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16th March 2005

Committee Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Fax 02 62775809

Dear Sir or Madam:

We wish to make a submission to the senate enquiry based on the following :

CASE 1 - CONFIDENTIAL

D & B Blanch Lot 1 RP748431 Carbeen Rd, Walkamin property size is 10.22 ha – Zoning Rural, received a grant from the Atherton Tableland Sustainable Regions Scheme (ATSRAC Ph. 07 40917205) for an amount in excess of \$200,000. The Grant may have been received under the name of Kalamunda Caravan Park or D & B Blanch Carbeen Rd Caravan Park.

Their proposal was to provide backpacker and caravan park accommodation to farm workers on their property.

We were shocked when we found out the amount that they had been given. We thought these grants were to go towards helping farmers or small businesses in rural areas who had been affected by downturn in farming, or who had opted out of tobacco growing to develop some other means of income.

The owners of Lot 1 are quite simply hobby farmers, with 4 cows, 1 horse and some fruit trees. To the best of our knowledge they have never derived an income from their property. They are not unemployed and are not struggling financially and do not fit the criteria to receive funding. We simply are quite stunned that these funds have been handed over 6-10 months before any development approval has been sought and given from the council. Site works have been commenced, some landscaping done, a building pad prepared and electricity has been connected to the site. Had grant money already been spent before material change of use applied for? Had they been given reassurance that everything will go through?

In our opinion this is a perfect example of taxpayers money been given for the wrong reason. It would appear anyone could get a grant if you fill out some forms.

Our farming property zoned Rural A is 65.837 hectares in size and borders the Blanch's 10.22 hectares also Zoned Rural. We feel Mayor Chapman in his quest to attract tourists and others to this area has perhaps lost the plot.

It would appear he has steamrolled this whole proposal and gone against the Town Plan Scheme to make it happen.

1. At the Atherton Shire Council meeting on March 18th 2005 the two Town Planners strongly apposed the change of material use of the applicants land to Caravan Park, based on the Town Planning Scheme, that it allows residential accommodation outside the defined settlement area of Walkamin some 2 klms distant.
2. The six councillors voted for the proposal 3 voted for and 3 voted against, it then came back to the chairman, Mayor Jim Chapman to cast the deciding vote and he voted for it. Our neighbours and we are extremely upset and angry because his vote was very biased and unfair. We have since discovered that at least three of four councilors had no knowledge of the grant for the proposed caravan park. The fact that the Mayor Mr Jim Chapman is on the committee to select/choose grant applications has provided the applicants with their planning approval.
3. Both us and the neighbours bordering Lot 1 are distressed at this turn of events and it goes back to the fact that if this grant had not been given for the wrong reason then our lives would not have been disrupted. It has cost us time and money to put in submissions and attend council meetings that we should not have had to do.

Our property is 168 acres in size. We run 30 head of cattle, 4 horses, have 110 established mango trees and planned to develop the adjoining paddock that borders the proposed caravan park with passion fruit. To control weeds we use a motorized spray but are always careful not to spray in conditions where it might be harmful to our neighbours.

We handed in our submission to Council objecting to the proposal based on:

1. Our land is zoned as Rural A and we fear that by allowing 140 people on 5 acres next door our farming activities would be affected.
2. That our wonderful lifestyle would suffer because our driveway borders the proposed caravan park
3. That we would not have purchased this property if there had been an existing caravan park next door.

In August 2002 when we purchased this property I asked the conveyancing solicitor who also happens to be Atherton Shire Council solicitor if we would be able to split the block in two. He told me in no uncertain terms that Atherton Shire Council would strongly oppose such a request.

So based on those facts we have decided to submit this submission

1. Apart from financial gain, by having over \$200,000 poured into their personal property to develop, at the end of the day they can sell a caravan park with cabins for a nice tidy profit and walk away leaving us with a "town" on our doorstep.

2. Community support –

- a. After discussions around Walkamin we have not heard a positive comment about this caravan park development. The community is very apprehensive about drugs being grown, alcohol, threat of a bush fire being accidentally started by caravan park residents just to mention a few.
- b. The harmony and culture of a small country town will be disrupted because the population of the caravan park could exceed the population of Walkamin.
- c. Council will not provide the immediate neighbours with assurance that present and future farming activities will go unchallenged.
- d. The Atherton Shire Council had approved an application for a Motor Home / Van Park on the outskirts of Walkamin some weeks before so this area is well provided for travelers. These people are setting up their van park in a more ideally situated area with their own funds.
- e. Because there is already a Mobile Home/Van Park under construction in Walkamin there will be a conflict of business.
- f. There is backpacker's accommodation available in Channel Rd Walkamin, Atherton Backpackers, Ant Hill Hotel Mareeba, Tolga Caravan Park plus all caravan parks in Atherton and Mareeba.

3. Job creation – the applicants and their family would probably do all the work themselves.

CASE 2

Atherton Hotel (Black Stump)
Main St, Atherton.

It has come to our attention that The Black Stump also received funding from ATSRAC for the sum of \$500,000 for a "Conference Room".

Here we have another case of wasted taxpayers money. The owners of this hotel are one of the wealthiest families on the Tableland. They own businesses and land and certainly do not need a hand out.

We have the Atherton International Club that has excellent facilities that can accommodate large conferences, meetings, functions etc. I'm sure the club would have benefited more from the money for upgrading because it services the whole community. The Black Stump is a "pub" with no significant cultural value and to date I haven't seen any "functions" or "Staff Wanted" advertised in the local papers.

It certainly appears that these public funds have gone to the wrong people for the wrong reasons.

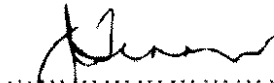
Which raises the following questions and concerns :

- a. Why didn't all the hotels and caravan parks in Atherton receive some money to upgrade or make improvements? Why did such a large amount go to one business?
- b. We are intrigued as to what the funding criteria was?
- c. Are fund recipients accountable for grant money?
- d. Will there be audits carried out on each grant recipient?
- e. If there is, will they be available to public appraisal?
- f. If public money has been misappropriated, what will be the consequences?

It appears that the money has not gone to the people who are in need of it but has gone to "greedy" people purely for financial gain.

This submission is written and authorized by

Les and Jenny Tenni.



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16th March 2005

Les is away until the 28/3/05 in Weipa and Aurukun but would be happy to appear before the enquiry if required.

We would prefer if CASE 1 were classed as confidential because of the fact that whatever the result is, we still have to live beside one another.