

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KU-RING-GAI MAYOR AND ALIGNED COUNCILLORS' ATTEMPT TO SACK GENERAL MANAGER STALLED

The attempts by the new Mayor and faction of aligned Councillors who were expected to terminate Ku-ring-gai Council's general manager's contract at an Extraordinary Meeting of Council (EMC) on Saturday 9 October have been stalled. The meeting was adjourned to Sunday 10 October 1.00 pm then 7.00 pm in the evening, when it was suddenly cancelled without explanation! Such behaviour is unprecedented in the history of the council.

The calling of the Extraordinary Meeting by Councillors Christine Kay (St Ives Ward) and Peter Kelly (Gordon Ward) is completely at odds with a recent council resolution that endorsed John McKee's contract and one that recognised a "More than satisfactory" performance rating by all ten councillors, supported by an independent consultant's Report, just two months ago.

More surprising was this action is only weeks before council goes into caretaker mode before the local government elections on 4 December. There remains no urgent reason for such an extraordinary meeting to be called at this time.

The Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Post reported " Mayor Spencer also acknowledged that Saturday's meeting is regarding McKee but has stated that council has not yet resolved to terminate McKee and is merely re-assessing his performance. Although he does acknowledge that termination may well be the outcome of this assessment." ('Ku-ring-gai Council looks set to fire longstanding General Manager', Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Post, 9 October 2021)

Had there been a quorum of councillors present at the meeting the unfolding 'plot' of sacking the general manager, quite likely would have been successful.

With two more council meetings to occur before council goes into caretaker mode the political maneuvering of this group of councillors is likely to continue. Another extraordinary meeting with the same agenda "Appointment of the General Manager" has been called for Friday 15 October at 7.00 pm!

The concern is that if this destabilising behaviour continues unabated, the dysfunction wrought on Council could lead to the Office of Local Government becoming involved.

The same five councillors who were willingly participating in the Extraordinary Meeting on the weekend are the same five councillors who opposed the Council's draft Housing Strategy aimed at limiting unnecessary development and re-zonings across KRG.

Kathy Cowley of Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment FOKE said:

"It is clear from observing the twice adjourned meeting and the extraordinary conduct of the Mayor and aligned councillors over the weekend, that due process is being subverted, destabilising council and bringing the council into disrepute. Adding to the Mayor's efforts to terminate the GM, on Sunday's live stream he single-handedly declared the five absent

councillors would be removed from office if they did not attend the adjourned meeting on Sunday at 7.00 pm. A power which he does not hold.”

Jill Green of STEP environmental community group said:

“The procedure followed at the Extraordinary Meeting and at the ensuing two adjourned meetings is extremely concerning. Its legality is unclear as are its implications for the ability of the Council to operate effectively until the local government elections in December.”

Christine Drake of NTAG Inc North Turrumurra residents group said:

“The actions of Councillors Kay, Kelly and Mayor Cedric Spencer in trying to overturn the democratic due process in terminating the contract of a well respected General Manager should be unacceptable to all fair minded residents.

Ku-ring-gai Council is amongst the most financially stable and well run Councils in Australia with General Manager Mr. John McKee who has only recently received a high performance rating.

By calling an Extraordinary General Meeting on both Saturday and Sunday the problem now endemic at Council is highlighted. Five Councillors were all involved in this underhand action and it is hoped that residents will reflect on this behaviour when they cast their votes at the 4th December Council election.

Council meetings evidence a complete lack of fundamental knowledge about the Code of Meeting Practice and were conducted in a manner that frankly could be seen as an embarrassment to all residents.

It seems evident that in the current divisive situation, Ku-ring-gai Council will descend into an autocracy where the best interests of residents are a poor second to the political ambitions of a few Councillors.”

Christiane Berlioz former St Ives Councillor said:

“Not only does the recently elected Mayor, who only holds his office for 10 weeks until the 4 December NSW Local Government Elections, want to hold confidential Extraordinary Meetings to potentially sack the GM, he now also wants to terminate the office of five councillors who have not participated in his plan.

Residents should be very concerned about what Mayor Spencer plans to do without a General Manager and without five of the democratically elected councillors, leaving only his chosen few running the show.”

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