

MAYORAL REPORT

Council Meeting:	30 April 2019
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Author:	Mayor
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The year progresses at an alarming rate, some rain has appeared but much more equally shared would be both welcome and helpful.

Progress across Economic Development / Tourism, Major Projects, Road Maintenance, Government Representation and Advocacy continue to keep us busy.

The ongoing water challenge is both divisive and unifying – of course when people feel marginalised it is hard to think laterally. We must address this issue with one voice to aspire to have some resolution come our way.

The roads are busy; school holidays and Easter have seen many travellers and visitors visit our communities to enjoy this unique part of the work and spend in our businesses. This grass roots investment is a great platform to build on.

With the change in daylight savings hours and cooler weather comes the usual winter ailments; stay well. Our communities need healthy, engaged and opportunity ready citizens!

29 March 2019

Seniors Lunch, Jerilderie. A well-attended day with 106 people enjoying a lovely meal, great entertainment and fellowship. Many visitors from Coleambally attended the lunch. The musical items from the audience were great. Thank you to Gaila Smith and Julie Conn for their organisations and to St Joseph's P&F for catering and the students for acting as wait staff.

4 April 2019

"Pause the Plan" Water Meeting, Griffith. Lead by Chris Brooks, Graeme Pyle and John Lolicato

Addressing issues of salinity, fisheries, biodiversity, river red gums. Initiative to stop / reassess using current, credible data.

Review of the 2007 Water Act.

Review current infrastructure.

"Include Historical Data" and acknowledge "boom & bus" cycles.

Some communities have lost up to 76%.

Water entitlements decreased up to 50%.

Communities at Breaking Point.

Environment – suffering – Menindee disaster, collapsing river banks, water logged forests.

Proposed SDLMS eg Menindee constraints project, Yanco regulator.

35 reports to date – do not fairly address the triple bottom line.

Government intends to take an extra 450 gigs out of productive water but it can't fit down the river.

How will Pause the Plan possibly address issues with honesty.

- Is the plan working or is it failing regional Australia?
- Breathing space for fatigued communities – tipping point.
- Greater transparency for MDBA / CEWH eg accountability for losses.
- 2100 gigalitres already removed from “The System” vast machinery out of Southern Connected Basin.
- Encourage a stop on any further water acquisition for 5 years.
- An appeal for a Comprehensive Review by Independent Consultants – chosen by the adversely affected communities.
- And the Terms of Reference to be developed by a community based panel.

5 April 2019

Murray Darling Basin Presentation overseen by Alex Anthony and Presented by Andrew Reynolds “Demystifying River Losses in the Murray River”. The points of interest in a presentation that challenges all in the room;

- Everybody who uses water wears the losses. Except the Environmental Flows managers.
- Up to 20% of water is lost
- Losses / measurements north and south vary.
- The CEWHs office has serious impacts.
- Murrumbidgee Water its delivery / contribution to the overall plan is significant and variable.
- Accuracy of measurements needs to be consistent and cutting edge.
- Decision making processes need to be considered / flexible and rational.
- Truthful and bipartisan stewardship needs to drive all decision to avoid further catastrophic events such as the Menindee fresh deaths episodes.

Proposed / Real Losses

Hume Dam to South Australian Border 18/19

June 18 to June 19 624 gigalitres

June 19 to June 20 850 – 1000 gigalitres (projected).

Because – little or no rain, no inflows, higher than average temperatures, dry conditions, hard earth no penetration, majority of water held in Dartmouth & Hume. High demand downstream of Barmah Choke.

- Trends Determined / Challenges
- Higher losses
- Fewer days of significant rainfall
- Exceptionally dry
- Lessening of channel capacity
- Less availability of inter valley transfers

- Flows pas Euston (same but still required)
- Availability of water in Menindee (all of system impact / efficiencies).
- Increased demand downstream – problematic.
- Lake Victoria – part of total system resource – part of NSW & VIC's obligation to SA.
- Different carryover rules and storage rights – different states.

6 April 2019

NEOEN Community Celebration, Coleambally

This very generous gathering facilitated by NEOEN, the developers of the Coleambally Solar Farm was very well attended with over 200 in attendance. NEOEN co-ordinated tours of the Solar Farm during the afternoon and hosted a Community Party at the Coleambally Community Club in the evening. A beautiful meal, enjoyable music and kid's entertainment catered for all present.

With the annual \$20,000 investment into the Coleambally Community by NEOEN - \$10,000 to the development farm and \$10,000 for community availability. We look forward to a long and happy association with NEOEN into the future.

9 April 2019

Western Riverina Intermodal Freight Terminal Masterplan (WRIFT) Meeting, Jerilderie.

On 9 April John Scarce and I met with Leeton Shire Council's General Manager Jackie Kruger to discuss Murrumbidgee Council's support of this regional initiative termed WR Connect – it is situated on the boundary of Leeton and Griffith LGAs.

This state of the art multi modal facility will enable a significant route for crops and manufactured goods moved by rail and facilitate access to domestic and global markets.

This initiative has whole of government support. The official launch will be at 1.00pm on Tuesday 30 April and I will be attending.

9 April & 11 April 2019

Destination Management Planning Forums

Darlington Point – 9 April

Jerilderie – 11 April

The two community consultation sessions presented some current data on visitation numbers to our LGA and Region and highlighted our established links to bodies and groups to which we belong and gave us several links to established funding opportunities.

It identified our need to source and identify exactly what our tourism product and offer is.

It also identified things such as small business mentoring and support. Consistent signage, current high quality imaging, Council Website and Facebook page, contributions and management. Advocacy for improved mobile phone coverage and better NBN Connectivity.

We need to be aware that our visitor guides and promotional material are only as good as the information available and the engagement of our local community.

10 April 2019

Community Safety Precinct Meeting – Griffith Police Station

On 10 April I attended the above meeting at the Griffith Police Station. Data provided for this area indicates that most major crime happens within the Major Regional Centre of Griffith. Reportable crime related incidents in Coleambally / Darlington Point are reasonably low.

Full complement of shift by end of April

1 – Coleambally

2 – Darlington Point

Main issues of concern - Domestic violence, inappropriate social media exposure for minors, break and enters, motor vehicle theft, farm theft, assaults, drug / alcohol related offences.

Major take away message was “the Police can only assist / monitor/ minimize anti-social, inappropriate and criminal activity if they are aware of such incidents”. This is our responsibility as community members.

General Manager, John Scarce and I have a meeting with Superintendent Peter O’Brien – Griffith Police District in Griffith on the 13th of May. We will progress the “idea” that notifying those at risk / elderly to local police can assist the village ethos of caring for those alone.

16 April 2019

ABC Riverina Interview – Simon Wallace, ABC Riverina

A very quick snapshot about Murrumbidgee Council endeavours to develop our Economic Development Strategy.

One minute is not a long time to convey a sane and rational message but what I did manage to get across was that in the surveys we had completed and every meeting and conversation we attended and have water security, access and availability drive all our decisions, advocacy and marketing.

I encourage all to visit our website and complete the survey or alternatively collect a hard copy from one of our three officers.

There is ample opportunity to have your say and I hope all have encouraged our constituents to do so.

16 April 2019

Meeting with Justin Clancy MP, Member for Albury

I attended a meeting facilitated by Tanya Thompson YACTAC, Helene Morthlock and other CCA Members and met with Justin Clancy and Peter Cerex (electoral officer).

A historical, geographical, environmental, agricultural, business and community overview was presented.

It was informative and well received.

- Yanko Creeks system was originally developed in the 1880s – stock and domestic.
- YACTAC was formed in 1980s.
- Its landholders initiated a levy in the early 2000s, taken responsibility for its ecology, weeds and willows
- The political rhetoric that it is an irrigation channel is offensive, it is a life stream and has its own ecology / riparian

Justin undertook to engage with

- Melinda Pavey – Minister for Water – visit us here.
- Adam Marshall – Minister for Agriculture and issue same invitation.
- Jill Ludford – CEO MLHD – resourcing of Mental Health initiatives and support.

We will endeavour to continue to progress this water issue and also Health, Education, Police, Roads etc etc with Justin at every opportunity.

17 April 2019

Meeting with YACTAC and Sussan Ley's Office

A meeting was convened by YACTAC ED Tanya Thompson, Board Member Mark Wettenhall, CCA Member Helene Mortlock and myself to meet with Sussan Ley. It was YACTAC and Councils desire to impress upon Sussan the very real anxiety that our community is operating under with the uncertainty around the SDL projects, questionable water allocations and delivery options into the future and the turmoil of our political environment.

We impressed upon her our disappointment at the lack of humanity and engagement being shown by both our state and federal politicians and our grave concerns that this could indeed worsen rather than improve.

25 April 2019

ANZAC Day Ceremonies

ANZAC Day continues to be extremely well attended across the nation. The Dawn Services are growing larger by the years and the very real measure of sacrifice is palpable at Dawn.

The annual marches continue to be well attended by our small communities and it is inspiring and reaffirming to know that young and old continue to be forever grateful for the sacrifice that our forefathers gave and our following generations continue to do so in the name of peace.

We will be forever grateful. Thank you to Councillor Wells for being Council's Representative in Darlington Point.

Cr Ruth McRae
MAYOR