

4 April 2019

Trust & Confidence

After open and frank discussion with fellow Councillors, I have decided it is in the best interest of Council and the community to offer an explanation around my activities as Mayor. My passion to see a new industry for Buller has meant I have overstepped the fundamentals of the Mayoral role. The key principle for a Mayor is to keep your Council fully informed and for Council to keep the community fully informed so you can move together to achieve agreed goals.

The heart and most important issue is trust and confidence for councillors and the community. Once broken it is very hard to restore. I have certainly given consideration to resigning but resolved to work on through to the elections in an effort to restore some trust and confidence as best I can.

I have reflected on the numerous emails regarding the waste to energy proposals and it is understandable that some people may be wondering exactly who I have been working for. I thought that the waste to energy venture could be a catalyst for new industry, as the opportunity of having power available without high transmission charges would certainly bring further industry and I was truly worried that the project might not go ahead in our district.

It was only ever my intention to try and facilitate what I considered to be an exciting project to go ahead with all the attendant benefits that this project would bring to our community.

I am truly sorry that has not come to pass.

I am also sorry that my actions exceeded my brief and powers as Mayor. At all times, I made it clear to both REL and their Chinese business partners that I could not make any commitments on behalf of Buller District Council. Even so, I can now see in hindsight that much of my communication may have been a lot more enthusiastic than might have been the case had it been considered by the full Council.

In addition, I don't feel as though I have done a good job in communicating with my fellow elected members of Council the extent and nature of the interactions I was engaged in.

To that end, I would like to offer my full apologies to Councillors, and to the community. I accept that, in my enthusiasm to promote our district for this project, I did not involve the elected Council along the way.

It is a good time, to reiterate that I will NOT be standing for Mayor at the upcoming elections this year. In that respect, I'd like to reflect on my time as Mayor ...

Over the past five and half years Councillors have had a number of challenges. I have been pleased with a few achievements such as the joint employment initiative brought about by the partnership with Ministry Social Development, Development West Coast and Council. Attracting EPIC to provide an avenue to diversify into the technology sector and in getting the Kawatiri Coastal Trail across the line with Provisional Growth Funding. Not many people know or appreciate that the project was taken off the PGF list on two occasions and it took strong advocacy and the assistance of Bruce Parkes to retain that project as a key development for the district. The current air service provided by Sounds Air has been a major success. It was the

efforts of Sonia Cresswell, Craig Scanlon and myself to attract the service, but I must give due credit to past Chief Executive Paul Wylie who finally got the agreement across the line. I have enjoyed the role in advocacy for the district with Government. I certainly appreciated the relationship with Minister Steven Joyce who did assist. The current coalition government has been a little more challenging and my advice to the next Mayor is to build a relationship with Minister Damien O'Connor and Minister Kris Faafoi as they can assist and champion district issues.

My deepest regret is not to champion the IFHC issue on behalf of the community from the outset. I have always been concerned at the lack of income streams for Council and the high reliance on rates. The commercial opportunity of Council owning the IFHC building and leasing to District Health Board for a good rental return overshadowed the fundamental advocacy role expected of me. I should have lead or at least more actively partnered with Buller Hospital Action Group. Other projects such as the northern link road and potential purchase of Holcim took considerable time and energy.

I have certainly learnt a lot while at Council. You obtain a great insight to the good number of fantastic community volunteers that go above and beyond for the benefit of the community.

Over the past twelve months I have often thought of my personal alignment to local government. Keith Marshall was a wonderful breath of fresh air and very good to chat to in regard to what attributes a Mayor should have. When we were recruiting for our current chief executive I asked to have a Hogan report of myself that analysed your personality and traits, as I wanted to be aware of areas that needed to be kept in check or worked on. Keith and I laughed at the result which showed that local government was not a good fit with my inherent DNA. I discussed and gave considerable thought to standing down with the appointment of current chief executive Sharon Mason as I weighed up the pros and cons of Council having a fresh start. I'm really confident that Buller District Council has an excellent chief executive that has passion for the community and making the team of council successful for the benefit of the community.

Lastly, our current councillors are an extremely hard-working group that give considerable time to represent their constituents. There is at least four or five potential mayors that sit around the Council table.

My passion remains for the success of our community and Council. I have had my opportunity at the Council table and for better or worse given it my best and sincere effort. I would like to express my thanks for the many people that have helped me over the past sixty six months, not only councillors but the staff at council.

Garry Howard
Mayor
Buller District Council

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Further Contact:

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