

NCC Long Term Plan: 2015-2025

20 April 2015

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(These comments are in the same order as the draft document.)

Page 6

“It has not been easy to keep the final package of projects and services affordable.”

You really haven’t achieved this. This submission states why ----

Make sure you DO engage with Ratepayers early on – you haven’t in the past on a number of critical issues.

Page 7

If you follow this plan as proposed, you will burden future generations with unsustainable Ratepayer Debt.

Page 10

The Council debt cap of 150% of revenue is irresponsible and is far too high. (You don’t HAVE to copy other NZ Local Bodies here.)

Refer page 7 comment above.

2.7% average rate increase is excessive.

Why do you have a mind set of always needing an increase?

The Councils serious financial situation would not be tolerated in Private Enterprise - you can’t experience cost overruns on projects, and then borrow more again, to finish them. There is a distinct lack of financial prudence at NCC. You HAVE to cut expenditure on the “nice to haves”, and concentrate on essentials only, for the foreseeable future.

Page 11

When the rain is bucketing down and homes are being inundated with flood water, it is cold comfort to the affected Ratepayers to know that the Disaster Recovery Fund won’t be in credit until 2023 ! ANOTHER 8 YEARS!

So even MORE money will need to be borrowed, to cover any new events, which surely must happen before then. Financial prudence says “Put more money into the fund now, and fix the infrastructure first”, before the “nice to haves”.

A few years ago I saw Poormans Stream flooding across the Main Road at the Stoke Fire Station – no-one is talking about this potential problem. Is it on your list?

Why should Ratepayers with higher value assets, have to pay higher storm water rates? Their properties create no more risk than any others, so this poorly thought -out idea should be scrapped.

Page 13

GET ON WITH THE SOUTHERN LINK ! JUST DO IT, FOR GODS SAKE !

By collectively and publicly stating their opposition to the Southern Link, those “Septic Seven” Councillors are out of touch with reality, and do not represent the view of the majority of Nelsonians. Accordingly they should not bother to stand at the next elections. It is obvious that this was a publicity stunt, and an effort to make things difficult for the Mayor.

Page 14

I am not in favour of Ratepayers subsidising the waiving of Development Contributions for inner city living developments.

Page 15

I hope the parking survey of Stoke suggests removal of the planter boxes in Strawbridge Square car park- (panel beaters have done well out of this.)

Rutherford Park Development –

This whole project should be put on hold until the Trafalgar Centre is up and running.

IT DOES NOT NEED A NEW ROAD TO THE TC - NOW THAT THE BAND ROOM IS HAVING TO GO.

You can't tell me that Council staff didn't know that the road would be restricted at the Band Rooms by the Maitai Walkway. Don't use this as an excuse to build a new ring road now. Those staff members should be sacked - this is what would happen in Private Enterprise.

The Mayors forward to this document says that local businesses are being supported, so why was hugely expensive imported hardwood timber used, instead of perfectly adequate New Zealand native? You had a chance to make this change when the cost over-run was publicised, but you didn't. I was at that Council meeting when this was discussed.

Page 16

Trafalgar Centre – don't get me started!

Remember you only have authority at this stage to spend \$3.2m, not \$9.5m.

A large portion of this has already been spent on "unreliable" (to use your new recent trendy description of abysmal performance) Engineers and Consultants.

I have tried to get from the CEO, but without success, the TOTAL COST to Ratepayers from the time of the first Earthquake Assessment ,until the present time, - ALL"unreliable" engineers and consultant costs ,meetings costs, transfer costs to Saxton Stadium etc, fares and accommodation. It appears from the CEO that this information is "not readily available". What a disgrace!

As of today's date we learn that Mr Kirby still doesn't know what he's going to recommend to the next monthly Council meeting, as to the way forward or likely costs to open the Trafalgar Centre. You are running out of time on this.

You are being watched very carefully here by a determined group of people looking after Ratepayers financial exposure. Spend the minimum to get it open, draw a deep breath and act prudently – (you certainly haven't up until now) Don't get caught up with the "nice to haves" at the Northern End. We can't afford it. Flood protection and essential infrastructure should be your first priority for Nelson.

The thought of spending \$12.8m over 10 years on Rutherford Park is not prudent at present – just increase the car parking for the TC (not reduce it as earlier plans showed)- there has been more than enough money squandered on the Maitai Walkway in this area at present.

The Marina

Good, increase the fees and reduce the debt.

Let the Sea Sports Alliance groups FUND THEIR OWN facilities –

When we had new projects in the past, this is what we had to do .

Page 17

Brook Sanctuary

Don't commit Ratepayers to any more financial support. They are going to have a major maintenance headache with the fence – BUT THEY HAVE CHOSEN TO IGNORE THE WARNINGS.

Ratepayers must not bail them out, such as happened with the Theatre Royal.

Page 18

Gondola

This is a Private Enterprise project and must NOT be assisted by Ratepayers. User pays should rule here, and don't let the Brook Camp area be compromised by the Gondola's needs.

The Brook Recreation Reserve Management Plan must be opened to public scrutiny – this didn't happen when its closure was badly attempted by the CEO without any consultation– refer to Page 6 again – “We will engage with you early on”

Community Assistance – I applaud you for pulling back financially here – as unpalatable as it will be.

Page 19

There is NO NEED to throw \$100,000 at home insulation and heating – Just get all late model enclosed wood burners fired-up again. This whole situation is a fiasco of major significance, particularly to low income Ratepayers.

School Of Music

Why has it all gone quiet? What have your “unreliable” Engineers newly discovered? Don't spend Ratepayers money on it – let the users pay, again it is the same situation as the Theatre Royal. Don't bail them out with Ratepayers cash of \$3m.

Spend it on flood protection.

Page 20 and 21

Don't spend more Ratepayers money on the Arts. Users and participants should pay.

Light Nelson DOES NOT NEED ANY Ratepayer money. Charge an entry fee (this can be relatively easily policed) and let it stand on its own feet.

Suter Gallery should not be attracting Ratepayer finance, users should pay.

Page 22

Ratepayers do not need to throw half a million dollars at attracting a Lions Tour game. This is the Rugby Unions job.

I am yet to be convinced that all the spin on local benefits derived during and following these events is in fact true ,to the extent promoted. Refer Rugby and Cricket World Cups.

Economic Development.

We do NOT need all the various groups aiming at the same goalposts. I applaud NCC for planning to reduce and consolidate these activities. (Nelson Tourism. Uniquely Nelson. EDA. Retailers Group etc.)

CBD Parking

Give us MORE not less. Encourage a parking building in the central City area. (Perhaps at the Paru Paru Road Tennis Courts. Office and retail staff would use it during the day, and Trafalgar Park, Rutherford Park and Trafalgar Centre Patrons would use it at other times.)

One hour free parking is a great idea, but I think it could be reduced to half an hour. A lot of people go to town for a single purpose – banking etc – and half an hour is plenty. This would save Ratepayers \$250,000.

CBD Enhancement

Don't spend another \$894,000 unless it is by different people than those you let loose on Bridge Street so far! Pathetic blue stripes and seats from Europe hardly encourage local business. Refer Page 4 – in Mayors Forward.

Page 24

I know a lot of Iwi involvement is Government mandated, but Ratepayers don't need any more involvement or association. This does NOT make me feel "cosy". Maori are only one group of our varied community, we are all New Zealanders.

Page 25

I am very suspicious of the proposed rate increase tables. I am appalled at the prospect of my rates going up 9.48% or \$488.00 for NO actual benefit to me at all. Our storm water goes naturally into the local stream and we provide our own water supply. Our impact on our 10 hectares is only to enhance it, AND YET YOU WANT US TO CONTRIBUTE MORE !

How can the Mayor in her Forward say "NCC is business friendly" and then hit Commercial Property Owners with a 13% increase? Nelson City CBD is dying!

Page 27

Finances

Don't you realise that NCC is in a serious financial situation ,with all the required essential storm and flood protection work needing to be done? Serious situations call for serious measures.

CUT OUT ALL UNNECESSARY EXPENDITURE FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS ON THE "NICE TO HAVES." *Get really tough here.*

You are not recognising that a large portion of Ratepayers are on fixed incomes and simply can't afford these projected Rate increases.

YOU DON'T ACTUALLY NEED TO HAVE INCREASES, just cut your expenditure as suggested. This is what Private Enterprise has to do. Current Ratepayers can't afford the borrowings you have already committed to, let alone future generations. There ARE precedents where rates have actually REDUCED . Once the essential flood protection works have been done (I don't know the detail of the extra \$30m mentioned in the Mayors Forward) then you can look at opening the cheque book again.

Stop squandering money on unnecessary projects. You have done more than enough for the "lycra brigade" and don't upgrade the Maitai Walkway from Collingwood Street to Nile Street to cater for them. They have proven that they have no respect for walkers to share the pathway, so make them use the road.

Page 28

Adjust the rate spend as follows ---

Reduce Parks and Active Recreation from 18cents to absolute bare bones.

Reduce Social from 16cents and Environment 10cents ,the same.

Spend these savings on storm water and flood protection.

Ratepayers will applaud you (instead of being apprehensive) when it is bucketing down. There WILL be more of these natural events to face.

AND STOP SUBSIDISING THOSE EMPTY BUSES !

Page 29

Net debt always seems to climb, and I feel it is irresponsible to have a ceiling of 150% of income. Abide by the Local Government 2002 Rules. If you must, use this as an excuse to "Act prudently to manage the City" (refer page 30)

Page 34

Flooding

Due to discussions with two senior NCC Staff at a local residents Meeting regarding flooding issues in Enner Glynn Valley, I was dismayed to learn that Resource Consent Issues prevent quick and easy extraction of shingle build-up, which would allow a quick fix of further risk.

If the rules are a problem – GET THEM CHANGED.

If it's not the local rules ,then change the Government Rules.

This is what our Local MP is for. DO IT!

FINALLY -----

“LISTEN TO YOUR RATEPAYERS !”

The vast majority of us have the City's best interest at heart.

As my Barber recently said:

“This present Council is only going to have a legacy of –

Stuffing up the St Vincent Street traffic, because of the Cycle Way.

Major fiasco of the Trafalgar Centre closure, with “unreliable “Engineers.

Gold plated Maitai Walkway.

Conversion of the two inner city car parks into camping grounds.

Attempt to close the Brook Camp.

Poor financial management – Everyman Records fiasco.

Won't allow dry firewood to be used to keep people warm.”

And the list still keeps growing !

I WILL NOT BE MAKING A VERBAL SUBMISSION THIS TIME –

I will NOT put myself through public humiliation again by the Mayor and CEO, - by them disallowing me the full 10 minutes allocated to me by Council Staff prior to the hearing. This prevented me from making my full submission which I had spent a considerable amount of time and thought on.

THIS TREATMENT OF ME WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN !

Thank you for your time to read this Submission – IT IS APPRECIATED.

Stuart Walker

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Stoke