



BRRAG

Belmont Resident and Ratepayer Action Group Inc.

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

1st June 2020

The Mayor and Councillors
City of Belmont
Belmont WA 6104

Dear Mayor and Councillors

On the 12 May 2020, Minister Templeman issued a press release which advised a letter went to all Mayors, Shire Presidents and Commissioners. In his letter urging local councils to take a leadership role, he stated that local councils were to be “Moving back to conducting council and shire chamber meetings in person - while observing social distancing at all times - and with the public attending where possible.”

<https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/05/Local-Government-sector-urged-to-take-leadership-role.aspx>

The City of Belmont Ordinary Council Meeting was held on Tuesday 26 May 2020, wherein the public were once again excluded.

At the March Ordinary Council Meeting, chambers had been re-arranged with staff and councillors chairs moved to accommodate the required social distancing. There was only two or three people in the public gallery, wherein seats had been appropriately spaced. I was personally advised if more than six or seven people attended therefore making social distancing compromised, the foyer would be used as there was microphones and speakers available in that area for use when large numbers of people attend meetings.

Given that the public gallery had already been “converted” to accommodate the new social distancing rules and little would have required attention for the public to attend, the only conclusion that could be taken, is that the City of Belmont is trying to exclude the public for as long as possible.

Other councils who have included the public since the issue of the directive from the Minister include, Town of Cambridge, Town of Port Hedland, Shire of Toodyay, Shire of Chittering, Shire of Brookton, Shire of Capel.

In addition to the failure of the City of Belmont by not complying to the Minister's Directive, Mr Mayor refused to take questions from Janet Gee because they were according to Mr Garrett, 7 minutes late to the deadline you set. Therefore they were not minuted and those questions and responses were not made available to the public. The deadline that you set was not even done by way of motion accepted by all councillors and is inconsistent with the Standing Orders which make no mention of time frame, other than before the meeting.

Unlike in some other localities, the councillors at the City of Belmont are the ones that select the Mayor, not the public. As you all are councillors elected by the people and therefore should be representing the people, it is time you start questioning the Mayor as to why he is flouting directives and making new rules that are inconsistent with the Standing Orders that you have all voted for.

It may well be that you were unaware of the correspondence from the Minister to the Mayor. Now you have been made aware of it, you should act upon it. The Mayor as the person you have chosen to speak on behalf of the Council, is simply not supporting the rights of the residents. It is time the residents become very aware of this and time the public had a say in who their Mayor is.

Please inform us if your intent is to open up the June Ordinary Council Meeting to the public

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

Kindest regards

Lisa Hollands
Chairperson BRRAG