

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

December 23, 1972

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In reply please quote:

Alderman Andrew Briger,  
Chairman, City Development Committee,  
The Council of the City of Sydney,  
Town Hall,  
SYDNEY 2000

*Dear Andrew:*

As I have mentioned to you previously in discussion, I would like you and Leo to know how increasingly peturbing it has been, over recent months, that a number of Action Plan "Project Directors" have been developing anti-Council, anti-Strategic Plan attitudes. These changes in attitude have been accompanied by an increase in the number of statements which I have heard from a number of individuals which are directed personally against individual Aldermen and the policies of the current majority party.

In any such relatively large team of individuals as are now working on so many Action Plans, there will always be a certain amount of grumbling and criticism of the leadership. However, it seems to me that the situation has gradually been getting out of hand, and beyond your control as Council's empowered Liaison Officer in charge of the entire Action Planning process. It also seems to be beyond the control of Michael Llewellyn-Smith. The behaviour of some of my own staff who have been serving as "Project Directors" has been causing me concern for some months.

There were two blatant displays of individual egoism at the November Action Planning Forum. First, Jim Coleman took advantage of his time on the rostrum to try to make a joke of the Strategic Plan. He alleged that it had said silly things about Ultimo and he ignored, and entirely failed to mention, what should have been the basis for the entire Ultimo Action Plan, namely "Action Priority 12F". It was

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no wonder that Cecil Kyle found it necessary to jump to his feet and draw attention to one of the major planks of your party's policy, and one of the important priorities of the Strategic Plan, namely, that the Ultimo precinct should not be used as a dumping ground for a tertiary education complex of 60,000 students. In my summing up at the end of the Forum, I set out to correct this situation by referring a number of times to the importance, to the City as a whole, of Action Priority 12F of the Strategic Plan.

At the time, I noted that Mrs. Lyneham had, during her presentation of the West Surry Hills Industrial Precinct Survey, expressed attitudes which came close to conflict with Council's policies, but it was not until later that I remembered how antagonistic she had been when she had previously attended a meeting with Cecil Kyle who had made submissions on behalf of the Central Civic Group.

However, no overt publicity has yet arisen over policies with regard to the Surry Hills Industrial Zone which would conflict with Council's policies for the Strategic Plan.

But I was shocked to discover, on the evening of the Forum, that Darrel Conybeare had given interviews to the Daily Mirror, The Australian, the Sunday Mirror and The Sunday Australian, which resulted in a large number of headlines and a considerable number of column inches in all those papers to the effect that the City Council's Project Director advocated the licensing of prostitutes and their general encouragement as a permanent feature of Kings Cross. As you have pointed out to me subsequently, this publicity has led many people to believe that these are the policies of the City Council. I have been told that Darrel was interviewed on Mike Willesee's "A Current Affair" TV programme and also on one or two other television news programmes, during which he repeated and, in fact, strengthened his statements regarding the licensing and encouragement of prostitutes within the Kings Cross Precinct.

Since none of these ideas had ever been discussed with me, I can only imagine that Darrel was motivated by a desire for personal publicity. Inasmuch as he gave so many interviews to the press and TV, there is no question that the desire to shock and to achieve notoriety was quite deliberate.

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You yourself have pointed out to me your concern over the jocular and defeatist attitude displayed at the Action Planning Forum by Terry Byrnes with regard to Pymont, and the truculent tone of letters sent to the Town Clerk by Neil Ingham and Peter Casey with regard to the "Palisades" development.

I have had disturbing reports from Peter Lindwall of what has happened at meetings of "Project Directors" convened by Council's Principal Planning Officer. Ever since these meetings began, I have heard that "project directors" squabble among themselves and do everything they can to score points off one another, off the Council and off the Strategic Plan. Michael Llewellyn-Smith has understandably and perhaps excusably found it difficult to restrain and control a number of personalities involved.

My own function of co-ordination and/or control over the Action Planning process was, at the beginning of 1972, severely diluted by the procedures adopted, by which individual persons were nominated "project directors", answerable directly to Council through Michael Llewellyn-Smith. When I have, on a number of occasions over recent months, attempted to remonstrate ever so gently with my own employees, on several of the matters you have complained about, some have told me in no uncertain terms that these matters have nothing to do with me and that the "Project Directors" are quite independent professionals, who wish to clearly state their own views on policy matters, notwithstanding the policies of their employer, or their employer's client.

Following the meetings of "Project Directors" on December 20, 21 and 22, I was told by several of those attending that Council's Principal Planning Officer had spoken of Council's allocations for Action Planning for 1973. I was told that these allocations had been described as "quite irrational" and that the Principal Planning Officer disclaimed any responsibility for the way they had been made up.

I have, up until recently, overlooked a good deal of this nonsense. However, I now fear that unless strong action is taken to squash the egoism and desire for notoriety of individual "Project Directors", the whole situation will become impossible in 1973 and by the critical date of September 1974, the whole Strategic and Action Planning process could be in a highly embarrassing shambles.

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It now seems to me that the 1974 Strategic Plan should co-ordinate, and in fact incorporate, all of the results of Action Planning, as well as the review and revision of the 1971 Strategic Plan.

This would mean that the 1974 Strategic Plan, to be published in May 1974, should be a compendious, single volume containing and officially presenting the results of all Action Plans. Individual Action Plan Reports should only be regarded as drafts to be edited for inclusion in the 1974 Strategic Plan. This would avoid the conflicting, overlapping chaos which could arise if a whole number of individual precinctal plans are published independently. In this way, the 1974 Plan can be more of a full-scale detailed City-Development Plan. It will then overcome previous criticism that the 1971 Plan was too vague. Indeed, it could be put forward and accepted as a richly detailed and highly positive document. It would also be a single document which can be more easily compiled and edited by myself, under the direct guidance and supervision of yourself, as Council's empowered Liaison Officer.

Please give these matters some thought during the January holidays. I shall be in Adelaide, Perth and Melbourne between December 28 and January 14. I attach a detailed itinerary which gives you my addresses and telephone numbers for each day of my travels.

Could we get together on, say, Monday January 22 in Sydney? Perhaps you might be kind enough to let my secretary know a convenient place and time for us to meet.

Yours sincerely,

Blind copies:  
Ald. Leo Port,  
Mr. D. Gazzard.