

PARTY BATTLE OVER TRAFFIC

Angry shots were fired at Sutherland Council during debate on new traffic changes at the Cronulla shopping mall, near the train station.

The Labor side claimed gleefully that Liberal councillors were “cutting each others’ throats” on the issue, with Mayor Carmelo Pesce at odds with party boss Cr Kent Johns.

“Go ahead and knock yourself out,” Cr Johns warned the mayor, reportedly.

Cronulla A-Ward councillors Carol Provan and Marie Simone took opposing sides on the battlefield. Both are Liberals now who were previously elected as independents.

Cr Johns won in B-Ward (Miranda) while living in E-Ward (west), while Mayor Pesce won in D-Ward (Engadine) while living in C-Ward (north) and having shops in A-Ward.

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Move to lift ban on left-turn ban at southern end of Cronulla mall defeated at council meeting

The Leader, by Murray Trembath, 23 Aug 2017, Page 1.

A move to suspend the ban on turning left into the southern end of Cronulla mall, “to stop businesses going to the wall”, was defeated at a fiery meeting of Sutherland Shire Council last Monday.

Liberal councillors engaged in angry exchanges between themselves after Cr Marie Simone moved for an immediate reversal of the change to stop traffic from Croydon Street entering Cronulla Street. The traffic change was introduced a few weeks ago.

Cr Simone was supported by Liberal colleague Kent Johns, but their motion was strongly opposed by fellow party members, mayor Carmelo Pesce and Carol Provan.

At one stage, an emotional Ms Simone was ordered to sit down by Cr Pesce.

“Don’t speak to me like that – take it back,” she fired back.

In another exchange, Cr Johns said to Cr Pesce, “go ahead and knock yourself out”.

Cr Simone said she had spoken to many shop owners and received “heartbreaking” emails about their plight.

Some believed they would have to close their doors before the end of winter, she said.

Cr Simone presented a petition which she said was signed by 50 businesses calling for the ban to be lifted.

She appealed to councillors “to put yourself into their shoes” and suspend the ban until council officers prepared a report on its impact.

However, Cr Pesce, who owns several shops in Cronulla, said he visited the centre three times a day and he found parking spaces at the southern end of Cronulla Street were invariably taken.

Cr Pesce said he was sent two photos showing empty parking spaces, but said they were taken the day a car flipped outside the station and police closed roads, and last Friday when gale-force winds caused Cronulla and other parts of the shire to be blacked out.

Cr Pesce said he knew, as a business owner, that shops in Cronulla always suffered during winter.

He said the left-turn ban was introduced on the recommendation of a community workshop to speed up traffic flow in that area.

“It was for a six months trial, but I am more than happy to bring it forward and look at it in a month’s time,” he said.



”The purpose was to clear the traffic and from what I have seen on social media people are saying council has finally got it right.”

Cr Pesce said the fire brigade had “asked us to fix the problem” because of the delay in getting to fires in South Cronulla.

“If we are going to make decisions as a council, we can’t change our minds just because two or three people say it’s affecting them,” he said.

Cr Provan told Cr Simone, “It’s a shame you didn’t have the courtesy to come and talk to us [fellow Liberal councillors]”.

“This is a trial – you all supported it, so let’s give it a go,” she said.

“I have only had one letter from one shop down there.”

Labor councillor Jack Boyd, who voted to continue with the trial, said the debate and vote showed “the shocking split among the Liberal councillors”.

“They openly fought on council floor and they went for each other’s throats,” he said.

Cr Boyd said from the opinions he, other A Ward councillors and the mayor had received, the trial was a success.