

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

A very full agenda for Council's June meeting held last Wednesday 13th. In conjunction with the ordinary monthly meeting, Council adopted its Operational Plan and Budget for 2018/2019 along with fees and charges for the next financial year. It was good to have a "full house" again, with Cr Thomas attending his first meeting since being elected at the By-Election in May. Cr Thomas took the Affirmation of Allegiance immediately following Declaration of the Poll on Wednesday 9 May.

The draft Operational Plan, including the Budget and the Fees & Charges, has been on public exhibition with an invitation for submissions - closing on 6 June. I am delighted to say four submissions were received, which is a record - it's wonderful to have community groups taking an interest in Council's affairs and letting us know how best we can service their needs.

Submissions were received from the Coonamble Show Society Inc suggesting improvements to the showground and pavilion; another from the Gulargambone Community Enterprises Co-operative Limited for financial assistance towards its 2019 Pave the Way to Gular Art Festival; the third was from the Coonamble Children's Services outlining the key role it plays in the delivery of community services and education and requesting that an allocation of funds be dedicated directly to the organization. The final submission came from Darius Smith on behalf of the Quambone community suggesting several areas in which Council could involve itself to support and improve facilities in the township.

Council discussed each submission at length and the General Manager will be responding individually to each one advising Council's position in each case.

Public Question Time at the meeting provided the opportunity for the Team Penning Committee representative to discuss charges levied for use of the showground for the three day event held recently. As I've said many times before, all facilities provided by Council have significant maintenance costs to keep them to an acceptable standard. Although the Committee paid for the hire of the ground, it said it was not aware there would be additional charges for hot showers and removal of rubbish following the event. In keeping with Council's previous decisions to not waive fees or provide the facility free of charge to other organisations, it was resolved to not waive the additional charges. Some of Council's decisions may seem harsh but it's impossible to provide facilities free of charge however, on this occasion, Council agreed to waive 50% of the additional cleaning charge.

The Country Mayors' meeting at Parliament House in Sydney provided me the opportunity, once again, to discuss the issue of Joint Organisations with representatives of the Deputy Premier's Office. At the meeting on Wednesday Council had a very comprehensive discussion regarding its position in this long drawn out process. It also considered the contents of a letter from The Hon John Barilaro MP, encouraging Council to make a decision, saying it is the Government's intent that all regional councils become a full voting member of a Joint Organisation so their communities can benefit from a strong regional approach to strategic planning, collaboration and advocacy.

Eventually Council resolved to inform the Deputy Premier that it will form a Joint Organisation with the Far West (North) Councils, which include the Shires of Walgett, Brewarrina, Cobar and Bourke.

A brief summary of some matters decided by Council is following so that our residents are 'kept in the loop' after each meeting.

Stage 3 of the Levee Upgrade

I am pleased to announce that a tender has been accepted for Stage 3 of the Coonamble levee upgrade. The work includes reinstating the river embankment slope and installation of rock protection of the section of the Castlereagh River near the Council building and library [portion 1] plus the installation of demountable flood barriers (flood gates) at Baradine Road and King Street (Tooraweenah Road) – [portion 2]. The tender was advertised in two portions, giving tenderers the opportunity to submit prices for the lot or either portion of the work.

Council engaged Public Works Advisory, Riverina / Western Region to prepare the contract specification, based on the design prepared by Infrastructure Services (previously Water Solutions) and to manage the tendering process. Only one tender was received from Comdain Civil Constructions Pty Ltd – total amount of \$1,482,106.77. It is estimated that the work will take 22 weeks to complete.

Health Services – Cobar Shire

Council agreed to support Cobar Shire Council in its representations to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health seeking a commitment from the NSW Government to provide incentives and programs to attract doctors, specialists and other health professionals to the area. Cobar General Manager says the frustration and difficulty being experienced in sustaining these services and the pressure on councils to provide medical services to the town is of concern. Council did agree to provide a letter of support, reinforcing the responsibility of health services lies squarely with the State Government. I can't emphasize strongly enough the dollar value the State Government puts on Local Government in its 'cost shifting' practices.

Coonamble Clay Target Club

The Club has informed Council that after more than 60 years at its current site at "Youie", it has to relocate to a new location. The Club has asked Council to help it find another site – we're looking for approximately 40 acres and, of course, it must meet very stringent guidelines for the activity to be conducted. Council agreed to investigate the availability of suitable land, however it will be the responsibility of the Club to work through and meet all the requirements and regulations imposed to conduct its activities.

Renewal of Alcohol Free Zones

The existing alcohol free zones in the three urban areas will expire on 30 June. In accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 and Ministerial guidelines Council has advertised its intention to renew the zones over all roads, footpaths and car parks within the town limits of Coonamble, Gulargambone and Quambone. Council notified by letter the police, liquor licensees and registered clubs of its intention – no submission or comment was received. Council resolved to formally declare the renewal of alcohol free zones and the declaration will remain in force on a 24 hour basis until 30 June 2021. Staff will now arrange to update signs to record the extension.

Planned Works – Coonamble Streets

Council considered constructing medium islands in McCullough Street, from Castlereagh Street to Charles Street and requested costings be provided for the

work. Councillors noted that with the associated road works, provision for water and other capital costs it is estimated at \$690,000 capital expenditure, with maintenance costs of mowing and watering being around \$15,000 annually. It was decided to reconsider its position again following the September 2018 budget review and possibly stage the works, one block at a time.

Another project Council is considering is the trialing of an alternate treatment on Effie Durham Drive in lieu of sealing. Questions were asked at the last meeting regarding comparative costs and this information was conveyed to the meeting. It is estimated that the cost to seal is \$183,000 – the maximum estimated to carry out the alternate treatment \$70,000. Effie Durham Drive was selected as the most convenient location because of its location which allows for constant monitoring. I want to point out that the alternate treatment is not intended as a long term solution – Council intends to schedule sealing of Effie Durham Drive possibly in the 2019/2020 financial year. If the trial is successful it provides the opportunity to address problems areas of unsealed roads which have excessive maintenance requirements.

Truck Wash Facility - Gulargambone

Recently Council had a request to reintroduce a truck wash facility at Gulargambone to replace the one previously located on the Quambone Road on the outskirts of the town. At the meeting a report was presented detailing what will be necessary to meet the stringent regulations imposed by the NSW Environment Protection Authority which have got tougher over recent years. Wastewater from the wash down bay typically contains detergents, degreasers and only substances as well as contaminants from the washed vehicle. Council would also have to identify a suitable site which would allow sufficient area for road train traffic and for all traffic to be able to flow in a forward motion to and from the site. It would also have to determine the type of system to be installed. An estimate of \$710,000 was given for a fully contained recycling plant and \$680,000 for a wash bay with retention pond operation. Unfortunately Council cannot commit such a significant amount of expenditure to a truck wash facility at Gulargambone – gone are the days when just a very basic pump and wash facility would suffice!

Grant Writing Workshop

Another community service arranged by Council's Community Services department was the free grant writing workshop. Both sessions proved hugely successful with over 30 community members registering. The workshops were presented by Megan Dixon, Executive Officer from Regional Development Australia – Orana. The workshops were timely, given significant increases in funding opportunities currently on offer – the participants will now be ready and waiting for the chance to put their skills into practice.

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

Michael Webb
Mayor