

SUMMER 2019

Singleton Edit





From the Mayor

As we come to the time when we reflect on the year that was, 2020 is already shaping up as the year of possibilities for what could be.

It's an exciting time for the Singleton local government area, where the past and the future are colliding as we prepare to mark the bicentennial of the European exploration of our area, at the same time as planning is well underway for the future, particularly in regards to the economy.

Next year we'll see the focus on proactive and strategic socioeconomic planning come into effect, as we act to establish partnerships, strategies and programs to promote industry diversification and maximise economic benefits for everyone in our community, now and into the future, and maintain Singleton's importance to NSW.

And through the development of documents such as the Singleton Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2019-2024, the foundation is well and truly being set for the potential for what Singleton could be, embracing new industries, technologies and opportunities for our community to continue to grow and thrive.

We're also working very closely with all levels of government on what our local government area needs to drive it forward, and that includes a Singleton bypass of the New England Highway. I'm very excited to see the plans go on exhibition by Roads and Maritime Services early in the new year.

But just what the Singleton of the future looks like for the community who will live here is still open to imagination. And that's why we'll be talking to you about your vision for the future of Singleton through a review of the Community Strategic Plan in 2020, the document that will guide the future of Council's operations and our community for the next 10 years and beyond. There will be a range of opportunities for everyone in our community and I encourage you to get involved.

2020 will also be a year of political, cultural and historical significance in Singleton. A local government election will be held in September, with the potential to change the direction of local governance and leadership in our community.

Perhaps most pertinently, we will also commemorate 200 years since the European exploration of our local government area. Back to Singleton 2020 captures a whole-of-community program of commemorative events that aims to bring everyone together, regardless of culture, background and whether you're a long-time resident or a frequent visitor. You can find the full program on Council's website and start planning your year now.

I wish you and your family a happy and safe festive season, and a prosperous 2020.

Sue Moore | Mayor

From the GM

With the festive season well and truly on its way with the countdown to Christmas On John Street on Friday 6 December 2019, it's the most wonderful time of the year to pause to celebrate all that we have achieved together in service of our purpose to create community in 2019.

One of Singleton's greatest strengths is the spirit of community that exists here, and it's a hallmark of events such as Christmas On John Street to see people of all ages come together to mark what we all love most about our local government area.

And it makes working at Singleton Council particularly rewarding because we can see the real impacts of the work we do in making people's lives a little bit better every day.

That was reflected in a number of ways in 2018/2019, including the 76,821 people who visited our Library and 11,410 people who visited the Youth Venue; the launch of a new website to better deliver more dynamic information and a gateway to online services; and new working relationships with management contracts for the Singleton Regional Livestock Market, Singleton Gym & Swim and Lake St Clair.

As an organisation, we're capping off the year on a high note with a healthy budget surplus and completion of our target to deliver 95% actions under the 2018/2019 Operational Plan in readiness to launch into a new decade with a host of exciting programs and projects.

Inclusions on our capital works program for 2020 are construction of the Animal Management Facility, the next stage of the Singleton Town Centre Upgrade, Broke skate park and drainage works on Kelso Street, to name a few.

Our events team is also hard at work to deliver an exciting program of events over the next few months, including, of course, Christmas On John Street, Twilight on 25 January 2020 and Back to Singleton 2020, the commemoration of the bicentennial of the European exploration of our local government area.

Most importantly, we'll be talking to as many people as possible about what you want for the future of our community as part of the review of the Community Strategic Plan to ensure the spirit of our community continues for another decade to come.

Best wishes for a merry and safe holiday season.

Jason Linnane | General Manager



New driver Skye Jones (front), with (from left to right) David Andrews (PCYC), Jen Holland (Singleton Council), Tallis Davies (program participant), Alison Baldwin (Singleton Council), Carissa Starr (volunteer supervisor), David Baker (Singleton Council), Jean Rennie (Salvo's Drive for Life) and Renee Crittenden (volunteer supervisor).



After seven years on L plates, Skye Jones is in the driver's seat of her life – literally – thanks to the support of a community-based program that has put her on the road to success.

The DRIVE program is a partnership between Singleton Council, Singleton PCYC and the Salvation Army that trains driving mentors to then teach young people who would otherwise be unable to tally the hours necessary to get their P plates.

Skye became the second graduate of the program in October, when she passed her driving test with the support of mentor Renee Crittenden. Skye signed up to the program through the Salvo's Drive for Life program.

"It's amazing for me to go for my Ps and finally drive," she said. "It will help my life in every aspect. I had my Ls for seven years because I was never able to get taught how to drive. Being in the program was the only way I could get the hours I needed to go for my licence."

"If it wasn't for this program, I'd be looking at eight years on my Ls."

Renee said she was motivated by being able to help people after seeing the program on Council's Facebook page. She has worked with two young drivers, including Skye, and will be taking on a new student after Skye achieved her wheels.

"It was a way to give back to somebody else – I could try to help people who would otherwise have a lot of difficulty getting their licence," Renee said.

With 10 trained supervisors working with more than 10 young people – and more on the waitlist – through both

the Salvo's and the PCYC, the next round of training for volunteer supervisors is now underway, with people encouraged to get involved.

A volunteer supervisor workshop was held in November, and further workshops will be run in March and May 2020.

Council's Road Safety Officer, Alison Balding delivers the Supervising Learner Drivers Workshop for supervisors, while students have opportunities for further training including lessons with an instructor, a government-funded "keys2Drive" lesson alongside their supervisor and Safer Driver courses.

"It's really a life-changing program for young people who for one reason or another don't have access to a car or to someone who can help them to learn to drive," Singleton Council General Manager Jason Linnane said.

"We know that transport is an issue for young people in Singleton, whether it's public transport services or being able to drive themselves."

"The DRIVE program is a tangible way the community can work together to support young people aged between 16 and 25 to get the practical experience they need to get a licence."

"Best of all, it opens up a world of opportunities for people who can then apply for jobs that require a licence, or take advantage of so many more options because of the freedom that comes with transport."

Volunteer supervisors may register at any time for the program by visiting Council's website at www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/728/Driving-Employment-Pathways



Merry + Bright

Santa Claus is coming to town as the community wraps up preparations for Singleton's biggest Christmas party on Friday 6 December

Santa Claus, Singleton Fire Station Deputy Captain Joe Adamthwaite, retained firefighter Hugh Miles, Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore and Council's Director Organisation and Community Capacity Sharon Hutch.

From craft groups and dance groups through to jolly St Nick himself, preparations for this year's Christmas on John Street are a demonstration that Christmas and community spirit is well and truly alive in Singleton.

The hallmark of Singleton's events calendar has become the unofficial launch of the festive season as John Street is overtaken by live entertainment; kids' activities including jumping castles, balloon twisting and a petting zoo; Singleton Council art and craft; food trucks; more than 60 market stalls; and a truckload of cheer.

And this year is proving to be a true community event with Rotary Club of Singleton members John and Isabella Bailey set to bring Santa Claus all the way from the North Pole, and the Coffee and Craft ladies putting the finishing touches on hand-made decorations for Santa's Grotto in time for all the fun on Friday 6 December 2019, from 5.30pm.

In keeping with tradition, Singleton firefighters led by Deputy Captain Joe Adamthwaite will chauffeur Santa to the event in their 1960s Bedford vintage truck.

There'll also be entertainment by Singleton Town Band and St Catherine's Catholic College choir, including soloists from Singleton High School and Singleton Public School, as well as performances from Urban Dance studio and Kayla Marshall Dance studio.

Sharon Hutch, Singleton Council's Director Organisation and Community Capacity said Ka-Boom Fireworks – supported by Yancoal – would cap off all the festivities.

"Christmas on John Street goes to the heart of community with people coming together to enjoy entertainment for all ages, delicious food from a range of food trucks as well as offerings on John Street, and of course Santa Claus and fireworks," she said.

"But best of all is the sense of the spirit of the season.

"The event gets bigger and better every year and I can't wait to see as many people as possible on John Street on 6 December."

For more information, visit www.singleton.nsw.gov.au



Singleton Coffee and Craft group members Jean Miller and Cathy Pobje with Anne Stokes, Heather Knight, Kathy Moore, Daphne Barber and Helen Phillips.

SURPLUS EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

A better than expected financial result has delivered a surplus for Singleton Council in 2018/2019, after original projections forecast a \$3.13 million deficit.

The \$23.4 million surplus (before capital grants and contributions) takes into account the sale of Wallaby Scrub Road and early payment of the Federal Government's Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs), but calculations without them show Council's successful financial position would have continued.

In the past five years, Council has turned deficit budgets in 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 into consecutive surplus budgets in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019, with another surplus projected for 2019/2020.

The organisation's total operating expenditure over the same period tracks in a straight line from \$55.1 million in 2015/2016 to \$55.3 million projected for 2019/2020, with little variation in between.

Anthony Egan, Council's Director Business and Community Services said it was a pleasing result from a raft of difficult work and hard decisions being made across the organisation to put a lid on operating costs without comprising the quality of service delivery.

"When we unwind Wallaby Scrub Road and the advance payment of the Federal Government's Financial Assistance Grant (FAG), we end up with a surplus of just under \$1 million at \$993,000," he said.

"That's an improvement on our original budget for 2018/2019 financial year, which was a \$3.13 million deficit.

"This result has been achieved by our continued downward pressure on operating expenses since 2016, as well as providing additional funds toward our infrastructure results.

"Even better, Singleton continues to be among the lowest rates and charges for Hunter councils."

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

An expansion of the Singleton SES headquarters that has been "years in the making" is clearing the final hurdle for completion with the installation of a lift and office fit-out underway.

The custom-designed facility will house response equipment including four boats, one ark angel, two storm trailers and three vehicles, with a mezzanine level to be an operations centre during an emergency event and training space for SES volunteers.

Jointly funded by Singleton Council and the NSW Government, the project is on track for completion by Christmas and at the height of the storm season.

Simon Merrick, Local Commander of the Central Hunter Cluster for the SES, said that as well as providing valuable space for SES operations, the new facility would also help to encourage more people to join the organisation.

"We currently have 62 volunteers but we believe this facility will help to bring in more recruits," he said.

"Given the size of our LGA and the equipment we need to respond to an emergency, we have outgrown the current building.

"What the new facility will give us is two purpose-built centres that would house the operations centre led by the police during an emergency event, as well as the SES response.

"This has been years in the making and it's fantastic to see it at this stage.

"We really want to thank Singleton Council and the NSW Government who committed \$200,000 to the project for their huge support."

SES Unit Commander Singleton Jesse Roberts, Local Commander Central Hunter Cluster Simon Merrick, Council's Manager Infrastructure Services Damian Morris and Director Planning and infrastructure Services Mark Ihlein



Coordinator Utilities Engineering Dave Tynan, Utilities Engineer Dinesh Nutalapati and Utilities Plumber Ben Carter

WATER RE-USE FILLS UP SAVINGS

A project to reuse water tanks as well as treated effluent will cut down water usage at the Council facility with the biggest consumption of water by at least 50 per cent.

The sewer treatment plant tallied up 18,000 Kilolitres in 2018/2019, leading the list of Council facilities in water usage above parks and gardens and the saleyards.

But completion of the \$2 million UV disinfection treatment plant in September last year means Council can re-use treated effluent because the water is of a higher standard to clean down equipment at the plant, which was previously done with treated drinking water.

The UV disinfectant treatment plant eradicates bacteria from effluent to a significantly high level before it is then discharged.

Mark Ihlein, Council's Director Planning and Infrastructure, said the reuse project was a simple yet brilliant solution to cutting water usage by between 50 per cent and 70 per cent, delivering further cost savings of at least \$15,000 per year.

"Council has transferred two water tanks to the sewer treatment plant that were used as temporary tanks for the

replacement of reservoirs at Jerrys Plains recently," he said.

"Those tanks will then store treated effluent from the UV disinfection treatment plant, which will be used for wash down operations including the aerators and cleaning of inlet screens (which pull solids out of the effluent before it goes through reactors).

"Previously, the treated effluent would go out into Doughboy Hollow and we would use treated drinking water to clean down the equipment."

Mr Ihlein said although the new system was only recently introduced, the benefits were significant - particularly with water restrictions in place.

"Council is well aware of our organisation's consumption of water and energy, and this reuse project is a credit to our utilities engineers who came up with the idea and then made it happen," he said.

"This system is expected to cut water usage by at least 50 per cent each year, which will also cut the sewer treatment plant's water bill by \$15,000."

Singleton

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2019 / 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

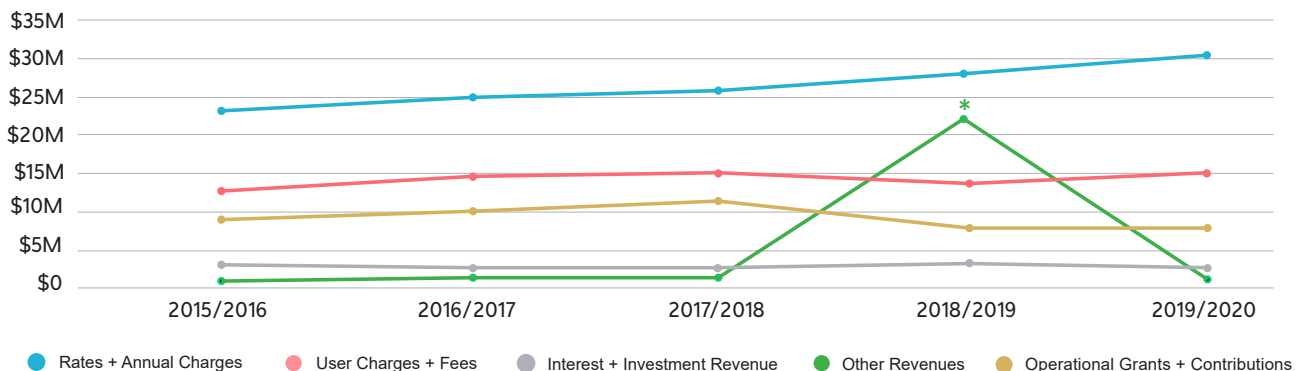
- Continued downward pressure on operating expenses since 2016
- Rates and charges consistently among the lowest of Hunter councils
- 3 consecutive budget surpluses
- Greater focus on maximising opportunities for Interest and Investment revenue
- Increase in asset rehabilitation expenditure
- Increase in funds invested

FINANCIAL RESULTS (BEFORE CAPITAL GRANTS + CONTRIBUTIONS)



INCOME FROM CONTINUING OPERATIONS

* Proceeds from the sale of Wallaby Scrub Road



TOTAL EXPENDITURE

* Includes relocation of Broke Road provided by Bulga Operations

