

Summary of Cr Abrahams's speech on 13 parking meter petitions in Council on 23 February 2011

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I rise to enter under first group of petitions all of which relate to businesses and the impact of the parking meters on businesses, whether they are in Kangaroo Point, Vulture Street near the Boundary Street Shopping Centre, Vulture Street down near the Hardgrave Road Shopping Centre or in the Woolloongabba precinct near Deshon and Nile Streets.

These petitions all came to Council over a period of three months, starting at the beginning of the roll out of the meters. Every one of those petitions have a common theme which is there was no consultation. The petitioners seek this consultation, they are powerless in the roll out of the parking meters and they wish to have dialogue. That was the common theme that was in each one of these submissions.

The other theme was genuine concern about the loss of their quick-stop custom disappearing because of the parking meters as that was their experience as they were filling in these petitions. The third issue was that there was history of these businesses working with Council officers to find the balance in parking restrictions and that was ignored when these parking meters were installed in many circumstances.

A total of 895 petitioners signed the petitions that we are going to consider today. That is an extraordinary number of business people to mobilise to sign a petition because they're busy people. They don't have the time to organise, so it is really quite amazing to have this response. I recognise it as a considerable level of concern within those different communities. The fact they have the same theme emphasises the roll out of the parking meters has been an appalling process.

What makes it even more irksome to me as their representative was that just two weeks ago, the Liberal National Party administration brought to the Council their Community Engagement Policy. Central to that policy was a "two way relationship" and "active participation where a partnership" is developed..

I can accurately say no business in The Gabba Ward developed a two way relationship or partnership. Business owners were simply told parking meters were to be installed. They were not consulted and they have not been consulted.

Cr McLachlan argued that there is no problem as drivers can pay 20 cents and get five minutes of parking so businesses should not suffer. Cr McLachlan businesses are telling me that customers are just not dropping in for their coffees and newspapers. They are feeling the impact.

The Community Engagement Policy also states "Political engagement. The Lord Mayor, relevant chairpersons and local Councillors have an integral role to play in all community engagement process."

I wish to put on the record (that neither) the Lord Mayor nor Cr Quirk have spoken to or met with the petitioners. The Liberal National Party has a policy that they completely ignored. This is a disgrace.

Cr McLachlan said the petition had led to changes. I refer to Petition G which considers parking in Vulture Street near Mick's Nuts Deli. That deli relies on a quick turn-around of customers. In response to the petition, two 15 minute free car parking spaces have been installed. I appreciate this action but it is not sufficient as the parking meters are preventing the quick turn over of parking spaces.

Each petition response states a standard phrase "Council makes every effort to balance the needs of local residents, business, visitors and commuters". This is no the case. The Lord Mayor is not listening. He has not heeded the petitioners' concerns.

Cr McLachlan said some changes to the meters have been made and I agree with that statement. Those changes are further evidence of the opposition to the parking meters and the failed roll out

process. So don't, Councillor McLachlan, you say this indicates there has been a consultation process. This is merely patching up what has been a disastrous process.

The reason why is clear. The Lord Mayor calculated revenue from the parking meters and nothing was going to get in the way of him generating that revenue.

Chairman: Cr Abrahams, I do not see anything in these petitions - and I have read them - about revenue.

Cr Abrahams Okay.

Chairman: Could you come back to the petitions before us please?

Councillor Abrahams: I shall indeed and I won't mention grab for cash because that would be inappropriate and you'd pull me into line.

Chairman: And I will sit you down. That's exactly correct, Cr Abrahams and one more time and you will be sitting down.

Cr Abrahams: Okay. I shall talk about the balance, the balance between residential needs, commercial needs and commuter needs as stated in the petition response. I table this photograph of Hawthorne Street, Woolloongabba.



It is the residential parking. if you look, there is parking meters on the right of the street and on the left of the street and as far as the eye can see there is no-one using the parking meters. That was taken this morning at 8:30am. A resident sent me a similar photo two months ago. That is the norm in this street now. Where is the balance for residents, businesses and commuters. There is none. People are just not using the parking meters. There is no balance and these parking meters are not even generating the Lord Mayor revenue.

These petitions were collected about three months ago. Yet today Council heard from John Morrow from the Protestant Hall in Merton Street, Woolloongabba. His speech shows continued concern about the parking meters. There is continued concern for residents as parking meters in residential streets means visitors are not coming to their homes and loss of amenity.

The Lord Mayor has not responded to the lack of consultation. Instead he hides behind a unanimous vote in the Council Chamber to use parking meter review to fund new footpaths. When this motion was brought to Council, I had no knowledge of how many parking meters were to be installed in The Gabba Ward, nor which streets, nor the hours of operation and that the community would have no say in where the meters were to go. I did not know which businesses or residents would be affected.

I did not know that 9 hour parking meters would be installed next to the Holman Street ferry terminal in Kangaroo Point. I did not know it would take the Annie Street car park 14 months to get appropriate signage.

The consultation was disgraceful. I present a photograph showing a parking ticket on a car at the same time as an information brochure after the meters had been installed in Jane Street, West End.



Today we are considering petitions signed by almost 900 petitioners saying the process is flawed and we object to the parking meters.

The bottom line for every business owner and resident who have parking meters in their street, is that they lived in either the Central Traffic Area or The Gabba Traffic Area. This means there was a two hour parking limit in their street. No-one could park longer than two hours without a parking permit.

If this parking restriction was enforced, there would be no need for parking meters. The parking meters do not add value for the residents, they do not improve their quality of life, they could have tradespersons and friends come to their homes.

Finally the Liberal National Party Councillors think that by bringing all the petitions to Council on one day that they minimise this issue. They are completely wrong. There is no support for the parking meters.