WCC credit card #4 and laying the whole mess bare

Description

The truth laid bare: unravelling Warrnambool City Council's spending and connections means entering a tangled, seemingly endless web.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

Today is the final episode of Season One of *House of Cards* meets Warrnambool City Council meets *Game of Thrones,* where all the lines in the ever-thickening and outrageous plot come together and I lay it all out on the table.

The opening scene in this special, double episode is yet another corporate credit card – we are now up to number four – which has the same pattern of spending on the backs of ratepayers that has become so depressingly familiar: the dinners, the drinks, the endless coffees, the lunches, on and on and on.

I have been sitting on all of this information for a very, very long time, hoping the council would eventually throw open the windows, but it hasn't and it won't, so I am doing it for them.

I will start with credit card #4 and a snapshot:

TAX INVOICE / RECEIPT

The Hairy Goat
69 Liebig St
Warrnambool VIC 3280
61572966796
0401 149 190
info@thehairygoat.com.au
https://www.facebook.com/HairyGoatBar/?hc_location=ufi

Sale #: SP-1 2018-09-21 17:49:39
Served by [redacted]
[T13]

Description	Amount
Redbank Charonnay/Pinto Noir glass x 2	$18.00
LC Pale Ale Large	$11.00
WR Dark Ale Large x 2	$22.00
Estrella x 2	$16.00
Redbank Charonnay/Pinto Noir glass x 2	$18.00
LC Pale Ale	$6.50
Furphy	$6.50
Subtotal:	$98.00
Total ex tax:	$89.08
- GST	$8.92
Total Inc Tax:	$98.00

Method	Amount

Prices shown in AUD

POS 1
2018-09-21 18:34:35
Sale ID: ox83qfxi

Exhibit A is $98 worth of drinks at the Hairy Goat on a Friday night on 21 September last year, which is around the time when, supposedly, the council was cracking down on its credit card use after “discovering” the inappropriate and over-the-top spending of former tourism chief David McMahon.

Hotel Warrnambool

Cnr Koroit & Kepler Street, Warrnambool
Tel: (03) 55622377
ABN: 11 005 732 552

Customer Order List

Table: 11 (Covers: 2)

Station: POS3 Staff: [redacted]
Bill:1030000009 Time:26/05/2018 6:43:26 PM

QTY	ITEM	TOTAL
[Beverages]		
2	*Coopers Pale Ale	11.60
	$	11.60
[Food]		
1	*Eye Fillet	41.00
1	*Fish Special	36.00
12	*Oysters	49.20
12	-- Natural	0.00
1	*Prawn WFP	26.00
	$	152.20

TOTAL:$ 163.80

(inc. GST):$ (14.89)

Exhibit B is a $163 dinner for two people at the Warrnambool Hotel on a Saturday night, 26 May last year, which included a dozen oysters au naturale and, wait for it, a plate of eye fillet. (Whoever gets to

play the eye fillet in the eventual movie of this saga is going to become a star).

Gyoza Gyoza
A.B.N. 19166328507
Tel: 96630801
115 - 117 Little Bourke St Melbourne

TAX INVOICE

10/12/2018 No: A1812100003
Service: SUPERVISOR People: 2
Table: 23

Qty	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
1	La Vue Pinot Gris 2 Gls	$44.90
1	Karami Kyu-ri	$6.80
2	Seweed Salad	$13.60
1	Tuna Tataki	$8.00
1	Miso Nasu	$6.80
1	Okonomiyaki	$6.80
1	Tori Karage (mustard)	$6.80
1	Minced Garlic & Pork (Ya	$4.80
1	Prawn (Yaki)	$6.80

Total: $105.30
GST Included In Total: $9.57
EFTPOS: $105.30
Balance: $0.00
* Indicates GST free item.

Order Number: 030

THANK YOU FOR VISITING
PLEASE CALL AGAIN

And then there is **Exhibit C**, a receipt from 10 December last year – *after* the council re-wrote its floppy credit card policy – where two people spent $105.30 on dinner at the Japanese cafe Gyoza Gyoza in Melbourne, of which $44.90 was soaked up by a bottle of pinot gris (with two glasses).

This outing was enjoyed just *a week* after the council decided to apply to break the rate cap and bump our rates up by 4.5% this year and the next.

What a ****** cheek.

Like you, I have had a gut full of the excuses and the ducking and weaving and hiding behind *Utopia* inspired spin that does nothing to comfort ratepayers that this long age of entitlement, slack governance and lack of accountability is well and truly over.

It needs to be rooted out and that's why it's time to name names.

Credit card #4 is held by the Manager of Economic Development and Investment Shaun Miller, he of the two jobs and who, after being named in relation to those two jobs, prompted an email from CEO Peter Schneider asking me not to name staff.

I tried that tack, but the council has done nothing since to convince me that it intends to get to the bottom of the rot which runs so deep. (#notAllstaff)

In fact all the signs point to yet another cover-up, so the gloves are coming off, because my only motivation through all of this is to expose the truth. So here are some truths.

Quest Flemington
600 Epsom Rd, Postal Po Box 83
QUEST Flemington VIC 3031

ABN: 37 766 378 192
Phone: +613 9371 2200
Fax: +613 9371 2299
Email: bookings@questflemington.com.au
Website: www.questflemington.com.au

Tax Invoice
REPRINT

Date:25 Jul 2017 3:45 PM
Adults:6
Arrival Date:22 Jul 2017
Departure Date:26 Jul 2017
Voucher No:.
Account No:170305
Reservation No:67492

WARRNAMBOOL CITY COUNCIL
CIVIC CENTRE 25 LIEBIG STREET
WARRNAMBOOL VIC 3280

Invoice No: 25245

David McMahon

Date	Details	GST	Amount (inc.GST)
25 Jul 2017	08: 2 BDRM. STANDARD - (23-Jul-17) David McMahon	$30.91	$340.00
25 Jul 2017	08: 2 BDRM. STANDARD - (24-Jul-17) David McMahon	$30.91	$340.00
25 Jul 2017	08: 2 BDRM. STANDARD - (25-Jul-17) David McMahon	$30.91	$340.00
25 Jul 2017	09: 2 BDRM. STANDARD - (22-Jul-17) Not Relevant	$30.91	$340.00
25 Jul 2017	09: 2 BDRM. STANDARD - (23-Jul-17) Not Relevant	$30.91	$340.00
25 Jul 2017	09: 2 BDRM. STANDARD - (24-Jul-17) Not Relevant	$30.91	$340.00
25 Jul 2017	09: 2 BDRM. STANDARD - (25-Jul-17) Not Relevant	$30.91	$340.00
25 Jul 2017	45: 1 BDRM. STANDARD - (23-Jul-17) Not Relevant	$20.00	$220.00
25 Jul 2017	45: 1 BDRM. STANDARD - (24-Jul-17) Not Relevant	$20.00	$220.00
25 Jul 2017	47: 1 BDRM. STANDARD - (23-Jul-17) Not Relevant	$20.00	$220.00
25 Jul 2017	47: 1 BDRM. STANDARD - (24-Jul-17) Not Relevant	$20.00	$220.00
25 Jul 2017	20: 1 BDRM. STANDARD - (25-Jul-17) Not Relevant	$18.09	$199.00
25 Jul 2017	EFTPOS Receipt #63610, MASTER CARD # 0246	$0.00	-$3,510.89
25 Jul 2017	- EFTPOS Transaction Fee	$4.72	$51.89
		GST	$319.18
		Total	$0.00

The accommodation invoice from the WCC delegation to the 2017 Victorian Tourism Conference at Flemington Racecourse.

Mr Miller travels around a lot. I can now reveal he is the mystery man who, you may recall and according to an invoice paid for by his former colleague, Mr McMahon, arrived two days early, on a Saturday, for a conference in 2017 that was held at the Flemington Racecourse which, on that Saturday, was hosting a major racing event.

A coincidence? Maybe, because our council thrives on coincidence.

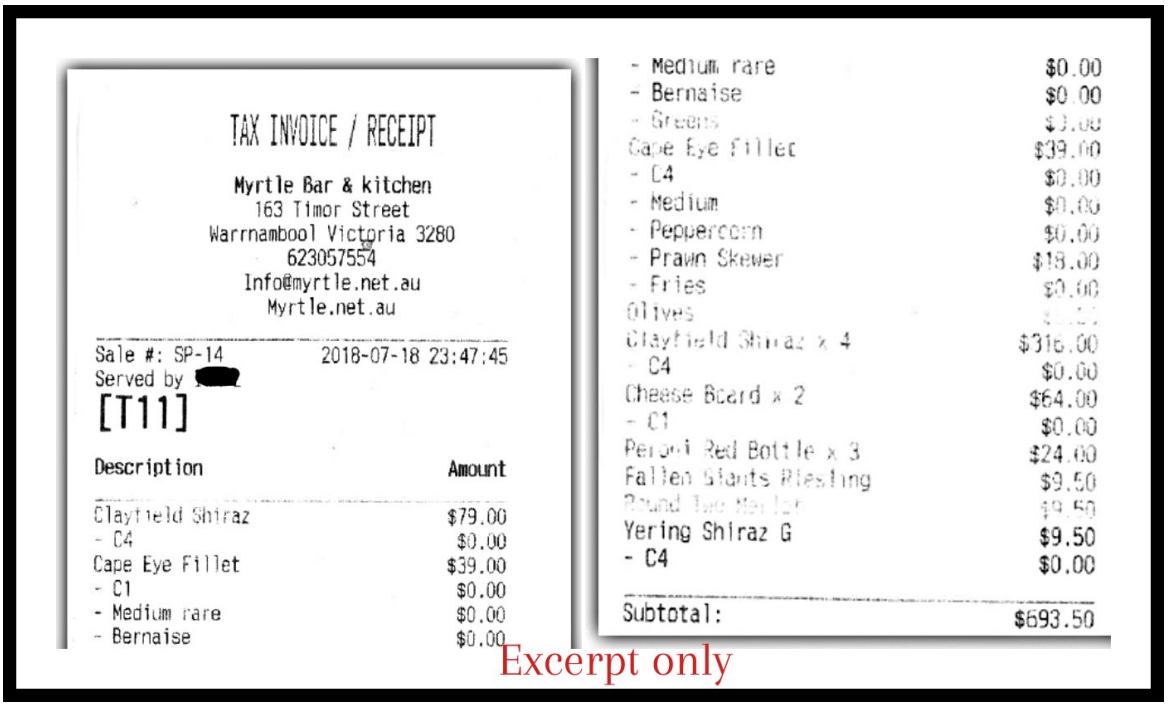
Certain people don't like me naming Mr Miller. When I wrote about his two jobs, there was a barrage of abuse and behind-the-scenes threats, perhaps because these people suspected that I knew more than I was writing about publicly. They were right, I did. More about that shortly.

I have not had any direct response from Mr Miller about his credit card use, however I did get another polite email on his behalf from Mr Schneider last Friday night, but it said nothing new and provided no

explanation for the receipts above.

Mr Miller's spending is signed off by his superior, Director City Growth Andrew Paton.

Mr Paton is the owner of credit card #3.



TAX INVOICE / RECEIPT

Myrtle Bar & kitchen
163 Timor Street
Warrnambool Victoria 3280
623057554
Info@myrtle.net.au
Myrtle.net.au

Sale #: SP-14 2018-07-18 23:47:45
Served by [redacted]
[T11]

Description	Amount
Clayfield Shiraz	$79.00
- C4	$0.00
Cape Eye Fillet	$39.00
- C1	$0.00
- Medium rare	$0.00
- Bernaise	$0.00
- Medium rare	$0.00
- Bernaise	$0.00
Cape Eye Fillet	$39.00
- C4	$0.00
- Medium	$0.00
- Peppercorn	$0.00
- Prawn Skewer	$18.00
- Fries	$0.00
Olives	[illegible]
Clayfield Shiraz x 4	$316.00
- C4	$0.00
Cheese Board x 2	$64.00
- C1	$0.00
Pepsi Red Bottle x 3	$24.00
Fallen Giants Riesling	$9.50
Round Two Merlot	$9.50
Yering Shiraz G	$9.50
- C4	$0.00
Subtotal:	$693.50

Excerpt only

This is the card that was used, among many other things, to pay for the $1476 dinner at Pippies, and the $700 dinner at the Myrtle Kitchen which included five bottles of wine at $79 a bottle.

Mr Paton was very polite in his response to my emailed questions last week, but he is gagged from answering me directly, such is the council's tight grip around the throats of those who might wish to talk

to journalists.

If he could have spoken to me, Mr Paton might have explained the purpose of the boozy Myrtle Dinner which was attended by four people, including himself and Cr Sue Cassidy.

Cr Cassidy is another name that is significant to this story because Cr Cassidy is one of two councillors on the council's Audit and Risk Committee. This committee is important because, well, it is designed to keep an eye on audit and risk, ie. the use of public money.

This is the committee that has just been put in charge of the external audit into the use of council credit cards.

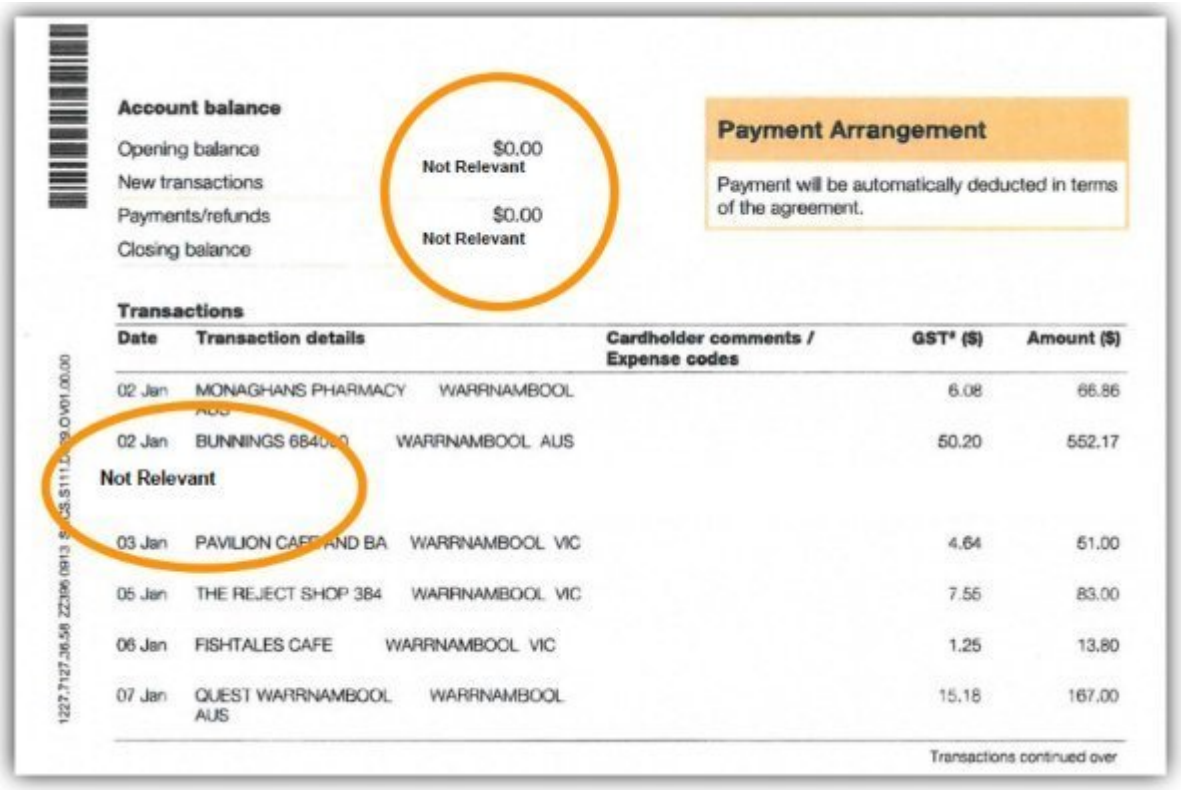
You guessed it, Barry the Bullshite Detector has been having a meltdown.

So let's paint the picture: Mr Paton is the boss of Mr Miller and was the boss of Mr McMahon and was the manager responsible for signing off on all the questionable spending on *their* credit cards, while at the same time using his *own* credit card to pay for a long, boozy dinner attended by Cr Cassidy who is a member of the council Audit and Risk Committee that will now oversee the investigation into those cards.

The *House of Cards* ain't got nothing on this.

And rolling along behind the scene of this car wreck are three specific side stories that I also want you to know about.

(*Intermission. Lights up. Toilet break. Grab a choc top. Right, away we go…*)



Account balance

Opening balance	$0.00
New transactions	Not Relevant
Payments/refunds	$0.00
Closing balance	Not Relevant

Payment Arrangement

Payment will be automatically deducted in terms of the agreement.

Transactions

Date	Transaction details	Cardholder comments / Expense codes	GST* ($)	Amount ($)
02 Jan	MONAGHANS PHARMACY WARRNAMBOOL AUS		6.08	66.86
02 Jan	BUNNINGS 684000 WARRNAMBOOL AUS		50.20	552.17
03 Jan	PAVILION CAFE AND BA WARRNAMBOOL VIC		4.64	51.00
05 Jan	THE REJECT SHOP 384 WARRNAMBOOL VIC		7.55	83.00
06 Jan	FISHTALES CAFE WARRNAMBOOL VIC		1.25	13.80
07 Jan	QUEST WARRNAMBOOL AUS WARRNAMBOOL		15.18	167.00

Not Relevant

Transactions continued over

An example of the redacted credit card statements provided by the WCC via a lengthy and costly Freedom of Information process.

Side story one: Freedom of Information. As you know, none of this – none of it – would have seen the light of day had it not been for a Freedom of Information application that I lodged almost a year ago, asking for Mr McMahon's credit card receipts.

The council did everything it could to stop me getting that information fully and efficiently and the whole process took nine months and a lot of money (#thankyouTerrierTipJar).

Even after the nine-month wait and all that money, we would not have known about the secret repayments and behind-the-scenes deal between Mr McMahon and the then CEO Bruce Anson last November, had it not been for sources.

That whole, disgraceful cover-up was only exposed, here, in July.

And who in the council was in charge of responding to my Freedom of Information applications about the credit cards?

The CEO's executive assistant, Wendy Clark.

So, to try and find out information that ultimately involved the actions and decisions of the former CEO, I had to go through the former CEO's executive assistant.

And if I wanted to dive deeper and detail the tens of thousands of dollars of credit card spending on behalf of Mr Anson – he didn't use his own corporate card to buy, for example, the cases of wine enjoyed after council meetings – I would need to go through the same executive assistant.

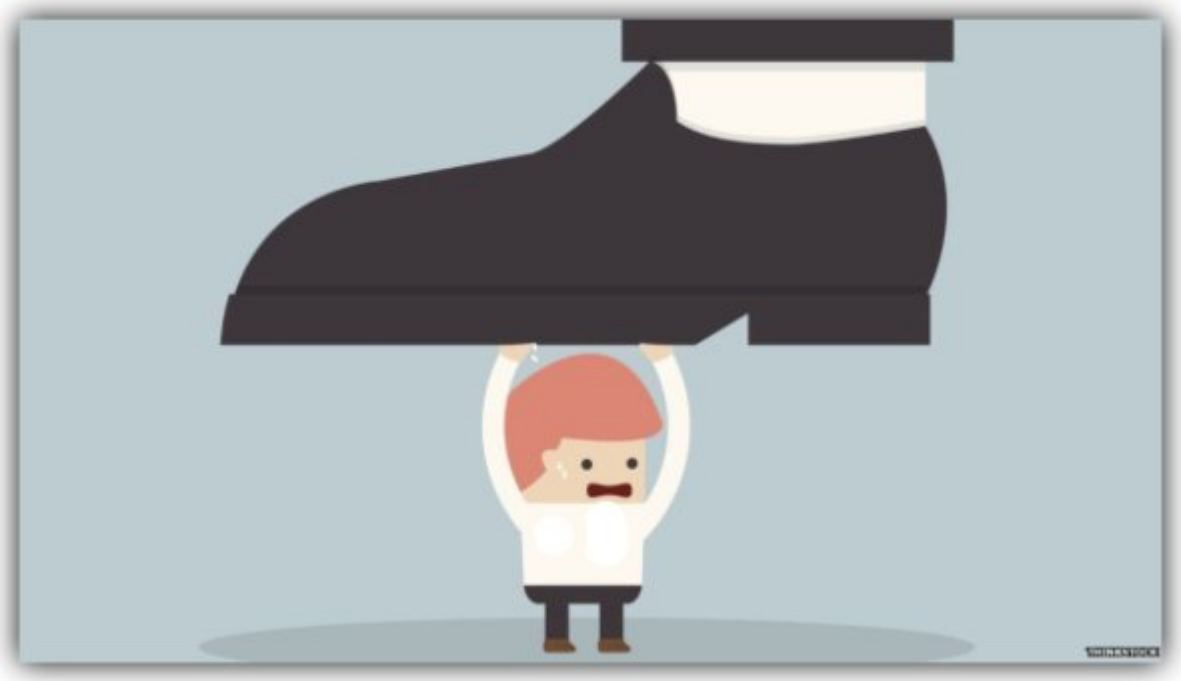
Does that pass the pub test?

And just to tangle that web a little more, Ms Clark, the CEO executive assistant, is the senior staff member who has lived in a council-owned CBD apartment for more than 30 years and for most of that time has leased it on nothing more than a handshake deal.

That suspect arrangement existed until I started asking questions and learned, wait for it, a written lease had been miraculously signed just a few weeks before my probing.

This is the rotten culture I am talking about.

It stinks and it has to end.



Side story two: former tourism chief Mr McMahon was a bully and made life hell for a lot of people, especially women. He came to the council with a reputation as a bully that somehow escaped the attention of those who hired him, but which I have since substantiated.

This is how this whole story started, not from people contacting me to talk about his credit card abuse – although that was raised too – but because of Mr McMahon's foul-mouthed bullying and a desperation to be heard, because nobody in council was listening.

I told Cr Tony Herbert about this bullying when we met last August in the meeting that he now fails to remember much about at all. Cr Herbert did nothing. The council did nothing. #goodbloke #heLikesAdrink

Nothing happened to Mr McMahon – he stayed in his top job while so many around him fell away, distressed and exhausted, and he stayed there right up until his dishonesty around his credit card expenditure finally caught up with him last July.

How was Mr McMahon hired in the first place? Why was he allowed to get away with all that he did? And why on earth – why on *earth* – did current CEO Mr Schneider praise him upon his departure?

This is how the council boys' club works and it is part of the rotten culture that I am talking about.

It stinks and it has to end.

Mayor Tony Herbert signs an MOU with the Mayor of Mariestad Johan Abrahamsson after a delegation from Mariestad and Nilsson Energy visited Warrnambool last April. Image: WCC

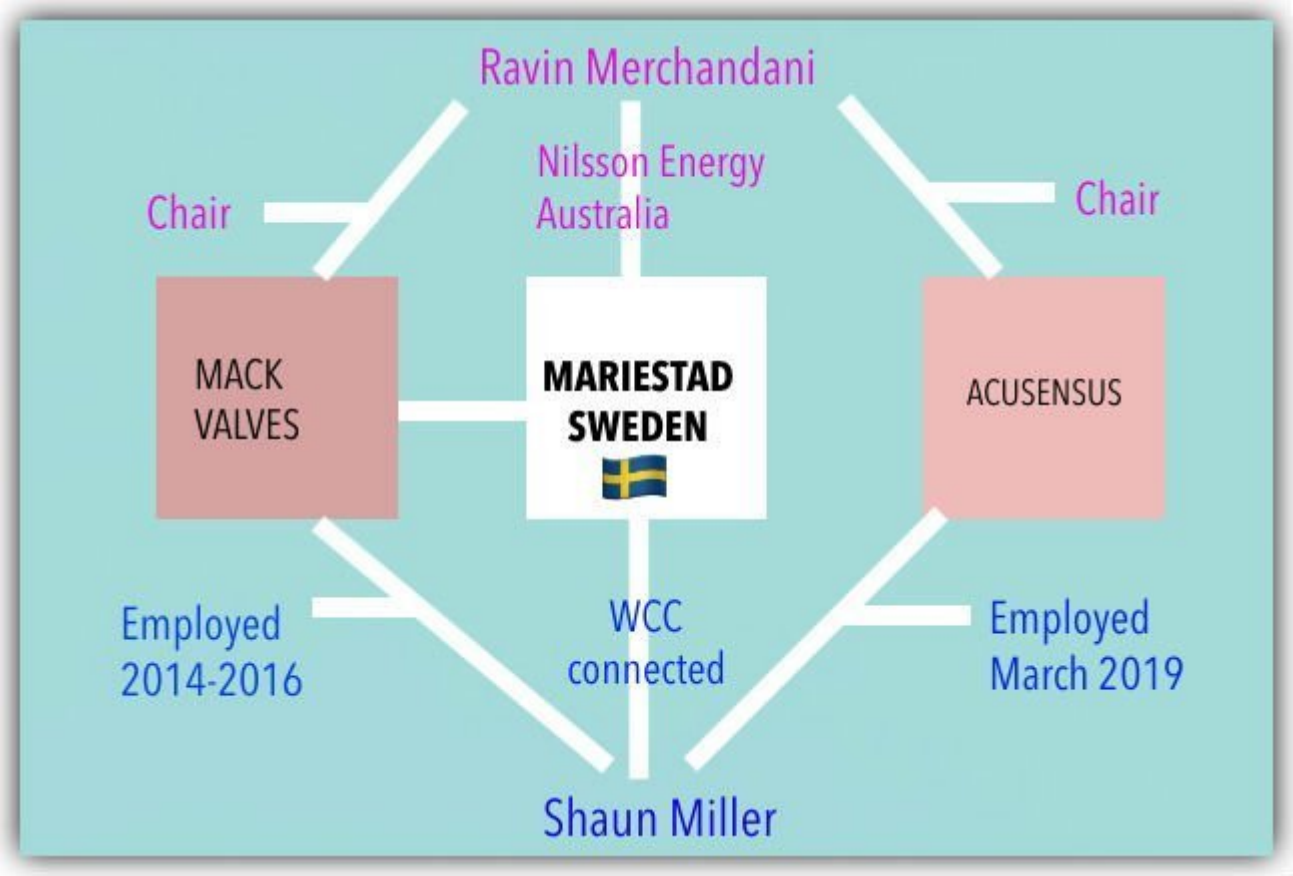
Side story three: Mr Miller has two jobs. One is full-time with the council and the other, as I reported recently, is with a start-up called Acusensus, which Mr Miller joined in March this year as International Business Development Manager and for whom he works 7.6 hours a week.

The chairman of Acusensus is a smart, charismatic guy called Ravin Mirchandani.

Before Mr Miller joined the WCC in 2016, he and Mr Mirchandani were in upper level management at a company called Mack Valves, which makes valves for things like hydrogen pumps.

Mr Mirchandani is still the director/chairman of Mack Valves and is now also the Australian representative of a group called Nilsson Energy, based near the regional city of Mariestad, Sweden.

Mr Mirchandani became the Australian rep of Nilsson Energy after going to see its work in Mariestad in June last year and, it seems, came away very impressed.



Ten months later, in April 2019, Mr Mirchandani was part of a delegation from the city of Mariestad and Nilsson Energy that was invited to visit Warrnambool and talk about using hydrogen electricity, which is the next big thing and has companies jostling for a slice of the action.

Mr Miller was a key driver and organiser of this Warrnambool visit, which saw Mr Mirchandani share the stage at Deakin Uni with government reps.

As a result of that April trip, Warrnambool CC and the city of Mariestad signed an MOU to share ideas and information and keep the momentum moving.

Tomorrow night's council meeting (2/9) will decide whether to send our Mayor, CEO and a council staff member – I wonder who that might be? – to Sweden to visit Mariestad before the end of the year. The public will help pay for the cost of that trip.

And this is the nub: nowhere, at no time, has there been a public declaration by the council of Mr Miller's active business links to Mr Mirchandani and any potential conflict of interest that may arise from the Mack Valves/Nilsson Energy Australia/Acusensus connection.

In fact Mr Mirchandani's name is missing from the list of names in tomorrow night's council agenda of those who visited Warrnambool with the Mariestad delegation in April.

Zero transparency.

This is the rotten culture that I am talking about.

It stinks and, despite hundreds of hours of investigation into all of the issues above, I am still only just touching the surface.

Curtain falls. Lights up. Credits roll.

Credits: all of the brave people who have trusted me to tell the truth, I see you and I want to thank you. And Dad, as I write this on this Father's Day, I see you too, even though you are long dead. My Dad was a bricklayer who got up at 5am every morning to make the money to pay his rates. I have done the best I can to get the fresh start in Warrnambool that we all deserve; it is now up to our elected officials, and our leaders, to press the reset button. On we go.

Category

1. Opinion

Tags

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8. Paul McNamara
9. Peter Schneider
10. Shaun Miller
11. Sue Cassidy
12. Tony Herbert
13. transparency
14. truth.
15. Warrnambool City Council
16. Wendy Clark

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