

We The People
Program 25
The Mayor



In April this year the Gold Coast City Council will hold elections for the appointment of Councillors and Mayor. This is an important year for these elections as we will be able to gauge just how seriously 'we the people' care about the way local government functions. In my view and by any measure Council is a basket case at the moment in the eyes of the public. My narrative today is focused on the Mayoral role as I don't think it's a position which is fully understood and great care is needed when you vote.

The immediate past Mayor states on the Council's web site that he sees 6 principles as being important. They are, independence, integrity, inspiration, integration, innovation and impact. Of all these catchy 'I' words I think it's highly questionable that the Council has met any of them and especially not Integrity. As an example, I contacted the Mayor's office on three occasions recently and as with others did not receive a response from the Mayor and as far as I am concerned that apparent arrogance is in keeping with the present Council culture in general. However let's take a look at the mayor's role because it's actually a defined role enshrined in legislation in the Local Government Act 2009 Chapter 2 part 1 section 12. Here the responsibilities are all about leadership and the accountability of the CEO to the Mayor and Councillors. The issue of leadership is underscored in clause 3b which says "provide high quality leadership to the local government and the community" and further "being accountable to the community for local government's performance". Regarding leadership and accountability how would you rate the mayor and councillors for that matter. Personally I think they are so far down the poliquake Richter scale they don't even rate as a minor tremor.

Of the various Mayoral candidates declared so far I wouldn't give you two bob for most of them with two exceptions. Further, one candidate thinks the role is some kind of promotion manager's job and yet another believes it's important to be able to turn left on a red traffic light. I despair when a mayoral candidate believes that's a compelling issue for a would-be mayor to have and it's a clear indication they don't know what the mayor's role involves at all. When I asked about it I was told it was one of the most popular policies the candidate has. This is definitely not a popularity contest, rather it's a serious position of leadership, accountability, responsibility and good governance and turning left on a red traffic light is plain dangerous.

The Mayor's role is about strong visionary leadership and about measuring the performance of the CEO. It's not about jobs or promotions or tourism as such rather it's about leadership and good transparent governance. Operational transparency is something we desperately need in Council and yet so much is kept from us on so many fronts. That's the Mayor's role to ensure we know what's going on and not to see too much power devolved to the CEO. Again how do you think they rate on this important test because on Alconex and Computergate alone they score an F minus in my view.

When you come to vote for Mayor make sure you know what the candidates policies are and measure them against the relevant legislated requirements of leadership and accountability. A transparent, sensible and open council is driven by the Mayor so vote for a candidate who knows what's important and don't be fooled by populism. Let's reflect on an old proverb which may be useful when considering your vote which is.... "Empty vessels make the most sound" or the delightful Polish version renders it "the cow which moos a lot gives little milk". **Until next time this is Kent Bayley**