

ITEM NO: 22

SUBJECT: PRECIS OF SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE, 17/02/2009

FILE NO: C00680

Recommendation:

That the Précis of Selected Correspondence be received and appropriate letters forwarded where necessary.

1. 24 November 2008 – Clr Searle, Mayor

Letter to the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt MP, Minister for Climate Change and the Environment RE proposed new Regional Waste and Environment Levy (Attachment 1)

2. 15 January 2009 – Clr McLaren, President WSROC

Letter to the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt MP, Minister for Climate Change and the Environment RE Regional Waste & Environment Levy – November 2008 NSW Mini Budget (Attachment 2)

3. 3 February 2009 – 39 Petitioners

Blue Mountains residents urging that the Council keep Benang St, Lawson open to avoid traffic congestion around the intersection of Unnamed St and New St. (Attachment 3)

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Attachment 1

24 November 2008

Office of the Mayor
Reference File: F04862

Carmel Tebbutt MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Climate Change and Environment / Minister for Commerce
Level 30, Govenor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister Tebbutt,

SUBJECT Proposed New Regional Waste and Environment Levy

In response to your letter of 11 November 2008, (DOC08/53138) we would like to formally respond to the announcement of the NSW State Government Mini-Budget.

The NSW Mini-budget was only released 2 weeks ago at the time of writing and there has been little time to properly analyse the impacts of the New Regional Waste and Environment Levy by landfill owners. At this early stage, however, we believe that it is not in the best interest of certain sectors of Local Government in NSW.

BMCC is strongly opposed to the introduction of the New Regional Waste and Environment Levy. We believe that the budget impact of the levy will reduce our ability to provide effective waste avoidance, reduction and recycling programs to the Blue Mountains community, in effect reducing environmental outcomes for the community. The existing self funded programs implemented by BMCC for reducing waste to landfill (including hazardous waste collection, kerbside recycling, kerbside green waste chipping and many waste education programs) have been highly successful. We do not expect that any additional reduction of waste to landfill will be achieved by the introduction of the new levy.

The NSW State Government has stated that areas affected by the Sydney Metropolitan Area Levy have decreased waste to landfill by 3% per capita and that areas affected by the lower Extended Sydney Area Levy have increased waste to landfill by 3% per capita, (since 2000). This is the primary justification for introducing the new levy. The Blue Mountains has in the same time without the impact of any levy achieved a **decrease of waste to landfill of 25.1% per capita** (since 2000).

The DECC Sustainability Programs Division has published a Good Practice Target for kerbside recycling collection of 5.5 kg per household per week. BMCC introduced a new MBG based kerbside recycling contract in July 2008 which is already harvesting **7.5 kg per household per week, 45% above the Good Practice benchmark**. The NSW State Government claim that households in Council areas not subject to Waste and Environment Levies recycle 20% less is not accurate for the BMCC Local Government Area.

The long term waste strategy for the Blue Mountains involves the introduction of an AWT in the next 5-10 years. The new regional and coastal Waste and Environment Levy, rising to \$70 per tonne over the next 7 years (plus rise and fall), will thwart the ability of BMCC to invest in AWT as a long term waste disposal strategy due to any capacity for

Attachment 1 cont.

the community to pay for additional services and/or infrastructure being absorbed by the new levy.

The new levy will also reduce the ability of BMCC to direct money towards local waste reduction programs which will result in a reduction in environmental benefits for the people of the Blue Mountains. Specific programs currently under development include:

- Feasibility Studies for Commercial Recycling.
- Expanding community education programs to include a wider range of modules including energy efficiency and water conservation.
- Extended rollout of smaller 140L mobile garbage bin service for kerbside waste collection.
- Implementation of Alternative Daily Cover for landfill operations.
- Construction and development of the improved resource recovery facilities at Katoomba and Blaxland Waste Management Facilities.

The mini budget identifies that participant Councils will receive a 100% return from the levy for household waste for the first two years, reducing to 50% thereafter. However there is no guarantee that any particular local Council will receive sufficient levy funds for specific waste reduction programs and/or infrastructure already included in long term waste strategies. This has the potential to severely reduce some Councils' ability to provide services and programs in the long term.

Overall, the cost impact of the mini-budget will be particularly detrimental to regional and rural local Councils who are currently subject to the greatest pressure for new infrastructure due to the rapid population growth associated with the "sea-change" (or "tree-change") phenomenon. We are highly disappointed that there was no consultation with Local Government or any industry bodies in the development of the new levy.

Effectively, the levy is a new tax on local communities that syphons revenue into the State Government's budget.

The implementation of a "One Size Fits All" approach to the new regional Waste and Environment Levy is not favoured. We believe that the Council areas which have the least proactive campaigns to reduce waste to landfill are not being captured in the new levy area and many Councils which have a wide range of innovative strategies and best practice (such as Blue Mountains) are being penalised in spite of excellent performance in waste management activities.

We request that the condition of the mini-budget which introduces the new Regional Waste & Environment Levy excludes the Blue Mountains Local Government Area due to the reasons outlined above. This decision will result in the continuation of BMCC's excellent and innovative waste reduction programs and ensure that the timely implementation of alternative waste technology for the further treatment of waste before landfilling is possible.

Yours faithfully

ADAM SEARLE
Mayor

Attachment 2

Ref: 11001.03; 13002.03; 32001.02

15th January 2009

The Hon. Carmel Tebbutt MP
Minister for Climate Change and the Environment
Level 30 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister,

Re: Regional Waste & Environment Levy – November 2008 NSW Mini Budget

I am writing to express WSROC's strong support for a submission made to you by the Mayor of Blue Mountains City Council in November last year, expressing serious concerns about the effectiveness of the new Regional Waste and Environment Levy introduced in the November 2008 NSW Mini Budget.

In the submission, Clr Searle noted that an additional waste levy is now required of Blue Mountains City Council (and a number of other councils) based on a tonnage rate for landfill.

Clr Searle pointed out that this levy will have the effect of reducing the ability of Blue Mountains City Council to provide effective waste avoidance, reduction and recycling programs.

While the rationale for the new levy is to encourage diversion of waste from landfill, Clr Searle noted that Blue Mountains Council is already "ahead of the game" on this matter, and that the new levy will prove counter-productive to his Council's future efforts.

While no doubt well intentioned and effective in many situations, it appears that the new levy will in fact prove to be a disadvantage in areas like the Blue Mountains, where it will simply not be complementary to initiatives that have already been taken to manage and reduce waste.

WSROC believes that this matter might be resolved by introducing the flexibility for the new levy to be waived in jurisdictions where it can be demonstrated that existing arrangements provide better and more effective outcomes. We certainly believe that this will be the situation in the case of Blue Mountains City Council, and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, together with the Mayor of the Blue Mountains, Clr Adam Searle and other representatives of Blue Mountains City Council, in an attempt to resolve this issue in a timely and constructive manner.

I would appreciate it if your office could advise a suitable date and time for a meeting with you by telephoning WSROC's Office Administrator, Mrs Esme Evans on 9671 4333.

In the meantime, if you would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0410 441 842 or WSROC's Executive Director, Mr Noel Child, on 9671 4333.

Yours sincerely



Clr Alison McLaren
President

Copy to: Clr Adam Searle, Mayor, Blue Mountains City Council

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Attachment 3– Cover page of petition

General Manager and
Councillors
BMCC
PO Box 1005
KATOOMBA 2780

Dear General Manager,

I wish to register my extreme concern about the closure of Benang St in the Lawson Town Centre Redevelopment for the following reasons:

- The shortest route from Honour Avenue to residential areas west of the village centre is via Benang Street. Why do locals need to travel right around the block containing Heatherbrae House, through parking and pedestrian areas?
- Honour Avenue will not have a left out to the highway so everyone driving to west Lawson or to the only exit to the highway at New Street will be using the same road (after having driven right around the remembrance garden in Honour Avenue).
- Those wanting to turn right into New Street near the lights may be prevented by cars banked back at a red light, or those wanting to turn into the service lane. As a consequence they will also hold up those who want to turn left into New Street. A domino effect! The intersection of Benang Street and New Street however is far enough away from the lights not to present this problem. It would keep local through traffic away from a busy area.

Council has created a situation that will lead to traffic congestion, delays and safety risks while at the same time saying the plan will be of benefit to the community. A new traffic study should be done or the closure of Benang St removed from the plan.

Yours sincerely,

