

Wednesday 8 November 2023

Statement by City of Ryde Mayor, Councillor Sarkis Yedelian OAM

I am aware through many people contacting me that there is an increased public interest in serious matters regarding the Ryde Central project and Council's current financial dilemma caused by the previous Council and administration, which have been the subject of media articles in recent days.

As the Mayor, I am working very closely with Council's Executive Leadership team to address the issues of concern in an open, transparent, and timely manner.

As there are ongoing inquiries being undertaken by the NSW Office of Local Government (OLG), the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and the NSW Audit Office (AO), I am limited in what I can say at this point-in-time.

However, I am somewhat surprised and disappointed that other Councillors have been making comments through the media on these sensitive matters and purporting to be Council's spokesperson, against Council's Code of Conduct and outside proper processes and protocols.

A Councillor quoted in today's Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) mentions a "Frankenstein" scenario, but he was responsible for creating our "Frankenstein" situation at Devlin Street. Let's not forget it was the previous Council under Councillor Laxale's Labor team that demolished our beloved Town Hall and left our community with a huge 'hole in the ground'. They have left us in this financial mess by making extravagant promises they weren't able to pay for. It has taken a complete restructure of the Council for these issues to come to light, and I would urge Councillors involved in previous decisions on this matter to set aside their own interests and start taking seriously the situation they have left behind.

Further to this, I am also very concerned that strictly confidential material has continuously found its way into the hands of media outlets, again in breach of Council's Code of Conduct.

These are important issues and sensitive matters we are dealing with. We must ensure that we are properly informed and take an evidence-based approach in addressing and attempting to resolve these issues.

As the broader public are now aware through the SMH, Council staff are currently preparing a detailed report on our major projects and financial situation for the consideration of Councillors at the ordinary Council meeting on 28 November 2023, which is open to the public.

My team felt it was best for the public to know that this discussion and any decision we make would be made in a transparent, open Council meeting, rather than any closed confidential meeting. **The report will be made publicly available.**

The report being prepared by staff will canvass all the major financial issues in question and provide options for potential implementation to ensure Council's long-term financial sustainability and ensure that my Council best serves the interests of the community in terms of a high standard of service provision. That is what my Liberal team are wanting for our community.

I will have more to say following the Council meeting on 28 November and will ensure that the community continues to be closely informed on these important matters.

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