



RIVERVIEW

First cab off the rank this week is the progress of negotiations between Council and Presbyterian Aged Care to take over operations of the Riverview Aged Care Facility. We now have a Council Resolution to proceed and have made initial contact with Presbyterian Aged Care (Sydney) to agree on the proposal that will subsequently form the contract for business transfer. Council are engaging the services of a specialist legal firm with experience in this area in order to guide us through the contractual part of the process. This will come at a cost, but it's important that Council 'get it right' and manage our risk appropriately. This is also not a fast path but we need to be sure that all possibilities are covered and Council is not left exposed to financial or operational risk through poor planning. Having said this, Council are committed to progressing this pathway as quickly as practicable to give confidence to staff, residents and community.

ORIGIN ENERGY

The news last week that Origin Energy has purchased Walcha Energy, the proponent that is developing the Ruby Hills Wind Project and Salisbury Solar at Uralla, shows the commercial interest in developing these projects. Probably one of the larger entities involved in the energy sector, Origin's arms reach into coal fired power (Eraring Power Station), coal seam gas, wind and solar generation. In a meeting with Council General Manager, Phil Hood, and myself had with them last week they committed to being consultative with the community as they take the Ruby Hills Project along the path. Still in the scoping stage there is a long way to go.

The Winterbourne Wind Project owned by Vestas still sits with the Department of Planning as submissions are answered which will be followed by a determination by the Department and onto the Independent Planning Commission for public meetings.

While this project follows the State Significant pathway Walcha Council in conjunction with Uralla Shire has been in negotiations with Vestas refining the Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA). These are legal documents and must be negotiated between developers and in this case each Council. The intended outcome of a complicated and firmly negotiated process is to deliver benefits to a community impacted by a development and developer. The draft VPA will be tabled at Council very soon, prior to public exhibition for public comment before being signed and implemented.



There is a lot of information in relation to the how's, why's and requirements of VPA's on the Department of Planning's website for anyone who wished to be informed can find answers there. The funds secured through the Winterbourne Wind VPA would be considered a Community Benefit Fund (CBF), and will be allocated after consultation with the community through a process covered in the VPA.

CAPITAL WORKS

At our last meeting Council awarded the contracts for the rehabilitation of Walsh Street and Middle Street (from Bridge to Fitzroy Street) and work should begin soon. The Tender for the Derby Street rehabilitation both north and south is advertised and will progress to construction soon after the Women's World Sand Greens Golf tournament in April. If all goes well the Tender for the Darjeeling Road Pathway should be posted by the end of the week. With a total value of around \$9 million these projects will bring massive benefits to our community. Although there will be some disruption during the delivery phase, especially along Derby Street, the outcome will be well worth it. The long needed pipeline to connect John Oxley Oval amenities (and Beaver Place) to the town sewer continues to snake its way to a connection point and will eliminate an issue that has plagued the facilities at that oval for years.

WALCHA ANTIQUE MACHINERY & TRUCK SHOW

Anyone who was fortunate enough to see the street procession or attend this event at the Showground must have been amazed at the outcome of 12 months of organization that culminated in a great weekend. The vast array of trucks and machinery etc that built communities like Walcha, and continues to drive them, was fascinating. That so much of this has survived and functional gave many generations an insight into the past and allowed those who used some of this an opportunity to reminisce. Businesses I spoke to were elated with the increase in trade this event brought and are eager to see it return next year. To the organizing committee, who I am constantly told was led capably and competently by Megan Tisdell, thank you for not only bringing a great event to Walcha but giving our residents an opportunity to relive the past for a while.

WALCHA SHOW

On the subject of the Showground our local Show is only 10 days away and will once again be the spectacle we have become accustomed to. The recent rain (although patchy) should see the grounds in excellent condition and the committee has lined up 2 days of fun filled and educational entertainment. The addition of the skin



cancer bus with the opportunity for residents to have that check-up we keep putting off is a great community outcome.

Sheree and I were privileged to attend the announcing of the Zone 4 NSW Young Woman in Tamworth recently at which Emily Scrivener represented Walcha with grace and style and we believe was unlucky not to proceed to Sydney. You did your community proud Emily and I'm sure the experience will be invaluable.

This Show also follows what is a busy time for Walcha events. The races, blessed with fine weather was its usual spectacle of fashion and fun. The work that goes into any of these events by small dedicated committees is unbelievable and should be applauded by us. It's great to see the town abuzz with people that these events bring into our community. Following on from a successful Motorcycle Rally in November last year and combined with campdrafting and a rodeo there has been plenty of entertainment this year.

Clr Eric Noakes
Mayor of Walcha