



MAYORAL MEMO - 28 JUNE 2023

When you have some spare time and need some interesting reading, sit down with a cuppa and pull out a copy of the Local Government Act 1993. The Hon. Gerry Peacocke was the Member for Dubbo from 1981 to 1999 but, more importantly, was the Minister for Local Government from 6 June 1991 to 26 May 1993. The Local Government Act was passed on 21 May 1993 so much of the work was done while under Gerry's watch.

It is not a short document and I don't tend to read it all in one sitting. Instead, I tend to review sections or read areas that are specifically relevant to items in front of Council at any given time.

One section I do read more regularly though is Section 226. This section defines the role of the mayor. For a role that is so varied and covers so many areas, the Act defines fifteen bullet points under the heading.

Many people, including some mayors I have met, would like to assign significant power to the role. Some mayors would even like to think they 'control' Council.

With Section 226 by my side, I see it as completely the opposite. The

mayor is actually controlled by Council and by decisions of the Councillors. Let me quote some sections to demonstrate what I mean.

The mayor is “to be the ... spokesperson of the governing body, including representing the views of the council...” So when Council has a position or a view on an item, my role is to represent that view. Not my own personal view. Council can vote on an item and my personal vote may be in the minority but immediately after the vote, regardless of my personal opinion, I must represent the collective view of Councillors.

The mayor is “to ensure the timely development of ... policies of the council,” and “to promote the effective and consistent implementation of ... policies of the council.” These two parts refer to the development of policies and then the implementation of policies. Several other sections also refer to policies of the Council. Note that it is policies of *Council*, as determined by majority vote of Councillors, as opposed to individual policy positions that I may hold.

The Act does not describe the role of a mayor as akin to a dictator or as having unlimited power to run a Council to suit themselves. On the contrary, the group of Councillors, where the mayor has a single vote, will determine the actions of the mayor and Councillors.

Lastly, the mayor is “to ... promote civic awareness” and I certainly spend time on ensuring that there is a constant stream of accurate and factual information that flows to residents about various activities of Council. As the spokesperson for Council, this communication flow is essential.

Councillor Mathew Dickerson

Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

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