

# **Blue Mountains**

## **Community vs Corporations**



**A snapshot  
of  
Australia's “state of democracy”,  
corporate power & politics.**

**By Rob Grosche**

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## Should corporations be able to claim the same rights then real people ?

*'The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government... The mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few to ride them.'* Thomas Jefferson

Australia has always been the proud, independent little brother of America. Whilst our early days were formed by British colonialists, our free, loudmouthed, larrikin pioneering spirit was always closer to America. We are not quite the lap-dog that says 'how high' when America says 'jump'. But we do look and act like Americans. A tourist made this point clear to me. When asked how she liked Australia, she said "It's great! It's a lot like America, but with a funny accent!"

We also behave as if we have a profoundly proud bill of rights or declaration of independence, similar to the one enjoyed by US citizens. Sadly, we only have a constitution, which allows our leaders to "Rule the people". This is closer to how a corporation operates, then the behavior we would expect from a sovereign nation in relation to its citizens. If this appears a little harsh on our proud nation let us remind ourselves what it says in our constitution:-

"1. The legislative power of the Commonwealth shall be vested in a Federal Parliament, which shall consist of the Queen, a Senate, and a House of Representatives, and which is herein-after called "The Parliament," or "The Parliament of the Commonwealth."

2. A Governor-General appointed by the Queen shall be Her Majesty's representative in the Commonwealth, and shall have and may exercise in the Commonwealth during the Queen's pleasure, but subject to this Constitution, such powers and functions of the Queen as Her Majesty may be pleased to assign to him.

3. There shall be payable to the Queen out of the Consolidated Revenue fund of the Commonwealth, for the salary of the Governor-General, an annual sum which, until the Parliament otherwise provides, shall be ten thousand pounds. The salary of the Governor-General shall not be altered during his continuance in office."

This is the opening of a document which could come straight from Telstra or the board of the Macquary bank. First we state who owns us and then we state what our owner's cronies can expect from the deal...

Now for the finest of the US. Their Declaration of independence...

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of

Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”

As Australians we think that we have the moral authority to be treated like American citizens- but we don't have it in law. Our constitution talks about the governing of the people- through its elected representatives. In other words, we place ourselves body and soul into the hands of our representatives and hope that they will look after our interests. We talk about ownership whereas the US declaration of independence talks about human rights. The difference is amazing!

Our federation document states that we have three levels of government. Federal, State and Local and that our parliamentary representatives are elected by the people. We believe that this is a proper model for a democracy. What we forget is that we have a representative democracy and not a direct democracy. Furthermore, if it were a direct democracy, more along the lines of a Swiss democracy, then we would expect to have the most direct influence on our elected representatives at the local council level. But this is not the case in Australia.

Sadly, our councils have the least democratic power of all three levels of government, despite the fact that they are closer to our ideal of a direct democracy than our State or Federal level of government.

Our councils are logically the closest we get to having a direct democratic say in our local affairs. We are the engine, that produces the taxes our State and Federal over lords spent. But when it comes to using the power derived from our taxes, we are kept at the bottom of a very rotten barrel of State and Federal political parties who accept legalised donation from corporate lobbyists.

Furthermore, our local councils can be gagged, made to abide by unjust laws, be lampooned by council staff and taken to court by council staff as well as be sacked if they don't kowtow to the State or Federal level of executive authority.

A recent sacking of the Shell Harbor council illustrates the point. A complaint mechanism was launched to investigate the elected councilors. In addition the corporate council instigated court proceedings against the elected councilors, which cost about one million dollars of ratepayers money.

An official document which was produced to facilitate the sacking of the Shellharbour council dealt at length, over some 120 pages, with the technicalities of how the councilors breached rules and guidelines.

I am not defending the actions of councilors and make no value judgment on “if and why” they breached guidelines etc... But what I am stating, is that none of the words in the document, which investigated the councilors, dealt with the substance of the councilor's discontent. It merely dealt with the local governments executives' displeasure with the behavior of the elected councilors. It is

a clear case of servants usurping powers over the electorate.

Some of the sacked councilors were accused of being '*whistle blowers*'. A formal inquiry was held into the councils affairs, prior to their sacking, titled "THE SHELLHARBOUR CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC INQUIRY – July 2008 – held by the commissioner Mr Richard Colley"

Councilors were supposed to have leaked and exposed secret developments and excessive council management salary issues. To be exact:- it was reported that the main issues leaked were the salary package of the town Clark. The rowdiness of meetings, the lack of polite interactions between council staff and councilors and a lack of social interaction between councilors and council staff. How these issues falls under the classification of secrecy- is one of politics many mysteries.

The only issues that were raised in the sacking report were issues of law and procedural matters. The document did not discuss if the councilor's action were in the interest of the locals or if the councilor's actions were detrimental to the locals interests. This point was irrelevant to the sacking process and was therefore a blatant denial of natural justice towards the councilors and the people who elected them.

One reason why the councilors should be sacked was a "*new councilors initiation ritual*". Council staff complained that some councilors did not want to participate in this ritual. Let me be clear about what happened. Newly elected councilors refused a junket (which was usually enjoyed by council staff during and induction weekend at a Jamberoo retreat) because, in the new councilors judgment, it wasted ratepayers money. This refusal to save ratepayers some money, was later used as one of the reasons to sack a democratically elected councilors.

It is clear that our repressive laws and willful political pressures can influence and gag our councils. This is not democracy. This is an institutionalised dictatorship where the people's servants behave as if they are the masters. Or to be more exact, many little concessions our executive arm of government have won over time, now have the effect that the servants have usurped their masters. It is a clear case of the tail wagging the dog with the help of local government laws and rules.

It makes at total mockery of our ideals of accountability and open democratic government.

A side issue to the sacking revolved around boisterous council debates and how individual councilors interacted with the general public. If further showed how ill adjusted many councils are to deal with democratic debates and how important it is to reform councils into a mini parliament which includes the public in its deliberations and debates.

Just because we have voted our representatives councilors into office, does not mean that they will respect our wishes during the whole term. Changing how we are represented by our elected representatives, can be as simple as openly debating issues with their electorate and forming a consensus on how to vote at meeting. (PSP further deals with this issue of power sharing, in later chapters.)

This example clearly demonstrates why our democratically elected councils often will-not and legally can-not listen to the concerns of the locals and shows how their representatives can be gagged, even when they genuinely try to represent their electorate. We must therefore accept it as fact, that ratepayers have little or no influence over major council decisions. Parliamentary debating privileges and immunity from libel law should also be extended to councils. I will address this important topic in greater detail later.

A typical council meeting makes my point clear. I observed a council meeting held at Katoomba

council (15-7-2008) and was appalled at the blatant manipulations and pressures, which were applied to the council from outside forces. Councilors had to vote on decisions, which involved the commercial viability of a mixed development project in Katoomba's retail district.

Councilors clearly did not understand the commercial viability or future liability such a development would create. Whilst one councilor raised concerns about this issue, most were satisfied that an externally prepared report confirmed the commercial viability of the proposal. Proposals were then voted on without viewing or analyzing any financial documents and without following any logical process of reasoning. It also became clear that councilors and staff could never initiate any profitable ventures which can lower rates. Councilors don't have the skill, inclination, time, resources or incentive to think of ways to create income which could reduce rates. It was simply taken for granted that "Expert" advice had been given and that this advice was fundamentally sound as a basis for a vote for or against the proposals. The simplest principles of "Buyer beware" were ignored.

Various local people commented on the proposal including a representative from Wollworths, whose corporate overlords would be the prime financial beneficiary from the project. This gentleman hinted at time delays in the approval process, which was a thinly disguised threat of legal action or intervention from the state planning office.

Another member of the public spoke of her distinguished achievements in public life and of her profession as an architect, only after she was asked to declare her professional background in regards to the development matter.

Before this point, she had introduced herself simply as a concerned local who wanted to speak on the matter. She also then revealed, to have been the chair of the "advisory committee" that guided the proposed development.

She spoke at length, about the exhaustive process and how, with her guidance at the helm, they had finally found the best architectural solution for a difficult development proposal. (Later in the evening one councilor asked why the manager's office in the proposed development was positioned to take in the best view, to the detriment of the general public's viewing platform.)

After the item was closed and voted on, these people removed themselves from the public gallery... but not before the chair lady of the advisory committee, planted an affectionate victory kiss on the cheek of Wollworths's strategic planning representative! They clearly were dear friends.

On the same evening in another development application, the "Springwood revitalisation proposal" came before the councilors.

There exists a shared history with both developments. Both Katoomba and Springwood have 'Coles', the main rival of 'Wollworths', dominating the local shopping centers. In both instances the community was promised new infrastructure, only if the new developments go ahead. In both instances Wollworths, the main rival of Coles, was the driving force in the creation of the developments. As well as both developments linked *free, new public facilities* to the approval of retail developments.

The scale of these manipulations extends into every viable, existing retail strip. This was especially made clear at the end of the meeting, when the people in the public gallery were asked to leave the meeting because secret Lawson sale issues were to be discussed. The land under discussion was located in the heart of Lawson's business district. It has been rumored that the council was again

trying to develop another new shopping center for Lawson,

This is especially worrisome, since the old shopping strip is about to be demolished and its historical appeal destroyed. The demolition of the old shopping strip was unnecessary. Because the pretext for the demolition was a road widening. It was possible to build a by-pass around the old town center but this option was never seriously considered.

Another interesting incident arose from a councilor who was hackled by local residents because he ignored their concerns. He alluded to the fact that only a few hundred people turned out to meetings which was an indication that the “silent majority of the people- who did not come to the meeting and who did not hackle him” were therefore in agreement with him. He then reminded his constituents to be careful about “character assassinations”. This was a thinly veiled threat that he might take legal actions against some locals.

When we were asked to leave the meeting room, two very well dressed business men remained for the secret Lawson land sale discussions. They sported a thick “file type folder” which are used in large, advanced offices. It would come as no surprise if we will soon find another Coles or Wollworths development application for the new Lawson shopping center. If this occurs, then the bypass road option was clearly unsuitable, because it would have drawn traffic away from the new Lawson shopping center development, which would have diminished the value of the land for the council and as well as it would have reduced traffic through the town which would reduce the economic return for a new shopping center.

This meeting exemplifies what's wrong with Australian council laws and rules in general. But whilst everything was strictly legal, it certainly was not democratic and not in the best interest of the locals. The meeting contained elements of:-

- Legal threats from a developer towards the council and from a councilor towards his unruly constituency.
- A development Steering committee chair person, who was charged with obtaining the best outcome for the locals, was discovered to be on intimate terms with the strategic manager of the corporate developer who would be the main beneficiary of this proposal.
- Councilors ineptitude to understand or discuss the financial viability of the proposed developments.
- No interest shown in developing profitable ventures which could reduce local taxes.
- By extension of the facts it could be surmised, that the secret land deals with an unknown potential developer and the associated demolition of Lawson's old shopping strip was contrived to secure a higher land value for the land-owners and to create more retail traffic for another corporate retail development.
- Hiding of true reasons for the demolition of Lawson's historic shopping strip.
- Hiding long term corporate planning objectives from the public to obtain commercial advantages.
- Withholding and blocking local community infrastructure developments, until the locals allow a corporation to develop a shopping center- which will with total certainty destroy local

livelihoods.

But by far the most worrying feature about this Katoomba council meeting was not what happened at all, but that everything that did happen, was totally legal and that these kind of meetings are held, all over Australia. A quick count showed that about eight hundred communities had this type of development forced on them. The developers used almost identical tactics and over time, increasingly more restrictive law, which were passed through our state parliaments especially to facilitate the destruction of local business communities. It is not unreasonable to conclude that political parties have been influenced to give an unfair advantage to corporations. When we include the practice of developers giving declared and undeclared donations to political parties, then we can see the "Invincible hand" of corporations as they usurp undue power over our democracy, our federal, state and local governments.

I let you draw your own conclusions whether this type of behavior befits a democratic nation, or if these processes are more in tune with a banana republic?

What surprises observers about Australia's representative democratic model of government, is that we have two ruler. One elected the other, which is not elected, can never be dismissed. Namely- Corporations!

Under our law, corporations enjoy the same rights and privileges as real people. Corporations compete openly with people and seek protection and nurturing from our military and legal system, at our expense and to our loss, when it suits them. They blatantly ignore social rules and social responsibilities that you and your neighbors live by.

It is argued that corporations are made up of real people and that corporations therefore are rightfully deserve to be treated as equals under the law. But this is logically total nonsense. Corporations through stock markets, limit the liability of shareholders to the value of the financial share. This structure allows us to anonymously launder dirty money. This system is perverse to the extreme. Imagine setting up a category killer business besides your neighbors business. Soon you would be exchanging words over the backyard fence and your peaceful quiet home would be turned into a battleground. However, if we invest in corporate shares, and these shares would be used to build a corporate category killer beside your neighbors business, then you could stay mates with your neighbour while this family loses their livelihood. The stock market process removes stigma and makes it socially acceptable to invest in aggressive ventures. Environmental concerns, natural justice, war and neglect kill our planet's life support system as well as about 30 thousand people every single day. Corporations make blood money and the stock market makes it socially acceptable to own shares which amount to nothing more than blatant aggression towards humanity and its basic principles of human decency.

This is a direct consequence of our colonial past. Australia's colonial owners managed to maintain their ownership over their Australian assets during the federation process. They no longer needed the colonial model to extract profits because they could extract profits through commercial laws, corporations and through the stock market.

When Liberals and Labor politicians talk about freedom, they never refer to the freedom we enjoy as people, but more importantly for them, they refer to the freedom corporations enjoy. "Free" people behave totally differently to a "free" corporation! This difference becomes dangerous when we consider that corporations minimise and evade their tax liabilities, set and influence politics and generally behave as if they owned Australia. And... they do own it in large chunks!

Our Stock market has roughly the same value as our yearly GDP consumption and we owe one year of our earnings to foreigners who also own a quarter of our stock market. If Australia were not a sovereign nation, but instead a business, then we would have been taken over a long time ago. So when we are asked to consider the re-vitalisation of our Springwood retail strip and we realise that this request came from a corporation, we have good reasons to be worried!

Our history is substantially intertwined with America because a minor local American judge made a minor ruling in the 1800's, to settle a protracted railroad case. He ruled that corporations should have the same legal status then that of *real flesh and blood humans*. This was done to expedite and settle a complex legal argument. This minor by-line ruling has today grown into one of the main reasons why corporations have gained ascendancy and they are the only world-wide, borderless form of government which is not fully accountable to anyone.

Australia, was founded as a colony which shipped its profits back to England. The Australian people have always been foremost, a supply of labor for the colonialist owners and secondly a people. We have always lived under the shadow of corporations and have forged our identity through a struggle which at its heart simply demanded and won fair living conditions.

This struggle received a severe setback, which came as a long term consequence of the French revolution. European rulers feared the power of free city states and that of free people anywhere as a hotbed for the "rule from the gutter" as coined by the Prussian king who filled the void left by the retreating French army and "democracy" as we know it today. To break up the power base of the commoners, the rulers of the old world order contrived two major reforms, which were implemented on a worldwide scale. They dismantled the power base of the commoners by changing the local councils into service providing corporations. Effectively ending the ownership of the council by the people, and turning people into relatively powerless customers of their council. This was a radical transformation from owner to beggar. This reform was disguised under the cloak of nation building and personal convenience.

The other contrived reform was even more diabolical. It was a tax reform. Taxes flowed for the first time directly from the commoners to their ruler. This simple strategy broke the commoner's veto power and gave our rulers unlimited financial resources to rule, subdue and wage wars with impunity against home grown as well as foreign foes. Most conflicts since then, notably the first and Second World War and the rise of dictatorships, occurred because local communities were duped into giving up their local council powers to the state and nation. The biggest loss of community powers came from giving up local law and courts, local defense, local tax collections and the ability to block the flow of tax funds to ruthless Federal leaders. Issues like global hunger, loss of community empowerment, wage-slavery, corporate environmental vandalism, our oil wars and terrorism etc... are the modern scourge and a direct result to seeds sown a century ago, when local power was wrestled from the people and handed to the state and federal rulers. Today these seeds have grown into unaccountable, borderless corporations who are supported by gullible liberal and labor politicians....

At the end of the council and tax reforms, which ended in the late 1800's, we had finally lost our ability to directly influence our rulers. Our councils could now be stacked with federal law-abiding administrators and party political representatives of our rulers. Our local representatives could now be influenced by outside forces and behave in ways that no longer reflected the wishes of the people it was suppose to serve.... and this is where the proposal of the Springwood revitalization starts and where it begins to get even more interesting as this ingenious system of oppression and targeted exploitation extents its tentacles into our lives today...

## Giving a voice to community consensus

Religion tells us what to feel. Politicians tell us what to do, think and fear. Advertising tells us what to buy and corporations force us to give them the power derived from profits of our local consumption, so that they can rule us as a de-facto form of government. How silly we are for thinking we are free!...

To clear the air, let's clarify what reasonable "locals" expect from their councils. A council should ensure that it safeguards the livelihoods and happiness of its citizens. But this retail development proposal has upset not only the shopkeepers and service providers, but also many of the locals who came to Springwood to escape the soulless concrete jungle of the suburbs. Springwood is a rare and precious exception in a world swooning in an eddy of mindless consumerism. It is the home of some of the friendliest people we are likely to meet. This has been achieved not by accident but through a quiet unspoken consensus that allows everyone to enjoy their patch in a caring and nurturing community setting.

This raises the question why this proposal was floated and who would benefit from it. This action has also raised the issues of impropriety and the larger issue of corporate vs private ownership. We also must examine the way our council is run and how it should find better ways to fund itself.

Do our councilors have a "duty of care" to ensure that our livelihoods are not put in jeopardy and should things go wrong with this proposal, are they potentially legally liable because they have been forewarned that the most likely outcome of this proposal will impact negatively on the business community? Are they perhaps open to a class action from disgruntled business owners who may seek compensation, at some time in the future?

In essence this proposal pits the aspirations of a civil community against the profit motives of corporations. Civil society encourages people and organisations to refrain from hurting and disturbing the happiness of one another and it tries to restrain those people, organisations and corporations which seek to reduce or destroy these values.

Since the time of the creation of the Westminster system, it has been argued, that once born, humans enjoy an inalienable right to work and own local resources, in sufficient measure to sustain themselves and their families. This is not a right, which should be recognised and extended to corporations. Corporations economic might is a billion times larger than that owned by a single human being. The two can never be equal and protection must be extended to people, so that they can enjoy their lives in their local environment without being excluded by corporations which are not bound by morals but who do claim protection under the law, when it suits or benefits them. We need to protect people from the undue powers, which are extended, to corporations over the rights and powers enjoyed by people like you and me.

Corporations are morally corrupt. A major food corporation that owns many well known bread brands ran a "Band Aid" bread TV advertisement in 2008. This advertisement mimicked a "Band-aid" concert, replacing the honorable quest to reduce hunger deaths with a comical quest to abolish "bland tasting bread". At a time when 30,000 people are dying daily from preventable diseases and hunger, when Haiti poor are eating mud cakes etc..., it is a total obscenity to profit from and make fun of *Band Aid*- in order to raise profits for a corporation, which is partially culpable in creating world hunger in the first place. If this is the level our humanity has stooped to, then it's beneath that of a cockroach! We must therefore not forget our own responsibilities in

unwittingly creating the current situation. Many of us happily wear designer clothing. We enjoy buying branded consumer goods and gladly shop in corporate supermarkets, buying corporate branded food. To be blunt, every one of us has in the past contributed to the ascent and growing success of corporations. This posed moral, political and humanistic contradictions and conflicts which I will explore in greater detail in later chapters.

To understand the inner workings of corporations, we only need to look at how the stock market punishes corporate leaders when they exercise moral constraints. They praise and reward leaders when they link record profits to the simultaneous sacking of workers, while shifting jobs overseas to low wage countries. This is logically like fowling the soup as we eat it. It's not just business! It's immoral, stupid and selfish.

Supplying a community of people with life's essentials, is a profitable business. Therefore we have to carefully consider who actually owns Springwood's economic wealth. Should it be owned by absentee corporations who extract the profits to satisfy the stock market, or should we give preference to locals because they have a greater moral right to profit from their own community's consumption of goods and services?

It is clear that corporations can not claim to be citizens and we have to treat them accordingly, by putting up trade restrictions, by extracting from them fair taxes and by giving preferential treatment to our locally owned businesses simply to safeguard our way of life.

But above all, locals expect to be protected in their own neighborhood without having to defend themselves against the councilors they elected. It is our god-given right, a fundamental of natural justice, to expect our communal assets to be governed for the benefit, social harmony and wellbeing of the locals. Nothing short of this goal is acceptable unless we are willing to acquiesce our rights to be curtailed by corporations, politically influenced councilors and vicious profiteers.

## What do corporations want ? / Corporation bashing

It may look like this book is a left wing attack on corporations. But far from being ideologically tainted, this book is simply looking for explanation to the dilemmas which have dogged humans ever since we began to build wealth through trade and commerce. As we made the transition from tribal law which was based on natural justice and defined how individual interact with the wider community, something went wrong as humans moved into modern times where the laws now champions corporations over the rights and need of the individuals! There are deep tensions between community values which have changed little over the millennias and the fact that corporations literally walk over bodies to increase their profits. It is a classic tale of the organised few ruling over the disorganised masses.

Corporations employ highly paid executives to ignore and work against community values and further reward them when their immoral actions improve profits. Corporations develop policies of externalise costs so that they are borne by the community. This is done through tax concessions, free roads, infrastructure etc.. In addition corporations engage lobbyists to sway governments to bend our democracy in their favour. To gain the "ear" of officials, corporations give donations to political parties. In Australia donations can be made anonymously if they are below \$10,000 at a time. Furthermore corporations engage tax-avoidance specialists and shift local jobs overseas to low wage countries, again without paying their fair dues either in monetary or moral terms. The stock market acts as an enforcer of these rules and punishes corporations which do not conform to the "moral-free-for-all" selfish, business methods.

Corporate actions sit in total opposition to civic community values. Civil society forces people and organisations to refrain from hurting and disturbing the happiness of one another. Civil communities are largely self-moderating and keep our desire for selfish actions in balance with our personal aspirations for a happy life. Corporations do the exact opposite. They aggressively pursue profit growth- without responding to the limitations of a civil or moral framework.

Corporations see nothing immoral about depriving an individual of their income. It's just business, dog eat dog etc... But should we allow corporations to unfairly compete with local communities and local livelihoods? Australia's local government laws have over time been changed to advantage corporations by changing local development and planning laws in their favour and to the direct detriment of the locals.

Restraining corporation from hurting local people is quite simple. But some planning laws will have to be reversed. For example:- under NSW planning laws, a certain size of population will enable corporations to overwrite council planning wishes automatically with a 30,000 square meter category killer super market. Limiting the power of corporations can be as simple as limiting the available retail space to a maximum of 300 square meters.

Other issues that can reduce the corporate power are a flat rental charge for both corporations and private retailers alike. Currently corporations can get a square meter for around \$300 per year whereas private retailers are charged between \$2,000 and \$3,000. Corporations are also frequently the owners of the shopping center. Abolishing this double-dipping effectively increases competition because private retailers can then lower their prices to compete with corporate stores. Such anti-competitive practices are clearly not accidental and must be changed.

Current advertising practices also allow corporation to drown out, local voices. Another initiative to strengthen local communities could come in the form of tax concession for working and producing

goods close to homes. This “Green” action would discourage corporations from dragging biscuits and other easily made food stuffs across the world, wasting fossil fuel and destroying local livelihoods.

There are plenty of ways to level the local playing field. Neo-liberal imperial thinking (Howard, Bush, Blare, both liberal and labor), have built their fortunes on two voting systems. The ballot box and the Dollar! They abide by the democratic ballot box's decision, less than three times in every decade. But they totally cow-tow to the Dollar vote every day! In the world of power politics, every dollar is viewed like a vote for their ethics. They believe, that if you have a lot of money, your opinion should also be more highly valued, as well wealth automatically gives you the moral right to rule! But should you be poor, then this is your own fault and regarded as a failure, which disables your ability to rule.

In stark contrast, civil society believes that every person has an equal vote. Civil society believes that, finding a balance between satisfying our selfish needs and living a life mindful of others, is a high moral ambition. So, under the current "Free market" corporate ideology, we should not choose a modest life that casts only a small footprint, because this automatically reduces our democratic rights as well as ennobles wealthier people and corporations to rule over us.

*"Capitalism is the extraordinary belief that the nastiest of men for the nastiest of motives will somehow work for the benefit of all." - John Maynard Keynes*

So how can we assert our rights- in the face of such hard-core corporate and political aggression ?

The answer is as simple as it is obvious. Because we are faced with a continuous assault on our values by rich Liberal people, we must talk to them in a language they understand. Namely:- in \$

We must begin to spend our Dollars like casting our vote at a ballot box. Every time we spend money, we must consciously cast a vote for the village, town, region, nation and world we want to live in. Irrespective of our political persuasions, when enough people act morally, amoral people and organisations are stopped for pursuing their goals because they will lack the funds to overrule our wishes. Corporations and ruthless individuals would simply be deprived of the fuel that stokes their mean, selfish and irresponsible desires and actions. If we did nothing else, but ask about the actions and morals of those who ultimately profit from the money we spend at the cash-register, our votes cast at the cash-register can shape a better world that lives in peace and harmony.

Sun Tsue, Napoleon, Hitler and Gandhi could all attest to the wisdom of a short supply line. They won and lost some of history's biggest conflicts by either ignoring or mastering supply line issues. Gandhi liberated India from the British Raj. He simply understood the power which comes from consuming food and clothing. To him, influencing consumer patterns was a bloodless weapon which won India's independence. We have to begin taking full responsibility for the consequences of our consumption. A simple, thoughtless purchase is a vote for the world as we know it. Whereas a conscious purchase, from a trusted supplier, neighbour or friend, is an awesome strategic tool which can change and heal the world.

## **Are corporations humane ? / Can they catch a cold ?**

The ultimate oxymoron: -Corporate community values or corporate citizenship, deserves to be more closely examined with a look behind the smiling corporate facade. It is not unreasonable to state that corporations are diabolically opposed to community values. That they aggressively pursue profit growth- without responding to the limitations of a civil or morally binding framework, to simply maximise profits without taking responsibilities for their actions. Whereas locally owned businesses are regulated by the prevailing moral code of the community and are largely regulated through this code.

Corporations claiming the same rights and privileges as do real human beings is simply a perversion of natural justice. Corporations need to be treated in light of their stated aspirations. Namely, that they are a legal constructs designed to generate and extract profits without being restrained by moral constraints that apply to real flesh and blood people.

Corporations could have a legitimate place in our society as part of a well mixed methods of raising funds to pursue large projects. But they have largely chosen to ignore this possibility. Their organisational structure is closer to that of a war-lord's kingdom who's non-democratically elected executives pursue anyone to the death all-the-while claiming conscience-free profits for their shareholders. Lazy corporations try to monopolised the consumption of all the basic human needs. They simply contrive ways to channel a growing percentage of our consumption through their corporately run business structures such as water, food, clothing, housing, building materials, energy, Love (internet dating etc..) etc... to name just the most obvious. They also contrive ways to artificially create consumption. This is clearly evident in Sydney, where clean Trams made way for dirty busses, many small community shopping centers made way for large corporately owned shopping malls and higher density living, close to amenities made way for expensive, polluting, long distance commuting and the associated breaking up of traditional family structures. These phenomenas are not organically grown, they are contrived by Liberal and Labour ideologies greed and lust for power. The situation is growing more oppressive by the day. This is clearly an attack on our personal liberties and forces us to respond by developing new ways to protect ourselves from corporate aggression. History is a great teacher and our problems have been solved many times before. A look at history shows us a few "old is new again" methods to defeat this assault on our hard won liberties.

To understand why corporations are viewed with such dread, we have to look at why they were initially created. In the early days corporations were formed to raise large sums of capital in order to profit from a joint venture. Shipping companies, for example, needed large funds to operate and banks would simply not lend on risky shipping ventures. Corporations started as a way to spread the risk of loosing everything on just one ventures. The stock market further solved this problem by offering small investors an opportunity to partake in many big ventures which limited potential looses to just the face value of their shares. It furthermore indemnified the investor should a corporation engaged in illegal as well as immoral actions.

For example, whaling, whilst not the first of all corporate structures, is certainly one of the most interesting. Whaling was a very dangerous business. Scurvy, drowning, sea sickness, decapitation by rope, hunger, food and water born diseases, thirst, brutal discipline, falling of masts or overboard, pirates, royal buccaneers, leaky ships and years of separation from family and loved ones- were only some of the most obvious hazards for whalers. Behind the folklore, however, stood the beginnings of a stock market and corporate system we would instantly recognize today. Investors would buy shares based on rumor and speculation fulfilled by the reputation of the ships

captain. The best captains returned to port laden with whale oil, with their ships in tact and handsome profits for the investors, the crew and for themselves. Fortunes and the crew's lives were gambled on a captain's reputation. Share certificates were traded and their values went up when good news preceded a ship's return to port. Likewise, speculation could make shares instantly worthless when disaster struck at high sea. Prudent investors began to look for a mix of ventures which spread the risk of total financial ruin. A good portfolio would include shares in high risk, high profit ventures like whaling and low risk ventures like slaving, plantations, colonisation and generally the exploitation of technologically weaker cultures. Industrial production in goods and armaments were in high demand and thus became the bedfellows of ruthless investors. The link between, hunger, liberty, war and commerce are therefore embedded in the stock market almost from its beginnings. We can not ignore the fact that commerce is linked to war, and profits to slavery, wage slavery, misery and hunger. If humanity ever wants to achieve its full potential of peace and harmony, then we must break this link right where it begins. Namely at our local supermarket, council chamber and most off all, we must be willing to examine our own lifestyle and lust for consumer goods. The whole sorry saga of war, poverty and hunger is intrinsically linked to how we as individuals behave. It is time that we accept the fact that we can totally reshape our world through our own behaviour. Because we have not learned that our personal ignorance about economic matters, like the consumption of life's essentials, is a root cause of wars, poverty and hunger. We therefore prefer to explain war, poverty and hunger, through contrived economic theory, inept or corrupt governments, even through soil and climatic conditions. But we have so far failed to make the most obvious link, namely that our society is built on a predatory economic philosophy. Its main prey are the profits derived from our consumption of simple goods and services. Whilst the collateral damage of our societies behavior are war, poverty and hunger! Corporations, when seen in this context are merely an extension of our societies beliefs and a schizophrenic attempt to separate our business aggression from our personal responsibility. Whether we actively engage in the stock market or quietly draw a pension derived from taxation or stock market activities, the inescapable fact is that everyone who lives in an elite economy benefits from world wide war, poverty, hunger and the destruction of our natural environment.

Lets fast-forward the clock to 2008 . The corporate system has fundamentally not not changed. But it has become more controlling, larger and more powerful. But there are some things which did not change at all. Laborers are still poorly paid and they no longer get a share of the (whaling) profits. Today's "Captains of industry and commerce" are still paid exorbitant salaries, based on their reputations and the level of returns they obtain for shareholders. Whilst, then and now, their consciences about slavery and other despicable acts are sedated and soothed by high salaries. Investors still pay executives and directors to do the hard-dirty work and after they have taken their profits, investors still turn a blind eye towards the morality of corporate actions.

Today's corporations no longer restrict their activities to traditional ventures which naturally require large sums of capital like shipping, airlines, farming or mining. They now prefer to pursue easy targets, like small family owned corner stores in our suburbs, with sophisticated strategies in order to win the lion share of our consumption. This is not *just business*, it is taking food out of peoples mouths!

This lack of corporate restraint reflects their leaders unwillingness to work with our societies moral framework. Our lax corporate laws allow "Free market" forces to wage economic war anywhere and against anyone. Corporate aggressions are therefore directly responsible for keeping the majority of the world perpetually in poverty and poor health. Corporate strategies are designed to deny the world's poor the *fruits of their labor*. Shameless schemes like the deceptively named "Free trade system" and the "World bank" are basically corporate tools designed to increase profits. We need to

look a little bit deeper into the economic rationale which try to justify corporate greed. The main explanations which economists have contrived to excuse the behaviors of corporations, are the “free trade system” and the “Zero-sum” economic theory which states that a corporations financial gain is totally unrelated to someone else's poverty. But it has to be said that these explanations are plainly a stupid excuse deliberately contrived by economists to excuse the unconscionable behaviour of corporations and investors. We only need to look at coffee prices to see why only corporations gain from “*Free trade*” and why the “zero sum” argument is a lie. Poor coffee producers are suffering unacceptably low prices. Market manipulations deny them basic dignities and forces them to live below the poverty line. For decades food corporations have deliberately manipulated prices through the stock market, with the help of “free trade” agreements to make it impossible for growers anywhere to achieve a fair price which would enable them to live a dignified life. I can already hear economists writing contrived arguments why these sentences are falsely accusing corporations and *Free trade* agreements.

To reply in advance, lets imagine that the stock market- at a distant day in the future, decides to raise the price of coffee to a level where small growers could earn enough to rise out of poverty. Would this mean that coffee would become unaffordable to the consumer? Clearly a rise of even US\$1 would not dampen out demand for the delicious brew. Would transport companies and stock/futures market participants make less profit? Clearly not- because prices are rising and falling all-the time and because the coffee drinkers would foot the bill anyhow! If a statement is totally true then a statement which totally opposes the truth must therefore be equally true. A truth is easily tested to be either a confirmed truth or expose as a lie. ie. We know its nighttime, because there is an absence of light and reversely we know it is daytime because there is an absence of darkness etc... Now let us imagine that we could lower the price of coffee beans below the cost of growing it. Would poor coffee growers be worse off? Clearly they would again starve etc... ! If a rise in the price of coffee beans gives growers more money and a fall in the price of coffee beans forces them back into poverty, then how can this phenomena then be honestly explained and the appalling behavior of corporations be explained through a “zero sum” argument? If one were to apply this simple logic, then the vast majority of todays corporations would be working in areas which are morally totally indefensible.

But the blame game is not over until we examine our own personal disinterest and acceptance of such an aggressive economic system. Are we innocent bystanders or do we enjoy cheap coffee at someone else's expense?

Since neither the corporate nor our personal behaviour is “snow white”, should we be surprised if the people against we have directed this offence are spoiling to pick a fight with us. The “World trade center” bombing was cheered by poor people dancing in the street! Has anyone seriously questioned why these people cheered? To us a harmless office building was destroyed in an unprovoked attack. To the poor- who live at the bum-end of our economic and corporate aggression, this was a joyous “Pay-back”!

If we want to explore ways to reduce wars, hunger and poverty, we must begin to kerb the power of corporations and allow them to operate only in areas which do not effect people's livelihoods, their joy of life, health and happiness.

But above all, corporations should not enjoy the same rights that are extended too real people. To highlight this absurdity of law, we need to remind ourselves, that people ultimately own corporations. Since the law treats a corporation as if it were a real individual person, this, when taken to a logical conclusion, means that a corporation's shareholders are keeping a person in

slavery and therefore makes the owners of shares, guilty of slavery! The corporate system as it stands today is both morally and logically an absurdity.

For example:- The Blue mountain council claims that it has been approached by a corporation and that this approach must be treated as if a real person had made this request. This nonsensical argument is the reason why we have to defend ourselves, not only against the corporations that made the approach and is hellbent on taking the profits away from Springwood locals, but also, we have to defend ourselves against our councilors who ignore our concerns and for reasons only known to themselves, are supporting this attack on our livelihoods, ambiance and enjoyment of Springwood.

We are living in a world that is ruled by corporations whose legal and economic powers are greater than that of real people. Corporations must simply not enjoy the same rights as real people. But, because they are treated in law like real people, they can rule over us without our consent and pursue us to a point, where even our corner stores are turned into a battle ground for economic supremacy.

Corporations economic power reaches across borders and dwarfs that of many nations.

At the same time, real people are losing their rights through preventative laws (terrorism-freedom of speech, local planning laws, government executive excesses etc...), and planning laws that increasingly strengthen the powers of corporations and weaken the power of individuals.

Media diversity especially- is limiting our available opinions. What we hear and see is filtered by media corporations and their advertising sponsors (Both corporations and our federal government together, are the biggest advertisers in Australia). It is ironic that our leaders are talking of freedom, while they bombard us with behaviour altering advertising messages.

We have to begin taking back our human rights and this process can only begin when we can freely exercise our democratic rights in our own community.

If we think that democracy should be about people, and suspect that hunger and wars are avoidable then we can begin to usher in a new world today simply by spending our money more wisely like votes at a ballot box.

Who owns Springwood ?

The locals, the business operators or corporations ?



*Tranquil village life or supermarkets- what do we prefer?*

When we are forced to make a decision about the ownership rights of a community, its facilities and its shopping strip, we must acknowledge that what we see today was paid for by the locals and was created by the locals,- for the locals.

Personally I have been a neighbour to Johnsons, from Springwood Hi Fi, Dick Ison from the barbershop and a not all that distant neighbour to our Realtors, to mention just a few. We have truly some of the finest shops owned and operated by some of the finest people I have met anywhere!

## Who created the need for shopping centers?



*A typical corporate supermarket- lovingly takes pride-of-place in the center of a Hunter region town.*

It must also be stressed, that we, who have spend our dollars in the Springwood business district, are actually the people who have paid for what you see today.

We are the ones who have paid for the roads, the railway, the town hall, the shops, the trees, the seats, the parks, the toilets and ultimately even the dinner, which we put on the shopkeepers, tables.

The business community in return has rewarded us with convenient shopping, a very good choice of reasonably priced goods, exceptionally good services and above all a friendliness and congeniality which I personally rediscover every time I return from my travels, to my home in Springwood. There is a hard to define sense of community which has evolved over the years between the shopkeepers and service providers and the local residents. Generally, it is fair to say, that the shops we have in Springwood exist because we like the people, and we like the services and goods they offer. But above all, we like them because many of them are our neighbours. Curiously, many locals go to the shops looking like they just fell out of bed. There is good natured interchange between people and a lack of pretences which we normally find in the corporately owned super centres. Locals joke that "True locals" will shop like slob. Whereas new arrivals to our community are easily spotted because they still wear their finery while shopping. Springwood has developed a nurturing care free environment with an easy transition between home, school and work, the young and the old. This phenomena exists in part because we have a good mix between living commerce and the size of our infrastructures. When we change this commercial mix in favour of large scale corporations, we will therefore also change Springwoods ambience to reflect corporate ambitions.

## WHO SHOULD BENEFIT FROM A COMMUNITY ?

We have been forced to consider inviting an large outsider into our community, we must therefore have a very good reason to do so. Try as I may, I can't find a satisfactory answer to this question. It s impossible to develop a plausible explanation why we are forced into having meeting about giving away our communal property to an outsider? The same question has been pondered by many communities across the world and most of them have succumbed to corporate tactics and experienced a decline in unemployment and a shrinking of comm

We would do well to remember that Springwood is a viable shopping destination, because we have made it what it is today! I take pains to pay homage to the efforts of the local chamber of commerce and everyone who has supported the viability of our community.

The fundamental question we have to answer before we dispose of our community facilities and assets, is who actually owns them. There is the ownership issue of private and public land and buildings. The ownership or rental status of retail tenants and last, but not least, the ownership of the Springwood ambiance.

The people of Springwood, have over time voted with their money to create Springwood as it exists today. Springwood, as it exists today, was paid for by the locals and was created by the locals,- for the locals. The simple facts are these. If we stop spending our money in Springwood shops- what we have today will disappear, because the profits will be pulled out of the local community and go to some one we don't know, who lives somewhere else in the world and who does not like Springwood and who in all probabilities is not even a person, but most likely a bank or a figure that only exists on a banks computer. In other words, giving Springwood over to corporations will take real money from locals and turn it into virtual money on a computer. The logic and stupidity of this business model beggars believe because it also is one of the root causes of war, poverty and hunger.

*It is clear that corporate ethics carefully considered the impact of their development and sized it to squash all local competitors.*



*Free market economy at its best! The humble family butcher vs the corporate supermarket.*

## Free market economy or just Free to rip us off?

The question of communal ownership today is often lampooned. But we should remember that we can take out patents of other peoples DNA, and register the names of charities like "Teddy bear's picnic" or the scent of a perfume. So why do we not place a commercial value on the ambience of our community? Why do we have to give it up - in fact - almost hand it over to a corporation which did not create, did not pay for it and who will not look after it - or maintain it at the present level ?

The answer to this question lies in politics that promote a "Free market economy". Under this system, large corporations are free to take-over our ambience, our conveniences and our livelihoods. They are free to take the profits out of our community and they are free to dominate, as anchor tenants, making everyone else subservient to their wishes. A free market economy can only work, when all parties have equal access to investment money and know-how.



*FREE is a wonderfully misleading word which has wormed its way into the worst Liberal politics. Free trade, FREE Market economies and Free Liberal ideology in general are summed up nicely by the behavior of Tobacco companies who with the help of FREE-to-air TV, persuaded generations to take up smoking. Now that people are addicted to nicotine, they are FREE to exercise their FREE CHOICE to buy their drug of choice. In Liberal ideology, the catch cry of FREE and "freedom of choice" is usually used to describe someone or something that is logically or morally a bit dodgy. FREE is used as a smoke screen to placate our suspicious minds and where ever this word "FREE" appears in politics, we have good reason to be worried. That leads me to the "FREEE" public infrastructure we will get- if we approve the Katoomba, Lura, Lawson, Springwood and Glenbrook corporate developments.*

If we take the wealth of all the shopkeepers in Springwood and compare it to the financial might of Coles or Wollworths, then the combined wealth of our Springwood shopkeepers would not even amount to a fraction of a cent compared to the billions of dollars available to the Free market promoters of this revitalisation.

A free market economy model does not work in Springwood! In a free market economy, the major operators are the only ones who are truly free, namely free to ruin the locals.

The only thing we are free to do, is to hand over our livelihoods and our enjoyment of Springwood to a development which will turn a charming-old fashioned shopping street into a spooky ghost town.

You may think that I am exaggerating. But only a few weeks ago I visited my brother in Port Kembla. I knew port Kembla in the seventies, just after the near-by Warrawong corporate shopping Center opened. Port Kembla still had some fine shops in the 70's- but it was in decline- due to steep road parking- just like we have in Katoomba. A few weeks ago there were only 5 things open for business in Port Kembla. Two pubs and three prostitutes. Most of the 200 or so shops were boarded up.

The freedom extended to corporations has many serious consequences for people and for the environment.

Corporations use their purchasing and transport might to run and profit from their operations. This leads to a replacement of locally produced foods with food that was produced in a different district, town, state, nation or continent. This causes problems locally as well as else where in the world.

The choices we make locally, do have a negative effect in the country which grew the food and on the people who have to live there. Issues like mono cropping reduces biodiversity, makes farmer dependent on artificial fertilizers, vulnerable to fluctuations in stock market prices and dependent on corporately controlled seeds. Then there huge amounts of fossil fuel wasted transporting the food across continents and oceans. When the food is at last put on our tables, we have effectively deprive our local producers, bakers and retailers of their income and their ability to independently sustain themselves in our neighborhood. Free trade does not only cause poverty in the food or goods producing country, it also has undesirable effects in our neighborhoods, to say nothing of the power derived by corporation from the profit of our consumption. This profit is then used to manipulate us into buying their brand of goods and services. There is no freedom to be gained for people who are in in the “free t tied to the free trade and free market ideology. Protectionism poor-to rich selling is therefore a necessary ingredient of social justice.



*Unsympathetic developments, which do not take into consideration the historical values of the town, are the hallmark of this corporate supermarket in the hunter region. The value of adjacent private properties and building has plummeted to the detriment of the locals.*

## Closed market economy or Local economies that works ?



*The above pictures were taken minutes apart. The privately owned High street shops were deserted and had no customers while the corporate supermarket had customers queuing at their cash registers.*

*The supermarket dominated parking and its lay-out discouraged shoppers from leaving the center.*

*This historic Hunter town, is an architectural gem. But there is no money for its upkeep. The corporate supermarket certainly washes its hands of any responsibility.*

Springwood is a closed economy. An ideal closed economy is created around the needs of the locals. It is mostly the locals who produce food and sell goods & services with a strong local flavor. We are not quite that pure, but are closer to this ideal than most towns.

To best illustrate Springwood's economic workings, we need to compare it to a fish tank. The size of the Fish tank is limited because Springwood is land-locked between the Blue Mountain national park and its population is therefore not expanding at a rapid rate. The many little fish in the tank are surviving in this environment. Then, we decided to throw a large shark into this Fish-tank in the form of the corporately owned Winmalee shopping Center. This action alone has put the little Fish under considerable survival stress. To rectify this problem, our leaders have decided to throw another, even bigger shark into the Springwood fish-tank. This is done under the guise of "revitalising Springwood as a shopping destination".

The callousness of this action is plain to see. The Big sharks eat the little fish. There never was a good case to allow the development of Winmalee and there is an even worse case to be made for inviting another big player to Springwood.

Springwood has an almost uninterrupted toe-to-toe busy line of shops which stretch from one end to the other. Should a big operator open up, the two opposite ends of the shopping strip will become semi deserted and a security problem for the town.

I have witnessed the decline after a major shopping center opens either out-of-town or at the gateway to the town, in many places both within Australia and in Europe. In some instances populations were reduced to such an extent that schools and hospitals closed- due to the closing of local shops.

Ask the Winter Magic festival- promoters in Katoomba if K-mart has contributed a single dollar to the event or if they have re-invested any money back into the town's infrastructure. You will quickly discover that corporate shopping centers are in business for themselves- to the detriment of the locals. Whereas many small shopkeepers feed their families and contribute to the local ambience infrastructure and friendliness.

To illustrate the calculated cruelty of corporate landlords, we only have to look how their stores are laid out. The way to the corporate supermarket entrance is usually lined with butchers and fruit shops. But in plain sight of these shops, we can already see the tempting fruit and meat specials of the corporations.

It appears that this set-up gives the small time operator the first chance to get the business! Wrong- when do we ever buy from the first vendor? The first vendor will give us a guideline to what a pound of meat is worth. He also stupidly puts the expensive quality cuts out...thinking that we know and appreciate the difference. But in reality most of us are dumb buyers and buy the cheaper cuts from the large supermarket, because we have forgotten the quality of the independent butcher and the fact that he too has cheap cuts, which are usually cheaper than the supermarket's meats. In addition we are now tired and want to get home etc...

If the corporate supermarkets were not pariahs, they would not charge rent to a butcher and then also sell meats! Instead, the supermarkets pay \$500 per square meter rent, while they charge the butcher anything up to \$3,000 as well as they compete unfairly with their own tenants. Many tenants are driven out of business, suffering family breakdowns and financial ruin. Corporate supermarkets are simply pariahs not only to the community they 'serve', but more cruelly also to their own tenants.

**Communal benefits of Independent local communities- Cabramatta.**



*Cabramatta deserves a mention. Corporations have for years tried to build a corporate super market. But the locals- having come from the tough exploitative economies of Asia, are no pushover. They have steadfastly refused to cow-tow and their customers are supporting them, preferring to spend money with their friends and neighbour instead of inviting a super market to take all the profits. Cabramatta is actually a very pleasant shopping experience. You would be surprised at the friendliness, super low prices and high quality. Much of what is on offer is also locally made. Unwittingly, this is a great example of a buoyant private economy. Then take a look at Bankstown, which is just about to loose its private shops to careless/malicious street planning which favors corporate ownership.*

## **Who owns who / master or servant ?**

Life on earth has to deal with a unique duality which exists between our personal inherent competitive self-interest and a high degree of cooperation which must foster the common good.

Our selfish interests direct us towards finding food, shelter and reprocreation. Whereas our communal interests allow us to live and thrive in our environment.

This concept is not new and is all around us. It is the main way living organisms and entities interact with one another. It is best reduced to a simple concept -which enables us to see the dichotomy more clearly.

One such concept is "spaceship earth" another which is clearer to define is an environment which is self sustaining inside a closed glass bottle. We all have done this experiment in our school days. We locked plants, ants, worms soil and water inside a clear large flask and observed it. The most likely outcome of this experiment is a stinking black brew at the bottom of the flask. Only rarely, do we get the balance right and achieve a mini Spaceship Earth inside a bottle. Too much water, too much heat, the wrong plants etc... and the experiment is easily doomed to failure. The process more then the success and failure of this experiment is the essence of my argument and deserves closer examination. Before everything inside the bottle turns into black goo, every living thing strives to preserve its own life. Ants, bacteria & plants try to find a way to adapt to the closed environment. Their self-interests dictate their actions and their innate abilities are the factors which limit their response to cope with a new situation. The wrong mixture of plant, ant, soil and water almost predetermines the outcome. This predetermined outcome is often referred to as a higher- god-like intelligence. It also demonstrates that there is a natural combination, which dictates the circumstances under which life can exist. It is a mirror of nature's laws, which has become the basis of most religions.

Spaceship earth in the pre-industrial age was a system in near equilibrium. A system that found a balance between life and death. Between an functioning environment in a bottle and at the other extreme total failure as black sludge at the bottom of the bottle.

The challenge which faces humanity is quite clear. We are meddling with the balance which exists on Spaceship earth, to a point where we are perverting and fighting nature's laws for material gain that are expressed in Dollars, rather than measuring our betterments which enhance our ability to exist in a closed environment.

Even stone Age farmers build communal infrastructures to sustain large populations. Whereas hunters and gatherers, simply deplete available resources and then move on. The simple paradigm we face is this:- Our selfish hunter gather instincts tell us to exploit and accumulate wealth, whereas our communal instincts tell us to preserve and improve our local environment. Humans are part of nature and when we strike a balance with nature, we enrich our lives. This balance is not expressed in pursuing our selfish interests, but rather by discharging our communal obligations.

Since time immemorial, humans have lived well, if they cared and controlled their local environment in a communal manner. Therefore we have to begin another stage in our social evolution. Namely a phase of natural economic equilibrium. We should strive for are a local economy in equilibrium which enhances our environment by taking care of fuels, energy, food, waste, water, waste water, security, medical, arts, trade, education, housing and commerce. Humans have always tried to build such environments. The world is full of cities, which have thrived for millennias as independent city-states. But this independence is today challenged by boarder less

corporations who extract local wealth which would otherwise have created a local-balanced economy.

Today our taxes go mostly straight into State and National coffers- without us having any veto power over its use. We are obliged to do as we are told. Whereas taxes should actually flow from our pockets to our councils. State and Federal agencies should furbish their budget for our approval. A reversal of the Tax system alone would bring rampant politics, corporate domination and warmongering to heel.

Today, we are locally impotent and largely ignorant of the effects our lifestyle has on "Spaceship Earth". Wars, hunger and irresponsible corporate behavior are the direct result of local impotence, local ignorance, apathy and the rise of personal selfishness over communal activities.

We allow corporate raiders to dismantle our communal assets and to shift our wealth to someone else, some where else in the world. Every dollar we spend is a vote for the world we live in. We can't clearly see the cause and effects of our daily consumption. We spend our dollars in total ignorance. A biscuit that originated as grain on the American plains has to be shipped to China for processing and packaging, before we buy it at our local Springwood supermarket. The energy expended in this example alone amounts to environmental vandalism.

Humanities greatest dream is to live fulfilled, peaceful lives, begins with how we personally behave in our neighborhood. When I see Springwood, I see a small community that is, perhaps not perfect, but nevertheless, almost in economic and environmental equilibrium with nature and its natural laws. We have a long way to go, to become economically totally independent. But we have a better environment than most other communities in NSW.

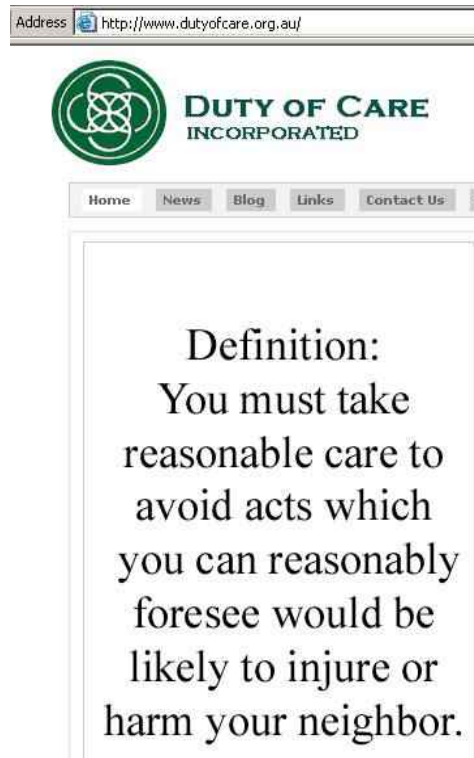
Springwood is a garden city and our communal pride and wealth- is also our greatest weakness. The communal values we have accumulated are expressed in high house prices and high shop rents. People are attracted to Springwood because they can escape the urban loneliness and the supermarket sprawl.

Where other cities have unattractive concrete walls, we have hedges and picket fences. Where other cities have a Coles, Wollworths, McDonald or Aldi at their city entrance, we have a green portal. Even graffiti is restricted to small, easy to reach walls which are used as "artistic tagging" canvases. Where elsewhere frightened parents pick their children up from school, our school kids are carefree. Where elsewhere mothers, have to drop their kids off to daycare- just to shop, or have to negotiate gloomy concrete car-parks with prams, we have a playground/childcare facility and parking right in the heart of town. We have created this nice environment, which is reflected in all-to-real, hard dollar based wealth that naturally also attracts corporate raiders- who want to extract the economic value out of our community. The time has come to decide if we are willing to accept a corporation into our midst and allow it to exploit us. To allow it to dictate to us from a distant boardroom- how we want to live and how we want to exist as an integral part of nature!

The question of opening a corporate supermarket in Springwood is not simply one of convenience. It is one of global importance and reduces to a simple choice between life and death! To choose life, simply improve the power of our local council get involved and spend your dollars wisely with people you know and people who strive for communal ownership and an alternate way to the corporately imposed way of life. To choose death, simply spend your dollars carelessly and abdicate your responsibilities to corporate cowboys, power hungry politicians and ultimately war mongers!

Councils duty of care (Duty and standard of care of public authorities).

Should a councils "Duty of care" be more protective of "local people" ...and less protective of a legally constructed corporation?



Civil and civilised society should "enforce"and "restrain those who are subject to its authority, from hurting or disturbing the happiness of one another." Adam Smith- author of the "invisible hand" doctrine (1776 Glasgow Edition, The Wealth of Nations) which is so frequently misquoted by liberals. But even the liberals ideological pin-up boy, Adam Smith, warned about an imbalance of civic power which can be caused by economic monopolies.

It is therefore prudent to ask what our councilor's are doing to safeguard "our happiness and enjoyment of Springwood's business district?"

If we agree that it is our councilor's duty to ensure that their actions "do not disturb our happiness, and lively hoods, then we must ask the question why some of them insist on pursuing the issue of Springwoods town center revitalisation so relentlessly?"

The concept of "duty of care" refers to a predictable outcome of decisions and actions we take. For example, if we dig a ditch on a footpath, then it is predictable that someone will eventually fall in and suffer injuries and we therefore must take measures to ensure that no one comes to any harm. So, to avoid anyone getting hurt, we would place a solid lid over the ditch to protect the public at large from predictable harm.

If we make a decision and the most likely outcome of this decision is, when viewed rationally, likely to cause someone to suffer a reasonably foreseeable, predictable damage, then a council and its councilors may have broken their duty of care and may be jointly and or individually liable to pay damages. Likewise, if a corporation takes advantage of a situation, and this is likely to result in

damaging someone's livelihood, then we can reasonably ask if this foreseeable outcome could expose them to a future damages claim. Wrong! this would only be the case in criminally negligent cases. Corporations are actually immune from prosecution when they damage livelihoods.

At a recent council meeting, the general public pointed out the likely damages which may be suffered by our local shopkeepers, should a very large development be allowed to unfairly compete with them. Many examples were given on the public record, which clearly showed what the predictable cause of such an action would be. Namely:- the destruction of private livelihoods in favor of corporate profits. At the very least, we are entitled to ask, if this is a breach of a council's duty of care? It is also reasonable to ask, towards whom a council actually does has a moral and legal duty of care? Does a council have a duty of care towards a corporation which is just a legal construct, designed to extract profits for shareholders who do not live locally and does a council have a greater duty of care to enable locals to live and work in their local environment? Is it not unreasonable to ask if a council should engage in behavior which is damaging to its flesh and blood customers/citizens? Clearly a corporation can not fall into a ditch! It is simply not made of flesh and blood and therefore deserves not the same level of consideration that we would extend to real local people. Wrong again. People and corporations have equal rights under our laws. This anomaly clearly favours corporations and hands them the tools to dismantle our social structures to benefit their own profit motives.

To illustrate the absurdity of our council's decision to engage in the euphemistically named "Springwood re-vitalisation" project, we must only look at the fact that this issue was not raised by a real human being. This issue was forced on the Springwood residents because a corporation decided to exploit a legal loophole by approaching the council with a development plan for Springwood. The issue was then twisted by councilors and made to look like it was in Springwoods best interest.

So we have to seriously question if our council should only represents real people and should it have a "Duty of Care" to consider corporate development which can damage real people ?

At the recent council meetings held in Springwood, some very basic issue became clear. The people of Springwood knew exactly what they wanted and expressed their views very clearly both emotionally, as well as rationally. This was in stark contrast to three of the councilors, who totally ignored the people's wishes and insisted that the "re-vitalisation process" be started anyhow, irrespective of the people's wishes, because it was in the peoples interest?

It is hard to imagine a more irrational situation or a more irrational explanation as the one furbished by these councilors.

Put simply:- the people said No- whilst the three councilors said:- *You elected us and gave us a mandate which also allows me to do as I please on any new issue.*

This is not democracy- it is simply a fact of councilors pandering to the demands of a corporation which are hell bent on extracting maximum profits from Springwood.

## **A well planned take over of Springwood... / a political shopping experiences...**

The world is full of opportunities which can be exploited by corporations. Therefore I was puzzled why corporations are pursuing small local shopkeeper's livelihoods in such an aggressive fashion ?

The answer to this riddle lies in Australia's poor corporate governance and a lack of tough and locally effective anti trust and anti monopoly laws. Australian corporations are unable to grow their business because they already monopolise much of the retail market. This lack of growth opportunities has let them to develop a cunning method to exploit small local communities with the help of gullible politicians.

To paraphrase a lecture given by the editor of the consumer magazine "Choice" in 2008 at the Glebe "Politics at the pub" meeting:-

*'In the seventies, Coles and Wollworths had a combined market share of about 35%. In 2008 this has risen to about 80%.' She further stated 'that that this growth was achieved through the (sic misuses of our laws) especially the local planning laws (as applied in the Springwood process). This was further accelerated through mergers and acquisitions, which led to a duopoly and poor competition in the groceries market place. This lack of competition then led to price creeps and expensive groceries.'* A major factor which helped the ascent of corporations was *'their increased sophistication in the application of computer technology.'*

Computer technology allows corporations to pick trends and has given them the ability to develop sophisticated methods of duping the locals into having to put up with unsuitable retail and socially undesirable developments. Our small local shopkeepers have no chance to compete with this level of corporate aggression. It is totally clear, that local planning laws have been deliberately designed to be used against small local interests. Planning laws are a tool, which removes competition from the groceries market. What is happening in Springwood has been planned for a number of years and this planning process has been made possible through a political funding process, which allows political parties to accept donations from corporations and developers. Whilst donations over \$10,000 are declared- the purpose for making these donations and the advantages they are supposed to bring to corporations and developers are kept secret. This process then becomes more murky for donations below \$10,000- which do not need to be declared.

Now it is our turn to be duped into accepting undesirable developments and disempowerment of the locals. Springwood is seriously confronted by huge corporations which have already planned and applied a tried and proven method to get their way and here is how it is done...

To fully appreciate the deception, we first have to pretend that corporations have the same rights as *flesh and blood humans*, which is of course is logically absurd. But sadly they do! Not only do they have the same rights as you and me, they have more money then all the people of Springwood put together and they are exploiting this advantage "to the max"! This process of usurping power over the locals was contrive to monopolise the profits derived from our consumption and to do it corporations have to destroy local livelihoods. This process will only end with the approval of a development which favors corporations, because it does not contain the third - most obvious option, namely to do nothing. This is a commonly used tactic and the Springwood locals were already trapped before the process was made public ... and this is how we were duped ...

When considering all issues related to the "revitalisation of Springwood" it is interesting to note that local elected councilors do not have to declare donations before elections. Even after the election, it is high impossible to obtain any meaningful disclosure of locally targeted political donations. We

must therefore treat councilors who push for this development, with suspicion unless they put it on public record that they or their parties did-not-receive any donations from any of the proposed developers- for at least 4 years prior to the election, neither at local, state nor at federal level.

The Labor party is a good example why these party donations are so influential. (But they are not the only party which engages in democracy gagging tactics.) Labor party members all swear an oath to "tow the party line"- irrespective of whether his position suits the local situation and circumstances. So it is quite possible to make a ruling at the federal or state level which has to be adhered to at the local council level. For example a state planning ruling, which enforces shopping centers to be 3500m square- for a given size of population, can kill the locals retail and small manufacturing sector dead, and hand it totally to corporations. Locals would have no say and are totally powerless in this decision making process. It is scary to think that this kind of situation is an everyday occurrence and that it can be enforced via a parliamentary decision as well as through a political party rule. This anti democratic process uses laws and policies, which favor corporations and developers, against the interests and wishes of local people. These methods cause serious damage to our towns, suburbs and ordinary people who want to make a local living. They are also in total opposition to *Greenhouse reduction thinking and planning*.

I let you draw your own conclusions about whether this type of behavior, party politics and laws befits a democratic nation, or if these processes are more in tune with a corrupt banana republic? Our political system is not transparent about party donations and this casts a heavy doubt on the actions of our local elected, party political councilors.

The greens have tracked this phenomenon and have recorded donations on their DemocracyForSale.org website. Our process of calling for developments is seriously flawed. To illustrate this point I'll dramatise the next paragraphs a little to show a process which could actually have taken place and which would be perfectly legal.

Both the liberals and Labor traditions are two sides of the same coin, when it comes to pandering to corporations. One side represents the employers, the other side controls the supply of labor. Both sides have an equally strong vested interest in keeping workers poor and under their control. In this example I define workers, as anyone who receives an hourly rate of pay.

This system exists because Australia's constitution does not have a bill of rights and was drafted to 'Rule the people'- without enshrining human rights and natural justice. Our major political parties both believe that they have a right to rule, not through consensus and consultation, but through ideology and party policy. Both sides listen to corporate lobbyists and both sides accept donation, some declared some not, for their election coffers.

Therefore neither party is protecting the rights of the individual. As individuals, we have no protection and no power because both parties believe in a free market system, which allows corporations to compete against individuals.

Federal parties developed their ideologies, which then filter down to the state level and down again to the local councils. Therefore we can not be sure if donations or lobbying occurred at a federal or state level- which might effect a decision made at the local level. This totally disempowers us and makes local citizen just pawns in a political game.

So when we are confronted with councilors of different political persuasions, who all ignore the local protests, then we must consider that their judgment is tainted by both party ideology from the state or federal level. If we then consider the disclosed and undisclosed donation that flow to local,

state and to the federal party level, reasonable people would have to form the view, that this process is therefore tainted.

If we further add to this negative view the fact that corporations, councilors and council staff claim "commercial in confidence" as an excuse to have meetings behind closed doors, then this should ring very loud warning bells!

In a democracy we have the right to witness the workings of our system and the discussions of our council staff and councilors. After all a building development proposal, which was initiated by a corporation, is simply a commercial arrangement between our representatives who are entrusted with our wellbeing and our money and a corporation which is just a legal construct.

If we had two lovers cavorting before us, we would gladly let them carry on behind closed doors. But this is a simple conversation between our representatives and a corporation about a simple commercial venture which is designed to extract profits from our community. This process is hardly so intimate, that it needs to be performed behind closed doors.

It is only prudent to be suspicious because the sorry Wollongong corruption saga is a stark reminder that our local political systems are easily manipulated by politicians and developers who under the current laws are allowed to walk a fine line between public duties and private gain. Whilst there is a clear definition of corrupt behavior, there are also worrying shades of gray. "Commercial in confidence", "on the record off the record meetings and discussions", "Secret party donations below \$10,000" for purposed and causes unknown and undeclared, "secret meetings on matter of public interest" are just the tip of the iceberg of a festering body of concealment, half truths and political brinkmanship and private gains, which escape public scrutiny. We have every right to be suspicious of this type of behavior.

The German proverb "Heimlichkeiten Schlechtigkeiten!" (secrecy breeds contempt) probably sums it up correctly. Again, corporations are claiming human rights to undermine our processes and to gain unfair advantages over local people. If we want to live in a balanced world, then we have to remove human rights and privileges from corporations.

## **The 'revitalisation of Springwood has been planned for years- but not by us...**

Corporations are very good at longterm planning. After all they can't die and can go on living in a legal *sens* for centuries. In our Springwood example, local real-estate agents claim that land, which could be converted into access roads to the proposed developments, has already been purchased years ago by leading "revitalisation interest groups".

When combining the issue of large, undeclared (yet legal) political donations with the issue of purchasing land to access the proposed development sites, then it is only prudent for us to be suspicious of the Springwood revitalisation proposal. One might even go as far as saying that the ultra short timing of all these events and a forced decision making under the cover of Xmas celebrations etc... further deepens our already serious suspicions.

Australian representative democracy allows us to elect our rulers from an elite class of leaders, who, are elected, almost without fail, from a narrow privileged class. Gone are the days when ordinary locals had a say in their own council. Today we are ruled by party ideology and big business lobbyists, who through their economic and media power, look today more like the real power behind our sham democracy.

Our major political parties are two faces of the same coin. Both deny that we can live economically independent from big business interests and try to persuade us that it is in our own interest to accept corporately sponsored shopping proposals and civic developments. Both parties insist that we can only function in an interdependent employers/employee relationship. The fact that small business employs 3.6 million people (nearly half the non agricultural workforce) and is worth \$4.3 trillion, four times the value of the Australian stock exchange, is conveniently ignored by our political leaders.

Both sides of politics have sold our community assets, shifted costs to local councils, sold many of our income producing assets for peanuts to corporations and have allowed banks like the Macquarie Bank to earn up to 18% yearly return on investments by charging us excessive road tolls, to say nothing of power, water, Military purchases adding an extra 15 billion and the endless increases in our telecom fees. When we include shortcomings in local infrastructure which is being withheld until we accept corporately owned shopping centers and undersized public transport, then we begin to realise, that as long as we have party aligned politicians in our council, we will have handed them the means and the power to rule over us. There is a strong case to be made for banning politic all parties from participating in local councils. We only have three tears of government in Australia and all three are dominated by party politics which favour politicians. It is time to clear our councils of undue party influence and to thus regain a balance in our democracy.

Nothing is fair or democratic about politicians giving themselves a fat increase in their super entitlements, at the last quiet sessions of parliament,- which for Howard alone- added upwards to \$600,000 to his super.

There are clearly two sets of laws. One which gives us only 9% super and almost bankrupts us if we have to go to court and another system which writes its own pay cheques and seeks re-elections on the backs of largely undeclared funds donated by corporate lobby groups.

A US journalist made this fine observation. *If an umpire were to make a critical call at the dying end of a game and we would ask him to consider our lobbying, as well as hand the umpire an undeclared donation under \$10,000, we would not hesitate to call it a bribe. Why then do we allow our political process to be corrupted by big corporate donations?* A bribe occurs when someone

gains an advantage after handing money to an official. Donations give lobbyists greater access to politician. All corporate donations are therefore morally and logically a for of bribery!

Our finest institutions now turn out countless graduates who are trained to aid corporations to deprive us of publically owned institutions and infrastructure, our water, our electricity, our minerals, our forests, our communication, our ports, our jails, our community assets, our media diversity and the consumption of our daily bread.

They scheme openly to deprive the people of Australia of a fair share of Australia's wealth, only to fill the pockets of someone else, somewhere else in the world. This is done because the world is awash with phoney investment money that has been wrestled away from nearly 4 of the 6 billion people on our planet. Billions of people around the world starve and are denied the most basic human dignities, like food, shelter and clean drinking water, just to enable Investors to earn a higher return. We are subjected to ludicrous local and international infrastructure projects (Sydney tunnel-Lawson road, Springwood, Katoomba asset sales, to corporations etc.. ) and impositions which ensure that the rich can grow the economy- by harnessing the limitless profits derived from our daily consumption of food, water, transport etc...

If you think that the US prime mortgage crisis correction is bad- then you better pray that the 57 trillion US credit debt and its associated limitless investment money bubble never bursts!

Also we should spare a though of the hapless billion of people who are living their lives in poverty as *collateral damage* of our unscrupulous corporate tactics and economic selfishness.

Sadly, most issues of social justice, poverty and war, point the finger squarely at our political, banking and corporate ethics. Local actions have global consequences! ...and we have to act locally to start of process of economic reform which holds corporation and unscrupulous individuals to account. But we also have to recognise that our personal consumption of goods and services are the fuel which drives this process.

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### **Only three options? / Limiting choice / Why only three options**

We are given three options to consider for the revitalisation of Springwood.

The first thing we have to ask Why three options- why not one or Ten options?

The answer can be found in the three options which were put forward.

One option requires that useful public buildings be demolished, an already too long shopping strip to be made even longer as well as it puts many social activities on hold during the building process. Clearly this one would only get up if the council were prepared to walk over dead bodies.

It's a red Herring, designed to draw our outrage and to let us to believe that the other two are more easily sacrificed. It's a bit like asking if we want to have our head chopped off, instead of our right arm or our little finger. Our little finger looks then like the most likely limb, which we would be prepared to loose. So which of the remaining two options is the little finger in Springwoods vitalisation? The southern or the northern ca park ?

The southern car park is of course the old School of arts site. It has had its fair share of troubles already and the controversy is unlikely to be revisited by anyone who values their sanity. The fate of this site was sealed when the community insisted on some open space between the shops. Especially because the community had lost the use of a much loved School-of-Arts community building.

This leaves us with the Northern car park- adjacent to the Old Post office. I think that this one is our little finger which we are expected to sacrifice more willingly.

However we are still asked to sacrifice a limb. So it is only fair to ask why we need this limb and what function it serves before we accept its removal.

This begs the question why we should sacrifice a limb at all. Perhaps we like our little finger just the way it is and perhaps this should also be an option.

If the northern car park were to be developed the following would have to be safeguarded in order to satisfy both our community's as well as our business objectives.

Springwood is a village shopping center which can not withstand the exploitative pressures of a corporate chain.

The following is a business minded set of rules which is needed to keep the proposed new shopping center development viable:- All new shops should be limited to a maximum size of say 150-300 sqr meters for every tenant. Rents must be the same per sqr meter for all tenants. Leases should be 5x5 no cpi. (5 year lease terms with an option to renew the lease. No CPI acknowledges that small businesses do not earn more every year. It also slows down inflationary tendencies, because it causes price to stabilize).

Every shop must provide at least three additional car parks to the existing number of car parking spaces. If the number of car parking spots were to be reduced, then this would result in an economic downturn for the whole of Springwood.

In many shopping Centers every car park brings about \$12,000 worth of daily turnover. Therefore any proposed development must provide additional car parking spaces. This would allow for

additional turnover which would allow more shops to exist.

The lost toilet facilities would have to be made available again within such a building. The two old toilets on either end of town ends would have to be opened during the construction period- to minimise loss of business and inconvenience during the building process.

The existing baby health facility would have to be maintained at the site and perhaps be expanded to include more shopping-related childcare. This is a great attraction for parents.

Seating would have to be maintained in numbers, and be equivalent to the current number of seats including the seating available on the low car-parking wall.

The upper floor of the building should have a few residential flats- to keep the village center alive with people after dark.

A proposal along these lines would be acceptable.

The last issue we should consider is the financial return of such a development.

I must stress my disappointment about the lack of financial transparency in regards to the Springwood re- vitalisation. We are asked to make a decision without being provided with the current income derived from the existing commercial arrangements. I was especially disappointed to see that the local chamber of commerce was not provided with basic financial details of the council's projected income derived from the 'revitalisation process'. Both details about the current level of income and details about the proposed future levels of income derived from a redevelopment are not available. This is indeed a very poor business plan- and shows the lack of understanding of commercial matters among councilors.

It is a basic business principle to look at the financial viability as part of a business proposal. But we are asked to make decisions without being supplied with basic financial information. The chamber of commerce we actually advised that such information was "commercial in confidence"- and was not available.

This is totally unacceptable. We just need to the Sydney tunnel to understand why financial issues should and must be openly included in all deliberation before decisions are made. We don't want to have another Springwood Swimming pool debacle. Where costs are only openly discussed after the project began to go wrong. We don't want another event where we, with the power of hindsight, will have to live with another easily avoidable financial debacle.

### **Politics of the shopping trolley.. & the religion of Money.**

We are blindly following the lead of our U.S. friends and believe in the strength of the US Dollar and the virtues of the American democracy and its business leaders. However, reality shows us that the world is awash with phoney investment money that can't be gainfully invested ever since the US stopped backing their dollar with gold and replaced it with a floated dollar system that allows unlimited, inflated, unrealistic and unethical profits. The only thing that sustains this system, is our believe in the virtues of the American people, their ability to repay their borrowings. But this repayment grantee is by no means certain, as the sub-prime mortgage fallout clearly shows. It looks like our council will loose us money from bad sub-prime investments many years to come.

In order for the floated dollar system to function, we are forced to hand over more of our social programs, civic rights, civic ownership of power, transport and water utility profits and the profits derived from our personal consumption, to corporations and banks as investment opportunities. But this is not enough to stop the rot because there are unlimited amounts of investment money floating around the world financial system and they have no where to go. Since the Gold standard was abolished- profits can now be limitless rather than contained by the available amount of gold. So if the worlds rich fail to invest this vast, illusionary amounts of profit in real assets (namely our utilities and profits from our consumption) then the stockmarket system will crash!

Because of this fear economists have advised governments around the world to privatise utilities and have allowed them through planning laws and corporate laws, to pursue profits derived from locally owned and operated family businesses. They are coming after small-time businesses because they have to keep on investing ever growing profits.

But clearly, there are limits to the number of businesses they can overwhelm. The amount of consumer goods, food and water which we can consume. The intensity and number of wars they can wage for oil which they force us to use in our daily struggle for existence and the number of water and electricity utilities they can buy. But no matter how aggressive they become, their growth will sooner or later have to end. Their financial profit based system will not just have a correction or a depression, it will eventually crash! In the mean time we will witness not just climate changes and environmental disasters caused by greed and wars waged over oil, but we are about to witness an increase in human suffering and terrorism on an unprecedented scale.

We can buy houses, cars and consumer goods on easy credit. But try getting a loan for a small independent business or a housing loan when you are self employed, or try to float a small business on the stock market and you will quickly learn that everything is stacked against an independent way of life.

Our near- two party political system does not consider independent communities and independent living a viable alternative to large-scale economics. Instead, both our major political parties prefer to cozy up to media barons, oil corporations, banks and corporations.

We need to take a reality check on our way of life. Democracy as we know and practice it is a sham. It appears to offers us freedom, but takes away our rights to run our own democratic local affairs. Everything we do to build a good local community is perverted to serve corporate interests and the power struggle of political parties.

Local government in particular is a sham. Our well intentioned councillors are obliged to steer about 500million of our assets and \$70 millions of our rates and subsidies, by " holding no less then 11 meetings per year! (18 on average)". I can't imagine running a school canteen by turning up eleven times to eighteen times per year- let along a \$500million council. We have parliamentary privileges of open speech, but we gag our councils with libel, public service and planning laws. Clearly we have to find a better way to govern our affairs. Yet it at the grassroots council level where democratic and governance innovations could be developed.

Loose tongues say that our council is nearly broke. They were also given a very poor score cards for withholding infrastructure and for not carrying out proper maintenance. They have invested millions in harebrained sub prime mortgage linked investments instead of building new community infrastructure. They have called ill-conceived tenders and have used council resources inefficiently.

Whilst the councils employees at a lower level are competent, they can not always work freely in the interest of the community or the interest of councilors. Our councilors and the councils dedicated staff are working under an idiotic system which denies them the ability to shine.

Historically, the problems we are facing are not new. Small towns have for millennia's solved these problems by creating their own city owned businesses to create income, to become self-sufficient and to be independent. Small town communities were formed for protection and to foster trade but above all, they were formed so that the locals could steer their own destiny independent of State and National governments. This fact was not lost on the ruling class, who around 1850 corporatised council services around the world. This effectively broke the power base of the city commoners, the third estate, as we were once called. The new corporate type of council, allowed us to be conquered and ruled from above, but it retained the illusion of local independence and local power. But as this booklet illustrates there is no more local power or free local expression left in our Australian democracy. Where once we were shareholders in our towns, today we are just powerless customers of our councils and pawns to be valued only for our ability to consume, consumer goods, food, water, transport and shelter. We are a mere unit of consumption- with no human rights and no dignity!

What kind of Blue Mountains do you want to live in ?

So, what has all that to do with our beautiful Blue Mountains and the proposed shopping center developments? Well look around you, we are ripe for the picking. Travel through any small NSW community and you will see that the economic prosperity of almost every council is sucked out of the community by corporately owned shopping centers. The rates derived from small local businesses, if well managed should add up to more, then the rates and employment derived from corporate shopping centers. Add to that, the cost shifting of unemployment benefits paid to former business owners and employees, the loss of income to locally owned commercial real-estate, extra costs of traveling for the work force etc.. and you will quickly see why corporate interests are trying to rule our council.

But what does a council gain from a corporately owned shopping center ? The answer is simply :- Chapter 32 contributions and development application money -which are used to settle debt- caused by the harebrained management of our affairs!

Most people don't realise the economic power that is inherent in a small shopping center. Most shopping centers are paid off in about 3 years. The profit from only 5 shops are enough to buy the best house in your suburb, every year. So a shopping center that has 50 shops and a major corporate owner, generates enough money to build and fully pay for a small subdivision, several swimming pools, youth centers and so on....

This begs the question why our council could not itself become the land-lord and thus create a self sustaining income stream- which benefits us all.

History shows us that big business and the ruling class have always worked hand-in hand to create wealth for themselves. Could it not be, that the time has come that our local council should develop initiatives, to create our own wealth? Has the time not come to re-evaluate the role our councils play in our daily lives?

It is not at all difficult to conceive a system which would enable us to provide local housing and

business loans, a local stock market, shops, workshops, tourism, galleries, invest in water, wind and solar energy, waste water, education, grow fuel and foods and create our own economy that as time passes becomes independent to the Bull & Bear stock market driven economy of the world. We already have a council that has an income of 70 million, very capable staff, and nearly half a billion in assets. What we don't have is a structure that underpins and pays for the aspirations of our community or a method to reduce costs.

Whether you agree with my world view is not the issue here. What is at stake is your enjoyment of the Blue Mountains as your home. Do we want to swap our working communities like Lawson or Springwood, for yet another soulless car park and deserted shops. Do we want to lose our quirky Springwood child care center, town centers, parks, libraries, favorite bakers and snack food makers, just so that someone else can steal our livelihoods for the sake of corporate profits ?

You might not think that you can change the world, but as strange as it sounds, the way we spend your Dollars, is a vote for the kind of world we will live in. Spend it buying Coca Cola and watch as this corporation sucks yearly 3/4 of the volume of Sydney Harbour from the ground water that in many places around the world makes farming now impossible near there plants.

Spend it with corporate supermarkets and eat biscuits that traveled all the way from China and Europe, just so that a London based executive can take home a million-Dollar pay cheque. Spend it on any other corporately controlled thing and you have cast the vote to use the profits, which are derived from your consumption to be invested in oil and its associated armaments race.

Imagine the vast amounts of fuel needed to ship corporate products around the world- just to offer you a cheap snack and to put your neighbour out of business. If you have any concern for the environment, the destruction of habitats and species, melting polar caps, erratic weather patterns, increased brushfire dangers and greenhouse gas emissions, then you have to begin to take responsibility for how you live and act locally.

It is time to wake up to corporate bullying. The time has come to spend our Dollars on largely locally made, or locally value added goods and services (baker, butcher, optician, restaurant, chemist , furniture makers, water/waste water services, energy, etc.), made sold and serviced by local people and we can watch as our local community flourishes. Per chance, if enough people wake up to corporate bullying tactics, we might even contribute to a Ghandi like Economic Satyagraha- which changes the world, ends wars and stops 30,000 children dying needlessly every day from preventable diseases and hunger caused directly and indirectly by corporate greed, party politics and poor local council governance.

You might not think that your Dollars count for much, but they are the fuel that made the world, as we know it and it is the fuel that will create our world, as we will have to know and endure it in the future... ?

We are forced to consider the issue of making a local living in the broader context of a "Free market economy". But there are two concepts which need to be examined before we can form an opinion about the proposed town center's existing functions and usefulness, to us, as a community.

Firstly, if we consider making a living, tending to the needs of others, without doing harm to others, as one of humanities greatest aspirations, then this aspiration sits in stark contrast to the "Free market economy" we are offered as an alternative to the existing small, human-scale business activities which characterise Springwood today.

Secondly, do we really think that voting once every few years gives us greater power than spending our dollars wisely? Do we really care if instead of a responsible local enterprise we elect to be governed by corporate giants? To most of us this issue is a "so-what!" issue and does not interest us in the slightest. What could possibly be wrong with giving unlimited access to profits derived from our consumption of groceries to a corporation?

The answer lies with the local business owners. They are accountable for their actions to their neighbors. Whereas corporations totally ignore all local and moral responsibilities.

Furthermore they are absentee landlords who do not have to live with and do not have to consider the consequences of their actions. In fact they are "freed" from all responsibilities because our "Free market" ideology gives them the freedom to abandon their responsibilities and empowers them to extract whatever profits they set their sights on, without shouldering any social or moral responsibility.

If a small business goes under, then it's the dumb owner's fault. If people have to work for lower wages for corporations, then they should upgrade their skills or travel out-of town to seek work. If a childcare facility has to be closed, then the locals do not put enough resources into it, the poor are poor because they are lazy, the unemployed are dole blunders and work shy. The liturgy of buck-passing is endless and tiresome.

When will we wake up and begin to take control of our local issues? When do we begin to take responsibility for the economic fall-out of our personal consumption? How much are we willing to endure before we realise that most of our most intractable problems are caused by our own indifference? And last, but not least, when will we realise that a world at war, a world which destroys its own environment and life support system with "Free market" economics, is upheld by nothing else than our own, personal consumption. Our local actions are the cradle which nurtures, wars, hunger, poverty, terrorism, environmental disasters and social unrest.

We can stick our heads in the sand and be dazzled by cheap advertising slogans that help to destroy the life support system of our planet and we can pretend that we shoulder no responsibility. But we are upholding a government system, which is the largest buyer of advertising in Australia. At every turn, we are told what to buy, what to think and how to spout new catch phrases, brands and policies.

When will we begin to understand that we are the factory that created the world as it is. That our seemingly small local activities are the fuel that unscrupulous operators need to stoke the engines of environmental disasters, war, hunger, discontent and an ever growing meaningless of life. A life that should be lived as a great adventure, a gift that has allowed humans, which after death amounts to no more than a few hand's full of dirt, to experience consciousness!

A vote for a corporatised world, or in our case a large scale corporately owned supermarket in Springwood is a vote for the things and methods which destroy our environment and our own life support system on earth.

Supporting small local business is a support for a life supporting ideology. When reduced, the philosophical issue we have to consider boils down to a simple vote for life or death.

No amount of Ritz and political nonsense can absolve us from having to make a profound choice between choosing between a life affirming people based system or a life destroying corporate political system.

## **National politics have no place in local government because...**

Our local councilors showed their Political colours by allowing the Katoomba, Lawson and Springwood and Glenbrook revitalisation process to go ahead.

If we still had "reds under the bed", they would call this process a "Neo-Liberal" political tactic.

Neo Liberals believe that it is their divine right to govern us. They believe that the public is best served if its utilities are in private hands and that public communal ownership, like council facilities, schools, media, jails, water, electricity, transport, housing etc... should be privately owned. In addition, they also believe that the people should wholly shoulder costs incurred in running a council, and that corporations have a divine right to minimise paying fair local taxes by using international tax avoidance methods.

More than 90% of shares are owed by less than 5% of shareholders. This is hardly a the endorsement for the stock market as an effective pension plan.

Why should we care? Imagine a world, where you only have to work for twenty hours per week. Where poverty and wars would no longer exist! Where your house could be paid off by the time you reach your mid twenties. Where you could walk to work and enjoy your leisure time is vast, well equipped public facilities with your family.

Now consider of what you have to do to satisfy the Neo Liberals view of the world. The price we pay is astonishing! What is even more astonishing is that we are at all beguiled by the Neo Liberal dream. We live with massive irrationalities like our commuter lifestyle, mortgages designed to economically enslave us for most of our adult lives, poverty which affects billions and wars which have their rational basis in securing oil supplies to underpin our commuter lifestyle.

When do we come to a point, where enough is enough?

When will we wake up and realise that we have to begin keeping corporations out of our lives, so that we can again be economically and emotionally free to enjoy our lives?

Our current economic thinking is so deranged that an increase in GDP, is our "Holy grail" !

In truth:- GDP grows, when families break up, when our friends and neighbors are killed on the road, when airplanes crash and when wars are waged.

Five of the six billion people on earth live less than satisfactory lives because corporations rule the world as the defacto *white hand* behind most governments.

30,000 children alone die every day needlessly. Every year this adds up to the total number of children that live in both north America and Europe. Could we imagine loosing this many children in the western world?

Our belief systems are truly irrational! What does it take, before we say:- enough is enough?

Where and when do we start to rethink our position and take small actions which at least preserve our own privileges against the Neo Liberal ideology of "Greed is good" ?

It is often said that evil flourished when good people do nothing. Will you do something ? ...take a stand and change or oppose what is in your power to change and oppose? Or will you do nothing

and hope that corporations will take pity on you, when it is your turn to be ripped off by them ?

There is a well known poem in Auschwitz, which I take the liberty to misquote here:-

When the Neo Liberal corporations killed millions through hunger, I said nothing because I was not hungry.

When they waged wars and killed civilians for oil, I drove my car, because I could.

When they proposed to destroy my neighbor's business in Springwood, I said nothing because I wasn't a local shopkeeper.

When they finally came for me, there was no one was left to care!

### **What you can do locally to stop corporations. / Are we responsible for hunger and wars ?**

...it is all-to-easy to look down on the world from the vantage-point of our comfortable Sprigwood homes. It is all too easy to forget the pain of despair and the desperation of hunger.

It is far too easy to avert our eyes to the pains of poverty.

Like children, we hide our emotions towards poverty under a blanket of wealth and privilege.

The realities of wars poverty are someone else's problem!

But, deep-down we know that the world is not a wholesome place and that through our indifference and inaction, we have shirked our responsibility towards the poor and have failed humanity...

\* \* \*

We, the world's elite, are charged with having developed an economic and trade formula, which without fail, has the effect of creating and sustaining poverty and wars. It is said of us, that poverty is no accident. That it is caused deliberately by us to uphold our environmentally and ethically unsustainable high standards of living.

It is clearly understood, that poverty is not caused by poor and lazy individuals, but that it is imposed on humanity by a callous economic ideology which manufactures its justifications for its existence through the economic think tanks of the Harvard school of economics.

Much of what we do under the cover of our current economic system, is said to be based on exploiting the lessor educated and powerless. Our economic teachings stand accused of being a means of deception that we use to justify our exploitation of the poor. It is said that when our economic actions are viewed in the cool light of "natural justice" and "rigorous logic", that they only amount to a justification for an economically aggressive war on humanity, which keeps much of humanity in dire poverty. It is said, that our current economic model only values humans as a unit of "economic consumption".

We can further argue, that based on principles of "natural justice", which is the foundation stone of

every culture on earth, that every human being has an equal right to a fair share of our planet's natural bounty. That nature provides enough sustenance for all of humanity and that everyone could live a dignified and fulfilling life. But, instead is becoming clear, that we, the worlds elite, have deliberately manufactured an economic and trading system which is denying over 80% of the world's population their rights to "natural justice" and ultimately the right to live a dignified and rich life.

It almost beggars believe that this system is condoned by our governments as well as by our moral standards and disinterests.

So, when we ask ourselves what we can do to end poverty hunger and war, then the answers stares us in the face. Act locally and reduce the influence of corporations through responsible consumer behavior- above all other considerations and actions...

### **A spending machine... / Riding the gravy train...**

Councils can not go broke because they get their income from our rates and from government grants. But, when broke, they stop fixing things and the stop building community facilities and they go to bed with corporate ideologies in the hope that they will get a pregnant financial windfall.

A councils sole purpose in life is figuring out how to spend our money wisely and to facilitate the smooth running of our community etc...

Detractors would say that our council employees are getting a 5% yearly wage increase, whereas we are lucky to get CPI around 2-3%. I am sure that our pensioners would like to get a 5% rise every year. But they don't and can't because they are not passengers on the council's "gravy train"!

Detractors further point out that Shell Harbour council has sacked in part for allegedly publishing secret council employee's salaries.

This presents us then with a dilemma. Whilst we are not begrudging hard working employees their fair wages, we do however have a nagging suspicion that some sectors of this structure are having "the ride of their lives on the ratepayers funded gravy train"!

I have already made the case why our political set-up is seriously flawed and why the way councils secret behaviors and legalised structure of privileges are further fulling ratepayers discontent about how and why our moneys are spent. Why there is never enough money to maintain and expand our council services and why we as ratepayers are being further and further disenfranchised as stakeholders and decision-makers.

### **So, is our council broke ? / Council's income**

Our council constantly cries poor and laments that they do not have sufficient income to meet its obligations. (This reminds me of another corporation which cries poor: Telstra! But...oops in 2008 they managed record profits.., again...something does not add up)

If I had a monopolistic business with a guaranteed income, I would be delighted. So why does our council, which has a monopoly on many things "cry poor"?

Their money comes in irrespective of whether they do a good job or not. It is guaranteed income. It can even raise rates every year more than CPI. So the problem has to be with our councils spending and not with its income.

We all know the power of compound interest! Perhaps it has to do with an annual 5% wage rise for staff? Imagine what this does to blow-out our councils wage bill. If every resident of Springwood would get a 5% wage rise every year, we would all be delighted. If our pensioners would get this rise they would be thankful. So why do we have to have automatic wage rises which are above CPI ?

Then there is the issue of the starved new infrastructure budget and the huge maintenance budget. The chamber of commerce member was recently told ,that if they wanted more seats in Springwood, they would have to find one elsewhere so it could be removed and re-located to Springwood. Again there is money and resources in the maintenance budget which can be used to shift the seat, but the new infrastructure purse is empty and we can't buy a new seat. I could go on.. but I am sure you get the picture.

The Blue Mountain council has about \$70 million of disposable income which is made up of rates and grants. Next year it will have almost 10% more and again the year after etc...

We were told at a recent Chamber of commerce meeting told, that our council runs at about 60%-to-70% efficiency. This means that \$21-to-\$28 million of our money disappears in inefficiencies! Call me stupid- but perhaps we could try to run budget better, so that we can afford new infrastructure and by chance even lower council rates. Who is supervising how our council spends our money? There is no mechanism in place to supervise spending and no planning process to plan for a brighter future. So why do we put up with this nonsense?

### **How can we fix our councils ?**

It is clear that there is something fundamentally wrong with the system under which our talented staff and councillors have to work.

I refer you to the second hand out- which deals with a management method called PSP. I would also urge everyone to consider participating in next years proposed constitutional debate and to push for greater local independence and a type of full-time elected PSP based council. Councillors also should be full-time and be properly paid and better resourced.

They should be properly resourced, be full-time, have local representative offices, staff and cars. They are running a council, which spends \$70 million of our money every year and on top of that has the Stuart ship over about half a billion dollars of our communal assets.

We must remember that we ask our councillors to run our affairs by turning up to about eighteen meetings per year. So we seriously expect great outcomes when we under resource our team at the top.

But we also need to remove libel laws from council debates. Every comment on public records should be offered immunity from libel laws. Furthermore we must abolish closed door discussions, party donations and appoint a PSP- ombudsman based council chamber.

## **Can a council make money to reduce our taxes ?**

Councils need more income. But how are they going to get it when there is no culture or interest in creating new sources of income among councilors and council staff ? After all, they are only concerned with spending money, not with creating income streams which reduce our tax burdens!

Can Councils generate additional income or should they only be concerned with spending our rates?

Factually, local council charters give them the ability to generate income. So why are they not using this right ?

## **New council income streams...**

If we are serious about addressing issues of climate change, peace, war and poverty then we have to think about how we can contribute to humanities age old aspirations in our local community. Our councils charter allows them to engage in commercial activities. But there is no serious attempt made to engage in profit making activities!

At a recent council pre-election meeting potential candidates were asked if they knew of any way council could produce some income (instead of investing our rates money in hare brained 'sub-prime' mortgage schemes). The labor candidate answered 'that the council ran the local swimming pool and that it lost money'. This was given as an example why council should not engage in running profit making enterprises. I won't bore you with all the reasons why this swimming pool is losing money. But one of the main reasons why it is losing money is that it is not open when people want to use it etc... hardly rocket science...

Neither environmental, moral nor political endeavours have recently produced anything, which remotely resembles a profit making enterprise. Instead, we are asked to fund their bureaucracy with yearly wage increases without our bureaucrats even attempting to cover their ever rising costs through commercial activities.

Why is our council staff not making any attempt to get more Money through worthwhile projects like, low cost housing, shopping centers, workshops, business incubators/local stock markets, solar and wind power generation, transport initiatives, recycling, Zoos, Theaters etc... ?

Council can engage in simple land-lord activities. Offering housing, workshops and retail space to locals at affordable and nevertheless profitable rates. Maintenance costs can be reduced by giving these responsibilities over to the tenants- as part of rental concessions under a system of mutual benefits and obligations.

Our much maligned Katoomba council library- for example has retail tenants which pay almost fully for the upkeep of the building. We can almost enjoy it for Free!

In the same spirit council can make space available for Growers markets, inviting local and near local producers to offer their goods, services and produce.

Energy (windmills, hydro, solar etc...), food production and processing, water, sewerage treatments and rubbish disposal, can all be turned into profit earning enterprises.

Tourism is another area which can bring immediate benefits to our councils coffers. Rather than

engaging in extorting parking fees from visitors, we could open wild-life sanctuary parks and farm out the running to a locally owned corporative. We have millions of tourists passing through our town without spending anything. They would and should contribute to the upkeep of our many parks and facilities.

Such activities would foster local small family sized business and reduce the dependence on imported foods and services. We have assets, lands and building - which written off, are valued at 1/2 billion dollars. Surly they can contribute to our own wellbeing.

Enterprises should be sized to a human scale- so that everyone who has the get-up-and-go, can aspose to running or part-owning a local enterprise.

If it is so easy to generate income from council owed property and assets, why then has it never been attempted?

The answer is simple. Our employment policy discourages council staff to speak put, when they see mismanagement or spot opportunities. They are totally discouraged from engaging in profitable business activities. They are only engaged to spend our money wisely and to ask for more funds if the money runs out. They have developed a a culture of dependency which discourages and punishes commercial initiatives. Should, they by some miracle manage to engage in a new protif making activity, which finally fails, they are demoted. So they will never learn from mistakes and never develop an entrepreneurial spirit. Instead the current system teaches them stay in their comfort zone.

We council has architects, builders, plumbers, financial experts, in fact almost every profession one would wish for.

I don't for a moment suggest to change everything at once. What I am suggesting is sticking to the tried and proven 10% compound interest method. If we can identify 10% of savings in a council, who admits to a 30% waste of our resources (that is normal by Oz standards) and begin to employ these savings in profit centered council funded enterprises, then we will have some failures, which will cost us nothing because the money would have been lost anyhow. But we will also have some successes which will accrue over time to a hefty reduction in our rates and an increase in the facilities we can all enjoy. As a by product we would also create a more challenging and more enjoyable work environment for our council employees.

How can our councils be reformed ...?

A true democracy needs locally accessible mini town parliaments, complete with immunity from libel laws. We need decision making discussion panels which do never sits with lobbyists behind closed doors and which never hide behind "commercial in confidence" laws to keep the truth from us.

We must remember when our representatives deal with corporations, that corporations are not people. They can't feel pain, hunger or thirst and they certainly can't make any claims on privacy. A corporation is simply not a human being and does not deserve the same treatment as a real person. Therefore open governments is vital to safeguard our interests.

But, better management also requires a rethinking of how we deal with power politics and factional

political issues in our council. We need a PSP type decision making system to get better outcomes. Again, if you are interested, I refer you to the following chapter which deal with PSP.

Clearly we need a system where our talented and dedicated council staff can contribute more effectively to the running of our affairs as well as we need a better system for our hard working councilors.

## **WHAT THE COUNCIL STAFF COULD DO TO FIX THINGS**

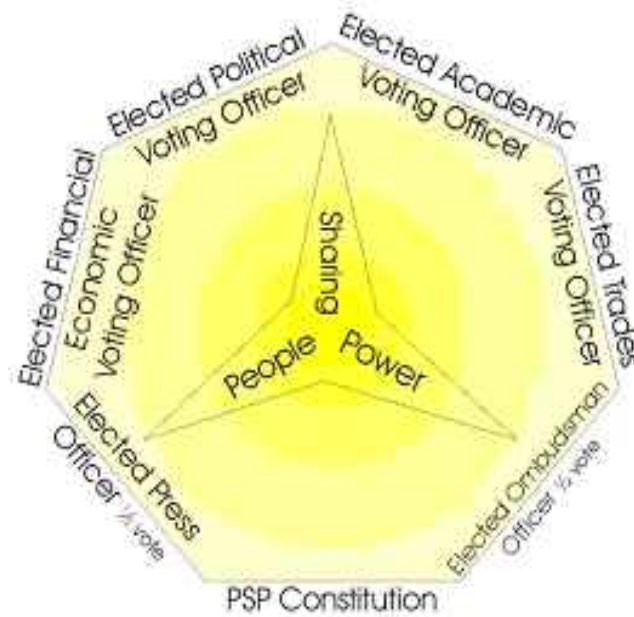
It appears that council staff are caught in the political cross fire of planning decisions.

But they are no mere innocent bystanders. They have or are about to loose millions of ratepayer's money in sub-prime montage schemes. They participate in local council reform debates without consulting us and without receiving our consent or wishes. They flourish under laws, which make them untouchables- and disrespectful of their duties towards real people.

On the brighter side, there are many committed and highly skilled council employees who are held back from doing a better job because they system under which they work forces them to act against the interest of their profession as well as against the interests of the ratepayers.

Every stakeholder in our community has a responsibility to find a better methods to run and organise our local communities. We should all try a bit harder to lower the costs of living in the Blue Mountains to enable everyone to enjoy our wonderful "city in a national park".

## What you can do personally to stop corporations. / What is PSP and PADP ?



*A search for an improved model of power sharing...*

We have to live with this flawed system of government because we have been politically lazy and have allowed our democracy to develop into a system which damages the livelihood of locals. Furthermore it is becoming evident that our disinterest in local politics is the foundation for the exploitation of the rest of the world's struggle with poverty and wars. We can't just sit back and whinge. We have to take responsibility and search actively for a better form of government and power sharing.

There are many worthwhile reform ideas, but few stand out as much as PSP. It is not the purpose of this book to delve deeply into social reforms but a simple PSP can deliver us a better, incorruptible decision making process which also reduces the negative aspects of party political influences.

PSP simply stands for People Sharing Power or People Sharing Democratic Power. A PSP is a system of governing our affairs for the benefit of all involved- through a system of informed consensual management. A PSP management team consists of an Ombudsman, a press speaker, a financial officer, trained professional. Then there is a hands on expert who complements the academic view with hands-on know-how. Like an architect and a builder. And last, but not least our humble, hardworking councilors. Under a PSP system we would never have ministers for main roads who hold a law degree, looking after our road interests.

A PSP is a self-regulating mechanism, which stops factional stacking, promotions of personal self-interests, unfair electioneering, blocking maneuvers, pigheadedness and unethical advances by lobby groups. A PSP usually has a constitution, which outlines its objectives. For example, a main roads PSP would ensure safe, efficient, picturesque roads, which don't offend locals. A business development PSP would have a constitution, which fosters green local businesses, employment and economic independence etc...

A PSDP simply is an extension of a local PSP to a larger electorate. PSDP advocates believe that representative democracy is like sending your brother to the doctor, to mend your own broken foot.

It prefers many local self-running and self-regulating PSP's, over large, distant government departments. PSP advocates amuses that all power, no matter how small corrupts and therefore needs to be justly administered.

PSP's are based on open door discussions and broadcasts all its sittings and private approaches through its press speaker. PSP board members are elected and council staff, legal minds, and councilors in general, are encouraged to participate. Therefore everyone, without exception, is encouraged to participate.

Our current political system is a reactive system whereas a PSP is a deliberative pro-active system. Our system only reacts to the consequences of bad decision rather than discussing the possible fallout and consequences, before decisions are made. Therefore a PSP is an insurance which protects us in before we suffer the consequences of bad decisions. By contrast, our current system is based on apportioning blame and looking for corrupt and plain stupid behaviors, after the damage is done. It is more an forensic undertaker then a force for good and appropriate decision making.

Issues like the Sydney tunnel, Lawson, Katoomba, Lura, Glenbrook, Springwood etc... would simply never be considered as viable alternatives by locals representatives who have to debate submissions under the glare of public, open door scrutiny, financial modeling and plain common sens.

PSP advocates believe that many small, local decisions from a PSP system, generate better decisions, then large scale decisions made by remote parliaments.

PSP is not a political party. It is simply a better form of government that looks out for your interests and allows us all to participate in a true, hands-on-direct-democracy irrespective of our political persuasions, prejudices and hats.

### **A sample of a typical PSP constitution**

A PSP is a Ghandian inspired peaceful system which fosters friendship and good will between the genders, between people of all races, the mighty, the powerless and the poor. Practitioner believe in a just, incorruptible form of government for all people. They believe that power should be shared for the benefit of all, using the democratic logic of the PSP constitution. A typical PSP constitution looks like this:-

#### **Preamble**

We believe in giving rich and poor alike equal access to all levels of Information, Justice, Education, Sanitation, health care, Security and Liberty.

We believe in safeguarding and nurturing the freedom and talents of individuals while striving for the betterment of our society's values and aspirations.

We believe in paying fair local wages- which enable workers to purchase the necessary food & shelter to live a content live. This may include the realisation that we have to pay higher prices so that the poor have a chance of a fair life.

We believe that a form of less corrupt, less wasteful, more open, economically viable local

government in our developed nations would free up resources to address the issue of the working poor, economically depleted local communities, World-hunger and Human rights.

We believe that Military service is the highest form of public service and that the Military should only be used for peacekeeping, the defence of Human liberty and not in an oppressive or aggressive manner. That the Military should abstains form any form of government. Furthermore we belief that the Military's peacetime talent should be use to support humanitarian services in education, food technology, health and sanitation.

We believe that if a Nation is to enjoy stability and prosperity, Taxes have to flow upwards from the individual to the city/district, from the city/district to the States and from the states to the Nation. To run the affairs of the Nation, the National Parliament should supply a budget application to cities/districts for consideration and for the release of Tax moneys to run the affairs of the Nation.

We believe that if companies claim the right to make profit for their shareholders, that city companies and governments have the duty to run their business affairs on a profit basis, with the burger being the shareholders that profit from the enterprise.

We believe that the private sector should compete with the Government for the supply of Utility services and that the Government sector has a duty to ensure/encourage adequate supply of Utility services.

We believe that small-scale city or district economies should be self-sufficient and financially viable to underpin the stability of the Nation.

We believe that small-scale economic city/district/state models must run and function on a level of equal importance, side-by-side with National economic models.

We believe that if democracy is to live up to its promise, it is understood that a silent contract exists between the state and the individual:-

PSP elected rulers/governors promise to nurture and protect the individual, to the point where the individual can enjoy a harmonious- fruitful life- from cradle to the grave.

The individual in return has the duty to become a person who is able to sustain his/her own adult existence to the fullest extend of his/her ability.

We believe that the state should work on being a good neighbour to the world at large, working for peace and stability. Working for the rights of individuals anywhere in the world.

### **Change to the constitution**

It requires a 65% agreement to alter this constitution.

### **Public approaches to elected PSP members**

Openly published (Internet- life) log of business enquires or business meeting.

Disclosure failures have 7 days to furnish a reasonable explanation.

If the Press officer and the Ombudsman is not satisfied with the answer, then the offending office holder will be removed instantly without compensation.

The deputy of the offending office holder gains ascendancy to the office.

### **Dissemination of Information**

Only the press officer can publish information pertaining to the results of a PSP decision. The workings of the PSP, however are to be in the public forum

ie. Live over the Internet.

### **Length of office terms**

Office holders can only hold 2 consecutive 3 year terms in the same office.

### **Dismissals**

Officers and PSP boards can only be dismissed if 5% of the voting population signs a named, dated, traceable petition.

If a primary office holder stops working effectively in the capacity of his office, the deputy then takes his position. Deputies are appointed in order of the vote placing of second, third runner up usw..

### **Suspicious death or incapacitation of PSP officials**

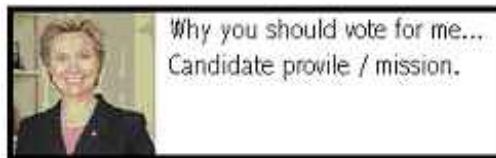
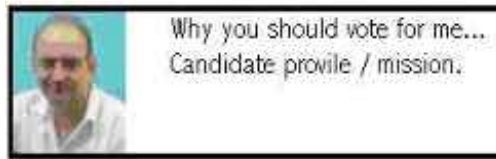
Suspicious death or inability to make decisions of the primary and or deputy officer, will lead to both being removed and the position . The position becomes a caretaker position, which will be held by the surviving office holder. Elections are to be held expediently within 4 weeks.

All current office holders as well as caretaker office holders are bared from seeking re-election for this position.

The caretaker can only make decisions with the consent of both the Ombudsmen and the consent of the Press officer.

## **Electioneering rules**

One person, one vote. No preferences are allowed. Electioneering is done face-to face.



Political advertising is limited to newspaper notices, giving equal space to candidates.

TV is limited to equal time slots for all. No donations are allowed. Candidates election costs are fully funded by the council. If too many people stand for council, then costs are awarded to a limited, but reasonably large number of candidates by a lottery process.

No- private form of advertising is allowed and party donations and fund-raising are prohibited- and will lead to the dismissal of candidates.

No door-to-door campaigns or contact with the electorate is allowed other than at an advertised time and venue. Gathering details shall be agreed on by unanimous vote of all candidates. If no agreement is reached then no gatherings can take place. If individual candidates block more than 2 venues, then they will be dismissed from the election process.

A minimum of three candidates has equal time to address the gathering. Gatherings are held in town halls, stadiums, clubs function rooms,

## **Candidate's eligibility rules**

Candidates must be willing to give up their full or part-time work.

They must not have hands-on business interests, but rather use third party, non-related investment strategies for the management of their wealth.

They must have no criminal records.

They must have proof of qualification - if the office requires this.

Ombudsmen must be a JP's, judge, solicitors, legal secretaries, police officers, court officers etc..

Candidates must not be heading any religious, business, mass media organisation, political party or lobby group- while standing for or serving a term of PSP member.

### **Financial rewards for elected PSP members**

Compensation is \$80k for every primary position. \$60k for every deputy position. A budget which includes a fully functioning office, car and one assisting staff salaries of \$45k.

### **Blocking of PSP's effectiveness rules**

Ombudsmen can ask the PSP board to show progress within 14 days (or sooner if the ombudsman can show just cause to demand a speedier response.). Should no substantial or logical progress be made, then the ombudsmen with the agreeing vote of the press, can dismiss any or all office holders.

In emergency situations, the ombudsmen can demand decisions to be taken within 1 hour. Failure to arrive at a decision results in the sacking of any blocking officer.

### **Voting rules**

1 vote for every officer, 1 vote for press officer and 1 vote for Ombudsman.

### **Passing a motion (deciding on an issue) requires 5 "yes" votes.**

Only the ombudsman has the right to veto any motion put before the PSP, providing the Ombudsman can show that it does not conform to the PSP constitution (ie. The resolution goes against the primary obligation of the Office. Ie. Department of main roads- closing roads permanently or engaging in a manner detrimental or contradictory to its obligation of providing suitable- financially advantageous roads.).

Should the Ombudsman veto any motion, the ombudsman officer must refer the matter back to the PSP for further deliberation- with a maximum time of 7 days.

If after 7 days no measurable progress is shown, the motion must be withdrawn. Failed motion - suitably amended can be re introduced after 3 months to the PSP with a 3/5 yes majority agreeing to the re introduction.

### **Minority justice or combatant forces rules**

In case of adversarial or combatant forces wishing to form a PSP, the deputy must be from the opposing faction.

In cases where minorities are wishing to join a PSP, it is understood that minorities will never raise enough votes to have primary position on the PSP board. In such cases the deputy position must be allocated to the minority candidate with the highest minority vote. Decisions made by every office holder have to be made jointly and with the deputy's agreement. Deputy positions can be repeated (nested as in computer programming) to any level required to obtain a just and acceptable outcome for all combatant parties.

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PSP is a powerful tool to safeguard our democracy from undue influences.

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## Local Democracy

...is a fine concept. If only it were available to us ...



<http://www.countercorp.org...>

one of a growing number of anti corporation organisations concerned about our liberties.

Today, local councils are gagged by state and federal laws, political party ideology and by corporations claiming human-type-rights and privileges in order to extract profits from our suburbs.

Should we be concerned if our local councils can't openly debate an issue without fear of falling foul of libel laws and should we be worried when they engage in secret "Commercial in confidence meetings", "on the record or off the record" with developers and food corporations ?

Is it acceptable that the closest thing we have to a *direct democracy, our local councils*, are the least democratic of our three teared government?

The evidence exposes the fact that our councils must endure a deliberately dumbed-down and silenced perversion of the democratic ideal. But who benefits form the disempowerment of our councils ? Who fills the power vacuum and can we trust them to look after our interests ?

## Can you afford not to read this book ?

Rob Grosche's wrote this book out of a deep concern about the abuse of corporate power and the weakening powers of free democratic people in general. The consequences of a corporate push to drive out our humble neighborhood shops are evident in rising world wide levels of poverty, hunger and wars.

Our three tears of governments mostly faceless executive, dominates our lives and subdues our democratic right. This book re-kindles the flame of our democratic birthright and promotes a mode of direct democracy which could allow us to again become masters of our destiny. It also puts a new spin on the old phrase "**Think Globally, Act Locally**"