



**REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF  
COUNCIL**

**MINUTES**

**11 MARCH 2014**



EXTRAORDINARY MEETING  
OF ORDINARY COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
11 MARCH 2014

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**ATTENDANCE:**

**Councillors Present**

- Cr Steve Jones (Mayor) (Chairperson)
- Cr Tanya Milligan
- Cr Jim McDonald
- Cr Kathy McLean
- Cr Janice Holstein

**Officers Present**

- Ian Flint, Chief Executive Officer
- Mark Piorkowski, Executive Manager Planning & Development Services
- Dan McPherson, Executive Manager Organisational Development & Engagement
- Myles Fairbairn, Executive Manager Infrastructure Works & Services
- David Lewis, Executive Manager Corporate & Community Services
- Sarah Fox, Corporate Communications Manager
- Rick Machin, Marketing and Comms Coordinator
- Stephen Hart, Manager Administration & Executive Operations
- Neil Williamson, Community Engagement Coordinator
- Susan Boland, Council Business Support Officer

**Media Present**

- Ann Kirby, Laidley Leader
- Tom Threadingham, Gatton Star

**Invited Guests**

- Ian Rickuss MP, Member for Lockyer
- Russell Neuendorf, Executive Director, Operations Business & Strategy, Public Safety Business Agency, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- Jason Smith, Senior Urban Fire Levy Officer, Public Safety Business Agency, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

**Apology**

- Cr Peter Friend
- Cr Derek Pingel
- Jason Bradshaw, Executive Manager Governance & Performance
- Jack Dempsey MP, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

*The meeting commenced at 6.34 pm*

*The Mayor, Cr Jones as Chairperson opened the meeting and welcomed all present, particularly acknowledging Ian Rickuss MP, Member for Lockyer and the representatives of the Queensland Government. He also acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the Deputy Mayor of Southern Downs Regional Council, Cr Ross Bartley together with Cr Vic Pennisi.*



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**1.0 LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**1.1 Leave of Absence**

**Date:** 11 March 2014  
**Author:** Jason Bradshaw, Executive Manager Governance & Performance  
**Responsible Officer:** Jason Bradshaw, Executive Manager Governance & Performance  
**File No:** Formal Papers

**RESOLUTION:**  
**THAT Leave of Absence be granted to Cr Pingel due to prior commitments and to Cr Friend due to family illness.**

Moved By: Cr Milligan    Seconded By: Cr McDonald  
Resolution Number: 3329

CARRIED  
5/0

**2.0 DECLARATION OF ANY MATERIAL PERSONAL INTERESTS/CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS AND SENIOR COUNCIL OFFICERS**

**4.1 Declaration of Material Personal Interest on any Item of Business**

Pursuant to Section 172 of the *Local Government Act 2009*, a councillor who has a material personal interest in an issue to be considered at a meeting of the local government, or any of its committees must –

- (a) inform the meeting of the councillor’s material personal interest in the matter; and
- (b) leave the meeting room (including any area set aside for the public), and stay out of the meeting room while the matter is being discussed and voted on.

**4.2 Declaration of Conflict of Interest on any Item of Business**

Pursuant to Section 173 of the *Local Government Act 2009*, a councillor who has a real or perceived conflict of interest in a matter to be considered at a meeting of the local government, or any of its committees must inform the meeting about the councillor’s personal interest the matter and if the councillor participates in the meeting in relation to the matter, how the councillor intends to deal with the real or perceived conflict of interest.

*No declarations were made by Councillors in any agenda items.*



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### 3.0 EXECUTIVE OFFICE REPORTS

#### 3.1 Emergency Management Fire and Rescue Levy

**Date:** 11 March 2014  
**Author:** Ian Flint, Chief Executive Officer  
**Responsible Officer:** Ian Flint, Chief Executive Officer  
**File No:** Formal Papers

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*The Chief Executive Officer presented the report as follows, highlighting Council's concerns with the imposition of the levy by the State Government without consultation, the duplication of the levy with other levies of Council, and the financial considerations and service expectations of the levy. In addition to the acknowledgement of State Government representatives in his report, he acknowledged that Peter Beauchamp, Assistant Commissioner, South East Region and Tony Johnstone, Acting South Eastern and South Western Regional Manager, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services were in attendance.*

#### Report

##### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide for further discussion and to establish a position with the State Government on the Emergency Management Fire and Rescue Levy and the apparent duplication with Rural Fire Brigade and State Emergency Service charges raised by Council.

This special forum is designed to provide a formal ordinary meeting structure to allow for Council to make recommendations for further action and to openly discuss with the State Government, Council's position with a view to preparing for the 2014/15 Budget.

Council resolved at the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014 Ordinary Council Meeting to meet with the State Member for Lockyer to discuss these. Council has also requested representatives from the State Government to attend for this discussion. Council has been informed that Ian Rickuss MP, Member for Lockyer as well as Russell Neuendorf, Executive Director, Operations Business & Strategy and Jason Smith, Urban Fire Levy Officer from the Public Safety Business Agency of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services will be attending the meeting. The Hon. Jack Dempsey MP, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services has forwarded his apology due to electorate commitments.

##### 2. Background

Council considered the introduction of the new levy from the State Government at the Ordinary Meeting held 18<sup>th</sup> December 2013, and resolved to write to the Minister outlining concerns with the proposed introduction of the levy. Communications have been ongoing to and from the State Government without resolution of the issues to date.

Following Council levying the charge with the current half yearly rates there has been significant community feedback of objection to the levy, particularly with the perception of a duplication with Council's existing levies, as a result of the timing of this implementation imposed by the State Government subsequent to Council's budget adoption in July 2013 for the 2013/2014 financial year.

There remains an ongoing expectation for an increased level of service from the State Government following the introduction of this levy to provide for more consistent access to services, similar to those delivered within metropolitan and urbanised areas, which is currently significantly different to those received within rural areas. To date there has been no change or information on changes to services.

The levies currently applied by Council appear to overlap with the application of the state levy and clarification is needed so that Council can consider the need for these levies, given that services provided should be funded from the state levy.

Currently the communities of Lockyer Valley have a limited capacity to pay and the community cannot afford to pay for funding the same services twice, which is a current perception that needs resolution.

The services funded by the levies are critical and essential, and Council supports the intent of the State Government to ensure adequate and appropriate funding for emergency services, but is also wants to ensure that the levies collected are applied to improving services and access to services on the ground, not through additional administrative and compliance initiatives.

The State Government has other ways to raise the revenue required to fund these services, and Council has only limited taxation powers through the Local Government Act, as such Council is seeking any further consideration of amending the application of the State Levy to ensure that the services provided are consistent across the State and reflect the costs of providing those services to at least a minimum standard.

Council needs further certainty from the State Government that the services within our region will be improved following the introduction of this levy as there is significant inconsistency and in some instances a lack of service or access to services and modern equipment that it is hoped will be addressed with the introduction of this levy.

In preparing the 2014/15 budget consideration will need to be given to amending or removing the existing Council charges should these be funded by the State Government.

*At the invitation of the chair, Ian Rickuss MP, Member for Lockyer addressed the meeting and highlighted the following key points:*

- *The levy was introduced as an initiative from the State Budget in order to help fund the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry which the State Government is committed to implementing;*



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- *The urban fire levy has been in place in urban areas of the State since 1980's and the new levy now spreads the cost across the whole State to include urban and rural areas;*
- *The mechanism of local governments collecting the levy on behalf of the State by inclusion on rates notices was adopted as it already exists in the case of the urban fire levy.*

*Jason Smith, Senior Urban Fire Levy Officer advised that:*

- *The urban fire levy was introduced in 1984*
- *Class A, B, C, D with Class A serviced by a Fire Station with 16 or more permanent officers and Class D serviced by an auxiliary*
- *State Government announced due to all the disasters which had been happening in the last 10 years, the funding was not sustainable and a more sustainable levy was needed to be implemented.*
- *16 groups to the levy (Group 1 – vacant land, Group 2 – property with shed, Group 3 – 16 – Commercial property based on use, base floor, cap commercial property at 6)*
- *The levy is to fund emergency services*
- *Pensioners get 20% discount*

*Russell Neuendorf, Executive Director, Operations Business & Strategy advised that:*

- *The levy raises an additional \$50 million across the state*
- *No change to the funding of Queensland Fire & Emergency Services*
- *The additional funding is going to services and infrastructure for emergency management*
- *The levy provides for broader funding, Council able to raise separate Rural Fire Levy for local rural fire brigades*

*Ross Bartley, Deputy Mayor, Southern Downs Regional Council noted that:*

- *The State Government needed to be more transparent in its promotion of the levy*
- *It should have been called Emergency Management Levy*
- *For what purpose is the levy to be used*
- *Unfair impost on rural communities already struggling*
- *Lack of consultation with and shortage of compensation for local government*

*Cr McDonald*

- *Lack of involvement with local government was disappointing*
- *Local Government did not have to be part of the process as there are other avenues available for the State Government to have considered*
- *For what purpose is the levy to be used across the State*

*Cr Holstein*

- *Where is the money to be spent?*
- *How are our ratepayers to be informed as to where their money is going?*

Cr McLean

- *How will the region benefit from its funding of the levy?*

Cr Milligan

- *People not really aware of the levy, how it works and why it is needed*
- *Name change would be too little too late, the confidence of the community has already been lost*

Ian Rickuss MP, Member for Lockyer added that:

- *The State Government had a mandate to deliver on the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry recommendations*
- *The debt inherited by the State Government has to be managed*
- *The money is being raised for emergency services*
- *The majority of the state already pay a levy*
- *He conceded that very little consultation was undertaken and that the levy was not marketed very well*

The Mayor, Cr Jones addressed the following points:

- *Unfair for local government to collect the levy when the State Government had other avenues available to it – local government is being blamed when it is actually only the collection agency*
- *No consultation with local government or the community*
- *Lack of consideration for the difficult circumstances faced by rural communities*
- *The way it has been undertaken has undermined the intent of the levy*
- *Local government is not being adequately compensated for the costs of systems implementation, administrative and collection costs, the costs to recoup monies outstanding*
- *Need to know the exact amount of dollars which will be returned to our community and in what form and for what purpose*
- *Want reasonable consultation with the community and local government before the levy goes any further*

*The meeting was adjourned at 7.11 pm for the public gallery to be given the opportunity to seek further clarification and to have an informal discussion on the Emergency Management Fire and Rescue Levy. The meeting resumed at 8.20 pm.*

*The meeting considered the information provided and clarified and the clear messages for the State Government from the discussions held and views supported. The following officer's recommendation was also considered.*

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**Officer's Recommendation:**

**THAT Council seek a response to the Council's concerns from the State Government for consideration at the next Ordinary Meeting of Council, to be held 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014.**





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**Further;**

**THAT Council requests a review of the application of the State Government's Emergency Management Fire and Rescue Levy to minimise any duplication with Council's existing levies and to ensure that ratepayers are receiving the benefits of the new levy through upgraded services to minimum standard.**

**And further;**

**THAT upon of the State Government's response, Council review its existing Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service Levies for the upcoming 2014/15 Budget.**

**RESOLUTION:**

**THAT Council request Mr Ian Rickuss MP, Member for Lockyer to take Council's concerns in regard to the Emergency Management, Fire and Rescue Levy to the Hon. Tim Nicholls MP, Treasurer and Minister for Trade and provide a response to Council's concerns from the State Government for consideration at the next Ordinary Meeting of Council, to be held on 26 March, 2014;**

**Further;**

**THAT Council request clarification on why consultation was not undertaken with Local Governments prior to the release of the Emergency Management Fire and Rescue Levy.**

Moved By: Cr Jones

Seconded By: Cr Holstein

Resolution Number: 3330

CARRIED

5/0

**RESOLUTION:**

**THAT Council request an overview list of the emergency services provided by the State Government and request a detailed list of the improved services to be provided through the Emergency Management Fire and Rescue Levy to regional areas, including Lockyer Valley.**

Moved By: Cr Jones

Seconded By: Cr Milligan

Resolution Number: 3331

CARRIED

5/0

**RESOLUTION:**

**THAT Council forward correspondence requesting the Hon. Campbell Newman MP, Premier of Queensland and the Hon. Tim Nicholls MP, Treasurer and Minister for Trade review and reconsider the collection and the implementation of the Emergency**





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**3.2 Toowoomba Second Range Crossing**

**Date:** 11 March 2014  
**Author:** Ian Flint, Chief Executive Officer  
**Responsible Officer:** Ian Flint, Chief Executive Officer  
**File No:** Formal Papers

**Report**

**1. Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to provide for further discussion and to reaffirm Councils' support with the State and Federal Government on the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing. This special forum is designed to provide a formal ordinary meeting structure to allow for Council to make recommendations for further action and to openly discuss Council's support for the project subject to proposed conditions previously resolved.

Council resolved at the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014 Ordinary Council Meeting to meet with the State Member for Lockyer to discuss these concerns. Ian Rickuss MP, Member for Lockyer has confirmed his availability for this meeting and representatives from the State Government have committed to provide a full briefing for the whole Council at a later date.

**2. Background**

Council has been a long standing supporter of the second range crossing and has openly communicated this support. Council has also advocated for a reasonable toll imposition for road users of the second range crossing, acknowledging the need for an economically reasonable approach for industry and transport operators.

Council maintains its position that the impacts on the local council road network before, during and after the construction of the new road infrastructure be minimised.

Council also seeks to be included in any steering committee associated with the project to the extent of monitoring the impacts on existing infrastructure associated with the construction activity and to provide input to the considerations of the toll to be applied.

**Officer's Recommendation:**

**THAT Council affirm its long standing support for the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing conditioned upon toll charge and road network consideration and commit this support in writing to the Federal and State Governments.**

**RESOLUTION:**

**THAT Council affirm its long standing support for the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing subject to reasonable toll imposition on users and to satisfactory arrangements regarding the minimisation of impacts on the Lockyer Valley road**



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**network before, during and after construction and commit this support in writing to the Federal and State Governments.**

Moved By: Cr Holstein

Seconded By: Cr Milligan

Resolution Number: 3335

CARRIED

5/0



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**4.0 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

*No Information Items reports at time of print run*

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.58 pm.