

The Sunday Times

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Truth at last

By JOHN FLINT

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AN investigation by *The Sunday Times* reveals that Joondalup council chief Denis Smith did misrepresent his academic background – and he might have perjured himself.

The newspaper has obtained a confidential memo from Mr Smith to former mayor John Bombak last November, setting out all his qualifications.

The list differs radically from the qualifications cited on his CV that was considered by the council before his appointment in October 2001.

Most significantly, the memo does not mention any degree or diplomas.

The row over Mr Smith's credentials has hamstrung the council and he has resisted repeated requests by Mayor Don Carlos and the ratepayers' association to show what he really has.

Police recently cleared the chief executive of any criminal conduct in WA but the affair is soon to be the focus of a parliamentary inquiry.

Earlier this month, *The Sunday Times* revealed that Mr Smith had embroidered other details from his past, relating to former job titles.

Academic qualifications were not a requirement for the \$225,000-a-year City of Joondalup position.

But Mr Smith's "qualifications" were listed in a report that was presented to the council by head-hunting agency Management Recruiters Australia.

The agency, which was hired by the council to seek suitable candidates, copied the qualifications verbatim from a CV supplied by Mr Smith.

The confidential memo, which *The Sunday Times* has obtained, was circulated to councillors last November, when the storm blew up.

In a statement this week, following the conclusion of the police investigation, Mr Smith wrote: "I have shown my qualifications to the WA Police (Fraud Squad) and they are able to confirm that the qualifications match what has been shown to the council in November 2002."

He has yet to explain why these qualifications don't match up with the more impressive list on his CV.

They are also inconsistent with other CVs that he submitted when applying for his former posts with councils in NSW.

Those positions did specify a requirement for tertiary qualifications.

His Joondalup CV cited a Bachelor of Business (Management) from the University of Technology at Sydney and two diplomas.

The list from November simply refers to a "post-graduate qualification course in Business

Management".

It is believed – because UTS cannot find any record of any graduate or student with Mr Smith' s name or a similar name- that he may have undertaken a non-award, professional development course there.

The Bachelor of Business (Management) claim was also made in a media release put out by Warringah Council in NSW when Mr Smith was promoted to general manager in 1998.

He also stressed his "qualifications" in a supporting letter for the Warringah job.

Doubts over Mr Smith' s academic qualifications first surfaced during a NSW District Court case in November 2002 when Mr Smith appeared as a witness in a defamation trial involving two warring councillors from Warringah.

Under cross-examination, he said he did not hold any degrees. But he did claim to hold diplomas – though these don' t appear on the list in the confidential memo.

In her decision, Judge Judith Gibson rejected an explanation made by a lawyer that Mr Smith might have participated in non-degree/non-diploma courses.

"(This) does not explain why he claimed in his CV (for a job at Coffs Harbour City Council) that he obtained specific diplomas and certificates and degrees in specific years . . . This is not a simple mistake but an inability to record accurately his entire claimed university career."

Mayor Carlos has welcomed the decision of the Legislative Council' s standing committee on public administration and finance to look into the matter.

Mr Smith has accused the mayor of harassment and intimidation. He said the issue over his qualifications was a "beat up".

The row has cost the council \$70,000, which includes Mr Smith' s legal advice.

Mayor Carlos, who has had to work closely with Mr Smith at budget meetings this week, repeatedly has challenged the chief executive to sue him.

Combined Ratepayers' Association spokesman David Davies said yesterday the people o Joondalup were not getting "good governance".

"This has to be sorted out urgently," he said. "It all revolves around Denis Smith showing his qualifications. He could have ended this long ago."

All applicants for jobs at Joondalup council are cautioned: "It should be clearly understood that providing false or deliberately misleading information . . . may result in your application being disregarded, or may be grounds for dismissal should you be successful in gaining the position."

Mr Smith has said that he made no formal application for his post.

The Sunday Times was unable to reach Mr Smith this week to ask about his confidential memo to Mr Bombak.

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