

Former Lyndoch Living board member breaks silence



Former Lyndoch Living board member Percy Eccles resigned in March last year.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

Former Lyndoch Living board member Percy Eccles has called for the entire board to “consider their positions” in the face of rising pressure for them to resign.

Mr Eccles, who served on the board for almost 10 years before his resignation last year, was speaking after CEO Doreen Power was stood down last Thursday.

He said he believed the board was “led by the CEO” and that they followed her direction, rather than the reverse.

“If the information I have been reading (about the CEO being stood down) is correct, then it’s a very good day for

Lyndoch," he said.

"I call upon all of the board members to consider their positions, because it's my belief that they were led by the CEO, rather than the CEO being led by the board."

Mr Eccles said it was one of the greatest pleasures of his life when he served as a Lyndoch board member in the early years, but that this changed dramatically in recent years.

"As a board member for almost 10 years, it was one of the joys of my life to serve the people and the staff, especially when Lyndoch was under the leadership of former CEO Rhys Boyle," he said.

"But in the few years prior to my resignation, I have never been more disappointed in the board's direction," Mr Eccles said.

Mr Eccles has been unable to speak publicly until now due to fears of legal action by the highly litigious CEO.

Following reports on The Terrier that the CEO has departed, however, Mr Eccles said he felt able to speak up.

While Mr Eccles could not comment on specific discussions within board meetings, it's understood one of the many issues he pursued vigorously while on the board was a breakdown of how much was spent each year on lawyers and consultants.

A line-by-line breakdown was never provided.

[I have also attempted to obtain this breakdown, but the figures are exempt from Freedom of Information due to Lyndoch now being a quasi-private company.]

It's widely known within Lyndoch, however, that a handful of highly paid consultants have been contracted multiple times for their services.

One of these includes a consultant who had an existing relationship with Lyndoch and was on the selection panel when the CEO was selected in 2014.

That particular consultant, who is not from Warrnambool, has since been employed multiple times and was a regular attendee at board meetings. It's understood this consultant was paid \$3000 a day.

It's also known that, in recent years, Lyndoch changed its legal firm from a local based firm to a top law firm in Melbourne who, among other things, was paid by Lyndoch to launch personal defamation actions on behalf of the CEO and another corporate staff member.

Mr Eccles was also one of three board members on the selection panel when Ms Power was appointed in 2014.

Mr Eccles said he did not agree with the choice of Ms Power and made this known to the panel at the time.

When the other two board members decided Ms Power was the best applicant, however, he signed off on the appointment for the sake of cohesion.

Ms Power's tenure has seen a dramatic decline in residential care at Lyndoch, largely due to a mass exodus of experienced staff, many of whom tried to speak up about the toxic culture that had developed.

The board did nothing in response to these concerns.

Lyndoch chair Sue Cassidy told media and staff Ms Power was on "annual leave" as of last Thursday. It's still not clear exactly what prompted the board to suddenly stand Ms Power down.

Pressure is now mounting for the board to follow, with almost 2000 signatures in an online and offline petition that began before Ms Power's departure.