



Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

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Commissioner's Update (#4)

24 January 2023

Congratulations and well done to all those who worked so hard to get the fires under control and the hundreds of others who supported the effort, whether it be through on ground support, provision of meals and accommodation or even being there to talk with those affected. It's also great to see the support being offered to the family who lost their home and others directly impacted.

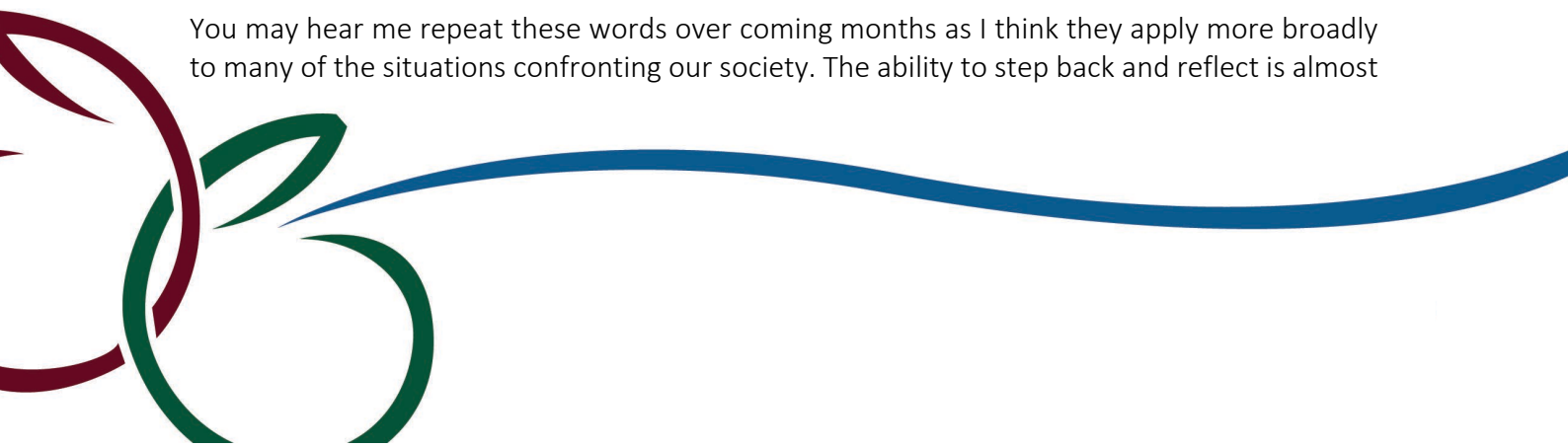
Importantly we still have many long, hot days ahead so taking heed of lessons learned and doing what we can to prevent any further losses is critical. Each of these events gives us the opportunity to reflect on what could have been done differently or better but that should not take away from the extraordinary efforts that went into keeping the community safe.

While the greatest praise deservedly goes to those on the front line, I want to take a moment to thank the Shire staff who were prominent among those providing the back up – or in a number of instances, out fighting the fires all night and then fronting up for work as usual. No doubt there are similar stories from individuals and businesses around town which speak volumes about the value of volunteering and supporting the community in times of need.

This week sees the Citizenship Ceremony and sausage sizzle to be held at the Amphitheatre on Thursday from 10-12. I look forward to meeting more of you at that event. In a year where we are due to vote on an amendment to the Constitution to enshrine an indigenous voice to the Parliament, the relevance and timing of Australia Day events come into sharp focus. Hopefully it gives each of us the opportunity to reflect on our own values set and consider what an inclusive society looks like to us. I have no doubt there will be a wide range of views, but I sense momentum for change is building.

At a personal level I have been incredibly impressed by Mechelle Turvey after the tragic death of her son Cassius. While she has every reason to be angry at the violence that led to the senseless death of her son, she is instead calling for calm and reflection. As she was quoted in the newspaper as saying, "It's important not to come into a situation screaming and savage because people's ears turn off, and we take it away from what truly needs to happen."

You may hear me repeat these words over coming months as I think they apply more broadly to many of the situations confronting our society. The ability to step back and reflect is almost





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a luxury in our busy lives these days but to effect change you do need to be able to look at a situation from a range of perspectives.

As mentioned earlier, a Special Council Meeting has been called for tomorrow afternoon at 3pm in the Council Chamber. The main business at this meeting will be to deal with some outstanding matters that were carried over when the December meeting was cancelled as well as to consider the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee that the Annual Financial Statements be signed off. The other items include consideration of the tender for the Southampton-Balingup path and road upgrade and setting the date of the Annual Electors Meeting.

I have continued my series of meetings and appreciate the range of views presented. My job will be to continue to 'sift and sort' the information. This week I intend to have more of a Balingup focus and will be around Balingup on Thursday afternoon and all day Friday so feel free to say hello or make contact by emailing commissioner@donnybrook.wa.gov.au or leaving a message for me at the Shire offices.

Take care.

Gail McGowan

Commissioner of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

