

CEO dismissal: time to come clean on the costs



The four W'bool City councillors behind the coup: Mike Neoh, Kylie Gaston, Sue Cassidy and David Owen. Original images: WCC.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

Tonight I want to pause and reflect on this simple fact: the Warrnambool City Council is now the subject of not one, not two, but three investigations.

One of those investigations is the Ombudsman's inquiry into the misuse of corporate credit cards.

The second is the council's own internal inquiry into these credit cards.

The third is a Worksafe investigation into alleged bullying.

And the fourth – [revealed here on Friday afternoon](#) – is an investigation by the Local Government Inspectorate into the sacking of the former CEO Peter Schneider by Crs Sue Cassidy, Mike Neoh, Kylie Gaston and David Owen.

What a freaking mess.

And all of it – ALL of it – will come at a cost to ratepayers, which is the bottom line of this latest disgraceful manoeuvring, backroom dealing and secrecy.

We are footing the bill.

We will pay for Mr Schneider's payout, whatever that is, because we still don't know.

The Four Horsemen involved in lopping off the CEO's head were happy to swing the sword, but haven't had the spine to reveal how much it will cost ratepayers, because that information will undoubtedly upset voters as they head toward the October election.

The councillors don't want that bitter truth spoiling their campaigns.

Best to distract ratepayers with other shiny things, like bike paths and taverns and new grass at Reid Oval.

And the four councillors involved in the coup brought in all the lawyers they needed to get rid of Mr Schneider, and guess who pays for that?

We do.

How much was spent on these lawyers? We don't know.

And who decided to get that legal advice?

It sure as heck wasn't supported by all seven councillors, because three of them – Crs Tony Herbert, Peter Sycopoulis and Robert Anderson – were dead set against the whole idea.

This begs another key question: can four councillors rack up a legal bill without the approval of the other councillors?

I am no expert on the finer details of the Local Government

Act but the Inspectorate is, and I hope it will pull this question apart during its investigation, because, as a ratepayer, I have a vested interest.

We all have a vested interest, because the four councillors involved have been spending my money – and yours – and we deserve to know the full story.

Rates notices are going out as we speak and blowing people away: I am getting messages every day from people shocked by how much we pay in Warrnambool compared to other cities.

I am also talking to people worried about what lies ahead as the full economic impact of the C19 virus kicks in.

And yet here are four of our councillors, blowing hundreds of thousands of dollars on lawyers and payouts for reasons which are all secret.

The inspectorate's investigation will probably take some time, but my hope is that the four councillors who are now part of this investigation will step up themselves and tell the public the full story about this coup and the cost.

They know the truth.

As we inch closer toward the October election, there will be many shiny distractions and photo ops and promises, but the two things that I am hearing voters want the most right now are transparency and integrity.

Transparency and integrity.

Over to you, councillors.

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