

## **TCC PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

### **MONTHLY MEETING 5TH AUGUST 2014**

Good evening everyone. It's great to be back after 4 months of sick leave. I've publicly said I was dealing with a major health issue. Many of my friends here tonight know what I've been dealing with and I'm going to briefly tell you now because it's relevant to an announcement I'll be making a little later.

Like so many of our fellow citizens, I'm now a cancer patient. I was diagnosed with a fairly rare form of abdominal cancer in early April. Our local surgeons couldn't help me but thanks to my family, I found out about a surgeon in St George Hospital, Professor David Morris, who has been operating successfully on patients with my type of cancer for some years. He operated on me on 1st May and saved my life. After 7 weeks recovering in St George, we, Carole was with me thankfully, finally got home. As you can see, I've shed quite a few kilos but after 3 months of home cooking, I'm making good progress. I'm on a 6 month chemotherapy program that finishes in early December. Thankfully, after 3 sessions, the chemo hasn't knocked me around but with 9 sessions to go, I have to expect it to take some toll on my fitness.

The reason for telling you this is that I intend standing at the September AGM for a second term as your President. You need to know if I'm going to be OK or on extended bouts of sick leave. As you can see, I'm OK and expect to stay that way. I'm also very pleased to tell you that all but one of your current Committee have agreed to nominate for a second term. Meg Blackman won't be due to work commitments but I am very grateful that Meg came to the rescue after Jan Petrie had to finish up because of family health issues. I would like to thank both of them for doing a great job. Tom Cheesman has agreed to be both Secretary and Minute Secretary. Thanks Tom. And thanks to the rest of the Committee. It's not often these days that a volunteer organisation can have an AGM with a nomination for every Committee position. And I didn't even have to twist any arms. That

doesn't mean that it's a done deal. Any financial member who will have attended at least 4 meetings since last AGM can nominate for any Committee position, including mine. We have nomination forms here tonight. If anyone is interested, they need to be submitted to the Returning Officer no later than 10 days before the AGM. By the way, Lyn Harwood, the CEO of Communities @Work has agreed to do this job for us.

Of course, we are always after more members to serve on the sub-committees. There are many issues we would like to get involved in but we have to be selective. We are a bunch of volunteers and I don't want anyone getting stressed because we are fighting on too many fronts. More hands make light work.

When I look at our Constitution, one obvious shortcoming in our operation is that we do not have any youth representation. I would like to fix this by getting students from Lake Tuggeranong or Erindale Colleges involved with the TCC. I think we will be able to help each other with a better understanding of community issues.

What other matters have we been working on since the July meeting? Probably the main one is following up on the Motion on Light Rail. Why do we think this is important? Please remember that this is the most expensive infrastructure project ever undertaken by an ACT Government. And the Government's track record in delivering big projects without massively exceeding the original budget is not good. So we wrote to the Chief Minister advising her of the TCC's objections to this project. We asked questions and made suggestions. This letter has been on our Website for anyone to read. We received a reply last week and were disappointed that it didn't answer our questions and confirmed that no updated cost estimates would be made available because it might compromise later contract negotiations. We will send her another letter shortly again asking for answers to our questions.

The Capital Metro Project Community Consultation Team including Simon Corbell was at the Erindale Shopping Centre on Sunday. Max, Meg, Carole and I separately had a chat with them. They of course are

very aware of the TCC's lack of support for their project. As they refine the cost estimates, they have no intention of releasing this information to the Canberra public. The current cost estimate of \$614million is simply unbelievable. Most suitably qualified people who have studied this project put the cost closer to \$1.2-\$1.6 billion. 2-1/2 times the current estimate. Minister Corbell wants private enterprise to build, operate and maintain this network. In this way, the ACT Government doesn't pay anything until the trams start rolling. So no capital spending would be required. I would be surprised if they could find a contractor prepared to do the job on this basis. In our follow-up letter to the Chief Minister, I will ask how much do they think this annual payment will be. I am not hopeful of getting an answer. Having been a Project Manager of large facilities projects during the later years of my working life, I decided to do a back-of-the-envelope calculation. I came up with an eye wateringly high figure.

For the ACT Govt to pay an annual fee without going further into debt or cutting spending elsewhere, it would mean an increase of residential rates of about \$100 pa. And my calculations were based on a final project cost of \$1 billion, so I was being conservative.

My rates went up 10% this year and they have done for the past few years. This trend looks like continuing into the foreseeable future largely because of the Govt decision to phase out stamp duty on property purchases. So here's another Govt decision that will significantly increase our cost of living - but, we Tuggeranong residents don't even get any benefit from it. How many Tuggeranong residents will be travelling from Gungahlin to Civic? We have had several emails/phone calls supporting our position and encouraging us to keep it up. I heard an older lady from Kambah talking to Mark Parton on 2CC a few weeks ago. She said she'd just got her gas bill. Her main heating is gas fired. Her bill had risen by 16%. She just couldn't afford it and has told AGL to disconnect her gas. She will go to bed early in winter to keep warm. How many other Tuggeranong residents are the same position? It's a dreadful state of affairs. For most Canberrans, the increases in our cost of living, mainly utilities, residential rates and other Government charges are far outstripping

increases in our income. This means that, inevitably, our standard of living is falling.

This is why we must stay alert and ensure that our political representatives are aware of these concerns. I would dearly love for our political decision makers to ask themselves one question before they approve spending on projects, 'what affect this will this have on the cost of living of Canberrans?' Are we going to have to put our hands deeper into their hip pockets to fund this project? If the answer is Yes, they should think again. If the project is financially self-funding that is, if it makes money, O.K. - but if not, then think again. Do we really need it? We certainly don't need the Capital Metro project.

#### Other Matters

We are progressing memorials for Rusty Woodward and Alison Ryan. We have written to the Chief Minister offering to fund the purchase of a bench seat in the Town Park for Rusty and suggested that a street in South Quay be named after Alison. She agrees with the bench seat but thinks a park in Tuggeranong named after Alison would be more appropriate. Both proposals are being further progressed by the Government.

If you have done any shopping at Calwell recently, you couldn't help but notice the construction of the Kings Swim Aquatic Centre underway. We strongly supported Mr King's request for relief of the \$300,000 'late fee'. Treasurer Barr eventually reduced it to a relatively small sum that enabled Mr King to proceed. It will provide a much-needed rec. facility for S.E. Tuggeranong and provide jobs, particularly for our young people.

You might recall that last year we sponsored a petition to keep DSS in Tuggeranong which Gai Brodtmann tabled in Parliament. They had gone out to tender for new office accommodation as their current lease expires in 2016. Their preference was to be located here or in Woden. If they moved from Tuggeranong, more than 1,000 customers would be lost to Tuggeranong Town Centre businesses and some would not have survived. A few weeks ago, DSS announced they had decided to accept a tender that involved staying in Tuggeranong and building a new office block. A submission had gone to the Parliamentary Works Committee.

We, and many Town Centre businesses are very pleased with this outcome. We are encouraging the PWC to approve the submission and get the building project started. This is Federal money and will certainly help our local economy. Well done DSS.

I spoke to the ACT Cemetery Authority recently to find out where they were up to with the final report to the ACT Government for the proposed Southern Cemetery. It seems that there have been further delays in finalising the report. I will be writing to the relevant Minister Shane Rattenbury requesting an update.

Concerning the Tralee residential development, you would recall that late last year, the TCC passed a motion that, amongst other things, resolved that we should write to the relevant Federal politicians requesting that the current Canberra Airport Noise Abatement Zones which cover all of Canberra's suburbs and Queanbeyan be recognised in legislation. There is currently a downstream risk that future residents at Tralee will be wanting noise sharing introduced. This would put aircraft flight paths over Tuggeranong. The risk will increase as the number of aircraft movements increases, particularly during the night. The Airport has made it clear in its Master Plan that it wants to develop a 24 hour freight hub. Currently, Airservices Australia can change the noise abatement zones with the stroke of a pen but if they are put into law, it will be much more difficult to have them changed. Because of some confusion late last year, this motion was not acted upon. I will be writing to the relevant politicians shortly requesting that the appropriate action be taken.

Well, I am sorry this has been a rather lengthy report but I think all the matters covered were worthy of inclusion.

Any questions?