

SPRING 2018

Singleton Edit



SINGLETON
COUNCIL



From the Mayor

Ask anyone what the biggest issue is for Singleton and they'll most likely say the New England Highway bypass and traffic congestion. The highway has long been a knife cutting through the centre of Singleton, acting as both an enabler and a barrier to economic growth and prosperity. A bypass is the obvious solution, with provision for easy access for passing cars to head into the Town Centre and enjoy a spot of shopping or a bite to eat. A bypass also presents other opportunities for Singleton to build on its growing appeal as a regional destination. A case in point is the draft Townhead Park Master Plan, due to come before Council in September, which outlines a vision for a gateway entry and recreation space to appeal to locals and visitors alike. But it all hinges on State Government priorities. We are aware that further investigations are underway into the preferred route for the bypass, and nothing can happen until the final plans are drawn. That said, I'll be in Macquarie Street any chance I get to keep the bypass on the political agenda – and asking for a pre-election commitment from both sides to deliver it.

The other important issue for our community is of course the drought affecting many of our local farmers. It's easy for some to go about their days without thinking about the last time it rained. But consider the steak and vegetables on your dinner plate and how they got there, and the very real likelihood that whoever grew them may not be eating as well as you. It's more important than ever to show our support for the primary producers who are doing it tough, and I'm really pleased Council is playing a lead role in offering assistance.

Cr Sue Moore | Mayor of Singleton



From the General Manager

There are some interesting conversations about the changing role of local government taking place in a range of forums across NSW and interstate of late, and Singleton Council is playing a leading role. In fact, the work we do in a range of fields has not only been recognised by our industry colleagues, but showcased as best practice with a number of prestigious awards for planning, communications, integrated risk and organisation development. Our staff have been approached to speak at conferences about the way we do things in regard to integrated risk management and business improvement. And I've been to Melbourne for the National Sports Convention, examining the changing structure of communities where traditional institutions aren't necessarily the centrepiece of community life and more people are looking to their local council to galvanise their sense of belonging.

It's a new way of looking at what we do at Singleton Council, and a different way to frame all of those traditional local government services that you told us are important, such as library services, waste management, water supply and financial management, as the foundation for community prosperity. That's why I'm proud to report that Council achieved its target for 95% completion of the 2017/2018 Operational Plan, and has launched into the 2018/2019 capital works program worth \$31.45million. We are continuing down the path of business improvement to review and re-evaluate every one of our business units, looking for innovation and new ways of doing things that are capturing State-wide attention. And top of mind is our commitment to fiscal responsibility, so we're constantly driving for better outcomes for our community as exemplified by the new waste contract about to come into effect on 1 November. It all makes for pretty good reading and I hope you'll agree, a bright future for our community.

Jason Linnane | General Manager



Natalie Zagninski, Claire Briggs, Tony Chadwick and David Baker.

FLOWING SUPPORT FOR OUR FARMERS

From a proposal for driverless cars to fire-eating dancers, Singleton Council is taking a literal approach to the community's vision to be vibrant, progressive, connected, sustainable and resilient.

Now Council is building on the success of community events held over the past year – including Firelight – and joining forces with a range of stakeholders to support Singleton's drought-affected farmers by connecting them with the help they deserve.

Planning is also underway for an event to bring the community together to "pass the hat" to raise money and support for our local farmers. Keep a watch on Council's website and Facebook page for more details when they are available (you might also want to start practising your best raundance moves).

Natalie Zagninski, Council's Manager Strategy and Engagement, said a major part of her team's role was to plan for the future of the community, to ensure Singleton is the best place to live, work, invest and do business.

But it's also crucial to be aware of the issues in our community now, and to provide a conduit between residents and the support they need. "Council is really proud of the strength of the relationships with government agencies, support services and

community organisations that exist for no other reason than to provide the services people need when they need them," she said.

"We've been having a lot of conversations with a lot of people lately, particularly around mental health.

"But one of the biggest issue affecting our community right now is the impact of the drought, and we're working with a range of stakeholders to make it easy for people to find the help they deserve.

"The government support for drought-affected farmers is fantastic, but we want to provide practical help to people to source that assistance. We want to make sure there's no wrong door – wherever you go to, you'll find the help you're looking for.

"We also have some terrific ideas for a community fundraising event. Without giving too much away yet, we hope it will be a record-breaking occasion for everyone to come together to demonstrate to our farmers that they are not alone."

Affected farmers can also apply for rate relief under Council's Hardship Policy, which allows Council to enter into payment agreements with ratepayers having difficulty meeting their normal instalment payments.



For drought assistance, visit DroughtHub at dpi.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/drougthub or contact Council on 02 6578 7290 for help to connect
If you need someone to talk to, contact **Rural Aid 1300 327 624** | **Lifeline 13 11 14** | **Beyond Blue 1300 224 636**

Wasting away

State-of-the-art trucks, all-new bins and a dedicated customer service centre highlight Singleton Council's new general waste collection service, with a new contractor scheduled to start on 1 November 2018.

Singleton Council is lifting the lid on a new era for its general waste collection under a new agreement that will bring a state-of-the-art service to our local government area.

JR Richards has been awarded a 10-year contract to deliver the general waste (red bin) collection service commencing on 1 November 2018, with households to receive new bins from Monday 5 November 2018.

The agreement will also deliver a significant cost saving, which will help offset forecast increases in kerbside recycling due to the crisis in the industry across Australia.

Mark Ihlein, Council's Director Planning and Infrastructure Services, said the new general waste contract was an exciting transition – but people were unlikely to notice any change to their general waste collection.

“Essentially, it's business as usual – apart from the arrival of a new bin, people won't notice any change in their collection at all”

“The contract was awarded following a competitive tendering process,” he said.

“As well as the red lid general waste collection, the contract also includes provision of a scheduled bulk clean-up and transition to a kerbside collection for food organics. Residents will see the collection service delivered using state-of-the-art trucks, comprehensive bin management and maintenance, a dedicated customer service centre, monitoring and reporting of the volumes collected by the service, and an education program focused on the introduction of a food organics collection in the coming years.”

JR Richards will also manage the roll out of new bins across the Singleton local government area, with existing bins to be collected.

Mr Ihlein said there would be a scheduled delivery of serial numbered bins registered to a particular property, with residents to be notified of when their new bin will arrive.

“Our biggest message to people is there's no need to panic,” Mr Ihlein said.

“Essentially, it's business as usual – apart from the arrival of a new bin, people won't notice any change in their collection at all. We are working very closely with JR Richards to ensure a smooth transition.”

A comprehensive community information program is being prepared to best inform residents about the bin changeover, which will include drop-in sessions for people to speak directly to Council staff in September or October.

“There will be ample opportunities for people to ask questions so they feel comfortable about how the process will be carried out,” Mr Ihlein said.

“People can check Council's website or follow us on Facebook to find out when more details of the community information program are available, or contact Council directly to find out more.”



Michelle Willis, Waste Technical Officer and Hamish Murdoch, Coordinator Environmental Services and Development.

ASSETS ADD UP IN FINANCE REVIEW

A review of the methodology used to calculate Singleton Council's asset depreciation expense will be a major priority in 2018/2019, as the organisation progresses under a budget cap for the second year.

Mark Wiblen, Council's Manager Corporate and Community, said Council had launched into 2018/2019 with a continued focus on driving efficiencies rather than bowing to increased costs under its service delivery review model.

Significant efficiencies were identified in service delivery reviews of business units including the Singleton Regional Livestock Market and Singleton Gym & Swim in 2017/2018. Reviews are now underway of Lake St Clair, Singleton Civic Centre, childrens services, planning and development, and roads.

Mr Wiblen said asset depreciation would also come under the spotlight. "We will be reviewing the asset methodology to ensure consistency with current practices

in relation to depreciation expense, and anticipate there will be a favourable impact on our bottom line," he said.

At the same time, the need to spend more money on asset maintenance and Council's operating performance ratio were two areas identified for improvement under the State Government's seven Fit for the Future measures. Singleton Council exceeded the benchmarks for the own source revenue, building and infrastructure asset renewal, debt service ratio and infrastructure backlog ratio measures.

"Our asset maintenance ratio is hovering at just below 80% of what Council should be spending on required asset maintenance and we are aware we need to be looking more at asset preventative maintenance as in our asset management plans," Mr Wiblen said.

"Our operating performance ratio is also below the zero target, however Council's position is currently trending upwards in the Long-Term Financial Plan and is anticipated to be on target in 2021."

SINGLETON SHINES

Singleton Council is cementing its place as an industry-leader in a range of fields with accolades for planning, communication, integrated risk management and organisation development.

The latest trophies came from the 2018 Local Government Week Awards, where Singleton took out an award for Planning Cultural Change for its digital development application process, and the RH Dougherty Award for Excellence in Communication for #singletonstories, a weekly community profile posted to Council's Facebook page each Sunday.

Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore said it was due recognition for the great ideas and hard work happening in Council that were now proven to be industry-leading. "But most importantly, the two projects highlighted at the presentation are delivering fantastic outcomes for the people in our community," she said.

Council's Integrated Risk team was recognised at the 2018 StateCover WHS Excellence Awards earlier this year, and the Organisation Development team is a finalist in the Australian HR Awards 2018 announced in September.



Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore with Council's planning and communications teams.



LIBRARY'S SWEETEST COLLECTION

Team Leader Library Resources | Kylie Tatt

Just like fashion, trends in cake decorating change from year to year. Whether you're a seasoned baker or a rookie cook, Singleton Library's new novelty cake tin collection is now available to all library members ready for your next birthday or special occasion.

Singleton Library is the first location in the Hunter to offer library members the chance to borrow novelty cake tins for free. The Library's novelty cake tin collection includes 70 different shapes from Mickey Mouse and 3D castles to Darth Vader.

Team Leader Library Resources Kylie Tatt said the collection would offer library members the opportunity to unleash their inner MasterChef without the cost of purchasing tins. "Novelty cake tins can be very expensive to buy – anywhere from \$20 and \$60 – and it's difficult to justify the expense if it's a shape that might only be used once or twice, and then takes up valuable cupboard space in the kitchen," she said.

"This collection enables our library members to borrow a tin to create a special cake without the cost of buying one – this is just another way our library is challenging the traditional concept of what a library has to offer."

Recently, Singleton Library launched their LABrary — unveiling 3D printers, a laser cutter and engraver, virtual reality, green screen, audio and visual equipment, animation software and a range of coding and robotics technology. Singleton Library also has an extensive toy library that members can join for a small fee.

"Non-traditional collections, such as our cake tins, are a great way to show that libraries are more than books, and that we are not only at the forefront of emerging library services, but meeting the needs and expectations of the modern community," Ms Tatt said. Anyone wishing to reserve a cake tin can do so via the library's website, over the phone, or in person at the library.

MAJOR CAPITAL WORKS REPORT

2018/2019 | 97 PROJECTS | \$31.45 MILLION

50%

OF RIVERSIDE PARK
CONSTRUCTION COMPLETE |
COST 2.7 MILLION | COMPLETION
NOVEMBER 2018



Singleton Regional Livestock Market Kiosk Upgrade | Deed agreement signed | cost \$706,000 | completion January/February 2019



Truck Wash Upgrade (Singleton Regional Livestock Market) | Preliminary design complete | cost \$350,000 | completion December 2018



Singleton Council Administration Building and Civic Centre | Airconditioning replacement | cost \$500,000 | completion June 2019



Brookers Bridge replacement | Detailed design in progress | cost \$2.2million | commencing February 2019



Rose Point Park | All abilities playground | cost \$880,00 | commencing early 2019



Sewer main relining | LGA wide | cost \$660,00 | commencing November 2018



Glendonbrook Road | 1.5km of rehabilitation, widening and strengthening of existing pavement | cost \$500,000 | completion November 2018



Pictons Lane | Drainage and pavement rehabilitation | cost \$400,000 | completion September 2018



Goorangoola Road | 500m rehabilitation to widen and strengthen the road pavement and install safety barriers | cost \$400,000 | commencing March 2019



Brokenback Road, Branxton | Pipe replacement and pavement reconstruction | cost \$200,000 | commencing March 2019



Allan Bull Reserve | 150m of shared pathway | cost \$100,000 | completion April 2019



Water main replacement | LGA wide | cost \$600,000 | commencing February 2019



Major pump station rehabilitation | Dunolly, Burke St and Kelso St sewer pump stations | cost \$800,000 | commencing December 2018



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