



Volume 10, Number 4, April 2006

Roads in spotlight

New committee to set maintenance priorities

THE Lower Darling Road will be one of the unsealed roads to come under the scrutiny of a new committee formed to look at the municipality's roads network and establish priorities for maintenance funding.

The move to form the committee is seen as a "positive step forward" for the Shire's roads and its residents, according to Deputy Mayor, Cr Mark King.

"There is no doubt roads are a major concern for our ratepayers and we are responding to that," he said.

"We have a limited budget and a lot of road. Somehow we need to balance that in the interests of all ratepayers, whether they reside in town or in the bush."

The committee will comprise Director Infrastructure & Assets, Peter Turner, and Councillors King, Brian Wakefield and Bill Wheeldon.

The committee will act as a consultation group, assessing the priorities and bringing back recommendations to be ratified by the full Council.

The catalyst for the formation of the committee was a report from Mr Turner tabled at April's monthly meeting regarding the Lower Darling Road.

"Following the presentation about the current condition of Low Darling Road at our last Council meeting (see February newsletter – Ed.) this briefing report has been prepared for Councillor's information.

"The Low Darling Road experiences a substantial increase in traffic numbers

Continued on Page 2



A winning day all around for Megan

The annual Mainstreet Events Committee giant 'Junction Junk' garage sale on Easter Sunday was a standout day for Dareton's Megan Tyers, above right. Not only did the self-confessed 'garage sale junkie' enjoy pottering among this year's increased number of stalls spread around the historic township, she also entered the competition for the Ruby's Cargo hamper valued at more than \$150. And she won! Megan is pictured above receiving the hamper from the Events Committee's Marg Jackson. Marg is also a member of the Ruby's Cargo collective that provided the hand-made goodies for the hamper including chocolates, sauces, jams and garden ornaments as well as a couple of bottles of wine for good measure. Megan said the win was a real surprise, but a very welcome one. "I'll be back again next year," she promised.

CAP sporting grants now!

WENTWORTH Shire Council has moved to alert the municipality's sporting groups to the availability of funding through the NSW Sport and Recreation Department's annual Capital Assistance Program (CAP).

Wentworth Shire Mayor, Cr Margaret Thomson, said the main objective of the program was to improve access for the general public to participate in sport, recreation and/or physical activities.

"It aims to improve the safety for users and participants and improve opportunities for groups within the community that traditionally face difficulties in accessing facilities including women, people from cultural and linguistically diverse communities, individuals with a disability, youth at risk, seniors and people from remote or geographically isolated communities."

The Mayor said the funding guidelines dictated that the Shire must submit applications on behalf of committees or advisory bodies.

"That means we are willing to assist any group or organisation that proposes a project that meets both the CAP funding guidelines and Council's plan for recreation facilities.

"In short that means incorporated not-for-profit sporting and recreational organisations that are able to demonstrate that the provision or the upgrading of a sporting or recreational facility would improve access for the general community to participate in physical activity."

The Mayor added the maximum contribution by NSW Sport and Recreation will not exceed 50 per cent of the net project cost and applicants must be able to verify that they have sufficient funds to complete the project.

"The value of voluntary labour, donated materials etc. is allowed as part of the applicant organisation's contribution to the project.

"The average grant awarded under this program is \$10,000."

The deadline for 2006 – 2007 CAP applications is Wednesday, May 31.

More information and application forms are available from Council. Telephone Community Service's Grant Maynard on 5027 5052.

Roads in spotlight

Continued from Page 1

during the January to March period due to the wine grape harvest. Unfortunately in terms of road maintenance this period coincides with the driest period of the year making maintenance efforts excessively expensive considering Council's limited budget.

"These increased traffic counts in conjunction with the dryness of the unsealed pavement leads to the fines (loamy light stone) being blown out of the wearing course. Due to the hardness of the gravel available for road construction in the area, larger, unbroken stones usually below the wearing course become extruded causing the present rough surface.

"Maintenance grading an unsealed road requires a level of moisture in the pavement material to allow compaction. The current dry period, as expected over summer months, allows little opportunity to maintenance grade unsealed roads unless water trucks are used.

"For comparison purposes, maintenance grading costs approximately \$125 per kilometre when utilising water from a rain event. If a water truck is required for additional moisture to assist with compaction moisture the cost is approximately \$380 per kilometre, over three times the cost. Considering Council's 1900-kilometre unsealed road network, using water trucks should only be considered when a road is impassable or believed to be a safety hazard.

"A recent inspection of Low Darling Road showed that despite being a rough travelling surface, the road is definitely passable albeit lower speeds are required to ensure safe transit and protection from damage to vehicles. It's acknowledged that lower speeds will be inconvenient to residents however it is necessary for safety to all road users.

"In coming years Council will continue to upgrade Low Darling Road prioritising works to improve the worst, high maintenance sections first. In discussing options such as sealing the Low Darling Road, Council must consider availability of funding. Initial construction of a

sealed road will cost almost double that of an unsealed road.

"If Council decides to spend more funds on the Low Darling Road it would have to be at the expense of other current, equally important projects throughout the Shire including Pooncarie Road, Arumpo Road, Rufus River Road and Tapalin Mail Road amongst others.

"On top of the substantial construction costs Council must consider funding options for the additional maintenance costs required to keep a sealed road. Additional funding for maintenance may be available if Council were to consider opportunities in closing under utilised, parallel roads for example the High Darling Road.

"As this is a very complex problem. May I suggest that Council form a small

Road maintenance in the spotlight



sub-committee to consider the multiple problems of road usage, available funding, alternative funding sources and form a road construction plan for a five-year period?

"This committee could also act as a liaison focus for the road user groups that wish to discuss their road problems with Council."

Councillors were keen to tackle the road issue, with the first suggestion being that the committee be an all-of-Council committee.

This was rejected after some discussion as being too unwieldy and the compromise was struck.

The formation of the committee is timely, Mayor Margaret Thomson remarked after the meeting.

"With the budget deliberation period fast approaching it will be good to have some extra guidance when it comes to considering the 2006-2007 road funding priorities," the Mayor said.

Roads are a huge budget item for the Shire of Wentworth, absorbing more than \$5million a year from a budget of about \$13million.

Arts grant for flood festival

WENTWORTH Arts has successfully applied for funding to stage an arts exhibition during the upcoming Wentworth Grande Resort 'Festival of the Flood' in Wentworth later this year.

The Community Arts Support Program funding of \$3000 was secured with the help of West Darling Arts', James Giddey, a staunch supporter of arts in Wentworth and Wentworth Shire Council.

Wentworth Arts' Cynthia Keenan said the group was thrilled that it should now be able to commission several local arts to contribute to an 'Art of the Flood' exhibition.

"We are now putting together a list of artists who might be interested in contributing to the project," Mrs Keenan said.

"Wentworth Arts plans to stage the exhibition in the Darling Street Memorial Rooms hall during the upcoming Festival of the Flood in July this year.

"We have secured a modest amount of funding that will allow us to involve several local artists in the commemorating the 1956 floods in different mediums."

'No' to GM production

COUNCILLORS have reiterated their opposition to the growing of genetically modified foods in the Shire.

At their latest monthly meeting, Councillors unanimously supported a policy of opposing GM food production in the Shire despite reservations that the action could be seen as a "toothless tiger".

"What can we really do to prevent it?" Deputy Mayor, Cr Mark King argued.

"If a GM company owns land in the Shire they do not have to seek our approval to plant a GM crop."

While acknowledging Cr King's concerns, General Manager, Michael Boyd, said that by moving to make their opposition a policy, Council was making a statement and taking a philosophical stance against such foods.

Cr Jim Macri, a vocal opponent of GM foods, agreed.

The proposed policy will now be circulated for public comment.

Once the statutory period for comment expires, Council will revisit the issue and make a determination to adopt, or not to adopt the policy, in line with community feedback.

Crisp flags Dareton wharf for budget priority treatment

THE low-level wharf just downstream of the Dareton boat ramp is beginning to show signs of old age and will be a priority in the 2006/2007 Shire budget Cr Peter Crisp has warned.

Cr Crisp is keen to make the project a priority, saying, "This project has simply been going on too long."

"We gave an undertaking to the Coomealla Memorial Sporting Club and the residents of Dareton that we would do something about the wharf a couple of years ago.

"I am flagging that I will be making it a priority in this year's budget deliberations because I am keen to see something done!"

Council has currently restricted vehicular access to the site due to the erosion of the base section, but it is still open to houseboats, Director Infrastructure and Assets, Peter Turner, told the meeting.

"Houseboats continue to use the wharf as the structure presents itself as being serviceable from the river. The actual deck is a combination of a timber edge wall, a concrete in fill and bitumen drive through.

"The leading edge needs to be re-built

using steel sheet piling or a concrete wall. Both of these methods will retain the existing structure and make it safe for all users."

Cr Crisp said an on-site meeting with representatives of the Coomealla Club and Council staff members had agreed that the wharf structure needed to be retained for the benefit of the thriving river trade.

"Now it is time to do something about it," Cr Crisp said, "Particularly in light of the Club's willingness to help fund the restoration."

Mr Turner said a basic plan had been drawn up the wharf area, now what we need to do is advance the design so that the job can be staged and the costs for each stage established, he said.

"Once this is prepared, Council can elect what stages they intend to undertake in the coming financial year. The overall project includes the area from the Coomealla Golf Club to the water supply pump station in Kookaburra Drive.

"Very preliminary costing includes \$28,000 for landscaping, \$35,000 to repair the wharf and \$15,000 to repair and improve the boat ramp," Mr Turner said.

Showgrounds camping allowed

COUNCILLORS have welcomed the news that camping, on an occasional basis, will be allowed at the Wentworth Showgrounds complex.

Director Infrastructure and Assets, Peter Turner, told the latest meeting that Council has recently secured an understanding with the owners of the showgrounds land – the Department of Natural Resources – for some camping to be allowed.

Camping at the showgrounds has been an issue for some time because the area is not a recognised camping area.

Under the new arrangements, camping will be allowed, occasionally, to take the overflow from Wentworth's existing accommodation sector, Mr Turner said.

He indicated the annual Show and Country Music Festival were good examples of the showgrounds' versatility to be used as an alternative camping ground.

Applauding the new arrangement as a victory for commonsense, Deputy Mayor, Cr Mark King, said the new understanding would assist groups to stage larger events in the township including the Earthbeat festival and the upcoming Wentworth Grande Resort 'Festival of the Flood' incorporating The Great Wentworth Tractor Rally.

"The showgrounds will only ever be used at cater for the overflow from Wentworth's existing accommodation sector," he said.

The other heartening aspect of the breakthrough was the potential to increase the use of the showgrounds complex, Cr King said.

"It would be great to see the showgrounds being used on a more regular basis and go some way towards justifying the time, energy and money that are being put into their upkeep."

Council agrees to lane name change

COUNCIL has agreed to a Wentworth Historical Society request to rename Wentworth's Darling Lane between Sandwyck and Helena Streets 'John Egge Lane'.

Outlining the background to the request, General Manager, Michael Boyd, told the April meeting that a historical society letter was tabled at Council's March 2002 meeting seeking Council's approval to change the name of Darling Lane between Sandwyck and Helena Streets.

"Council agreed to the change of name pending the view of a resident living in the lane at the time.

However, the resident did not want the name changed and the request lapsed," Mr Boyd said.

"Council has since received advice from the Society that the resident no longer lives in the lane and that, in fact, the residence is also gone.

"The Wentworth Historical Society is now advocating that Council reconsider its previous request.

"I can no reason why this cannot be done at this time and that the change would be a fitting way to remember one of the town's historical figures." (See accompanying story).

Who was John Egge?

In 1849, before gold was even talked about in Australia, an enterprising and astute young man from the Shanghai area in China requested of Captain Francis Cadell, a merchant sea captain, employment for his passage to Australia.

Captain Cadell based himself at Goolwa, the Murray mouth, and the young Shanghai man was quick to realise the potential the rivers offered as he had always worked on sampans on the Yangtze River in his homeland. Initially, working in a menial capacity with the boats, he absorbed the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed.

As the young man prospered, he anglicised his name to John Egge and married an English girl, Mary Perring, from Totnes, Devon UK, in Port Elliot SA. Mary lived on Hindmarsh Island at the mouth of the Murray River. John's courting was

Continued on Page 5



Historical Society president, Jenny McLeod, explains the finer points of the cataloguing process to interested members of the group as the ambitious grave cataloguing project begins. The first cemetery earmarked for attention is historic Wentworth.

Historical society launches ambitious graves project

THE Wentworth Historical Society has embarked on an ambitious project to comprehensively map burial sites in the Shire.

The project aims to visit all the Shire recognised cemeteries, small station cemeteries and lone graves to make a detailed record of each grave, including GPS coordinates.

Other details to be catalogued include headstone details, any fencing and decoration, an assessment of the grave's condition, access and land tenure.

The catalogue work will also include taking a digital photo of each headstone and any other unique features.

According to historical society president, Jenny McLeod, the "end result will be a searchable database of all graves and cemeteries within the Shire".

"We will also produce a map showing accurate locations and make this available to the public through the Society.

"The project will provide a record of people who have lived in the Wentworth Shire and family descendants and others with ties to this community will be able to access data about the location, access, and condition of graves.

"The information will enable family descendants to visit the area and identify where conservation works may be needed.

"Headstones record many aspects

of people's lives. Some include details such as birthplace, country of origin, occupation, place of residence, family members, relationships and cause of death. These details can enhance existing records held by families and add to the social fabric of the region.

"The project will bring with it an awareness of the need to preserve the social history of our area by giving members of the wider community a chance to be involved at a local level.

"We will be calling for interested members of the public to assist once the field work commences and this will include recording headstone transcriptions, making site sketches and filing descriptions.

"All of this information will be vital in making the digital images we take relevant and usable."

Interestingly the Society is already preparing to ask members of the region's Italian and Chinese communities to assist with some of the headstone translations.

"There are quite a few in both languages," Mrs McLeod said.

Mrs McLeod thanked the Bendigo Community Bank for its assistance with the project, providing the funding to purchase a digital camera and a computer to store the graves' database.

Continued on Page 5

Who was John Egge?

Continued from page 4

done by tying his clothes on his head and swimming back and forth across the 'Goolwa Arm'.

Right after the wedding John and Mary set off, working their way along the river until they settled in Wentworth in 1859. Eight children were born and raised in Wentworth which was to be John's home for 41 years.

It is said that John Egge eventually borrowed money from China to purchase his first boat, and became a highly respected and successful businessman owning a number of steamers, a bond store, a bakery, a butchery and boarding house.

He was finally recognised as 'a Champion of the Rivers' and the 'merchant with the best credit in all the colonies'. Twenty years after arriving here he was already paying rates on eleven different properties. He was also well respected for his large contributions to local charities.

The Chinese presence in New South Wales was often criticised and in 1890 the introduction of the Chinaman's Act enforced a 10 pound toll on all Chinese passing between NSW, SA and Victoria in the state. John Egge was so well liked throughout Wentworth that the school children went around the township and collected money to pay his toll.

John Egge died in Wentworth on 11th September 1901, and was survived by many children and grandchildren. He is buried in Wentworth.

New graves project

Continued from Page 4

"Both items are now in regular use and we thank the bank for its generous help," she said.

"Members are now in the process of refining photography techniques and planning a training program for interested community members."

Anyone who would like to be involved in the project should contact Mrs McLeod on 5027 3211.

Halls scrutiny to plot a course for the future

COUNCIL will be taking a close look at the operations of its public halls in coming months after a report to this month's meeting highlighted some disturbing trends and highlighted several shortcomings.

The comprehensive report revealed huge costs are likely to be incurred in coming years to maintain the halls to an acceptable standard, and also questioned the value of some halls based on poor patronage.

It also highlighted the declining income the halls were generating and how unattractive many were to potential hirers.

The report was the result of an audit undertaken last month by Council staff looking at maintenance issues, facilities including kitchens and toilets, furniture, crockery, cutlery, glassware, cleanliness and the general condition of the hall and surrounds.

The halls audited were Curlwaa, Pomona, the Wentworth Town Hall, Gol Gol's Wilkinson Hall, the Alcheringa Pavilion at Carramar Drive and the Midway Centre.

In his report to Council, Director Infrastructure & Assets, Peter Turner, suggested that if Council was keen to maintain all its existing halls open to the community, it needed to consider how it was going to do that in the long term.

It should be recognised that nearly all our halls are in generally poor condition, due mainly to their age and the limited funding available for their continuing maintenance, he said.

"Council currently budgets for minor maintenance works each year, but the funds available are simply not enough to keep up with the increasing works required to maintain the halls at an acceptable standard," Mr Turner said.

"The same argument has been advanced for the road network where it

is recognised that the cost of maintenance is not sufficient to maintain our roads at a reasonable standard.

"Council maintains the halls annually with some input from community groups but, as with most things, the people who apply the most pressure often receive the first call on funds.

"What it boils down to is: Can we afford to keep all our halls?"

"Especially in light of the increasing pressure of community expectation for



The Curlwaa Hall

Council to provide facilities of all types to all areas of the Shire."

Mayor Margaret Thomson said any move to close any of the Shire's halls would be a contentious issue.

"This is really something we need to talk over with the community and get some perspective on," she said.

"The community should be aware that this is a very preliminary report, that we have not made a decision to close any of our halls at this stage."

Cr Cherie Ribarits agreed there was a definite need for Council to review its halls and their management.

It's time we had a look at how the halls are used and how valuable they are to the community, she said.

Cr Wakefield said the fear of losing a hall might just be the thing to make some communities take a little more interest in the welfare and future of their building.

"On the other hand they might not care at all. Either way, we would know how our communities feel about their hall and that would give us some direction...and some options to explore," he said.

Shire invites show of Tidy Towns interest

WENTWORTH Shire Council wants to gauge the level of community interest in contesting this year's Tidy Towns Awards program.

"Keep Australia Beautiful New South Wales has forwarded an Awards entry kit and now we want to know if one or more of our communities is interested in giving it a go," Wentworth Shire Mayor, Cr Margaret Thomson, said.

"This really is a community-based event and needs the co-operation of everyone to ensure success."

In a recent letter to the Shire, KABNSW Tidy Towns Program Manager, Peter McLean, informed the Shire that this year's Tidy Towns process was successfully launched in Dubbo in late March at the Western Plains Zoo.

"Attendees celebrated the opening of the program for 2006 and learnt about developments in this year's program as well as a case study of Singleton, the 2005 State Tidy Town Winner.

"Last year the Tidy Towns Program received various entries from 130 towns

in NSW and in 2006 we are aiming to increase this figure.

"We understand that your council may already be participating in the Tidy Towns Program however there may still be towns or communities within your Local Government Area that would benefit from participating in the program.

Further information on the Tidy Towns Program can be viewed on the KABNSW website at www.kabnsw.org.au

"Alternatively, please feel free to contact me in regards to entering the Tidy Towns program. I would be happy to discuss an entry with your Council."

"Now we need to know if any our communities, or more specifically any group within the community, is interested in taking on the challenge," Mayor Thomson said.

"Council will do its bit, but the drive needs to come from the community itself."

Expressions of interest can be made by telephoning Council's Community Services Department on 5027 5052.

Roundabout fears

CR WARREN Ward is concerned at the height of new landscaping at the main Buronga roundabout.

"The earthworks themselves are high enough, but once the plants grow, even if they are low growing, it will be impossible for many drivers to see the other side of the roundabout and approaching traffic," he said.

Correction

One of our sharp-eyed readers noticed a mistake in our calculations last month regarding water prices.

The price for raw water is 35 cents a kilolitre so 102 kilolitres would cost \$35.70, not the \$38.50 quoted.

That would make the raw water account at 12 months, providing the 6-month bill had been paid, \$47.25.

The total cost of raw water for the year would be \$82.95.

Shire contacts

Shire offices: 26-28 Adelaide Street,
WENTWORTH NSW
2648

or: Post Office Box 81
WENTWORTH NSW
2648

Telephone: (03) 5027 5027

Facsimile: (03) 5027 5000

email: council@wentworth.nsw.gov.au

Libraries

Wentworth: (03) 5027 5060

Dareton: (03) 5027 4258

Buronga: (03) 5023 3078

**Shire after hours emergency
mobile: 0428 488 862**

**For matters concerning stray stock
telephone
5027 5050**

Wentworth Shire &
Azai Town, Japan
Sister Cities since 1994



浅井町

Free legal assistance for our community

Our residents, like their counterparts across the State, can experience legal problems on a daily basis, but there is help available.

LawAccess NSW can assist members of our communities resolve their legal problems through a free government telephone service, providing legal information, advice and referrals.

The service can assist customers with a range of legal problems including neighbourhood disputes, debt matters and family law.

For the cost of a local call customers can contact LawAccess NSW on 1300 888 529 to get assistance with their legal problem. LawAccess' trained customer service officers can assist customers with a range of legal problems for example dividing fences, neighbourhood disputes, noise, nuisance and animals.

LawAccess NSW customer service officers can:

- Provide callers with legal information to assist them with their legal problem.

- Explain court related processes such as Fencing Orders or Alternative Dispute Resolution processes such as mediation.

- Refer callers to another legal or related service that is best able to help.

- Send out information that can help callers with their legal problem.

LawAccess NSW can be contacted between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) on 1300 888 529. Customers who have a hearing or speech impairment can contact LawAccess on 1300 889 529.

If customers have access to the Internet they can visit LawAccess Online at www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au.