

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Council's first meeting for 2020 was held on Wednesday 12 February. My colleagues and I are pleased to get back to business following recess over the Christmas / New Year period and, indeed, January which traditionally, is a quiet time.

Our meeting day included a comprehensive and informative workshop with representatives of the consultancy firm, sala4D, which has been assigned to develop the Coonamble Shire Council Masterplan. I am pleased to say it is well on track, with some exciting enhancements on the drawing board.

Following the pre-meeting session, we had a presentation from Mr Tim Collins, Senior Planner and Mr Wayne Garnsey, Team Leader, Department of Planning and Environment, Dubbo. Council invited them to speak about our Local Strategic Planning Statement which will be adopted by Council within the next month or so.

Future planning of our Shire is of paramount importance and will be guided by the Central West and Orana Regional Plan, which feeds to the Coonamble Local Strategic Planning Statement, then the Western Sub Regional Land Use Strategy and finally Council's own LEP. It's also a very complex matter and due to time restraints at the meeting, Messrs Collins and Garnsey have agreed to revisit Coonamble to workshop with Councillors and Staff. This will be arranged as soon as practical. One of Council's biggest issues is the need to revisit the 1000ha minimum requirement for housing entitlements on rural lots. This will be one of the main topics at the workshop and I'll keep our residents informed.

Mrs Susan Walker addressed Council during Community Consultation. She referred to service to the community by her late husband, former Councillor John (*Bunda*) Walker and requested that a plaque be erected at a suitable location in Macdonald Park in his memory. Mrs Walker suggested that Council consider installing plaques to acknowledge former Councillors who have served our community over the years. Council did agree to place a plaque in Macdonald Park in memory of "Bunda".

Masterplan for Coonamble Pool & Macdonald Park Precinct

Council included in its 2019/2020 Operational Plan funds for the development of a stage of life assessment and a masterplan for the Coonamble Pool. The scope of works was then extended to include the development of Macdonald Park.

A list of "desirables" was identified by Council and considered as part of this development. They include more parking for pool patrons, location of skate bowl, more open space, connectivity of both facilities and the ability to carry out the works in a staged delivery program

Two options were submitted to the meeting, both provided additional parking and the suggested 'ideal' site for the proposed skate bowl. After much deliberation, we decided on Option 2 Concept Plan, which will be included in the overarching Coonamble Shire Masterplan.

2019-2020 Operational Plan performance Review

In conjunction with the December 2019 quarterly budget review, Council was informed of the progress of all principal activities against the actions within the Operational Plan 2019-2020 and progress towards meeting the outcomes in its four (4) year Delivery Program. In this last six monthly progress report it was pleasing to see what works have been completed, commenced and/or in progress. The reporting period was from 1 July to 31 December 2019 and 15 major highlights were listed. I realise that sometimes the community is of the opinion that everything takes too long to come to fruition, but there are processes to undertake and this all takes time – be assured we are achieving the goals set.

Drought Communities Program - Extension

Council has just received the exciting news that its submission under the Drought Communities Program – Extension for \$1,000,000 to upgrade the Coonamble Sportsground has been successful. The works to be undertaken will involve upgraded lighting; upgrade playing surfaces, replacement of the cricket pitch and associated works; painting of infrastructure and renewal of main oval perimeter fencing. These major works will make our sportsground one of the best in the region and one which will be able to host major events in the sporting sector.

Adoption of Economic Development Strategy

In 2017 Council received a draft Economic Development Strategy but, at the time, it was not adopted in favour of developing a more concise higher level document. The Strategy has been reviewed and updated to reflect and define benefits to the community, increased investment and employment opportunities and initiatives that will have positive social impact.

Invitation to Join the Orana Joint Organisation

The Minister for Local Government, The Hon Shelley Hancock MP, wrote to Council encouraging us to join the Orana Joint Organisation. Early on, when JOs were first being established Council advised that it would not be participating, preferring to 'stand alone'. Further down the track, after a lot of research and ground work, we agreed that our area would be better suited to the Far North West JO for various reasons, including the tourism potential, however the application was not accepted.

In dealing with the matter and being mindful of the amount of work Council has before it in the short to medium term, we resolved to inform Minister Hancock that no decision would be made until after the next local government elections in September 2020.

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