



ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

General Manager Barry Omundson presented to Council his review of the Organisational Structure at last week's Council Meeting. After an election it is a legislative requirement for the General Manager to review the structure within 12 months. At the outset Councillors and I are very happy with the new direction of Council under Barry's leadership. The new structure will see an improvement in service delivery and a reduction in costs. The General Manager's view and supported by Council, was that we were a little top heavy and not as effective in areas where we should be. Subsequently there have been three redundancies in the management area. Three positions that are no longer on the Organisational Chart and funded, saving conservatively over \$200,000. Council has gone from what was effectively a four directorate structure to just two directorates, reporting to the General Manager. This will provide a more strategic approach enabling long term visions to be realized, while less reactive responses operationally. A major change is in our planning and development area. The Planning functions are now combined with the Infrastructure functions enabling a more seamless response to an increasing development demand. Currently the planning and development elements are contracted services on a 2 day a week basis, however the new planning services commencing shortly will be three days: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. These are the days you book in to see a planner for example, if you want to build a shed, or an extension. Building Inspections remain difficult to manage, with the resources available both internally and externally very limited, and the usual 48 hours noticed will still be required. Please understand we are managing this function as best as can with what we have. This area is not about being able to afford the service delivery required, rather our ability to find the required resources to actually do the job. Financially it is not cost effective to have a five day week service in the planning and development area, however should the demand increase substantially then this would be reviewed. Other areas strengthened by the new structure include risk management, safety and infrastructure.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

This week will see our first workshop with Professor Drew who with his team is undertaking our Financial Sustainability Review, as previously mentioned. The changes to Council's Structure will undoubtedly enhance services and reduce costs, however that alone will not come close to balancing our books. Once Council has had the chance to digest Professor Drew's work we will be out in the community next month to discuss with you what we found out and what we may need to do to ensure our financial sustainability. Rest assured, Council is taking measures to increase our efficiency and effectiveness while reducing costs where we can.



OFFICE CHANGES

Many of you have no doubt noticed the change to the customer foyer and counter areas at Council including the relocation of the Service NSW counter. Walcha Council received funding from the Department of Planning to create a planning space where customers are able to complete online Development Application lodgements with the NSW Planning Portal. This was an excellent opportunity to improve the customer service area and accessibility to the Service NSW counter while creating an additional customer meeting area at Council. Service NSW have also generously provided funding for the relocation of the Service NSW counter with the project overall receiving 100% external funding. We strongly believe these changes will enhance your experience with us now and into the future and we look forward to seeing you at Council soon.

Clr Eric Noakes
Mayor of Walcha