



BRRAG

Belmont Resident and Ratepayer Action Group Inc.

“To provide an effective voice for the people of Belmont”

21 April 2020

The Mayor and Councillors
City of Belmont
Belmont WA 6104

COVID19 Response to Ordinary Council Meetings

Dear Mayor Marks and Councillors

As a result of COVID19, the City of Belmont along with other local governments, will not be having their Ordinary Council Meetings open to the public. We are requesting that the City of Belmont make satisfactory urgent arrangements for the participation of the residents at these meetings.

According to the City's website, questions for Public Question Time must be written and submitted on the Monday lunchtime prior to the meeting. The most disturbing part is that the meeting recordings will not be available presumably, until the following Friday week as per the normal pattern of having the recordings available.

The issue of meeting recordings has been one that has gone on for many years. Last year the residents called a SEC wherein our motion asked for Live Streaming of council meetings. Whilst council was not prepared to respond to this, they instead as of February 2020 made available audio recordings on their website. It has been suggested by a senior member of staff, they may need editing prior to being available.

We are asking that the councillors support a COVID19 response to Live Stream these meetings for the duration of the current crisis. We ask that we are allowed to participate on the live stream with Public Question Time and understand the need for the questions to be submitted within the required time frame so responses are available at the meeting.

Many organisations such as gyms, dance studios and offices are now continuing their business by way of apps such as Zoom and Skype, so that interaction can occur during this time of isolation. Some of these businesses have nowhere near the resources of an organisation such as the City of Belmont and they are all adapting extremely well. They also adapted in very quick time.

The closure of the City of Belmont as far as their meetings go, should not be used as an opportunity to “get things done with no one watching”. Transparency has always been one of the main reasons we (along with some councillors over the years) have pushed to get meetings recorded. A ten day wait for residents to get access to the meetings does not demonstrate that the council has much interest in the residents and it is a very bad look. We should be included in Live Streaming as an interim measure whilst we are confined to our homes. This is an opportunity for people to become

interested in what goes on at council.

Also be advised that in the likely event we do either submissions or deputations, which are not likely to be read out at meetings, our intent once a copy is given to all councillors is to do our own recording of the submission/deputation and make it available to the residents of Belmont. We want the residents to be informed of what we are doing. We believe that the residents also expect transparency from the council. The councillors can ensure transparency happens if they support the COVID19 response we propose for meetings at this time.

Please be advised this letter will be made available to the residents of Belmont on the BRRAG website as will any response to this letter.

Kindest regards
Lisa Hollands
President BRRAG

, Western Australia, 6105
Australia