



MAYORAL MEMO - 16 NOVEMBER 2022

If I owned a lolly shop, it would be very easy to be known as a generous shopkeeper. Some children might visit me after school on their way home and I kindly give them a few lollies. In my overall finances, the small cost of these lollies is insignificant. These children tell some of their friends about my incredibly big heart and I find a few more children start dropping in after school to smile nicely and pick up a few lollies.

What impact can just a few cents have each time?

The 44th anniversary of the death of Margaret Mead was yesterday and it started me thinking about my lolly shop example. Mead had one particularly great quote about the combined power of individual actions.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has.”

This quote is principally relevant to local actions for worldwide problems, such as climate change, but it also applies in a financial situation.

In my lolly shop example, it doesn't take long before I go broke because one lolly seems insignificant but small sums can become large sums when multiplied by lots of examples.

The same is true when it comes to the finances of Council.

Council's budget for this current financial year is approximately \$222 million. That is a big number. I am often approached by various organisations for small amounts of money or to do small projects.

Mow the lawn along a certain section of path.

Fix a specific pothole in a certain road.

Give a donation to a worthy project.

Waive the hire fee for a Council facility.

Whilst most of these requests are logical and sensible, there are problems with meeting these individual requests from residents.

Reacting to a variety of ad hoc requests is an incredibly inefficient way to run any organisation. It is in contravention of the Local Government Act 1993 but just imagine, for a moment, that I instructed our staff on what areas to mow or where to fill potholes based on requests that I received. Our staff would randomly be up and down our 2,782 kilometres of roads and to every corner of our 7,536 square kilometres of the LGA.

The best way to run an organisation the size of Council with over 500 staff is strategically. Work out a plan on the best way to deploy

resources and then make the changes at a strategic level and let the strategy dictate the actions.

It is this part that some people find difficult. In your household, you mow the lawn when it is long or fix a broken downpipe when it leaks. Think about airlines or mining organisations or...Councils. Strategic planning is essential to use limited resources in the best possible way.

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

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