



MAYORAL MEMO - 2 MARCH 2022

General Motors (GM) introduced the Chevrolet Cobalt in the US in 2004 and it quickly became a popular car with 213,000 sales in 2005 and 211,000 sales the following year. But there was a problem. In 2001, pre-production testing had shown a defect with the ignition system. The ignition system could inadvertently switch off while driving if, say, your knee bumped it.

Fast forward to 2014 and GM recalled over 840,000 Cobalts with faulty ignition systems but only after the loss of thirteen lives directly attributable to the issue. The NHTSA quickly followed up with a \$US35 million fine. Former US Attorney Anton Valukas undertook a thorough investigation and, after interviews with over 200 employees and accessing over 40 million documents, he concluded that the primary culprit for the issue was poor communication. The ignition issue was well known throughout the engineering and executive staff of GM but it was labelled a 'customer convenience' issue rather than a 'safety defect'. The report concluded that communicating the significance of the issue correctly would have saved thirteen lives.

Since my return as Mayor, I have mentioned my desire to improve the communication levels at Council. I refer to better communications in all

areas. Internally I want our dedicated and talented team of employees to be clear about the direction that Councillors want to move in; I also want silos to be broken down so that different departments are all moving in the same direction and, most importantly, I want the public to be aware of what is happening at Council. I don't expect the public to agree with every decision of Council. It is foolhardy to believe that any democratic body could keep all of the people happy all of the time. What I do think is achievable, though, is for the public to understand *why* decisions are made. You may not necessarily agree with the decision but I want you to understand the reason behind each and every decision of Council.

To further this understanding, this Saturday sees the return of the unique Community Leaders' Breakfast. It is frustrating when residents feel as if there is buck-passing amongst the three levels of government so this Saturday morning you will have open access to your representatives at all three levels of government. At the rotunda in Church Street from 7am to 8.45am you can talk to Councillors and senior Council staff as well as our State Member, the Hon. Dugald Saunders, MP and the Federal Member, the Hon Mark Coulton MP. This will return as a regular event. Nowhere else in Australia is there a regular public forum for all three levels of government to discuss issues with the public. Please take advantage of this and call past and say hello. We will have a free breakfast waiting for you as well!

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

Last Edited: 24 May 2022