

DECEMBER 2012

With the end of 2012 fast approaching, it is timely to reflect on what has been a busy year for Wakool Shire Council.

We have been very active this year advocating on behalf of our community and have had a number of meetings with NSW State Ministers, including the Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson and Minister for Roads and Ports Duncan Gay. In August, the General Manager Bruce Graham and I presented Council's position on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee chaired by Senator Bill Heffernan in Canberra.

I have spoken before about the Basin Plan and it was just so damn unacceptable to see it go through with barely a whimper from the Federal Coalition. In response to their apathy I was reminded of what the great Hawthorn Footy Club coach John Kennedy said at half time in losing the 1975 Grand Final; *"At least DO SOMETHING! DO! Don't think, don't hope, do! At least you can come off and say 'I did this, I shepherded, I played on. At least I did something'".* On the other hand, our NSW State Government had the fortitude to make a decent stand and are to be highly commended for that.

On another note, Bruce and I have developed excellent working relationships with senior NSW State Government Ministers and this strategic approach is delivering with multi-million dollar funding for infrastructure like the Tooleybuc and Gee Gee bridges and the recent flood study funding for our Shire.

Contrast this with the stalled bridge proposal at Swan Hill, which in my opinion can be best described as a malaise. The irony of this whole shemozzle is that the two Councils have probably never been better positioned to articulate a funding submission to Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. Timing is everything with state significant projects and the political planets are in alignment. With local member Peter Walsh, Deputy Leader of the Victorian Nationals on board, our own well established connections into Sydney and the distinct possibility of a change of Federal Government next year one would think this should have triggered a light bulb moment. In any event, Wakool Shire will remain focussed on what can be achieved and I am expecting more good news from our State Government very soon.

We certainly made headway with the Local Environmental Plan (LEP) this year but the NSW planning reforms will continue to be a challenge. We are expecting to have formal approval to publicly exhibit the draft Wakool LEP shortly and we are planning to exhibit it from late January 2013 for 42 days.

We have continued a busy works program of general maintenance and road restoration with significant flood restoration work completed most recently in the Waugorah area. At its December meeting, Council resolved to apply for funding through a NSW Treasury scheme to accelerate our timber bridge replacement program which, if successful, will see five new bridges built over two years. In response to letters and direct representations by ratepayers, the new Council is taking another look at local roads. A report identifying more action is currently being prepared and will be presented to the February 2013 meeting. Feel free to have your say as there is time.

Before I close, I would like to recognise our wonderful Executive Assistant Katie Byrne. Katie has been a most tremendous help to me, the Shire and has also been a huge contributor to the Moulamein community over the last couple of years. On behalf of

everyone at Wakool Shire, please accept our very best wishes for your impending parenthood.

Finally as we wrap up the year on behalf of the Council I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy, safe and most prosperous New Year.

Cr Andrew Douglas
MAYOR

