

We The People
Program 366 February 3, 2020
We the People 366 The Moral Compass



Good Day to you and Happy New Year. I must admit to wondering how the years pass so quickly as here we are in 'twenty-twenty' which sounds like a sci-fi movie title. Nevertheless it's a new year in a newish century and we push on to deal with the challenges of life and the various levels of fruitless governance. If you feel like a bit player in an episode of Yes Minister then you are not alone and somewhere there is a Sir Humphrey manipulating and scheming to the detriment of society. I loved the series because it effectively laughed at inept government departments, ministers and politicians and their absence of a moral compass.

Today I am highlighting matters akin to this regarding a challenge which has beset the wonderful people at the Tweed charity called **You Have a Friend**. The President and Founder, John Lee, is a good man doing what most of us would shy away from as he and his marvellous team of volunteers help and feed the homeless. Sadly, if that homelessness was as the result of a bush fire, society would act very differently than it does with the long term homeless on our streets who have experienced a catastrophe just as real as any other. In Coolangatta there is a public park called Goodwin Park which has BBQs, toilets, shelters and drinking water. It sits right on the boundary of NSW just on the Queensland side and according to John "*is not used to any great extent*". In desperation, homeless folk may settle in these places temporarily with their meagre belongings as a place to simply exist for a while. These fellow Australians have nothing but are still part of our national community. John Lee and his team look after these folk and feed them and try hard to find them accommodation and support. Some are sick and desperate and all are lonely and hungry and most are just like us but have fallen on hard times because of a metaphoric conflagration. These makeshift camps represent the only place these homeless Australians have and **but for the grace of God go we.**

So along comes the Gold Coast City Council law officer who tells John he will be fined between \$650 to \$6,500 if he doesn't get a Council permit to feed these homeless souls. John simply refuses to pay which in my view is the right response to this unmitigated arrogance. Imagine if the bush fire brigade volunteers were made to have a permit to feed Australians who had lost their homes. The Council officer then sabre rattles some more and further threatens John in order to shut down the whole exercise, repeatedly quoting rules and regulations with Yes Minister logic. This is the same Council which has spent millions on futile investigations into a cruise liner terminal and now declares it will spend at least an additional million as well. This is a very telling example of a Council which has lost its moral compass and cares not for the homeless else it may tarnish the already dubious reputation of the Gold Coast. Remember, this is the capital of domestic violence in Australia according to the stats so nothing to be proud of here in terms of our society. One poor homeless man was recently attacked while he slept in his sleeping bag in Coolangatta and suffered a glassed face, a broken cheek, broken collar bone and a broken nose after being kicked senseless by locals. In contrast just metres away in NSW, Geoff Provest MP has been allocated \$5.2 million toward helping the homeless into accommodation. Sadly John Lee from You Have a Friend has advised me that the Local Councillor Gale O'Neil has never spoken with him. Could it be that Gold Coast Council just wants these homeless folk to be chased off across the border into NSWI wonder.....and in any case the Gold Coast City Council appears to be in direct breach of the UN Charter of Human Rights on this matter. Shame on them and their unbridled waste of public money. Where is their moral compass..... where is their humanity?

Until next time this is Kent Bayley