

# MAYORAL COLUMN:



## AUGUST 2021

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### **OFF CREEK STORAGE**

One of the most talked about local issues from the last decade has been water security for Walcha. This has dropped off the radar in most conversations over the last 18 months, but Council has been hard at work in the background fitting the pieces together that will hopefully make water restrictions an issue from the past. Recently the final off creek storage design was presented to Council and we are now right to proceed with land purchase, document preparation and construction tendering. This has been a long and onerous process but the outcome is what matters and we are not guaranteed to build this storage. Obviously with the amount of civil works happening locally, state wide and nationally sees us in a competitive situation to engage contractors but we are hopeful that construction will start late this year.

It's one thing to build a dam, but as most people know it's another thing to fill it. We are capped on our yearly abstraction from Macdonald River and we still need to supply towns needs as we fill it. Compared to what we have been through this is certainly not an insurmountable problem and hopefully a few more wet seasons will see the storage full. After the drought, rules and regulations around water management and use seem to move around but hopefully we can obtain some concessions to fill it quickly. Start planting your trees now.

### **COVID**

As it's well into the week of lockdown in Armidale and Tamworth now I won't cover the conditions that surround this lockdown and their impact on Walcha. These are easily found elsewhere and in more detail. Suffice to say that these are worrying times after the "break" we had as the first wave receded. It makes it clear that none of us are immune and this ever changing virus is only a train or car trip away from our community. Council, plus businesses and families in town are being severely effected by this and while some of the protocols around its containment can be arduous they are there for good reasons. I hope everyone stays safe and if you have concerns for neighbours etc and you or they are not too sure where to turn remember Council is only a phone call away. While we may not be able to solve the problem we will do everything possible to help. It's easy to criticize governments at this time but I believe that all leaders have shown tremendous courage and vision in this fight. I notice most criticism is looking back and offering anything constructive ideas going forward.

### **COUNCILLOR ELECTIONS**

Another victim, again, of the pandemic has been the Councillor elections. These were gazette for September, but now will not occur until December. While certainly not the worst problem that COVID has bought it still is disruptive to long term strategies for local governments.

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This is also a timely reminder that anyone wishing to nominate for these elections should keep an eye out for the new dates for each part of the process. It also gives those who were considering running an opportunity to avail themselves of information in relation to the roles and responsibilities of a Councillor.

### **MENS SHED**

Rising like the Phoenix from the “ashes” of the old Scout Hall is the new Mens Shed. A State Government funded project driven strongly by Gerry Moran and his team this building will be purpose built and offer a great learning, social and working facility in Walcha. I have it on good advice that there is a group of wives forming a posse to paint the inside if need be to get their husbands back to the shed and out of the house.

### **VANDALISM**

For anyone, whether a Council, business or family the act of wanton vandalism of your property has got to be one of the most futile and violating acts someone can perpetuate. The constant destruction of toilets and other facilities that our community owned and funded will not only lead to tighter restrictions on access but obvious costs to repair. Council may need to look at security cameras etc to help stem this damage. While there has always been elements of this behavior it really seems to have ramped up recently. The facilities at Captain Cook Park are currently closed due to someone smashing them with a rock.

What lies behind people doing this is probably beyond most of our comprehension and points to a wider problem in society, the roots of which many of us haven't lived or understand. Still it is a pity to see come to Walcha. Our Staff will work hard to repair these facilities and have them open as soon as possible.

### **THOUGHT**

As I said earlier stay safe, check in, check out (the importance of this has been proven this week), sanitise, wear a mask and look after the more isolated, but above all give a thank you to the people who turn up amid this mayhem everyday to keep our town running. They are exposed, vulnerable and would probably prefer to be somewhere else. On behalf of Walcha Council we thank all of you.

Clr Eric Noakes  
Mayor of Walcha