



MAYORAL MEMO - 20 DECEMBER 2023

With nine new Dubbo Regional Council Councillors elected at the end of 2021, last year was a year of learning the ropes for our new Councillor team. In 2023, Councillors were armed with knowledge and an additional year of experience and that has been put to excellent use as I reflect on the achievements of 2023.

Dubbo's year is ending in a similar way to how it began: with a celebration of sporting events that highlight our exceptional sporting facilities and the desire for organisations to bring events to Dubbo. Examples include the Swimming NSW Country Regional Meeting; NSW Country Athletic Championships; Cricket NSW State Challenge for U14 Boys and U15 Girls; U13, U14 and U15 Boys Youth Cricket Championships and the largest event, the NSW Touch Junior State Cup (Northern Conference) which attracted 7,000 people to Dubbo. With Bowls Championship events and Veteran Cricket events, sportspeople of all ages visited Dubbo in addition to recurring events such as the Dubbo Stampede; the Macquarie Titan Mud Run and parkrun.

In 2023, our Australia Day ceremonies in Dubbo and Wellington took a

meaningful leap towards inclusivity with the inclusion of Aboriginal speakers and our first ever twilight Australia Day event held in Wellington. These moves acknowledged our rich Aboriginal heritage with 15.6 per cent of our population identifying as Aboriginal. The Holi Mela Festival of Colours and the Cross Cultural Carnivale by ORISCON were examples of the changing nature of our population with 18.5 per cent of our population born overseas.

Sister-city student exchanges resumed with a group of Minokamo students visiting Dubbo and a group of Dubbo students visiting Minokamo this year. We have a Councillor delegation planned to visit Japan in early 2024. I visited many schools throughout the year and spoke to groups of students with a particular focus on students in Primary School who study the three levels of government. We are fortunate to have two Universities in Dubbo and I am honoured each year to welcome new student cohorts to our city.

Our environmental sustainability efforts were bolstered throughout the year. We made significant steps in our Net Zero Framework and our nation-leading Zero Emissions Fleet Plan has resulted in many staff already driving electric vehicles whilst saving the community money. We also signed new electricity supply contracts that move towards the full supply of green energy. We continue to work on increasing our tree canopy with ongoing work on a new Tree Preservation Order. Renewable energy is proving to be very important for the region with the continued expansion of our Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) which will not only see the region contribute to solving Climate Change but also see billions of dollars of investment land in our region over the next decade. The recent announcement that the Central West Orana REZ will expand from 3GW to 6GW is more good news. The business plan we are developing for the

REACT Centre will see ongoing tourism in Wellington as a direct result of our location in the REZ.

Visitors are an important part of our economy with \$450 million injected annually. We had 142,597 visitors to the WPCC (boosted by the Archibald Prize exhibition and ARTEXPRESS) in addition to 47,270 visitors to the Old Dubbo Gaol and 74,906 visitors to the DRTCC with Possum Magic the most popular show in 2023 (2,136 people over 5 shows). Conferences and events helped drive visitation with one example seeing 280 lighting professionals attending an international conference at our airport. We will continue to improve our tourism offerings with the Old Dubbo Gaol featuring a new 'Life of Crime' exhibit internally while work continues on our Heritage Plaza outside the front gates. Residents will also notice the work that is nearing completion behind the CBD on our Shared Pathway and Event Precinct and we have determined the funding strategy for the Wiradjuri Cultural Tourism Centre.

Infrastructure upgrades were an important aspect of 2023. We were the first in this nation to use the new 3D printing technique to build a piece of public infrastructure. The result is the amenities block in Macquarie Lions Park West. We also completed significant upgrades such as the Boothenda Road intersection upgrade; the Brocklehurst Playground; the Showground Lighting Upgrade; the Lady Cutler Pathway; LED Lighting at the DRTCC; Netball Court resurfacing and EV charging stations in Wellington and the tender was awarded for a new fluoride dosing system at our water treatment plant. The technological advancements didn't stop at EVs and 3D printing as residents can now receive daily reports of their water usage via an app and new camera technology was trialled by our parking officers.

A high population growth rate requires continuing expansion of our housing stock. Keswick Estate land was developed by Council but, on the back of interest rate rises, blocks haven't sold as quickly as we would have liked. Planning is continuing for our North-West Urban Release Area and the connection to the New Dubbo Bridge. Private developers are also investing heavily in the future of Dubbo.

Financial sustainability is the number one issue facing Council. Councillors are exploring a variety of ways to maximise efficiency of Council and return our budget to the black. The harmonisation of water and sewer fees between the Dubbo and Wellington communities was long overdue but this was achieved during the year. Returning the pool to an external contractor from the more expensive internal management was a decision designed to improve the bottom line. Although the introduction has not gone as smoothly as we would have liked, I am confident that the organisation that won the tender, with over 220 venues under management across Australia and New Zealand, will iron out their teething issues in the new year.

At the beginning of the year, after the wet finish to 2022, the condition of the roads was the number one reason for residents to contact me. With some dry weather and additional road funding, we have been able to do significant patching in addition to major roadworks at Sheraton Road; Wheelers Lane; Burrendong Way; Saxa Road; Gollan Road and more. The Macquarie River North and South Precincts Master Plan was also a major topic of conversation at the beginning of the year. Conversations on roads and the Master Plan subsided by the end of the year as other topics became more important.

Councillors have worked together tirelessly to make this region vibrant, inclusive, and forward-looking and our staff have undertaken the work with enthusiasm and pride. I am excited about the future of our LGA.

Merry Christmas to all our residents and I look forward to a bright and prosperous New Year.

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

Last Edited: 22 Dec 2023