



**OF PORT PHILLIP**

*Empowering ratepayers with a voice*

Newsletter 21 March 2019



## Welcome everyone,

Especially to our new members and *thank you* all for your ongoing support. Special thanks also to those who have helped with distributing flyers and for passing on the message to friends and neighbours.

## We Need Your Help

If you would like to be involved in our activities please contact us at <https://ratepayersofportphillip.org>. We are looking for committed and engaged people to assist in our communications, advocacy, social media and potential candidates for the Council elections in October 2020.

## \$2.2M of wasteful spending in 2019 to date:

- Botched St Kilda Marina lease \$500,000
- Unnecessary grant to Housing First \$1,500,000
- Memberships \$220,000

## Appalling waste of ratepayers' funds

### Social Housing

Councillors Baxter, Brand, Copsey, Crawford and Simic all supported a motion to provide grants of up to \$1.5M for social housing against the advice of Senior Council Officers at Council meeting on 6 March 2019 and in circumstances where the benefits to be derived are highly uncertain. We understand only one organisation has applied for funds which means the allocation is in effect a grant to Housing First (formerly Port Phillip Housing Association). It should be noted

\$2.2M of wasteful spending to date in 2019

Another \$1.5 million dollars of unbudgeted expenditure wasted.

Council memberships, 19 in total, costing over \$200,000's set to continue. If you add in staff costs we are way over \$500,000 p.a.

Who is RoPP and why do we care – because just like the banking royal commission someone has to say, enough is enough.

What is our politics: Labor, Liberals, Greens or others?

So, what's happening?

If you want to help, contact us at

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that the grant was unbudgeted and Councillor Simic is on the board of Housing First. Councillors Bond, Gross, Pearl and Voss opposed the motion.

It is curious that Council recognises that the development of social housing in Port Phillip is a more expensive exercise than in other places around Melbourne. Yet the decision was made not in spite of this fact but because of it. We seem to live in the land of topsy-turvy. The grant is another example of wasted ratepayer's funds because funding for social housing is provided by the Victorian Government (\$1.5 billion) and any contributions by the Council are totally unnecessary. It is possible the Victorian Government may reduce its contribution to any successful housing project in Port Phillip by the amount donated by the Council.

**We implore the five Councillors who supported this motion to look at their obligations under the Local Government Act and remind themselves that the ratepayers of Port Phillip are their constituents. Please stop wasting our funds.**

## Council Memberships

Councillors had an opportunity to greatly reduce the cost of membership fees to a number of organisations but a majority again voted against the advice of council officers. The Council is a member of 19 organisations costing over \$300,000 in fees annually and excluding 19 Council Officer's time in managing the relationships. RoPP questions the value of the majority of these memberships. If you are interested, you can find a list of these organisations and membership fees at:

<http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/14.2%20Strategic%20Memberships%20attach%201.pdf>

Had the all the Officer's recommendations been supported by the majority of Councillors, the savings would have been \$222,000. However, savings of only \$75,000 were achieved following representations from a number of organisations which had been identified as not being strategically aligned to Council. It was clear that the Councillors who supported maintaining memberships could not make difficult decisions when representatives of some of these organisations were present at the Meeting. If you are interested to see how Councillors voted please refer to the link to the Minutes because there were separate motions for each organisation:

<http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/Draft%20Minutes%20Ordinary%20Council%20Meeting%206.3.19.pdf>

## Who are the Ratepayers of Port Phillip (RoPP)?

We are a concerned community group taking action to stop the Council's wasteful spending and reduce our annual rates. Our frustration stems from being gouged with continual, and in many cases significant rate increases year on year and then to find and see the Council waste millions on pet projects, irrelevant spending, poor asset management and with no apparent regard to fiscal responsibility for ratepayers. The Council is a monopoly with poorly defined responsibilities and a voracious appetite for spending. We are now finding home owners whom can now longer afford to live in their home because of rate burden inflicted by Council over recent years, often under the guise of increased property values. Well, we all know what's happened to property values recently; will rates be reflected accordingly?

Our aim is to shine a spotlight on wasteful spending and support and elect Councillors who will act in the best interest of all ratepayers with financial integrity. We don't believe the current level and growth of rates is anywhere near fair or sustainable for our members and is significantly more than our other council neighbours.

RoPP aims to

- reduce rates by 30% over the next 3 years whilst maintaining the amenity of our municipality which is why we live in this community.
- apply pressure to Councillors to be held accountable and apply due diligence to decision making that will result in cutting wasteful spending.
- encourage Councillors to seek alternative sources of revenue thereby reducing the rate TAX burden on ratepayers who are not guaranteed source of income each year.

## What are our Politics?

Well firstly, we have none. We don't use labels. All are welcome to fight the beast. As a little bit of indulgence, it is pretty well understood in our society that this country is vastly over governed with the 3 layers (Federal, State, and Local) of expensive bureaucrats whom, in recent times have awakened to the power of their monopolies to tax. The sizes of all these institutions have ballooned to obese proportions and accordingly we believe that local issues should be apolitical and totally focussed on efficient local amenity.

We are not aligned to any political party and we support all Councillors and candidates who desire to see an efficient and financially responsible organisation. Port Phillip Councillors comprise of members of the Greens, Labor, Liberal Parties and Independents. RoPP supports any councillors or candidates regardless of their political affiliation and who share our values and commit to our objectives. We

recognise the need for support of the majority of councillors to get rates under control. If the current elected representatives are unable to meet their obligations to ratepayers and their elected duties the long-term goal is to help elect candidates in the October 2020 elections who are able to stop the waste, incompetence and reduce our rates.

## What are we doing?

RoPP has started attending Council Meetings to hold our elected representatives accountable for their decisions in relation to Council expenditure and management of underperforming Council assets. For example, we have questioned why CoPP has approved a proposal to extend for 3 years the lease of the St Kilda Marina for a non-commercial rent of approximately \$250,000 when the Council has advised us of an independent valuation that has estimated the market value of the rent at \$800,000. We expect improved management of the asset should deliver a reduction in rates revenue by more than \$500,000.

We will continue to represent the Ratepayers of Port Phillip at Council meetings and report to our members on wasteful spending and expose the Councillors who are responsible for supporting wasteful spending and increased rates. We have started to compile a list of wasted funds and so far, we have a tally of more than \$2 million for the 2019 calendar year. We will keep you informed of the running total throughout the year.

## How can you help us and yourself?

Please pass this email to your friend and neighbours who are ratepayers or residents in the City of Port Phillip and encourage them to join up. Our subscriber/ membership list is private and confidential but you need to be on our list to receive regular updates on the Council's wasteful spending.

If you would like to be involved in our activities please let us know. We are looking for people to assist in our communications, advocacy, social media and potential candidates for the Council elections in October 2020. And naturally all donations are welcome as stuff still costs money.

You can contact us at <https://ratepayersofportphillip.org>