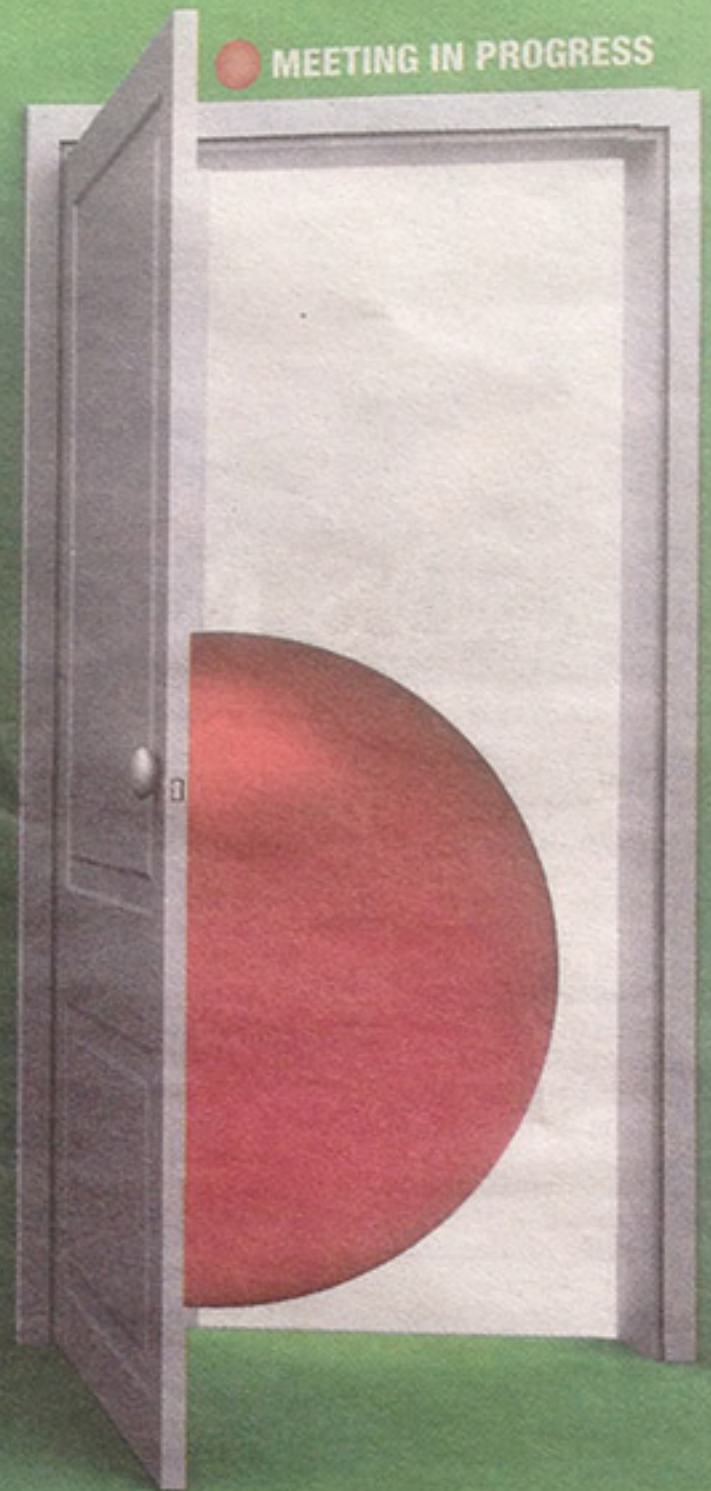


COUNCIL CHAMBER POT

- Councillor, do you have a property interest?
- Have a personal interest on an item in today's agenda?
- Yes? Great, take a seat. We're open for business.



WHERE do our city councillors stand on having a perceived conflict of interest when voting on a development?

Are we likely to see our councillors stand up and declare a personal interest or leave the chamber?

Mayor Tom Tate has brought on this debate after his Deputy, Donna Gates, raised a development dispute.

In what she later admitted had been her most challenging week, Cr Gates spoke about an email sent to all councillors suggesting an "unnamed councillor" at the planning committee had voted on a development item despite owning property in the area.

Before full council could tick off on it, Cr Gates outed herself, explaining her knowledge of city-wide planning matters and having to represent the views of other residents compelled her to stay in the planning room.

As she now considered leaving the chamber, the mayor weighed in.

"It has city-wide implications," Cr Tate told her. "I got property all over the city. We got reports - we have to

look at the new town plan, we're going to look at the light rail corridor, the Southport PDA.

"Why I'm speaking up on this councillors, I don't want any councillor to feel... bullied into leaving the room.

"My attitude is if somebody out there is sending emails to all of you and trying to get you out of the room because they perceive that you may have one view or another before the debate even commences - I think it's a poor day for democracy."

The mayor asked council chief executive officer Dale Dickson to advise Cr Gates.

While she did not have a material personal interest or self interest, there could be a "conflict of interest".

"At the end of the day it's a matter of her judgment, and her judgment alone," Mr Dickson said.

The Register of Interests for councillors shows Cr Gates has a portfolio limited to a family home, an investment property and a Westpac savings account.

Most of the "interest" headings do

not require her to make an entry.

By comparison, the mayor is a multi-millionaire hotelier and strong in politics (LNP), clubs (turf, yacht, golf) and business (chamber).

He is a shareholder in 19 companies, a director of 11 and owns a family home, residential property and two units.

His family operates the Islander Hotel, he has a stake in the old Surfers Paradise Bowls Club and lives on a canal.

His council is guaranteed, in future, to discuss development on the light rail route which passes the hotel, potential new casino options near the bowls greens and the impact of flooding from Seaway dredging on waterfront homes.

Cr Tate indicated his own plans by advising Cr Gates not to leave the room, telling her: "I urge you to think about it."

She did and stayed, but gained no satisfaction from being in the spotlight.

"I've given 100 per cent while doing this job. Self interest has never been any motive. I'm entirely offended by the suggestion," she said.

“

Why I'm speaking up on this councillors, I don't want any councillor to feel ... bullied into leaving the room.