

Major issue: Elected member representation

February 2008

Interested parties:

Residents; local Councillors, NSW & Federal elected representatives.

Area affected:

Beecroft and Cheltenham.

Background:

Residents have reported an increasing trend for politicians to look to post-political careers in lucrative areas with notable corporations. There is a possibility that some may seek or be offered the prospect of opportunities with these businesses during their time in politics. That may have some direct or indirect impact on their impartiality and decision-making ability to best represent the wishes of the majority of their constituents.

Residents have also cited the possible arrogance of elected folk where they hold a *safe seat*. Elected performance may then respond to Party or other priority, rather than to represent the best interests of local constituents. Ministerial and similar roles may, on balance, lessen the capacity to represent effectively.

Key points:

- The Trust encourages our elected Federal Representatives (Senate & House of Representatives) and NSW Government (Legislative Assembly & Legislative Council and Hornsby Shire local Ward Councillors) to learn more of the impact of federal, state or local activity *or inactivity* on the Beecroft Cheltenham quality of life and potential loss of amenity.
- The Trust encourages local representatives to provide notice, research and other materials to their community, on all likely local impacts that their level of government is intending.
- The Trust looks to these representatives to advocate effectively for the best interests of the majority of residents on all local issues.

Trust response:

- Within its resources, the Trust will work to engage with its community as a facilitator – acting impartially and professionally, and applying the skills of its volunteer members and supporters to seek local beneficial strategic outcomes
- The Trust supports the reinstatement of a generous superannuation scheme for elected federal representatives, in exchange for a quarantine period of no commercial employment after their retiring from elected roles (Canada has a 5 year requirement). The Trust supports a similar quarantine period for NSW representatives.
- The Trust believes progress towards better remuneration of local Councillors is essential to attract and retain capable people, who can then devote more time to more knowledge-based local representation.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) is pivotal for maintenance of the robust democratic values that Australians require. Unfortunately, when acting in ministerial roles all too often elected representatives choose to support the non-disclosure requirements of the bureaucrats. They often the needs of their voters who have elected them to a position of trust, to represent community interests.

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