

## **COUNCILLOR JACKIE WATTS CALLS ON LORD MAYOR SALLY CAPP AND ALL OTHER CANDIDATES IN THE MELBOURNE CITY COUNCIL ELECTION TO RESPECT VOTERS AND IMMEDIATELY ACTION HER CALL FOR TRANSPARENCY ON DONATIONS DISCLOSURE AND OTHER CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.**

Councillor Dr. Jackie Watts OAM has been the leader in calling for the current City of Melbourne elections to be the most transparent in Council's history.

Councillor Watts said "at the Public Council Meeting on Tuesday 25 August, 2020, I successfully moved two Notices of Motion to deal with the issue of public concern about the integrity of the forthcoming election process. To my alarm, five councillors abstained from voting and three of those abstainers are now members of the Capp Team. But I still succeeded.

My successful Notices of Motion, among other things, asked that donations to candidates be disclosed and publicly recorded within five business days of receipt. I am doing this with my team. The other called for a register of Public Interest eg. Board memberships. I am doing this as well.

I took this action because of increasing concern that the winners in the elections at the City of Melbourne are generally those with the most money to spend.

Constituents are concerned that the election outcome is bought and has not resulted in equitable and fair representation. I have seen many good candidates defeated because they did not have the money or support of the big-end of town. I have seen many 'dud' candidates elected because they some how get a winning spot on a high-profile cashed-up team ticket.

The trigger for these comments today is that constituents have contacted me about the recent direct mail they received from Sally Capp - individually addressed in an envelope delivered by Australia Post. In addition, extensive letterboxing of a flyer supporting the Capp Team has occurred.

This direct mail must have cost a lot of money and the question is, who paid and what do they want? With almost 128,000 people on the Voters Roll and assuming all received Sally Capps letter, this exercise must have cost somewhere between \$170,000 - \$200,000. This is an enormous amount to

spend and don't forget all the other election costs. Who pays and why? Do all donations come with expectations of influence.

When heavily funded candidates are elected, the result is generally conflicts of interest.

I find it alarming and unacceptable that Councillors are required to leave the Council Chamber when they are 'conflicted' as a result of election donations etc. When a quorum is lost, the administration and not elected Councillors makes the decision behind closed doors. Many of these matters are significant.

It gets even worse, the conflict remains on the Councillor's record at Town Hall and their voting capacity is restricted for the next five years.

For example, donations to Sally Capps' last election still have 3 year to run and this election is for four years. So conflicts from past and current elections apply well into the next term.

Whilst the excuse put forward by the 'cashed up' Teams to explain why they are acting without accountability to voters, is that they are abiding by the law. ie. the failed provisions of the Local Government Act and privacy issues. This excuse just does not hold up.

Failure to voluntarily disclose donations or Board memberships etc, from voters until after they the election does 'not pass the pub test'.

The voters need to know who is financing candidates for election before voting is conducted. - not 40 days afterwards as the legislation allows.

I again call on Sally and her Team **and all other Teams** to review their unfortunate stance on transparency and decide now to immediately and voluntarily disclose donations and other conflicting positions so that voters can ahead of voting see what potential conflicts of interests will arise during the 4 year term ahead.

Voters deserve all the relevant information before they vote. It is not unreasonable to know who is buying this election".

An extract from the Melbourne City Council Minutes is attached showing in detail my two successful Notices of Motion and the voting pattern.

Authorised by Councillor, Dr. Jackie Watts OAM. 15-17 Palmerston Place,  
Carlton. (0400 305 323) on behalf of MORGAN-WATTS TEAM.

These unconfirmed minutes below have now been confirmed at a Public  
Council Meeting.

## Unconfirmed minutes

### 7. General business

There were two items of General business for consideration in the open session.

#### 7.1 Notice of Motion: Cr Jackie Watts, Electoral Transparency, Disclosure of positions and beneficial interests

Moved: Cr Watts

1. That Council:

- 1.1. *Recommends that candidates in the 2020 City of Melbourne Council elections voluntarily disclose the following information for publication.*
  - 1.1.1. *The name of any company or other body corporate or un-incorporated in which the candidate holds an office as a director or otherwise.*
  - 1.1.2. *The name or description of any company or body in which the candidate hold a beneficial interest.*
- 1.2. *Notes that as a service to constituents, the publisher of Docklands News/CBD News/Southbank News has agreed to accurately record disclosed information provided by candidates via the email address [admin@hyperlocalnews.com.au](mailto:admin@hyperlocalnews.com.au). The publisher has undertaken to remove the registers from the website 40 day after the election.*

Seconded: Deputy Lord Mayor, Arron Wood

The motion was put and carried with the following Councillors voting for the motion: Deputy Lord Mayor, Arron Wood and Councillors Leppert, Oke, Pinder-Mortimer, Riley and Watts; and the following Councillors abstaining from the vote: Lord Mayor, Sally Capp and Councillors Frances Gilley, Le Liu, Louey and Reece.

#### 7.2 Notice of Motion: Cr Jackie Watts, Electoral Transparency, Donations

Moved: Cr Watts

1. That Council:

- 1.1. *Acknowledges that in order to promote greater transparency and public confidence in Council decision making post-election, it encourages all candidates seeking election to undertake the following voluntary steps prior to the 2020 elections:*
  - 1.1.1. *Decline to accept donations, either in cash or in-kind, from persons who personally own or hold controlling interests in companies that actively engage in the property development industry or derive gambling income in Victoria or any entity trading in the tobacco or gambling industry sectors.*
  - 1.1.2. *Disclose any donation and/or in-kind gift of a value of \$500 (cumulatively) or more within five business days of receipt to counter the lack of transparency within the current legislation that mandates candidate donations are only disclosed 40 days after the election.*
- 1.2. *Notes that as a service to constituents, the publisher of Docklands News/CBD News/Southbank News has agreed to accurately record disclosed information provided by candidates via the email address [admin@hyperlocalnews.com.au](mailto:admin@hyperlocalnews.com.au). The publisher has undertaken to remove the registers from the website 40 day after the election.*

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