



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

**RIGHT OF REPLY FROM MR MARK DIXON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
CITY OF WODONGA
RELATING TO STATEMENTS MADE BY MR TIM QUILTY MLC,
ON 5 AUGUST 2021**

September 2021

Ordered to be published

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APPLICATION FOR A RIGHT OF REPLY TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

- 1 On 9 August 2021, an application for a right of reply to be incorporated into the parliamentary record, pursuant to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Council was received from Mr Mark Dixon, Chief Executive Officer of Wodonga City Council.
- 2 The application relates to comments made by Mr Tim Quilty MLC during the Adjournment Debate on 5 August 2021 (*Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, page 2879).
- 3 During my consideration of the application, I gave notice of the submission in writing to Mr Quilty. I have also consulted with Mr Quilty prior to the right of reply being presented to the Council.
- 4 Having considered the application, I have determined that the right of reply should be incorporated into the parliamentary record. Standing Order 21.05 requires the response to be succinct, strictly relevant to the questions in issue and not contain anything offensive in character.
- 5 Having determined that the right of reply should be incorporated into the parliamentary record, I wish to draw attention to Standing Order 21.04 that requires me, in considering a submission under the Order, to not consider or judge the truth of any statements made in the Council or the submission.

Hon Nazih Elasmr MLC
President of the Legislative Council

8 September 2021

RIGHT OF REPLY FROM MR MARK DIXON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CITY OF WODONGA

Letter to the Hon Nazih Elasmr MLC, President, Legislative Council requesting a right of reply to allegations by the Mr Tim Quilty in the Legislative Council, 5 August 2021

Dear Mr President,

I wish to invoke my 'right of reply' in relation to comments made by Member for Northern Victoria Mr Tim Quilty on Thursday, August 5, 2021.

Mr Quilty's unsubstantiated comments, on Thursday, August 5, 2021, constitute a personal attack on my reputation as a community leader. To claim, among other things, that I am a dictator who rules by decree and shuts down debate and dissent is, quite frankly, offensive and completely lacking in factual evidence – the CEO does not make decisions at council meetings as they are always made by councillors.

I spent 30 years in the defence forces serving my country with distinction and integrity. Mr Quilty's unsubstantiated comments are very damaging to my reputation, offensive and detrimental to my wellbeing. They have been the subject of very disrespectful social media commentary since being posted on his Facebook page and in the local media. I pride myself on my ethical and collaborative leadership, not only in our community but also among my staff. Indeed, over the past two years since heading our organisation, I'm proud to have led our staff and community through, what has been for many regional areas, some very challenging and testing times. I have guided our community through bushfires and COVID, successfully closed out the investigations mentioned by Mr Quilty and through that, strengthened our governance and continued to innovate and improve on our service delivery and engagement within our community.

Mr Quilty referenced the investigation by IBAC of Wodonga Council. The council was very open and transparent with our community and released a summary about Operation Eden, as soon as it was appropriate to do so. The investigation did not substantiate any allegation of corrupt conduct by councillors. Likewise, the investigation did not establish any instances of favouritism being afforded to specific developers by public officers. The suggestion by Mr Quilty the council "operates largely in the interests of local developers" is not supported by any evidence and is an affront to councillors, council staff, local developers, not to mention to the substantial investigative work of IBAC and its officers.

The council has also acted upon and implemented all the recommendations of the Ombudsman's report from two years earlier.

We consider these matters closed and are focussed on delivering for our vibrant and transforming regional city that is showing fantastic growth.

I believe we have done, and continue to do, an exemplary job which can be seen in the continual improvement in the results of the government-led annual Community Satisfaction Survey. Across numerous measures of performance, Wodonga Council has repeatedly been rated above the state average and above the averages for most similar regional cities. These survey results are on the public record and I encourage Mr Quilty to acquaint himself with them.

Mr Quilty has made an unsubstantiated remark that I have ignored the Local Government Act, the governing rules and council resolutions. I reject that in the strongest terms. I have rejected notices of motion brought by the councillors, including

Cr Olga Quilty (his wife). We have treated each of these on their merits, seeking legal advice and advice from Local Government Victoria to ensure we were following due process and good governance. The decisions made were supported by that expert advice. In all instances, the councillors were offered assistance in drafting an alternate notice of motion, that would meet legal and governance requirements, but at no time was this offer accepted.

In summary, Mr Quilty's comments are damaging to my professional integrity and reputation as a highly ethical CEO and distinguished veteran.

Kind regards,

Mark Dixon
Chief Executive Officer
City of Wodonga