

Pollies square off over meters

Michelle Wranik

Parking meters may be a source of frustration for motorists but their revenue helps Randwick Council provide services for residents, according to Randwick deputy mayor Murray Matson.

The outspoken Greens councillor said he was compelled to defend the council's use of parking meters after former Randwick mayor Charles Matthews announced his new political party, No Parking Meters.

In a *Courier* article earlier this month, Mr Matthews criticised the council's use of parking meters to raise revenue, and spoke of his plans to embark on an anti-parking-meter campaign with 15 candidates in the 2008 local government elections.

Mr Matthews said he would focus on Randwick first, but if all went well, the party would try for the Senate.

But Cr Matson, who was criticised

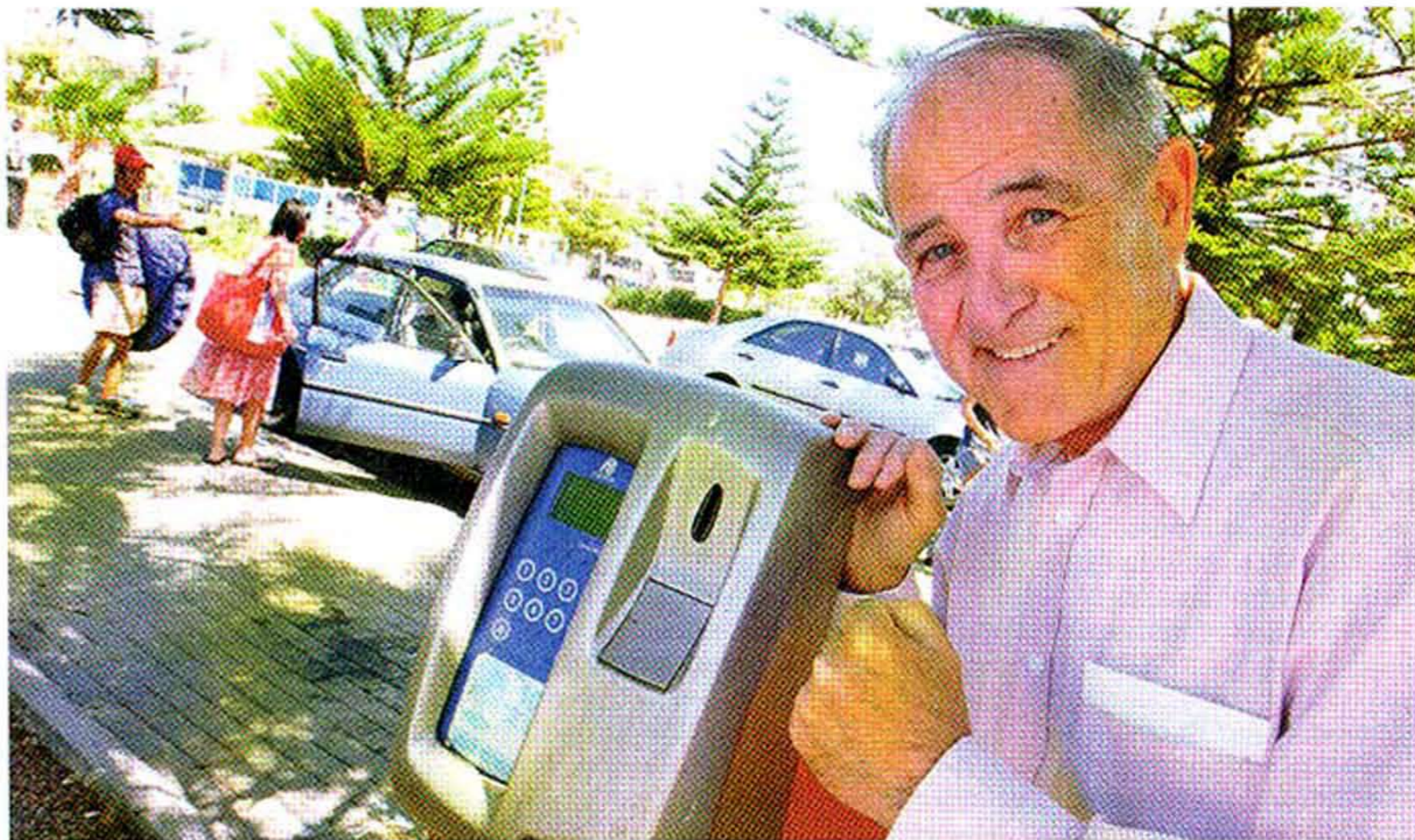
for attempting to introduce a pay-parking scheme in Randwick last year, has cast doubt on the plans.

Although Cr Matson described the formation of the party as "democracy in action", he criticised Mr Matthews for refusing to explain how he would fund the loss of revenue.

"For me, community opinion is important and I thus think Charles' idea of running a No Parking Meter party is fair enough," he said.

"But former councillor Matthews cannot blithely say that he will just cut the residents' revenue by \$279,000 each year. He hasn't costed his proposal and I think that is financially irresponsible.

"To get a mandate for removing them, Charles must tell residents that the council's spending on community services will have to be cut by the revenue per year that those meters bring in."



Charles Matthews is making political waves with his idea of a No Parking Meters party. Photo: Melanie Russell

However, Mr Matthews, who was a Randwick councillor for 27 years, said he had no intention of releasing his good ideas for the taking.

In an earlier interview, Mr Matthews said councils would have to "wake up to themselves and get revenue another way".

"There are other ways to get revenue in council," he said. "I think that Murray Matson could wait until I bring out my policy closer to the elections and then he'll learn a little bit more about local government.

"I know what happens in there. They pinch your ideas."

Meanwhile, Waverley police are investigating a suspected arson attack after several parking meters in Bondi Junction were set alight.

Police patrolling the area at 1 am last Thursday discovered several parking meters on fire in Gardiner Street.