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I have no faith in Yass Valley Council's integrity to pass my own views or the views of the community in its "Fit for the Future" submission so I am writing directly.

Yass Valley Council / LGA have not been fit for a long time. We Ratepayers and the wider community have suffered the burden of a Council in crisis and the associated waste of money and resources from consecutive Councils. The current Councillor / General Manager combination just happens to be the worst.

We have only two Councillors who stand for what is just while the other seven either back an out of control General Manager or say nothing.

Waste and executive excess along with poor service delivery and lack of attention to maintaining our roads and bridges is and has been a topic of conversation for a decade or so.

I am in favour of the NSW Governments "Fit for the Future" initiative as it has heightened an awareness in the Community of how bad things have got and better still put a spotlight and a deadline on our Council to explain what they have been doing and forced them to come up with possible answers and solutions.

I praise whoever thought of this strategy.

I believe I can show why Yass Valley Council is unfit and hopefully add weight for IPART to provide a negative report on their fitness and indeed their behaviour.

Council has known about the Fit for the Future program for over a year but only brought it to the fore in February 2015. This late start and then using the timeframes of the regulator as an excuse is to rush things is a well worn track for our Council.

The current saga started when Council passed a resolution in December 2014 for the General Manager to provide a report on how to move forward with a SRV to IPART. The General Manager went ahead, [REDACTED]

The General Manager released three flyers, Residential, Commercial and Business all of which had different information and all designed to keep the community divided and in the dark.

This, along with many other poor management attempts to explain why we needed a SRV cumulated in Council withdrawing its application for an SRV. A win for democracy?

Not to be deterred Council, within a fortnight, is up and running with its Fit for the Future program. Community consultation was the catch cry and a band of 40 community members were sought and got. I am one of the forty.

The strange thing is that the Fit for the Future was not in the discussions until the SRV got beaten.

Council had changed tact and community consultation can be used to Councils advantage and a plan was hatched.

Then Council management with all its human resources decided to engage a co-ordinator, at \$40,500, to run six workshops rather than use staff or one of the many community groups available.

The co-ordinator obviously had to be briefed on what sort of workshop to run. I am not privy to that document but what was delivered was an Amway conference complete with games and stickers. Members were left wondering after two meetings as to where all this was heading. A number of members got quite agitated and voiced their disapproval of being treated like children and being drip fed part information and skewed figures.

The meetings at times were in disarray as frustration in Councils inability to provide information in an understandable and coherent fashion. Things like varying the backlog figure by 3 million with a key stroke and no explanation. Depreciation figures bounced all over the place and the members (some of who are accountants) looking into Councils financials didn't come up with the same answers Council was delivering.

We found our Council was not auditing its borrowings and borrowing money from private individuals under the name of "other". (see attached 23/06/15 Council non-audited accounts)

We had a bus trip and were shown dirt roads and crook bridges with the question all wanted answered, what has Council been doing to let things get this bad?

On week four, Council provided some scenarios for us to consider and consider the group did. Nobody considered any of the scenarios to be an answer. By week five the group were still bemused as to exactly what we were being asked to do. We asked for a voting method, none was forthcoming, we asked for efficiencies to be looked at, we asked for many things but the more we asked the more confusing the meetings became.

Now Council will have a different version and no doubt be using the workshops as proof of their commitment to the consultative process. If Doubt exists I suggest IPART contact some members of the workshop and get the story first hand.

At the end of workshop 5 and another specially called meeting, Council took its scenario 1, 2 and 3 to the people by way of a flyer and 9 community meetings. I went to four meetings and I was disappointed by the lack of transparency and especially at the first two meetings the vagueness and delivery of rate rise news as compared to the upbeat way the good news of give us more and we can give you more was told.

The workshop members were also used to justify the scenarios that they never approved.

By the last meeting many members of the community had awareness of what was going on, asked good questions, and the Council story was a bit better.

Then to add to the mistrust Council contracted a provider to embark on a phone survey where the questions were loaded. The phone manner was confronting and unless people chose one of the three scenarios on offer were told that they would not be included in the survey.

Many people were excluded because of age and many people saw a Council promoting ways to get their own agenda across the line. (See copies of constituent's record of phone survey no1, no2, no3, no4, no 5.)

After the community meetings and the phone survey we had the last workshop. It was poorly attended by members as so many members had given up and were tired of seeing Council's General Manager putting spin on rate rises as the only way forward to a successful FFTF.

The General Manager was asked if FFTF members could vote a preferred scenario.

The closest we came to a vote was Council's co-ordinator hanging a cloth sheet on a wall with two horizontal lines cutting it into three sections.

We got coloured post it notes that we got to put on our least and most preferred options.

As a democratic voting procedure is was a joke and yet Council will put a spin on the numbers as if the process has validity.

Any reasonable person can see that management has not had proper oversight by Councillors and that management has not been operating in the best interests of the community.

I have included copies of some flyers that I have distributed to the community. (See 14/05/15 Twelve months on, 14/03/15 2nd Flyer)

The point of all this is to show that our Council has no fitness level at all.

I ask that Council's submission be rejected, that IPART report includes the need for an administrator or in the least an investigation into Council activities.

Many members of the community, some Councillors and some ex staff all have story to tell, they are willing, and all that is needed is someone to listen.

Others will no doubt provide submissions showing a council out of control and out of contact with community expectations. I ask that IPART provide proper oversight and give back a bad report on Yass Valley Council as anything has got to be better than what we have.

IPART should not reward our General Manager or our Council for its bad performance.

The poor performance and poor decision making of our Council is ongoing and seemingly endless. I hold a record of account of Council actions over the last decade and am happy to provide IPART information on any gaps found in any story spun by our Council.

Touie Smith snr

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