

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Our second meeting for the year was held on Wednesday 14 March in the War Memorial Hall at Gulargambone – this has been tradition for many years and gives the Gulargambone residents an opportunity to attend the meeting and address Council on any issues they may wish to raise.

I am pleased to say that, as usual, there were individuals and organisations taking this opportunity. Firstly, we welcomed Mr Colin Ryan OAM, representing the Memorial Hall Committee who drew Council's attention to various issues requiring attention at the hall. Mr Ryan also thanked Council for its assistance in getting the bullock wagon sculpture in place and to those who attended the unveiling of this unique installation on Saturday evening 10 March.

Mr. Ryan congratulated and thanked Council's Gulargambone staff, who were present during the early part of the meeting – he said they are always willing to lend a hand and have a very positive attitude towards the community. This comment was supported by the Principal of Gulargambone Central School, who was also at the meeting. Congratulations to our Gulargambone team – feedback such as this is always well received by Council and management.

Mrs Alison Dent spoke on behalf of the Gulargambone Community Enterprises Co-operative which, along with other associated parties, has agreed to hand over the bullock wagon art installation to Council. The structure is located on land owned by Council adjacent to the Highway and, as such, it will be covered by Council's insurance. The formal deed will be adopted at the April meeting. When we were in Gulargambone for the meeting, we inspected the bullock wagon and I can tell residents it's well worth a trip to Gulargambone just to have look!

Mrs Annie Haling, another representative of the Gulargambone Community Enterprises Co-operative, was next to address Council and she discussed plans for the *Pave the Way to Gular* art initiative. Councillors were also shown design concepts for the art to be placed on the Council-owned structures – these concepts were approved and we now are waiting for the Festival when all this activity will take place. Mrs Haling also presented other design concepts that will be used in other locations during the festival. She said community consultation is continuing and it was obvious that the Gulargambone Central School is keen to support the initiative.

Council previously committed a contribution of \$25,000 towards artist fees for Council-owned buildings and the Festival also attracted a grant of \$20,000 through the Destination NSW Incubator Fund. The event will run from 5 to 8 April, however the painting of the water tower will take place earlier as, I understand that artist will not be available over the festival weekend. Council wishes the Co-operative all the best with this 'first of its kind in the region' initiative.

Update on Joint Organisations (J.O.)

As I reported previously Council decided not to make a decision regarding joining a J.O. until all Regulations and Legislation have been gazetted. The Office of Local Government has now extended the deadline for councils to resolve to form a JO from the end of February until 23 March and councils have been invited to provide feedback by way of a submission, if they so wish, by 16 March.

I have instigated discussion with the Mayors of the Western Region Councils regarding the possibility of forming a J.O. based on the western half of the OROC

region which would take in the Shires of Brewarrina, Bogan, Bourke, Cobar, Walgett and Warren. The financial contributions required from councils who become members of a J.O. are still not known – initially this Council estimated the cost to be in the vicinity of \$100,000 however, depending upon other functions that may be undertaken by a J.O., this amount could escalate. This was another factor Council carefully considered when it resolved to **not** join a Joint Organisation. It'll be interesting to see what the Government will throw at us next to challenge councils in getting on with their business of looking after communities!

Grant Funding Opportunities

It is wonderful to be able to report very positively about the opportunity to bid for grant funds over the next few months. I reported earlier that Council is awaiting the outcome of applications already submitted and just a few days ago we were advised that approval has been given for the fencing project at Gulargambone around the cemetery and bore areas, works at the aerodrome, Coonamble Golf Club car park and fencing of the Coonamble waste depot.

Under the Stronger Country Communities Funding Program our Shire has been allocated \$1,600,263 in Round Two – applications open on 12 March and close on Friday 4 May. At the meeting we considered possible projects and the percentage of co-contributions Council would be able to commit. I am thrilled to report that Council resolved to submit applications the following projects:

- Splash pad at Gulargambone Pool
- Toilet block in the Coonamble CBD
- Visitor Information Centre
- Refurbish toilets throughout the Shire
- Skate Bowl in West Coonamble
- Extend the irrigation at the Sports Oval
- Erect shade structures over playground areas
- Playground/gym equipment in Lions Park at Gulargambone
- Pool blanket and change rooms at Coonamble Pool
- Basketball court at the Youth Centre in Gulargambone.

It is estimated these projects will cost in the vicinity of \$2,100,000 – Council will apply for grant funding of \$1,595,000 and it has committed co-contributions of \$505,000. Due to the very limited time between when Round Two opens and closes, staff are working hard to have all projects costed and applications ready for submission by 4 May.

Community organisations are also invited to submit applications for projects, but the applications **must** come through Council. If residents want further information, please phone the office on 68 271 900 and speak with either Robyn or Bruce.

Coonamble Library Refurbishment

Another project completed through grant funding from the State Library was the upgrade of floorcoverings at the Coonamble Library. The work was carried out with as little inconvenience as possible to residents and looks wonderful. I encourage residents to take time to visit our local library and be amazed at the diverse range of services it provides and the technology available. It's a great distraction from a busy day – just pop in and have a look around.

Annual Buy Local Strategy

Council's Director of Community Services accepted an invitation to attend the recent Chamber of Commerce meeting and subsequently met with four representatives to discuss marketing strategies for an ongoing Buy Local campaign. Some great initiatives came to light which certainly will assist in attaining that goal and Council's Director will continue to be involved in the campaign. To support the initiatives which will be included in the Buy Local Strategy and Marketing Plan Council resolved to include \$25,000 in its 2018/19 budget, noting that its Director of Community Services, Ms Robyn Ryan, will facilitate the implementation and development of the Plan.

Proposed Public Toilet – Coonamble CBD

I touched briefly on this project last month and can report that Council will be negotiating the purchase of a building in the main street, preparing and submitting an application to the Stronger Country Communities program for \$400,000 and resolved that a co-contribution of \$120,000 be committed. If the application is successful Council will then develop a design and construct tender to complete the project.

Council By-Election Timetable

Council has contracted its election duties to the NSW Electoral Commission however I can report that nominations for the election of one Councillor open on Monday 26 March 2018 and close at 12 noon on Wednesday 4 April. Pre-poll voting starts on Monday 23 April and concludes at 6.00 p.m. on Friday 4 May, with Election Day being Saturday 5 May – between the hours of 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. All enquiries regarding the by-election should be directed to the NSW Electoral Commission at www.elections.nsw.gov.au or telephone 1300 135 736

Council Newsletter to the Community

I hope most of our residents have seen a copy of the most recent newsletter – after every Council meeting, staff is preparing a mail out to keep the community up to date with what's happening at Council. This is a new initiative and I congratulate the Director of Community Services and her staff.

Should anyone wish to contact me to discuss issues or concerns, please phone 0427 905 626 - I'm always available and willing to discuss matters to bring forward on residents' behalf.

Michael Webb

Mayor