

## Commissioner's Update #14

Shire of Donnybrook Balingup 17 August 2023



The last few weeks have been particularly busy in our Shire and around the State.

Earlier this week I met with Minister David Michael, the newly appointed Minister for Local Government, and provided an overview of my time as Commissioner for the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup. I also attended the Leadership Matters Breakfast, where WA Premier Roger Cook outlined his vision for the State. I also attended the Bush Summit which was convened by the newspaper, The Australian. This forum covered a broad variety of topics, from resource activity and challenges in agriculture, to the importance of sport, and was largely concerned with highlighting some of the unique challenges faced by those living in regions that are farther away.

The final Ordinary Council Meeting before our voluntary Caretaker Period commences (from 14 September) will be held next week on Wednesday (23 August) at 5:00pm. I had originally anticipated attending to both the VC Mitchell Park Community Club Project and the 2023/24 Budget, including rate setting, at this meeting, however some late changes have been made. This has resulted in the need for a Special Council Meeting which is scheduled for the week following the Ordinary Council Meeting in order to finalise these matters, and details will be advertised on our social media platforms and website as soon as available. Notwithstanding, I anticipate rates will be set in line with the projections in the [Long Term Financial Plan 2022 – 2042 \(linked for your convenience\)](#), and it will be recommended that the VCMP Community Club Project proceeds to the construction phase.

I have also authorised the seeking of legal advice regarding some social media commentary that I consider to be completely unacceptable. I would again remind people of standards of common decency we should all expect to receive, and the defamation laws that also apply to social media. I took the opportunity to brief both Minister David Michael and key senior departmental staff at the Shire about my concerns about the nature of some of the material that is circulated from time to time.



 (08) 9780 4200

 shire@donnybrook.wa.gov.au

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The forthcoming Council elections were also high on the agenda in my discussion with the Minister. Like me, he is keen to see a democratically elected Council governing the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup. Again, I encourage people not only to think about the forthcoming nomination period that opens on 31 August, but also ensuring as many eligible electors take the time to cast a vote. The WA Electoral Commission will be conducting the election on behalf of the Shire, using the postal voting method. This is the standard approach by most Local Governments in WA, and is not a new process for this Shire either.

An Audit and Risk Management Committee Meeting was also held this week on Tuesday (15 August). I thank the Chair Ian Telfer and fellow member Vivienne MacCarthy for their contributions, with the Meeting primarily dealing with the results of the Interim Audit from the Office of the Auditor General. I am pleased to report that the Auditors are recommending an unqualified report with only two matters identified in the report, one moderate and one minor. My thanks go to Kim Dolzadelli, Belinda Richards, and the finance team behind them for the work they have done (and continue to do) in managing the Shire's finances.

In lighter news, I am sure many like me may have been glued to their screens watching the amazing efforts of the Matildas over the last week or so. While the dream may be over, the focus on women's sport and the lasting impact the FIFA World Cup will have cannot be overstated.

Finally, I will be travelling to Singapore this weekend in my role as Chair of the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority. The focus will be on the way in which Singapore has activated some of their public parks and public spaces to encourage an enjoyment of nature, but also as part of a broader strategy about greening the city. I have no doubt that some of the lessons learned can be applied in regional contexts such as the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.



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