

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Last Wednesday 8 August we put another meeting behind us, but prior to commenting on issues and outcomes I would like to report on my attendance at the Country Mayors' Association meeting at Parliament House in Sydney on Friday 3 August.

The Hon John Barilaro MP, Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional NSW, Minister for Skills and Minister for Small Business, informed the meeting that the Government is supplying significant funding to the regions in conjunction with Local Government. He pointed out that the Regional Vision Statement has been released and funding from the sale of the Snowy Hydro will, in total, go to the regions.

The Premier, the Hon Gladys Berejiklian MP, was also at the meeting. She said we need to speak up for poor communities as the Government will listen to concerns and ideas. She also said probity is important and announcements need to be delivered as quickly as possible. Ms Berejiklian pointed out that \$1 in every \$3 is spent in regional areas and reiterated the comments of The Hon John Barilaro that all money received from the sale of the Snowy Hydro will be spent in regional NSW.

Another topic for discussion at the meeting was – yes, you guessed it – Joint Organisations!!! Mr Ken Gillespie, the Regional Infrastructure Coordinator, NSW Premier and Cabinet, agreed that JOs are an important part of the State's future and they need to be successful. He said there are so many council issues that need to fit in with the priorities of JOs and councils should prioritize their top five issues. Funds are now being made available and distributed to Joint Organisations to get the ball rolling and start doing what they've been set up to do!

While on the topic of JOs - just a couple of weeks ago I was informed that the Far West (North) JO was proclaimed with the Shires of Bourke, Cobar and Walgett being members, however it was also conveyed to me that our request to join was being considered and we will be given an outcome shortly. It's still very much 'a waiting game' or a 'work in progress' – whichever way you want to look at it! Any news will be conveyed to our community as soon as it's received.

During the month since the July meeting, in company with Crs Thomas and Walker, I took part in a tour, conducted by Santos, of the Narrabri Gas Project area, where we inspected well site facilities, water treatment and storage facilities and the power station operating in the area. The General Manager is now making arrangements for us to visit and see first-hand the alleged devastation caused by mining in Queensland and as soon as possible we'll be going north!!

Along with our General Manager and Crs Walker, Thomas and Fisher, I attended the Planning Focus meeting conducted by the Department of Planning and Environment concerning the EIS for the section of inland rail between Narromine and Narrabri. It was made very clear that the line will not come to Coonamble, nor will consideration be given to any submission to this effect.

Council has always lobbied for connectivity to the rail line from the Coonamble line - it was good to hear that this will happen, thus enabling the region's produce access to markets. It's expected that in about 12 months, the environmental assessment will have identified a 40 – 60 metre wide rail corridor within the current 2 kilometres wide route study. It will be some time before tenders are called to design and construct the railway.

Council does believe there will be opportunities for the Shire and, contrary to some beliefs, it has been in discussions with various bodies, including the ARTC. Even during the construction phase of the project there may be direct benefit to our area - at the appropriate time Council will direct resources towards those opportunities and benefits and will proactively promote our Shire.

Now a brief outline of some issues raised at the meeting and the outcomes.

Coonamble & District Education Foundation

Another meeting, another request for financial assistance – the Foundation is seeking \$8,000 towards its major fundraising event next year. In April 2019 it will be hosting the *Classic Wallabies* to run a junior development clinic and play a match against a regional representative side in Coonamble, ahead of a local game of rugby. Those activities will be followed by an evening cocktail party and auction.

Council was informed that the expected cost of accommodation and travel for players and support staff is in excess of \$13,000. The Foundation expects the event to raise funds for its ongoing scholarship program and it hopes that around 1500 rugby enthusiasts will be in Coonamble on the day.

We were advised by our Director of Corporate and Urban Services that Council holds \$6,000 in Trust for the Foundation, being two years' contribution for which the organization did not seek the funds. He said a further \$3,000 is due for this financial year. With that information we decided to provide the Foundation with \$9,000, however no further contribution will be made during the 2018/19 year.

Council has, since its inception, financially supported the Education Foundation annually and will continue to do so. It provides \$3,000 each year towards scholarships to local students wanting to further their studies. This amount is held until the Foundation makes application by supplying a tax invoice.

We wish the Foundation well with its fundraising efforts and if the event goes according to plan, it should be very rewarding.

Coonamble Clay Target Club

The Clay Target Club approached Council to assist with locating a new site for the Club's activities. It is estimated that approximately 40 acres of land is required and the site must comply with legislative requirements. A suitable area has been identified on the north-western end of "The Meglo" fronting Quambone Road. Council decided to offer the land to the Club, whose responsibility it is to determine the suitability of the site for shooting activities. Currently the area is leased and if the Club decides to pursue the location, negotiations with the current lessee will have to be amicable. Inspections were made of a couple of other sites, however it was thought that "The Meglo" location would be the best Council could offer.

Central West Lifestyle Magazine

In 2016 Council considered including a promotional feature in this magazine, however at that time it did not come to fruition. Our Director of Community Services, in following up Council's decision, has had further discussion with the publisher and has negotiated a 50 page promotional feature in the Summer 2019 edition.

Council resolved to allocate \$9,000 to cover the promotion which boasts a wide audience, targeting urban and rural sectors of the Central West and beyond. The magazine is published four times/year – Summer / Autumn / Winter / Spring – and research shows an individual print run of 6,000 copies per issue.

Along with my fellow Councillors, I feel this will be dollars well spent – and by the time publication of our promotion takes place, we hope that some of our grant funded projects will be complete. No doubt they will be added attractions for our area and another plus is that Council is able to use the images taken during future marketing campaigns.

Street Trading Policy

There was some confusion with the draft policy which has been on public display. The Chamber of Commerce raised a couple of issues which were addressed by the General Manager in a reply to the Chamber. In formally adopting the Policy Council included the following :

“That advertising structures, including A-Frames, flags, balloons and the like, on public roads, footpaths and road related areas may be permitted with consent”.

This was a grey area and one of the concerns raised by the Chamber of Commerce, so by including this wording Council hopes that the intent of the policy is clarified. A question was also raised about the responsibility of cleaning the footpath – of course Council will continue its usual street cleaning, however it also expects that business premises, especially those serving food and using the footpath as a dining area, will do their bit in keeping frontages clean and tidy.

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