
Administrator Minute – 16 August 2023

At the last meeting of Council, I outlined a proposal for candidate training prior to the September 2024 elections. Unfortunately, I got the election date wrong and the minute should have read 14 September 2024* which is when residents of all Local Government areas across the State will go to the Polls.

It very appropriate that on this agenda there is a detailed report on the Strategic Outcomes Works Program. This is a real team effort and again highlights the legacy issues from the last Council/s that are now in consultation with the Shire wide community being treated in a positive way as an opportunity. Particularly highlighted from the report...

It is critical that Council continue to take a strategic approach to housing supply so that Council and the community determine how and where the Shire will grow, and to ensure that our growing communities are supported by essential infrastructure...(p260)

Such a statement can only be strongly endorsed.

Readers of the report will note that since Administration, \$1.36M has been allocated to this work however staff estimate that an additional \$970,000 will be required over the 2024/26 financial years. My commitment to residents has always been that I will do my best to restore public confidence and credibility in the Council and work to ensure that when Councillors are returned in 2024 they can hit the ground running.

The work outlined in this report highlights the need to ensure that when returned the elected Council has the whole Wingecarribee community in its sights and works on the big picture while acknowledging roles and responsibilities and not meddling in operational areas.

Obviously, a lot more will be said in the Candidate Information Sessions, but one thing is clear in my view – Wingecarribee Shire Council needs new faces to take it forward who listen and work in a strong partnership and respectfully with the community and professional officers.

At the July meeting, consideration was given to a report on open access information in relation to Development Applications when the matter was deferred so I could consult generally with the General Manager to achieve what I considered to be a better outcome. I am happy to advise that considerable progress has been made on the matter with a report coming to Council at its September meeting which in my view will be a quantum improvement for residents' access to development applications, including how the Council proposes to deal with Section 68 certificates (generally water and sewer connections).

I would also like the report to deal with dilapidation reports on public property being mandatory for any development.

The Nepalese community is becoming one of the newest emerging culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia and people of Nepalese background representing approximately 1% of the population of the Shire. I am constantly reminded of the important role the Nepalese community play in servicing the needs of others, particularly of those in care. Many communities have festivals and other acknowledgements that celebrate diversity. Following a discussion I had a recent Citizenship Ceremony, I have asked the General Manager to look at meeting with service providers and representatives of the Nepalese Community to see if there could be a way the community could celebrate with them and better understand their cultural values. It may be that local groups are encouraged to apply for upcoming grants such as the Community Resilience Small Grants Program to hold an event. Regardless, I would like consideration to be given to a culturally appropriate event in the 2024/25 Operational Plan and budget to recognise and work in partnership with the local Nepalese community.

*original published date was September 2023, this was corrected to 2024

It was a pleasure to join the General Manager and staff at the Local Government NSW Week Awards on 3 August 2023. Council was successful in taking home two awards on the night, the 2023 LGNSW Award for Excellence in Planning and Development Services for the Robertson Place Plan, and the 2023 RH Dougherty Events and Communications Awards for Excellence in Communication for the 2023 Seniors Festival. Another of Council's most popular community initiatives, Sustainable Us, was also a finalist in the Excellence in Communication category with a series of engaging YouTube videos.

In presenting the planning award, LGNSW noted that it was a "stand out". It's nice to be recognised and on behalf of the community I say to all involved well done and keep up the good work.

Council facilitates playgroups across the Shire in both towns and villages, and I have been told that there are active groups in Balmoral Village, Bundanoon, Colo Vale, Penrose and Robertson – in addition to the main towns of Mittagong, Bowral and Moss Vale. Isolation of mums with young babies has been a matter raised in my moving around the community and it is extremely important that such opportunities be made well known. In addition, I recently have been told that following an expression of interest, Playgroups will soon be also available in Exeter (through the CWA), Yerrinbool and Hill Top. Great news and please help us spread the word.