
Community Update

Reference: 101; 102; 103/6
Report Author: Interim Administrator

I am pleased to advise that following a highly competitive process the General Manager has secured three experienced and highly qualified professionals for the roles of Director Corporate Strategy and Resourcing; Director Communities and Place; and Director Service and Project Delivery.

As provided for under the NSW Office of Local Government Circular: *21-22 Updated guidance on the appointment and dismissal of senior staff* (released 10 August 2021), the General Manager consulted me on 26 August, of her intention to appoint candidates into the three roles. Following this consultation, the three candidates were formally offered the roles and subsequently advised of their acceptances. The appointed Directors are:

Director Corporate Strategy and Resourcing: Ms Carmel Foster
Director Communities and Place: Mr Geoff King
Director Service and Project Delivery: Ms Karin Targa

While I have not met the new Directors, I am confident the General Manager now has the nucleus of a strong team to take the Shire's administration forward in the best interests of the community. I table the Memo from the General providing more details of the recruitment process and the appointments.

Residents continue to contact me about the use of Council facilities including complexity, transparency and generally getting "a fair go" for all residents. Liability and risk, completion of necessary agreements and on occasions simply being told no by village committees and Council staff are all matters that have been raised.

In relation to villages this is a delicate matter as hard working volunteers give many hours to manage and improve their communities but they also complain about the complexity of dealing with the Council's administration.

Also raised is the need to complete a DA application for such a simple thing as a car boot sale in a local reserve. While this is a State Government requirement the General Manager has assured me that staff are looking to make the process easier while complying with statutory obligations, in particular fire and traffic safety issues.

Many village and township halls are not owned by Council and some are run by Council delegated committees. Council owned facilities should be available to all on an equal basis with a common Shire-wide policy and in my view, Council must take responsibility for risk, financial and maintenance matters and I have asked the General Manager to arrange a review

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in consultation with both committees and hirers to make management and hiring of facilities equitable and easier.

In my Minute at the meeting on 28 July, I tabled the Dave Owens report on the Council's response to the 2019-2020 bushfires and requested that the report and its recommendations should be subject to a formal response by the General Manager as soon as possible and that an external person, or new senior employee, should have carriage as some aspects may be worthy of further interrogation. The General Manager has engaged Ms Leanne Barnes, as the Bushfire Recovery Project Facilitator, to progress this important project over the coming few months. I table a memo from the General Manager providing further details of this work.

Ms Barnes has been engaged for a period of three months to work through all recommendations, ensuring a comprehensive plan with identified outcomes and strategies, is developed in consultation with the community and a final draft report and plan will be presented to Council by the end of the year.

I also note in the General Managers memo that the NSW State Coroner is conducting a series of coronial inquests and inquiries relating to the 2019-20 NSW bushfire season. While there have already been a number of reviews and inquiries into the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires more broadly, this inquiry seeks to look at the effects of individual fires rather than the broad themes covered by previous reviews.

It is acknowledged that it can be traumatic for people to recall or recount their experiences, however, inquiries like this provide an opportunity for governments and agencies to learn from the past and ensure we are better prepared for the future. The Inquiry commenced with an opening address at the Coroners Court of NSW, Lidcombe on 25 August 2021. Public hearings will be conducted at various regional locations, including Queanbeyan Local Court on 20 September – 1 October 2021. Anyone needing additional support during this time will be encouraged to contact the Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511 and ask to be referred to a Bushfire Recovery Clinician. This support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Correspondence has recently been received from the Country Mayors Association inviting Council to become a member.

The Association was established to further the interests of regional and country areas in NSW, by being an effective voice and forum for country NSW Mayors. The Association acts as a lobby group pursuing the interests of rural councils, and makes submissions to LGNSW, Ministers, Government Departments and agencies on its members behalf. The Association does not work against the interests of LGNSW but works closely with that Association.

In my short time at this Council I have taken the view that it appears to have been isolationist. I have discussed Council joining the Association with the General Manager and we agree that as part of the reinvigoration of Council and being seen and working with the sector we should

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invest the membership fee of \$750 and I recommend accordingly. Membership involves four meetings per annum held at Parliament House, Sydney.

In my minute at the meeting held on 11 August, I asked the General Manager for a detailed report in relation to Civic Centre project. The General Manager has engaged Mr Norm Smith, an independent auditor with extensive experience in such matters, to review the project including the project plan, scope, budget (including variations) and the procurement and approval processes associated with the entire project.

Once completed a report will be provided to Council setting out the findings arising out of the review and recommendations to be used by Council to improve the management of projects including, but not limited to:

- Governance and approval process
- Procurement processes
- Overall management of the project.

Viv May PSM

Interim Administrator