

Unpicking the tight-knit connections of WCC and Lyndoch



Links: Lyndoch Living CEO Doreen Power, WCC Councillor Sue Cassidy, WCC planning chief Andrew Paton, WCC CEO Vikki King and Lyndoch board member Prof Rob Wallis.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

Oooh Warrnambool can be a tight-knit little place and the knit between two of our biggest public institutions – Warrnambool City Council and Lyndoch Living – just got a little tighter with the unexpected elevation of Vikki King to council CEO.

While the seven councillors continue to rip each other's heads

off and try to justify why they treat the public like numbskulls (#whitenoise), I thought I would briefly turn the channel to another station and unpick at least one row in the roll-neck sweater of the Warrnambool club.

As we know, the crucial vote for Ms King being hand-picked for the top role by four of the seven councillors came from Councillor Sue Cassidy (or as someone accidentally, but prophetically, said as a spoonerism the other day, Coup Sassidy), so let's start there.

(Needles up! Cast on...)

Cr Cassidy is a member of the Lyndoch Living board.

Cr Cassidy, owner of Unisexcuts hair salon, is close to the Lyndoch CEO Doreen Power and, together with Ms Power, is one of three directors of Lyndoch Healthcare Pty Ltd that was set up to oversee the Warrnambool Medical Clinic which was bought by Lyndoch last year.

The [Warrnambool Medical Clinic](#) is set to relocate at some point into a new, multi-million dollar "super clinic" being planned for Lyndoch.

The third director of Lyndoch Healthcare Pty Ltd is Andrew Paton. Mr Paton is the Director of City Growth – the head of planning – at the Warrnambool City Council.

He is also on the Lyndoch board.

Mr Paton is also part of the council's Economic Development Advisory Committee, where Ms Power is one of the nine committee members.

Another Lyndoch board member is former Deakin academic and former Wannon Water deputy chair Professor Rob Wallis.

Prof Wallis is also the independent chair of the council's Audit and Risk Committee.

Cr Cassidy also sits on that committee.

Prof Wallis, as it happens, was also until recently one of two independent people on the council's Chief Executive Employment Matters Advisory Committee, which advised on matters to do with the CEO.

That was until last week when, according to the Standard, he resigned in the wake of the unprecedented coup against CEO Peter Schneider.

Cr Cassidy was part of that coup, which loops us right back around and up and down to the new council CEO, Ms King.

Prior to being anointed CEO, Ms King already had connections to her Lyndoch counterpart, Ms Power.

They were both members of [Beyond the Bell](#) – a local network to encourage and support children in education – around 2016-17 when the program went through a period of transition on the back of receiving significant government funding.

As a result of that transition, Brophy CEO Francis Broekman became chair.

As an aside, Mr Broekman is the husband of former Mayor and long-term councillor Jacinta Ermacora who is now chair of Wannon Water. The CEO of Wannon Water, Andrew Jeffers, is on the board of Beyond the Bell.

Up and over and around we go....knit one, pearl one....but I digress.

Ms King and Ms Power are also on the executive committee of the [South West Primary Care Partnership](#) which is a collective of health service agencies.

Ms Power is chair and Ms King is deputy chair of this network.

The partnership itself, as of last year, is now included in the financial statements of Lyndoch Living.

Some of the SWPHP members have also been involved in the transition of the Warrnambool Medical Clinic over to Lyndoch's control and ownership.

(Needles down. Cast off...)

This little knitting exercise is not only interesting for the links between these WCC and Lyndoch – but also for where they sit in terms of public accountability.

Both Lyndoch Living and WCC are arguably in the middle of unprecedented change and will face ongoing questions from us, the public, whom they serve, about their operations, direction, expenditure and staff morale.

It will be fascinating to watch how these questions are handled in coming months, as we enter annual general report time, annual general meeting time, and council elections.

Will we see greater transparency and openness, or will the wool be once again pulled over our eyes?

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