



CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Last week saw the retirement of Jack O'Hara as Walcha Council's General Manager. Much as been written and said about the contribution he made to our community and his legacy will live on for years to come. On the flip side Anne Modderno has taken the reins of Council and we welcome Anne and her family to Walcha.

RURAL WOMENS GATHERING (RWG)

Attending the opening of the RWG on Saturday gave a small insight into the work done by the organising Committee. A massive amount of work goes into organising an event on this scale and to pull it together in what would have to be the toughest year possible is a credit to their ability and dedication. Dale Webber deserves credit for instigating this process, and surrounding herself with a capable and focused Committee. Walcha was certainly the winner, both from a business sense and the exposure our town received. Well done to this Committee, they did not have a lot of time to organise it but by all accounts ran a fantastic event.

MOTORCYCLING

It is old news now that the company that was bringing the Freak Show event went into voluntary liquidation, taking with it the reputation of those tied to the company. This event was launched in Walcha by George Spring to a large crowd in February this year and had the capability to boost Walcha's economy and be a yearly event. On news of the collapse Council was approached by several businesses and individuals to resurrect the weekend in some form. With less than four weeks to do this there is a plan in place for event that should support businesses more than the original concept. It will now be focused on the Showground and participating businesses in town. The Rodeo Committee will still run their rodeo on Saturday afternoon and into the night. A bar, bbq, food vans, motorcycle games and band will provide entertainment, while many local establishments will also provide entertainment.

I would like to take this opportunity to reconfirm that Council had no financial or management involvement with this company, or the event and had no prior knowledge of the companies financial problems. Despite this there is a concerted push to make this work and sometimes a short timeframe can bring a renewed focus. There is a possibility that well over 1,000 bike riders could be in town, and with the rodeo crowd there stands to be a much needed financial boost. Food and a bar are being kept to a minimum on the ground to try and push patrons into town.

WATER

The construction of a new water storage for Walcha remains the focus. I am constantly amazed by what this process involves. The process to me seems to be obstructive and convoluted. Environmental Impact Statements, Dam Safety Committees and yield studies now form part of my everyday language, and all take time. The grant of \$1.5m is being used to navigate through these areas, and when this is done we will be ready to design and construct. As stated previously we still need this construction money but we have been advised that it is "right". We are only just over a year into this particular project, having to rule out other concepts before embarking on this one and much has been achieved in that time. The State Government is attempting to cut through some of the above mentioned red tape, but is facing a lot of pushback from minority and interest groups. I believe these groups are the reason much of this red tape sits there in the first place. We cannot afford to build this dam ourselves, so we require Government money and therefore must



tick all boxes. The amount of infrastructure being designed and built in NSW adds another level of difficulty to the project as engineering consulting companies are flat out.

Social and print media are full of comments on the Mole River Dam at Tenterfield and the proposed Dungowan Dam at Tamworth and why they are getting more publicity and quicker timelines than ours. They are large projects, aimed at much more than town water supplies and if you read their projected timelines they are years off being built. The Mole River Dam is projected not to start for four years with a completion date up to four years after that. There are many projects of our size being progressed and we will get the result we require by following the process.

TRAINING DAY & EMPLOYMENT EXPO

Walcha Council is proud to partner with Namoi Unlimited to present 'Find Your Feet', a training day and employment expo. The event will take place at Walcha's Ex-Services Memorial Club on Tuesday, November 12, and will allow residents to complete subsidised first aid, white card and career training thanks to the NSW Government's Smart and Skilled Program. Should you wish to complete a training course please register at: <http://www.namoiunlimited.nsw.gov.au/events/> as soon as possible.

REGIONAL VISITS

Later this month Council will embark on its annual regional visits. This is a great opportunity to engage with Councillors and management in a relaxed environment. Our new General Manager will be there and it will be a great opportunity to understand what is going on and bring issues to our attention. Not everything can be fixed, but it is more difficult if we don't know about them. Venues and times will be advertised in print media and on Councils webpage.

Clr Eric Noakes
Mayor of Walcha