

Background

- Former Gosford Council had for the past 10 – 15 years been operating in a visionary approach of Pre-Cambrian time, outlook and planning. Ie 'heads stuck in the sand.'
- For the past 10-15 years Gosford Council.CC Council has had no soul – the region has for a long time looked 'tired and worn' with no morale. Eg. Lack of maintenance, only ever 'Artists Impressions' of proposed developments that never happen (eg Gosford Waterfront marina and fast ferry, CBD revitalisation, Spurbest Development etc)
- Elected Councillors (far too many under current structure) who often serve their own self-interests and NOT of the ratepayer. They are aligned to factions and self interest groups without the care of the ratepayers and future vision of the region.
- There has never been any true transparency of financial affair/reports/accounts, even in very recent times with current mess –even the true report of the financial situation/mess has been disguised by the current Administrator. It has been secretly known for some years (even just prior to amalgamation, that Council financial affairs were a mess, with the then Mayor brushing over them without consideration or proper diligence).
- Ratepayers were never fully aware of the CEO salary and of recent, his redundancy payout. Too much secrecy.

Suggested IPART Implementation

- Reduce number of Councillors from 15 to 9
- Reduce number of Wards
- Robust, transparent and regular reporting of all Council activities, projects and finance.
- Reduce salary by half of CEO and CFO – and ensure accountability/performance targets. And max. 3 year terms for each with eligibility for re-apply based on performance criteria.
- Privatised key assets – Water, Sewage, Parks and Gardens AND most importantly, ROAD and Path Maintenance – all should again have supervisory checks work has been completed to proper community standards, expectations and 100% application
- Max 5% increase to rates – current survey gives NO option other than to have 10 or 15 % increase. Not transparent, rather one of bias and inaccuracy.
- Regardless of any rate rise and based on past precedents, there will be no increase or improvement to services and visual amenity of the region under CC Council. Eg. It often takes 4 online reports to get things like a pot hole fixed (and even then hot asphalt is not used and the pot hole re emerges days later and then another 3 online reports to get it fixed again and so on), parks mowed etc

Other Sources of Readily Available Income

- Employ more rangers. There is a wealth of income to be derived. Eg. Recent visit to Umina Beach saw at least 10 dogs unleashed with their owners in the No Dog Zone, one cannot use Paddy Clifton Oval or Gavenlock Ovals at Narara in the afternoons because of the same dog problem and the same with Bateau Bay Beach (Wyrabalong NP) and the same at The Skillion Terrigal. Fines or these offences should incur a \$275 penalty – these are just a couple of locations from a wide geographical area where 100s of fines/revenue can be obtained.

- Issue fines to major shopping retailers for not being accountable to the collection of their shopping trolleys from streets, parks, roadside and creeks – again impound them and charge them a release fee (Lane Cove Council, Hunters Hill Council and others in Sydney do this and raise much needed revenue).
- I have brought both these issues to Council with minimal interest and or no response.

Consideration

- Ratepayers are not responsible for the current Council financial mess.
- The State Govt is responsible through forced amalgamation – they should be accountable and pay for it.
- Current Councillors and former CEO should be charged with fraud of ratepayer funds and unauthorised use. Ratepayers were given no say in the amalgamation of the 2 Councils. The State Govt spruiked such amalgamation would actually save ratepayers money. Criminal proceedings should be commenced and recommendations made to the DPP.
- The amalgamation cost up to \$80 million, not the said \$20 million as outlined by the State Government Bruce Baird. Therefore the fault of the State Govt.
- Current Councillors should be sacked not stood aside.
- Current Administrator talks of assets removal – but does not actually state which specific ones and how the money raised will be specifically used. He tells us they will raise \$100 million with a 15% rate rise but Council is in debt to \$565 million. Where we will find the other \$465 million.
- All of this should have been made transparent when an interim CEO was appointed when the amalgamation of the 2 Councils occurred.
- Council must get back to basic services – proper road maintenance, spraying of roadside weeds (it used to do it at night but now the whole region just looks neglected), regular street sweeper in the suburbs, not just the CBD of Gosford, faint line markings on roads and overgrown guard rail roadside safety fencing (major road safety issue here).
- Any current Councillor should be barred from running for Council or any other public office again.

Conclusion

- No amount of rate increase to rates will fix the current mess, neglected state of the region of public confidence in Council.
- No amount of rate increase will create a future vision and path for the region.
- How can one pay a 10 or 15% rate increase when current CPI is around 2.5%.
- The State Govt must accept full responsibility of the mess they created and fund the situation until a transparent and accountable Council can again return to office.
- Criminal proceedings should commence against those who committed the fraudulent use of public money.