

## TRANSPARENCY IN DECISION-MAKING AND INFORMATION

Yass Valley Residents deserve openness, honesty and information from Yass Valley Council. We need to get our trust back in Council's decision-making, decisions and actions. Grassroots democracy is a core Greens belief; people are at the centre of government actions.

This Council has used closed-door discussion and decision-making more than ever before, particularly around some of the most important issues facing our communities; Where can you find any information about:

- the \$50 million dollar loan to build the new Civic Centre and what we'll actually be getting for that \$50 million investment?
- how that loan will affect Council's ability to provide and maintain the services we need and expect?
- what a heated pool complex might mean in terms of costs and services?
- the what, when and how much of the long-awaited water treatment plant upgrade?
- the contract Council entered into with a private developer to place their staff inside Council to develop policies for the Parkwood development?
- what's happening in terms of planning for North Murrumbateman?
- Why our water and waste charges go up every year by far more than inflation?

This Council's 'commitment' to "*an informed community, engaged in decision-making*" doesn't stack up:

- we only get to 'comment' on pre-prepared documents and we're not engaged in their development;
- Council decisions are made in closed session, without any public scrutiny;
- independent oversight of the new civic centre development was resoundingly rejected;
- draft budgets and financial reports change regularly between their first publishing and final adoption, without any explanation or notification of changes;
- Council meeting reports are minimalist, full of spelling and factual errors and leave vital questions unanswered; and
- Council meeting location, timing and online participation actively discourage public involvement and attendance.

It's almost 10 years since Council surveyed the community on what it wants. And the General Manager has publicly stated that Council relies on residents writing to it, to gauge public sentiment. If Council doesn't know – and doesn't care – what we're thinking, it won't care about the decisions it makes.

### Your Greens Councillors will work to:

1. **Open up decision-making and actively invite the public in.** We will put public accountability and transparency at the core of Council operations and decision-making processes. We'll work to:
  - Establish a Governance and Administration Committee, with public participation, to review Council's information sharing – including Council's meeting papers – and find ways to make them more open, useful and accessible to all;
  - Establish a Council 'Decision Register' that tracks progress on Council resolutions and reports monthly;



- Make Council reports provide sufficient detail to enable easy public understanding of the issues, rather than burying detail in attachments. And minimise 'late reports' that can inhibit public discussion;
  - Publish summaries of Councillor briefing sessions and decisions made at meetings, with details of the implications of those decisions;
  - Make public participation in Council meetings easier and more flexible by:
    - Conducting meetings outside Yass and in villages across the LGA;
    - Allowing the public to address Council when their matter of concern is being discussed, rather than limiting it to a few minutes before the meeting starts;
    - Changing the 4.30 time of meetings to outside working hours;
    - Improve the quality of online streaming of meetings and enabling public input online; and
    - Adhering to legislated standards about when matters are discussed 'in confidence'.
  - Properly review all policies after the election, as required by legislation and propose amendments and new policies where needed. And all done with public engagement.
2. **Make information more available and more easily available.** Council's current practices seek to hide, or not actively release, information that the public is entitled to. Council needs to give better public access to more information by:
- Formally adopting an 'open access' policy, consistent with NSW legislation;
  - Ensuring it is complying with its obligations under 'information provision' legislation;
  - Making more, better, and up-to-date information available on its website, social media and in community forums;
  - Actively monitoring its own social media – and that of local community groups - to actually understand the range of public opinion and to respond to community questions and issues.
3. **Make doing business with Council easier** by enabling online transactions and completion of forms, and by making better use of modern technologies to facilitate your interactions with Council.
4. **Ensure accurate and timely reporting on Council performance.** Council's Annual Reports have become meaningless, 'cut and paste' documents with no real information and no transparency. Financial reporting is ad-hoc and changes dramatically from one statement to the next. Greens Councillors will change this by ensuring:
- Council's reports comply with legislated standards and community expectations;
  - Publishing on Council's website and social media, the data that is required to be provided annually to the NSW Office of Local Government - much of which relates to Council's financial integrity and service levels;
  - Developing a comprehensive 'dashboard' reporting framework that breaks down and reports on Council's key performance outcomes, its service delivery and how it stacks up against relevant State averages; and
  - Monthly reporting to Council on key performance targets and measures, and progress on Council resolutions.

We will regularly and actively engage with the community, be honest in our communications with residents and seek open feedback to ensure we're working to support your outcomes.

**TOGETHER FOR REAL CHANGE**

**VOTE GREEN**

**ADRIAN CAMERON AND TANYA CULLEN - FOR THE REAL CHANGE YASS VALLEY NEEDS**

