

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Last Wednesday 12 December Council held its final meeting for the year – the next one is scheduled for Wednesday 13 February 2019, in keeping with Council's decision not to have a meeting in January. This works well I think, as it gives both staff and councillors the opportunity to have time away with their families over the Christmas / New Year break. Many other businesses and professionals close down and January is always a quiet period.

Our General Manager, Rick Warren, decided to resign and handed me his notice of intention on 30 November. Rick's last day with us will be Friday 11 January – we all wish him the very best in his future role and thank him for dedication and commitment to Council over the past seven years. In total Rick has been with us for 15 years, filling the role of Director of Corporate Services prior to his appointment as General Manager.

At the November meeting I made a recommendation that Council consider providing a rental subsidy of 50% to police officers in Coonamble and Gulargambone, however no decision was made at the time and it was again on the agenda for the December meeting. I thought my recommendation was passed however such was not the case and I apologise for that oversight.

In the business paper also was a letter from the CEO of the Coonamble Aboriginal Medical Service seeking consideration of assistance with housing and rental subsidy for local doctors. Of course, this raises a precedent and Councillors decided to support the idea in principle but, in the interim, have talks with both Police Association representatives and the CEO of the AMS to clarify details regarding entitlements those professionals are currently receiving before making a determination.

With the amount of money (\$60,000/annum) Council would have to outlay should the police housing subsidy be approved, we must get it right and be very sure of our facts before locking Council funds into a financial commitment. Our residents may remember that for many years Council subsidised doctors' rent, however some time back it was increased in increments until it reached "market value", although Council still provides two houses for doctors, plus the residence occupied by the dentist. Hopefully we'll have sufficient information to discuss these issues at the February meeting and make a firm commitment.

On Monday prior to the meeting I had a brief meeting with Superintendent Peter McKenna about police numbers. He assured me he's doing all he can for us and informed me that two new sergeants will be joining us shortly – one stationed at Coonamble, the other at Gulargambone – this is great news. Supt McKenna also said that we will shortly have an Aboriginal Liaison Officer and a Domestic Violence Officer both stationed at Coonamble. These appointments will certainly boost our police presence and will be well received by the communities.

A situation has arisen that some residents outside the water area have run out of water – Council has decided to provide potable water for household use only. It will be the users' responsibility to ensure transport of the water in suitable containers and a limit on quantity and time of availability will be put in place. Any enquiries regarding the supply of water should be directed to Council's Director of Corporate and Urban Services. It is expected that the finer details of this arrangement will be in place within the next few days.

Now I'll get on to some of the issues determined at the meeting.

Supply & Installation of Splash Pad at Gulargambone Pool

This was one of the projects forming part of the Stronger Country Communities Program funding and was successful in attracting funding of \$225,000. Council decided to enlist the assistance of Regional Procurement Initiative to handle the tender process. We received submissions from four companies for the design and construction of the splash pad, with Council awarding the contract to Beau Corp Projects Pty Ltd in an amount of \$223,780. It's good to see projects already funded by grant monies being rolled out.

Supply & Delivery of Plant & Heavy Equipment

While on the topic of tenders, Council also received a report regarding the four items identified as needing to be replaced – a backhoe/loader; excavator; wheeled loader and watercart. Council also approved the purchase of a mobile scalper/reclaimer screen for quarry operations. This tender also went through the Regional Procurement Initiative and is in accordance with Council's rolling plant replacement program and within allocated budget. In making a decision Council decided to purchase the backhoe/loader, the excavator and the wheeled loader from Komatsu Australia Pty Ltd; the watercart from Tracserv Pty Ltd and the mobile scalper/reclaimer screen from Screenmasters Australia Pty Ltd.

Update on Bore Baths Proposal

Council representatives meet with members of the Racecourse Trust, Jockey Club and Golf Club recently to discuss the proposal to acquire the land at the front of the track at the racecourse adjacent to the highway. Everything points to there being no objection, however we have to wait on confirmation from the Land Manager – when this is received Council can move to the next stage of the process.

Donations

Council is always generous when requested to provide support to worthy clubs or organisations. At the December meeting it agreed to provide \$300 to the Gulargambone Junior Cricket to assist in the purchase of a cricket kit, which will contain all the gear to enable members to participate in the summer competition. Council noted the price of the complete kit is \$600.

It was also decided to provide \$250 to the Gulargambone Junior Rugby League to register a team in the Touch Football Competition being held in Dubbo sometime this month. Unfortunately it was not able to provide the full amount funds required to register two teams due to other commitments.

A donation of \$1,000 was approved for the Coonamble Community Radio – its currently having an upgrade and has recently installed a recording studio to assist in improving sponsorship announcements. Council's support will enable sound-proofing panels to be installed.

Conclusion

As I said earlier in my report, this was our last meeting for 2018 with the first one for 2019 scheduled for Wednesday, 13 February. In closing I want to congratulate our management team, headed by the General Manager, for its hard work and achievements during 2018. We are losing our GM Rick Warren who will be leaving us on 11 January.

I want to personally thank Rick for the great job he has done in the role of General Manager and for his assistance to me as Mayor and wish him all the best as he starts another chapter of his career and my colleagues also join with me in wishing Rick all the best. Another thank you and commendation goes to Council's outdoor staff who also do a great job – they keep everything, including parks, gardens, pools, roads and other services, all running smoothly and I thank them for their efforts. We all work as a team and I think it's obvious by what we've achieved this year.

Finally I wish all our residents a safe and happy festive season – if you're travelling, please do so safely. My colleagues and I look forward to having time off, before we get the ball rolling again in February.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.

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