



AUSTRALIA DAY

With the eventual fall of some welcome rain McHattan Park looked inviting for Walcha's Australia Day celebrations. A large crowd of around 300 attended and were treated to a delicious breakfast and an entertaining morning. Our ambassador, Narelle Campbell, gave an insight to a life many of us never think about and we saw a philanthropic side that bettered the lives of those less fortunate. The award recipients represented all that is great about our community. Humble, hard working and surprised they have received this honour. Our community is so much richer for having these people in our midst. Last award presented is always the local Citizen of the Year. This is the ultimate recognition of a persons contribution to our community and could not have been granted to a more deserving person. Brian Smith's behind the scenes dedication to this community is often only seen by those who are close to the project he is donating to. All this pro-bono work carried out by many people is what makes our town tick. While congratulating Brian I'm sure this old saying '*beside every great man is a great woman*' and Katie's role in this achievement should not be understated. On behalf of Walcha our congratulations to all the worthy recipients.

RAINFALL VERSUS WATER

The recent rainfall certainly boosted farm dams, brought a green cover to the country and taken the short term pressure off our town water supply. Despite this reprieve we must still keep a focus on the long term sustainability of urban water. We are currently refilling the Muluerindie Dam and supplying town water direct from the river. Without putting a negative spin on it we are only receiving storm rain and it is variable around the area. Until we can receive some general rain or we fill the dam, current water restrictions will need to apply. Hopefully the current weather pattern remains for a while and the pressure remains off.

FIRES & DROUGHT

Following the natural disasters that plagued us recently both State and Federal Governments are offering grants and loans to individuals and Councils. Businesses including primary producers can access what is available through the Rural Assistance Authority website and most of this is administered by the Rural Financial Counselling Service. Debby Maddox, Walcha's counsellor will be in Walcha again on the 28 February for assistance in completing the relevant forms. The message is still don't self assess as we still have a long way to go until we are out of the woods. From Council's point of view grants coming our way are being assessed and as we move along the path we will involve the community in the process.

CANBERRA ADVOCACY

Last week I attended a meeting convened by Sir Peter Cosgrove to determine what is required to revitalise and stimulate businesses that have been impacted by the spate of bushfires. While no local businesses were directly impacted by these fires, the financial implications of road closures on top of the drought impacts will leave income never to be



recovered. The Oxley Highway was closed for over two months and Thunderbolts Way for three weeks. Presently there is no grant assistance available to retail businesses even though it exists for primary producers. We are following up on this and pushing for some assistance to be available. The criteria for grants is a changing environment and if enough councils keep pushing we may have a favourable outcome.

RACES

I don't know much about horse racing but hopefully the recent rain will make the track favourable for the two day carnival. Like many events in small towns it is run by a dedicated and hard working committee who always turn on a great day in a picturesque venue. Walcha Council is proud to support free entry for all into the event and I'm sure I will see our community enjoying themselves. It's a great day out to catch up and socialise. Hopefully the weather will be kind, so good luck to Jim Nivison and his Committee to run a successful day!

Clr Eric Noakes
Mayor of Walcha