

Launceston Ratepayers Association Inc.*
PO Box 2039,
NEUNHAM TAS 7248
03 6326 3607

Local Government Study,
Productivity Commission,
LB2 Collins Street East,
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

11th February, 2008

Attention: Carole Gardner,

Dear Madam,

ASSESSING LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE RAISING CAPACITY
Productivity Commission Draft Research Report November 2007

This Association thanks the Productivity Commission for the opportunity to make a further submission as outlined in your Circular dated 18 December 2007, and is pleased to note the references to our original submission made in your draft report, indicating to us, the value you have placed on it.

This further submission does not contain any matters of a confidential nature and may be reproduced in full.

The Association notes and agrees with the principles set out on page 145 of the Commission's Draft Report. The Launceston City Council may say they are complying with these principles, but these are really 'motherhood' statements, and evidence illustrating the actions of the LCC does not reflect that compliance.

LCC advocates its commitment to upholding the following fundamental values,

INTEGRITY

We behave ethically.

- We tell the truth
- We keep our commitments
- We meet both the spirit and letter of the law

STEWARDSHIP

We care about people and the community in which we live.

- We operate safely
- We are environmentally responsible
- We strengthen the community

INCLUSION

We value diversity and respect the dignity of each person.

- We value differences in people and perspectives
- We build relationships based on mutual trust
- We recognise the contributions of every individual

INITIATIVE

We lead the way.

- We have the courage and creativity to shape the future
- We have the discipline to manage risk
- We act decisively in a timely manner

TEAMWORK

We work together to achieve superior results.

- We share ideas and talents to develop solutions
- We support and rely on each other
- We value clear and open communication

ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our actions.

- We live our values
- We set clear goals, measure results and seek to improve
- We build and protect the Launceston brand and reputation

yet, LCC actions do not demonstrate these values, particularly as evidenced during the past year, where their actions and operations are less open and transparent.

For example, the Association wrote to the LCC General Manager Frank Dixon on 16th November 2007 [see attachment], requesting further information of Council that had not, in the Annual Report 2005 – 2006, been provided in the detail and manner customary to recent year's reports. The General Manager's reply dated 4th December 2007 [also attached], the day following the AGM, simply refused to provide the information requested, proclaiming the level of information to be sufficient.

Since making our original submission to the Productivity Commission, the Launceston City Council held its Annual General Meeting on 3rd December 2007. In accordance with Council's public notice, 3 weeks prior to the AGM, the Association asked a number of good and laudable questions on notice, concerning some very relevant issues critical to the interests of the Association. The questions and answers may be viewed at Page 4 (LRA Inc. 10 – 18)

<http://www.launceston.tas.gov.au/upload/3700/agmagenda312.pdf>

The Association finds the answers to its questions to be inadequate and somewhat evasive. We have also examined the questions and answers provided to other people, and similarly conclude. Our Association judges that of the 32 questions asked with notice in writing of Council, that only 9 questions were actually answered to any reasonable degree of satisfaction.

As an example, in relation to the Association's question 4.3.13, the answer provided was completely inadequate and unacceptable, causing the Association's Executive to take up the matter at the LCC AGM pursuant to Agenda item 6. The General Manager deferred the further enquiry to a senior staff member, who simply refused to provide the information causing the Mayor to intervene and ask if he could take up the concerns the following by meeting with the Association's Executive representative the following day.

Due to an unexpected meeting to deal with non-council business, the Mayor advised that the General Manager would deal with the question. In a telephone call that day the GM simply advised that his senior staff member would now provide the information originally requested. There was a delay in

the information being subsequently provided. The GM's secretary provided a statement via an email that the letter providing the information had been posted on 6th. December 2007, but attached a copy. The attached letter included a reason for council not having provided the information when first requested which drew an emailed letter of protest in return as well as a request for the residential information requested. The GM wrote in reply on 14 December 2007 stating that the offending letter was in fact only a draft letter and apologising. This 'final' letter simply deleted the final paragraph from the alleged 'draft'. The Association finds this situation implausible. Copies of documents referred to in this paragraph, are all attached.

In conclusion, the Association submits that there is a need for a greater influence on Local Government by the Commonwealth, and that this could be linked to Commonwealth/Local Government funding arrangements.

There is a need for higher authority than State Government to keep an eye on Local Government

- particularly to ensure that Commonwealth funds are expended properly and effectively, and
- to require adherence to principles of responsibility, or otherwise the withdrawal of funds would be threatened;

and there is a need to find a way to measure performance criteria.

We look forward to receiving the Commission's final report, in due course.

Yours faithfully,

Kelvin Jewett

For and on behalf of the Launceston Ratepayers' Association Inc.
Senior Vice-President

Launceston Ratepayers Association Inc.
PO Box 2039,
NEWNHAM TAS 7248
03 6328 1200

28 November, 2007

Mr. F. Dixon
General Manager
Launceston City Council
St John Street
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Dear Sir,

ANNUAL REPORT

This Association is disappointed in aspects of the 2006/07 Annual Report in that it does not provide the level of easy-to read information that has been provided by reports in recent years.

To illustrate this concern, we attach particular pages from last year's report, which apart from what is shown on page 10 Quick Stats Financial Measures (compared to P25 Performance Snapshot last year), the information is much-reduced.

Specifically, in 2005/06 Annual Report

- at the front, you gave useful Fast Facts on the Contents page. This information has in 2006/07, not been provided;
- On page 27, you gave much more information concerning the level of importance and gave the dissatisfaction level. In 2006-7 this information was again collected, so why not publish it ?

In the 2006/07 Annual Report, much of the page space is unnecessarily taken up with promotional style material and many coloured photographs. This results in a document that does not easily provide orderly information, which is scattered throughout the document.

The report is also a large file when downloaded, which is a disincentive to ratepayers not on Broadband to access, and expensive to print. It would be much preferred if at least a simplified version were also published on Council's website, minus the space-taking presentation and photographs, and then be printable in a simple and economic format.

In some parts (such as the Grants & Benefits on Page 47), financial information is not even totalled.

The Association would like to receive the 2006/07 information provided in the 2005/06 report pages as attached, and accordingly requests that this data be provided to us today by email.

Yours faithfully,

John Henshaw

President

For and on behalf of the Launceston Ratepayers Association Inc.
Attachments.



File No: SF0026
FD/WB

4 December 2007

Mr John Henshaw
President
Launceston Ratepayers Association Inc
PO Box 2039
NEWNHAM TAS 7248

Dear Mr Henshaw

Re: Your request for further information (Annual Report)

Thank you for your request for further information. Council does not always use the same format for its Annual Reports.

I am satisfied that the information provided in the 2006/2007 Annual Report provides a sufficient level of information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Dixon".

Frank Dixon
GENERAL MANAGER

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LAUNCESTON CITY COUNCIL

Launceston Municipal Ratepayers' and Residents' Association Inc.
PO Box 2039,
NEWNHAM TAS 7248
03 6328 1200

16 November, 2007

Mr. F. Dixon
General Manager
Launceston City Council
Town Hall
St John Street
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Dear Sir,

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This Association is pleased to ask you the following questions which are on notice.

1. Is it the intention of Council to close the First Basin swimming pool due to structural concerns, if so, when and for how long and what is the standard and type of swimming facility that will replace it ?
2. What changes are proposed to the operation and management of Council-owned pools within the Municipality from the time that the Regional Aquatic Centre commences operation ?
3. How much will the Regional Aquatic Centre need to lose annually from an operational and maintenance viewpoint before Council will consider leasing out all or parts of the development ?
4. Will Council provide a concise disclosure with reference to the development and on-going operation of the Regional Aquatic Centre for the following aspects:
 - Economic performance
 - Market presence
 - Indirect economic impacts

And also with particular regard to the operation of any Wellness Centre, fitness or exercise gymnasium, restaurant/café/crèche/child minding facility;
On an inaugural and regular quarterly/annual reporting basis ?

5. Has Council or any of its agents entered into any discussions with the East Launceston Bowls Club or its subsidiary tenants who occupy the Croquet Club and Tennis Club, to close, relocate or in any modify these leased area at the completion or termination of present lease agreements ?
6. Likewise for the previous question in relation to the Royal Park Croquet Club or any other sporting club occupying Royal Park ?
7. What precautions will Council undertake to protect any threatened wildlife or plant species at Windmill Hill Reserve during the construction, and furthermore the operation, of the Regional Aquatic Centre.
8. Given the discontent expressed by ratepayers over the past year, what strategies are proposed by Council to better consult with ratepayers on major decisions concerning expenditure of rate monies ?

9. What strategies can be considered to improve the recycling of cardboard and paper within the Central Area where no such collections by Council exists ?
10. What strategies are proposed to improve weed control in the urban area including parks and road reserves, especially the spread of capeweed ?
11. What action does Council propose to take to better police the danger presented by low branches overhanging footpaths ?
12. Will Council call for public submissions and then undertake a public forum to investigate a system of rating that will be more service-cost related prior to any decision to prepare budgets or rating models for the 2008/09 financial year ?
13. Will Council provide data that illustrates how many residential-rated properties are subjected to municipal rates based on an AAV of 4%, identifying the number of such properties related to each suburb or separate township in the Municipality ?
14. What is the rental that Council receives from the Tasmanian Design Centre and Tasmanian Wood Design Centre; what are the maintenance obligations that Council has entered into for that building; and how does Council comply with the principle of competitive neutrality as set down in the Competition Principles Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Tasmania, in-so-far as it may be conferred upon Local Government Bodies by this and other likewise principles and agreements.
15. What is the cash surplus that Council achieves each from its participation as a 'partner' in Esk Water and from 'retailing' water to rated and non-rated properties in the municipality ?
16. Will Council advise full details on the consumption of water where the charges for such consumption is not recouped by Council, including its own consumption and that "lost" in the reticulation/storage systems ?

Please feel free to contact us if you require further information.

Yours faithfully,

John Henshaw

President

For and on behalf of the Launceston Municipal Ratepayers' and Residents' Association Inc.

Gardner, Carole

From: Wendy Brown
Sent: Tuesday, 11 December 2007 3:17 PM
To: morrell
Subject: Correspondence as requested
Attachments: Morrell.doc

Attached please find correspondence as requested via Mayor's office. This correspondence was forwarded to you via Australia Post on 6 December, 2007.

Regards

Wendy <<Morrell.doc>>

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Wendy Brown

General Manager's Office

Launceston City Council

Phone: 07546 2200

Fax: 07546 2201

Wendy.Brown@lcc.tas.gov.au

5 December 2007

Mr Lionel Morrell
 Esk View
 41 High Street
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Dear Mr Morrell

Annual General Meeting - Question

Further to your question at the Annual General Meeting, below is a table that shows the number of properties with an AAV of 4% of Capital Value.

Locality	Number	Locality	Number
Bangor	48	Pipers Brook	14
Blessington	52	Prospect	199
Burns Creek	10	Punchbowl	12
Dilston	226	Ravenswood	95
East Launceston	789	Relbia	172
Franklin Village	1	Retreat	10
Golconda	5	Rocherlea	105
Invermay	224	South Launceston	399
Karoola	141	St Leonards	234
Kings Meadows	378	Summerhill	251
Lalla	32	Swan bay	110
Launceston	1,039	Targa	25
Lebrina	76	Tayene	36
Lilydale	181	Trevallyn	639
Lower Turners Marsh	5	Tunnel	35
Mayfield	11	Turners Marsh	108
Mount Direction	16	Underwood	164
Mowbray	134	Upper Blessington	28
Myrtle Bank	17	Waverley	42
Newnham	576	West Launceston	1,066
Newstead	1,232	White Hills	65
North Lilydale	34	Windermere	124
Norwood	1,128	Wyena	6
Nunamara	141	Youngtown	722
Patersonia	41	Total	11,198

Total number of properties 29,621

37.8% of properties have an AAV of 4% of the Capital Value

Due to the potential for the information to be misunderstood, the disclosure via the Annual General Meeting minutes is not appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Frank Dixon
GENERAL MANAGER

Gardner, Carole

From: on behalf of Local Government (Ex Email)

Subject: FW: Correspondence as requested

From: Morrell | lionel.morrell@london.gov.uk
Sent: Tuesday, 11 December 2007 5:07 PM
To: Wendy Brown
Subject: Re: Correspondence as requested

Attention Frank Dixon.

Dear Frank,

Thank you for emailing your letter.

There certainly seems to be a problem with the mail system, because a letter posted from the Town Hall on 6th December should reach me the next day, but still on 11th December, nothing has arrived.

The question called for residential properties, but it appears that you have included all properties.

Please separate out the residential data on the same breakdown, and forward to me by email.

I am perplexed by your last paragraph. I certainly am under no misunderstanding about simple factual information. I would be pleased to hear from you how you think I or any other person of average intelligence could misunderstand such information.

Regards,

Lionel Morrell.

|



File No: SF0529/SF0098
FDWB

14 December 2007

Mr Lionel Morrell
'Esk View'
41 High Street
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Dear Mr Morrell

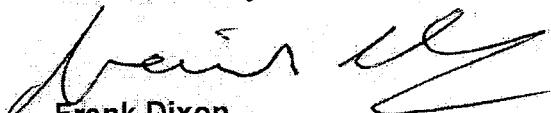
Re: Annual General Meeting Question

Thank you for your e-mail of 11 December, 2007.

You were inadvertently given a draft that I had not approved and therefore has no status. I apologise for this oversight.

Please find attached the correct response to your question.

Yours sincerely



Frank Dixon
GENERAL MANAGER

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LAUNCESTON CITY COUNCIL



File No: SF0529 SF0098

LAUNCESTON
CITY COUNCIL 14 December 2007

Mr Lionel Morrell
Esk View
41 High Street
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Dear Mr Morrell

Annual General Meeting - Question

Further to your question at the Annual General Meeting, below is a table that shows the number of residential properties with an AAV of 4% of Capital Value.

Locality	Number	Locality	Number
Bangor	15	Prospect	155
Blessington	13	Punchbowl	8
Burns Creek	2	Ravenswood	18
Dilston	143	Relbia	148
East Launceston	763	Retreat	5
Golconda	1	Rocherlea	9
Invermay	143	South Launceston	295
Karoola	68	St Leonards	163
Kings Meadows	292	Summerhill	208
Lalla	19	Swan Bay	82
Launceston	927	Targa	7
Lebrina	21	Tayene	2
Lilydale	81	Trevallyn	599
Mayfield	2	Tunnel	8
Mount Direction	4	Turners Marsh	62
Mowbray	68	Underwood	95
Myrtle bank	4	Upper Blessington	5
Newnham	422	Waverley	14
Newstead	1,119	West Launceston	971
North Lilydale	14	White hills	24
Norwood	1,085	Windermere	100
Nunamara	43	Wyena	2
Patersonia	14	Youngtown	578
		TOTAL	8,821

Total number of residential properties is 24,870.

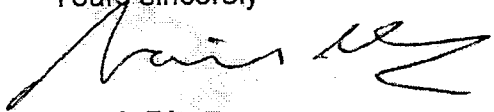
35.5% of residential properties have an AAV of 4% of the Capital Value.

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LAUNCESTON CITY COUNCIL

I trust this updated information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Frank Dixon
GENERAL MANAGER