

The Vault: WCC spends \$450k and no report?

Description

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[author] [author_image timthumb='on']http://the-terrier.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/vault3.jpg[/author_image]Welcome to **The Vault** – this is where Bluestone will place all sorts of subscriber-access-only material. If you have something you would like to submit, please email us at editor@bluestonemagazine.com.au[author_info][/author_info] [/author]



By Carol Altmann

[box]Bluestone would like to acknowledge subscriber PT for funding the Freedom of Information application used for this piece.[/box]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] B[/dropcap]luestone subscribers will know that we cop quite a lot of flak for continuing to ask questions about the sacred cows of Warrnambool including Flagstaff Hill, Fun4Kids and the increasing secrecy and lack of transparency around how the Warrnambool City Council runs its affairs – but as long as there are huge gaps in the information, we will keep asking.

Like why is there no formal report on the 2015 Fun4Kids Festival [that cost ratepayers \\$450,000 to run?](#)

Bluestone has just uncovered this fact and it is staggering, irrespective of your views on Fun4Kids or whether it has picked up tourism gongs.

Anyone who has ever dealt with public funds will know that full disclosure on how that public money was spent and the results of that spending is standard procedure.

It's called accountability.

Indeed I remember when working for the might of News Ltd that we were expected to account for every dollar we claimed when working on a story, right down to producing a receipt for a \$10.50 pizza – after all, Rupert might be a very wealthy man, but he was still the boss.

Yet the Warrnambool City Council has spent almost half a million dollars of public money on an event that, until now, has [always produced a full report](#) on its budget and the festival results.

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When we asked the council media manager for a copy of the 2015 Fun4Kids report, he said the key results of the festival had already been [released to the media](#).

So, what was told to the media via the council's media unit should be enough.

Well some journalists in Warrnambool might be happy to swallow the pre-chewed lines delivered by the council, but *Bluestone* is compelled to dive deeper.

So when the council told us that “about 15,000” people attended the 2015 festival and that 24% of these were from Melbourne and that they surveyed 1000 of these patrons for their views, we wanted to know more.

Can we have the full report? We asked.

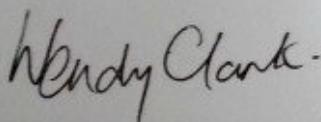
Nothing was forthcoming, so we lodged a Freedom of Information asking for two things:

- i) the report and/or documents **prepared for the council** relating to the financial results of the 2015 Fun4Kids festival
- ii) the report and/or documents **prepared for the council** relating to the patronage, including any breakdowns or analysis on these figures.

patronage of the 2015 Fun4Kids Festival including a breakdown of daily patronage and any analysis of these patrons including town/city of origin.

I have found no documents that meet the terms of your request, however I have attached 2 reports from the Council meeting agenda of 2 November 2015 which contains the September 2015 Financial Performance Report and Council meeting agenda of 7 December 2015 which contains the Community Development Directorate Six Monthly Operational Report. These reports make reference to the 2015 Fun4Kids Festival.

Yours faithfully



WENDY CLARK

Bluestone Magazine

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] A[/dropcap]fter the obligatory 45-day wait, the council's Freedom of Information officer **Wendy Clark**, who is also chief executive officer **Bruce Anson's** personal assistant, came back with this jaw-dropping response:

"I have found no documents that meet the terms of your request..."

This means, we must assume, that there were no reports prepared for the council.

Ms Clark then attached two documents that, we must also assume, amount to the full documentation available on the results of Fun4Kids 2015.

One was a single budget line reference and the other was five paragraphs that included not one single figure, but plenty of motherhood statements like:

“The Fun4Kids Festival achieved a positive percentage increase in the metropolitan market, while maintaining regional attendances. This outcome is a key growth strategy for the festival moving forward.”

I don't know about you, but whenever I read those last two words – “moving forward” – I know we are deep in the river of public relations spin and far from the shores of plain speaking.



People were outraged after a row of old tea tree was pulled out from Pertobe Rd – one reader asked for more information on why it had to be

done and is still waiting.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] I[/dropcap]n a similar vein, you may remember the uproar that followed [the sudden removal of a row of old tea tree](#) along Pertobe Rd just before Christmas.

The trees were removed, we were told, after an arborist inspected them and found them to be unsafe due to infestation by a certain worm and cracking.

A *Bluestone* reader dared to ask more. In early January, she asked for a copy of the arborist's report (or at least more detail) and whether the trees would be replaced.

She is still waiting for a reply, let alone any more information.

Such queries could normally be thrashed out by elected councillors in general council business, but that, as we know, [has been abolished](#) and now councillors [are timed](#) for how long they talk, even though meetings were usually over within a couple of hours.

All councillors, not just some, should be demanding *more*, not less, transparency on behalf of ratepayers.

The fact they aren't, and that this sort of "trust us" mentality is gripping the council, is of serious concern to anyone who remembers that it is the [ratepayers](#) who, just like Rupert, are the boss.



Find more in The Vault here...

[Trees, transparency and the truth](#)

[Wilma Wright, FOI and more](#)

[The big shed schemozzle: we follow the money](#)

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