

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Council's monthly meeting was held last Wednesday, 8 May with a very full agenda which included the 2019-20 Estimates, Operational Plan, including the Budget, and the 10 Asset Management Plans, all submitted in draft form.

In preparation for this extremely important time, a pre-budget workshop was held which provided the opportunity for Council to carefully examine its works program for the coming financial year. As well as being mindful of how our ratepayers' funds are spent, we endeavour to include a lot of the works which are sometimes referred to as Council's "wish list" – things that will benefit the whole area – however, as disappointing as it may be, Council cannot include all the things it would like to see completed.

Following the outcomes of the workshop, management presented the draft operational budget to achieve an estimated operating surplus of \$8,276 (before depreciation), being aware that Council has, in the past, adopted either a "balanced" or "surplus" budget.

Council is required to have a plan - the Operational Plan - which is adopted at the start of each financial year. This plan details the activities to which Council is committed and forms part of the Delivery Program covering the same year. The Asset Management Plans also contain information pertaining to the maintenance and upgrade of Council's assets – they too form part of the annual planning framework.

After careful consideration Council adopted the draft Operational Plan and Budget as presented and these documents are now on public exhibition – I ask that residents take an interest in what is planned for the next 12 months and put aside the time to peruse the documents. This is the time to take positive action – it's possibly the best time to make a submission so that Council can consider your thoughts, proposals and suggestions prior to adopting its estimates at next month's meeting. There is an advertisement in the paper advising where the documents are on display – they can also be viewed on council's website – www.coonambleshire.org.au

Council also considered its position regarding a by-election following the passing of Cr John Walker and the resignation of Cr Michael Webb. The A/General Manager, Mr Inglis, was instructed to contact the NSW Electoral Commission to administer a by-election to fill the two casual vacancies. We also agreed to include the conduct of a constitutional referendum at the by-election to increase councillor numbers from seven to nine.

Sponsorship & Financial Assistance

The Coonamble Greyhound Racing Club requested Council, at the April meeting, to consider sponsoring a race at the October Long Weekend Carnival. Before committing financial support, Council requested a copy of the Club's financial statements – which were provided. Management advised that an analysis of trading results indicates that sponsorship can be justified, so Council agreed to an amount of \$3,000. It is very obvious that this event draws many people to Coonamble, often for extended stays and is a great boost to the local economy – it is perhaps the biggest annual event on the local calendar and Council was pleased to provide support.

Another group requesting financial support from Council at the April Meeting was the Coonamble Women's Shed – prior to making any decision Council requested a copy its financial statements for the past year. An analysis of the Committee's finances was made by Management and the request re-submitted to the May meeting. Council took into account the hard working volunteer committee which supports other organisations with community functions and events. Another fact of which Council was mindful was its support of the Coonamble Men's Shed through the provision of a premises and other incidental in-kind assistance throughout the year. Council agreed to support the Coonamble Women's Shed for a further 12 months by providing a rental subsidy and \$2,000 towards operational costs – a total amount of \$10,000.

Code of Meeting Practice

Council is required to endorse the Draft Code of Meeting Practice pursuant to the requirements of the Local Government Act 1993 for public exhibition and comment. In December last year the Office of Local Government released a new Code of Meeting Practice and Councils have until 14 June 2019 to adopt their own Code of Meeting Practice. Council's draft Code has been developed in consultation with Councillors to determine the required non-mandatory clauses best suited to its needs. We resolved that the document be placed on public exhibition prior to its formal endorsement at the June meeting.

It is very interesting to note that from 14 December 2019 Councils will be required to webcast Council and Committee meetings of which all members are Councillors. The webcasting requirement may be met by posting an audio or video recording of meetings on Council's website. Closer to the time of this becoming law, Council will be considering the best way forward and I will certainly keep our residents posted.

Code of Conduct

As with the previous matter, Council is required to adopt a new Code of Conduct – the new Code released in 2018 gives effect to a key reform made by amendments passed by the NSW Parliament to consolidate the prescription of all ethical standards for local government into a single statutory instrument. As with the Code of Meeting Practice, the Code of Conduct must be adopted by Council by 14 June – the draft document is also on public exhibition and will be formally adopted at the June meeting. Again, I urge residents to take the opportunity to read these documents whilst they are on public display.

Status Update – Drought Communities –Extended – Funding

Council received a report from its Director Community Services saying that all projects endorsed by Council and submitted for assessment by the Department of Industry Innovation and Science have been approved and the full \$1m has been allocated. I personally congratulate staff on this achievement – until you're actually involved in the process, one has no idea of the requirements to be met and the time taken to eventually get the "tick of approval" – well done Directors and staff. The report provided a status update on all approved projects and drew attention to the requirement to have them completed by 30 June 2019. I am thrilled to see so many community organisations and events that have benefited from this funding – it has had an enormous result.

Coonamble Clay Target Club

Since the Clay Target Club had to relocate from its long-time “home” at “Youie, Council has been working with the Committee in selecting a new site for the Club to set up. Eventually a site on “The Meglo” was identified as being suitable and after a time-consuming process, subdivision of the required area was approved by Council at the meeting. The Club will now be able to start setting up and preparing the area in readiness to conduct social and competition events. We wish the Club well at its new site.

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