

### Commissioner's Update (#10)

21 April 2023



#### Namaste!

I am currently in Muktinath in Nepal which is some 3600m above sea level. We have slight snow flurries outside, and the temperature is hovering around zero degrees. This is quite a change from a few days ago when I was in the Kathmandu Valley, where it was around 30 degrees and very warm. Nepal is a fascinating country and I am thoroughly enjoying the trip - it is a great leveller and makes you realise that what many of us regard as absolute necessities are anything but.

Yesterday we visited the lovely little village of Marpha, known as the Apple Capital of Nepal. It is a tiny village set against a backdrop of snow covered mountains. They have a big apple symbol on the side of the hill, and most of the shops sell apple related products – I've seen juice to brandy and dried apples. The town is famous for its apple pie which we sampled, and while it was nice I would have to say I have tasted better!



Our trip is now over half complete. The highlight so far would have to be getting up to catch the sunrise at the Thansang Village Lodge, which sits right in the shadow of Dhaulagiri mountain, which is approximately 8127m tall and is the seventh highest peak in the world. It is in the Annapurna circuit area, where at least two climbers have lost their lives while we have been here. Fortunately we are doing more hiking than trekking, so while it would usually be taxing the altitude makes it much more sedate.

It seemed quite surreal to go from the Donnybrook Festival on the Saturday to Kathmandu on the Monday, but I will still take the opportunity to thank all those involved in the Festival for their amazing efforts. The turn out was amazing and to see and you could truly feel the positive energy of all involved – it was simply fantastic! So to Belinda O'Brien and team, well done.



I am told the Balingup Small Farm Day was also very successful so again, congratulations are due to all involved.

This week, I was pleased to have received a letter from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. It was in relation to concerns that had been raised with them by some concerned citizens about a variety of matters. In essence, the Department has reviewed information that I, along with the CEO, have provided back to them in response to these issues raised. The view was formed that no further action is required. Alongside this resolution, the letter also commented positively on the various processes and practices being implemented to improve and enhance communication with community members and other stakeholders.

I have been really heartened by the positive approach Shire staff have taken in terms of keeping our community informed of a wide range of topics and issues, and thank them for the extra effort they have put in. It is important that openness and transparency become embedded practices as the new Council is put in place later in the year.







## Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

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The RCH Consulting Report on the VC Mitchell Project has now been released on the Council website, and great work is continuing with the project user group to advance the discussions. A Community and Stakeholder engagement plan is also being finalised.

Looking forward, the coming week sees Anzac Day memorials throughout the State. It is a highly valuable time to remember the sacrifices made and the futility of war, and seems to take on renewed prominence. Even if you are not attending services, please take a moment to stop and reflect.

I am aware that there have been a couple of requests for meetings or contact when I return, and I intend on following up on them. There is a possibility that there will need to be a Special Council Meeting on 2 May in order to progress a contract for Waste Management Services, and once this is confirmed the community will be notified through our standard communications channels (social media, the website, etc). The next Ordinary Council (Commissioner) Meeting will be on Wednesday 24 May at 5:00pm as per the usual schedule.

Best wishes, and I'll see you all soon.

***Gail McGowan***

**Commissioner of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup**

