

8 July 2022

MEDIA STATEMENT



SOUTHERN MALLEE RESPONSE TO THE BORDER TIMES REPORT

The Southern Mallee District Council rejects a recent claim made by one of its Elected Members that Councillors are “dictated to by management”.

Councillor Neville Pfeiffer made the statement to *The Border Times* newspaper in its Wednesday, 6 July edition.

However, Southern Mallee Mayor Jeffrey Nickolls said Council refutes the claim.

“Local Government has certainly changed over the 30 years that Cr Pfeiffer and myself have been in office. It is now much more regulated – and many of these rules and regulations have been set by the Local Government Association and the State Government,” Mayor Nickolls says.

“The Code of Conduct for Elected Members and rules around conflicts of interest, for example, exist for very good reasons – to ensure appropriate and respectful behaviour, and equitable and lawful decision making.

“There are also very strict legal requirements Council must adhere to including the consideration of certain matters in confidence – and the viewing of information related to confidential matters.

“This extra bureaucracy can certainly be a point of frustration for those of us who have been around for a few terms. However, the reality is that these are the rules within which we operate, and they are there for an important purpose.

“Modern local government is highly complex – we are dealing with more diverse and complicated issues now than ever before. Matters such as economic growth strategies, housing strategies, planning and infrastructure development are now as commonplace for us as discussion around core traditional Council business like roads, rates and rubbish.

“The reality is, Council is strongly supported by our management and staff who offer high-level expertise and advice. Our staff are dedicated professionals who are passionate about serving the Southern Mallee community. The policy directions and decision-making, however, still rest with Elected Members and our community. And – if Elected Members don’t like the advice or recommendations of staff – they can, and have previously, rejected those.

“What has changed is that, where we Councillors once sat in meeting from 9am to 9pm to micromanage every issue, we now have a far more efficient and effective system that utilises expert advice from our staff, but ensures Elected Members remain the ultimate decision makers.

“Any Councillor who doesn’t like the way Council operates, or who wants access to more information, has the power to raise their concerns with fellow Elected Members or staff, and can move motions in Council meetings to seek changes to the way Council operates.

“This is a great organisation to work for and with – and I hope the comments of one person don’t put people off applying to run for Council in the lead up to the November election.”

- ENDS -

Media contacts:

Southern Mallee District Council Acting Chief Executive Officer Matthew Sherman
P: 0428 891 116 | E: matthew.sherman@southernmallee.sa.gov.au