

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Council held its second meeting of the year at the War Memorial Hall in Gulargambone on Wednesday 13 March in accordance with its policy to have a meeting at Gulargambone and one at Quambone each year. In so doing, it provides residents at both centres the opportunity to meet with Council without the need to travel to Coonamble. As usual the Hall Committee ladies provided a delicious morning tea for Council – thank you ladies.

Just as the meeting started a group of students from the Gulargambone Central School arrived – this is great to see, young leaders of the future, no doubt! Four of the students had prepared questions and their teacher asked permission for them to address the meeting. We heard from Chloe, Preston, Cooper and Jayden who spoke about the feasibility of a native garden in Gular, recycling issues and the recently installed splash pad at Gulargambone pool. My thanks to them for their attendance and input – Council promised to look into the issues raised.

During public question time, the Gulargambone Preschool, represented by its Director, Ms Amii Marchant and Project Manager, Mr Ash Walker, made a presentation to Council. Ms Marchant handed to Councillors a letter outlining their successful grant funding of \$1,145,000 to build a new Centre and increase intake to 29 students per day. She also handed out plans of the proposed new facility. Council agreed to inspect the site of the new building after the meeting and informed the representatives that a detailed report would be prepared for the April meeting for consideration and a determination of what assistance may be forthcoming.

Mrs Judith Regan was next to address Council on behalf of the Let's Dance Carinda Tribute Committee regarding financial assistance towards the 2019 event which will be held over the October long weekend. The Committee provided Council with documentation which was included in the business paper and supported the representations. During discussion on the Committee's request later in the meeting Council resolved to provide \$5,000 from its donations vote to assist this hard working Committee.

During the month since our February meeting I have had the pleasure of representing Council at several functions – the Seniors Festival Annual Luncheon was a huge success – over 150 guests enjoyed the entertainment and meal – I convey my congratulations to the Community Services staff for organizing this event. The Welcome to Coonamble Dinner was also a huge success – it's interesting to note this event is in its 33rd year. According to those in attendance who have moved from place to place over time, it's a real novelty having an event specifically designed to welcome newcomers to the town! That's Coonamble – always ahead of the pack!!

On a more serious note I attended the meeting of the Country Mayors' Association in Sydney on 8 March. This is a great networking tool and covers a diverse range of issues that are relative to local government – recycling is a hot topic at the moment, particularly with the metropolitan councils and I feel it will be advanced further with the State Government in the near future. A good news story to come out of the meeting is that the Assistant Commissioner of Police mentioned Coonamble in his address – saying they were working on having Coonamble classified “special remote”. It's been a long road – Council has been trying to get this classification for many years. I'll keep our residents informed of any developments.

The Grants Commission's visit to Coonamble in February brought with it some very good news too in that our Financial Assistance Grant will increase by 7.3% and in money terms will be in the vicinity of \$4m.

Some of the issues discussed and determined at the meeting are briefly listed below and I hope will be of interest to residents.

Contributions to Various Organisations

As has been said many times before, the amount of requests received by Council to support organisations and events is never-ending and this meeting was a prime example. Council considered requests from the following:

- Coonamble Aquatic Club – seeking assistance with insurance renewals – amounts of \$2,289.80 for Professional Indemnity and \$1,036.30 for Material Damage. Pointing out that current climatic conditions have prevented any income being generated from memberships and currently the Club is not in a healthy financial position. Council, unfortunately, is not able to assist every one every time, however it decided to investigate grant opportunities that might be able to provide help.
- Coonamble Show Society Inc – seeking drought funding of \$5,000 to assist towards entertainment expenses at this year's show. Quotes were provided in amounts of \$9,240 and \$10,850 for the preferred entertainment. Council was advised that it has \$30,000 in the Drought Communities Program – Extended for community events. This funding has to be shared between Coonamble, Gulargambone and Quambone so Council decided to request the Society to provide a copy full financial records so an informed decision can be made.
- Coonamble Golf Club Ltd – seeking financial support to purchase a diesel pump – forwarding quotation in the amount of \$18,644.67. The Club pointed out that the installation of the pump would reduce the cost of pumping water to the course by one-third. Again, this was something that Council resolved to investigate and if the proposal is cost-effective Council will look at what funding sources can be recommended for an application to be lodged.
- Gulargambone Community Enterprises Co-operative Limited – seeking a \$5,000 contribution from Council to cover Project Management employment, promotional and marketing costs. The Co-op advised Council it has committed \$10,000 of its own funds to employ local artists to build window displays and it has planned a street party launch which Outback Arts will support and promote. Mrs Annie Haling addressed the meeting on this issue, pointing out the importance of employing a Project Manager – after consideration Council decided to contribute \$5,000 from its donations vote to assist the Co-operative.
- Coonamble Rodeo Association – saying that marketing and advertising for this year's event will be in the vicinity of \$12,000 and asking Council to contribute upwards of \$6,000 towards the cost. Mr Steve Butler was at the meeting to speak to this matter – he pointed out that the marketing would promote the area as a whole and include businesses and other events, as well as the annual rodeo and Campdraft. Mr Butler said that the 2020 would be the 65th anniversary of the event and it was hoped to spread

promotional and marketing material through all advertising channels for this year and next year. It was mentioned that marketing for this year should already be well underway – however Council resolved to ask for a copy of the financial statements of the Committee prior to making any determination.

2020 Local Government Elections

The next local government elections won't be held until September 2020 however it was necessary for Council to make a decision regarding the conduct of the Elections. Council has in the past appointed the NSW Electoral Commission to undertake this role on its behalf and again decided that this was the best option. Advice has to be provided to the NSW Electoral Commission 18 months in advance.

Integrated Planning and Reporting Process

It's that time when Council has to put aside dates for the orderly process of its draft budget and operational plan, which includes the budget for the 2019/2020 year. It was decided that a date would be set for a workshop with Councillors to work through the draft budget and operational plan, followed by the preparation of the draft documents for presentation at the May meeting. The A/General Manager will get this process underway and the public will be kept informed through the local press.

Grant Funded Projects Update

Council noted progress made by Community Services staff who continue to prepare applications for the DCP – Extended projects approved by Council – 12 applications have been submitted and approval and acceptance has been received for :

- Facility upgrades and community beautification projects for Coonamble, Gulargambone and Quambone \$311,686
- Development of new shooting facility – Coonamble Clay Target Club - \$150,000
- Council's tourism initiative and improvements to established community assets \$120,010

The Coonamble Greyhound Club has already been issued with a purchase order to commence its project. Finalisation of projects endorsed under the DCP Round One is currently underway, noting that works must be completed by 30 June 2019. Staff has acquitted completed projects and savings from these will be utilized to complete the proposed works at Gulargambone Youth Centre and Memorial Hall.

Council's Director of Community Services, Ms Robyn Ryan, said 27 projects are currently in hand and her staff will be working with various community organisations to get them over the time within the allocated timeframe.

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