

your say

Letters to the Editor

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Letters should be no more than 200 words and should be typed or clearly written. All letters need business hours phone number and address for verification. By submitting your letter to us for publication you agree that we may edit the letter for legal, space or other reasonable reasons and may after publication in the newspaper, re-publish it on the internet or in other media.

ICAC just tip of iceberg

WOLLONGONG City Council general manager David Farmer needs to pull his head out of the sand if he thinks that the ICAC revelations are all there is to worry about (*Mercury*, 19 March).

Convicted criminal Ray Younan is right - they are the tip of the iceberg.

Many in the community have known about council corruption for years but their concerns have been largely ignored by the council, politicians and authorities such as the NSW Ombudsman's office and ICAC.

I contacted Mr Farmer as soon as he arrived on the job, offering to provide a briefing with regard to some of the community's concerns and examples of abuses by council

officers and councillors in recent times, with suggestions for action to restore community confidence.

I never received a response to my offer.

Corruption of process has been rife throughout council for decades now, most especially in the area of planning.

Bad management has supported this, and the offenders have reacted to criticism by "circling the wagons" and covering up or denying there were any problems.

There has been a decided lack of vision, aside from Mr Oxley's "fait accompli" development imperative.

A culture of bullying has allowed abuse of individuals

and the environment to occur.

For example, there is no coastal protection plan, the development of the escarpment management plan was drawn out far too long and only implemented after the horse had bolted, while heritage protection instruments have been ignored or watered down.

My door is still open to Mr Farmer if he wants to talk to me and other members of the community who have had incredibly bad experiences with councillors and council officers over many, many years.

For someone such as myself who loves Wollongong, what we have seen during the Oxley years has often been heartbreaking.

As it now stands, the



Ignorant: David Farmer has come in for criticism from a letter writer.

community has been disenfranchised and the bean counters are in control.

The new general manager has yet to show that he has the vision or commitment to community engagement that the city sorely needs at this time.

Perhaps he is just an Oxley clone ... I hope not.

Michael Organ, Bulli.

IN A WORD

Sell-off or sell-out?

When the Transport Minister announced a new rail link last week, he said he wanted the new service to be separate from the existing 19th century rail system.

Why, minister, did you close, dismantle, and sell off the dual-track, fully electrified railway line from Blacktown to Ropes Creek months before announcing 7000 building blocks on the same line? We know you intend to build this new rail link using taxpayers' money and then sell it off to your private enterprise Labor-supporter mates.

Dave Cox, Corrimal East

Stooges in power

The voice from the mount said, they will be replaced by just three.

That's all they need in Wollongong, so I thought that maybe that's all we need to run the state, after all their record is abysmal.

After much thought about who could replace the motley crew, I came up with those who had the right credentials, that's right Curly, Larry and Mo.

Brian George, Berkeley

Light my tyre

I'm not allowed to set alight a couple of car tyres anywhere in NSW unless they're mounted on my car and I do it at Bulli Showground, in the middle of a residential area. Fair dinkum.

Kevin Epps, Coalcliff

From the web

Stop council waste

Re, Mercury article, Fears for city museum's future, March 20.

I am shocked that our council, who are always crying poor and increasing our rates to cover shortfalls in funding, have thrown away a huge amount of income from this building for 24 years. Worse, the council has had its hand in our pockets to cover almost all of its annual running costs. Someone has to have the balls to stop this serious waste.

Greg Noble, online

Let the people decide

I, along with many Wollongong residents, deplore even the suggestion that we need cafes, shops and restaurants scattered around the harbour and Wollongong headland.

Too many so-called developers - I call them personal pocket liners - the Chamber of Commerce, development-at-any-cost-Oxley (did he ever knock any development back?) and now Frank Sartor, are of the opinion that they should determine the direction of development in Wollongong without consulting the people.

Lest we forget it is the people who make purchases at the shops and buy the units, not the pro-development lobby, and so it should be the people who decide.

The ICAC inquiry only confirmed what we already knew - that our concerns are not of any interest to the decision-makers, except possibly at election time.

Wollongong Harbour precinct is a microcosm of nearly 200 years of Wollongong history. It is of high local significance for its role as

the focus of economic, historic, cultural and social activities for the communities of the Illawarra region. If the Department of Lands (read the Iemma Government) is so sure that is what we want, let us have a referendum.

Alternatively, I would think that people who were interested in the abandoned Neighbourhood Committees would be more than willing to take a petition around and see if our self-appointed minders are correct in their view of our wishes.

They might get a big surprise.

Doug Boleyn, North Wollongong

Thanks to councillors

At the March 12 Local Area Meeting 1 members asked that a letter of thanks be sent to Ward 1's ex-councillors Alice Cartan and Dave Martin for their outstanding contribution to our community.

We would like to do this through the *Mercury* and a copy of the letter is attached.

The time and effort given by these two ex-councillors was beyond the call of duty, attending every meeting, sharing their

knowledge of council procedures, processes and activities and always being available for any community member's concerns.

While all meeting attendees did not always agree with them on every issue, lively debate meant that the community's concerns would be heard by council.

To Alice Cartan and Dave Martin in particular, but also former independents Andrew Anthony, Carolyn Griffiths and Anne Wood - let's hope it is not too long before you return.

Pauline Smith & Bob Scullion, Co-Convenors Local Area Meeting 1

Matters of opinion

I write in reply to Barry Swan (*Mercury*, January 5). I am sorry it has taken so long for my letter of reply to be published, however this was due to circumstances beyond my control.

I am pleased Mr Swan takes the time to read my letters, however I would appreciate in future if he would do so with a little more diligence. At no time did I accuse the *Mercury* of conspiring with

anyone to do anything, nor did I make the "accusation" that "Howard wasn't buried, just laid low". To the contrary, I said: "Certainly Mr Howard's political career was buried in the recent election."

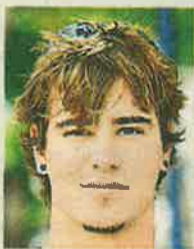
His interpretation of my letter of January 1, "an editorial bias by the *Mercury* toward the Left of Australian politics and deliberate misinformation played a major role in John Howard and the Coalition losing the recent federal election" is quite wrong.

Mr Swan should know letters do not always appear in newspapers in their original format. For example, in two separate letters I described the election victory of Labor in the following manner (January 1) "narrow but comfortable win" and (January 7) "reasonably comfortable win". According to the *Mercury*, these two crucial passages were edited out of my letters due to space requirements.

Tom Griffin, Pambula

Six in the city

Q Could you get through life without plastic bags?



Brendon Moore, West Wollongong: For sure. I'd just use the green bags.



Renay Lawrence, Nowra: No. I really like them. They are the perfect-sized liner for my rubbish bin.



Jessica Barry, Wollongong: I could live without them and use Aldi bags.



Talal Hatim, West Wollongong: Maybe. Sometimes they are useful.



Dylan Daniels, Woonona: We would learn to adapt. It would obviously be better for the environment.



Andrew Hall, Wollongong: Yep. There would be a substitute made so we could get by.

ONLINE POLL

Will tougher ACCC powers over oil firms reduce prices?

VOTE NOW

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RESULT SO FAR

Will tougher ACCC powers over oil firms reduce prices?

YES 16.7%

NO 83.3%