



MAYORAL MEMO-21 FEBRUARY 2024

On 8 July 1917, Dubbo High School was officially opened as the first secondary school in the west of the state. By June 2001, the last school assembly was held at the school. On 18 September 2001, Council resolved to accept the offer from the Department of Education to purchase the building and land for \$250,000 to develop a cultural centre. The vote progressed with a small majority with seven votes to five and Councillor Richard Mutton was so dissatisfied he later moved a motion of no confidence in Mayor Allan Smith (despite the fact that the purchase was resolved by a majority of Councillors).

This process had originally started on 6 December 1999 when the newly formed Cultural Centre Working Party first met. One of the objectives of the committee was to find a home for a "Dubbo Museum and/or Dubbo Regional Gallery and other associated community cultural and recreational needs."

The stage was set for the master planning process to begin but before any physical activity could start, the site had a temporary stint as the administration building for Council after a fire at the main building on 15

April 2003.

By the time I was first elected to Council on 27 March 2004, plans had started to progress for what would become known as the Western Plains Cultural Centre. I remember looking at various plans and mock-ups of different designs as we progressed through the various design phases.

The final price was \$8.2 million to transform the former school into a gallery, museum and community arts space. Her Excellency Professor The Honourable Dame Marie Bashir AD, CVO officially cut the ribbon on 10 February 2007 to signify a significant cultural shift in Dubbo.

Fast forward to today and the WPCC is an important piece of infrastructure.

The National Gallery of Australia Touring Exhibition - Ceremony: 4th Indigenous Art Triennial is currently on display. At the opening I learned that only one location in NSW has been chosen to display this touring exhibition. A testament to the quality of our display space. It is no surprise to learn that the annual Archibald Prize finalists have been displayed at the WPCC on six separate occasions.

I recently attended the AGM of both the University of the Third Age and the Dubbo Eisteddfod. The original vision for the WPCC was to have a space for community organisations and it is pleasing to see these two, and more, take advantage of the space.

I also attended two recent workshops in the auditorium where the space can be set up with 80 seats in a theatre style or 30 seats in a round

table space.

With the café and the green space and variety of rooms, it is no wonder that we see up to 14,000 visitors per month through the doors.

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

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