

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

I was disappointed to not be able to attend this meeting, the second Council meeting I have missed in the past 5½ years. I believe Deputy Mayor, Cr Michael Webb, did an excellent job in the Chair and I thank him for again filling the breach.

In conjunction with its meeting, which was held on 11 November, 2009, Council attended the Remembrance Day Service at the Memorial. I believe there was a good roll up of students and it is pleasing to see them participating - I commend them and their teachers. This day, along with Anzac Day, must always be remembered and it is important that the children understand the significance and continue the tradition.

Revitalisation of Tin Town & Warrena Creek

Council received a deputation from the Coonamble Common Culture and Environmental Heritage Group which is undertaking two projects that will benefit the whole community. The cleaning up and protection of the former Aboriginal mission, Tin Town, is considered critical to ensure that the conditions experienced by its inhabitants are not forgotten. The Group requested assistance from Council in retrieval of car bodies and white goods that have been unceremoniously dumped in the area. It is disappointing that not only those items, but also general waste, continues to be deposited on public land. Council has requested a cost estimate for the removal of the rubbish and leveling of the site.

January 2010 Council Meeting

In keeping with past practice Council will not hold a meeting during the month of January, 2010 with the first meeting of the new year scheduled for Wednesday, 10 February.

Development Requirements for Industrial Land

Council formally adopted an Annexure that will set the standard for Industrial zoned land into the future. Whilst the development requirements are not onerous they do contain many of the provisions set by legislation and are needed to ensure the orderly development of the Industrial Estate extension. In calling for the amendments to its Development Control Plan, Council recognized the difficulties that arise from combining industrial and residential land uses.

Roaming Dogs

Dissatisfaction was expressed by Council at the never-ending problem of dogs roaming our streets and it has instructed that a blitz be commenced to mitigate the adverse effects of the issue. **Be warned that if your dog is on a public place you will be fined!**

NSW Grain Freight Review

Council welcomed the release of the Federal Government's review into NSW Grain Freight and is working towards a submission to the NSW Government for the immediate upgrade of the Armatree to Coonamble section of our rail line to Class 3. This will have significant benefits in terms of freight costs for local producers and, hopefully, allow proposed developments to proceed. Council will be seeking the support of all affected stakeholders and hopes to present its case to the Ministers for Transport, Agriculture, Regional Development and Rural Affairs. Following our record harvest and a series of derailments, the case for the upgrade has been enhanced and, with strong support from other stakeholders, should be seen as critical.

Horticultural Enterprise

A request was received from Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation for the provision of a parcel of land on "The Meglo" site for the establishment of an advanced technical horticultural enterprise that has the potential to employ up to sixteen persons when operational. The enterprise would also provide continuous training to allow accrual of relevant skills.

The project would dovetail perfectly with the current proposals for market gardens at both Gulargambone Central and Coonamble High Schools. Council agreed to sell the necessary land, subject to conditions and to also assist with the seeking of alternative sites.

Demand Farming

A response from the proponents of Demand Farming was received by Council, with the latest update being encouraging for local farmers in the areas of growing mustard and mallee. Since the meeting, staff have met with the project 'heavy weights' and there is also the potential for value-adding facilities in the Coonamble Shire. Council now hopes that the investment by its and producers can enhance alternative agricultural pursuits.

Impact of Cost Shifting

The Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW recently released its latest findings of a survey of local government authorities that reveals cost shifting from both State and Federal Governments has resulted in an additional burden of \$253m or 5.92% of total council income. In the case of Coonamble, the figure is \$588,000 or 4.15% of Council's total income.

Joint Purchasing

The Orana Regional Organisation of Councils participates in the regional procurement initiative of Hunter Councils and the latest update for the last financial year showed that Coonamble Shire through purchases totaling \$393,000, accrued significant savings. Council also utilizes State Government contract purchasing, along with the Local Procurement arm of the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, both of which provide substantial benefits.

Law and Order

Council has battled with this issue for many years and it appears below strength staffing levels in both Police stations will again force Council to resume its efforts to have the system changed ensuring recruitment of replacement officers is carried out expeditiously.

Sealing of Roads

Council has called for a cost estimate, funding options and a potential time frame for the possible sealing of the Tooraweenah and Carinda Roads. Whilst the proposal is contrary to the principles espoused in the Roads Management Plan, Council is hopeful that Government funding may be forthcoming to ease the burden on its finances.

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

TIM HORAN

Mayor