



La Castra tops missing councillors' list

MATTHEW KILLORAN

BOB La Castra attended fewer council meetings last year than any other Gold Coast City councillor.

Mayor Ron Clarke, who is not a councillor and does not sit on any committees, was the only elected official to attend fewer meetings.

The record for Cr La Castra (pictured) is an improvement on the previous year, however, when his attendance was worse than all but one of his peers.

Cr La Castra has defended his record, revealed in the council's annual report, saying his 16 absences were for official council business and a family emergency.

He attended the least number of budget meetings and missed four community and cultural development meetings – a committee he heads. He missed more of his own committee meetings than any other member, excluding Cr Greg Betts, who joined

part-way through the year. Cr La Castra attended 38 of 42 full council meetings.

He said the meetings he missed occurred between April and May, initially when he attended a seven-day SportsAccord conference in London on behalf of the council.

He returned briefly before rushing back to the UK, where he was born, for a family emergency, he said.

"If you miss one week you miss that round of meetings," he said.

"It was May so I missed the budget meetings as well. That's why the numbers clock up."

Cr La Castra attended 99 meetings and missed 16.

Mudgeeraba councillor Ted Shepherd, who chairs city planning, which meets more often than other committees, attended 137 meetings – the most among his colleagues.

Meanwhile, mayoral candidate Peter Young denies he is the most expensive councillor, saying his col-

leagues cost ratepayers more. Yesterday it was revealed a careless mobile phone bungle left ratepayers to cover \$3500 for four hours of "data roaming".

The council's 2010-11 annual report revealed he racked up \$17,700 in expenses, more than any of his colleagues including Mayor Ron Clarke.

Cr Young said he took responsibility for the high cost but argued many of his colleagues were more costly than him because they had leased offices, while his were in a council-owned building.

"There are also other costs such as postage that can't be known because they're not allocated to (individual) councillors," he said.

"There's a whole bunch of hidden costs."

The biggest chunk of Cr Young's expenses was an \$8000 mobile phone bill, while \$5359 was spent on conferences and training and \$4104 on printing and advertising.

ATTENDANCE REGISTER



Ron Clarke	63
Donna Gates*	136
John Wayne*	134
Grant Pffor*	116
Margaret Grummit	119
Peter Young*	129
Dawn Crichlow	110
Susie Douglas*	129
Bob La Castra	99
Ted Shepherd*	137
Eddy Sarroff	116
Jan Grew	107
Greg Betts*	134
Daphne McDonald	104
Chris Robbins	116

* Member of city planning committee which meets more regularly than others

Source: Gold Coast City Annual Report 2010-11