



MEDIA RELEASE

Rural Living Campaign Message Cuts Through

Mayoral Press Release

It has been a fruitful few weeks in Buloke. Back on August 19 Councillors and staff enjoyed a great trip around Donald. Donald 2000 provided a bus and commentary about priorities and matters of concern to local residents. Councillors and staff had also been invited to a tour of Charlton by the Charlton Forum but it rained on our parade. The rain fall was most welcome so instead we inspected the museum before sitting down with the Charlton representatives to discuss priorities and issues pertinent to them. Again these tours have proved invaluable.

Council has provided feedback to Public Transport Victoria on the development of a regional transport plan. As a council we underlined the need for both Community Transport and more sensibly programmed bus services.

A Mallee Family Care worker is now auspiced at Buloke Shire Council's Birchip office. Wendy Hersey is well known in the area as a former Councillor and is providing services to vulnerable children and families across much of the Shire.

Mayor, Cr Reid Mather and CEO John Hicks attended the Rural Mayors and CEOs Forum in Melbourne. The event was attended by Mayors and CEOs from across the State. Topics included the proposed Rate Capping Framework for Local Government and the Municipal Association of Victoria progress against the Victorian Auditor General Recommendations.

The Mayor and CEO met with Dr Ron Ben-David of the Essential Services Commission to brief the Commission on the sustainability problems faced by small rural shires and had an excellent reception. The **RURAL LIVING** campaign message seems to be cutting through. On this front a meeting with Rural Councils Victoria Executive took place in Melbourne on September 18. Discussions centred on how the rural councils can support the **RURAL LIVING** campaign. Following these meetings a letter was sent to the Mayors of all Rural Municipalities requesting further support for the **RURAL LIVING** campaign with our brochure attached. The letter outlined our current position with the campaign and reinforced its core messages. The campaign received 84% support at Municipal Association of Victoria State Council and we are continuing to recruit support to ensure access to a basic suite of services for rural people so our communities do not become more and more unliveable.

The Mayor was again in the company of Dr Ron Ben-David from the Essential Services Commission on Thursday August 20 when he attended the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) Rate

Forum. This was the second such forum following on from the initial forum VLGA conducted back in April.

We took a deputation to meet with Minister for Local Government; the Hon Natalie Hutchins, on September 9 to push our case for the **RURAL LIVING** campaign. The Mayor and CEO John Hicks headed up a deputation that included; Mount Alexander Shire Council Mayor Cr Christine Henderson, Swan Hill Rural City CEO Mr Dean Miller and Gippsland Shire Council CEO Tim Tamlin. We had a positive meeting and the Minister is considering our request to establish a working group to consider a solution to the issues the Rural Living Campaign has raised.

Finally, from our Buloke Shire Council Meeting held on September 9 Council recommended funding applications for the Wycheproof Swimming Pool, Donald Archives Museum and the Donald Caravan Park.

Council had previously applied for federal government funding in 2013 for the Wycheproof Swimming Pool project, but a change in government saw this offer of funding withdrawn. Council will now apply for \$200,000 of funding under Sport and Recreation Victoria's Community Sports and Infrastructure Fund for the redevelopment of the Wycheproof Swimming Pool change facilities, plant room and kiosk. This project is a key priority project in Council's forward capital works plan and has strong support from the Wycheproof community. Council would match the funding with a \$250,000 contribution over two years.

Council will also submit an Expression of Interest to Regional Development Victoria's Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund for upgrades to the Donald Caravan Park and Donald Archives Museum. Both these projects are of high priority. Donald Caravan Park staff highlighted a number of opportunities for Council to improve the tourist facility. The upgrade would include a new barbeque area, camp kitchen, upgrade of the toilet facilities, installation of compliant caravan power outlets and new entry gates with signage. The roof at the Donald Archives Museum requires replacement and this upgrade would also include construction of an additional space at the rear of the building for storage of historical archives. Since initial funding for this project was deferred the Donald Historical Society and Natural History Group has lost a significant amount of storage for their historical records and artefacts.

End release

For further information contact Travis Fitzgibbon on 1300 520 520