

Comment

Byron Shire Deputy Mayor **Peter Westheimer** presents his wishlist for the 2007 Council season

Help us address the climate of challenge

There is certainty that 2007 will bring change and challenges for us all, especially for those who like their life to be predictable and secure!

Positive action towards keeping the globe and its inhabitants cool in the face of irrefutable evidence of warming will increasingly take centre stage. Sharp focus, clear hearts and spirits, searching minds, as well as innovation and application are needed.

Climate change

The recent report of the United Nations IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) underscores the responsibility and action needed for all tiers of government, business and individuals. The UK Stern report presented the economic imperatives for action and Al Gore has informed us through the media.

Byron Shire Council (BSC) needs to urgently address the challenge as well. Senior staff have been slow to respond to climate change issues. Some councillors verge on being climate sceptics.

I urge the community to demand continued action

and leadership from councillors of all political persuasions, and a more proactive approach from the Council general manager Pamela Westing, the director of corporate and community services Elisabeth Brown and others in the administration. Ask them and your councillors the hard questions or offer ideas on local initiatives and solutions.

Councillors resolved last year that predicted savings from a Country Energy audit was to be spent on purchasing 100% solar or wind power green energy, and other measures to improve energy efficiency in Council's operations. Council spends over a one million dollars a year on electricity. Unfortunately Country Energy have been slow to complete the audit, delaying council's initiatives.

Climate Change information is available on Council's website www.byron.nsw.gov.au and also from North Coast Climate Action Group 6684 2272 or the ACF website www.acfonline.org.au.

Coastal flooding

Our coastal towns and villages don't have much eleva-



tion above sea level to spare. Byron Bay town centre has low points only 2.5 metres above sea level while the Ewingdale Road/Kendall Street corner (the road to Belongil) is a level of 1.5 metres. Mullumbimby varies from 2.7 metres east of the rail line to four to five metres in the town centre. Brunswick Heads has low points of two to three metres, Balemo Drive, Ocean Shores, has low spots of 1.5 metres, New Brighton two metres and South Golden Beach 2-2.5 metres above sea level. This doesn't give us much leeway for predicted sea level rises and more frequent subsequent flooding especially with oceanic storm surges.

It will be interesting to watch the impact of climate change on the state sanctioned Becton North Beach resort. Photos from 1987 show much of the site under water. In 2006 Council successfully took legal action against Becton to insist that their beachfront Bayshore building be dismantled

before all of it subsided into the steep and shifting sands of the Belongil Estuary mouth.

Action this year

I'd like to see delivery of actions this year including Council playing a formative role in nurturing local renewable energy infrastructure, eg aiming for an energy efficient and green energy shire ASAP including installation of solar roofs, small high efficiency wind turbines, new LED fluorescent bulbs etc etc. We can start with all new civic buildings and retrofitting where feasible. I'd like to see new education courses and business training for renewable energy locally.

By June 2007 Council has to produce a 25 year strategic plan to address sustainability for ecology, community, economy, human habitat, infrastructure, and governance. It should provide a philosophical basis for the new Shirewide LEP.

We are fortunate that based on the 2006 NSW govern-

ment's Far North Coast 25 Year Regional Strategy, Byron Shire, now approximately 32,000, essentially has a de facto population cap of 35,000 to 40,000 people. This is in contrast to Tweed Heads/Ballina/Lismore where 50% population increases are planned.

BSC's Greenhouse Action Strategy available via Council's website was adopted in June 2004 but is frozen at milestone three of the Cities for Climate Protection program. The strategy sets out 38 actions before milestone 4 is achieved. Seventy or so councils in Australia have completed milestones 1 to 5 and have embarked on further positive and proactive actions. We can move faster this year.

Better 'wages'

Byron Shire councillors are, in general, an exception to a culture of mediocrity and part time commitment among councillors in Australia.

The general manager is on \$175,000 a year, more than that of the Mayor and nine councillors' combined wage 'allowance', yet like the GM we need to be professional, responsible and committed.

If councillors received anything like a semblance of a working wage, rather than an amount similar to unemployment benefits, they would probably be freer to dedicate more time to a job that needs a minimum of 30 to 40 hours a week.

Some fresh talented councillors elected in 2008 with training or skills in planning, engineering, government, economics, sociology and ecology would help future councils.

Poor management

The communication, business acumen, and innovation skills of council administration, often pretty average, need improving. This costs the community in the long run. Management of com-

munity buildings has been abysmal and although the problem has been recognised by councillors with more funding and staff allocation pending, it is a sad indictment on previous administrations and on the underfunding to councils in general.

This has impacted on all sorts of things. From poor management of the YAC to the management of the repairs and renovations to the Mullumbimby Hall slowed by bureaucratic delays. There are fortunately however many multitasking and enthusiastic staff who do outstanding work and their commitment to the community gives me cause for optimism at times.

I look forward with cautious optimism to the Mullumbimby Civic Hall renovations beginning in the next few months.

The lack of trains on our tracks continues to be scandalous and is an issue that is still very much alive.

We need to embrace the aboriginal world view where people and country (nature) are an integral whole I believe that this is a time to look at the way we do lots of things, our interpersonal relationships, and our commitment to preservation of the natural environment. Putting a price on carbon emissions now looms as urgent for governments all over the world. Nuclear waste endangering lives for thousands of years sounds like a raw deal to me. We need to give the next generations a fair go. In planning parlance its called intergenerational equity. Vote only for those who care.

The last time in history that a large ice sheet melted sea levels went up five metres per century. Current predictions are for sea level rises less than one metre by 2100 but we don't know that for sure!

Welcome aboard flight 2007!

CHES by Ian Rogers

The World Championship match in Elista between Vladimir Kramnik and Veselin Topalov last October proved that the hot-house atmosphere of a world title match could create argument and enmity between two likable players who had previously been no more than friendly rivals.

The first major tournament to be held after the Elista contest concluded in Wijk aan Zee, the Netherlands, a fortnight ago, and in some ways fell hostage to the ongoing feud between Topalov and Kramnik. The penultimate round saw the showdown between the world number one and the World Champion, with Topalov holding his half point lead after a draw which saw no handshake before or after the five hour battle.

On that day an article also appeared in the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* accusing Topalov of receiving signals from his manager Silvio Danailov during the second and third rounds of Wijk aan Zee. The article was written by respected German IM Martin Breutigam who could not find any logical explanation for Danailov's behaviour during the games - taking messages on his phone and then entering the spectator area, positioning himself in Topalov's line of sight and fidgeting in strange ways until, eventually, an arbiter intervened.

Subsequently, others came forward saying that they had

observed something suspicious at other tournaments, starting with Topalov's world title win in Argentina in 2005.

The rumours about Topalov being secretly informed when the critical moments in the game have been reached have certainly gained wide currency: this writer conducted a survey of ten top grandmasters a week after Wijk aan Zee and found only two who were confident that Topalov and Danailov were not cheating. (Notably, both had been in Wijk aan Zee.) However, of those questioned, only one was sure that the allegations were true - the others offered varying shades of 'maybe'.

Both sides of the argument have some difficult questions to answer. If Topalov wanted to receive messages, why would he choose an obvious conduit such as Danailov rather than someone anonymous? Conversely, if there was nothing unorthodox going on, why was Danailov acting so strangely?

It is very hard to believe that Topalov - who has been a top ten player for more than a decade - would involve himself in such tactics. I have observed the Bulgarian in tournaments from Argentina to Wijk aan Zee and saw nothing out of the ordinary. However, it would certainly be helpful if manager Danailov answered some of the specific complaints about his behaviour rather than just wave away the allegations as a joke.

Drivers can have say in drug-driving survey

The Australian Drug Foundation is urging NSW drivers to have a voice in a national drug-driving study by completing an online survey. The survey - available at www.drugdriving.org.au - is open to all Australians of driving age whether they have any experience of drugs or not, is completely anonymous, and takes only ten minutes to complete.

Dr Jane Mallick, Director of the ADF's Centre for Youth Drug Studies, said the survey targets a wide cross-

section of Australians, including those who use drugs and those who do not. The results will provide valuable insights into the community's attitudes and experiences of drugs and driving, she says.

'We... encourage anyone over 17 years with internet access to have their say,' said Dr Mallick. 'Currently, there is limited research about the prevalence or drug-driving in rural areas, and any insights we can gain will be valuable for developing road

safety strategies to protect our rural communities and keep people safe.'

The ADF, together with Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, is conducting the survey to better understand Australian attitudes and experiences of drug-driving, and make informed contributions to public debate on the issue. The project is being funded by insurer AAMI, which has a long history of commissioning independent research about driving-related issues.

According to AAMI NSW corporate affairs manager Selina O'Connor, recent AAMI research suggests drugs and driving is a problem for NSW communities.

'Almost one in eight NSW drivers (12 per cent) admit to driving after using recreational drugs and twice as many (just over one-quarter or 27 per cent) admit to driving after taking prescription or over-the-counter medication containing a warning not to drive,' Ms O'Connor said.

Where to play: Byron Bay Services Club, Monday 7-10pm
Mullumbimby Poinciana Café, Saturday 2-5pm