

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

In accordance with the distancing guidelines currently in place, Council's last meeting was held in the Shire Chamber on Wednesday 17 June 2020 with all Councillors in attendance. It's good to see that we are getting back to pre-COVID-19 in many areas. Thanks to our residents for their co-operation during this time – I'm sure it's because we all did everything required of us that our LGA remains very much virus free. Of course, like everyone else, I am looking forward to further easing of the restrictions, but we are still being warned to not become complacent.

The agenda for our June meeting included dealing with the Coonamble Shire Masterplan in conjunction with the submissions received during public exhibition. Council also adopted its Operational Plan for the 2020/2021 financial year, which includes the budget. One submission was received, and it was considered in conjunction with the adoption of the Plan.

On Monday evening prior to the meeting, Councillors attended a workshop to overview all submissions concerning the masterplan, the associated costings, priority actions, tourism and branding, along with recommended changes. The workshop gave us the opportunity to look at the final document prior to the meeting. I want to re-assure the community that Council is listening to its concerns, having taken into account comments put forward in each and every submission.

I'll now provide a brief summary of outcomes from the meeting to keep our residents abreast of happenings.

Coonamble Shire Masterplan

The debate prior to adoption of the Masterplan was spirited to say the least – all Councillors had the opportunity to put their views, suggestions and recommendations forward.

Council's endorsement of the Masterplan will allow implementation to commence. It is a process that will be completed over a 20-year period, with a vision to guide growth and development and sets out strategies to conserve, improve and enhance our LGA. Works will involve:

- capital works: infrastructure and public space improvements;
- industry opportunities: supporting the local business community;
- ongoing community engagement: the community will continue to be involved at each stage of development.

After deliberating various projects included, Council resolved to remove the roundabout option at the intersection of the Highway and Castlereagh Street and re-direct the \$315,000 earmarked to back into Council's working funds and there improving its financial position. There was also lively discussion regarding parking, particularly centre-isle parking in the CBD precinct. In both instances Council will investigate options for reconfiguration of these works.

Branding was included in the Masterplan and, as a result, Council has a new corporate logo and the LGA has a refreshed tourism logo. Tourism and marketing opportunities were reflected by the Masterplan as a high community priority and the provision of strong branding will support the execution of these future projects.

Adoption of the Masterplan will ensure greater return on investment of Council's expenditure by strategically allocating spend to projects of greatest value to the community, it will also provide Council with greater confidence in accessing Federal and State grant funding.

The public toilets will be sited on the vacant block at 79 Castlereagh Street – other locations suggested were considered but finally Council agreed to proceed with this site, being seen as the most suitable. Council is now calling for expressions of interest and creative submissions for the design and artwork of the amenities building and its surrounds. There is scope to make suggestions for public art opportunities on the external walls of the amenities building (three sides will be clearly visible) and neighbouring wall, and for the landscaping of the site.

Adoption of Operational Plan for 2020/2021

During the course of the meeting Council adopted its 2020/21 Operational Plan and Budget and made and levied rates and charges. Fees and Charges for products/services were also adopted and will become effective from 1 July 2020. One submission was received and considered in conjunction with Council's determination. Council has allocated funding for the commissioning of a design for the mineral spa and the main street – these are a couple of the projects incorporated in the Masterplan.

Local Roads & Community Infrastructure Program

Council has been allocated an amount of \$929,818 under the Federal Government's \$500 million Local Roads & Community Infrastructure Program. The aim of the program is to support local councils in delivering priority local road and community infrastructure projects.

I put forward my Mayoral Minute to allocate \$200,000 of this funding to the Quambone Resources Committee to construct a toilet facility at Quambone Park, however after giving the matter further consideration, I withdrew the recommendation.

Following discussion, we decided to nominate the Quambone toilets as a project and allocate \$60,000, with the balance of funds being allocated to the local roads network. My colleagues and I are anxious to have a meeting of the Roads Committee, which includes independent ratepayer representatives, at which priority projects will be determined, following consideration of a report from the Director Engineering Services.

New Building for NSW Fire & Rescue

Council was requested to provide 'in-principle' approval of a suitable site for the new building for NSW Fire and Rescue. Two sites were provided to the meeting as options; one adjacent to the current State Emergency Services headquarters on Aberford Street, the other in Lions Park, the area bounded by Mendooran, Dubbo and Tooloon Streets, Coonamble.

Preliminary investigations have been commenced and discussions held with a representative of the current owner of the Aberford Street site, the Coonamble Local Aboriginal Lands Council. At this point in time, it appears the LALC would be prepared to release 2000 square metres of the area, which would provide adequate space for the development and Council resolved to pursue this option.

Of course, prior to a final decision, negotiations need to continue as the land would have to be surveyed and subdivided prior to any further action. I will keep our residents updated on this proposal.

Acquisition of Land for Bore Baths

Council has now received notification from Crown Lands that it has no objection to Council issuing a compulsory acquisition notice for the land on which to construct the bore baths. This will be quite a lengthy application process, information has to be obtained and submitted to the Office of Local Government to begin the process and I'm pleased to advise that staff is undertaking appropriate research and investigations to prepare and submit a completed application. This is a step in the right direction to commence our much-sought after bore baths project. I'll certainly keep our residents informed of progress.

Congratulations Coonamble Show Society Members

I am aware that Council's Community Services Department assisted the Coonamble Show Society to host the *Coonamble Shownotshow 2020* with bunting and the street banner, also the printing of posters, schedules and voting forms. The 2020 Coonamble Show was to have been held on 28 and 29 May, however due to the pandemic, suffered the same fate as all other events and was cancelled. I commend the Show Society Members for their initiative in displaying exhibits in shop fronts along Castlereagh Street. This attracted significant notice and a keen voting interest and I have heard from very reliable sources that the schools' sections were very popular. Congratulations on this wonderful initiative and thank you to Council staff for assistance and support.

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
