



## **WHAT DOES 1.5 MILLION DOLLARS GET**

The confirmation that Walcha was the recipient of \$1.5m to continue on the path of water security for the town is very welcome. In July, Council adopted a preferred site on which to construct this storage and this has led to the availability of this funding. The most important issue to understand with this funding is that it will not be enough to build a storage. These funds will be used to improve infrastructure that will be required for this storage and allow the detailed design of this storage. Basically we should be in a position to go straight to tender after this process, when we secure the extra funding, to build this storage. Currently there is a tender out to complete the aforementioned work. As I said earlier this does not secure us one more litre of water and we now must step up the push for the funding needed to complete the project. The State Government has listed the securing of town water supplies as number one project to be funded from the Snowy Hydro 2 project and we will step up our efforts to be a priority project.

The adopted site and estimated storage volume of 300 meg when filled should alleviate our reoccurring water restriction issues. There has been some comments that a much larger storage would be a far better option and it is hard to disagree with this, but the issue is that this volume is modelled on projected consumption. If Governments funded the building of every towns dream water storage the allocated money would not go far, and Council won't inflict a massive borrowing on our water users. The bottom line is once we build and fill this storage we will have upwards of 400 meg of water stored and this is around 18 months of current usage. If we exceed projected growth we have other options to pursue in the decades to come. To chase other options at this time, when we are well down this path, may delay us for years and have a worse outcome.

This is the furthest Walcha Council has been down this path and we continue to push hard to bring it to a successful conclusion. Any sustainable outcome is obviously still dependent on rain.

## **OPENINGS**

Since my last column Council has been involved in the opening and renaming of numerous infrastructure in town. The newly named *Peter Fenwicke Oval*, *Blue Hogan Bridge* and last Friday the former Middle Street Bridge now named in honour of Shirley Davison – *Shirley Davison Bridge*, will stand as a lasting legacy to three of our pioneering and respected citizens. In amongst all of this the purpose built Function Centre at the Showground will serve the community as a vital building for years to come. Funded by the Federal Government as part of an initiative to kick start activity in drought stricken councils the collaboration between several sectors of the community to bring this in on time and budget is a credit to all involved. This Centre is managed by the Trust on behalf of the community and is available for hire for most occasions.

## **DROUGHT**

While on the subject of drought, any hope of a break coming with spring is quickly disappearing. The exasperation being felt as the temperature rises and the bare ground gets a baked look about it is palpable around town. Stock trucks continue to roll out as feed trucks roll on. This is certainly not the first drought of this magnitude to hit Australia and won't be the last, but managing a way through it is not an easy task. The flow on effect to businesses in town is also being felt, yet not a major focus of Governments. At times like this, those effected tend to turn to Governments for assistance, and there is a number of measures out there to soften the blow. There is no easy solution from their part either, as towns run out of water, people leave communities and businesses push for help. Walcha Council is involved in discussions and lobbying in this space. In a community our size with Councillors from a diverse background we feel we well understand the issue, but like levels of Government above us, struggle to be able to provide any sort of definitive answer. To this



end Debby Maddox from the Rural Financial Counselling Service will be at the WCCC on FRIDAY 18TH OCTOBER from 2pm to 4pm to assist with available measures offered by the two tiers of Government. The overall message from Debby here is to not self assess. Available measures are listed on the RAA website and now include the \$15,000 grants following the windstorm last December.

## **“THE TIP”**

As has been widely advertised and editorialised Monday saw the introduction of fees to dispose of certain types and quantities of waste at the Waste Management Facility. It is never an enviable task to introduce new or higher fees, but changing legislation, growth in waste volume and the resulting rising costs we had to go the way of every other Council. We are all part of the problem, but the over packaging of products is a major component that filters down to our facility. There doesn't appear to be an appetite from the top level to alleviate this issue so Councils are left to bear the brunt of the problem.

## **PRESCHOOL**

For the younger ones and their parents in our community the new Preschool is nearing completion. Local Member the Honourable Kevin Anderson was in Walcha last Friday to view the facility and it certainly is a great purpose built facility. Walcha's Council run Preschool has an enviable reputation for its caring attitude, dedicated staff and financial success while keeping fees to an affordable and minimum cost. There will be more on an opening when the last few items are finalised. While in town Kevin also viewed the outcome of funding to the Historical Societies tool shed and the grant of \$200,000 to renew the bottom bowling green at the Bowling Club. This grant is a credit to the local community who got behind this project and voted it up over much larger towns. While there Kevin, Jack and myself rolled a few bowls (not balls apparently) down and the way they rolled we would certainly agree that the greens are not up to scratch.

## **FREAK SHOW**

As this festival approaches on the back of the Mountain Bike Festival and the Rural Woman's Gathering the organisers project upwards of 3500 people will come to town for the weekend. If this festival can become a success the benefits for the town both in the short and long term will give another level of financial and tourism security to our town. The organisers have invested a lot of money, time and sweat into this weekend if we can pull together to make it a success it will stay and grow into the future. Speaking to other towns who run festivals like the Elvis and ABBA festivals and the Merriwa Festival of Fleeces the economic benefits to their communities both at festival time and the publicity for tourism gives them a great lift. I believe we won't get another opportunity to host a festival like this and its success in part relies on community input. The amount of complex background work and regulation that must be done before it can proceed amazed me and David and Greg have ticked all these boxes. Buses will transport festival goers into and out of town, and to the Friday night rodeo. Many are staying in town and hopefully the atmosphere created in these testing times will lead to this festival staying and growing into the future.

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Mayor of Walcha