

Letters to the Editor

Fax: 6684 1719

Email: editor@echo.net.au

Deadline: Noon, Friday

Letters longer than 200

words may be cut; letters

already published in other

papers will not be considered;

pseudonyms not acceptable.

Please include your full name,

address and phone number.

What to do with KBR

I'd like to thank Cr Tom Tabart for his letter (January 10) about the Kellogg Brown and Root (Halliburton) contract for the Bangalow Sewage works, and for reminding us once again that our councillors are also stuck within a system not of their making with rules that they have to follow, or find ways around.

I'd like to encourage Council to explore the choices available for widening the parameters they can use in choosing contractors. I know that in my own private business it is considered normal for me to consider the ethics of my suppliers – whether individuals or companies. In the Bangalow Sewage Works case it should have been possible for Council to consider the fact that KBR had over-charged governments in the US, Bosnia and Iraq, and that this makes them an inappropriate supplier to any government anywhere in the world.

Council could start the process by requesting any potential supplier to provide details of any issues relevant

to their ethics when bidding on any contract, specifically lists of any environmental violations they, or a related company (eg. Halliburton) have been charged with or convicted for anywhere in the world. Add to that anything relating to fraud, corruption, and to foreshadow potential legal action, details of any legal actions between the company and its customers or governments.

Such a request for information, while minimally impacting small, local businesses would give council a wealth of material on which to make a decision. After all, if companies can use their experience worldwide as part of their claims while tendering for a contract, why shouldn't they also be held responsible for their crimes worldwide.

Local authorities worldwide are taking the lead from their national governments, who are frequently owned by these same corporations, for example Wayne, Pennsylvania, has a 'Corporate Accountability Ordinance' which prevents companies doing businesses with the town if they have more three or more significant violations over the past 15 years. And in case we think this is not effective, in 1996 Motorola stopped selling components to make land-mines largely because many local governments stopped purchasing from them for ethical reasons.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to encourage local businesses, small or large, that care about sustainability and ethics to join us in the Byron Sustainable Ventures Network, where we actively explore ways in which we can steer our businesses in directions that benefit the planet and our communities.

Links to the specifics of these cases are on my website www.mitra.biz/blog

Mitra Ardron
Tyagarah

Bruns horror

After experiencing the invasion of drunken young yobboes in Brunswick Heads over the Christmas break it would seem time to introduce a permanent no drinking in public places policy throughout the Shire. To allow for well-behaved picnickers perhaps this rule need only be from 5pm to 10am.

Byron managed to claim back New Years Eve as a family friendly occasion, now it is time to do the same for the whole Shire. The pub too needs to be more diligent in enforcing the rule of not serving inebriated people. I can tolerate the crowded beaches and restaurants and lack of parking in the peak season but to feel unsafe to venture out in the evening in our own, usually quiet and safe, little town is unacceptable.

Also I am surprised that