



Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

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Commissioner's Update (#12)

8 June 2023

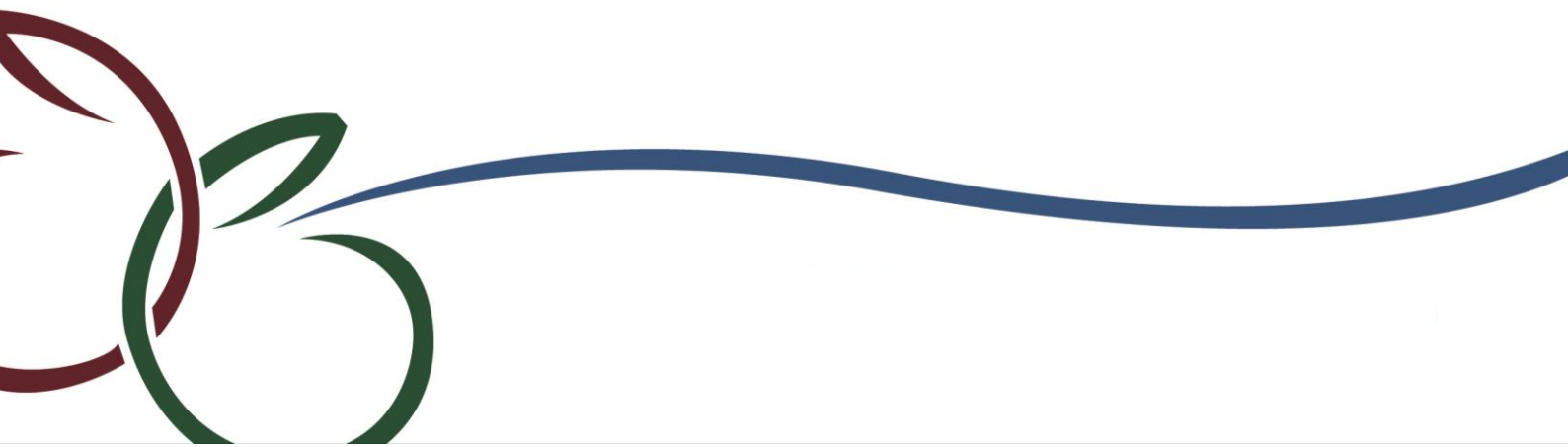
Winter has certainly signalled its arrival with heavy but hopefully welcome rain across the Shire.

While the extremely wet weather has eased, the cold days and nights are here with vengeance.

The monthly Ordinary Council Meeting (OCM) was held on the 24th May, with the next scheduled meeting on the 28th June. We also had a meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee last week. The Finance team, led by Kim Dolzadelli is busy working on the annual budget and both the OCM and the Audit and Risk Management meeting involved updates on the budget assumptions.

Plans are currently being finalised for a Special Council Meeting next Monday (12th June) to consider moving to the next hold point in the VC Mitchell Park Project. Last week I attended a briefing on the latest phase of the design process. As would be expected, there are some challenges in managing a project of this size and scale in the current environment of the construction industry, but I was pleased with the progress made. An information session specifically focussed on the residents living in the vicinity of the VC Mitchell precinct is planned for this coming Sunday evening at 5pm.

Ross (Rosco) Marshall has now been appointed to the vacant role of Director Operations at the Shire. Rosco takes over the role previously occupied by Steve Potter who resigned earlier in the year. Kira Strange has been doing a great job acting in the role in the intervening period. In welcoming Rosco to the role I would like to acknowledge Kira's efforts. We are fortunate to have some very capable people working for the Shire.





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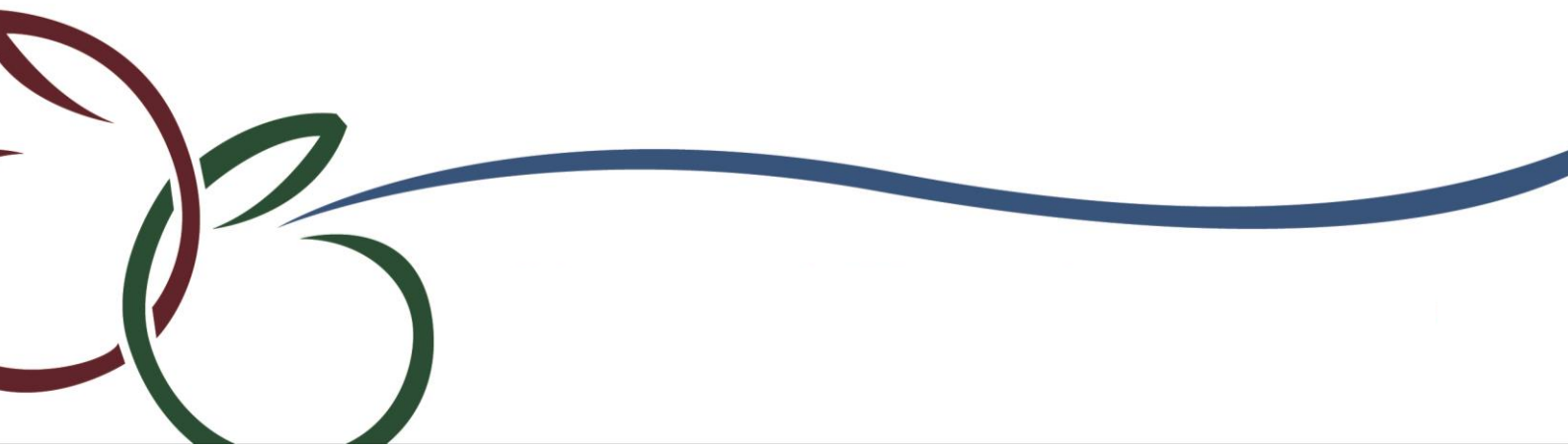
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The past week or so has been especially eventful following the surprise announcement by former Premier Mark McGowan of his intention to leave Parliament. There has been a change in Cabinet with David Michael taking over the role of Minister for Local Government from the Hon John Carey. Mr Michael served on the City of Stirling Council for a number of years, so he has a good knowledge of the sector. Even with a change of Ministers I would expect the Local Government reform program to continue.

As was mentioned in the Preston Press, I have recently taken on the role of Chancellor at Murdoch University. As the first female appointed to the role in the University's 50 year history, it is an honour, albeit daunting. One of the things I am really focussed on is the role universities play in providing opportunities for learning and in equity and diversity. Personally, I didn't go to university straight from school - instead, I enrolled when I was closer to 30 with three little kids in tow. We were living in Port Hedland at the time and almost all of my study was completed by correspondence. Consequently, I have a really keen interest in how people living regionally get to access further education opportunities. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup is very lucky to have facilities such as the CRC, but I still worry about the barriers people living outside of our cities and larger towns face in trying to access learning. While not directly related to my role as Commissioner, I'd be happy to chat to anyone who is trying to undertake remote learning about what needs to be done to provide support.

I mentioned in my last update that plans are in place for some information sessions on becoming an elected official. Thanks to Wendy Trow and the Balingup Progress Association, the first scheduled session will be held in Balingup in late July. Keep an eye out for more details, as we are also looking to have at least one session in Donnybrook.





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The Shire has recently been approached to help support the Preston Press following recent challenges around getting the publication printed. There is yet to be a formal decision, but I have seen the strong support shown for the role of the newsletter, and I am sure we are going to be able to assist. That said, there is still likely to be a shortfall, so I would especially encourage businesses to provide their support. Both the Preston Press and the Donnybrook Balingup Community Radio station provide amazing services and really help bring local issues to people's attention. I know they do it tough and it would be great for the community to show how much these services are valued.

The Shire CEO Ben Rose and I met with Jodie Hanns, MLA the Member for Collie Preston last week. We discussed a range of issues facing the town and valued bringing these issues to her attention.

I'd like to finish this update with a shout-out to the many people I see wearing multiple hats in service to the community. Often, it's the same people who volunteer across more than one organisation. I encourage you to think about people worthy of nomination in local, state, or national award programs. Whether that be Citizen of the Year type awards or the Australian Honours system, these awards don't magically get bestowed. It does take someone taking the time to fill out a nomination. The nominations process isn't terribly difficult though, but feel free to reach out to me or the Shire admin team if you want to know what is involved.

In the meantime, stay warm and take care.

Gail McGowan

Commissioner of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

