

New Premises for Cardinia Shire Council

A recent media release announced that Cardinia Shire Council will move to Officer in 2013 where a purpose - built four storey building will be leased from VicUrban who are planning a thousand lot development on surrounding land they have held for several years.

It is fair to expect Council chambers and administrative offices to be as convenient and accessible as possible for all ratepayers and residents in the municipality. In this instance, the expectation has fallen short, the explanation being that the deal offered by VicUrban was too good to refuse as it will save ratepayers money. Well, it is considered that while cost to the ratepayers is important, there are other areas of Council where savings could be achieved and that the matter of accessibility and convenience for all ratepayers should have received greater priority when assessing where to locate new Council premises. **The following questions were put to the Council on 18th April 2011.**

1. Does the Council intend to occupy the entire building and given its size, what is the estimated on -cost to ratepayers including fitting out etc. of the new premises?
2. What is the estimated cost of leasing the premises, and if it is to be based on a percentage of total annual revenue, will that cost continue to rise each year as the number of ratepayers increases, or is it to be capped at an agreed amount?
3. Is it a fact that VicUrban has never been required to pay rates on its land holding in Officer, and will VicUrban continue to be exempt from rates payment including the site of the new office building?
4. Will this Council consider establishing regional service centres in certain areas of the Shire to offset any disadvantage to rural residents and businesses created by the chosen location of the new premises, i.e. a few kilometres distance from the western boundary of the Shire?
5. Is there a documented analysis regarding the cost of expansion and upgrading of the current premises by using the surrounding Council owned land to do so, compared with the long term annual cost of leasing the new premises, and will you provide that information to the ratepaying community?
6. Does this Council believe it is possible to maintain an independent status in representing the best interests of all residents and ratepayers across the Shire in the face of close alignment and possible obligation to compromise with State government authority in future process regarding urban growth and expansion policies?

Gloria O'Connor
President, Cardinia Ratepayers
& Residents Association Inc.

18th April 2011.

