

Introduction

The Indigo Shire proposes consolidating its administrative facilities and council chambers on a single site. We want YCDCo Shareholders to play a positive part in this Indigo Shire process.

Our concerns are many and varied, including:

- One of the posters we put up around Yackandandah when offering shares in YCDCo asked:

'where do you draw the line?': Banks (closed) Yackandandah Shire (closed) Petrol station (almost closed)

Should we add one more:
Shire offices (closed?)

- The Shire has a responsibility to all parts of the Shire – we support extending Shire services in Chiltern, Barnawartha, etc, and restoring services in towns which have already lost services such as Kiewa/Tangambalanga.
- As the Consultant's report concludes, the Shire's Yackandandah offices bring \$290k of direct benefits to Yackandandah – can we afford to lose this?
- Why would you borrow \$6m, with annual interest costs between \$300k and \$600k to save \$130k per year? This equates to a rate rise of 3% on top of the shire's projected annual rate rises of 5%.
- The projected \$135k per annum saving cannot be supported – with figures that appear to be presented to support the desired outcome.
- The administrative offices are in need of refurbishment – but do they need to spend \$6m to achieve this?
- The councillors could make use of improved chambers – again, does \$6m need to be spent to achieve this?

Consequently, we are distributing information in an effort to get you to think about what is proposed and the consequences for your community. If you find that the information presented concerns you, then we encourage you to let someone (councillors and politicians) know.

Why are YCDCo getting involved?

YCDCo is a Company. It has not been democratically elected to represent the Yackandandah community. However, we have decided to run a public education campaign on this issue, as it differs from others, such as unpopular subdivisions, raised since our share issue in 2003:

1. Under Corporations law, all companies are required to act in the best interests of the Company, and of its Shareholders. The Shire's plans to consolidate are clearly not in YCDCo's interests – the Shire are our single largest customer (more than \$120,000 per annum), excluding fuel sales to staff and of supplementary items such as drinks, snacks and cigarettes.
2. Our Constitution requires us to act for the 'social, economic and cultural benefit of Yackandandah and its surrounds'. The Shire's plans are clearly not in the best social, economic or cultural interests of Yackandandah.
3. Our shareholders have instructed us to. A resolution was passed unanimously at our 2007 Annual General Meeting instructing the Board to do what it can legally to educate the community on the implications of the Shire's proposal.

What do we have against Beechworth & Chiltern?

Absolutely nothing! We believe the Shire has a responsibility to the entire Shire – not just Chiltern, or Yackandandah for that matter. We accept that Beechworth and Yackandandah have more than their fair share of administrative facilities at this point in time, but consolidating the whole lot at somewhere like Chiltern is hardly in the best interests of Beechworth, Kiewa, Tangambalanga, Wooragee or Yackandandah. The population of Yackandandah/Kiewa/Tangambalanga is only 19% less than Beechworth/Stanley. Chiltern, even if combined with Barnawartha, is 40% smaller.

To maintain a meaningful linkage to all areas under its control, we strongly make the case that the shire needs to maintain a real operational & economic presence in all major population centres.

A closed ‘open’ process

Despite the promise of an open process, the first two drafts of the consultants report were not made available. Council’s process has always involved selection of a suitable site for consolidation; at no stage was the idea of retaining multiple offices considered. Why not?

One nail too many

Yackandandah has clearly received less than its fair share of Shire services in recent years:

- The waste transfer facility has been closed;
- Indigo Way has been closed;
- Minimal contribution to the Folk Festival, in stark contrast to significant contributions to several of the Beechworth festivals, for example the Golden Horseshoes festival has been majority shire funded since its inception.
- Reduced staffing and hours at the Visitor Information Centre when Shire Officers failed to properly monitor their expenditure; and
- No contribution to the local newspaper – Yackity Yak – despite offers of regular space and sponsorship acknowledgment.

Can Yackandandah afford \$290,000+?

The Shire’s own report (page 21) suggests that the closure of the Shire’s Yackandandah offices will cost the town \$290,000 in Shire expenditure alone. We believe the actual loss will be higher, and that the report inadequately accounts for:

- Wages;
- Staff lunches & other discretionary staff spending;
- Meeting catering and other refreshments;
- Shire fuel;
- Staff fuel;
- Stationery, office cleaning;
- Banking; and,
- The multiplier effect – grocery and bakery purchases lead to additional employment, which in turn, leads to additional expenditure in Yackandandah.

Even if the \$290,000 figure is correct – how many years will it take Yackandandah to recover from this loss?

One Shire

We believe the Indigo Shire has a responsibility to extend its services, employment and spending across the whole Shire, not just Chiltern, Beechworth or Yackandandah. If this costs as little as \$135,000 per annum, a figure which we dispute, we believe that most rate-payers would accept these costs in return for better services.

Where to from here?

If the Shire's proposal concerns you, then make difference by writing to the following people.

**Brendan McGrath
CEO Indigo Shire
Po Box 28
Beechworth Vic 3747**

**Indigo Shire Councillors
PO Box 28
Beechworth Vic 3747**

**Hon Richard Wynn MP
Victorian Minister for Local Government
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Vic 3000**

**Mr Bill Tilley MLA
Member for Benambra
14 Station Street
Wodonga Vic 3690**

**Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP
Member for Indi
117 Murphy Street
Wangaratta Vic 3677**

One More Thing....

Our current Council has decided to centralise their operations and provide themselves with new chambers, realistically the only way to change their decision is to change the makeup of the Council itself. Shire elections take place in November 2008, if you have ever considered standing for Council, perhaps now is the time.....