



MAYORAL MEMO - 3 APRIL 2024

The old expression that Councils take care of Roads, Rates and Rubbish is a relic from a dark distant past.

There is still the Local Government Act 1993 that outlines what areas Council has control over but there is some flexibility in how we deliver what a community needs.

In the years since Dubbo was first declared a municipality on 19 February 1872, a number of different facilities and business arms have been started under the umbrella of the Council. Some of these were via identified needs in the community and others were as a result of decisions of higher levels of government. Still others were inherited as part of an amalgamation.

When you look at the business portfolio under Dubbo Regional Council, the list is extensive. Dubbo Regional Airport; Rainbow Childcare Centre; NRMA Dubbo Holiday Park; Old Dubbo Gaol; Wellington Caves; Aquatic Leisure Centres; John Gilbert Water Treatment Plant; Dubbo Sewage Treatment Plant and Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets, more commonly known as the saleyards.

It is the last item I want to focus on.

Council has resolved to go to an Expression of Interest process to investigate the possibility of the sale or lease of the saleyards. I want to stress that no decision has been made yet. The only decision undertaken by Councillors is that we must ensure that all of our different business units are run as efficiently as possible. We know that Councils across the state, and across the country, are under increased pressures to deliver sustainable futures for their communities. Even if a business unit is currently delivering a positive cashflow to Council, just like any public company should be looking to maximise the return to their shareholders, it is incumbent upon Councillors to ensure that our business units are delivering the best possible outcomes for the overall community. This does not just mean the bottom line for the community, but it certainly is a significant part of what is required. We also have to consider other non-financial benefits to the community.

If it is a business unit that competes with other similar businesses and the benefits to the community are the same regardless of who owns the facility, then Council, logically, has every option available.

Having said all of that, I can't stress enough that no decision has been made for the future of the saleyards, but with changes in legislation and further advice Council has received, leaving the status quo is not a viable option. If Council does retain ownership, the operating model will have to change. An inspection across the State shows the main saleyards are either council owned and operated; council owned and leased or privately owned. There is no single correct answer but have faith that the group of Councillors will deliver the best outcome for the majority of residents.

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

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