

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

On Wednesday 14 November Council held its ordinary meeting – just one more to go before the end of 2018 – where has the year gone! One of our long serving employees, Raymond “Icy” Canham, decided to retire after 22 years’ service and it was a pleasure to have him and his wife Judy join us for lunch so Council could thank Icy for his service and wish him well in retirement.

I’ve been very busy since the last Council meeting, attending functions and representing Council. The Local Government NSW Conference was held in Albury from 21 – 23 October – it’s always good to be represented and to have a finger on the pulse. Cr. Webb and the General Manager also attended the Conference with me. Another important meeting I attended was that of the Country Mayors’ Association in Sydney on 2 November – this provides a valuable forum for issues localized in regional and rural areas and a great networking medium. I moved a motion that the Country Mayors’ Association, in conjunction with Local Government NSW, facilitate a Question and Answer Session on 8 March 2019 between leaders of the major NSW Political Parties and Mayors and General Managers of NSW Councils.

Although there was a comprehensive report on my Inland Rail Roundtable meeting in the local press, I just want to say that I think it has opened the doors for some of our local suppliers who are now aware of the procedure to be followed in tendering for goods and services in the future.

In my report to Council, I made a recommendation that Council provide a housing subsidy of 50% to police officers in Coonamble and Gulargambone – money-wise this would equate to approximately \$60,000/annum, but it would, I think, be a great incentive to get officers to come to the area and ride out their term before moving on. If there is no way of having our region classified ‘rural remote’ and offering incentives to officers, I am pleased that Council has seen fit to consider this matter further when negotiations are held with the Police Association. I realise this is a significant contribution – but I think it’s one worth pursuing. Should it come to fruition, one could say another government responsibility being shouldered by Council!!!

Tenders – Water Main Replacement – Coonamble and Gulargambone

Council has accepted tenders for its water main replacement program in Coonamble and Gulargambone. The successful company for the Coonamble contract is Laser Plumbing Dubbo – the work in Coonamble is to be carried out in Castlereagh Street, from Tooloon Street to Macquarie Street for a price of \$117,826.50. The Gulargambone contract was awarded to Jake Jones, a local contractor – for work in Munnell Street, from Muraiman Street to the showground. The tendered amount for Gulargambone was \$117,900.00.

Coonamble Streets Ahead Committee

This year Council was requested to provide financial support towards the Christmas Carnivale. The Committee says it has a big program of entertainment organized for the event which is being held on Friday 19 December. Council agreed to provide financial assistance of \$4,800, which was the amount remaining in the budget for the Streets Ahead Committee. Council is mindful that this is a community event and, in the past, has been well attended. The Christmas atmosphere will provide some relief to our country residents from the worries of drought. It also hopefully will provide a boost to local businesses, which remain open for late shopping.

Closure of Services Christmas / New Year Period

I am pleased that Council again agreed to close its office which, of course, includes the library, RMS and Visitor Information Centre, over the Christmas / New Year period. The services will close at c.o.b. Friday 21 December and re-open on Wednesday 2 January. Council has been doing this for many years and it gives staff the opportunity to enjoy an extended break. I urge our residents to get in early if they have business with the RMS and also to get a good supply of books for the holiday period.

Skate Bowl in West Coonamble

Quite some time ago, a young person from West Coonamble approached Council to consider building a skate park on the western side of town – Council took on board his suggestion and made application for funding under the Stronger Country Communities Program. The application was approved and \$120,000 was allocated to build the facility, which was estimated to cost \$157,000. The question now is where? Councillors suggested a couple of sites, but did not make a determination – preferring to consider further options in a report that will be provided to the December meeting.

Drought Relief Heavy Vehicle Access Funding

Council has been informed that the NSW government has introduced a drought relief heavy vehicle access program of funding to contribute to the cost of maintenance and minor improvements on roads and road sides. The Roads & Maritime Services will administer funds and is calling applications from eligible councils. Our Council agreed to make application for the maximum per council of \$300,000 for remediation of portions of Castlereagh Street parking lanes, Aberford Street and the two intersections of Namoi/Castlereagh Streets and Railway/Aberford Streets – this project will cost \$400,000 – Council has agreed to contribute the additional \$100,000. I think this is a great incentive and one which will be delivered within the stipulated time frame.

Christmas Parties & Donations

Council always likes to contribute to its staff Christmas parties – this year it decided to contribute towards catering costs and provided the outdoor staff with \$500 and the indoor staff with \$400. The outdoor staff also get a half-day off to enable all members to attend the party which this year is being held at the Golf Club on Thursday 20 December, so work ceases from 12 noon on Thursday. The indoor staff usually has an evening function just prior to the annual break-up.

The only other donations approved at the meeting were to the five schools within the Shire towards their Presentation of Awards functions – Council hopes its contribution acts as an incentive to students to work hard through the year.

Australia Day Nominations

Planning for Australia Day 2019 is well underway. Nomination forms are available now and I encourage everyone to think hard about the many hard working volunteers in our community who all deserve to be nominated for an Award. The categories will be advertised in the local paper from time to time – please take the time to nominate someone you know who works for the good of others in our community.

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

Ahmad Karanouh
Mayor