



# MAYORAL MEMO - 24 AUGUST 2022

It was 2017 when a significant milestone was reached. Harvard Business Review released its annual ranking of the top performing worldwide CEOs. It was the first year when more CEOs in the list had a science or engineering background than an MBA. The MBA program was established in 1908 and was typically the course of choice for those wanting to reach the upper echelons of the business world. So surely an MBA would arm a CEO with more skills than understanding scientific principles.

Not quite. Boards across the world are discovering that those with a science or engineering background make decisions based on data and with a more analytical focus. In any job, if you can make better decisions, you get better outcomes.

Councillors have to make decisions. In a typical four-year term, a Councillor makes over one thousand decisions. Some of these can have far-reaching impacts. Now, I am not suggesting every Councillor should have an engineering degree but using some of the basic scientific principles certainly helps in the decision-making process.

The first concept that comes to mind is the principle of the null hypothesis. Make an assumed statement, the 'null hypothesis', and set out to prove that it is true. This is done by collecting data and analysing information so that you have information to support (or reject) the null hypothesis. You try not to arrive at a decision just "because" or "a friend at the pub said so" or "I saw it happen once." You need to remove all emotion from your decision-making process and have the data to support your hypothesis.

Secondly, the burden of proof lies with the person making the claim and it is not upon anyone else to disprove. Just because you can't disprove a claim does not suddenly render the claim valid. I might make a claim that eight ghosts wander through the Old Dubbo Gaol and if you can't prove I am wrong, then it must be true! If I am making this claim, the burden is on me to provide evidence to support my claim. Until I can provide the evidence, then we have to assume that my claim is not true.

Lastly, a quote from the 1800s. The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence. It is difficult to prove that something does *not* exist. Just because there is no evidence is not proof enough that it does not exist. Now this one can be a little dangerous. Those who promote alternative medicines argue that since a treatment has not been proven to be ineffective, then we should use it! Go back to my second point – if you are making the claim, provide the evidence to prove it!

There are many times when decisions have good arguments from both sides. When in doubt, trust the data!

**Councillor Mathew Dickerson**

## **Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council**

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