

MAYORAL REPORT – AUGUST 2019

Council Meeting:	27 August 2019
Report Date:	23 August 2019
Author:	Mayor
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As the close of August 2019 approaches, we find ourselves still at the mercy of the climatic whims that shape our viability and sustainability.

It has been cold and windy, but with little rain. The continuing water story only adds to the level of angst and uncertainty that pervades most of our thoughts.

We have had some credible higher level advocacy from the Member for Albury, Justin Clancy

- intervention in the proposal to shut down the Yanco Creek system for 21 days for proposed maintenance works without any dialogue with Local Government at all. We have a stay of proceedings until December 2019.

-Advocacy relating to the proposed job losses with Essential Energy and the collateral fallout that would ensue. Placing the Jerilderie Depot at serious risk and very vulnerable. At this stage the Government has instructed Essential Energy to develop efficiency proposals other than job cuts.

It is with sadness that Murrumbidgee Council acknowledges the death of the Hon Tim Fischer, aged 73. Tim served our country with 30 years of political representation at State and Federal levels. He was Leader of the National Party for 9 years; Trade Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Australia for 3 years, and Ambassador to the Holy See for 3 years;

He was awarded many honours, including Australia's highest – the Companion of Australia – in 2005 for his service to the Federal and New South Wales Parliaments and for fostering openness of cultural difference in the community.

Tim also received a Papal Knighthood in 2012 and Order of St Gregory The Great in 2019.

Tim was a thoroughly decent human being. He was resolute and immovable in his beliefs and his passions. His advocacy for rural and regional Australia, and in particular the Riverina, leaves such a rich legacy.

He was the epitome of a statesman-like politician in his undeniably unique way.

One of his great passions was his push to have General Sir John Monash posthumously promoted one step from General to Australian Field Marshall.

Many reasons why this cannot occur did not at any stage dampen Tim's belief and passion that this travesty should be addressed.

Vale Tim Fischer.

There is much interest and comment regarding the proposed bronze statue of Ned Kelly and Sir John Monash. The community group driving this project have actively encouraged the people to vote in support of the funding opportunity through "My Community Project" process.

The submission is still live, and we await the decision.

Below are a brief account of my meetings and movements in the last month.

24 July 2019 – Altina Wildlife Park, Darlington Point

Meeting with Crystal and Gloria Altin to discuss complying Development Application

29, 30, 31 July 2019 – Cuppa with Councillors at Jerilderie, Darlington Point and Coleambally

A great initiative with positive early signs. Great to see staff represented. Could well be something that occurs more frequently. Well organised. A positive forum.

31 July, 2019 – Rural Doctors' Forum, Wagga

A forum facilitated by GP's and centred around the Murrumbidgee Local Health District. Chaired by Paul Mara.

Local Government was well represented.

Spoke to workforce shortage, education pathway, length of training, reluctance to engage = not adequate peer support.

Ageing demographic and the emerging face of health service delivery.

1 August, 2019 – East-West Airlines Meeting at Darlington Point

Public relations exercise in informing Council of the Griffith to Wagga Wagga service.

Encourage Council to advocate for use of this service, and encouraging Council itself to use it.

Early signs encouraging – 20 travellers per day.

3 August 2019 – Coleambally Rescue Squad Inc (NSW VRA) Region 5 Captains' Conference, Brolga Hotel, Coleambally

Covers southern part of the state from Balranald to Binalong.

2 day Conference. In excess of 30 attendees.

Similar issues to all Emergency Services – communications, vehicles, PPE, training, under resourcing, chain of command. Some long term participants and a wealth of knowledge

Mix of age demographics – visible gender balance.

Very cold morning. Local squad had been out at a fatality all night, so that was a reality check.

5 August 2019 – YACTAC Annual General Meeting, Ian Gilbert Room, Jerilderie.

Presentations/speakers

– Roger Knight DPIE, Environment; James McGuire, DPIE, Water; David Leslie/David Clarke – Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), SDLAM projects.

Startling revelation that there was a serious proposal to close the creek completely mid – late August for at least 21 days. No Local Government input. Council's General Manager, John Scarce, myself and Justin Williams sought advocacy through Justin Clancy's office and the direct line to the Minister – ordered a stay of proceedings until December 2019.

7 August 2019– METAG Meeting, Coleambally

Presentation from Richie Robinson, General Manager, Destination Riverina Murray, on accommodation projects and marketing.

Council's social media pages #visitmurrumbidgee.

Visitor Guide – Lockhart Shire

Discussions on:

- Town entrance signs for Darlington Point;
- Economic Development Strategy;
- Drought Community programme;
- Development of a business guide.

Letter to be sent to Altina Wildlife Park congratulating them on being a finalist in the Tourism Awards.

9 August 2019 – YACTAC Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting

Members/Mayors – pre road trip to Yanco Weir.

10-11 August 2019 - Vintage Machinery Rally, Coleambally

A very successful biennial rally was hosted in Coleambally. The weather was a little challenging, but an amazing collection of tractors, trucks, engines, motors and agricultural equipment were on display.

My congratulations to the Committee and the community for successfully hosting this event.

15 August 2019 – Yanco Creek Tour/Weir Visit

Including Local Members Justin Clancy and Stephanie Cooke. Mayors of Federation, Narrandera, Murrumbidgee and Leeton Councils were present, including Jackie Kruger General Manager, Leeton Shire, DPI Fisheries, DPIE Water and Aboriginal Elders.

Had a good look at Yanco Weir, Yanco offtake and spoke at length about the proposed SDL projects.

It was a very valuable day.

17 August 2019 – Mid Murray Zone, Deniliquin – Fire Control Centre Official Opening and National Medal Presentations

- Total cost of build \$5.19 million
- Funds from Rural Fire Fighting Fund
- 51 brigades; 103 vehicles, 1425 members
- 24,000 square kilometres, population 23,150 people

2 Jerilderie commendations/presentations:

Andrew Browning – 29 years service. National Medal and 1st Clasp

David Bryce – 36 years service. National Medal and 1st and 2nd Clasp.

Both members thoroughly deserving of this recognition, with a combined 65 years of community stewardship. Well done. The Jerilderie community thanks you.

19 August 2019 – Invitation to Deniliquin “Discussion on Socio and Economic Conditions in Basin Communities”.

Led by independent panel comprising Robbie Sefton, Bruce Simpson and 5 others.

A conversation that highlighted a level of disenchantment and frustration at the arm’s length previous approach.

Desired outcome – words like “Be brave enough to listen and understand, not debate”.

Honest, balanced, transparent and respectful communication. These 4 drivers will include a dignified, equitable, diverse, authentic and courageous engagement to achieve a desirable communication process.

Attendees encouraged to be positive, opportunistic, optimistic, inclusive, solution focused, visionary, hopeful.

Terms of Reference set – as is.

Linkages and need to assess impacts as a collective.

Drought, trends, policy, health, water trading, future focused young people, education, easily digestible less complex information, business mentoring support.

What exactly is the Government's position. Do the States and Federal Government have different positions. How to mitigate the negative regional focus.

Some of our community projects are reaching a soon to be completed milestone.

Some have plans almost ready to revisit again.

There is much happening in Murrumbidgee Council.

Ruth McRae
MAYOR