

We The People

Program 181

Kerbside Common Sense



Good Day to you. Recently I addressed the Mermaid Beach Rotary Club and was delighted to meet a group of worthwhile Australians doing their bit for society. Larrikins one and all but they represent all that is good about Australia. Years ago I was a member of Rotary in Gladstone and was impressed by their 'four way test' which they apply in life. One question they ask is.. **"is it fair to all concerned"**. The brilliance of this question is in its simplicity and in a civilised Christian nation makes perfect common sense for a harmonious peaceful society. So today's narrative is about fairness.

Just a week ago I was contacted by a resident and listener from the Palm Lakes Resort Retirement Village at Banora Point in Winders Place. A softly spoken gentleman, John Ellison and his wife have lived in the complex for some years and enjoy a peaceful life. Like so many Australians, finances are limited and bills seem to arrive when we least need them. John was concerned as Tweed Council notified him that there would be no kerbside rubbish removal this year as the complex was deemed a commercial entity and didn't qualify through the rate structure for that service. He noted the kerb rubbish removal had been taking place since 1997 and could not understand why the Council would stop it now. All this didn't sound fair to me so I pursued the matter and it was an interesting journey to say the least.

I spoke with Rod Dawson of the Tweed Council who is the co-ordinator of the rubbish removal service. Frankly I was ready for a bureaucratic stoush but in this my expectation was unfounded. Instead of speaking with a guarded civil servant who had recently undergone a charisma bypass, I conversed with a real live fair person who seemed completely out of place in the bureaucracies we rate payers are used to. In fact it was a pleasure to speak with this Council officer as he was polite, candid and lucid and above all, helpful. Rod explained that because the rate structure at Palm Lakes Resort was deemed commercial then that meant the Council under sections 496 and 504 of the Local Government Act of NSW could not provide the kerbside service. The Act goes on in bureaucratic madness to say but the Council can lend itself the money from rate income to provide the service. This is of course right out of Yes Minister but the law must be obeyed even when the law is an ass but it's not fair. I had a courteous and productive conversation with Rod Dawson and worked through all the options which was most helpful and not laced with caveats and other dull passages so common in Council speak. As it turns out, although the contractor has been providing the kerbside pickups, they have in fact never been paid for them by Council and simply did it because they assumed it was on the list.

I spoke with numerous people along the way and finally ended up on the phone with Garrie Love from the corporate office of Palm Lakes Resort. Garrie describes himself as the 'go to person' within the company which I think is code for 'fix everything when the boss is busy' and in that sense I was soon to learn he is indeed the right man to go to. Again a pleasant fellow, candid and helpful and understood the situation and understood from the residents view that to lose the kerbside service didn't seem fair. In fact Palm Lakes Resort corporate knew nothing of the matter and it too assumed that the annual Council kerbside pickups were there because they pay rates but not so and that didn't seem fair to him either. So now we have the residents, the Council and the retirement village owners all viewing fairness from their relative positions and frankly all were right but to the loss of the annual rubbish removal for residents. By any measure a convoluted conundrum. However within an hour Garrie proactively called me back to tell me that Palm Lakes are going to provide a mega skip for residents to use and will help pick up the large stuff on site and then take it away. In other words they will effectively arrange the kerbside removal at their own expense and do so to help residents. I believe this to be a sincere gesture and a fair one, so in the end the residents and John Ellison are delighted and do not have to bear further cost. A great outcome and a fair outcome all round. So the Rotary question **"Is it fair to all concerned"** is a resounding yes. Now let's get Gold Coast Council to work the same way with fairness, humility and some kerbside common sense.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley