



MAYORAL MEMO - 6 JULY 2022

Over a decade ago, I had the opportunity to be taken for a tour through the Toyota plant in Altona North, Victoria. It was fascinating to start at one end with a roll of steel and going through the factory to see a car roll off the production line at the other end. Toyota was the largest car manufacturer in Australia – and the world – and before COVID-19 hit a worldwide production volume of over 10 million cars. Toyota Australia manufactured up to 150,000 cars a year from Altona North. The Toyota plant employed almost 3,000 people directly and was largely responsible for a total of almost 6,000 jobs with related industries.

The only minor problem was that the Australian government was paying up to \$1 billion a year in subsidies to a variety of companies to keep the car manufacturing industry afloat. This was always a source of constant debate. Paying subsidies helped keep an industry operational with subsequent employment. On the flip side, the Australian government was paying money to overseas organisations for the privilege of having that manufacturing on our shores. And it wasn't as if the industry was a start-up.

Toyota started manufacturing in Australia in 1963 but they weren't the first. Ford started in 1925 and Holden started in 1948. This was a

mature industry yet we were still paying subsidies to keep this industry in Australia. Once the subsidies were removed, the auto manufacturing industry in Australia died relatively quickly with Toyota the last to close its doors in 2017.

Back to Council. Now I am not suggesting we should start supporting a car manufacturing industry for Dubbo Regional Council and subsidise that to the tune of a billion dollars a year but is there any opportunity for local government to support specific industries that might be helpful for our economy?

The former Carpet Court building on Darling Street is owned by Dubbo Regional Council. It is currently an empty building and we are in the process of planning a strategy for several Council real estate assets including this building; the former Dubbo City Bowling Club and land opposite the Dubbo Aquatic Leisure Centre.

While that planning is continuing, Councillors have offered a 6-month temporary lease for \$100 per week plus outgoings to a Not-For-Profit start-up organisation called Circular PV Alliance. This rental is well below market rent of approximately \$110,000 per year. Given the fact that Dubbo Regional Council is in a Renewable Energy Zone, this is a good opportunity to encourage an organisation that is directly related to our new renewable energy economy. If we can encourage an entirely new industry sector in the economy with a short-term rental of a building not currently in use, it may be a great outcome for the community.

Tell me your thoughts on subsidies at mayor@dubbo.nsw.gov.au

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

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