



MEDIA RELEASE

Community Consultation a Winner

All roads led to Wycheproof Tuesday night when Buloke Shire Council held a Community Forum Summit as it begins preparations for the upcoming Annual Budget. Community members from Coonooer Bridge to Nandaly took the chance to speak with Councillors and Council Officers face to face over a pleasant thirty minute meet and greet whilst enjoying light refreshments.

Mayor, Cr Reid Mather, opened more formal proceedings soon after to outline the evening. “Tonight will be a conversation about Council’s financial position and what the community thinks the Shire’s priorities should be. We want to talk to you before the budget so we can set it in light of your priorities, rather than bring you a draft budget later in the year as we have done previously”, the Mayor said.

The evening was designed to lead the audience through the finances and the state of Council’s roads and other assets before workshopping four key areas. The outcomes of these workshops are to be used to inform Council as it sets its budget for 2016/17.

Manager Finance Mr Bill Hutcheson then led the audience through a presentation on financial sustainability. He provided an in-depth yet accessible presentation setting out Council’s financial position with the need for continued restraint and planned investment in asset renewal, especially roads.

Director of Works and Technical Services Mr Anthony Judd followed by opening his presentation in a light hearted manner before taking the summit members through an explanation of capital works requirements into the future. It was a sobering tale of large numbers with Buloke currently facing a \$14.5m asset renewal backlog that will only increase with time.

Mr Judd then demonstrated the actual cost of an asset to council using the recently opened Charlton Skate Park as an example. The \$164,000 project was mainly funded by the community and government but Council will still need to spend \$390,000 over the thirty year life of the asset to maintain, clean and replace the asset.

Chief Executive Officer Mr John Hicks then invited attendees to move into the next phase of the evening, breaking up into four workshops on Communications, Assets, Community Services and Business. This gave residents the opportunity to engage with Council officers on what they see as the key issues relating to these areas and to workshop ideas. These were vibrant discussions with some innovative and creative suggestions.

The evening rounded off with the Mayor outlining progress on the **RURAL LIVING** Campaign and updating the audience on its latest developments. The last session for the night saw Robyn Ferrier and John Richmond from Birchip outline the “Birchip Cares” community transport project; sharing

their story and how they arrived at their business plan. An uplifting tale of how the community rallied to provide community transport when council could no longer continue to fund the service.

A broad range of ages, backgrounds and community roles were represented at the Summit with strong feedback that the event was productive and that people would come again to the next Summit.



End release

For further information contact Travis Fitzgibbon on 1300 520 520