letter identifies opportunities that would arise from a high speed passenger rail service. It also includes the identification of **Priority Living Areas**, designated by state government. In the words of the Infrastructure Development committee representative stated, the priority living areas are **"Where people should live"**.

This Plan is setting the way for everything in alignment for a **SMART City**. It is up to us to make sure we have a say against the proposals. One councillor stated that if Gympie Council doesn't follow the Regional Planning Scheme from the state government we may miss out on the **benefits**.

This is a clear plan by the Qld state government of where we will live and under what conditions we will live there.

The time is now for us all to act. We need to write our responses into the **Draft Wide Bay Regional Plan** and tell the government this is not a plan for us.