

Port Phillip City Council slammed over rubbish collection contracts

Two independent reports have slammed Port Phillip City Council over its handling of rubbish collection contracts, sparking calls that “heads should roll” over the failures.

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30 comments



The reports were raised at a Port Phillip council meeting at St Kilda Town Hall last week. Picture: Hamish Blair

Two independent reports have slammed a local council in Melbourne’s inner south over its handling of rubbish collection contracts, sparking calls that “heads should roll”.

A serious conflict of interest was uncovered after the reports probed Port Phillip City Council’s tender process for its kerbside waste and recycling collection.

The reports, which were recently made public, also revealed that council bosses failed basic principles of accountability and good governance.

Dean Hurlston, head of ratepayer lobby group Council Watch, said councillors should step up and demand answers from the Port Phillip administration.

“These failings are so severe that one wonders if the staff at Port Phillip actually have the skills and capacity to run any project,” Mr Hurlston said.

“Heads should roll over this,” he added.

Mr Hurlston has written to the Ombudsman, IBAC and Local Government Minister Melissa Horne calling for a corruption inquiry.

The reports were commissioned after Citywide, a [subsidiary of the City of Melbourne](#), won the contract for kerbside collection in 2022 after Port Phillip City Council decided to ditch its existing contractor Four Seasons.

After the switch to Citywide in July last year, almost 7000 residents reported not having their kerbside bins emptied.



Dean Hurlston, head of ratepayer lobby group Council Watch, said heads should roll over the failings. Picture: Kiel Egging

Mr Hurlston said one of the most serious breaches revealed by the reports was that a City of Melbourne employee was allowed to sit on Port Phillip’s tender evaluation panel – despite the fact Citywide was one of the contractors under consideration.

According to one of the reports, the City of Melbourne employee was involved in “contract management activities” with Citywide at the time.

The conflict of interest – which was discussed by management but dismissed – was confirmed by the report.

“A conflict of interest ... existed and that, in considering the materiality of the conflict, the panel member should not have been permitted to participate as a voting member in the panel,” it reads.

The City of Melbourne employee, who was previously employed by the Port Phillip City Council, has since left the organisation.

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A City of Melbourne spokesperson said the employee was requested by the Port Phillip City Council to sit on the panel “as a subject matter expert in the waste industry”.

“The staff member carried out the role under the probity guidelines and requirements set by the City of Port Phillip,” they said.

Key findings from the reports by The Commercial Advisory Partnership and RSM also revealed:

FAULTS in the tender process, such as being too complicated;

COUNCIL did not secure information from the previous contractor to ensure a smooth transition; and

LACK of documentation to ensure accountability and transparency of the tender decision.

The head of the Port Phillip waste management team at the time of the tender process, Chris Carroll, is now the chief executive.

The Herald Sun understands Mr Carroll offered his resignation to councillors after the release of the reports, but it was not accepted.



City of Port Phillip chief executive Chris Carroll.

Mr Hurlston attended a Port Phillip council meeting at St Kilda Town Hall this week, challenging the councillors to act after sitting on the reports for seven weeks.

Mr Carroll told the meeting that the council was working on a review, with an action plan expected to be presented to councillors in June.

“In the interim, we are not just sitting here, we have made a range of improvements and will do so in response to those audits,” Mr Carroll said.

“We do take the reports seriously and that we are implementing its recommendations.”

In an earlier statement, Port Phillip City Council mayor Heather Cunsolo apologised to residents for the convenience and disruption.

“The level of service disruption was entirely unacceptable, and for that, we are deeply sorry,” Ms Cunsolo said.

“The release of these independent reports marks a crucial step towards rebuilding trust and moving forward.

“One report scrutinises some of the potential reasons for the missed bin collections, while the other evaluates the procurement process for engaging the new contractor, alongside our adherence to proper probity processes.

“We’ve gained significant insights critical for the continuous improvement of our council and organisation.”

Citywide is chaired by former Victorian premier John Brumby.

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