

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

On Wednesday 14 September, prior to the ordinary monthly meeting, Council held an extraordinary meeting for the purpose of electing the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and various Committee delegates for the ensuing 12 months.

I was again elected to the position of Mayor and I thank Councillors for their support and confidence. As I have said previously, I do not take the role lightly – it involves responsibilities and often decisions made are not easy. I would like to commend Councillor Don Schieb for “throwing his hat in the ring” for both the role of Mayor and that of Deputy Mayor.

Councillor Michael Webb was again elected to the position of Deputy Mayor and I look forward to working with him for the next 12 months. This is our final year of the current Council, with Local Government Elections being held in September, 2012.

It's going to be a challenging twelve months and it is a matter now of getting on with the job at hand and achieving as much possible in our management plan. I am very confident we are up to the task.

I have given a brief overview of some issues raised at the ordinary meeting last Wednesday which, I'm sure, your readers will find interesting.

Moorambilla Festival

This weekend the Moorambilla Festival will be held and Council has been assisting with preparations for the event. At the meeting it agreed to contribute a further \$1,000 towards the cost of hiring a stage. Council's staff and plant will be utilised to transport the equipment from Dubbo and assist in assembling the stage at the Showground Pavilion. Council believes this event contributes significantly to social and cultural activities within the Shire, so much so that it has agreed to support the Festival over the next three years.

Destination 2036

I reported to Council that, in company with the General Manager, I attended the Destination 2036 Workshop held at Dubbo on 17 – 18 August, 2011. Every Local Government Authority throughout NSW was represented at the meeting by their Mayors and General Manager. The Minister for Local Government, in addressing the meeting, stated he was there to listen and to find ways of working in partnership with local government for the benefit of their communities. It was again stated that forced amalgamations were not on the Government's current agenda, however Local Government will be actively encouraged to consider boundary adjustments and working alliances between neighbouring councils.

Council's opinion is that the interests of the community are best served by the current identity of Coonamble Shire. Any move to increase the size of the area by amalgamation would lead to reduced services and a less financially viable administration.

The workshop identified the following challenges for the future:

- Demographic change
- Increasing community expectations
- Technological change
- Economic, financial and industry change
- Environmental change
- Social change.

A Steering Committee has been established to progress the issues identified at the Workshop. This Council, as are other rural shires, will be represented on the Committee by the President of the Shires Association of NSW.

Financial Statements

Council's Auditors have completed their audit of Council's records for the year ended 30 June 2011 and, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act, the Financial Report and Auditor's Report were presented at the meeting.

I am pleased to report that, in the opinion of Council's Auditors, its overall financial position is sound and I congratulate the finance staff for this year's result. Council has undertaken a significant amount of emergency works in the past two years, however it has also been able to maintain its works plans in conjunction with these unplanned circumstances.

Community Strategic Planning

Another strong message from the Destination 2036 Workshop is that Councils need to address the concerns of the community through the Integrated Planning and Reporting process. Our Council will shortly be undertaking community consultation to formulate its Community Strategic Plan for the next 10 years and, in this regard, Council will be seeking input from residents and ratepayers through a variety of forums. It is hoped this will provide Council with community priorities for a minimum 10 year time frame.

At the September meeting Council was involved in a workshop to determine a community engagement strategy and it is anticipated that the consultative process will begin in October this year. Council's Director of Corporate and Community Services, Ms Lianne Tasker, will play a leading role in undertaking this process. The Community Strategic Plan must address social, environmental, economic and civic leadership issues.

Each and every one of us has a part to play in the future of Coonamble to ensure the community continues to thrive and prosper into the future and I encourage everyone to be part of this process.

Education Department Presentation

Council has raised concerns about the number of young people of school age who are often walking the streets during school hours. An invitation was extended to the Department of Education to address Council on a number of issues. Bourke Regional School Education Director, Mr Paul Loxley, in company with other representatives of the Department, addressed the September meeting. Mr Loxley expressed the opinion that there are very few students not attending school and that truancy in Coonamble is at a very low rate.

Unfortunately the Coonamble community does not appear to share Mr Loxley's findings and reports are constantly received by Council that, on any day of the week, school aged children are frequenting the CBD. I can assure our community that Council is constantly working with the Coonamble High School to develop innovative ways to engage students' interest and encourage attendance at school.

If anyone has an issue they wish to discuss I am available anytime to meet with them – telephone 0407 221002.

TIM HORAN
Mayor