

Mayor says group's allegations are unchained from the facts

BY DENISE MOONEY

PORT Phillip mayor Janet Cribbes has lashed out at triangle opponents Unchain St Kilda over allegations of council misconduct made in material distributed to residents last week.

Councillor Cribbes accused the group of "jumping at shadows" and "making up responses without facts" which she said was "dangerous" for the community.

The material, which called for local government reform, accused the council of mistreating public assets like the South Melbourne Town Hall, selecting an inappropriate site for the proposed skate park and slashing child-care funding.

It also referred to recent scandals involving breaches of tender guidelines, which led

to an inquiry by the State Ombudsman.

"The problems with the triangle site represent the tip of the iceberg," the leaflet stated, before listing issues of concern such as the council's \$20 million refurbishment of its St Kilda offices and the attempt to sell the Mary Kehoe Community Centre in Albert Park and children's playgrounds.

The mayor said Unchain St Kilda, which is standing candidates in the upcoming council election, had ventured into arguments it knew nothing about and had no idea what it was to be part of a council.

She said the group was making unfounded assertions without providing evidence to back up its claims.

"This is just about them, a minority group who think they know best," she said.

Cr Cribbes rejected the

claims in the leaflet and said the council had taken immediate action over the tender fraud allegations. The council had also led the way in delivering integrated child-care centres that were part of the Federal and State Government plans, she said.

But Unchain St Kilda president Serge Thomann said the group stood by its comments.

Mr Thomann said the group's members included five former councillors and two former mayors of St Kilda who knew "exactly" what they were doing.

"When it comes to the triangle there were 7000 objections to it. So I don't know what she's talking about when she says we're a minority group," he said.

"She should tell us directly if she has a problem with the material."