

MEDIA RELEASE

FIERY DEBATES AT COUNCIL

4 February 2009

Fiery debates characterized Blacktown City Council's meeting on 4th February 2009. Nearly every councillor spoke against the State Labor government's plan to reduce the levies on new development by \$64,000.00. This would cap infrastructure contributions payable to Council to \$20,000.00 per lot.

Labor Councillors denounced the making of "future slums". Without the funds to develop new areas' open space, roads and amenities including neighbourhood centres and sports fields, it is easy to imagine how these new housing estates will look like slums.

Independent Councillor Russ Dickens led the charge in denouncing the proposal and rebuked Labor councillors for not standing up to their State Labor mates. "We have discussed this a number of times in this Council, we have recommended deputations after deputations to the Premier and MPs representing our area, but nothing has happened, they have done absolutely nothing", declared Councillor Dickens.

Liberal Councillor Jess Diaz strongly supported Councillor Dickens, and said, Labor Councillors had to stop the rhetoric and accept that State Labor government has totally ignored the Council, a Labor-dominated Council, in the many issues including this proposition that will bankrupt the Council. He said, "they are all your Labor mates who brought miseries to the whole State and completely ignored the interests of the people of Blacktown and caved in to the interest of the developer in the guise of housing affordability. The reduction will only end up in the pockets of the developers. We have the whole community on our side in this."

In discussing the creation of CBD Advisory Committee, again nearly every Councillor denounced the state of deterioration of Blacktown CBD. The unsavory looks, the upkeep of shops, and what has come to be a loitering place that many residents avoid going to the CBD.

Councillors Diaz and Dickens were most critical of the state of disrepair and lack of development over the last 20 years. While Labor Councillor Tony Bleasdale described the current situation as grim and would be so because of financial crisis and former mayor, Councillor Allan Pendleton talked about a number of initiatives that did not materialize, including 24 and 25 storeys approved development, Councillor Diaz maintained that there has been a total neglect and that Blacktown CBD has been by-passed by economic boom and no amount of rationalizing can escape Council's responsibility for what has happened in Blacktown CBD.

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