Shire of Mt Marshall

THE SANDALWOOD SHIRE

30 July 2018

DIARY DATES

7 August 2018
Recycling Collection

21 August 2018
Ordinary Meeting of Council @ 3:00pm in Council Chambers, 80 Monger St, Bencubbin

COUNCILLORS

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BENCUBBIN ACCOMMODATION BOOKINGS NOW ONLINE

The Shire is currently trialling online accommodation bookings for all Shire owned accommodation in Bencubbin. There is links provided to the booking facility on our website's home page and should the trial period be successful Beacon accommodation will be added in the future.

RV FRIENDLY TOWNS

Bencubbin & Beacon have both received RV Friendly Town Accreditation from the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia Limited. This initiative is aimed at assisting recreational vehicle consumers as they journey throughout Australia.

An RV Friendly Town™ is one that has met a set of guidelines to ensure they provide a certain amount of amenities, and a certain level of services for these travellers. When RV tourists enter a town displaying the RV Friendly Town™ sign, they know they will be welcome, that certain services will be provided for them that may not be available in other centres, and they will have access to a safe place to stay overnight, and possibly for a longer period.

RV Friendly Signs will be erected at main entrance points of both towns in the coming weeks.

RV FRIENDLY TOWN

CONTACT US

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PRESIDENT TONY SACHSE TALKS VOLUNTEERING

At a recent Lions Club event, Shire President Tony Sachse spoke about volunteerism. The speech was based upon responses he had provided to a university project on the subject. As the topic is one of interest to the wider community, details from the speech and project are provided below:

Mt Marshall is one of two Australian Local Governments with a volunteering rate of over 50% (the other being Kimba, South Australia). The population of the Shire has been in decline but there was a slight improvement at the last census with the current population now at 530. The 2016 census indicated 51.3% for persons volunteering for organisations or groups. So the volunteer % has been very high and stable over time.

We are extremely proud of our volunteerism and people typically volunteer for several organisations and groups. It really keeps our communities going with the high effort being rewarded by proud, active and vibrancy even under adversity. However the high workload of volunteers has been identified in Council planning as being of concern. So Council needs to identify ways in which this workload can be managed.

There are a whole range of organisations needing support from volunteers. In emergency we have St John's Ambulance, multiple Fire Brigades, Silver Chain Health Services (at Committee Level), and State Emergency Services. Both Primary Schools have parents and citizens organisations. The Mt Marshall Agricultural Society which runs the annual show requires significant volunteerism. This has been going for a considerable time and is a feature event for our Shire. There are Community Resource Centres that have volunteer support on top of Government funding.

There are also Progress Associations, Service Clubs (eg Lions Club), Community Recreation Councils, Religious Organisations/Churches, Returned Services Leagues and the like. Some large capital projects can include very significant contributions which would not be possible without such a commitment by the community. A local Men's Shed is involved in the restoration of old farm machinery which is also a tourist attraction. Then there are all the sporting organisations such as AFL football, netball, hockey, lawn bowls, golf, cricket, tennis, gun and rifle clubs and a go kart racing club. There is also an annual off road car rally event that requires considerable volunteer time and is also supported by the Shire. Commercial operations include Sporting Clubs and a Community run shop. Other clubs include a Theatre Arts Club, book clubs, gardening and herbarium clubs etc. There are two local newspapers (one in each town) entirely run by volunteers. There are also agronomy and land care groups which are run/organised by volunteers. This list is not complete but it gives an idea of the diversity of volunteerism within the Shire.

The Shire runs an Economic Development Fund which is an avenue for community groups for worthy community projects on a $ for $ basis. There is also a small clubs grants program run each year. Council also lobby State and Federal Governments for assistance to groups wherever possible. Capital upgrades for buildings and equipment also form part of the annual budget. This is integrated with Strategic Plans, Corporate Business Plans and Long Term Financial Plans.

An example of assisting volunteers would be an improvement to a current airstrip within our Shire to allow Royal Flying Doctor Service night flights. As well as being able to have more timely responses to medical emergencies, this upgrade will reduce the workload of long Ambulance trips for St John's Ambulance staff (they are all trained local volunteer officers operating these Ambulances).

The sense of volunteerism is also passed on from generation to generation. People are proud to be part of things and children are encouraged to also help where possible. Also older and retired people are highly valued for their volunteer efforts. Council has identified the benefit of older people remaining in the community. The Shire provides aged accommodation in our towns to encourage people to stay and live in the community. This can also help with volunteer numbers. The Shire also has an annual Citizen of the Year Award which recognises outstanding members of our communities over the years.

The community place a very high importance on volunteering. Meetings plan busy bees and functions in an attempt to maximise attendance. So a high attendance makes everyone feel that the effort has been worthwhile with good overall contributions.

The sense of pride and achievement comes through here. The flow on effects is that services and organisations continue on, even if they are challenged at times.

Unfortunately Government support can sometimes be lowered or cut. Poor rainfall years put financial strain of agricultural business' which is the main business in the Shire. So it's important that volunteers can continue on with their commitment, even under difficult personal circumstances. The high percentage of volunteerism with 'everyone doing their bit' certainly helps with this.

I believe that our levels of volunteerism will continue to remain high. Smaller regional Shires and communities typically have a percentage of over 40% whereas some metropolitan Local Governments may just have single digit figures. The mentality of leaving it to someone else (eg Government) to fix up rather than doing it and fixing the problem is an unfortunate pathway. It can be a downward spiral.

Collecting strewn rubbish after an event in the city can often fall upon the local government. In our Shire the local group would largely see that any clean-up was done by the group responsible. There is more ownership with our smaller local communities. The almost total lack of graffiti is another example of this.

A lot of people feel they are just so busy with their individual lives, that volunteer time should be cut or even omitted. However the experience in our community is that it is often the busiest people that contribute the most to their community with their volunteer time and expertise. The reward of feeling good about their commitment helps towards this. Once people are used to volunteering, they enjoy the experience and return to do more. But it's also easy to say "I'm simply too busy".

We are a relatively large Shire in area with a mix of farming onto the boundary of pastoral land, unallocated crown land and nature reserves. Being proud, having a commitment from almost everyone who can contribute in their own way, no matter how small. This theme is very valuable in keeping everything going. As mentioned, Council needs to be aware of the high work load and that people can get burnt out. Having good support and planning is vital.

The Shire's support and encouragement has also undoubtedly helped over the years. Our residents are so proud of their individual towns, organisations, and clubs. They are also proud of their own individual effort as well. It is really the most important part in making us special.