

2016 COUNCIL ELECTIONS – MBCA QUESTIONS

Pete Faulkner, Independent Mayoral Candidate – Speaking notes

1. What is your understanding of the role and responsibilities of the position of Mayor and what skills and experience would you bring to fulfil this role?

Running a large organisation with over 300 people is very different to running a small business; and I have experience managing both large and small. Improving efficiency and effectiveness of large organisations involves changing cultures; that is not an easy job but it is essential if we are to make real change.

The Mayor's job is the linkage between the Councillors and the Executive team...similar to the role of a Board Chair. They are also the face and voice of the community and need to be able to take on that role.

There are at least four primary skills our Mayor needs..

Skill 1 - Leadership

I've sat on a number of Boards and Chaired many; led large teams of workers in a large commercial operation; led community groups and from an early age displayed leadership capabilities as Rugby Captain at school and a CSM in the Cadet Force

Skill 2 - Strategic Thinking

For the past 10 years I have provided strategic guidance and assistance to many organisations, NFPs, local orgs, commercial businesses, start-ups. I have sat on, and still sit on, Boards whose role has been the development and implementation of strategic change and cultural shift.

Skill 3 - Communication

Our Mayor is the face and voice of our region. They need to communicate effectively at all levels; local community, council, state and federal and business. I am an excellent communicator. My written

and verbal skills are used professionally by many organisations. I am a regular speaker at business events, my economics blog is often quoted in the media and read by local business people, political leaders and investors.

Skill 4 - Listening

That is a large part of my current job: to listen and do community consultation for local councils, NFPs, community groups and commercial operations. I am highly regarded by our clients and known as an excellent listener and synthesiser of opinions.

2. What strategies would you consider implementing to improve the efficiency of the CCRC workforce?

Every organisation has some fat, particularly those with a similar team at the top for some time. First step is to find it. Review of dept. budgets and processes...identify efficiencies. The trick is to put changes in place that ensure the fat doesn't simply return! That requires a cultural shift; culture needs to come from the top and it needs to be consistent throughout the organisation. Changing culture is not an easy job...it requires experience and expertise; and ability to think differently and to innovate.

3. What do you think could be done to ensure the CCRC executives are accountable for 'stuff up's' in their department?

Problem is that in most organisations the processes for accountability exist but are poorly applied. I will ensure the processes are applied and performance reviews are effective. I have worked with a number of clients to formulate and apply performance review processes, so have the expertise and experience. As Mayor I would certainly review this with the CEO and Council to determine if the processes in place are operating adequately.

4. Are you prepared to examine and change the system of performance evaluation of the Executives?

PR is the responsibility of the CEO and the Mayor must ensure it is applied effectively. If there is evidence that it is not working then the Council can instruct the CEO to implement change. I would certainly do that if required. I have no evidence that the system is not working BUT few large organisations in Australia do it well so I will be on high alert and would use my experience to make change if needed.

5. Do you think the current system for awarding contracts is effective and if not how do you think it can be improved?

The Council has ultimate responsibility to ensure value for money for ratepayers. There is a balance that needs to be struck between giving priority to local contractors and attaining value for money...the current policy allows for some preference to be allocated to locals...if that hasn't struck the right balance then we need to reconsider. We need to look at some means of factoring in the economic benefit to the community that flows from contracts being awarded locally.

We must remember that there are serious legal issues at play here too. If Council is seen to be unfair in their deliberations, and give unfair advantage to any one contractor, then Council (and therefore ratepayers) may well find themselves on the wrong end of legal action.

I would encourage a review of the awarding of large contracts to determine if, with sufficient expertise in Council (or sourced by Council), we could not split some of the larger contracts into smaller units to allow smaller local contractors an opportunity to compete.

6. Will you support a 'Green Cemetery' for Mission Beach?

Yes...so long as suitable land can be found and the community support exists.

7. Would you support a “no plastic bag policy” for the Cassowary Coast?

Yes...but the impetus for such a policy must come from the community working with all the local retailers. We should also be aware of recent studies which suggest that the problem lies not so much with large supermarkets providing bags (as these tend to make it home and are extensively used as alternatives to bin liners) but rather bags for disposable purchases...something to consider.

8. If elected, what would you do to help support and sustain the unique natural environment of Mission Beach?

A robust planning scheme (that is fairly and rigorously upheld) combined with a shared vision for the area. I want to initiate a process of “Visioning” for all our local centres so that the various communities can come together with a shared view of our future.

Given the very high %age of our region that has high environmental value, I would like to discuss with State Govt. the options around State Nature Refuges. I will advocate for some degree of rates relief for landowners who establish **new** Nature Refuges, *with that relief provided by the State, rather than Council, coffers*. Nature Refuges protect environmental values that are crucial at a State and National level...I will argue that the financial burden of such protection should not be loaded exclusively onto the shoulders of our ratepayers.

I am aware of the fact that the Cassowary has been listed on the Federal 20 Birds in 2010 list and that this suggests there might be the potential for funding in the areas of habitat protection, traffic control and dogs. I would certainly be keen to ensure that the CCRC makes full use of any such funding and would be open to suggestions from experts as to initiatives that could have real benefits for the cassowary and our region.

9. Scenario: “As a tourism destination Mission Beach makes a significant contribution to the Cassowary Coast economy. In order to attract visitors to stay and hopefully to return, the respective villages that make up Mission Beach need to look attractive and welcoming. Visitors have often commented that Mission beach looks untidy and tired, with overgrown entrances, weed inundation on footpaths and beach/parkland in need of weed control and more regular mowing.” Given this scenario and considering that Council works within a tight budget, what strategies would you implement to improve this situation?

Tourism is vital to not just MB but the whole CC. MB has a unique appeal and for many that appeal is its “laid back” and “undeveloped” nature. However, that is not to say that the place should look untidy and uncared for.

Some of the issues outlined in the scenario are actually the responsibility of property owners. We can all name blocks of private land that are a major eye-sore to the region. It is a very difficult, expensive and drawn out process for CCRC to address those individuals. As a community we need to make it clear that kind of behaviour is not acceptable...it comes down to a pride in our town and in our region. This is a region wide issue.

We need local visions for what we want our local centres to look like in 10, 20 years’ time. That process can be led by CCRC but will be determined by the communities...when communities have ownership and understanding of the direction we are taking we mitigate against much of the inter-area fighting and we ensure that CCRC’s decisions are leading us towards that shared vision.

10. **A research survey recently conducted by the MBCA indicated that a large majority of members are opposed to the Perry Harvey Jetty/Overtopping Breakwater design, which is meant to improve recreational and commercial boating safety. What are your views on the suggested alternative, which involves the consolidation of all boating facilities at Clump Point and if elected, would you support such an alternative?**

The process by which we have arrived at this position has been seriously flawed. CCRC, in my opinion, should have taken the harder leadership and advocacy role earlier rather than simply trying to wash their hands of responsibility by claiming “it’s nothing to do with us”. But...now we are where we are.

The expert opinion relied upon by the State Govt tells us that the over-topping breakwater will work in making the Jetty usable in the vast majority of instances. I am certainly aware of others claims that this advice is wrong. I am not a marine engineer and therefore, unless presented with compelling evidence to the contrary, tend to attach heavy credence to such expert advice. However, we also know that there are potential issues surrounding the Perry Harvey Jetty which might raise the question as to why we would be considering significant expenditure on an asset that may already be compromised. I also note a recent report to Council from an independent consultant suggests that, the “jetty does have more issues than would be considered ideal for a structure less than 3 years old, however with a commitment to ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation as required, the structure will perform as a fit-for-purpose structure.”

I am aware, and have been extensively briefed, of an alternative, fully costed proposal which has been presented to the State Govt. **This proposal would appear to me to be an attractive alternative to the solution currently on the table.**

But, I have not had the opportunity to discuss this proposal with the State Dept. and I will not be making a firm commitment either way until

I've done that. **I will commit to going to visit with the State Dept to review the alternative proposals in light of community concerns and the potential issues (and apparent extra maintenance costs) surrounding the jetty; to get the facts, untangle the options and discuss the expert options first hand before making a firm decision.**