



PO Box 85
PORT KEMBLA
NSW 2505

22 November 2009

Dr C Gellatley, Ms G Kibble, Mr R McGregor
Administrators
Wollongong City Council
Burelli Street
Wollongong NSW 2505

Dear Administrators,

The members of Wollongong Against Corruption (WAC) are seeking to understand the progress on eliminating corruption in Wollongong City Council.

The Councillors were removed from office after Part 1 of the ICAC Report was released in March 2008 that declared there was systemic corruption in council. You were then appointed as the Administrators to restore good governance to Wollongong. We thank you for your efforts.

We realise that task has not been easy because the systemic corruption, as identified in the ICAC report, had endured for an extended time. Many honest citizens complained to the ICAC for more than a decade but until their recent response the corruption flourished. We believe that the corruption was more extensive than that which the ICAC investigation managed to uncover.

We realise that corruption is extremely hard to eradicate because of greed and the desire for unfettered power. However we believe that strict processes of accountability and transparency are the weapons required to protect this council from repeating history.

We respectfully seek an answer to one major question--

Has systemic corruption within council been eliminated?

With reference to the following specific issues –

1. How many complaints have you received concerning corruption?
2. What are the steps you have used when dealing with such complaints?
3. Have any complaints been referred to other statutory authorities and if so how were they dealt with?
4. Are there any current investigations in regards to corruption?
5. What protocols have been put in place to deal with sexual harassment and misconduct problems in council?
6. How can staff make such a complaint without fearing consequences?
7. What were the reasons for so many highly qualified planning staff leaving their jobs in recent years?
8. What processes, measurements and monitoring have been put in place to ensure the elimination of corruption so that it cannot re-occur?

We have attached a proposal for development process monitoring, prepared for us by Mr Ian Young BSc (Eng), MBA, for your perusal and consideration.

We also believe that the preferential voting system used in Wollongong for council elections, and donations made by developers, played a part in enabling corruption to flourish in Wollongong. Are these matters being addressed?

We appreciate your role in this difficult task to restore good governance and request your written reply for our mid-December meeting.

Yours sincerely,
WAC per

Attachment.

cc Mr David Farmer GM

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WAC – Development monitoring to minimize the risk of Corruption.

Proposal to Wollongong City Council

- A. Wollongong City Council introduce, if not already done so, (our dealings with council would indicate they do not have in place,) check sheets as part of the development application and assessment. The check sheets shall be hard copy with hand written comments and signatures.
- B. The Council implement audit teams.

The intent of the proposed check sheets is two fold

1. It provides an audit path in line with good Quality Management system.
2. For the person responsible for final signing off on the assessment can quickly verify, if the full and correct process has taken place. There should be enough information on the check sheet for the person responsible for signing off to be able to equate themselves directly from the check sheets and/or from documents referenced on the sheet as to the recommendations.

The intent of the audit teams is to ensure

1. The processes are carried out in accordance with council processes and the correct and complete standards are followed.
2. There is no level of bias towards or against an applicant for a DA.

Operations of the Check sheets

The check sheet shall contain a list of items to be checked for all DA's.

There may be a number of check sheets used depending of the level of assessment needed for the submitted DA. At the peak there should be check sheet that identifies the level of the assessment requirement. This form shall reference the check sheet(s) to be used.

The Assessment check sheet(s) should list all the documents, reports, etc, required for a development application.

Signing off on Check points

The assessor shall record on the check sheet the reports required, when received, assessed by; name and signature. If a report is not required this is to be noted on sheet as not required, with name and signature of the assessor.

For all check points the person associate with the decision and/or entry shall enter their name, signature and date to confirm they have been responsible for that section of the assessment.

The Assessment process

The assessor shall place comments to the effect of the assessment at each point with reference to supporting documents providing an audit path for review.

Where there is variance from compliance requirements for the check point item, a brief comment shall be made on the check sheet with reference to other documentation.

Where the DA is rejected the reason for the rejection shall be recorded as comment with a reference to the fuller report as appropriate.

Final Sign Off

The completed Check sheet shall be signed off by the responsible manager not directly involved in the detailed assessment. This could be a senior manager within the planning

department, the planning manager, the General Manager, the Mayor/administrator or the regional assessment committee as per Councils levels of authority. Where the assessment is to go beyond the General Manager the document shall be typed and signed off by the General Manager. The original hard copy with signatures shall be maintained as part of quality records including a scanned copy into achieves.

Auditing and Quality and Corruption Control

To minimize the risk of corruption the following controls shall need to be put in place.

1. All rejected assessments shall be reviewed by a review panel to assure correct procedures, standards and justifications have been applied. If found the reason is subjective the review panel shall seek additional assessment.
Similarly all assessments that have exceeded a minimum period should be reviewed as to the reason.
2. Independent Audits
There shall be random audits of DA's by an internal auditing team to verify the processes have been conducted in accordance with council procedures, standards, and references to the full length of that required for the DA.
3. The auditors shall report directly to the GM and reports made available to Council/Administrators.
4. An external 3rd party auditor shall review the council processes at least annually.
5. Anomalies found shall be referred to The Councils internal ethics review committee and may require referral to the relevant Government department inspectors.

Note

The external audit team would be a registered Quality Assurance provider as well as a separate financial auditor.

The internal audit team should cover all aspects of the council operations including engineering, works and gardens, property, finance, etc. and should be looked on as a continuous improvement lead team rather than a Policing role.

Prepared for WAC by Ian Young BSc (Eng), MBA.