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Date of submission: Friday, 25 March 2022

Your submission for this review:

By continuing to raise water charges, all rate-payers in the Central Coast are to bail out their Council by paying extra in water and land rates, to the same managers who orchestrated the crises. This is not acceptable. Using simple maths 155,086 residences at an extra \$200 per year water = \$31,017,200. This is money taken out of the local economy. It is money, which is no longer going to support local businesses, shops, food, entertainment, restaurants, farmers or local charities. This is money going to Council, back to the same managers to pay back debit to multinational banks. What EXTRA safeguards are on this money? The restrictions on the last bucket of money clearly did nothing. There were no checks, balances, or accountability, but restricted funds were clearly and freely [REDACTED] with no penalty or limitation. More than \$500M has gone missing! Council will continue to terminated full time employees and engage contractors from outside the local government area so that the "bottom line" for labour costs looks good. Councillors don't control council money, senior management does. Sack them and employ managers who can manage Council for the betterment of the local community.

I am a Wyong resident and ratepayer – Central Coast Council

Council financial crises? Extra charges being thrown on residents? I object to extra money going to the same senior managers of Central Coast Council. Sack them all and get fresh management in to steer Council in the right direction to benefit all rate payers.

Our Council crises has been orchestrated by senior management, including human resources (P&C) over a period of at least eight years.

Prior to the merger of Wyong and Gosford Councils in 2016, Council management was already withholding information from staff and Union Delegates who represent them in forums such as the Consultative Committee meetings. Union Delegates repeatedly requested information on

- Staff numbers – head count, full-time equivalent, contractors, labour hire, casuals, and total itinerant workers
- Organisational structures
- Labour budgets
- Financial status and reports
- Position vacancy numbers and recruitment information
- Trend information on – finance, position vacancies, employee numbers, headcount, expenditure, budget spends
- Strategic plan for the future
- Future direction of Council

Access to this information was continually blocked by management who continued to play stupid games by not “understanding” what was being asked for. Management deliberately and continually avoided answering any questions, deliberately miss interpreting all questions asked and providing very selective information at best, if providing information at all.

This was recorded in all our monthly Consultative Committee minutes over the last eight years. And is available on request.

Post-merger, this practice of avoiding provision of any information, has only become worse with management deliberately sabotaging the consultative process.

Union Delegates lodged many grievances, often dealing with the same issue multiple times to make management deal with the situation in a reasonable and transparent manner. More than 39 grievances were raised in a six-month period regarding appropriate pay for members for example. Some 95% of these ended up in the Industrial Relations Commission who supported the Unions and continued to uphold the Local Government Award. Council has not won a single dispute in the past 8 years. However, they continued their refusal to provide crucial financial information, solve disputes locally, even trying to ban Union representation for members requesting information on Council’s wellbeing. Instead, they continue to delay resolution until the dispute was lodged in the IRC. IRC records will support this inappropriate behaviour from management.

Council even engaged an external consultant to investigate the time take to resolve issues initiated by the Internal auditor and ombudsman. This report was never tabled or made available to staff despite many requests made.

The Unions even questioned whether the Council was running two financial books. This was denied at the time. However, this has been proven to be true.

When Council refused to pay staff in 2019, the “crises” due to miss-management, the whole game was exposed.

There have been no repercussions for management or for anyone working in human resources, who allegedly caused this crisis. The workers, who had nothing to do with the financial situation, were penalised, targeted and paid the price by being retrenched.

Union Delegates were also targeted for retrenchment as were staff who questioned management. It was an opportunity for management to “get ride” of any Staff who questioned them.

Council has now shed 20% of its working staff, with only a few from management levels leaving. Nearly all were from lower employee levels in the organisation. Promises were made that Council would have fewer managers and a more streamlined organisational structure. This has not occurred.

Subsequently, there was a “Public” enquiry which only last week was made public. This document appeared to miss represent some of the responsibilities of management and internal staff who were directly responsible to financial reporting and accuracy of information.

Now all the rate-payers in the Central Coast need to bail out their Council by paying extra in water and land rates, to the same managers who orchestrated the crises. This is not acceptable.

Using simple maths – 155,086 residences at an extra \$200 per year water = \$31,017,200.

This is money taken out of the local economy. It is money, which is no longer going to support local businesses, shops, food, entertainment, restaurants, farmers or local charities. This is money going to Council, back to the same managers to pay back debit to multinational banks.

What EXTRA safeguards are on this money? The restrictions on the last bucket of money clearly did nothing. There were no checks, balances, or accountability, but restricted funds were clearly and freely used by management with no penalty or limitation. More than \$500M has gone missing!

Council policies, procedures and accountability have not changed. Council management continues to use contractors, fail to repair roads, fail to provide basic local government services, fail to mow parks, fail to spray weeds, continue to freeze recruitment, fail to communicate or engage with staff. There is no meaningful interaction between senior management and general staff. The Consultative process continues to fail and engagement between management and general staff is non-existent. So how is the current situation any different from eight years ago?

We are going to give these same people, more money to continue doing the same thing over and over again. Nothing has changed with internal processes. Nothing will change unless the managers are terminated.

Council management is STILL withholding information from Union Delegates who represent the general staff. Union Delegates and general staff continue to request the same information they have been request for eight years. Information on -

- Staff numbers – head count, full-time equivalent, contractors, labour hire, casuals, and total itinerant workers
- Organisational structures
- Labour budgets
- Financial status and reports
- Position vacancy numbers and recruitment information

- Trend information on – finance, position vacancies, employee numbers, headcount, expenditure, budget spends
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This information continues to be blocked by senior management, who continue to avoid answering any questions, deliberately provide miss-information or try to provide glossed over information, if providing information at all.

Having written to the NSW Ombudsman, office of local government and the minister for local government (several times) whose response has been - “This is an operational matter and the office does not get involved.” The red flags were out a long time ago and the response from those that govern the integrity of our local government never came or maybe they lacked any interest..

Unions have secured an agreement that Local Councils will provide a report on staffing levels at a certain point in time. However, who will check the accuracy of this data as it could just be an estimate, or will local staff get to see this data?

So -

- Who is holding this council accountable?
- How is this council being held accountable?
- Who is checking the accuracy of the information?
- What extra guarantees are in place for the estimated \$31,017,200?
- Who is policing these guarantees?
- Why are ratepayers being penalised?
- Staff continue to be penalised with threats of further retrenchments if there is no SRV
- Staff numbers are below critical mass already delaying any work, let alone and backlog
- Under resourcing is now a major issue in Central Coast Council and we will see a rise in IRC disputes
- Erosion of assets continues – sale of assets, lack of maintenance of assets and infrastructure, reactionary maintenance only (on demand)
- Who prioritised works or projects so further miss-management never occurs again?
- Who approves expenditure?
- What additional penalties are there to senior management who fail to carry out their duties?

We need clear, honest and transparent management NOW, not after the next crises, not after the next election, we need it now.

Increased water and land rates will NOT achieve any of this and certainly not with the current senior management.

Get rid of the current senior managers and HR at Central Coast Council and we will see an improvement in financial management, recruitment, policy and procedures (which current senior managers and HR control) and the appropriate benefits will flow to rate payers. If not, any extra money will just continue to be wasted.

Under the current management of Central Coast Council, I oppose any variation for increased water and/or rates pricing.