

Note: the information, figures and expenditures in the following pages have been prepared from published sources. Some were sourced from the TRC, TRC documents, such as Annual Reports, available to the public and information in the TRC letter to the DLG. Some were sourced from newspapers and a small amount from the TRC website. We were unable to access TRC Annual Reports for 2009/10 and 2011/12 from the TRC websites, current or previous, the Clifton Service Centre or library. Consequently, we have no figures for 2012 and period totals had to include the projected best estimate for 2012.

Preamble:

On page 3, in the first dot point: The TRC uses the term “*throughout the broader Toowoomba region*”. It uses a large number of others to describe areas of the TRC region. Some other terms used are:

“regional area(s)”; *“areas outside urban Toowoomba”*; *“rural communities”*; *“district areas of the region”*; *“district areas”*; *“regional locations”*; *“non-urban areas”*; *“outside urban Toowoomba”*; *“former shires”*; *“rural areas of the region”*; *“district”*; *“areas of Clifton, Greenmount, Millmerran, Oakey and Pittsworth”*; *“Millmerran, Pittsworth, Clifton, Greenmount”*; *“Toowoomba region”*; *“residential and industrial growth corridors across the region”*

The terms “*rural locations; rural areas; regional area; small communities*” were all used in the same (fifth) dot point on page 7 of their letter.

Unintentionally, or otherwise, this makes the areas referred to by the TRC as very vague and confusing. And their expenditures fairly meaningless, as their figures seem to include, or exclude, various areas to show statistics and expenditures to the best advantage.

Expenditures for the area of the proposed new shire, (**the DDS**), compared with those of the rest of area (**the New TRC**) would have been more forthright.

Definition of Terms: Generally, unless referring to a particular location, we will, generally, confine our terms to five:

- The area of the proposed new rural shire, referred to as: “**the DDS**”
- The remaining area of the TRC region as: “**the New TRC**”.
- The residential and industrial growth region, the area generally from Meringandan (north of Toowoomba) to Withcott (to the east) to Hodgson Vale (15km to the south) to about Wyreema (generally south) to Oakey referred to as “**the Growth Area**”. This area should include the areas referred to by the TRC as “*residential and industrial growth corridors*”.
- The current Toowoomba Regional Council (TRC) area will be referred to as: “**the TRC**”.
- The former Clifton Shire Council (CSC) area will be referred to as as: “**the CSC**”. (If we mention any of the other former shire areas, we will refer to them by their previous name).
- *Italics* are used to quote the TRC or to indicate the TRC term for the area under discussion.

Unlike the TRC we have attempted, as far as possible without access to all the TRC data, to back up our statements from TRC and other sources in the **Appendices**.

We will also **number** our items to make any reference to them by the DLG or the TRC easier and less confusing. We will address the claims made in the letter from the TRC to the DLG, generally, point by point unless obviously related.

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- 1) **Letter, paragraph 4:** *“We are now at a point where Council can demonstrate achieving economic, environmental, governance and social outcomes that greatly exceed likely outcomes from a de-amalgamated configuration”.*

While this may be possible on the basis of the whole TRC region, the residents of the DDS area would be in strong disagreement that the TRC could do so for their area on a stand alone basis.

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- 2) **Page 3, “General Comments”, first to fifth dot points:** *“a wide range of development application approvals throughout the broader Toowoomba region”* and re Attachment 1: *“it is recognized there has been a downward trend during the analysis period”* (2008 to 2015).

a) TRC Attachment 1: The bar chart on page 15 is for *“Development Approvals”* and only excludes the *“Toowoomba City Area”*. It is no indicator of the approvals in **the DDS area**. It, and the pie chart on page 16, includes the Highfields and Oakey areas, the Growth Area, which account for 998 of the claimed “in excess of 1400 approvals” for the eight year period.

b) Of these 1400 approvals, from the pie chart, only 98 were in the CSC area, or an average of about 12 per year. Compare this with the CSC Development Applications for Clifton, as published in the CSC Annual Report 2006/07. In the four year period from 2003/04 to 2006/07 there were 472 Development Applications Of these, 66 were MCU, 90 RAL and 154 dwellings. This is an average of 118 per year. (For the last six years of the CSC, the figures were 613 total and 102 /year average.)

Since amalgamation, development approvals under the TRC have fallen 90%
See Appendix CD 1 - “CSC Annual Report – pages 8 and 9.”

c) Of the claimed *“214 new approvals for commercial/business related uses outside urban Toowoomba since amalgamation”*, the *“growth corridors”* are again included, **the Growth Area**. We would expect that nearly all of these approvals, as well, would be in that area.

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- 3) **Page 3, “General Comments”, sixth to eighth dot points:** The eighth dot point states *“As indicated in Attachment 2, since 2009 approximately 220 industrial properties have been developed in the district areas of the region.”*

- a) A closer inspection of TRC Attachment 2, “Vacant industrial land developed between 2009 and 2012” will confirm the following:
1. 26 of the blocks are shown as “*Inner City*”.
 2. A total of 117 are in *Cranley, Harlaxton, Harristown, Drayton, Wilsonton and Torrington*, all suburbs of Toowoomba. This makes a total of 143 for Toowoomba.
 3. Another 15 are in *Oakey*.
 4. This makes a total of 158 of the 220 that are in **the Growth Area**.

See **Appendix M 1 – ‘Sensis’ Maps of Toowoomba 1 to 14**, showing the suburbs mentioned.

- b) The total for *Millmerran, Pittsworth and Clifton*, **the DDS** area, is shown as 45.
1. Even this number has been inflated. The TRC is wrongly claiming credit for the 24 blocks developed in Clifton and most sold, before council amalgamations in 2008. Much of their current development was also done prior to amalgamation.

See **Appendix CD 2 – Industrial Land (CSC 23 Aug 2005)**.

- c) If the *Millmerran and Pittsworth* figures are accurate, this brings the true number of industrial properties developed in **the DDS** since 2009 **down from the claimed 220 to an actual 21.**

d) In reference to TRC Attachment 2: The first table covers from 2009 to 2012, the four years immediately after amalgamation. The eighth dot point states this is the total development “since 2009”. Are we to conclude there has been **no** further development in the last four years? While we believe this likely for **the DDS** area, we find it unlikely for the balance of the current **TRC area**. There appears to be an inconsistency here.

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- 4) **Page 3, “General Comments”, ninth and tenth dot points:** “*future need for industrial land*” and the “study by consultants” in the TRC **Attachment 2** titled “*Industrial Land Supply and Demand 2016 to 2031 (hectares)*”.

a) There are no explanatory notes, but it would appear the *Supply* figures are the total hectares that will be required for the whole 15 year period, and the *Demand* figures the progressive total requirement for each 5 year period shown.

b) On the basis of the blocks developed for 2009 to 2012 and the apparent lack of development from 2012 to 2015, we are not surprised by the projected industrial land requirements for **the DDS** area for the next 15 years.

c) The projected demand for industrial land, by the TRC’s own consultants, is Clifton 4 hectares, Pittsworth 19 hectares and Millmerran 6 hectares.

d) These figures would appear to confirm what **the DDS** residents have long concluded for themselves. Over the last eight years development has stagnated under the TRC, and will continue to do so, particularly commercial / industrial.

5) **Page 4, “General Comments”, first dot point:** Development incentives for regional locations, TRC “Attachment 3 - Council policy 2.32” pages 18 to 22 and TRC “Attachment 4 – Council Policy 2.44” pages 23 to 27.

a) These so called incentives were anything but encouragement to develop in **the DDS** area. Policy 2.32, first adopted 11 December 2012 because of the “downward trend” as mentioned by the TRC in their discussion of TRC Attachment 1 (page 3, dot point 3). It was last revised on 21 July 2015,

1. There was also an incentive scheme introduced for inner-city residential areas at the same time. Both schemes were reported in The Chronicle at the same time. **See Appendix NA 1 – The Chronicle’ 4/12/2012. See Item 7.**
2. The original scheme was only for developers of business and industrial enterprises, not residential development as was Toowoomba’s scheme.
3. It also included towns outside **DDS area and even in the Growth Area.** **See Item 7. See Appendix NA 1 – The Chronicle’ 4/12/2012**

b) This was done to assist Toowoomba builders, affected by the down turn, blaming high TRC charges. So many unit developments were built under the incentive scheme that council was reported as considering dropping the scheme.

c) Channel 7 Local TV News reported on Thursday 31 December 2015 that “hundreds of unit blocks have been built in Toowoomba over the last few years and almost none of them filled”.

d) There was little incentive to develop in **the DDS** area with better prospects in Toowoomba.

e) Perhaps the incentive in Policy 2.32 may have had better results if a few dollars of the TRC \$1m a year advertising budget had been spent promoting it in **the DDS** area papers. When we tried to access the TRC website for information on the areas and charges, it was not possible. The File Size was indicated as “EMPTY”. **See Appendix M 2– TRC Charge area maps.**

f) TRC Attachment 2.44 applies to all sporting bodies and community organizations in the whole of the current TRC area. It will only benefit Toowoomba and the Growth Area. Few organizations, if any, in the smaller towns of the DDS area would be large enough, with sufficient funding for a development, to take advantage of this scheme.

g) The implication that this policy was designed to assist development in **the DDS** is just another misleading statement. It has just the opposite effect. The only likely effect on **the DDS** area will be extra rates to fund any extra development in **the Growth Area.**

h) Some of the main incentives to build and live in **the DDS** small towns were the lower rates and the lower house costs. House costs were lower because of the much

lower land cost. This was partly because of the much lower council fees and charges. The TRC has removed this incentive. The example of CSC charges compared to the higher TRC charges is used for comparison:

- Minimum Rate, up 120% (\$345 to \$758 including ‘separate rates’)
- Water Charge, now triple (\$285 to \$917 for 365kL of water)
- Total CSC infrastructure charges in 2008 were \$3,600 per Clifton dwelling. What must the TRC charges be if they can, in Council Policy 2.32, offer a discount of \$14,500? We were unable to find out as the *charge area maps* file on the TRC website was empty. **See Appendix CD 2 – Charge area maps.**
- Outside the town areas there was **no** CSC infrastructure charge for reconfiguration of a lot or building a residence other than the development application fee. In the TRC Policy 2.32, the discount is \$7,500

i) These lower rates and charges once offset the costs, to the former shire residents, to travel to Toowoomba or Warwick. TRC charges no longer do so. They are far more of a disincentive to development in the DDS than policy 2.32 is an incentive.

6) Page 4, “More specific response”, first to third dot points: *“both offers were below the independently assessed market value of these lots.”*

a) The CSC did not develop these industrial blocks to make a profit, but to encourage businesses to establish locally. The intent was to encourage local industry; a bit like the intent claimed for TRC Council Policy 2.32, Attachment 3. Unlike this policy there was no uncertainty *“that the TRC may, in certain circumstances, accept a reduced adopted infrastructure charge amount”*. The CSC method was more direct and had less red tape attached.

b) A lease arrangement and an option for purchase at an agreed price on development, a similar arrangement to the deferred infrastructure charges incentive approved for the TRC region, may actually see some industrial development.

7) Page 4, “More specific response”, fourth to sixth dot points: *“Council has implemented development incentive schemes including policies that discount infrastructure charges in district areas.”*

a) True. But the TRC failed to mention there were several incentive schemes introduced for Toowoomba city, running for long periods concurrently with the scheme for the district areas mentioned here.

b) The first of these was introduced in December 2012, “The Temporary Urban Consolidation Incentives Policy”. It commenced on 2nd January 2013 and due to run to the end of June 2014. The policy offered discounts on infrastructure charges for unit development in **Toowoomba City.**

1. By mid December 2013, total discounts were already over \$3.1 million with the policy gaining momentum and with over six months to run.

2. By 26 June 2014, with 4 days to run discounts were \$7,995,000.

See **Appendix NA 1** – The Chronicle 4 Dec 2012; See **Appendix NA 2** - The Chronicle 27 June 2014 “Council delivers 4% rate rise in 2014-2015 budget, page 1”

c) On 1st July 2015, Council introduced a policy, as reported in The Chronicle, “...to apply discounts of up to \$1m in council infrastructure charges to encourage specific developments in the **Toowoomba CBD**”. The total amount of discounts was capped at \$3m. One councillor is quoted as saying “Council could not afford a repeat of its flawed incentives scheme for medium density housing”. See **Appendix NA 3** - The Chronicle 10 Mar 2015.

d) In June 2015, the TRC also began allowing developers to defer infrastructure charges, when subdividing, for 3 months. The scheme was to last for two years. This was of absolutely no use in **the DDS** area towns where it can take years to sell the blocks.

See **Appendix NA 4** – The Chronicle 16 June 2015

e) It should be noted that Pittsworth, in the DDS area, was not included in the original incentive scheme for district areas. It was not included until 1st July 2015 in the last revision of Council Policy 2.32. Oakey and Crows Nest were also included at this time. So the incentive area was widespread, not just in **the DDS area**. See **Appendix NA 5** - The Chronicle 17 Dec 2013; See **Appendix NA 6** - The Chronicle 21 July 2015 .

f) Originally, the DDS area scheme did not include residential like Toowoomba’s scheme. See **Item 5a2** above.

8) **Page 4, “More specific response”, seventh to eighth dot points:** “*The total value of infrastructure charge discounts and waivers provided to district areas amalgamation in 2008 is approximately \$2.8 million.*” And in the next dot point “*discounted infrastructure charges provided to district areas represent revenue forgone by the entire Toowoomba Regional Council area*”

a) Again the TRC has used the vague term “*district areas*”. From page 14, first dot point this term appears to include 18 towns, including Kingsthorpe and Oakey in **the Growth Area**, with only 7 of the remaining 16 towns in **the DDS** area. Of the claimed discount of \$2.8 million, we believe very little originated from **the DDS** area, the bulk benefiting **the Growth Area**. Only the TRC could provide the correct figure.

b) By 26 June 2014, with 4 days to run, discounts given under “*The Temporary Urban Consolidation Incentives Policy*” for unit development in Toowoomba city had resulted in 781 units with the total of discounts given at \$7,995,000. See **Item 7b** See **Appendix NA 2**- The Chronicle 27 June 2014 “Council delivers 4% rate rise in 2014-2015 budget.”

c) Since there has been little development in the DDS area, and a boom in Toowoomba City and the Growth Area, it would appear that, rather than the

Toowoomba Regional Council area providing funding to subsidize the DDS area, as the TRC implied, the reverse is probably the case.

d) This is not the only instance where **the DDS** is believed to be subsidizing **the Growth Area**. The latest is the new TRC subsidized taxis, available almost everywhere but the DDS area. This is in addition to the free library shuttle bus doing about 120 trips a month in Toowoomba. At the same time the TRC claims it has no funding to provide infrequent regular medical transport from Clifton to Toowoomba. See **‘Appendix NA 7 –On Our Selection News “Some local areas to benefit from TRC cab initiative”**; **Appendix NA 8 –The Chronicle “\$2 cabs for disabled and elderly residents launches”**. More Info **Appendix LE 1 - Letter TRC Subsidized Taxis**.

e) There is also good reason to believe that increased charges on all the water supply areas outside Toowoomba subsidized the Toowoomba charges. The surplus for Water and Wastewater for 2015 was \$35,690,000 from total revenue of \$99,899,000 or 35.7%.

See **‘Appendix NA 9 –The Chronicle “No surprise as council rates rise”**; **Appendix LE 2 – Letter “Water Charges – A History”**; **Appendix CD 3 – CSC Annual Report 2005/6**; **Appendix CD 4 – CSC Rates and Utility Charges 2007/8**; **Appendix CD 5 – TRC Financial Statement page 141**.

9) **Page 5, “More specific response”, first and second dot points:** *“It should be noted that 70% of the total rates and charges revenue is derived from the Toowoomba City area”*

a) The cost of development incentives to **the DDS** area would have been minimal compared to the cost of those in Toowoomba City and other areas. A single incentive in only Toowoomba city cost \$7,995,000 with 4 days to go. See **Item 7b**. See **Appendix NA 2**.

While 70% of the total rates and charges revenue is derived from the Toowoomba City area, **the Growth Area**, it is likely that incentives to this area were more than 70% of the total incentive cost. See **Items 21a to 21d**.

b) As well as its share of expenditure, Toowoomba gains extra benefit from the TRC being based there. Many purchases, formerly made by local councils in **the DDS** towns, are now made by TRC staff in Toowoomba.

c) With virtually all of the most senior officers and almost all of the administration staff now gone from **the DDS** area and now living in Toowoomba, businesses in Toowoomba have gained from the extra staff spending at the expense of **the DDS** businesses. They have also gained from the 100 extra administration staff employed since amalgamation.

10) **Page 5, “More specific response”, third dot point:** *“Since 2009 more than 1400 specific development applications have been approved within the district*

areas of the region. Of these there were approximately 214 approvals for commercial / business related uses outside urban Toowoomba since amalgamation.”

- a) Of the 1400 development application in the region, very few of the total 320 applications in **the DDS** area shown on the *TRC Addendum, page 16*, would have been commercial / industrial applications.
1. Almost all of the applications would have been for subdivision of rural blocks, or for a single residence, either in town or on farming properties.
 2. Compare the 320 development applications over the 9 years of the TRC for the whole of **the DDS** area, or an average of 35 per year, with the average of 118 per year for the smallest of the 4 former shires alone, Clifton Shire.
See Item 2b.
- b) We believe that, of the claimed *approximately 214 approvals for commercial/business related uses outside urban Toowoomba*, most, or all, would have been in **the Growth Area** west of Toowoomba and **virtually none** in the **DDS area**. We are sure an inquiry to the TRC would confirm this.
- c) **See Item 3** above for more detail.

11) Page 5, “More specific response”, first and third to fourth dot points:

“Proponents are concerned the rural-based Council works depots and service centres are gradually being whittled away and local staff are being replaced by Toowoomba based contractors.”

Since amalgamation, in the period from 2009 to 2015, figures from the TRC Annual Reports show that:

1. Depot & Outdoor Staff numbers have gone from 678 to 632, or a decrease of 46.
2. From their peak in 2010 of 749, the decrease is 117.
3. For the same periods, Administration Staff numbers (in Toowoomba) have gone from 705 to 803, an increase of 98.
4. From 2010, when the administration staff numbered 682, the increase was 121. **See Appendix TF 1 – “TRC Change in Staff Numbers”.**

b) Since there has been such a decrease in the number of depot staff, The DDS Steering Committee believes our concerns concerning local works depots are justified.

c) Clifton, as an example, has lost all but one local administration staff member, the librarian – See Item 12. Another works at the Clifton Service Centre, away from public access, part time.

d) Being Clifton’s largest employer, the CSC had a policy of hiring only locally where possible. These locals had the advantage of local knowledge. Now most inquiries at the service centre concerning local residents, the shire hall, the caravan park and a host of other items, even concerning equipment in the service centre, are

referred to the librarian. Once she retires the stock answer at the service centre is likely to be “I don’t know”. The CSC institutional memory will be gone.

e) The CSC office had five full time locals (including the librarian) and four part time or casual locals (including the cleaner). The CEO, a non-local, had worked full time on a daily basis in Clifton for years and was very familiar with the area.

f) Only the librarian, at retirement age, remains. There is now not a single local officer left in Clifton Service Centre senior enough to make an independent decision or give local advice

g) Staff members, only two visible, but not necessarily the same two, now travel from Toowoomba. While the librarian is on leave or away, casuals travel from Toowoomba, Oakey or Pittsworth to fill in. A very competent young local, much liked by the customers, doing a traineeship or similar and capable of filling in on her own, was, stupidly, not retained. She was forced to seek employment in Toowoomba.

h) The cleaning of Clifton TRC buildings went from a local contractor to a Toowoomba based Brisbane contractor. See Appendix NA 10 – Clifton Courier - “Council cleaning contract goes out of town.”

i) The Clifton garbage collection contract, also always awarded locally by the CSC, now also operates from Toowoomba. See Appendix NA 10

j) The recent painting of the Clifton library was also done by unfamiliar faces. All council buildings of the CSC were painted by local painters.

k) TRC workers now travel to Clifton from Toowoomba for ridiculously minor jobs, such as painting street furniture in the main street. Being non-locals, they managed to miss the seat directly opposite the TRC Clifton Service Centre. See Appendix LE 3 – Letter “What is Local; Appendix LE 4 – Letter “Uncompleted Work Clifton.”

Did the TRC get even one quote from the several Clifton painters for the recent painting of the library building? The inside of the service centre has just been painted. Were quotes obtained in Clifton? Does the TRC Toowoomba staff even have a list of services obtainable in Clifton or other towns of the DDS?

See the TRC Attachment 7 – Millmerran Drainage, Footpaths and Road Infrastructure for the period 2011/12 to 2014/5. Note the headings NDRA Oswald. Is this meant to refer to Oswald Bros. (Clifton bypass as well?)

12) Page 5, “More specific response”, fifth to seventh dot points: “Since amalgamation, Council has actively increased the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations.....”

a) There are a lot of residents in the DDS who would dispute the statement in the fifth dot point. These residents’ argument would appear to be borne out by the example of the Clifton Bypass.

1. The CSC estimate to construct this was \$140,000. It was extremely rare that CSC works were not done for the estimate.
2. The TRC budgeted amounts to construct this bypass totalled over \$1.1 million.
3. The last section began to fail less than 12 months after completion.
4. The culverts apparently went in at the wrong level for the road, and the culvert approaches needed adjusting with hotmix. See **Appendix LE 5 –Letter “Clifton Bypass”**; **Appendix LE 6 - Letter “By-pass”**; **Appendix LE 4 – Letter “Uncompleted Work Clifton”**.

b) Some shoulder work was done recently in Clifton in John Street, between Kates and George streets. The CSC would have put “Road Closed’ signs at each end leaving access for the 10 or so residents. The TRC paid for two contract traffic controllers and vehicles for the days it took to do the work. This may have been appropriate for Toowoomba but I doubt either of them needed to stop or direct a single car in the days the job lasted.

c) The TRC should not make the mistake of believing that, just because expenditure is down, it must be because they are working more efficiently. See **Items 14a and 14b**.

d) It is common now to see work, formerly done by a single worker, now carried out by a three man gang. With large organizations tasks are too numerous to allow for worker flexibility. Each task is allocated to an existing work crew, often resulting in 3 men where one would do. In smaller operations the task is assessed and just the number of men needed sent to do the job.

13) Page 6, “More specific response”, second to sixth dot points and page7, first dot point: “..... at least one of the quotations must be sought from a local supplier....”

a) The problem here is what the TRC, and the TRC purchasing officers, consider a ‘local supplier’. If Toowoomba is considered local, as is likely, then no quotes at all may be sought in **the DDS** town where the work is to be carried out. It is noted that the TRC did not attach this policy as an addendum to their letter.

b) It would be doubtful that council officers in Toowoomba, when requiring services in the DDS rural towns, would even be aware of any of the suppliers’ names. They would do what any hard pressed employee would do, get a quote from a familiar “local supplier” – in Toowoomba. See **Appendix LE 3 - Letter “What is Local?”**

c) On small items and goods purchased from a local supplier in Clifton, the CSC gave a 10% weighting. The 2½ % weighting given by the TRC would not generally even cover the extra freight cost from Toowoomba to Clifton. A quote from a Toowoomba supplier delivering goods to the Toowoomba depot would always be lower than a supplier from a **DDS** town delivering to the local depot where it is needed.

14) Page 7, “General Comments”, first to third dot points: *“Council does not accept the assertion that there is diminished service delivery in the rural areas of the region.”*

a) We refer you to the article in the Clifton Courier 18 April 2012. At a meeting of the Clifton Business Group attended by sitting Councillors Joe Ramia, Ros Scotney and Anne Glasheen ‘various people at the meeting raised issues relating to the service being provided to small centres. Matters such as grass mowing, minor plumbing and electrical repairs in council facilities and the removal of dead animals were not being addressed as they once were. *“What we’ve got now is a joke,”* Cr Ramia said.’
See Appendix NA 11– Clifton Courier 18 April 2012.

b) We also refer you to a statement by the new Deputy Mayor after his election as reported in The Clifton Courier: *“I charge you to strongly lead back to the communities of Yarraman, Millmerran, Pittsworth and Clifton and others that felt disenfranchised in the last term”*. **See Appendix NA 12 – Clifton Courier 23 May 2012**

c) The TRC might claim they do not agree to the assertion of diminished services now. But there were certainly councillors who, before and after the last election, agreed that there were diminished services.

d) The comments expressed by the TRC in the second to third dot point are unsubstantiated and irrelevant. They are nothing but TRC opinions and aspirations.

15) Page 7, General Comments, fourth dot point: *“The establishment of Toowoomba Regional Council has resulted in the lifting of service standards, access to more services in rural locations, improved community engagement and consistent resolution of issues irrespective of location... ..”*

a) This is also a TRC opinion and apparently not one shared by many DDS residents. They are voting on the performance of the TRC with their feet. At present there are a record number of houses in the Clifton town area for sale, with few buyers. There is no longer any rate advantage to live here. Cheaper rates used to offset the added cost of travel to Toowoomba or Warwick for work, specialist medical treatment or special purchases. Land valuations also fell at the last valuation.

b) New Infrastructure was the first to suffer. The TRC was aware of this and attempted to appease residents by letting them know they were aware of this with their budget statements and advertisements. For example:

1. Cr Glasheen was quoted in The Clifton Courier (5-8-2009) as saying ‘Council chose to focus on services to the community. “There will be no reduction in services across the region” she said’.
2. On 18-8-2010 the quote was ‘Cr Anne Glasheen said the 2011 / 12 Budget focused on meeting community expectation for local service delivery’.
3. The TRC budget advertisement in the Clifton Courier was headed “Toowoomba Regional Council 2012-2013 Budget – Back to Basics”.

c) Despite these assurances services also suffered. This is most easily illustrated with an example of the Clifton library:

1. On 15/2/2012, residents were advised in the local paper that library hours would be reduced. As a result of a letter to the Editor and other unfavourable reactions, the decision was reversed. This was probably because the elections were just a month away.
2. For weeks the single printer on the public computers was not working. Why? Because the TRC had refused to supply an ink cartridge. The reason given was a lack of funding. It is certain that the printers in **the Growth Area** did not go without ink. **See Appendix LE 7 - Letter "Library Printer"**
3. The number of novels dropped from the CSC's 2000 to less than 800 under the TRC. Numbers of other items also dropped accordingly. **See Appendix NA 13 – Clifton Courier "Library's empty shelves being refilled"; See Appendix LE 8 – Letter to The Hon Jackie Trad MP.**
4. *Page 29 of the TRC Attachment 5* shows expenditure of \$41,347 over four years for books for **the DDS** area libraries. But all these books are purchased by Toowoomba and, if the number of Toowoomba reservations exceeds the number of books purchased for Toowoomba, the reservations are filled by **the DDS** copies. **The DDS** area does not see them until the reservations have been satisfied. With popular novels it can be a lengthy wait.

d) There were also a series of issues with **the DDS** area tips, with rural tips closing and proposed reduced hours for town tips.

e) As for maintenance, any inspection by the DLG would show a lack of maintenance to streets in the Clifton town area that would be unacceptable in Toowoomba, anywhere in **the Growth Area**, or almost anywhere else. As one lady visitor put it, "you would not know Toowoomba and Clifton were run by the same council".

f) Also **see Item 14a.**

16) Page 7, "General Comments", fourth dot point: *"Maintenance and replacement of assets.....requires prioritisation of work regionally whilst adding an overlay of appropriate geographic dispersion."*

a) If the TRC were not so big and unwieldy this would not be so difficult. As in all government there is never enough money to go around. As usual, the most voters get the most money. In this case it is Toowoomba and **the Growth Area. The DDS** area is right at the bottom of the list.

17) Page 8, "General Comments", first dot point: *"The economies of scale have been achieved....."*

a) Many in **the DDS** would argue the TRC has just become too big and too unwieldy to operate efficiently, and **the DDS** is "out of sight, out of mind". With a ratio of 56% administration staff (803) to total staff (1,435) compared to rural councils' usual 20%

or less, **the DDS** is contributing to a very large percentage of its rates to a bureaucracy and overheads they neither need nor want. (Audited staff figures were taken from the TRC 2014-2015 Annual Report page 124). **See Appendix TF 1 – TRC Change in Staff Numbers.**

b) This could partly explain the disparity between what the TRC are claiming they are spending in the DDS, and what little work the local residents are seeing done. The other is inefficiency – see Items 12a1 and 12a2.

c) The Premier, Anna Bligh, broke up Queensland Health into 2 separate departments and 17 regional hospital boards to make it more efficient as “it had become too big and unwieldy” in its current form. Rather than *economies of scale* being achieved, we believe the TRC is also “too big and unwieldy”.

18) Page 8, “General Comments”, second dot point: “.....*Council does not believe that a smaller, rural based organisation would have the capacity and capability to maintain longer term sustainability without significant and ongoing financial and non-financial support directly from the State Government.*”

a) The TRC has also needed considerable financial support from the State Government.

From 2010 to 2015 (excluding 2012 – no figures available) the percentage of the total of State Government Grants was almost identical to that of the last four years of the CSC. See Appendix TF 2 – “Government Grants & (State) Grants to Total Income Ratio”.

b) In the sustainability report mentioned, the CSC was rated exactly the same as the Toowoomba City Council, “moderate (developing)”. On the sustainability list, listing councils from most sustainable to least, Clifton was rated 14th above Toowoomba City at 21st. So, it is not the size of the council that determines sustainability but governance. Millmerran and Pittsworth Shires were rated lower, “weak (developing)”. The real “basket case” in the words of their own CEO, ‘very weak (negative), was Jondaryan Shire. Oakey has a much larger population than Clifton. **See Appendix CD 6 – Report of the Local Government Reform Commission, page 318**

19) Page 8, “More specific response”, first dot point: “*Council’s expenditure on Capital improvement in the rural areas of the region.....\$335 million spent on Capital Works between 2011 to 2015.*”

a) “*Rural areas of the region*”: An undefined term that could mean anything from ‘only the areas outside the town areas’ to ‘all the TRC area outside Toowoomba City’ with or without the Outer Urban shown on TRC Map 1 – **see Appendix M 3.** Read with the third dot point, it would seem to refer to the latter. In the “*growth corridors*”, **the Growth Area**, there has been considerable TRC expenditure to fuel

Toowoomba's growth. With this expenditure included in the \$335m, it can not be used as an indicator of the expenditure in **the DDS** area. **See Item 21c.**

b) From the TRC pie chart on the TRC Addendum 5, page 28, it can be seen that 68% of the \$335m was not in **the DDS** area but in the Charlton and Kingsthorpe area to the west, the Highfields area to the north and the Westbrook area to the west. It should be noted that both the Westbrook and Highfields areas are shown as "Outer Urban" on the TRC Map1. **See Appendix M 3 – TRC Map1: CITY (A) & OUTER URBAN (B)**

c) In Cr Nancy Sommerfield's 2015/15 Budget speech she said ".....: *the extension of important sewerage networks in Kingsthorpe, Gowrie Junction and Westbrook along with the Sewerage Network Project at the Toowoomba Enterprise Hub at Charlton.*" **See Appendix CD 7 – "My Budget Speech 2015/16"**

d) While the money may, technically, be spent in the rural areas of the region most of it is all in the areas that benefit Toowoomba's growth, **the Growth Areas**. An example is the proposed \$192m Charlton Sports Precinct. It appears about \$7m may have already been spent on land, consultations and a master plan. Cr Englart is quoted in The Chronicle as saying "Council identified the strategic need for a sporting complex of this standard to drive economic growth in the region and cater for future sporting needs of the city's residents.....I think this decision shows some foresight from council as these facilities will be needed as the city continues to grow". **See Appendix NA 14 – The Chronicle 17 March 2015 'Master plan for \$192m sports precinct approved'.**

(We really need the TRC 2011-2012 Annual Report to confirm the exact % and to be able to quote the actual amount. We have averaged 2011 and 2013 incomes for a guesstimate)

20) Page 8, "More specific response", second dot point: *"This represents 138% of rates collected from the "district" locations during the abovementioned period.*

a) "District": This is another indefinite, undefined term. If it is meant to mean the same as "*rural areas of the region*", I would refer you to the comments in the last paragraph of **Item18** above. Expenditure in the whole TRC region excluding Toowoomba, and just including **the DDS** area has little relevance to expenditure in **the DDS** area.

b) I would point out that TRC Total Income is almost 200% of rates collected, (rates actually average 50.7% of total income from 2009 to 2015) so expenditure in the district at 138% is not remarkable. In fact the 138% would seem to reinforce that only 20% of expenditure is going to **the DDS** area and other areas outside **the Growth Area**. We believe that the bulk of expenditure is going to **the Growth Area**.

c) The TRC has not produced any figures for the whole period from 2009 to 2015 for **the DDS** area alone. Comparing the *spending by region* figures shown in the TRC 2015/16 Budget and 2013/14 Budget with the total General Rates and Charges for the

year 2011/12, the latest available to us, the ratio of expenditure for the areas in **the DDS** is:

1. Pittsworth 207%	\$11.1m	for 2013-2014 budget	127%	\$6.7m
2. Greenmount 161%	\$7.86m	“ “ “ “	121%	\$5.9m
3. Millmerran 113%	\$4.85m	“ “ “ “	105%	\$4.5m
4. Clifton 79%	\$2.75m	“ “ “ “	127%	\$3.5m

See **Appendix TF 3** – “TRC- Totals for Various Items for Years 2009 to 2015 (Excluding 2012)”;

Appendix TF 4– “Budgeted Expenditures in Previous Shire Areas for 2015-2016”;

Appendix CD 15 –TRC Advertisement “2015-16 TRC Budget”

Appendix TF 5 – “Total Rates & Charges Previous Shire Areas – 2011-2012

21) Page 8, “More specific response”, third dot point: “.....*Toowoomba City area received \$519 million....with rates income of \$546million over the same period (2011 to 2015).....representing only 95%.*”

a) Services and administration costs only relating to, and only necessary for, the city and the Growth Area, would add significantly to the *Toowoomba area \$519 million*. For the period mentioned (2011 to 2015) the following examples would add \$49 million:

- Consultancies \$30 million
- Conferences \$8 “
- “Professional Services \$11 “
- Services – eg the Free Library Shuttle bus and TRC subsidized taxis.

Other expenditures of little benefit to the DDS residents are, with costs for a single year, 2015, alone of \$74 million are:

- Theatres \$3.2 million
- Events \$4.4 million
- Planning & Development \$14.5 million
- Parks and Bush care \$29 million
- Community Facilities and Services \$23 million.

b) These few items alone bring the total from \$519m to \$642m, or 117% of the \$546m in rates.

c) Just some of the items of major expenditures during the period, 2011 to 2015, that we are aware of are listed below. These recent projects alone total about \$450m, without the major cost of the Wetalla Water Reclamation Facility, out of the \$519m expenditure claimed for this 4 year period in the *Toowoomba area*. See Appendix NA 16 for the host of other works done in only a single year.

- Flood Mitigation Works: \$260m
- The Outer Circulating Road: \$45m
- New Greater Toowoomba Waste Management Facility, O’Mara Rd Wellcamp: \$22m.
- Water main replacement and other work, Ruthven Street.
- Wyreema Water and Sewerage Project: \$7m
- Wetalla Water Reclamation Facility:

- Pump stations linking Oakey, Kingsthorpe and Gowrie Junction to Wetalla: \$20.5. (Including mains?)
- Kingsthorpe, Gowrie Junction [just north of the west Outer Urban (B)] Sewerage Scheme scheduled for completion about August 2015 - \$18m
- Westbrook, “Outer Urban (B)” ,to Wetalla sewerage pump station and mains: \$9m
- Trunk sewers, pump station and mains from Highfields , “Outer Urban (B)”, to Wetalla: \$8m
- Glenvale sewerage pump station and mains: \$3.5m
- Highfields Sports and Recreation Ground: Land \$6.5m? + earthworks
- New City Library and Civic Square: \$24.5m
- New Waste Facility (actually at Charlton): \$20m
- \$192m Toowoomba Sports Precinct at Charlton: Land cost \$6m?
- O’Mara Road \$21m.

d) The sewerage schemes in the areas above indicate where the TRC priorities lie, in the Growth Area. The Nobby sewerage scheme in the DDS area was budgeted \$25,000 by the CSC in 2007, before amalgamation, for a Planning Report. This was in preparation for construction. It has not been heard of since.

See Appendix CD 9 – CSC budget Link 2007/08.

e) The promised treatment plant, Clifton Water Supply – history:

1. TRC Budget 2009 – 2010 – Almost tripling of water charges. Cr Williams justified the new charges by stating that, in Clifton’s case they will provide funding to upgrade the water quality in Clifton. **See Appendix LE 9 Clifton Courier 14 Aug 2008.**
2. TRC Budget 2010-11 – “\$50,000 (of \$400,000 project over two years) to improve Clifton water supply quality”. **See Appendix CD 10.**
3. TRC Budget 2011-12 – “\$350,000 for treatment of bore water to improve quality.” **See Appendix CD 11.**
4. The Chronicle 18 June 2012 – “\$2.4m plan to clean up Clifton’s drinking water.....A study by consulting company MJM Environmental found current treated water exceeded health guideline limits for hardness, dissolved solids and chlorides. It also found that long-term treated water exceeded limits for nitrates in 95% of samples though health guidelines were reached by blending raw water sources. MJM recommended council build a treatment plant using a cationic ion exchange system.” **See Appendix NA 15 The Chronicle 18 June 2012.**
5. TRC Budget 2012-13 – “\$380,000 for Clifton water supply quality improvements.” **See Appendix CD 12.**
6. TRC Budget 2013-14 – “\$145,000 for treatment of bore water for quality improvements” AND “\$100,000 for Clifton water supply quality improvements – *planning and investigations.*” **See Appendix CD 13.**
7. TRC Budget 2014-15 – “a further \$130,000 for the ongoing planning of improvements in the quality of the Clifton water supply.” **See Appendix CD 14.**
8. TRC Budget 2015-16 – Cr Nancy Sommerfield’s Budget Speech: “.....*There is planned investigative work to try and resolve the ongoing Clifton water quality issue.....*” **See Appendix CD 7 “My Budget Speech”.**

9. But despite all the promises and budget items it would appear it may all be deception. In the *'TRC Planning Scheme Policy N° 6 – Water'*, the projected work for the next 15 years did not include a treatment plant for Clifton. One was mentioned but in the *'Estimated Completion'* column is noted the following: *"Timing will depend on funding and economic viability **(unlikely before 2025)**". See Appendix LE 10 – 2 Dec 2009.*

f) After 6 years and \$1,155,000 budgeted, the promised Clifton water treatment plant has not yet reached the planning stage! It is evident that work in the DDS area is of very low priority. And this is despite the tripling of water charges increasing revenue by almost the estimated cost. The DDS get promises while the rest of the TRC gets our cash.

See Appendix CD 7 "My Budget Speech";

22) **Page 8, "More specific response", fourth dot point:** *"When you combine the information immediately above with the knowledge that 70% of the revenue is generated from the immediate Toowoomba City area, Council considers there is no evidence to assert that district areas are subsidising any other part of the region."*

a) The "information immediately above" consists of assertions and unsubstantiated figures applying to the undefined areas of "Toowoomba City area", "rural areas" and "district". An example is the statement in the TRC first dot point above: *"Council's expenditure on Capital Improvement in the rural areas of the region has significantly increased since amalgamation....."*

23) **Page 8, "More specific response", fifth dot point:** *"The disproportionate capital investment in the district areas has been primarily upgrading Roads, Sewerage and Water infrastructure in order to meet acceptable service levels and standards, for example compliance with Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and meeting environmental compliance obligations for sewerage and waste disposal."*

a) All the upgrading of Roads, Sewerage and Water Infrastructure has been concentrated in the areas immediately surrounding Toowoomba, in the Growth Area, in preparation for Toowoomba's expansion out past those areas.

b) As advised in our original proposal, the Clifton water supply underwent a major upgrade just before amalgamation. On completion the system could handle almost double the number of connections

c) Clifton and Nobby water supplies were profitable under CSC. Since then charges have tripled. A TRC consultant's report confirmed that the Clifton water did not meet water quality guidelines. But in spite of TRC collecting another one to two million in

extra revenue, and the \$6m surplus CSC contributed to their finances, we have yet to see a start on the promised water treatment plant used as justification for the rises.

d) With a surplus for the financial year 2015 for Water and Sewerage Operations of over \$35m, and 2014 of over \$30m, (See Annual Reports pages 141 &137) it would appear to be a lack of will rather than cash.

e) So, Clifton’s Water Supply quality, despite the TRC claim that water supplies needed to be upgraded to meet Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, still does not do so. And the TRC apparently has no intention of doing so until at least 2025. See Item 21e9 and 21f. See Appendix NA 15 – News Article “\$2.4m plan to clean up Clifton’s drinking water.” See Appendix LE 10 – 2 Dec 2009.

24) Page 9, “More specific response”, first and second dot points: “.....pre-amalgamated local government did not have the capacity or capability....”
and 5th “Council continues to invest heavily.....Attachment 5....(excludes Toowoomba)”

a) The fourth dot point is just an opinion and irrelevant. Most residents of the DDS area, if questioned, would be of the opinion that the TRC has shown it does not have the capacity, or alternately the will, to look after the DDS area.

b) The pie chart on page 28 of Attachment 5 mentioned in dot point 5 includes **the Growth Area**. It is apparent from the chart that the bulk of the *regional capital investment (excludes Toowoomba)* has gone into the north-west quadrant of the TRC region, or **the Growth Area**.

c) Of the \$334m total, \$87m went to the Pittsworth, Clifton, Greenmount and Millmerran areas. Of the \$88m spent in the Oakey area, likely less than \$20m was spent in the areas proposed to be included in **the DDS**. This makes a total of \$107m in the DDS area compared with \$227m for the rest of the area outside Toowoomba, an area about half the size of the DDS area.

d) It should also be noted that these expenditures are for only a four year period from 2011-12 to 2014-15. Annual expenditures since amalgamation may have not been at the same rate. For example the total for the Clifton area for the four years is given as \$20m, or an average \$5m per year. Yet in the 2013-2014 Council budget breakdown, “Spending by region”, the Clifton area was budgeted \$3.5 million. An inspection of the TRC 2015-16 Budget Advertisement shows the proposed expenditure for the Clifton area as only \$2 million. Neither figure approaches the average of \$5 million per year implied by the TRC. See Item 26b1 and 26b2. See Appendix NA 16, page 2 and Appendix CD 15 –TRC 2015-2016 Budget.

25) Page 9, “More specific response”, fourth dot point: “42% of Council’s current workforce were employed prior to amalgamation.....skills and local intelligence retained.....”

a) All the decision makers from the DDS were taken to Toowoomba to, generally, subordinate roles. Council policy is made by the senior staff in Toowoomba, often to the frustration of the locals or the detriment of services. The locals are bound by TRC policy and not encouraged to use their initiative or employ their “skills and local intelligence”.

b) Some quotes in The Clifton Courier 18 April 2012 attributed to sitting Councillors at a meeting of the Clifton Business Group the previous Thursday: **See Appendix NA 11 – Clifton Courier article 18 April 2012.**

1. *Cr Ramia ‘said that under Mr Goulthorp’s (the CEO) regime the council has become too “city-centric” and all of the former rural shire areas had been “ransacked” of people and equipment. “He wants it all centred in Toowoomba”.*
2. *‘Cr Ros Scotney accepted that things could have been better.’*
3. *Cr Anne Glasheen “was disappointed that more staff had not been retained in rural areas.”*

c) Much of the money the TRC claims to spend in the DDS is wasted because decisions and policies are made in Toowoomba with a lack of local knowledge of the DDS area conditions and the refusal to listen to local advice.

Some examples, some from items previously mentioned:

1. There were wooden bins of donated books set up by the local librarian to meet the needs of visitors and non-members of the library. Even members used these books for hospital stays or other circumstances where books could be lost or when they could not find anything else on the depleted shelves. The bins were required to be removed by Toowoomba to give a ‘less cluttered look’ to the library. They are sorely missed.
2. Empty library shelves: Outgoing exchanges were assembled for pickup by Friday. But since the library was closed Mondays, the day of the exchange, incoming exchanges were not dropped off. After inquiries to 2 councillors from The Clifton Courier about the empty library shelves, exchanges were changed to Tuesday – after seven years!
3. When the seats were painted in the Clifton main street, the seat missed directly opposite the Clifton Service Centre was not painted because “it wasn’t on the list”.
4. John Street shoulder work: Two contract traffic controllers were employed for a couple of days or more. Their apparent sole contribution for the period was to put up, and take down, two ‘Road Closed’ signs daily.
5. In the TRC Budget advertisement in the Clifton Courier on 29/8/2012, the first item on the list was “\$5.2 million over three years for Clifton Water Reclamation Facility Upgrade. **See Appendix CD 12– TRC advertisement “TRC 2012-2013 Budget – Back to Basics”.**

6. CSC had a 100% effluent compliance over its last four years compared with a State average of 88%. **See Appendix CD 15 – “CSC Annual Report 2006/7 page 31”**. Despite the comparatively huge amount of expenditure, there has never been a reason given for the upgrade. With a needed water treatment plant, street maintenance and other works forgone, residents have to question this expenditure. But the TRC spent \$300,000 on a floating wetland in 2015 and have budgeted \$775,000 for this year. **See Appendix CD 16 – TRC annual Report 2014-2015 page 74; Appendix CD 17, page 3; Appendix LE 11– Letter “A Camel”**

26) Page 9, “More specific response”, fifth dot point: Re: Infrastructure expenditures over the four years from 2012 to 2015.

a) The total figure of \$121.8m quoted is meaningless because it includes *the Oakey area*. Much of this area and the growing towns such as Charlton, Kingsthorpe, Westbrook, Wyreema and Oakey itself are in **the Growth Area**, which will not form part of **the DDS** area. As can be seen from Attachment 6, expenditure for this area is about \$47.8m of the \$121.8m quoted, or nearly 40%.

b) The expenditures for 2012 to 2015 should also be considered with the total of the previous four years, which if not of an equivalent amount, would make it low.

1. For the *Clifton area* for a four year period Attachment 6 shows expenditure of \$18.5m (Attachment 5 shows \$20m). For comparison, the CSC budgeted expenditure for road works for 2007-08 was just under \$4.75m. With inflation indices of 86.7 for June 2007 and 102.5 for June 2013, the \$4.75m was the equivalent of about \$5.6m in 2013. This was for a single year.
2. It should be noted that the CSC \$4.75m budget did not include design, supervision or administration costs that were elsewhere in the budget. The TRC figures, being costs, probably included all three, and with the predominance of administration staff, at an extremely high proportion.
3. The proposed TRC budget expenditure in the Clifton Area was \$3.5m for 2013-2014 and only \$2m for 2015-2016, far from the average \$5m the TRC indicated for the 4 years from 2012 to 2015. **See Appendix NA 16 and Appendix CD 17.**

27) Page 9, “More specific response”, sixth dot point: “.....*Millmerran, in excess of \$23m for the period 2011/12 to 2014/15.....*”

a) If the private works on main roads and the work on previous main roads funded by the State Government are deducted, what is the amount remaining for the other

council roads and other council work actually funded by the TRC? See Items 17b, 26c, 29b, 30c and 30d.

28) Page 9, “More specific response”, seventh dot point: “.....areas comprising Millmerran, Pittsworth, Clifton and Greenmount have seen approximately 30% of the sealed area of these localities, resealed in the 3 years ended 30 June 2015.”

a) Constant traffic in streets in larger centres like Toowoomba keeps the bitumen ‘kneaded’, like putty, and flexible so it lasts longer. Because of the lower traffic volumes on rural roads, the bitumen tends to dry out and become brittle. Unless resealed more often, it will crack under heavy loads at harvest times, allowing water penetration then pavement failure. Some experienced rural overseers or have developed techniques to lessen this problem.

b) Rural shires usually find it necessary to reseat every 10 years maximum. This works out at 10% (less any reconstructions) of the roads needing resealing per year.

c) We note that the period used here is only 3 years instead of the usual 4 years between 2011/12 and 2014/15. We find this significant. If the resealing before this 3 year period was less than the target 10%, then there needs to be much more than 10% on other years to catch up. We do not consider the 30% figure anything to be particularly proud of for rural roads. 70% In the 7 years since amalgamation would be impressive. Little in the first four years would mean the roads came from the shires in good shape or TRC neglect.

29) Page 9, “More specific response”, eighth dot point: “.....\$8m per annum on the maintenance of.....Clifton, Greenmount, Millmerran, Oakey and Pittsworth areas.”

a) Because the TRC has again included Oakey and Towns in the Growth Area, this figure is not relevant for the same reasons as **Items 26a, 26b and 26c.**

30) Page 10, “More specific response”, first dot point: “.....Main Roads funding.....reduced significantly...”

a) Most rural residents are aware of which roads are MRD and which TRC. They know where to assign blame for bad maintenance.

b) Private works on roads is shown in both the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 TRC Annual Report (pages 137 & 141) at about \$5.5 million each year. We would assume this is construction on State controlled main roads, formerly “rural arterial”. Most, if not all would expected to be in largest area, **the DDS** area, as highways are handled directly by the Main Roads Dept.

c) Over a four year period, even at the significantly reduced funding (see TRC Response page 10, first dot point) this amounts to some \$22 million. It is not unusual to include this work with other road work expenditure in financial reports. This would boost the expenditures in the **TRC Attachments 6 and 8** considerably if this expenditure had not been removed.

d) Similarly, work on the former ‘rural local’ main roads handed to council, and for which State Government funding is provided, would also boost the TRC roadwork expenditure figures. **TIDS? Roads Alliance? What is Oswald? Otswald?**

31) Page 10, “More specific response”, second to fourth dot point: Issue: There is no evidence that TRC has implemented an adequate roads maintenance program.

a) The key word here is ‘evidence’. No matter what programs the TRC has put in place, if they are not showing results to the DDS residents, then they are obviously not working and are inappropriate for rural areas. It does not matter how many roads are looked after, who is doing it, or how they are doing it.

32) Page 10, “More specific response”, fifth dot point: *“The maintenance inspection and evaluation program is further supported.....(by).....customer inputs and complaints influencing the maintenance program.”*

a) If it is a matter of ‘the squeaky wheel gets the grease’, with the small population of **the DDS** and rural residents being a fairly tolerant lot, it is no wonder we appear to be at the bottom of the totem pole for customer service..

33) Page 10, “More specific response”, sixth dot point: *The customer response system.....and uses the pre-amalgamated facilities and Council chambers....”*

a) We note that while claiming the “*facilities and Council chambers*”, there is no mention of the pre-amalgamation staff. **See Item 25b.**

34) Page 10, “More specific response”, seventh dot point: *“Council has significantly increased the opportunity to gain access to and receive consistent quality and timely information far beyond the capability and capacity of the pre-amalgamated councils.”*

a) All items affecting the community in small rural councils go to full council meetings and are then reported in the local paper. Any item could be readily discussed

with any of the local councillors, all known and available to local residents, or with the well informed and familiar local staff, either during or outside working hours.

b) Now with the TRC, in contrast, officers directly deal with many of these items away from public scrutiny. Others items are discussed in committee meetings. Any that go to a Council Meeting are hidden in the sheer volume of items in the minutes and, if found, lack detail.

35) Page 10, “More specific response”, eighth dot point to Page 11 fifth dot point: “.....a Customer Service Branch (CSB) which provides front counter and call centre support at 9 locations throughout the regional area.”

a) The TRC seems to be proud of the CSB. Almost anyone in the DDS shire who has had to deal with the TRC will tell you it is not working. It compares badly with the easy direct access to the responsible decision making officers that they had before. They were able to discuss their problem with someone who actually knew what they were talking about. See Item 37a to 37e, in particular 37e to see how well the TRC system is working.

b) Compare **Item 37a to 37e** to the same complaint at a rural council where:

1. The customer applies at the front desk and is directed to the Overseer if he is in the building and not in another meeting; often the deputy CEO if not.
2. If the Overseer is available, there is an immediate discussion and usually a joint inspection. Otherwise both are done as soon as he is available, usually the same day, even after normal hours if urgent.
3. If it is a Council problem, then immediate action is taken to remedy the problem and it is usually resolved within 24 hours. If is not a problem with the sewer mains but with the house-drain (owner’s responsibility) then he is given advice on how to fix the problem or, if minor, Council may fix it anyway. After all, in small towns they are neighbours.

c) At the TRC, departments are separated so staff knowledge is limited. Customer Service Branch officers have little interaction with other departments, so their knowledge is not as general as that of officers in a small council. They are unable to make a decision and can only pass on the problem. The responsible officer, possibly the wrong one, gets incomplete information second hand. At the previous smaller rural councils there were few items that could not be settled on the spot, or complaints that could not be dealt with promptly.

d) We believe the situation is similar to that, years ago, of a PVC pipe manufacturer. They replaced the plumbers they were using for customer service with, in the interests of cost and efficiency, young ladies with computers. Customers who could not give the exact listed name or quote the catalogue item number could not complete their order. It was reported that they lost over 50% of their business. The plumbers were reinstated.

e) In the third dot point on page 10, the TRC state that CSB *performance metrics* are reported to Council on a monthly basis and that 'The pre-amalgamated councils did not have this capability'. Nor did they need it!

f) In general, residents seemed fairly happy with pre-amalgamated rural council performance. For example, CSC had only 220 complaints and requests for service in 2006/07 of which 208 or 95% were resolved at reporting time. Compare this with the TRC figure of 80%. **See Appendix CD 18 – CSC Annual Report 2006/7 page 13.**

g) All complaints received during the month were listed and went to the next Council meeting for their information. And for Council to deal with any that the staff could not make a decision on (eg a request for a gravel road to be sealed). The rare item unable to be concluded by the next meeting stayed on the list until it was.

36) Page 11, “More specific response”, sixth dot point: *“Council’s customer service officers (CSOs) are available during extended working hours during the day.....”*

a) Compare this service with the superior service of small rural councils. It was usual for these to have after hours numbers listed for the Overseer, Water and Sewerage Officer, Sexton and sometimes even the Shire Clerk or CEO. These could generally be contacted 24 hours a day seven days a week, directly. It was usual that the part time councillors also had their home phones listed in the phone book. They were usually available to talk to residents from their home, something impossible with a large council like the TRC.

37) Page 11, “More specific response”, sixth dot point: *“Specialist staff such as planners and engineers are also available by appointment to meet with members of the community at any of the 9 service centre locations across the region.”*

a) Rubbish! They can’t even be contacted on the phone. An example: A Clifton resident, having problems with the excessive sewer stench emitted from his SVP, rang the TRC call centre, 131 TRC. After a frustrating few minutes trying to explain the problem to someone not even aware of what an SVP (sewer vent pipe), branch line, rotary eductor etc was, asked to speak to a sewer engineer and was refused.

b) With the problem persisting, on at least two subsequent visits to the local service centre he was told the problem had been resolved. It had been blamed on a business on the other side of town. It was suggested he contact them directly. The TRC had made no contact with the complainant in the many months since the original complaint to advise him of this conclusion.

c) Six days after the last *Service Centre* visit, on 11 January 2016, a TRC employee with technical knowledge finally looked at the problem and agreed it was not the business, was sewer gases, and the matter would be investigated. He also remarked

that the complaint had been directed to Toowoomba by mistake, instead of to him at Greenmount.

d) It is over 18 months since the original complaint in June 2014 and the matter is still ongoing.

e) It appears some the 80% of problems resolved are by the ‘tick and flick’ method.

f) If a resident is unable to speak to an engineer on the phone, what chance do they have of getting them to come to a regional office for a meeting.

38) Page 11, “More specific response”, eighth and ninth dot point: “.....lost time due toaccess and transport of Council equipment.”

a) Many of the services, even minor or unskilled, are carried out by 3 man teams in a truck from Toowoomba, even if one man could have done the job. This results in wasted manpower and unnecessary travel time. Large organizations are not as flexible as small ones, so it is easier to send the whole team rather than split it up and find something else for the others to do as a small council would do.

b) There are occasions where Clifton workers are sent to Toowoomba or elsewhere for duties. In a truck up to two hours travel time can be lost to do an hour or two of work. Even if is for the whole day, two hours lost out of eight hours it is considerable.

39) Page 11, “More specific response”, tenth and eleventh dot point: “.....there has been a strong retention of local knowledge to assist in decision making.”

a) Of the administration staff only the librarian, at retirement age, remains local. All the innovations she made to suit local condition have been eliminated. Some she wanted to make after amalgamation were refused. Another local staff member works in Clifton part time. **See Items 11a, 11b, 11c, 25a, 25b1, 25b3 and 25c1.**

b) Outside staff numbers have gone down by 46 since amalgamation, 120 since 2010. Since increases have likely occurred in **the Growth Area**, then obviously the *rural areas*, such as **the DDS** area, must have suffered decreases.

40) Page 12, “Response”, first and second dot point: “The statement identifying ‘there are only two councillors who live in the rural areas of the region’ is inaccurate’.”

a) The DDS Steering Committee statement was correct! The TRC implication that four other councillors live in the rural areas in the second dot point is misleading at best. We refer you to **Appendix M 3 - TRC “Map1: City (A) & Outer Urban (B).**

This TRC rating map puts all the councillors mentioned either in, or in one case, immediately adjacent to, the outer urban areas of Toowoomba.

1. Cr Tait lives in Cotswald Hills in the Outer Urban area to the west of the City, about 10km from the City centre.
2. Cr Cahill lives in Highfields in the Outer Urban area to the north of the City, about 15km from the City centre. **See Appendix M 4 – Travelmate Map Maker and Driving Directions to Highfields.**
3. Cr Williams lives in the Outer Urban area to the south of the City. This was formerly part of the Cambooya Shire.
4. Cr Taylor lives on the Drayton Connection Road. This is the western boundary of the Outer Urban area south of the city. She lives 13.4km from the City centre on the west side of the Drayton Connection Road, just 87m from the city boundary. **See Appendix M 5 – Travelmate Map Maker and Driving Directions to 794 Drayton Connection Road.**
5. Cr Antonio now lives in Toowoomba, and as a busy Mayor, probably does not have a lot of spare time to spend in Millmerran.

41) Page 12, “Response”, third dot point: “.....regional rotational visits by Councillors (both during and after work hours), monthly Community Conversation Forums and numerous online engagement opportunities through the Customer Service centres.”

a) From the 2014-2015 TRC Annual Report, ‘Calendar of Events’ (pages 16 to 19) it can be seen that in this 12 month period Clifton had 2 councillor visits and 1 forum (the show!), Millmerran 8 visits, Pittsworth 3 visits and 1 forum (the show), Greenmount 2 visits, Cambooya 1 visit and Felton 2 forums (proposed mining?) **See Appendix TF 6 – “Councillor Regional Visits”; Appendix CD 19 – TRC Annual Report, Calendar of Events, pages 16 to 19.**

b) From these figures in the DDS area it can be seen that the visits can hardly be described as “rotational” or the forums as “monthly”.

c) As for *online engagement opportunities through the Customer Service centres*, most residents have never even heard of them. One of the first actions of the TRC was to wall off, put up a ‘staff only’ sign and fit a combination lock preventing access to the, previously freely accessed, staff and council chamber areas in the former CSC building. Apparently they did not like the *engagement opportunities* that the public had to CSC staff.

42) Page 12, “Response”, fourth dot point: “.....Divisional electoral boundaries.....”

a) No further comment.

43) Page 12, “Response”, fifth to seventh dot point: Re: Claimed Council engagement with the community, *“engagement activities include but are not limited to Councillor and senior staff ‘Community Conversation’ activities at various locations around the region on a regular basis.....”*

a) A check of the Calendar of Events in the TRC Annual Report (see Item 41a) will show that only ONE Community Conversation is listed in the DDS area for the whole 12 month period, 2014-2015. This was at Cambooya.

b) More councillors showed up unannounced for a photo opportunity at the opening of the Clifton Dabblers Den than we had otherwise seen since the 2012 elections. There was the Mayor, Cr Antonio and five other councillors all at one time. Elections were getting close.

See Appendix NA 17 – Clifton Courier articles 1 July 2015.

44) Page 13, “Response”, first dot point: *“In excess of 230,000 customer inquiries are received each year.....”*

a) We believe this point has been addressed previously. In particular, **see Items 17a, 25a and 25b.**

45) Page 13, “Response”, second dot point: Re staff input into TRC decisions.

a) We believe this statement has also been addressed previously. **See Items 11a, 11c, 25a, 25b3, 25c1, and 39.**

46) Page 13, “Response”, third dot point: *“Council continues to significantly invest in its services to meet the needs of the entire region, irrespective of geographic location or community of interest.”*

a) An opinion only that we think has been well covered in previous items. See, in particular, **Items 25b, 35a, 35b, 37a to 37e** and **Appendices NA 11 and NA 12.**

47) Page 13, “Response”, fourth dot point: *“.....procurement arrangements require quotations from local businesses..... Council maintains numerous discount and incentive schemes to the regional area.”*

a) The subject of ‘procurement arrangements’ has been covered in **Items 13a and 13b.**

b) These incentive schemes benefit Toowoomba City and **the Growth Area** far more than **the DDS area**. See **Items 7a to 7f**.

48) Page 13, “Response”, fifth to eighth dot point:

Fifth dot point - *“Promotion and facilitation of economic expansion.....remains a priority.....”*

Sixth dot point – *“The Toowoomba Region is a powerhouse.....”*

Seventh dot point – *“The Toowoomba Region is experiencing unprecedented growth.....”*

Eighth dot point – *“There is currently in excess of \$500M of external investment in and around the city.....as well as a significant investment throughout residential and industrial growth corridors.....”*

a) That the fifth dot point, and the stated TRC objective is obvious to the residents of the DDS area. What is also obvious is that this objective is confined to Toowoomba and the immediate surrounds.

b) In spite of all the TRC, generally unsubstantiated, claims of *incentives; fee discounts; the continuing Community Growth Action Plans; the increased efficiency and effectiveness; the customer response system, call centre and service centres; procurement policy; lifting of service standards; access to more services; improved community engagement; dedicated Community Liaison Officer; the prioritisation of work regionally; the economies of scale achieved; the quality and timely information; the input of local staff into decision making; specialist staff such as planners and engineers available by appointment; the regular Councillor and senior staff “Community Conversations”; the monthly Community Conversation Forums; concerns regarding mining and coal seam gas development; the 70% of total rates and charges from the Toowoomba City area subsidising the rural area; the eight councillors claimed to be living or having ties to the rural area and making fortnightly visits, and other rhetoric, the DDS area residents would still prefer a separate shire.*

c) They still do because the TRC is long on rhetoric, promise, plans and policies, but very short on action and results. There has been no visible effect of all the claimed initiatives of the TRC on the ground in the DDS area. For a perfect example See Item 21e.

d) Compare the development in the Former Clifton Shire under the CSC and TRC. Over a four year period, without any of these plans and policies, the CSC averaged 98 developments per year. Over four years the TRC averaged 12 per year, or a 90% reduction.

e) On the TRC’s own figures, development has stopped and is likely to remain that way, according to the TRC Attachment 2, page 17 right hand chart. See **Item 2b and 4a to 4d**

f) When it comes to development, they are not even able to assess the real situation. See **Item 4c.**

g) Effective services to The DDS area and towns will be impossible while we remain as part of the TRC. It is obvious ‘there are too many Chiefs and not enough Indians’ in the TRC for it to be effective in a rural area like **the DDS**, used to more personal service

49) Page 13, “Response”, ninth dot point: “*Council continues.....Community Growth Action Plans..... Council recently established a Regional Economic Development Officer position.....*”

a) We could find no mention of any *Community Growth Action Plans* on the TRC website. There was mention and a description of a ‘*Toowoomba region community plan*’ that “*sets out what the communities would like to see occur in the next 10 years*”. Rather than a plan, we would call this a list of aspirations. It is said to be the key driver for a series of other “plans”. We could not access a copy. **See Appendix CD 20 – Toowoomba region community plan.**

b) To **the DDS** residents this is just another *plan* in a series of *plans, initiatives* and half-baked *incentives* used as an alternative to actually doing something.

I do not know enough about these but expect they will be no more effective than other TRC initiatives.

Development Officer: another Toowoomba bureaucrat who will recommend more policies? Or someone who knows something about rural towns and actually has some power to do something?

50) Page 14, “Response”, first dot point: “*.....\$3m Economic Development Incentives Scheme.....*”

a) Kingsthorpe and Oakey are included in the package, part of **the Growth Area**. As we pointed out in **Item 5**, we believe very little of the stated \$2.8m spent benefited **the DDS** area. It would be interesting to ask the TRC just how little. Pittsworth, in **the DDS** area, was not included until the last revision of this policy on 21 July 2015.

b) We believe this item is well covered in **Items 5, 7, 8, and 9**

51) Page 14, “Response”, second dot point: “*.....mining and coal seam gas development.....*”

a) The “*balanced*” consideration that would be given to mining, coal seam gas and underground water reserves would balance the many Toowoomba businesses that would benefit against a few rural interests. We all know which would prevail. Toowoomba businesses have, by far, the most votes.

52) Page 14, “Response”, third dot point: “...management of pests.....”

a) Pest management: 3 supervision staff and 4 actually tackling the pests. It sounds like a typical TRC operation. We suspect that the TRC pest control is certainly no better than that of the former shires. Many of the 30 or so part-time Councillors were farmers or from farming families with a special interest in eradicating, and a direct knowledge of, pests and control measures.

53) Page 14, “Response”, fourth dot point: “.....the Main Wild Dog Fence.....” and “.....the annual (rabbit) precept payments.....”

a) It would be interesting to find out from the TRC if ‘local’ Toowoomba contractors or ‘local’ Millmerran contractors were used for the upgrading and replacing of the 40km of dog fence; and if prices were even sought from Millmerran or any of **the DDS** area fencing contractors.

b) The rabbit precept: The TRC is claiming undeserved credit here. All the previous shires made precept payments, they were compulsory. Toowoomba gardens would also suffer in the event of a rabbit plague. The loss of tourism dollars to Toowoomba might even approach farm losses.

