



MAYORAL COLUMN: 12 December 2023

Dam Opening

With the 'soft opening' of what has been referred to as Off Creek Storage 1, but can now revert back to what it is, a dam, and probably the largest single infrastructure build for Walcha Council, is now filling with water. Over the years I have written a lot about the path to secure funding and construct this dam, and when filled should give town water security well into the foreseeable future. Adam Marshall's comment that this is the first dam completed in NSW since Split Rock Dam in the 80's is a credit to the combined lobbying and push by this community. It proves the process, while convoluted and technical at times, works. Some plumbing work to be completed and the project will be signed off on and fully operational.

Derby Street

The public display day for the draft concept of Derby Street Upgrade went well with plenty of people taking the opportunity to review and have input into the plans. With around \$6.5 million to spend on this project we need the outcome to align with our community's vision. Obviously the road structure, drainage and surface treatments are questions that are beyond most of us, but the footpaths, parking, street-scaping, signage, etc are all open for input. There is an opportunity to have your say until the end of the month and work will commence straight after the Women's World Sand Green Golf Championships held right here in Walcha in April 2024.

Golf

On the subject of the golf tournament, what a coup it is for our local golf club and the flow on effects for the community that this event will be staged here. It's hard not to be impressed by the course as you head west of Walcha and obviously NSW Golf felt the same. It is a credit to the Board and members of the Club. World wide recognition of our community and its facilities can only prove to be great advertisement for our town.

Paddles

The recent passing of Phillip Chandler, more affectionately known as Paddles, takes another great community member from us. Paddles worked for LP Cross for a long time and then became an integral part of Council's workforce. Always with an infectious smile, a little cheek or banter his presence always lit up a room. I believe

MAYORAL COLUMN: 12 December 2023

Paddles would have left this world without an enemy and Council's thoughts and best wishes to Olive and her family at this challenging time.

Draft Wind Guidelines



The Department of Planning have released their draft guidelines in relation to renewable energy for comment. Of particular interest to our LGA are currently the Wind Guidelines, Transmission and Community Benefit Fund sections. Following a public meeting in Walcha a couple of weeks ago these are out on display for comment until the end of January 2024. While these are only guidelines they will nevertheless be used by the Department in the assessment stage of these projects in the ever expanding renewable energy future. So in practical terms this is an opportunity to have your input into the renewable energy assessment process. How much that input will ultimately be able to shape (or halt) individual projects is yet to be seen, as the overall commitment to transition to renewables has been set politically and can really only be changed at that level. As I have said before, it is my view that this change is coming in some form and as a Council and community we need to make sure we get the best outcome for us. The draft Guidelines are easily found on the DPIE website.

Christmas Wishes

As this will be last column for 2023 on behalf of Sheree and myself I wish to take the opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year. Most people I speak to cannot believe where this year has disappeared to, an issue of getting older maybe but also how busy we all seem to be. I know Council struggles under the current environment to deliver the large amount of projects that funding has been successfully applied for. Bridges, roads, streets and other infrastructure are funded but unable to be completed in our expected timeframe due to workforce constraints. In reality this is a good problem, at least these projects are funded, and will be delivered. Through diligent oversight our current record of delivering within budget is commendable.

Back to Christmas, I hope everyone can celebrate Christmas in a way that brings them pleasure. With the end of the year falling around this time also it's a great time to reflect on family, our wins, losses and challenges for the year.



Clr Eric Noakes
Mayor of Walcha