



Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

PO Box 94
Donnybrook WA 6239
www.donnybrook-balingup.wa.gov.au

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Commissioner's Update (#1)

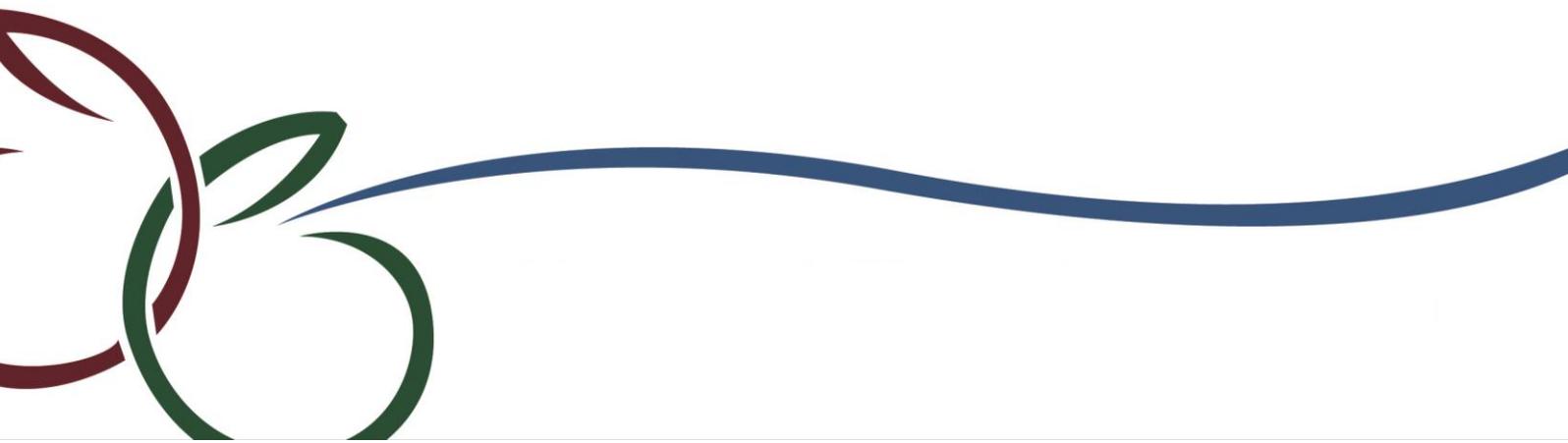
22 December 2022

Welcome to the first of what I intend to be regular updates.

I have been appointed as the Commissioner for the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup and officially took up the role on Monday 19 December 2022. My job is to act as the Council and exercise all those duties and functions the President and Council would ordinarily carry out, as well as to prepare for the return of a democratically elected Council in October 2023.

My appointment follows the resignation of five Councillors earlier this month, which meant that more than half of the offices of Council were vacant. On 14 December 2022, the Governor published an Order in the Government Gazette declaring the remaining offices of Council vacant and appointing me as Commissioner. It's important to recognise that this is different to other recent appointments of a Commissioner/s to a local government in Western Australia where the Council has been either suspended or dismissed and an Inquiry established.

As to the question of whether I am carrying out an Inquiry, the answer is no. While the legislation provides for the Minister or the Departmental CEO to establish an Inquiry, this is not a course of action that has been followed in this case. It doesn't mean I can't or won't seek to understand some of the background to decisions made, but my intention is to focus on the future and what needs to be done to put the Council in the best possible place for the elections next year.





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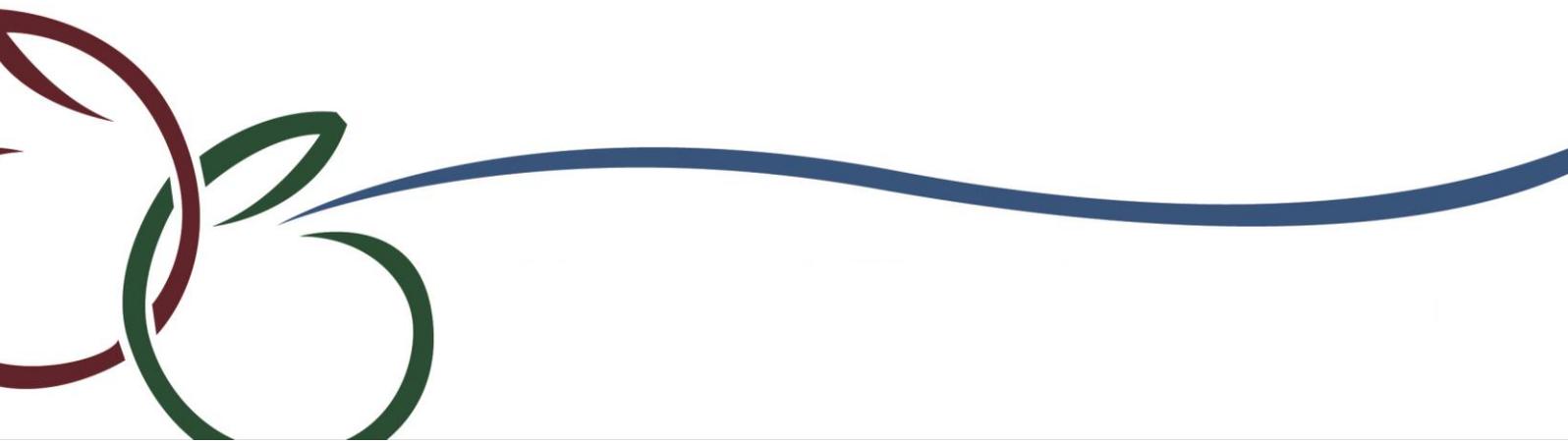
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I've come into the role after a long-term career in public service, including being a former Director General of the Department of Planning Lands and Heritage, and having a passion for building capacity in both State and Local Government. I currently hold a number of other roles, including Chair of the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (which covers Kings Park and Bold Park), Chair of Leadership WA, Director on both the Mid West Ports Authority and Foundation Housing, and I am also a member of the Senate of Murdoch University.

Another frequently asked question is whether I am any relation to our current Premier! Again the answer is no. McGowan is my married name. My maiden name was Rajander and I grew up on a farm near Darkan. My parents sold the farm and moved to Bunbury in the 1970s and over time my siblings also ended up in Bunbury. While I've never lived in Bunbury I've had a long association with the area. My husband Wayne is a retired educator and we spent some great years living and working in regional WA while raising our family. Over the years we lived in Kununoppin, Mt Barker, Broomehill and South and Port Hedland. Our three children are now well and truly grown and we have two lovely granddaughters – Lily who will be nine in March and her cousin Mallory who will turn two in May.

My plan is to spend as much time as I can in Donnybrook Balingup, especially in the first couple of months. I'd welcome the opportunity to meet with as many community groups and individuals as I can. I'll reach out to some but for anyone else wishing to catch up, please email me at: commissioner@donnybrook.wa.gov.au or ring the Shire office and leave a message for me to get back to you.

While some details are still being worked through, I'm anticipating all Council meetings will go ahead as scheduled, apart from the April meeting where I will be overseas. Agenda Briefing Sessions may need to be rescheduled but they will still go ahead in some form, as will the opportunity for public questions and Deputations at Council Meetings.





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Decisions will still need to be made and the business of the Shire must continue. I will be looking at both the facts and the law, and will consider the merits of anything that comes before me. The important thing is that I will be acting to the best of my ability in the public interest. I won't always get it right in everybody's eyes, but I'll be doing my very best to listen and to understand the context and act in the interests of both the current and future residents of the Shire.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge and thank all of the elected members who have either resigned or had their positions declared vacant. One thing I have learned over my time in public service is that good people put themselves up for election or choose to work in forms of public service, and it can and should be a rewarding experience. There is no doubt that many are disappointed it has come to this, but this shouldn't detract from the contribution of those past members nor the Shire staff that have supported them.

I look forward to working with and for you, and wish you all a safe and happy Christmas. Please stay safe on the roads and remain bushfire aware.

Gail McGowan

Commissioner of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

