

## **Report 01.248**

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Report to Policy and Finance Committee  
from Cr Mike Gibson

### **Enhancing Public Knowledge of Transmission Gully**

1. Our colleague, Cr Chris Turver, referred to “Chatham House Rules” for the first time ever (in my hearing at the Regional Council) a few months ago.
2. He might have misled some Councillors as to the Rule’s nature and purpose, a version of which was kindly circulated by Ted Maguire (**Attachment 1**).
3. Our colleague, Cr Euan McQueen, used the expression (for only the second time in my hearing at the Regional Council) at a Transmission Gully meeting in the presence of the press a few days ago. He, too, seemed to be misled as to the Rule’s nature and purpose – perhaps officers had never given advice on this matter before. At any rate, Cr Chris Laidlaw followed Cr McQueen’s remarks by observing with propriety that he felt free to comment on matters arising at the meeting.
4. The difficulties which arise from this approach (not, I hasten to say, with Cr Chris Laidlaw) is when a Councillor is constantly rushing off to his community after a “Workshop” and misleading people on Council matters. This is particularly serious when safety matters are concerned.
5. My own understanding regarding the release of material under the Chatham House Rule goes back thirty years to a private meeting which I arranged with a then Minister, Tony Wedgwood Benn, on the subject of lobby correspondents. It is that such material may be released as “unattributed background.” (I understand that most Councillors, if not virtually all, agree with me that the ‘attribution’ can be made to oneself!).
6. The point is that, contrary to some of the impressions which have been given, the Chatham House Rule is in fact ideally suited to allowing a public presence at “Workshops”.
7. In the case of Transmission Gully a public presence at “Workshops” should at least serve as a deterrent to anyone who might be tempted to pronounce on an increasingly unlikely completion-date for that route. This would be particularly serious if such

pronouncements were to act as a deterrent to incorporating safety improvements and generally upgrading the coastal stretch of State Highway One.

8. In any event, I will continue to promote the desirability of having Workshops on Transmission Gully held with a public presence.

MIKE GIBSON  
Councillor

**Attachment 1: The Chatham House Rule**