

## **COLUMN FROM MAYOR TIM SHADBOLT**

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One of the most important jobs as Mayor is that you're the solo court of last resort.

People arrive in our city every week with their hard earned cash and they have a dream.

Invercargill promotes itself as the "City Where Dreams Are Possible" and the Mayor seems a friendly chap who is always trying to attract investment in the region. Surely this is a city crying out for development.

For some people fulfilling their dream is having an ensuite attached to the master bedroom because the children are in their "tweens" and we all know what that means when it comes to sharing a bathroom. For others the dream is building a delicatessen shop, barn styled market place, café and food expo all in one and they would develop this at the gateway to the city near the Riverton turnoff.

In both cases the "dreamers" were well established locals and in both cases, they ran smack into the solid brick wall of Council bureaucracy. They stumble into my office like shattered, disillusioned train wrecks and pour out tales of very expansive misery and frustration.

When I invited Peter Townsend to speak in Invercargill and help establish our Economic Development Unit (EDU) he told us it was critical to have economic developers within the planning departments of Councils.

As soon as a developer arrived in town wanting to invest in our city they should be met by a senior staff member whose sole purpose is to guide the potential investor through the rocky rapids of Council regulation. That officer should also have a positive, friendly nature. Unfortunately because of "Southern Unity" and "Shared Services" with other councils our economic development officers are isolated from planning officers, who all work in separate buildings.

If Invercargill wants to attract development we have to ensure that investors have a really good experience when they approach the City Council. I'm not saying they should all get everything their heart desires. What I aspire to is situations where people are coming into my office saying, "Well Mr Mayor, I didn't get what I wanted and the process cost me a small fortune, but I just want to say how helpful and friendly your planning staff were. At no stage did they try to manipulate me or thwart my project, they were 100% honest when reporting my case to Councillors and I'm really looking forward to doing business with you in the future".

The two big projects I'll be working on this week are the Lou Crimp poll on the future of the Invercargill Licensing Trust and the bio-tech industry being developed in our city because of the Auckland Island Pigs.

The Invercargill Licensing Trust and Invercargill City Council have always had a close working relationship. In the early days it was illegal for the Trust not to have at least two City Councillors on their Board. In recent times, it occurs as a result of tradition rather than legislation. If the Invercargill Licensing Trust was ever to close all its property, buildings and investments would be transferred to the City Council. We've always had a close working partnership.

I also have a lot of respect for Lou Crimp. I live in one of his houses and it's never leaked. He contributed millions of dollars to the Hospice and other worthy causes. He successfully ran for the City Council in 1998 and was a good Councillor despite all his frustration with red tape.

My aim is to get the two parties back around the table. A poll in basic terms means two highly paid, out of town, public relations companies will make a small fortune out of both Lou and the Invercargill Licensing Trust when that money could go to youth and sport programmes.

The other critical issue is the campaign to get the Minister of Health to make a decision on the future of our Auckland Island Pigs. Last week I had the pleasure of spending an hour in the Koru Lounge with Prime Minister, John Key.

He spent half an hour telling me about his future vision for Auckland and I spent half an hour telling him about the huge potential of a bio-tech industry for Invercargill. In politics nothing is more exciting than a full and frank exchange of views.