

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Council's September meetings, three in all, were held on Wednesday 12th – following the Coonamble Common Trustees' meeting, the extraordinary meeting was held at which the Mayor was elected for a two year term, the Deputy Mayor for one year and representatives to various committees for the ensuing terms. This was followed by our ordinary monthly meeting.

I am proud to say my fellow colleagues elected me to the position of Mayor for the next two years, for which I'm most grateful. I look forward to a challenging period ahead and one which we, as a team, will take on with gusto and achieve the goals already set!! It would be remiss of me to not congratulate former Mayor Webb on his achievements in the top job and to ask for his support during my term. We also have a new Deputy Mayor for the next 12 months – Councillor Paul Wheelhouse being duly elected to that role.

On 30 August 2018 an extraordinary meeting was convened to consider a request for a financial commitment to the Rain Dance Drought Relief Ball which will be held on Saturday 6 October. The organizing committee is hoping to bring community & visitors together and encourage the injection of funds into local businesses over the fun-packed weekend. I moved the motion to donate \$25,000 and my colleagues unanimously supported me.

During Council's monthly meeting we welcomed members of the NSW Police Force, together with Ms Fiona Ozols, a branch official of the Orana Mid Western North - Police Association of NSW. Also present at the meeting were several members of the community, some of whom were victims of recent criminal activity. Ms Ozols informed the meeting that, as a member of the Police Association, she is endeavouring to have more police stationed in Coonamble. She indicated a shortage of officers in many places where incentives are not great to recruit and retain officers and, unfortunately, Coonamble is included in that category.

Ms Ozols suggested that Council may be able to assist in attracting and retaining officers – saying housing is an issue that needs addressing. She said suitable housing in appropriate areas in Coonamble is not available and said that Council may consider implementing an arrangement offering 50% of housing subsidy or building suitable accommodation and having it available for senior police officers willing to come to the area.

Superintendent Peter McKenna, Area Commander, referred to statistics on crime within the area – saying that the incidence of crime has, in fact, dropped although the activities are now of a more serious nature. Supt. McKenna encouraged the community to report all incidents of criminal activity – saying this is the way we can argue for more police. He said he is proud of the job the local police are doing – there are just not sufficient numbers to meet every demand. However Supt McKenna assured the meeting that our community would always be adequately policed by officers from Orana Mid Western Regional Command or other neighbouring areas. He said he supports the “special remote” classification and the incentives it provides. Supt McKenna introduced Sergeant Jack Russell, who will be taking up a sergeant's position in Coonamble for a period. The Superintendent indicated that the two vacancies for sergeants in Coonamble would be advertised shortly.

The Superintendent said he appreciated the openness of members of the forum at the meeting and indicated he would definitely be discussing ways of improving the policing image within the community, especially regarding communication. During morning tea the discussions continued between Councillors, residents and the Police Officers.

Now a brief outline of some the outcomes from the meeting.

Additional Funding - Drought Communities Program

Council was pleased to receive advice that additional money of approximately \$1m per eligible council has been made available under the Drought Communities Program (DCP). The General Manager referred to the short timeframe for submission of applications, funding approval and project completion and provided a list of projects that would be eligible for funding.

The decision was made that we involve the community in what projects they may wish to see proceed and, in this regard, please refer to the advertisement elsewhere in the paper. I urge all our residents to carefully read the criteria under which funding is approved – this is also set out within the advertisement. It must be understood that projects not meeting the listed criteria are not eligible for funding. I encourage residents to please have their say and let us know what you think will be the best way to spend this grant money. The October meeting on Wednesday 10th will look at the responses and make determinations - so please let us know what you think.

Coonamble Saleyards – Funding for Repairs

Earlier in the year I moved a motion that a report be submitted to Council identifying a list of works for repair, costing up to \$100,000, at the Coonamble saleyards. The report was included on this month's agenda – Council noted that works listed meet guidelines of the Drought Communities Funding and was pleased to agree to submit an application for funding of \$102,740. If approved the project would provide assistance to local businesses and contractors and benefit stakeholders at the yards with ease of movement of stock, better lighting, renewal of crush and other more minor improvements. In finally making a decision on this matter, Council agreed to include the installation of CCTV at the saleyards in its application.

Bore Baths – Land Acquisition

At a workshop facilitated by Megan Dixon, from Regional Development Australia Orana, on 23 August 2018 preliminary aspects for the location of the bore baths and the concept was discussed. There is no question as to the preferred site, being Crown Land fronting the Castlereagh Highway and managed by Coonamble Racecourse and Recreation Trust (Land Manager). It's an area of approximately seven hectares and Council requires consent from the Department of Lands to pursue ownership. The first step in the process is to approach the Racecourse and Recreation Trust to secure tenure – with this achieved, potential problems in the future will be avoided.

Council has authorized the General Manager and myself to negotiate with the Trust to gain tenure and take the necessary steps to convert the land to freehold in Council's name. This is the very first step in a long and complicated process, but it is important that we make progress as soon as possible. I certainly will keep our residents informed.

Coonamble Rodeo Association

An opportunity has arisen for the Rodeo Association to submit a grant application under the Club Grants Funding Program, which provides up to \$300,000 per application for sport and recreation infrastructure. Discussions have been held between Council staff and representatives of the Association and it has been decided that a project to construct a cantilevered structure over the current grandstands at the southern end of the rodeo arena would be appropriate.

Council as land manager of the Showground Trust, was pleased to approve in principle the application by Coonamble Rodeo Association to submit an application for a shelter structure in a total of \$330,000. The meeting resolved that the design of the proposed shelter be submitted to the October meeting for Council to determine its suitability.

Additional Facilities – Showground

At the August meeting we agreed to purchase two additional ablution blocks for the showground – I am delighted to report they have been delivered and installed. These additional amenities will service the needs of the facility during annual events and other times the ground is used in the future.

PCYC NSW Visit

In our Director of Community Services report, I was pleased to learn that the PCYC will visit Coonamble on Monday 8 October 2018 from 3.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. as part of the Fun for Kids Tour. The aim of the tour is to support youth in drought affected areas by running free activities and hosting a barbeque. We will surely be able to put forward our case for a PCYC in Coonamble at that time – there is no doubt the benefit kids get from this interaction with police. Even at the meeting, when Supt McKenna was speaking, he referred to the PCYC in Dubbo and indicated that programs do work and help kids find their way through companionship, exercise and having somewhere to go. So here's hoping.

Inland Rail Update

I received a call from Mark Coulton, our Federal Member for Parkes, regarding current issues one of which was the inland rail project. I requested that Mark facilitate a 'round table' forum between Inland Rail representatives, Council and local contractors to discuss opportunities which may be available and beneficial for our local economy. Mark has agreed to organize this meeting and I will certainly keep our residents informed.

Should anyone wish to contact me to discuss issues or concerns, please phone **0427 887 666** – I look forward to representing all our residents during my tenure as Mayor and encourage your phone calls.

Ahmad Karanouh

Mayor