



MAYORAL MEMO - 26 OCTOBER 2022

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.
If ever there was a group of people who needed to take notice of the
Serenity Prayer, it would be Councillors.

There are some strange requests I have received in my time on Council.
At the top of the list was a meeting arranged by a resident who needed
to see me “absolutely as soon as practicable” for an issue that needed
my urgent attention. Sitting down for the meeting, the resident explained
to me that since his recent retirement, the exchange rate for the
Australian dollar against some foreign currencies had not been kind to
him and wanted me to fix the issue. I briefly explained that the
Australian dollar had been floated in 1983 and, in a floating regime,
exchange rates are determined by supply and demand and, at best, the
Reserve Bank of Australia could possibly intervene to help reduce
volatility. I further explained that Council had no power to help him. “But
you are the Mayor,” he countered, “don’t you care about your residents?”
Well, of course I care, but there is a difference between caring and
having the power to make change. On this day, a very disappointed

resident left my office not fully understanding the role of Council.

The Local Government Act 1993 (as revised) is the gospel according to Council. This is an Act of Parliament and can be changed by the NSW Parliament. Local Government can not decide that we like some parts and ignore other parts. This is the legislation we have to work with and we can't make changes from our end.

The greatest challenge for Councillors is that we want to help. We want to improve our community. We want the area we live in to improve. We want to assist people wherever we can. There is a risk of course. There are limits to the power of a Council. The three levels of government have different areas of responsibility. Residents often talk to Councillors about changes needed in schools or hospitals or the local court system. These are primarily the responsibility of the State Government. Residents want help with employment conditions or unemployment benefits or superannuation. These are all primarily the responsibility of the Federal Government. This may sound like I am passing the buck but in reality it is an example of the wisdom to know what we can do as Councillors. As much as we all want to help with every problem, we have to acknowledge we need to prioritise our resources on items within our areas of responsibility and not waste our precious limited resources on chasing items where we have only a small chance of achieving a positive outcome.

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

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