

## Tate's 50 Epic Fails (2012 – 2020)

In the true spirit of rigorous investigative journalism, the Gold Coast Advocate shines a spotlight on "TATE'S 50 EPIC FAILS" from 2012 – 2020, in a Five-Part series of articles.

The following is a summary of the main points.

### PART ONE

20/03/2020

**FAIL 1** -Tate told Surfers Paradise Bowling Club members he would do a 'Crackerjack' and save their ailing club (2010). He and business associates acquired the Club and its bowling greens and shut it down completely. The elderly members have not been able to bowl on it since and some of the site is earmarked for a highrise apartment block development, "Waterglow" (2010 – 2020).

**FAIL 2** - Mayor Tate in his first term refused to meet with NBN reps for more than a few minutes with the potential loss of 150 jobs & the saving of millions of dollars in ratepayers' funds by not negotiating the laying of NBN cable at same time as Light Rail track (2012).

**FAIL 3** - Tate promised in his 2012 pre-election policies to introduce free parking on weekends & public holidays. In fact, more paid parking, greater restrictions, less parking options and shorter parking times have proliferated across the Gold Coast under Tate's 'watch' (2012).

**FAIL 4** -The "Red Dot" re-branding of the GCCC (Feb 2013) involved a red dot on all GCCC correspondence, logos etc. It cost over \$750,000 of ratepayer funds for the design and promotion of the 'red dot'. A substantial amount of that money went to Tate's 2012 mayoral campaign advisor, Simone Holzapfel of SHAC Communications, who was then employed by Council in the GCCC Economic Development Dpt. soon after the 'red dot' launch (2013).

**FAIL 5** - Chinatown, Southport – a Ghost Town costing ratepayers \$8 million "in conjunction with sister cities" (2014-2020).

**FAIL 6** - Tate allowed the bulldozing of Northcliffe Beach dunes without State Government permits to do so and then had the sand dumped at Cavill Mall's Surfers Paradise beach. A protected green turtle was found dead the same day and at the same location as the bulldozing of dunes at Northcliffe (2016).

**FAIL 7** - The GCCC produce an expensive video outlining the \$330K tender for installation of piece of art at the intersection where Surfer's Paradise Boulevard meets Elkhorn Avenue. Up to five "finalists" will be chosen – and awarded \$5000 to help develop their final submissions.

- The winner of the \$330K tender is announced as Irish sculptor Alex Pentek and the winning artwork unveiled as a "New Zealand fern ". There is huge outrage in the art community.

-The sculpture does not appear and GCCC will not answer questions regarding its whereabouts or if the artist was paid but the sculpture not delivered (2016).

**FAIL 8** - Tate supports the dubious ASF China Casino consortium's proposal for Hotels/Casino/Mega-highrise/ private apartments/Foreign Resort City enclave with Cruise

Ship Terminal (CST) and private marinas on Wavebreak Island and covering more than 100 hectares of public waterways and public land on the Broadwater and Spit with no community consultation (2013-2015).

**FAIL 9** - The ASF China proposal is dropped by the Labor Government when it forms government in 2015, after the community revealed the dubious and illegal activities of the (now disgraced) ASF China Casino consortium and their Chinese Government owned engineering companies who were major partners in the ASF consortium (2016).

**FAIL 10** - 2018 Commonwealth Games. For many local businesses the promised trade did not eventuate and in fact many lost \$thousands and had to put off staff. Meanwhile, an independent University study that predicted these losses was suppressed by Council before the Games began.



## **PART TWO**

21/03/2020

**FAIL 11** - After Tate tabled his first Mayoral report to Council in 2012, he was questioned by journalists, about his stated aim to 'look at selling the Bruce Bishop Car-park and Transit Centre'. Tate then claimed it was "a mistake and I will remove it from the report".

**FAIL 12** - Tate invited the X-Cat speed boat world series (owned by the Dubai Crown Prince) to race on the Broadwater without first getting permission from the State Government to use Moreton Bay Marine Park for the race circuit (Aug 2015).

**FAIL 13** - Ratepayers pay \$500,000 to host the X Cat world-series event and to sponsor a Gold Coast entrant. The race was apparently not televised directly to any international audience and was watched on a streaming service by a mere few thousand viewers. The X Cat series has never returned to the Gold Coast (2015).

**FAIL 14** - After an election promise that Black Swan Lake, Bundall, a community asset and wildlife habitat, would be preserved and protected, 80% of the lake has been filled in for car parking for the use of the private enterprise, Gold Coast Turf Club. A 40,000+ petition to save Black Swan Lake has been ignored (2014 - ongoing).

**FAIL 15** - HOTA, Gold Coast Arts Centre budget blow out of the \$385 million project for the first stage of its new cultural centre, after a shock decision to demolish a key civic building built just 14 years ago.

-Since being elected in March 2016 councillors had not been given a formal briefing on one of Tate's key promises but were assured the mayor, "as an engineer", would lead the process.

- Council documents in June 2014 revealed a funding formula which included disposal of land, a recreational space separate charge, a tourism adjustment levy and a "confidential commercial deal". Asked what pieces of land would be sold, Cr Tate indicated "sales of excess council land are proceeding". Bruce Bishop Car Park, Neil Shannon Park and possibly the Transit Centre have since been offered for private sale.

- Huge tracts of public open space at Evandale Parklands have since been rezoned to commercial and residential up to 40 storeys, supposedly to fund the HOTA cost blowouts when the Federal and State Governments failed to fund Tate's 'vision'. Tate originally stated the Art Centre development would be at no cost to ratepayers (2012 – 2020).

**FAIL 16** - In 2018, GCCC proceed with offering the BBCP for sale (currently held up in courts) with the loss of approx. 1450 car spaces in central Surfers Paradise and the loss of the Neil Shannon recreational park on its rooftop. GCCC is currently ripping up Neil Shannon Park for "structural reasons". One of the excuses for the sale is to fund an 'arts green bridge' from Chevron Island to the Arts Centre, a bridge that would supposedly "not cost ratepayers" anything.

**FAIL 17** - Tate supports the developer, Bob Els' push for a CST/Casino/Apartments on public beaches and foreshores at North Kirra. It was dropped when even the LNP Premier Newman said he would not let it happen on Gold Coast beaches after a huge protest by the local community and surf industry luminaries (2014).

**FAIL 18** - Tate and his Chief of Staff, Wayne Moran, refused to support the World Surfing Reserve if it included the beaches north of Burleigh and in particular the Spit. Due to this obstruction, only half the world-class surf beaches on the Gold Coast are currently under the World Surfing Reserve classification (2016).

**FAIL 19** - Tate promotes and supports Sunland's proposal to develop 2 x 44 Storey apartment towers on the Main Beach Spit, Mariners Cove at the current Fishermans Wharf site that was contrary to the 3 Storey Height Limit in the City Plan for that area. Council Planning Officers recommend the Sunland proposal not be approved as it falls outside the City Plan and the 3-storey height restrictions on The Spit (2016).

**FAIL 20** - Tate gives Sunland CEO, Solheil Abedian, the Keys to the City for his 'charitable work' (2019).



## PART THREE

22/03/2020

**FAIL 21** - Tate writes to Disney to ask if the *Black Pearl* ship from the film set of *Pirates of the Caribbean – Dead Men Tell No Tales*, can be sunk and used as a dive site when filming is finished on The Spit. Tate seems oblivious to the fact that the *Black Pearl* was constructed and based on land on a film set in Helensvale, while the ship being filmed at the The Spit, *The Dying Gull*, is a set constructed of plywood and other quickly degradable products and therefore totally unsuitable as a dive site wreck (2017).

**FAIL 22** - Proposed Light Rail spur line through Tedder Avenue is cancelled after fierce protests from local residents and Tedder Avenue businesses (May 2017).

**FAIL 23** - During a 2016 mayoral debate hosted by the Nerang Community Association, Cr Tate was asked about his statements (recorded on video) that “an offshore cruise ship terminal was not viable and would not proceed” and Council documents were shown confirming this position.

Tate replied: “Regarding my comment that cruise ship terminal is not viable, I reject that comment...”

Tate tells the packed hall that he rejects himself and his own comments.

**FAIL 24** - Tate’s Oceanside Cruise Ship Terminal (OCST) proposal on public land and beaches at Philip Park on the Spit has already cost \$12-20 million of ratepayers funds wasted on various studies, reports, Council staff time and consultants. This was a cruise ship terminal that Tate declared as one of his pledges in 2012, “would not cost ratepayers a cent” (2016-2020).

**FAIL 25** - Ratepayers fund an \$800,000 Feasibility Study for an Oceanside Cruise Ship Terminal at Philip Park on The Spit. The report is never released to the public or media in full. The equivalent of 56 pages are redacted (blacked out) from the report, including the entire “Risk Assessment” chapter (2017).

-The Labor State Government conduct a Spit Master Plan (SMP) process and it reveals that of all the proposals for The Spit, by far the most unpopular proposal is the Oceanside Cruise Ship Terminal at Philip Park – this conclusion is derived from the SMP Online Survey and responses from Key Tourism, Business and Community Stakeholders involved in the 18 month SMP process (2016 – ongoing).

**FAIL 26** - Tate asks for the GCCC to fund further OCST studies for his “Love Boat” fantasy port at a cost to ratepayers of \$1.5 million (2019).

**FAIL 27** - Second Casino aka Global Tourism Hub for the Gold Coast. Tate fully supported proposals to use public land and public parks in Southport e.g. Carey Park (Aug 2017-2019) for a foreign casino tower.

-An ABC online survey reveals 83% of the Gold Coast Community does not support a second casino for the Gold Coast. Labor State Government will not allow the use of public land or parks for any second casino proposal (2017 – ongoing).

**FAIL 28** - Behind closed doors, Tate and two other Councillors give ‘Delegated Authority’ approval for the Forise ‘Spirit’ tower on the old Iluka site in Surfers Paradise thus avoiding

any discussion by the Planning Committee or full Council. Tate had previously encouraged the Forise CEO to “go higher” than the original proposal to 88-storeys making it the tallest structure on the Gold Coast on one of the smallest sites (SMH article 2018).

**FAIL 29** - Ratepayers then fund GCCC’s court case in the Planning Court against local residents who objected to aspects of the Forise ‘Spirit’ tower that broke the GCCC’s own planning laws. The residents (ratepayers) fund their own case against Forise, and the GCCC Residents win the case (2018).

**FAIL 30** - The “Green Bridge” (blue) from HOTA to Chevron Island should have been paid for by the Forise developers as a ‘community offset’ for all the changes from the City Plan that they were granted by Council for their ‘Spirit’ Tower. Forise lost their financial support for the construction of ‘Spirit’ and the site remains as only a half constructed carpark. Consequently ratepayers foot the \$19.5 million bill for the ‘Green’ (sic) Bridge (2020).

-The Forise underground car parks are below ground water level. How leak proof are they? Are there pumps installed and working, as in all other high rise on the coastal strip? Is the basement steadily filling with water through neglect of Council and/or owner? (2020)

FYE (For Your Entertainment) - Watch the following:

- a) Tate's explanation for why an ocean-side cruise ship terminal (OCST) on the Gold Coast is unviable.

[www.facebook.com/SaveOurSpit/videos/1281251645223675](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurSpit/videos/1281251645223675)

- b) Tate one week later at a 2016 Mayoral debate, rejecting his earlier statement that an OCST is unviable and now it is viable.

<https://www.facebook.com/saveourspit/videos/1282391281776378/>



## **PART FOUR**

23/03/2020

**FAIL 31** - Removal of sand dunes on Coolangatta Beach without State Government permission. This occurs 'coincidentally' on the day before a public protest was planned for that part of the beach against the Komune highrise development proposal that was supported by the GCCC (2018).

**FAIL 32** - Mayor Tate said the Coolangatta dune sand removal was at the request of Commonwealth Games for the beach-volleyball courts at the northern end of the beach. The Commonwealth Games organisers refute Tate's statement, saying they did not request the dune sand because it is too coarse and not used for competition beach-volleyball (Feb 2018).

**FAIL 33** - GCCC spends hundreds of thousands of ratepayer dollars defending their approval of the Komune highrise proposal to fight the objections of local residents and ratepayers in the Planning Court. GCCC eventually withdraw from the court battle against Coolangatta residents only after Council were warned by a Planning lawyer that the GCCC would lose the case (2019).

**FAIL 34** - Operation Belcarra. Mayor Tate admits to not having a dedicated bank account for his 2016 campaign funding but instead ran it through his private banks accounts which broke the Queensland Electoral laws (2017).

**FAIL 35** - Social Media: Facebook – Tate is reported for "Misconduct" and fined and ordered to undergo counselling for his "untrue & unreasonable" comments regarding another Gold Coast Councillor, Glenn Tozer (Dec. 2018).

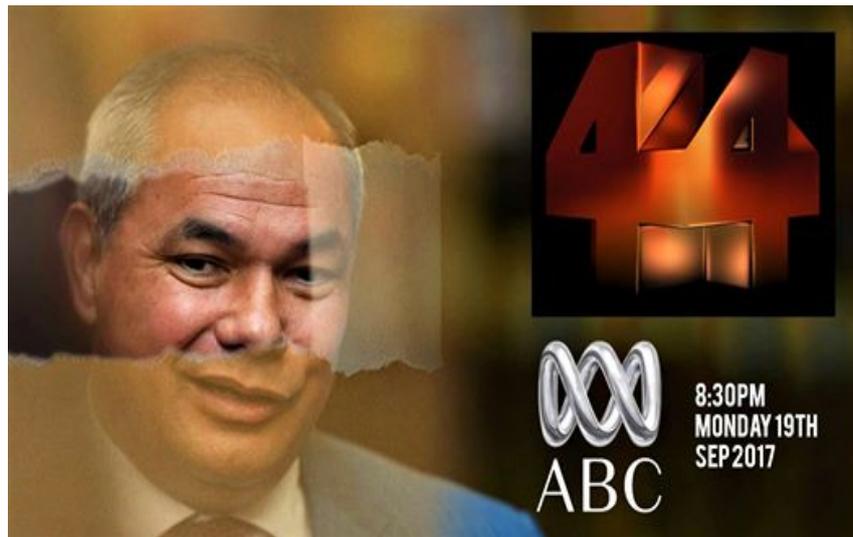
**FAIL 36** - Tate refused to talk with Trans-Pacific undersea data-cable reps and ignores the potential for the data cable to make landfall on the Gold Coast. Hundreds of future Gold Coast jobs are lost along with the loss of the construction and running of major data storage hubs on the Gold Coast. The Sunshine Coast Council takes up the offer (2018).

**FAIL 37** - The light sculpture at Yatala, commissioned for the Commonwealth Games on the M1, costs ratepayers \$2.1million. The words formed by the light sculpture, "GOLD COAST", were indecipherable from the M1. Questions surround the GCCC's failure to obtain copyright from the artist and now the sculpture is regarded as too expensive to store or relocate at an estimated cost of \$250K (2018-2020).

**FAIL 38** - Kirra Beach Tourist Park. GCCC planned but now delayed the eviction of elderly residents, "to make way for growing tourist demand" (2018). Now it is back on the agenda to evict elderly residents sooner than the notice they were originally given without housing alternatives being offered to residents (2020).

**FAIL 39** - Withdrawal of Tate's defamation case through Hickey Lawyers against fellow Counsellor, Peter Young, after 2 years of being tied up in legal purgatory. Tate claims he dropped the case when he found out that ratepayers would be funding Cllr Young's defence. This was not true as Cllr Young covered his own legal defence costs with some assistance from Council insurance (Nov 2019).

**FAIL 40** - Tate continues his defamation case through Hickey Lawyers against the ABC Four Corners producers and ABC journalist Mark Willacy for their program "All That Glitters" (2017 - 2020).



## PART FIVE

24/03/2020

**FAIL 41** - Tom Tate closes his Face Book page after stricter 'misconduct' guidelines are introduced by the State Govt. He claims it is impossible to adhere to the new rules without breaking them (Dec. 2018).

**FAIL 42** - Tate publicly declares there will be "no development on floodplains" (2016) and then supports several foreign development proposals on Carrara and Tallebudgera Valley floodplains (2016-2020).

**FAIL 43** - The GCCC approves an illegal (and possibly fraudulent) material change of use (MCU) development application for the heritage listed Main Beach Bathing Pavilion from 'museum' to 'restaurant' including approval to serve alcohol (2018).

**FAIL 44** - The continued use by Tate in his official role as Mayor of insulting and derogatory comments in television interviews and print media regarding residents and ratepayers e.g. "NIMBY'S" and "No swans here - what are they smoking?" etc (2012 – 2019)

**FAIL 45** - Since Tate was elected in 2012, dangerously high levels of raw sewage containing unknown levels of prescription drugs, illicit drugs and other toxins have continuously spilled into the internationally protected Moreton Bay Marine Park designated fish habitat of the Coomera and Coombabah estuary. The last major upgrade to sewerage and treated water infrastructure was conducted by the previous Council in 2011.

-The results show that Gold Coast residents, visitors and international tourists have been exposed to dangerously high levels of E.coli and Enterococci (the now preferred measure for saltwater) up to 6,800% (680 times) above safe guidelines.

- Mayor Tom Tate, Cr Owen-Jones, Cr Cameron Caldwell (also Chair of the Economy, Planning and Environment Committee) and the Council CEO were all made aware of the serious threats to public safety. These have been repeatedly ignored, ridiculed or denied. The Mayor stated that, "It's not a [sewage] spill... it's mangroves... it is Fake news!"

- The GCCC recently issued a Stockholder Alert stating that 91 pump stations across the city had failed during heavy rain. Residents reported more than 35 homes in the Paradise Point area were contaminated and/or condemned due to Cat 3 Black Water contamination. The homes are being stripped apart and rebuilt due to this contamination. Two weeks later sewage was still flowing into the gutters. Council issued notices to residents, but still denied any pump station failures, contamination, sewage spills or liability (2012 - 2020).

**FAIL 46** - Mayor Tate's Chief of Staff, Wayne Moran, is stood down by the GCCC CEO in late November 2019, following a Crime and Corruption Commission investigation.

- Tate and Moran are banned from communicating with one another.

-Mayor Tate claims he does not know the reason why his Chief of Staff was stood down. In early 2020, the Mayor's Chief of Staff is informed by the GCCC CEO that his contract will not be renewed.

-Tate is referred by the CCC to the Office of the Independent Assessor (OIA) for alleged misconduct in relation to:

- a. The amounts and types of expenditure with ratepayers' money by Tate on personal and 'charity' items
- b. Tate's declaration of a 'self funded' trip to Beijing to launch the Forise 'Spirit' tower apartment sales being revealed by ABC Four Corners as actually having been paid for by the Chinese developer Forise's Australian representative, Hickey Lawyers.
- c. Tate's obstruction of the GCCC CEO's duty to investigate possible conflicts of interest in relation to secret meetings with developers conducted by the Mayor's Chief of Staff (2015 – ongoing).



**FAIL 47** – Under Tate, the new GCCC City Plan removed the Local Area Plan (LAP) framework that was enshrined in the previous Town Plan. LAPs had protected the unique architecture and heritage of suburbs and the village atmospheres at the heart of communities in many suburbs across the City of Gold Coast.

- A flawed and non-transparent GCCC City Plan 'amendment' process was commenced with seemingly predetermined outcomes after 'powerbrokers' inside the GCCC were not content with the new City Plan (less than two years old) and the perceived restrictions it placed on new (especially highrise) developments. Population growth was used as the justification for the proposed amendments.

-Amendments advocating major changes with hugely increased height limits, density and site coverage in suburbs that are home to families living in urban housing not highrise apartments, appear to favour property speculators and developers over residents.

-Community groups arrange town-hall style meetings to compensate for the poorly organised and inadequate GCCC “pop up” planning update information stalls.

-Community forced to advocate for longer GCCC submission periods which initially had short deadlines in the middle of the busy summer holiday season (2019-2020).

**FAIL 48** - Sale of a parcel of public land to a large multimillion-dollar private sports club, NRL Titans, to construct a 'clubhouse' at Oxenford. A five year peppercorn lease will transition the terms from 'lease of public land' to a freehold sale of around \$2million.

-The Titan 'clubhouse' is in negotiations to acquire 200 poker machine licences. An extra 200 cars per night are expected on surrounding roads. Any related road infrastructure upgrade costs may be borne by ratepayers. (2019-2020)

**FAIL 49** - Koalas and other wildlife on the Gold Coast have become more threatened during Tate's administration through the destruction of important habitat owing to private development approvals and the misuse/non-use of extra levies charged to ratepayers - oddly named the “Open Space Preservation Levy” and the “Koala Levy”.

-The Open Space Preservation Levy's objective is to purchase land for conservation purposes. The GCCC has purchased zero land since its last acquisition in 2012 and the \$millions collected from the levy have been absorbed into the broader GCCC budget and expended on items such as “maintenance”.

-The clearing of large swathes of koala habitat in the city's north has threatened koala numbers in areas like Coomera, now known nationwide as hotspots for alarming drops in koala populations or “koala killing fields.”

- After 7 years of non-action, in the lead up to the 2020 election, Tate introduced the Koala Levy to ratepayers' notices in 2019. This fund is now being used to make tokenistic land purchases supposedly to save habitat and establish koala management plans (2012-2020).

**FAIL 50** - Just as the 2020 Council election pre-polling booths opened, the CoVid-19 viral outbreak imposes itself on daily life. Even though Tate and Council are in caretaker mode, he announces to the media that he has created a 'taskforce' of the “city's brightest minds” to combat the virus.

-The taskforce was later revealed to be led by Tate and includes only business people such as former Premier and leader of QLD National Party branch, Rob Borbidge (also works with lobbyists for Adani) ; Golding Chairman (and Light Rail advocate) John Witheriff; sports promoter Tony Cochrane; Car dealership executive, Bec Frizelle; and Gold Coast Bulletin Editor, Rachel Hancock.

-There is not a single health or medical professional on Tate's “brightest minds Covid-19 taskforce” despite the City being a centre for Medical Research with some of Australia's most qualified health professionals living and practising on the Gold Coast.

- As Chair of the Covid-19 Taskforce, Tate photographs himself hugging 'like-minded' candidates at the polling booths and posting it on social media when the National

Government and Electoral Commission guidelines demand 'social distancing' and getting no closer than 1.5 metres to others.

-This 'taskforce' has many of the same individuals who were selected by Tate in his 'Captain's Call' of political and business friends who were invited to "set the vision" for the city in Tate's last "think tank" panel. They were given power to set the City's infrastructure and investment programs, in particular, projects proposed by Tate's hand-selected members for this "think tank" panel.

-There seems to be no true impartiality in the local press when they report positively on Tate and his campaign announcements such as "Greenheart" and "taskforce" that appear to breach Council caretaker rules under the Queensland Electoral Act during an election period.

- And on the other hand the local media do not report accurately on Tate's public slurs against and false information about other Mayoral and Divisional candidates who are not part of the Council 'voting bloc'. 'Blocs' are also illegal under the Queensland Electoral Act.



This list was compiled from contributions by numerous community members, previously published news reports and publicly available information sources.