



COVID Revisited

It was, and somehow is not hard to have relaxed a little in our attitude to the dangers of the COVID 19 Pandemic. The relaxing of the restrictions that were implemented to minimise its spread has seen some normality return to our lives, even though many restrictions still apply. As the second wave starts to spread it seems harder to bunker down and treat this situation as serious as it is. The current position in Victoria highlights the risk still threatening everyone, and the myth that this is only effecting the elderly is being debunked regularly. Walcha is an easy five hour drive from Sydney and any traveller can bring it to our community in that time. All businesses have strict conditions imposed on them by the Government and we need to respect these to protect our businesses from both COVID and the financial penalties that constantly face them. I have seen that chicken fillets and mince are the new "need to stock up on" items. Remember these do have a use by date unlike toilet paper. Obviously this is not going to be much of a fun time for chickens either.

Gymnasium

The start of the construction of Walcha's new gym sees the culmination of two years consultation, designing and funding being turned into a physical presence. This building will be a great asset to Walcha's sporting infrastructure and will offer a purpose built gym and group fitness space for a large range of activities and community groups to benefit from. Planned to be completed early next year, the dedicated group that instigated and grew the current gym should be congratulated on their initiative.

Without sounding flippant about it sometimes progress comes at a cost. As part of the project Council has had to remove at least one additional tree at the site already. This removal was not taken lightly, with all advice given to Council left it to be the only path. Anyone with a garden knows the dangers and costs a poor choice of tree location can cause to buildings and infrastructure. Council does and will continue to plant hundreds of trees around our town and standing on any vantage point the results of this can be clearly seen. The tree that was removed will be replaced as part of a wider regeneration project for this precinct to plant new trees in safe and suitable locations.

Community Storage Shed

The starting of the gym also hails the completion of the community storage shed. Another project that also started its path a while ago, this shed, while being a great asset to our Service clubs recognises these clubs commitment to fundraising and working within our community. A centralised point to store their "tools of trade" the shed is a contribution on behalf of the community to respect the hundreds of hours work given selflessly by these members.



Alcohol Free Zone

Last month Council took the first step to consider creating an alcohol free zone within the centre of town and between our licensed premises. There are many steps in this process that include extensive consultation with local police, agencies, businesses and the community. The details of the proposal will come back to Council for consideration before the formal consultation process can commence. There is an expectation that if the proposal completes the process and is implemented a problem many of us don't see will be lessened. Some people have commented that they see no issues with the current situation, but like me they are probably sound asleep when issues arise. The problem is left to our Police who have to work in the dark hours.

Mill Hole

The park joining the "Mill Hole" in Walcha has always been an under-utilised spot in Walcha, but this area has now been transformed into an inviting place for both visitors and locals. The addition of seating and gardens is a credit to the Parks and Gardens crew and by the number of people utilising it the outcome is appreciated. These areas are what encourages travellers to stop and spend. Great visionary work by this group.

Main Street

It is also great to see owners having the faith in our town to both refurbish and open new businesses. Without singling any out I'm sure we all see what is going on and from what I see when visiting other towns our number of closed shops is minimal compared to other centres. This shows great faith and commitment to our town and helps make our town busy and vibrant.

Coming Year

Last week Council adopted the Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Budget. The document covers what we are going to do, how it is financed and how we are going to do it. When considering our new program and carry over capital projects, Council have embarked on our largest capital project ever of approximately \$20million. The majority of this program is the result of lobbying for funds and grants through both State and Federal Governments. Along with the aforementioned gym the pool pumping system upgrade will be completed before the swim season. Next week will see the start of sealing approximately 3.2kms of Kangaroo Flat Road followed by two sections of Brackendale Road. Obviously there will be some disruption on these sections during construction but the result will be well worth it.

Clr Eric Noakes
Mayor of Walcha