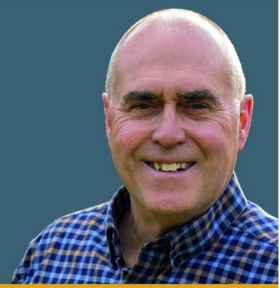


Harvey LENNON

FOR MAYOR, COUNCILLOR, HOBART

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OPINION

Rebuilding Trust and Respect in Council

Harvey Lennon, candidate for Hobart Mayor and Councillor

How can you expect the City's employees to do the best for the ratepayers, to deliver value-for-money, when the elected members are seen to be receiving special treatment at ratepayers' expense?

I have been disappointed as I've spoken with people around Hobart's CBD and suburbs about how many times the issue of ratepayer-funded snacks has been raised with me. Sure, there have been other issues like traffic congestion, housing, bike lanes and stalled development opportunities.

The other words connected with mentions of snacks are trust and respect. Now the lid has been well and truly blown off the issue of snacks in Hobart City Council's Members Lounge, the people of Hobart have started to give thought to what else their rates are paying for. The people are rightly starting to see this as a matter of principle.

When there are so many people around Hobart struggling to put food on the table, it isn't a good look for the ratepayers to be funding snacks for their paid elected members. Across our city employees and volunteers don't enjoy that luxury. They BYO so why isn't it good enough for Hobart's elected members?

The Council should set the tone and culture for the whole organisation. The snacks may be 'small bikkies' in the context of Council's budget but it sets a standard from the top.

Also raised with me in doorway chats has been the number of integrity issues raised between our Councillors. It is to be expected, in fact it is healthy, that we have different views and perspectives on Council. Just like on Boards and Committees, a variety of views will lead to stronger long term outcomes than 'group think'. The problem isn't the difference of views. It is the way those views are expressed. It is where debate turns personal. Ratepayers should rightfully expect issues to be debated in a mature and healthy manner, decisions made and outcomes reviewed and reported.

To establish a customer-centric value-for-money culture then the elected representatives must lead. They need to be respected and trusted by the employees who will rightly take their lead from the top.

To build and hold the trust of ratepayers, ratepayers must see the elected representatives acting in their best interests. Focussing on the services they want, at the standard they expect. Evidence of waste and extravagance should rightly be questioned by the people of Hobart.

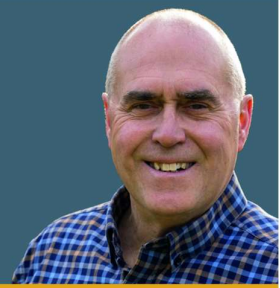
To build and hold the respect of key partners, the Council needs to be seen to be working together respectfully, making informed decisions and being accountable for outcomes. Life today plays out in broadcast and social media. Organisations make their own headlines and stories through the actions and behaviours of their members.

If we want to maintain the best of what we have as a City, the values that make it attractive to those of us who choose to live here and those who make the journey to Hobart to experience the best of what we have, then we need a Council that is trusted and respected, a Council that works together to make

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decisions on behalf of the people who elected them and a Council that is accountable for those decisions.

There are huge opportunities ahead for our City but there are also many challenges. Challenges that I hear about as I walk around our CBD and suburbs. Challenges that are starting to hold us back. Challenges which will make our City less attractive to our children and grandchildren. Some of those challenges are small things like maintenance of roads and footpaths, rubbish collection and the parks and green spaces we enjoy.

Other challenges are bigger, longer-term issues. Things that require partnering with adjacent Councils and State and Federal governments, with business. The things that require long term visions and plans but must start somewhere. This includes building the transport systems that will keep our city moving, housing solutions which increase the pool of affordable dwellings, and key infrastructure projects which will ensure our City is as desirable in thirty years or more as it has been in the past.

To deliver what the people of Hobart expect now and into the future, we need a Council that is a respected partner and that starts with the elected representatives. They set the tone and culture for the organisation. Their ability to work together constructively and respectfully, despite differing views and opinions, will be the defining factor in shaping what Council delivers now and into the future.

Snacks may be 'small bickies' but if we want the Council we need to deliver today and set the vision for the future, then it has to start with elected representatives who respect one another, who respect the people who elected them and work to build the trust and respect of their community and stakeholders.

Harvey LENNON is former CEO of RACT and Hobart City Mission.