

WINTER 2019

Singleton Edit



SINGLETON
COUNCIL



From the Mayor

It's been an interesting few months in politics as we all went to the polls for the NSW State election, followed directly by the Federal election. But apart from exercising our democratic rights, the elections reinforced Singleton's advocacy agenda to highlight the issues most important to the people of our area and the need for State and Federal support to make Singleton the best it can be.

The Singleton bypass of the New England Highway of course featured heavily in conversations with State and Federal candidates, and we were pleased to see Labor commit to national funding. But regardless of who sits in government, this is a project that transcends political boundaries. We know our community is tired of heavy traffic crawling through the centre of our town at peak times during the day, and there are significant issues that come from highway traffic having to slow to 50kph in built-up areas where school children cross the road and wait for buses. So we're calling for our State and Federal politicians to work together to deliver this vital project not for voters, but for the people of the Singleton local government area and beyond who are caught in congestion on a daily basis.

Equally significant are conversations with the State Government about the need for a review of the Resources for Regions program, which became a case in point with the disappointing news Singleton would miss out – yet again – in the latest funding rounds despite being the biggest contributor of mining royalties in NSW.

Singleton Council's application for an \$8.5 million Roads Upgrade program targeting the four major transport routes servicing our area's 17 coal mines asked for just half of the funding to deliver the project. Yet no proportion of the \$340 million in royalties derived from our area each year will be returned to benefit the people literally at the coalface.

The only silver lining was that Deputy Premier John Barilaro made the trip to Singleton to deliver the disappointing news personally, along with a commitment to overhaul the Resources for Regions program. It is our view the program should be funded from mining royalties, with a fixed amount made available to areas based on the level of mining impact and without the need for a benefit cost ratio, which Mr Barilaro indicated would be key components of an immediate review.

Mr Barilaro is on notice that we're holding him to his word, along with his promise to also find an alternative funding source to deliver our Roads Upgrade program to make the trip to work efficient and safe for everyone. What's more, we'll be looking to see outcomes on both matters sooner rather than later.

Sue Moore | Mayor

From the GM

With a forecast surplus and focus on asset management heading into 2019/2020, the future doesn't only look bright for our community, but most importantly sustainable.

Sustainability has a number of definitions, and we're working hard to cover off on all of them under Council's 2019/2020 Operational Plan. That means a growing awareness of our organisation's environmental impact, as well as following through on our commitment to deliver the services our community deserves in the best possible and affordable way.

The 2019/2020 Operational Plan that comes into effect on 1 July 2019 provides for a total expenditure budget of \$95.8 million, which includes \$55.3 million for operational expenses, as well as 153 actions covering a \$37.6 million capital works program through to revolutionising the customer experience, allowing people to do business with us when it suits them through our new online services.

And all with a projected \$791,000 operating surplus (before capital grants and contributions).

But it certainly wasn't easy to achieve. The 2019/2020 Operational Plan and budget presented a significant challenge to maintain Council's service levels within fiscal constraints, and the result shows the extent of our commitment to making sure our spending did not exceed our income all while continuing to tick off the State Government's Fit for the Future indicators and our own measures outlined in the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program.

Best of all, our Long Term Financial Plan shows our approach to financial management is sustainable into the future, without the need for further special rate variations.

With the 2019/2020 Operational Plan and capital works program about to commence, I'm looking forward to what the coming financial year holds for our community, including the biggest investment in water and sewer infrastructure in more than a decade, the \$7 million continuation of the Singleton Town Centre upgrade and more than \$10 million committed to local roads.

Asset renewal also accounts for \$29.4 million – or 79 per cent – of our capital works budget, and that means we're making sure the standard of our community assets is maintained to the highest possible level that we can afford.

What's more, we're excited to talk to you – the people in our community – about what's going on in our organisation and our area. We've recently launched a new website designed to make it easier for you to find the information you need as well as do business with us. And we're getting out and about to talk to you personally. Council's senior staff are meeting with community groups across our local government area so we can talk to as many people as possible about our plans for the coming year – and to hear your honest feedback about how we're doing. I look forward to catching up with many of you soon.

Jason Linnane | General Manager



From local historians to motorcycle racers, the Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame is celebrating 10 years since it was introduced to showcase Singleton's highest achievers

It's been 10 years since the first engraved paver was laid on the Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame, and plenty of footprints have followed in celebration of Singleton's contribution to the national and international stage with a total of 46 inductees.

But in keeping with the pursuit of excellence, the Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame committee is looking to mark the special occasion with a new batch of inductees and a new approach to nominations – including the possibility of videos – as well as a glammed-up presentation event.

Committee chairman, Cr Godfrey Adamthwaite said a review was part of preparations for the 2019 event, with a refresh to encourage more people to get involved when nominations opened on 29 July 2019.

"The Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame was introduced with a vision to hold up people or organisations with a close association with Singleton, from all spheres of the community, who have achieved significant recognition at a State, national or international level in their field of endeavour," he said.

"And it has certainly delivered on that premise, with an illustrious list of inductees covering businesspeople, sportspeople and community service.

"To be inducted into the Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame is a great honour and great recognition for those individuals and organisations. But best of all, it's a wonderful source of pride for our community and inspiration for future generations that people from our area are making an important contribution on the national and international stage in a range of fields.

Committee chairman Cr Godfrey Adamthwaite (right) with 2018 Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame inductee Warren Taggart.

"I encourage anyone who knows someone who has excelled to the highest level in their field of expertise or who has provided outstanding service to our community to put them forward."

Nominations may be made in the categories of Arts, Science and Education; Community Service; Sport; Public Service; Business, Industry & Tourism; and Meritorious Family.

Cr Adamthwaite said the success of the Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame was also due to the partnership between Council and Peabody Energy Australia.

"I thank Peabody Energy Australia for their ongoing support for the Hall of Fame over the past 10 years, and their enthusiasm and dedication to making this year even more memorable," he said.

Wambo General Manager, Albert Scheepers echoed Council calls to get behind the 2019 awards.

"We're calling on residents to 'dob in' Singleton's shy, high achievers so we can honour them with a permanent paver," he said.

The Wambo Coal Singleton Hall of Fame is located on the footpath between Singleton Library and Council's Administration Building.



Raise the roof

It began as two slab built lock up cells before transforming into a courthouse, the headquarters for the Municipal Council and eventually home to the Singleton Historical Society & Museum. Now the museum in Burdekin Park is in store for a restoration – including a new roof – to take it into the future

From holding criminals to being the seat of local decision-making, the Singleton museum building in Burdekin Park has weathered plenty of history since it was built in 1874.

But a leaking roof has finally taken a toll, with a replacement slated as part of Singleton Council's \$37.6 million capital works program for 2019/2020.

The restoration project, including a pitched roof, new accessible entrance, pergola, seating and a new external display area is in the design phase, with a tender to be called for a builder later this year and the works complete by March 2020.

Singleton Historical Society and Museum president Peggy Moore said the biggest job would be temporarily rehousing artefacts to make way for the new roof. Suggestions have included a shipping container to protect the collection while the works are undertaken.

Nonetheless, she said the Historical Society's 160 members and the museum's 16 volunteers were looking forward to seeing the project go ahead – and the end to a leaking roof that put items housed at the museum at risk of damage.

"It means a lot because we have lost quite a few items because of the roof, particularly a lot of paperwork that had to be thrown out."

Damian Morris, Council's Interim Manager Infrastructure Services said the project was meaningful not just because of the history of the building itself, but because it preserved the history of the local community.

Items in the museum's collection include Singleton's first telephones, the pack saddle that transported bushranger Joe Governor's body after his death, and the ball cash rail system used in Geary's Store from 1913 until the 1970s.

The museum hosts school visits as well as tours for visiting community groups. It is open to the public on Tuesdays from 10am to 1pm, and on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from 12pm to 4pm.

"This is an important project to ensure the protection and security of Singleton's historical artefacts and culture for generations to come," Mr Morris said.

"We are fortunate in Singleton to have an immense collection of items covering everything from rural and farming equipment through to textiles and wedding gowns, and that we have people dedicated to making sure they are preserved into the future.

"However, the building housing the Singleton Historical Museum was built in 1874, and the rear western side is damaged and has become a significant risk to historical artefacts and collections housed in the museum.

"This is a restoration project to ensure the preservation and safety of these collections, as well as to assist the work of the Singleton Historical Society & Museum and enhance the visitor experience."

The Singleton museum building is included in the \$29.4 million Council will spend on asset renewal in 2019/2020, accounting for 79 per cent of total capital expenditure.

Mr Morris said it was a demonstration of Council's commitment to asset maintenance and renewal to ensure community facilities were above standard.

"We're doing a lot of work to assess the condition of Council's assets, as well as to identify critical assets to best prioritise our works schedule," he said.

"Other projects on our capital works program for the current financial year include the replacement of Brookers Bridge and improvements to Howe Park including irrigation and a white picket fence around Singleton's premier cricket oval."

ON THE COVER: Council's Project Engineer Sam Walker and Singleton Historical Society & Museum members Peggy Moore, Ann Quinn, June Nowlan, Mavis Marzol and Michael Akrill.

THIS PAGE: Singleton Historical Society & Museum president Peggy Moore, Council's Project Engineer Sam Walker and Singleton Historical Society & Museum member Michael Akrill.

FINANCE PROVES TO BE FIGHTING FIT

Continued downward pressure and capped budgets since 2016 have seen a plateau in Singleton Council's operating expenses that will continue into 2019/2020.

But Anthony Egan, Council's Director Corporate and Community Services, said net savings had come from sustained operational improvements and difficult but necessary decisions by Councillors and staff, rather than slashing service levels and quality standards.

In fact, Council's focus for the next 12 months is on asset renewal with \$29.4 million or 79 per cent of the capital works budget dedicated to maintaining or renewing community infrastructure, all while forecasting a budget surplus.

"It's obvious that a surplus budget means we are sustainable and financially viable, but what that means for our community is we are operating within our means," Mr Egan said.

"It is also a significant performance indicator for the State Government against Fit for the Future measures applied to local government.

"But more importantly, any surplus that is generated is reinvested in our assets, as well as providing opportunities for improved service levels."

Singleton Council is now rated as "fit" across five Fit for the Future categories that the State Government uses to assess the financial performance of all NSW councils.

Singleton is also tracking towards meeting the building and asset renewal ratio and asset maintenance ratio, which

show asset renewals measured against depreciation and required asset maintenance.

"This is the fourth year of the Special Rate Variation that Council identified was required to be able to invest more in our community assets," Mr Egan said.

"We are at the point that we have achieved five of the Fit for the Future measures and we're well and truly on the way to the remaining two because of the foresight that was shown, and the difficult decision that was made by the previous Council and sustained focus on efficiencies by our staff.

"What's more, our Long-Term Financial Plan at this stage shows continued stability and sustainability for Council's operations, without the need for any further Special Rate Variations."

Mr Egan said Council's \$95.8 million total expenditure budget for the coming financial year includes 31.72% from rate revenue and the remainder from other sources such as grants and contributions, developer contributions, fees and charges and cash reserves.

"We are very proud that a survey of average rates for 2018/2019 shows the average general Singleton rate is \$1,028.70, compared to the group average for Hunter councils of \$1,320.92. Singleton is also among the lowest charges for residential domestic waste, residential water service and residential sewer charge in the region," he said.

"It means we all benefit from Council's focus on financial management, without having to compromise on existing levels and standards of service."



Council's Environmental Health Officer Lucy Packham with Emily May and Lauren Howard-Hickey from The Mochaccino Bar.

STARS ALIGN FOR BEST RESTAURANTS

Restaurants may well be judged on how many hats they have or the number rave reviews, but Singleton Council is encouraging diners to look for the number of stars under the Scores on Doors program.

The program, run across NSW, is based on regular food premises inspections, aiming to improve food safety standards as well as reduce the instance of foodborne illness in the retail food industry.

Scores on Doors also creates greater consistency in food hygiene inspections by using standardised inspection checklists, providing greater visibility and transparency of compliance by food businesses.

Lucy Packham, Council's Environmental Health Officer said diners should look for the purple and green certificates and stickers on display in their favourite eatery so they know what's happening in the kitchen.

"Singleton Council has been involved in the Scores on Doors program since 2014 as a great way for businesses to show customers just how seriously they take food hygiene and the results they have achieved by displaying a rating certificate and sticker on their door," she said.

"The certificates and stickers reflect the result of a regular hygiene and food safety inspection to give customers

an idea of what's going on out the back at your favourite restaurant, café or takeaway.

"Singleton is very fortunate to have a high level of compliance among our food businesses, and a great variety of fantastic places to go out to dinner or to stop in for a quick bite or pick up something to take home.

"Whatever you feel like, if you see a restaurant displaying the purple and green poster and sticker, you can dine there safe in the knowledge it has met minimum hygiene and food safety standards during the last food inspection. And if it's not displaying one, perhaps take note and ask why."

The rating system of Excellent (5 stars), Very Good (4 stars) and Good (3 stars), all represent levels of compliance with the Food Standards Code. The rating includes such things as food temperature control, food prepared in advance of service, food handler hygiene, cleaning and sanitisation, and pest control.

Ms Packham said while food inspections were mandatory and carried out on a regular basis, eateries could choose whether to participate in Scores on Doors.

"I would encourage all food businesses to be involved as an extra reason for people to choose their restaurant, along with great food and service," she said.

LIVE

EXPERIENCE

GROW

COUNCIL

WEB REVOLUTION

Singleton Council is now offering 24-hour access for residents and businesses to pay your rates, water and accounts; apply for online certificates; and lodge requests via its new-look website.

You can also keep up with the latest in news, events, capital works and Council meeting agendas and minutes with all the information you need to live, enjoy and grow in Singleton at the click of a button.

SIMPLY FOLLOW THE STEPS TO CREATE YOUR WEBSITE LOG-IN:

- Head to www.singleton.nsw.gov.au and click sign in (top right)
- Click register
- Enter your details and create a password (password must include letters, numbers and symbols)
- Click submit
- You will receive an email to your nominated address from eservices@singleton.nsw.gov.au; click the link to activate your account

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KNOW YOUR

Water

RESTRICTIONS



Continued dry weather and drought conditions are having an impact on dam levels and unless significant rainfall is received, our capacity to supply water from Glennies Creek Dam may be jeopardised.

Small changes and increased awareness of how and where you use your water will help if **level 1** restrictions come into effect.

For the latest on the water situation, restrictions and dam levels affecting Singleton and surrounding regions, visit www.singleton.nsw.gov.au

HOW YOU CAN SAVE WATER



GARDEN AND LAWN

ANYTIME - Hand-held hose with trigger nozzle attached, watering can or bucket only.



USE OF SPRINKLERS AND IRRIGATION (INCLUDING NEW TURF)

4PM - 10AM - Fixed to a timer and not left unattended.



WASHING OF VEHICLES AND BOATS

ANYTIME - Hand-held hose with trigger nozzle or a bucket.



WASHING DOWN OF HARD SURFACES (PATHS AND DRIVEWAYS)

BANNED - Use a broom or blower instead.



USING WATER TO COOL DOWN PEOPLE OR ANIMALS

ANYTIME



TOPPING UP SWIMMING POOLS

ANYTIME - Fixed to a timer and not left unattended.



ACCIDENTS, HEALTH HAZARDS, DEFEND AGAINST FIRE

ANYTIME - No restrictions in the event of threat to people, wildlife or property.



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CONNECT WITH US

