
MEDIA RELEASE

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COFFS HARBOUR COUNCILLORS PENALISED OVER MEETING STUNT

Four Coffs Harbour councillors are facing disciplinary action after being found to have engaged in misconduct by the Office of Local Government (OLG).

Councillors Paul Amos, John Arkan, Keith Rhoades and Tegan Swan have had payment of their fees suspended for two months by OLG Coordinator General Kiersten Fishburn.

The four councillors breached the code of conduct by failing to attend two official meetings which deprived the council of a quorum resulting in consideration of important business not being able to proceed.

The meetings were due to consider a rescission motion in relation to a development proposal for a Cultural and Civic Space in the Coffs Harbour CBD which was eventually lost on the casting vote of the mayor at a subsequent council meeting.

In the statements of reasons, Ms Fishburn described the conduct as “premeditated” and “deliberate”.

“[The conduct] is improper and unethical and inconsistent with the duties and obligations expected of an elected representative,” Ms Fishburn stated.

“Council has incurred both productivity loss and economic loss as a result of [the] actions. The penalty reflects this economic loss.”

Ms Fishburn said it serves as a warning to all councillors in NSW not to engage in conduct intended to prevent the proper or effective functioning of their council.

“The local community is entitled to expect the highest standards of leadership and conduct from its elected representatives,” she said.

“Council meetings are a vital democratic function where councillors deliberate upon and determine important matters on behalf of the community.

“While I acknowledge the community and councillors can rightfully become emotive and passionate about issues, denying an official council meeting of a quorum does not serve anybody’s best interests.

“While the council is denied a quorum at meetings, all business on the agenda is in limbo and no formal decisions can be made on behalf of the community.



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“Councillors were elected by the local community to do a job and that’s exactly what local residents expect them to do.”

The statements of reasons can be found on the OLG website [here](#).

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