

Gympie Regional Council Meeting – 28 June 2023 Report

Thank you to everyone that could turn up for the council meeting yesterday and for those that let us know they were unavailable to attend. Again, another good turnout of **around 20 people in attendance**, with the meeting going into extra time due to some in depth discussions. It would appear that through comments from the councillors, in their words **"their useful life in coming to an end with the elections in March 2024"**. Some are already looking into when council goes into caretaker mode by December however the mayor advised that period would not begin until February 2024.

The meeting opened with the Pastor offering some relevant information that may have been lost on the attendees other than those in the public gallery. The pastor made reference to the rain fall that he used to measure when on the farm in Mackay and when he moved to Gympie, he was advised that **the rainfall records have been recorded in the Gympie region by the Buchanan family at Goomboorian and have held the official records for 114 years**. The pastor advised the attendees that the rainfall received in Gympie in 2022 was the wettest in 114 years and that the start of 2023 so far in the first 6 months is the driest period in 114 years. For anyone that read the Anthony Violi weather report and have researched Anthony's bio, you will see that he suggests governments have been responsible for the periods of drought and flooding. He suggests that the government has purposely manipulated the weather to have Australia in either flood or drought conditions for years.

Item 6.4 Finance Report

Council currently has \$91.3M cash at hand with \$90.3M invested in Qld Treasury. Council is to receive approximately **\$6M in federal funding next financial year** that will go towards infrastructure repairs.

Item 6.5 Schedule of Fees and Charges

This item was raised as a review item from last meeting and was required because **Qld State Libraries have increased the fees for inter library book exchange charges**. Council's libraries currently use a book loan system with Qld libraries of which legislative changes in library fees and charges have increased causing a review of the **Gympie Regional Council schedule of fees and charges to be reviewed in line with the legislative requirements**. **These fees and charges increase are as a direct result of the state government passing on the charges to council and paid for by the ratepayer.**

Item 6.6 Annual Land Valuations

Council officers have recommended to council that "Council resolve to request that the Department of Resources' State Valuation Service do not undertake an annual valuation of the Gympie Regional Council Local Government Area which would take effect from 30 June 2024".

The Land Valuation Act 2010 (the Act) requires the Valuer-General to undertake an annual statutory valuation of all rateable land in Queensland. Under the Act, annual valuations are required to be issued prior to 31 March in the year the valuation is to take effect. **The Office of the Valuer-General is also required to consult with Council in the preceding year to determine Council's opinion on whether a valuation should be undertaken.**

An annual statutory valuation of all rateable land in Queensland is required to be **undertaken by the Valuer-General under the Land Valuation Act 2010**; however, the decision may be made **not to do so after consideration of:**

- **a market survey report of the Local Government area** which reviews sales of land since the last valuation and the probable impact of the **sales on the value of land since the last annual valuation**; and
- **the results of consultation with the local government for the area**, and appropriate local and industry groups.

The Office of the Valuer-General has contacted Gympie Regional Council to determine Council's opinion on whether a valuation should be undertaken during the 2023-24 financial year. Council's opinion in

relation to whether or not a valuation should be undertaken must be submitted in writing to the Office of the Valuer-General by Thursday, 13 July 2023 and the Valuer-General will issue its determination based on the criteria listed above in due course.

Should the Valuer-General undertake the statutory valuation for the 2023-2024 year, notices would be issued prior to 31 March 2024 and the valuations would take effect on 30 June 2024. The updated valuation issued by the Department would inform Council's 2024-25 annual budget process.

Upon reviewing the potential impact of recent interest rate rises on property markets and the available sales evidence within Council's Local Government area since the last valuation and noting that valuations have been issued for the previous three years, it is appropriate that Council request that an annual valuation not be performed.

Cr Devereaux stated that he doesn't understand why the department consults back with council after undertaking valuations as they do as they want anyway.

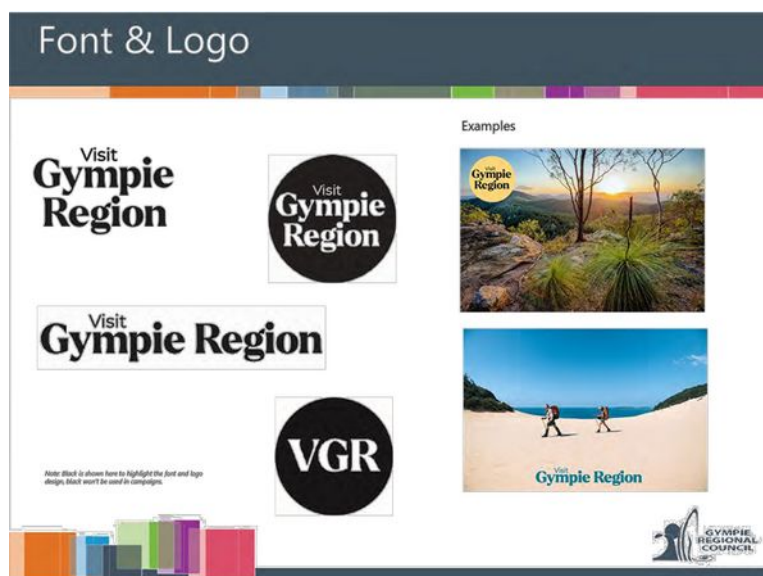
The council officer replied, "It is a legislative requirement under the Land Valuation Act 2010 that the Office of the Valuer-General is required to consult with Council for feedback".

The mayor advised that he had met with the valuer general's department and stated council did not ask for the valuation, unlike some councils that do request the valuations to be completed in the council areas. The mayor stated the valuer general's department will undertake a valuation review if it sees there is an increase in valuations of council areas.

This is clear example of the corruption within the state government being pushed down to the people who are already struggling.

Item 6.7 Tourism Branding

The council officer advised that there was a need to streamline councils current branding as there were a number of versions of branding being used by various organisation to promote the area including the updated Visitor Guide for the region. The new branding has been designed in-house by staff at no cost other than staff hours.



Item 6.8 Procurement Panel

The most interesting thing coming out of this item was the concern from Cr Fredman as to why there was only one tender received for the bulk fuel deliver to council. He questioned the council officers is the tender process too difficult or is council too difficult to deal with?

Cr Polley also asked about the price quoted by the only tenderer and stated that it was only as good as the time it was quoted as the price of the fuel goes up and down all the time.

Cr Smerdon moved that due to only one tender being submitted he would like to have the contract reviewed in the 12-month period prior to an extension option being given. Councillors voted to have the recommendation brought back before council prior to any extension granted.

Since we have been attending, there are more and more times councillors are now questioning what is being presented to them that they are expected to rubber stamp for approval. On most occasions the councillors are now referencing the ratepayers and what they expect over the past few months which was not occurring early in the year. Our presence is making a difference in how they operate.

Cr Milne was interested only in the free trees program and hoped the approval of the exclusive two groups selected would expedite the program. Council has the ability to decide when a tender is required and when one is not!!

Under the heading 2.3 Specialised Supplier, District Landcare Group Incorporated and Cooloola City Farm Nursery were given approval at the 21 September 2022 Council meeting, where Council approved the list of specialised supplier list under s235 of the Local Government Regulation 2012.

This section provides exceptions to the seeking of tenders and quotes. Council resolution is required for s235(a) & s235(b). Where Council has a need to obtain services that are specialised or confidential in nature that it would be impractical or disadvantageous for Council to invite quotes or tenders then it can resolve under s235(b) of the Local Government Regulation 2012 for an exception from the requirements to tender or quote.

An additional area has been identified whereby this exception was sought. Gympie Regional Council Environment Services Branch (ES) is seeking Specialised supplier approval for two (2) local non-for-profit community groups, for supply of endemic native plants for Council's Free Trees for Ratepayers Program (FTFR Program). The ability to give exemptions to tender seems interesting to say the least.

Item 7.3 Community Grants

It was noted from the council officer that community hall committees are able to apply for grants of up to \$2000 when securing public liability insurance for hall activities. When questioned by Cr Devereaux has this been available all the time the response was "yes" but no one had been applying for it. The council officer advised when questioned by Cr Devereaux on how many halls there were and was advised there are 27 owned or under trustee halls.

Could that be that no one was aware this was available to committees?

Another interesting topic that was raised by Cr Devereaux was in reference to the ability to access the funding from the tourism office of \$80,000 but was cut short by the mayor stating that if he was requesting the budget be altered to support the funding that was a matter that had to be discussed in private and is not for the public arena in an ordinary meeting!!

This is what council is about, ensuring the ratepayers and public are not made aware of any deals made behind closed doors.

We the people need to stand up and take back control of our community and the use of its funding and expenditure of those funds.

The Community Grants Program Guidelines document, Section 6.4 – Major Environmental Projects, sets out the priorities under the Environmental Strategy 2018 – 2023 that identifies Biodiversity and habitat protection, adapting to a changing climate and natural hazard management, improving land management, improving land management practices that influence water quality and waterway health and energy efficiency and the addition of renewable energy. (Attachment 2 – pg 8 of 18).

Does that sound like the parameters of SMART cities program??

Item 8.1 Asset Management Policy

Cr Fredman stated he thought the policy being submitted for approval was noble, however he believes the policy should include the asset management is governed by the budget. He stated that council can only cover the amount of maintenance that the budget from the rates allows. He suggested the policy should be reviewed

to identify the maintenance program wording to be rewritten. The matter was left on the table for the next meeting in July to be discussed.

Following the meeting a small number of us were able to question the mayor and CEO on the sale of the Rattler. The CEO was vague in his information and unable to answer many questions but the mayor was able to give a detailed response to the deal. The mayor advised there was no sale but a new agreement that would remove the liability from council and ratepayers of an ongoing commitment of \$450K per year with no end date. This was the contract that was signed over by the previous mayor and council.

An offer of payment of \$1.4M was made as a lump sum payment to the Rattler board so they can now proceed with seeking alternative funding elsewhere with no constraints from council.

The mayor was very open with his conversation and was happy to discuss with us the details.

Thank you again to everyone attending the meetings. We are ensuring this council is being held accountable.