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MEDIA RELEASE

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More conflict at Geelong City Council

Member for Western Victoria, David Koch, is calling for the Minister for Local Government, Richard Wynn MP, to initiate an independent inquiry into the actions of Councillor Lou Brazier.

Speaking in Parliament this week, David Koch said that the flagrant disregard of any councillor who did not declare a prior conflict or pecuniary interest in carrying out civic duties must be independently investigated and not left to an in-house departmental review.

“Nothing but a thorough and independent investigation into the actions of Corio Ward Councillor Lou Brazier will determine her motives in trying to override council officers’ recommendations for ratepayer support of organisations she has an affiliation with and that employ her.

“Councillor Brazier, who two weeks ago moved to donate a \$1 million block of council owned land for CREATE to relocate from Osborne House to a green field development at the DW Hope Centre and to move thousands of dollars towards her employer, Neighbourhood House, without prior declaration of a conflict of interest, has blatantly ignored her responsibilities to Geelong ratepayers.

“It beggars belief that even though she made a prior declaration of a conflict of interest two years ago in relation to another matter involving Neighbourhood House, she chose not to this time.

“A generous person might suggest a lapse of memory or a lack of judgment, but those who know and have been watching Councillor Brazier’s performance over recent times, have absolutely no doubt of her intent and the five councillors who supported her two motions are also not faultless and must have known better.

“Councillor Brazier’s later unrepentant outburst and slur where she claimed those who opposed her reminded her of the Bali bombers who are poised “smiling and waiting in the background to attack”, reveals her contempt of councillors who take their municipal responsibilities seriously.

“There is no excuse for this behaviour and all councillors should be well aware that after previous misdemeanours at Geelong City, information sessions were held to avert poor judgement and unsatisfactory civic practice, and to enforce adherence to the Local Government Act.

“The City of Greater Geelong will continue to have difficulty in restoring ratepayers’ confidence when councillors are either unaware, ignore or deliberately put their interests before public duties.

“Fortunately for Geelong ratepayers, responsible councillors who voted against these motions have been successful in moving a rescission notice at this week’s special meeting, endorsing the recommendation of council officers of the four-stage process where a feasibility study, comprehensive business plan, assessment of land and building requirements, and identification of funding capabilities and opportunities are required where financial support is requested.

“I have called on the Minister for Local Government to make Councillor Brazier’s nomination null and void and for him to move quickly in independently investigating the latest shenanigans at Geelong to resolve this deliberate misuse of councillor privilege”, David Koch said.

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