



MAYORAL MEMO - 24 APRIL 2024

It sounds counter-intuitive but a decision is not always about the outcome. Sometimes it is about the process. As Councillors, we can sometimes see an obvious outcome which, in a business environment, we could achieve very quickly. That is when we are using our own money. In local government, we are using your money so following process is vital.

This is relevant for a decision Councillors will be making on Wednesday night.

On 10 April 2019, the Dubbo RSL Memorial Club Limited acquired 74 Wingewarra Street (the former Dubbo City Bowling Club) for a purchase price of \$0.

On 22 July 2019, Council resolved to endorse an initial land swap arrangement subject to a further report to Council. On 28 September 2020, Council resolved to proceed with a land swap deal for a Council owned 3.3 ha site in Keswick Estate for 74 Wingewarra Street. Land swap deals raise eyebrows in my mind as it seems somewhat convenient that two parcels of land are exactly the same value. In the business world, not an issue. When dealing with public money, I prefer a

more transparent process.

My concerns were not realised though as the RSL Club formally rescinded the land swap deal on 19 September 2023. Subsequent to that decision, the RSL Club started an EOI process to sell their site. On 14 December 2023, Council resolved to submit a price to purchase this site. Council sees this site is of use as part of an expanded cultural precinct in the area.

In response to the EOI process, on 2 April 2024, the RSL Club offered to buy the same parcel of land in Keswick which was previously the subject of the land swap deal. The current proposal is for the purchase of 74 Wingewarra Street and the sale of Keswick land to be linked in the one resolution from Council.

As much as I would like Council to own 74 Wingewarra Street, it is about the process. For open and transparent decision making with public money, the best way to determine if we are achieving full value for the land at Keswick is by a public process, such as an EOI.

If it was good enough for the RSL Club to run an EOI process to determine the value of 74 Wingewarra Street, surely it is incumbent upon Council to arrive at the best value for land in Keswick.

I must point out that, according to Section 55 of the Local Government Act, a Council would invite tenders for contracts over \$250,000 but part 3 (d) excludes land from this requirement. The deal being considered is not illegal but, in my opinion, with the long history of the negotiations involving these two parcels of land dating back almost five years, lacks the full transparency that would make me comfortable.

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

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