

We The People
Program 28
Bureaucracy



I have a growing concern that this country and indeed much of the free world has a massive problem within government and that's the bureaucracy. It's the term used to describe a system of governance where a hierarchy is formed around clusters of competency, impersonal rules, fixed salaries and no public accountability. There is nothing inherently wrong with a bureaucratic structure except for the failings of people who then use it to concentrate power and authority. As a result 'we the people' must be vigilant to prevent the system going into a socialistic power struggle of unbridled waste, over governance and self indulgence at our expense. Democracy can be unwieldy and inefficient but socialism is corrupt the day it's born simply on the premise that the economy and the community are to be centrally controlled. By its very nature the bureaucracy is socialism in another form and we tend to view the word itself now as negative and with good reason.

On the Gold Coast the local government bureaucracy and the elected members have morphed into a self indulgent, self centred monolith of silence and waste. By any measure the entire combined entity of Gold Coast City Council has become broadly useless and poorly focused. The only thing that can change this is if we the people vote in new councilors who will overhaul the bureaucracy, address the waste and sack the incompetent bureaucrats. The level of devolution of power by councillors to the CEO is especially shameful and not in our interest. To underpin this the CEO has the power to unilaterally decide if something is to be confidential and therefore out of the reach of the people. Freedom of information is simply not available to us and this is happening far too frequently and the lack of transparency is breathtaking. The sign of a ship in trouble is when it begins to leak and the same is true of Council as the leaks flood out all kinds of information and whistle blowers. I've just seen a highly confidential Queensland Treasury document which further exposes the horrendous waste in the Council and the fact that the Councillors have been kept silent because of the restrictions on the document. I don't imagine for a moment they care as it probably suits them but it does expose some very worrying issues and more on that revelation very soon.

The Gold Coast City Council regularly prints and sends out a news letter full of self righteous propaganda about itself. The last expensive edition featured the then mayor Ron Clark on the front cover saying that there had never been a better time financially for the Gold Coast. I called his office and asked to speak to him on two occasions as to the basis of this public claim. The Mayor didn't return the phone calls and it appears to me that under his leadership the Gold Coast has suffered badly in terms of direction and governance. This new leaked document and the recent demise of our credit rating shows clearly he was not being wholly truthful with us.

We've just witnessed Queensland voters demanding a new deal at State government level and friends, we must do the same at local level as well and simply get rid of the entrenched councillors and restore transparent open local government. Without transparency we're at the mercy of the bureaucracy which is almighty and powerful at the moment. Shortly some very alarming facts will be exposed along with secret plans to massively increase rates and the existing councillors know this and their silence is reprehensible.

As honest leaders go I believe Abraham Lincoln was a remarkable man who had the courage of his convictions and fought to stop slavery and unjust government. He said, "Nearly all people can stand adversity, but if you want to test a persons character, give them power". Very wise but don't look for wisdom in Gold Coast City Council as the bureaucracy has probably formed a special committee to discuss it's worth and report in the fullness of time, confidentially of course. Oh dear!

Until next time this is Kent Bayley