

# Newsletter

Wentworth Shire Council

## ELECTION OF MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR

Councillor Margaret Thomson was elected to the position of Mayor at Council's Statutory Meeting held on 24 September 2008.

Councillor Brian Wakefield was elected to the position of Deputy Mayor.

Mayor Thomson said that she was happy to be Mayor for another term and looked forward to the challenges ahead.

"There are some major challenges ahead as we strive to continue delivery of services in these trying times," she said.

Councillor Wakefield said he was looking forward to his new role as Deputy Mayor.

"The leadership role of Deputy Mayor will be a challenge and I look forward to working with Mayor Thomson and the Council team over the coming year," he said.

All nine Councillors were sworn in by Wentworth Shire Council General Manager, Peter Kozlowski.



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*Left: At the Statutory Council Meeting held 24 September 2008, Cr. Margaret Thomson was re-elected as Mayor. Cr. Brian Wakefield was elected as Deputy Mayor.*

Photo courtesy of Sunraysia Daily.

## NEW ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING TIME

Council has resolved to change the commencement time of its Ordinary Council Meeting to 9am on the third Wednesday of each month.

Ordinary Council Meetings are open to the public. All residents and ratepayers are more than welcome to attend.

*The first meeting of the new Council, held on 24 September 2008, saw three new Councillors attend the meeting. They were Cr. Peter Thompson, Cr. Ian Whitfield and Cr. Melisa Hederics.*

*Right: Cr. Bill Wheeldon addresses the new Council.*

Photo courtesy of Sunraysia Daily.



## WENTWORTH'S LOCK 10 TO RE-OPEN IN OCTOBER

Lock 10 at Wentworth which closed in May this year for major refurbishment will re-open to boat navigation the week beginning 27 October.

Murray-Darling Basin Commission Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik said the works were part of planned, necessary maintenance and upgrading of structures along the Murray.

"Some components of the lock had been in place since it was built in 1929 and were nearing the end of their useful life. The work has included emptying the lock, removing and repainting the gates and refurbishing the valves. The four lock gates, each measuring 9 by 7.5 metres and weighing more than 18 tonnes, are being grit blasted and completely repainted to ensure long life," Dr Craik said.

"The twelve main valves, each measuring 2 by 1 metres and weighing about a tonne, are being replaced. Quite a number of other components are also being reconditioned or replaced. We and State Water, who are carrying out the work, chose this time of year as it is the quietest period for tourist craft, the main users of the river," Dr Craik said.

Dr Craik said the works had not had any impact on the water levels in the adjacent weir pools. State Water will advise local councils, visitor centres, boating associations, boat hire companies and registered owners of houseboats in the area likely to be affected of the reopening date.

"With these major works done, the lock will be in top operating condition for decades to come," Dr Craik said. For more information on Murray navigation and boating inquiries contact NSW Maritime's Infoline on (02) 9563 8557.

## SWIMMING POOLS TO RE-OPEN

Please be advised that the Wentworth and Dareton Swimming Pools will re-open to the public on Sunday 26th October 2008.



**Aerial view of Wentworth's Lock 10 which will re-open in late October 2008 after necessary maintenance has been completed.**

The wording used at the swearing in of each Councillor at Council's Statutory Meeting...

*"I.....having been elected Councillor of the Wentworth Shire Council do hereby declare that I will faithfully fulfil the duties of the office according to the best of my judgement and abilities."*

## APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

At the Statutory Council Meeting, Council adopted the membership of a number of Council committees and Council representatives on external bodies.

A full list of committees, their membership, and representatives to external bodies has been posted on Council's website - [www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au)

## ALL ABOARD THE LMD CMA'S "PRISCILLA" COACH TO THE COONAMBLE WOMEN'S GATHERING THIS OCTOBER.

This year the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority has been able to secure funding to support a bus load of ladies to travel to Coonamble and participate in a great weekend, 17-20 October 2008. The bus will also stop at selected pickup locations along the way from Wentworth, through Hay, West Wyalong, Parkes and stopping at the final destination, Coonamble.

The Gathering workshops, formal dinner and meals while you are at the Coonamble Gathering site are all inclusive in the registration fee of \$165.00 per person. Works out to be about \$40 per day – a great investment in time and networking away from the daily chores.

For more information contact Susan Walla on 03 5021 9460 or visit the website at [www.lmd.cma.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lmd.cma.nsw.gov.au) for Catchment travel details. Information sheets and registration forms are also available the at the Shire Offices, 26-28 Adelaide Street, Wentworth.

# **COUNCIL MEETING NOTES**

## **RECORDING OF PLANNING DECISIONS**

New legislation requires that the General Manager records which Councillors vote for and against each planning decision of the Council. This process commenced at the Ordinary Council Meeting on 24 September. This information, which will be recorded in the form of a register, will be available publicly and posted on Council's website [www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au).

## **NEW PUBLIC REGISTER OF CURRENT DONATIONS**

New legislation amended in the Local Government Act now requires that the General Manager is to keep a public register of all current registered donations and expenditure declarations lodged by Councillors with the Election Funding Authority of NSW. This change will commence on 1 October 2008.

## **DLG SEMINAR FOR NEWLY ELECTED COUNCILLORS**

Councillor information seminars are now one of the components of the Department of Local Government's Councillor Development Strategy to assist Councillors elected on 13 September 2008.

Wentworth Shire Councillors will be attending a seminar on Wednesday 5 November at Balranald (nearest location). The seminars will focus on three broad topics areas of Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships, the Code of Conduct and Ethical Decision Making and Meeting Practice.

The General Manager is required to report to the first meeting in 2009 on which seminar each of the Councillors attended and any associated feedback.

## **ELLERSLIE GOLF COURSE**

Council resolved to enter into a Licence Agreement with the Department of Lands on the occupation of the extension of the Ellerslie Golf Course, drainage and wood lots.

## **P.S. RUBY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Council approved and endorsed Dave Eddie and Barbara McIntyre to the P.S. Ruby Committee of Management.

## **DARETON SANDBAR**

Council resolved to enter into a Licence Agreement with the Department of Lands in relation to the Dareton Sandbar.

## **RTA MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

Council was provided with a report detailing the new requirements of the Road Maintenance Council Contract (previously know as the Single Invitation Maintenance Contract).

The Director Infrastructure & Assets, Bill Turner, advised Council that "the new contract will provide more flexibility in how work is done and may even result in additional work on RTA roads."

## **NEW COUNCILLORS INDUCTION**

The new Council has commenced a series of meetings as part of their induction. A tour of the Shire is being planned. Councillors met staff on October 1. Councillors will be attending a seminar in Balranald on 5 November.

## My Thoughts

Wentworth Shire Council is committed to improve its services and "My Thoughts" is a valuable way of providing feedback to Councillors and staff. Take the opportunity to write your thoughts down in the area below and drop it into one of Council's libraries in Wentworth, Buronga or Dareton, Visitors Information Centre or the main Council Offices in Wentworth or simply pass it onto a staff member or Councillor.

As a resident/ratepayer of the Wentworth Shire, I would like to offer my thoughts:-

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If you provide a name and address on the following lines we will write back to you with a response within 10 days. In that time your request may be attended to in full and, if not possible, you will be advised as to the action to be taken.

Name: ..... Phone: .....

Address: .....

"My Thoughts" may be ideas, complaints, requests for information or action, observations, comments or questions. If the space provided is insufficient attach your additional information to the back of this page.

**Peter Kozlowski, General Manager**

### **VOLUNTEER GRANTS PROGRAM 2008**

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is offering cash grants to volunteer organisations through out Australia.

Details of the Volunteer Grants Program 2008 can be found on the following website [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfsc-vgp\\_2008\\_guidelines.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfsc-vgp_2008_guidelines.htm)

The Program provides cash grants to individual, not for profit, organisations of between \$1000 and \$5000 to help :

- buy tangible, small equipment items to help volunteers, and/or
- cover costs such as club sporting equipment and uniforms, training of volunteer sports coaches, and travel for specific sports-related purposes, and/or contribute towards fuel reimbursement for their volunteers.

Parent organisations can apply for funding on behalf of themselves and their branches/outlets for amounts between \$10 000 and \$250 000, to purchase, items including contributions for the reimbursement of fuel costs, of between \$1000 and \$5000 for each branch /outlet.

Strict eligibility requirements apply to the grants that can be found on the above web site. Applications close 5pm on Friday 17th October 2008. Application guidelines are also available at the Shire Offices, 26-28 Adelaide Street, Wentworth.

### **NEXT COUNCIL MEETING**

The next Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 15th October 2008 at the new time of 9am. The Public Forum held in conjunction with the Ordinary Council Meeting will commence at 8:45am. Residents are welcome and encouraged to attend.

## STAFF PROFILE

**NAME:** Sue Rudd

**POSITION TITLE:** Community Development Officer

**OBJECTIVES:** To work with local, state and federal development bodies as well as industry, investment and service providers, educational and employment providers and the community to achieve positive economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Liaise with community organisations and groups, promoting involvement, active participation and collaborative efforts to drive successful implementation of various community strategies.

Assist in the coordination and delivery of Council's involvement in community events such as Australia Day and 150 Years Celebration.

Prepare informational, public relations and promotional material.

**LIVES:** Merbein South.

**FAMILY:** Kids all grown up—just me and hubbie at home.

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/GROUPS:** Member of Merbein Development Association and Merbein Street Market Committee Member.

**WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?:** I am rapidly gaining a basic understanding of the operations of the Council and my head is still spinning! I am also looking forward to meeting with various groups and organisations in the region to get a better understanding of what they do.

**ANY OTHER INTERESTING FACTS?:** The slight accent is not Kiwi—I have spent most of my life in South Australia.



## MAYORAL REPORT

*The Mayor's report was presented to Council at the Statutory Council Meeting held Wednesday 24 September.*

I feel very privileged to have lead the Wentworth Shire Council in the role of Mayor for another year. This last year has been one of review and consolidation. The Mayoral role has been challenging and rewarding. It has also been demanding as reflected by my involvement in numerous meetings, openings and attendance at functions as a result of invitations. As Mayor I have continued to have an open door policy and met with ratepayers and developers on request.

I have promoted the Shire and its activities strongly as I firmly believe that increasing Council's profile in as many areas as possible can lead to many opportunities. At this point I would like to thank my Deputy for the past 12 months Councillor Sue Nichols for her assistance, particularly in attending functions on the Shires behalf.

A number of civic receptions were held during the year, including one for the Country Music Festival Civic Reception in October 2007, celebration of the 100th Birthday of Mrs Violet Watts in March 2008 (who sadly passed away a short time later), a reception for the Azai exchange students in August and a reception for the NSW Heritage Council. In September last year I met with the then Minister for Water and Energy Phil Koperburg when he visited the area. He was able to see for himself how the Shire was affected by drought.

I attended the Western Division Conference in Cobar along with the General Manager, Councillor Bill Wheeldon and ex Councillor Warren Ward. The conference was a disappointment and a motion was accepted that a workshop be held to address declining attendance and continuing relevance. The Western Division Group has since reviewed its strategic direction. In Cobar another meeting of Wentworth, Balranald and Central Darling Shires was also convened to explore resource sharing possibilities. Due to distance, this may well be limited but all Councils involved considered this a worthwhile goal.

In June I attended the annual conference of Local Government Shires Association NSW in Sydney along with the General Manager, and ex Councillors Ribarits and Ward. This is an important forum for Councils in terms of policy development. Whilst there I attended a Western Division Group meeting.

**Mayoral Report continued on page 6...**

## **MAYORAL REPORT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5...**

While in Sydney I took the opportunity, along with the General Manager and ex Councillor Cherie Ribarits, to meet with Nathan Rees the then Minister for Water to put the Shire's case forward for special consideration on water restrictions. This resulted in approval being granted for a trial watering period in June. Wentworth Shire was the only Council along the Murray River to have received this type of approval. Whilst the trial was never near the result we were aiming for it was pleasing to get some recognition for Council's argument on the water issue. During the Sydney visit the General Manager and I met with the Chief Valuer for NSW to discuss future valuations which will be based on the separation of land from water. We also met with the Director General of Planning and his senior Planner to voice our concerns on the holdups with development plans. I invited them to visit this area to see for themselves what is being proposed and I am pleased to say they did honour their commitment by coming to Wentworth in September. I believe it is important to keep inviting Ministers and staff to visit the Shire.

The NSW Heritage Council met in Wentworth in September. This was a great opportunity to showcase the area and it was also important for them to see the projects they had funded and hopefully will contribute to in the future. On that point I am glad to say that the Ruby will soon be put on the slips for final inspection. The volunteers under the leadership of Leon Wagner are to be congratulated for their perseverance over so many years.

Council conducted a series of consultation meetings with the various communities during the year. I attended all of these sessions. These are worthwhile and I am sure once the community realises that Council is committed to community consultation, attendances will improve. Consultation is something that has been sadly lacking in the past and, consequently, has been a focus of Council.

The General Manager and I attended a workshop on a way forward for the Western Division in Sydney. I now believe that group has a strategic direction for the future. Council decided during the year to be a member of Riverina & Murray Regional Organisation of Councils (RAMROC). This is proving to be invaluable in terms of staff professional development and information flows. With the inquiry into the privatisation of water and sewer being of major concern Council was able to be part of a service model developed by RAMROC and submitted on the Group's behalf. RAMROC has a member on the Water Advisory Committee and has been advocating for a different regime for water restrictions.

Outstanding progress has been made on the 42 recommendations identified when Council undertook an Organisation Review late in 2006. The General Manager Peter Kozlowski and his staff are to be congratulated on the effort they have put in to move the organisation forward. I recognise that some staff have found it difficult to adapt to change. This is so necessary if we are going to survive into the future. On a personal level I have found Peter exceptional to work with. He is constantly looking for ways to promote and improve the organisation. Many thanks Peter.

The Director of Infrastructure & Assets Bill Turner and his staff have done a great job under very trying circumstances. The drought meant that tasks had to be reviewed to allow for hand watering etc. and his staff also embarked on a water conservation program for our parks and gardens with dripper installation, mulching and the use of recycled water. The roads also were of concern with very little moisture to allow for grading. Thanks Bill.

The Director of Development and Environment Ken Ross and his staff have continued to provide the almost unending requests for information required to progress the Buronga/Gol Gol Structure Plan and the Rural 1C amendments. These are waiting endorsement by Planning NSW. However developers are continuing to submit plans with the Shire. Ken and his staff endeavour to find ways forward and I thank them for their efforts. The Murray Street land has finally been cleared from Native Title claims and it will shortly be necessary for Council to decide how they wish to proceed with the development of that land.

The Director of Corporate and Community Services Terri Maguire can be very proud of how she has steered the organisation towards a better budgetting model that links in with the Shire Management Plan. Terri also devoted a huge amount of time in endeavouring to find a Doctor for the Medical Practice while at the same time considering the interests of the staff involved. This has now been resolved with the closure of the Practice and a Private Practitioner now operating in the offices.

Jill Davidson who is assistant to both myself and the General Manager has been a pleasure to work with. She is so well organised and nothing is too much trouble. Thanks Jill.

I also thank my fellow Councillors for their efforts in representing the Shire during the year and in particular retiring Councillors Ward and Macri. I also acknowledge the contribution made by Cherie Ribarits during her 9 years on Council. All these Councillors worked very hard to represent ratepayers during their years on Council. I wish them well as they move on in other directions. The new Council will have major challenges ahead as we strive to continue providing services in a changing environment. I hope they enjoy their time on Council.

I am confident we have the staff to deliver excellent service and value to all residents in the Shire. I am confident the newly elected Councillors and staff will work together to keep Wentworth Shire a great place to live and do business in.

All the best for the coming year.

Mayor Margaret Thomson