



# MAYORAL MEMO - 24 JANUARY 2024

Let me start this week with a philosophical question.

Is it acceptable for Council to make controversial decisions?

Before we answer that, exactly what is a controversial decision?

It is hard for Councillors to always make decisions that everyone in the community agrees with but a controversial one tends to divide strong opinions. There is often a delicate balance between a long-term vision and the short-term public opinion. Avoiding any such decisions entirely may seem like a safe route, yet it could lead to stagnation and missed opportunities for growth and improvement.

If Councillors decided to avoid all controversial decisions, the result could be a Council that is overly cautious and unresponsive to changing times and needs. Or a Council that, instead of showing leadership, showed followship. Apple co-founder, Steve Jobs, said that “innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower” and I think that we sometimes see that in our political leaders. Read an opinion poll and

immediately we know what opinion some political leaders will hold.

It may sound arrogant but Council leadership is not just about listening to the community and giving people what they want. If it was that easy, every Council decision could be made by an opinion poll. Leadership is about having a detailed understanding of the issues at hand and then taking people not necessarily where they want to go but where they need to go.

I ask these questions as they relate to our Australia Day events this week.

For Australia Day 2023, Council made a controversial decision. After discussions with the Department of Home Affairs and our community, we chose to hold the Wellington Australia Day event as a twilight event on 25 January and we added an address by an Aboriginal speaker to both Dubbo and Wellington events.

The strong feedback Councillors received told us we had made a controversial decision.

It was with great interest that not long after Dubbo Regional Council made the decision to hold a twilight event, the Federal Minister made a change to the Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code which allowed a ceremony to be held up to three days before or after 26 January. Our decision was not only vindicated but helped clear a path for all 537 Councils across the nation.

This week we are running a similar program to last year. On 25 January at 6:30pm we will hold a twilight event at Cameron Park in Wellington.

On 26 January at 8:00am, we will hold Dubbo's event in Victoria Park.

Regardless of how long any individual has been associated with this patch of dirt we call Australia, both events give us the opportunity to recognise what a wonderful nation we have and think what it means to be Australian.

I look forward to seeing huge crowds at both Australia Day events this week.

**Councillor Mathew Dickerson**  
**Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council**

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