



DRUG REHAB CENTRE FUNDING A BOOST FOR DUBBO REGION

I couldn't be more pleased with last week's announcement that Dubbo has secured \$3 million in federal funding to go towards a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility.

At my first speech as Mayor I made it quite clear that this Council's major social priority would be the facilitation of establishing a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. Law and order experts and social workers all advised Council that the single biggest thing that can be done to cause a drop in crime and better social harmony is for Dubbo to establish a Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre. Added to that, only through a rehabilitation centre can Dubbo secure other initiatives like a Drugs Court.

All 10 of your Councillors are united behind this push. Councillor Stephen Lawrence, through his legal work, especially has first-hand knowledge of the importance of drug rehabilitation in order to break this modern day curse that cruelly cripples families. Councillor Lawrence's stewardship of this process deserves recognition and congratulations.

I take my hat off to Mark Coulton, he heard loud and clear that Dubbo's calls for a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility was essential for the major inland service centre of Western NSW. He pushed the relevant Ministers and typical of Mark's style, delivered a positive outcome with very little fanfare.

Getting the service established is a complex task that needs to be done using expert knowledge. We know that a centre is best to be several kilometres out of town for patients and residents to have the peace and tranquillity needed to focus on their recovery. Dubbo Regional Council has several parcels of land that has been identified as being fit for the purpose of a rehabilitation centre that is just out of town and has water and sewage connections.

The next big piece of the puzzle we need for completion is getting the State Government to also come to the party and agree to fund the remaining portion.

Last week the NSW Government announced a special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug Issue. While the inquiry is certainly welcome, I personally don't see a need to wait for any long-winded report to determine that Dubbo and Western NSW is in need of a rehabilitation facility. It's already blatantly obvious and my plea to the State Government is to move quickly in supporting the other two levels of government in getting this facility established.

I have already raised the issue with the new member for Dubbo Dugald Saunders, where he has expressed his personal support for the facility. Now that the new State Government ministry has been announced, my plan is to put the drug rehabilitation centre plan on the desks of the relevant state Ministers. In my view it is essential that we get the Ministers responsible to make a decision before the coming State Government budget.

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