



## Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

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Donnybrook WA 6239  
[www.donnybrook-balingup.wa.gov.au](http://www.donnybrook-balingup.wa.gov.au)

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### Commissioner's Update (#3)

*12 January 2023*

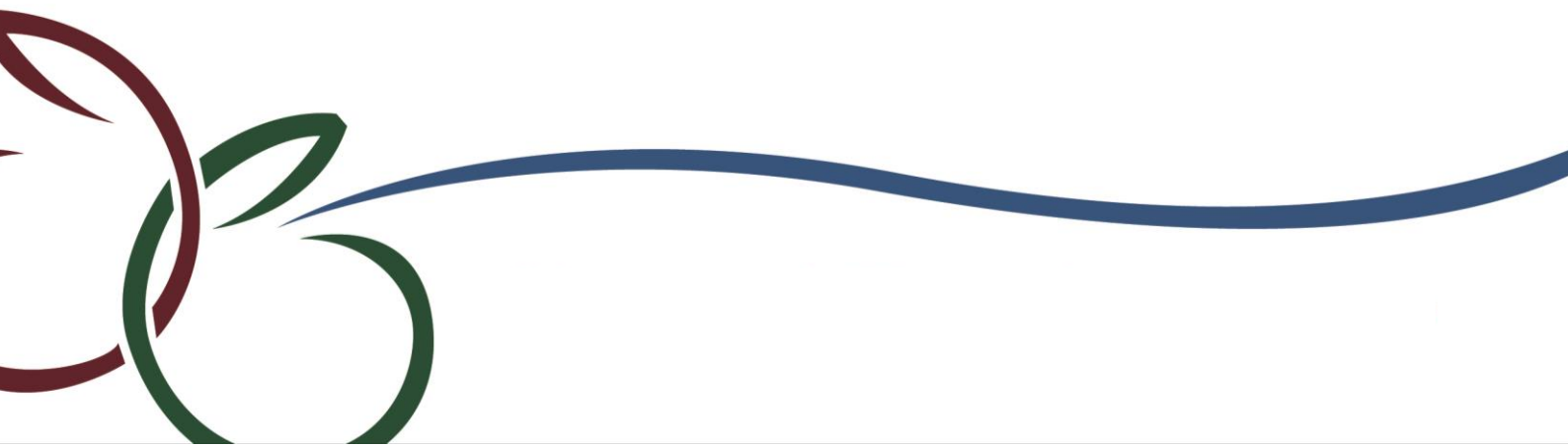
As I write this the fires are continuing to burn out of control.

It is a stressful and anxious time and my thanks go to all of those volunteers and professional emergency service personnel who put their lives at risk to keep the community safe. It has been quite inspirational to see how people come together. My thoughts are also with those impacted by the fire. While I really appreciate your desire to get back home, please follow the advice of the emergency service personnel as their primary aim is to keep everyone safe.

The fires have been my main focus over the past couple of visits but there has also been quite a lot going on and I have been continuing to meet with various people. My apologies to those I've had to reschedule because of last minute emergency management meetings.

I held my first Special Council Meeting (SCM) yesterday. I had to set it in place at very short notice because the legislation requires a Council Meeting to formally endorse my appointment as a member of the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Having held that meeting I am now able to convene a meeting of the Committee which I hope to do next week. There may also be a need to have another Special Meeting which is likely to be on the 25<sup>th</sup> January. It's certainly not my intention to have these special meetings unless absolutely necessary, but there are some matters that were held over after the December meeting was cancelled, and I don't think these can wait until the scheduled Ordinary Council Meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

In this update I do want to highlight the three issues which seem to be most commonly raised with me as the source of some of the frustration and concern which led to my appointment.





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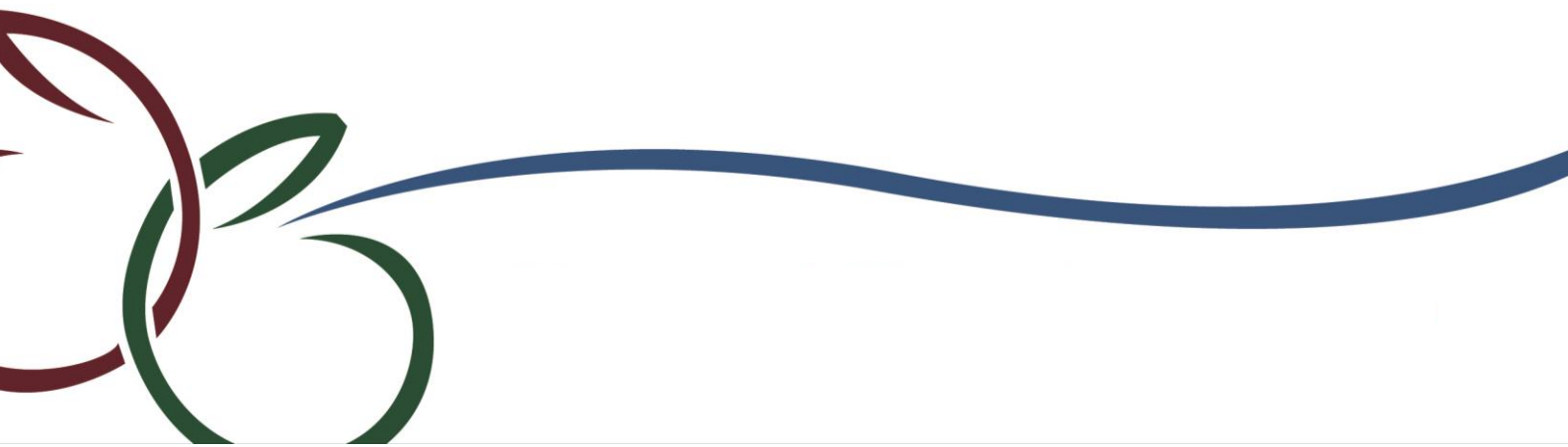
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Firstly, in terms of the VC Mitchell Park development, I have listened to lots of views and have read lots of information. I'm still working through the issues and the next step for me is to meet with representatives of the various sporting bodies. However, I do want to make a couple of observations. On balance my very early view is that this is a great opportunity and one the community can really benefit from. There is no doubt some things could have been done better or differently, but this is typical of any project. I will spend some time working these issues through over the next few weeks.

I have had some briefings on the development and have also spoken with WA Treasury Corporation (WATC) at an informal level. The WATC is the body that loans the funds the Shire will be seeking. I have indicated to those I've met that my understanding is that when Government provides a grant, unless it is explicitly required, there is no legal obligation for there to be a contribution (matching or otherwise) from the body being given the grant. However, there is very much an expectation and a precedent established over all the years I've been in Government, that there will be some 'skin in the game'. A co-contribution generally improves the chances of being successful with a grant obligation and this situation is no exception.

The WATC has advised me that they work with local governments to both determine whether a proposed loan is sustainable, as well as a lot of scenario planning on both the structure of a loan and repayment options. They also help provide projections of whole of life of loan costs. These will be important considerations as decisions are made. I would however stress that I'm still at a very early stage of looking at this and hope to be in a position to provide more detail over the next few weeks.

The second issue is what seems to be known as the 'museum project'. This is one I have only just begun to look at. I've received some documentation and look forward to meeting with some of the project proponents over the next few weeks.





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Lastly there is the matter of the CEO contract. This is not an issue I intend to play out in the public arena. The term of the current CEO is due to expire mid-year and there are a number of options available to me. These include advertising the role or re-appointing the incumbent CEO for any term up to 5 years. I will be taking into consideration, but am not bound by, past Council decisions. An important consideration will be what I determine to be in the best interests of the community given a new Council will, in effect, have any decision I make imposed on them. We also have to remember we are talking about individual's lives and livelihoods here which is why I would urge people to be respectful and avoid running public commentary.

Along with these issues there are many more 'business as usual activities'. My thanks to the team at the Shire who have been helping me settle in to the role. At this stage I am managing to spend anywhere between 2 and 4 days of each week in Donnybrook but am available by email at any time. Should you wish to speak with me in person, please make contact with the Shire Office and they will pass on your details so that I can contact you.

Once again thanks to all those helping with the fires and all those working in the background to support the fire effort.

Take care.

***Gail McGowan***

**Commissioner of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup**

