

Transcript of Speech by Michael C H Jones to:
Warringah Council - Tuesday 23rd October 2012

Mr President and Members of Council

In three minutes I do not have time for rhetorical flourishes, so I will just read what I have to say.

I address this first session of the newly elected council members for Warringah with the purpose of emphasising your broader responsibilities to the community, not only within the boundaries of Warringah but external on the North Shore and to Greater Sydney as the financial and commercial powerhouse of our region of Australasia and Asia in general. (I decided not to say "I have made many speeches in other places across the world on this subject" which is true but would have detracted from my message).

Modern Councils must act within a global society of multiculturalism. Your masters are State, National, Regional and Global Institutions.

As examples I quickly cite:

1) Financial decisions/investments

Just look at the carnage caused to many Australian councils by what at the time seemed sound investments in the USA prior to the Global Financial Crisis post 2008. Even though by court decision much of this money may perhaps be recovered it has placed enormous strain on many councils.

2) Tourism trends and business implications

In recent years/decades there has been a massive shift in global wealth to Emerging Economies particularly in Asia. Chinese nationals now stay longer and spend more per head in Sydney/Australia than Europeans or North American tourists. Just note the recent discussions at Manly Council and in the Manly Daily concerning the impact of the decline in tourist numbers and change in composition on small business in the area.

3) Cultural responsibilities/decisions

Willoughby Council is arguably the leading and richest council on the North Shore. Its high rise office blocks and apartments are worth billions of dollars and attract investors from around the world. Its recently completed Cultural Centre has changed the demographics of the performing arts in Greater Sydney. Even the British Ballet has performed there.

4) And so to Warringah Council

Many of the decisions you will be required to make are million dollar decisions. Some projects in which you will participate are billion dollar projects.

For example the already started new hospital at Frenchs Forest - payments have already been agreed and paid for the land. A 'state of the art' major hospital will service not only Warringah but its specialties will service Greater Sydney and perhaps Australasia. All the required and on-going infrastructure will involve decisions by Warringah Council. It will impact the zonings of land in a very wide arc. The financial welfare of many residents are going to be impacted by your decisions.

5) Governance of 21st century councils

In Australia's democracy citizens elected to Municipal, State and Federal bodies are held responsible for decisions of governance - often many billions of dollars over a few short years.

They must show maturity in their own actions making sure no individual runs amuck with self aggrandisement or conflict of interest.

They must govern and direct firmly very sizable council staff consistening of highly qualified and experienced people, who though expert in their own specialties often do not understand the 'westminster' system - they give advice, they do not make policy decisions. So many councils have run into trouble because of the inappropriate actions of their employees. Even 'Police Integrity Commissions' have the same problem - or closer to home Willoughby Council over recent years.

To conclude:

Because sleeping dogs were kicked last year in the Oxford Falls/North Belrose area of Warringah Council - concerning land zonings - many eminent and senior business people with great individual wealth have become interested in the activities and decisions of Warringah Council. When council plays "loosely" with peoples' property and lives, expect a very "savage" reaction. A million dollars can buy a lot of court time and damage permanently aspiring political reputations.

Therefore hopefully this new council will show and act according to a more adult and mature standard of performance.

Thank you.