



## MAYOR'S COLUMN 28 NOVEMBER 2018

A huge thank you must go to our representatives in Canberra, Mark Coulton and Andrew Gee.

Because of the urging of MPs like Coulton and Gee, the Federal Government announced a \$1 million package to Councils affected by the big dry, called the Drought Communities Program.

This extra bonus has been a godsend for Dubbo Regional Council. We have identified a number of places that require significant upgrades that we can do if the government approves the projects.

If successful, a grant of \$560,000 will be used to secure better access to water for residents and also for the recreation ground, including Boehme's Hall. In recent years, relying on only rainwater, the recreation ground has not been able to attract caravans and campers.

Stuart Town's tourism strength has certainly not been able to be as good as it could be due to the lack of water.

The funding will be able to pay for bores and large water tanks that can also supply 250 households with non-potable water, which helps save their potable water for essential drinking water.

I see our villages in the region to be essential. In order for them to flourish and offer a serious alternative lifestyle from the larger urban areas of Dubbo and Wellington we need to be continually upgrading the facilities and services as best we can. With water upgrades these communities will grow and add to the greater economic potential of our entire region.

This extra million means that Council can install an accessible public toilet in Church Street to the value of \$245,000. This installation fits perfectly in with my plan to make Dubbo the most disability accessible city in Australia.

For decades locals been complaining about not having adequate facilities in this area - and rightfully so. Shoppers and workers in the CBD have been forced to use toilets in various shopping centres which is substandard for a modern city like Dubbo. We have been able to answer this and ensure that the new facility be available for all people regardless of their mobility.

There is no doubt that this new amenity will help give our CBD retailers further firepower in their attempts to attract more shoppers and visitors to the Main Street.

With the drought funding we have also been able to allocate \$195,000 for shade sails at the Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets. This funding has been able to further enhance our responsibilities when it comes animal welfare at our saleyards.

I'm told that our saleyards contribute around 3 per cent of the entire city's economy. It's a huge business that requires continuous evolution and upgrading to remain competitive with other regional yards. To have appropriate shade for both livestock and handlers will make our facility more competitive and keep Dubbo at the forefront of the livestock industry.

Again, thank you Mark Coulton and Andrew Gee - I love your work!

But with this \$1 million comes an anomaly. While Councils that are in drought received \$1 million each, Dubbo Regional Council received only \$1 million despite the fact that if Dubbo City and Wellington Councils didn't merge, our residents would have received \$2 million - not just \$1 million.

Imagine the extra projects we could have done with an extra million up our sleeves?

Not only did the amalgamation cause us to lose an extra million, but there seems to be some inequality when it comes to funding. Gilgandra Shire with a population of 4,300 and Narromine Shire with a population of 6,500 each received \$1 million dollars, yet Dubbo Regional Council with 52,000 people receives the same. It doesn't seem right to me.

I have raised the matter with Mark Coulton, and true to Mark's usual enthusiasm in chasing money for our region, he is following up the matter with the Minister. I'm hoping the Minister sees the anomaly with this drought funding and adheres to Dubbo Regional Council's request for extra funding.

Last Edited: 29 Nov 2018

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