

Good morning it is my pleasure to talk for a few minutes on the Weipa town Authority of today, and on some of our problems.

SLIDE 1

Just like any local government election occurring in Queensland the process starts with calling for nominations.

Here is the notice of Election from 2004.

Notice that it is next to an election notice for the Shire of Aurukun.

See also how the wording is copied, this could and does give some people the impression that Weipa has a normal council.

SLIDE 2

Just like any other town or shire election the candidates have campaign workers and hand out “ how to vote cards” etc.

SLIDE 3

The Weipa Town Authority members are made up of seven people. Three appointed by RioTinto Alcan, and four persons elected from residents of Weipa. One of these positions is for the chairperson of the WTA.

We run a hybrid system part board of management and part portfolio based.

SLIDE 4

Portfolios are allocated to elected and appointed members alike.

SLIDE 5

The powers and authorities for the WTA have been laid out in the Management Protocols for Weipa that was adopted by the WTA and RTA in early 2008.

SLIDE 6

RTA will keep a tight rein on members.

Taken from proposed Code of Conduct

SLIDE 7

Some residents believe we are a Local Government.

Some believe we are a Town Commission.

Some know that in fact Weipa Township is just one department of a major international mining company

SLIDE 8

At times the WTA is confused; our local law #6 is headed Weipa Shire Council.

SLIDE 9

And it's not just the WTA, here we see an extract from the "Mineral Resources Regulation 2003.

2D refers to us as "and Town Commission of Weipa". What is worrying here for me is the this State legislation is controlled by the Department of Mines, the very same body that administers the Commonwealth Aluminiun Act.

SLIDE 10

Residents are levied Rates

Rates notices are sent out to property owners, but these are not recognised by the Australian Taxation Office as rates and we get slugged the GST on general rates!!

Business and owners of investment properties can claim back the GST, but poor mum and dad trying to purchase there own house are slugged the GST.

Remember John Howard in the year 2000 saying that the General Rate will be exempt from the GST, we can't have a tax on a tax.

Well be can and do in Weipa.

SLIDE 11

Around 3.5 million is collect each year to run the town and for 2008 represented 92 % of the recurrent income.

Cookshire collected about 4.7 million for the same period which represented about 11% of their recurrent income.

On average rates account for around 35% of councils recurrent income

Why does Weipa miss out ?

The Federal Government collects GST and returns it to the States for allocation back to communities through the Grants commission in the form of Federal Assistance Grant s (FAGs)

Because the State will not recognize Weipa as having a local council no money comes our way.

SLIDE 12

We miss out on buckets of money.

In Weipa we get

SLIDE 13

Actually I stretch the truth here.

We don't even get the bucket.

SLIDE 14

How do we spend the rates

- Almost like any other Shire or Town Council
Partily on roads and rubbish

SLIDE 15

Our rubbish (two pick ups per week) is handles by a private contractor.

The contract is not negotiated by the WTA as one might assume, but by RTA on behalf of the ratepayers.

The other major expenditure for ratepayers is the Parks and Gardens contract. Yes you guessed it, negotiated by Rio no input from the WTA members.

What else is recurrent income spent on

SLIDE 16

As with everywhere roads take a lot of maintenance

SLIDE 17

Community buildings are also maintained using money collected through the rates

SLIDE 18

The roads, community buildings, areas of land, water supply in Weipa are all owned

Not by the ratepayers who are maintaining them but by the shareholders of RTA who's global headquarters are based in Canada.

SLIDE 19

In the RioTinto sustainability report of 2006 Rio told us it had spent 2million dollars in freeholding lease areas so its employees could purchase their houses.

I have seen no figure on how much profit was made on the sales. Today over 75% of the residential houses in town are not owned by Rio. Many people believe Rio manipulate the price by controlling supply and demand. Only Rio can convert mining lease into freehold hence making development possible. We hear of money being spend to improve the assets like sewerage water etc.

I came to Weipa back in 1985, In that time the number of residential houses must have doubled.

Developments like Nanum 1 , Nanum2, Transmission Street, and the Golf Links Estate to name some have put pressure on our assets. Normal Councils would be in a position to charge the developer a headworks charge, not so in Weipa.

It is true Rio does offer financial support to the Town-

This year for instance the capital budget is ZERO

The amount is dependant on the share price, or the state of the company.

Any company worth its salt will maximise returns for shareholders, even if that meant mothballing Queensland operations for a lower cost of production or higher grade ore elsewhere.

We can't budget on uncertainty.

SLIDE 20

It is not just a question of money.

It's about community.

Many residents have children, grandchildren and even great grandchildren living here, it's their home now.

No longer is Weipa a mining camp to house mine workers.

Weipa has changed since the Commonwealth aluminium Act was created Can the State Government still deny the Weipa community the same level of governance as the rest of Australia enjoy. Weipa residents are governed from the overseas headquarters of a multinational company.

Just a few short months ago 30% of the town's assets, the community buildings, roads etc were going to be owned by the Chinese?

It's Time,

It's time for a fair go for Weipa Residents.

We are part of Queensland at least for the moment.

Thank you

Peter Miller