

Hello Peter,

Thank you for your email, I was planning to contact you about setting up the Working Party but you've saved me the trouble.

In answer to your first query, actually no I am not well thank you for your concern. I would have thought you could tell from the video, it taking me an hour and a half of trying to speak to cobble together that 4 minutes that you saw. Doctors have been doing tests which seem encouraging however I have lost 14kgs in the last 7 weeks. Between being shunted around between hospitals for tests and doing my carer duties that I told you I was up for, I'm finding not much time for other things, so excuse me if the answers to communications are a little slow.

I know that none of your staff have been booting me off groups and blocking me on Facebook. I wouldn't have thought any of them would have the time to even look at Facebook, not during business hours anyway.

I didn't write out a formal speech to make that video, but I did make sure that I choose the words very carefully when I said "Shire interests". It was a Shire Councillor that was booting and blocking residents and ratepayers who were asking uncomfortable questions or bringing up issues that could be considered contentious. I didn't mention this because I was mindful that we are dealing with a small community and I didn't want to make the video any more inflammatory than it already probably seems to some.

Any voting resident or ratepayer would find the idea of an elected official treating the concerns of citizens in such a cavalier fashion as repugnant, and so they should. If you can't take your concerns to your elected representative, who can you take them to?

As I suggested in the video, my personal belief is that this person (and I'm not going to disclose their identity here as I will be uploading this email to the www.GoomaRates.com webpage along with all other ratepayer correspondence) thought that they were doing the right thing and simply made an error in judgment.

I understand that you are in no way responsible for the actions of Councillors and other Shire elements that are beyond your jurisdiction. Perhaps you can bring up at your next Council meeting that Councillors should be aware of their interactions with the community and how they can be viewed from an outside perspective. Just because a Councillor may not agree with a constituent's issue, they never the less have an obligation to at least listen to them. If it is not appropriate for the issue to be brought up in whatever the forum may be, it should be up to Councillor to say that I can't speak about that here and now but you can make an appointment with me to discuss it later.

In regards to your second point, I spent a few days setting up the page, testing the features like the subject tagging etc and if the group conferencing feature would work. The page was officially launched on the 1st of September. Two days before your email so it is early days yet and things aren't as well organised as they could be. Please give us some time and cut me some slack. The Shire has been around for decades, the Residents and Ratepayers Working Party just a week. You are right I didn't invite Shire staff, Councillors or Contractors or yourself in as things were still being set up. Actually, I only sent an invitation to one person to test some of the features of the page. They in turn invited people and the page has been growing steadily since, the email sign ups even more so which to me at least indicates that there is interest in such an exercise although I expect some of the email sign ups will be duplicates.

My first thought was to invite the CDO in first to help me develop the idea (as I mentioned in my second video on the subject) but held off when it was explained to me that there was no longer a full time CDO working on Shire staff. Now that the board is open, the other stakeholders and interest groups you mentioned are more than welcome to sign up, and I'm happy to see that some of them have even at this early stage.

As I have said to many of the Working Party members, while I think that having a Residents and Ratepayers is a great idea, it isn't necessarily a great idea that I run the process. This is because as only being a resident for sixteen

years I am still seen as a polarising figure around town and the idea may be better served by people that the community places more trust in. You are quite right, I am an opinionated person and unafraid to air my opinions. This is another reason why it is not a good idea for me to head up this process. As you say, during the time I'm going to initially spend monitoring the board, I will need to strictly maintain an impartial viewpoint and seek to guide discussion rather than trying to colour it with the way I might be feeling about an issue at the time. I'm sure someone will remind me if I stray to far from the formula.

So if I'm not the right person to be doing this, why am I doing it? I'm setting up the structure of the whole thing because I may be the only person in the community with the skills and the inclination to do so. It is my hope that by the end of the year that I can find four people to take on the following tasks:

1. I will be needing someone to head up the feasibility study as to whether a Residents and Ratepayers Association is necessary or even desirable for Goomalling. A working party is just that, an informal group that undertakes various studies and ends up making a final recommendation to be decided upon. I would expect from experience that this might take at least up to eighteen months. I feel that I can help set up some guidelines to help the Working Party reach this goal given that I've done it all before while working in a managerial capacity with the ATO. I can't guarantee that I can go the distance though given my current health concerns and other commitments.

2. I will need someone else or possibly two people for the Facebook page, one extremely patient and impartial individual (I admit failings on both accounts) to facilitate the discussions on the page and one to maintain the tagging and indexing on each post. In this way, a CDO or any other interested individual can do a search by subject say in 5 years time about what the history of a certain issue is and get an idea of the current "street" feel on that subject. I would consider that to be better feedback than what you would get from the normal polling options that you have currently available to you.

However, I'm going to need a short time to establish conventions with how people deal with each other. Maybe using only polls to seek out ratepayer

opinion might be the go although general discussion seems to be working at the moment with people learning things already that they would have no way of learning easily from any of the other existing forms of information. I'm hoping that the Facebook page might prove to be a great training ground for potential future Councillors. I heard that there isn't much interest around town for new sign ups so maybe this is the thing you could be looking for.

3. I'm going to need someone to keep the website up to date. I've got a basic one where people can sign up for the newsletter but I am working on coding it so that it can hold a database of ratepayer case studies and other miscellaneous documents and resources that cannot or should not be kept on the existing Shire of Goomalling webpage. It will take me a while to get a friendly admin backend in place so that someone with little of no I.T. knowledge can get in there and keep it current. Once, I've established this then that can be handed over.

4. I'm going to need a literate person to help prepare and hopefully next year take over media releases. It is important first to establish an appropriate tone and format for the releases. Periodic media releases are going to be run in the Toodyay Herald as it is seen by the working party to be an independent publication as opposed to the Endeavour the Shire quarterly newsletter, It will consist of a digest of that months discussion posts assembled by myself to start with and given enough editorial to make a coherent statement but hopefully without colouring the nature and intent of the original resident and ratepayer input. My expectations are that the early ones are going to be quite short as the Herald editor has only provided us with limited space. I imagine he will run them, or not, depending on what local news they have in Toodyay on hand at the time, so don't be surprised if nothing appears at all.

If you are at all concerned about the content of the articles, I can do for you what I am doing for the email sign ups, send out a copy of what goes out (my version, not the version that the editor will probably change to suit space requirements) so you are getting a couple of days to look at it before the article goes out. Mind you, I don't think its probably a good idea for you to want to try and edit it because that defeats the whole purpose of setting up a Residents and Ratepayers Association in the first place. I would expect that if

there was anything in the digest press release that you take issue with that the Herald editor would give you at least equal space to address any issues you may have.

As to your third point you could well be right about the situations in Toodyay and Dowerin and you would be in a good position to know more of the story than most I imagine. The point I was trying to make is that mistakes were made in Toodyay and Dowerin (as they sometimes are in other country towns all over the state) that resulted in those Shires being financially disadvantaged. Perhaps if those Shires had an active Residents and Ratepayers Association there may have been more community awareness of what was going on and those events may not have happened was the point I was trying to make. Its just that the execution was wrong. I believe the point to be valid even if the examples aren't. I'm not a professional political speaker like yourself, it was an opinion piece only (ie why I "think" Goomalling needs a Residents and Ratepayers Association). I did the best that I could with the information that I had available at the time. I take your point on board and will maybe go with a pre prepared written statement next time if I go ahead with any more videos and perhaps limit the statements to what is happening in town.

I suspect from the tone of your email that this in particular has upset you. Whatever I say or do, I know not everybody is going to be happy, but I don't want to see anybody upset. What would you like me to do? I can either take down that video and make another one but its all going to be the same thing with just that phrase "nearby Shires being financially disadvantaged". Yes it will scan better, and be more accurate, but all that will happen is that it will get circulated all over again and create more community speculation as to what is going on. Alternatively I can leave the one up as is and let it die a natural death. From memory it had under 100 views, a few of those are going to be people viewing it multiple times and many will be just switching off after five seconds because they don't like the look of it. So I don't expect that many people have actually seen it all the way through.

Point 4. I had not seen an official statement about your contract renewal and am thinking that there hasn't been one. I was aware that it went up to

September I think but figured it would need to be looked at at least three months in advance (wasn't aware of the six, thank you for the information). I've not noticed any editorial from you in the past two Shire newsletters so it got me to thinking that maybe you had received a better offer. I realised that by law that the Shire had to keep putting J.P. Bentley on the bottom of everything regardless of weather you are there or not.

I contacted the Shire to find out who was in the box seat because I knew that if I were to start up a Residents and Ratepayers Working Party I would need to know who I would be dealing with. So the Shire was contacted so I could send a letter about it but you have pre-empted that with your prompt email so I shan't bother. I have no desire to take part in a community voting exercise to work out who should be the CEO or any other Shire appointed position. In fact I think that would be a terrible idea and makes no sense at all.

Ratepayers have a right to know who is in charge. Personally I don't care, as long as somebody is. As for your performance, I was aware that you were in for an uphill turn given the state of the finances. In the half hour interview I had with you previously I indicated that I thought you were on the right track. I do not agree with the decision that you made in the matter that we discussed but you probably make hundreds of decisions in the course of a week and they aren't all going to be popular with everybody. That is going to be your lot I'm afraid, as a town CEO you have and will continue to make decisions that are not popular in some quarters. Remember, you could be giving free money away and there are always those that are going to be complaining that it isn't shiny enough.

Point 6 and 7

The Endeavour is a CRC initiative being run out of a Shire owned building with volunteers and CRC workers who's wages I believe are government subsidised in some way. In my house I have a copy of most of the Endeavours from 2005 to Covid times. In the post Clare Dadd era and sometime in the Loretta Johnson era the following statement was made in the editorial and I am paraphrasing here as I don't have the edition with me "please don't send us articles that are contentious as we get in trouble". Now I

know this statement was made long before you appeared on the scene but it is indicative of the culture in place.

Now you and I both know that the Shire President, the Shire CEO, the Shire Staff, the Shire Contractors, the Shire Councillors, the paper run out of the Shire owned building are all separate things. To everybody outside that system though it looks like the Same thing. When you factor in a Councillor deleting social media posts from annoyed residents and ratepayers asking tricky questions and the fact that the CDO position (the last conduit existing between the community and the Shire) is seemingly being frittered away. Now it is a part time office commitment and the position is not being advertised. It is little wonder that someone under those circumstances might put forward the idea of having a Ratepayers Organisation.

Any outsider looking in would say that all the communication is being controlled by the one entity ie Shire. You may not agree with that but that is how it can be viewed from outsider. When I spoke of a dictatorship and dictator in the video, I wasn't talking about you or Barry or your staff et al - I was talking about the all over entity The Shire. I explained as much in my second, perhaps more moderate video but people never watch the moderate ones for some reason. In any case I don't find the dictatorship model inherently evil, its just that history has proven that if it gets adopted then things can go wrong along the way.

Nobody thinks that Goomalling is like North Korea. If it was I'd probably be shot and my house burnt down by now. All I'm talking about is all the communication coming from one source and nobody being able to make a comment that doesn't fit in with established party lines (which is their model). If you look at other towns people for the most part are free to pass comment on whatever they want, there is just in my view some need for comment control and suppression in Goomalling that is beyond my understanding.

Yes I acknowledge that there have been some improvements made on the transparency front and I hope that the Ratepayers Association should it ever formally eventuate can help continue that good work.

Point 8.

Nobody blames you for the streets but people are probably confused about what streets are main roads responsibility and what aren't, another reason why the Working Party page forum is a good opportunity to educate.

People have a right to have an opportunity to speak about streets, about lots of stuff.

You are not always going to like what they are going to say. And its ok for you to not like it.

I think that is about it, excuse me if I haven't covered everything and excuse spelling, punctuation as I am writing under time pressure.

I know we will get the opportunity to discuss this further and working out just where a Residents and Ratepayers Association could possibly fit into the puzzle.

all the best
Adam