



4 April 2020

COUNCILLORS DELEGATE AUTHORITY TO CEO

On 25 March, 8 of 9 Councillors voted to delegate powers to the CEO in the event a quorum is not possible, and this may occur if and when Stage 4 COVID-19 pandemic restrictions are invoked. We understand Councillors will continue to meet until Stage 4 restrictions prevent Council Meetings occurring. You may be interested to know that Council meetings must be held in person and the Local Government Act does not allow video meetings. This is likely to make public oversight into Council decision making virtually impossible. We also question why is Council wasting money seeking legal advice from Maddocks regarding quorums when the Local Government Inspectorate sent them clear advice on 18th March?

We can only hope our elected Councillors are able to make the tough budgetary decisions that will inevitably follow this extraordinary economic and health crisis before Stage 4 restrictions are implemented.



EMERGENCY RELIEF PACKAGE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Port Phillip Council announced a \$2.5 million emergency relief package in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ratepayers who are assessed as being in financial hardship will be able to defer rates payments for six months with no interest charges; zero interest for rates deferment by self-funded retirees; up to six month rates deferral for eligible small businesses with a no interest 12-month payment plan; increased pensioner rebate to be considered.

See link http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/mar-2020-media_8930.htm?fbclid=IwAR0vDWolmw_ iyeT4rai atC26AkrVCcyz02ZMlu3sEITm8zpnnHpYW5BsWSQ

\$2.5 million represents about 1% of the council's revenue. We also note that other than rates deferrals, the relief package is not targeted to relieve pressure on ratepayers. We question why ratepayers are continually asked to dig deep.

RoPP has made repeated requests over the last two years to Councillors asking them to understand that the cost of being a ratepayer is unaffordable and annual rate rises cannot continue.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic the City of Port Phillip faced massive budgetary challenges caused by the failure of Fines Victoria to collect

\$21.7M of parking fines and the legal ruling to refund up to \$8.8M of contested parking fines.

The Council is now facing a perfect storm with the Budget to significantly 'blow out' with significant interruption to the flow of revenue due to a surge in ratepayer job losses, decision to waive commercial rents for the April-June quarter, dramatically changed business conditions, retirement nest eggs being severely impacted by share market events. All of these events will influence significantly the ability of ratepayers to pay the 4th rates instalment.

In the past we have called for Council to run budget surpluses so that in times of need, there is a buffer. With Council unable to efficiently operate assets (e.g. \$0.5 Million loss on South Melbourne Market) they have found themselves in a situation where they are likely to have a huge hole in their finances this year. This is due to Council not being fiscally responsible and creating a buffer when times are good. It is telling that council is now looking to fund Fishermans Bend by raising \$70 million in debt. This will be paid for by ratepayers for years to come. Council has not yet embraced the magnitude of the problem or identified an adequate solution.

RoPP believes Port Phillip Council should unanimously agree to:

- Agree that there will be NO rates increase for the next two years
- Stop all project spending & defer all non-essential projects
- Enforce CEO & Executive salary cuts of at least 25%
- Comprehensive solution that matches council operational expenditure with the revised revenues
- Expand Home visiting services like Meals on wheels, Foodbank & Maternal Health

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/RoPPh/> and sharing this email with neighbours and friends and ask them to subscribe to our regular Newsletters at <https://ropp.org.au>

If you would like to be involved in our activities, please let us know. We are looking for people to assist with:

- Communications, newsletters.
- Social media and public relations.
- Speak at Council meetings on behalf of RoPP (if there are Council meetings in future!).
- Write to us at mail@ropp.org.au
- Donate to RoPP at BSB 063-188 Acc No. 10461095

Your donations help fund our activities such as maintaining the website, printing of materials and holding meetings.



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