



EXPERIENCE REGIONAL WA

We'll see you in Mingenew!

COUNCIL UPDATE 3 MAY 2019

As the weather cools down and the seeders kick into action we are looking to finish our current financial year projects and plan for FY19/20.

Message from the Shire President

The past month has seen the Shire engaging with both our State and Federal counterparts, as we hosted the Hon. Melissa Price MP, Minister for the Environment and Federal Member for Durack at our Anzac Day ceremony and the Hon. Darren West MLC who joined us to represent the Minister for Sport and Recreation to open our new Netball Courts.

These visits are a great opportunity for us to remind our State and Federal representatives of both the needs of our Shire, as well as the incredibly significant contribution that our region makes to the wider State and National economy. Whilst roads, particularly the funding of roads, are always topics for discussion, our conversation with Minister Price also included telecommunications – and the desire to see improved mobile telephone coverage for our Shire. We also sought support for improvements to digital connectivity, for both our farming community and our small (but growing) space industry.

We spoke with MLC West about a range of issues, including housing. Housing was raised as one of our key community issues through our Strategic Community Planning process, and we believe it will feature in the State Government's upcoming policy framework. Naturally, we will be seeking to participate in this process as best we can to try to ensure some positive outcomes for Mingenew.

Beyond our visitors, I would also like to recognise and thank the organisers and participants of both of these events for their efforts. I felt that this year's Anzac Day ceremony was a great tribute to those who have fought and sacrificed for this country. Likewise, it was heartening to stand on our fantastic new netball courts – they have certainly come a long way since I last played on them.

I also note that we have two nominees for our upcoming special election, and I want to thank them for their nominations. The role of Councillor can be both challenging and rewarding, and I want to commend anyone who puts their hand up to serve their community in this way.

- Cr Helen Newton, Shire President.

Extraordinary Election

We are holding an extraordinary election on Friday 7 June to fill a vacant seat in the Town Ward. Nominations have recently closed, and we have two candidates: Carol Farr and Anthony Smyth. We wish them both the best of luck. More information on the election process can be found at: <https://mingenew.wa.gov.au/elections/>.

In addition to this extraordinary election, there will be a regular biennial Local Government election on 19 October this year with two seats each in the Town and Rural wards coming up. Expect to see and hear more about this closer to the date.

Strategic Planning

Our Strategic Community Plan 2019-2029 was adopted by Council at a Special Meeting on May 1. The document is available for viewing at: <https://mingenew.wa.gov.au/strategic-plan/>.

The next step is for Council staff to operationalise the plan by distilling it into a four-year Corporate Business Plan, which will seek to capture and deliver upon some of the Strategic Community Plan's ten-year goals.

Roads

While many are hoping for a soaking of rain, the dry weather is allowing us to press forward with our roadworks program unimpeded. We have two key funded projects we must complete by 30 June: a further 3km of widening and sealing on Mingenew-Mullewa Road and 1.5km of the same on Yandanooka North East Road.

We are also looking at our budget and program for next financial year, which will include further widening and reseal work on Coalseam Road as well as a range of smaller town and rural road maintenance projects. This process is being supported by the development of a Shire-wide Road Hierarchy (a document adopted by Council at our April Meeting) which will help to inform an (under development) 5-year road maintenance and construction plan.

Council Meeting Review

Our April Council Meeting took place on 17 April. This month saw the adoption of the Shire's updated Asset Management Plan, part of our wider integrated planning framework, which helps us to better understand and guide future maintenance and investment in our infrastructure and assets. As noted above, council also formally adopted their Road Hierarchy, one of the key recommendations that came from the Asset Management Plan, and a first step to a better formalized 5-year road maintenance and construction program.

The meeting was quite planning-heavy, with decisions relating to a local planning application, the Geraldton Alternative Settlement Arrangement native title process and the adoption of the Shire new Local Planning Scheme (No.4). The new Scheme updates our local planning framework and bring it into line with current legislation and good practice guidelines. You can view a copy of the Scheme, and find more information about planning and development generally on the Shire website at: <https://mingenew.wa.gov.au/planning-and-development/>.

As always, minutes can be found on the Shire website: <https://mingenew.wa.gov.au/minutes/>.

Publicity

Mingenew is receiving some publicity at the moment; we recently had a visit from the West Australia newspaper, as part of their 'Back to the Land' travel lift-out (see their Saturday 4 May issue). On 8 May you may also encounter a film crew from the Our Town television show in the area, showcasing our attractions, lifestyle and people as part of an episode focused on our region which will air in the coming months.

Netball Courts

At the first round of the 2019 Winter Sports calendar on 27 April we were delighted to formally open our new netball courts. The project would not have been possible without significant contributions from the Department of Sport and Recreation and the Mingenew Netball Club (and additional support from Smyth Agri Services, Bayer, Geraldton Community Bank Branch of Bendigo Bank and the Mingenew Football Club).



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Audit and Risk Committee

While it may not be one of the most exciting aspects of Local Government, governance and compliance forms large part of what we do. In fact, when the question “What do all those people in the office actually do?” is asked, a significant part of the answer lies in maintaining and delivering upon our legislative compliance requirements. Whilst the Local Government Act 1995 and (11) associated Regulations govern much of our activity, we administer somewhere in the order of 50 pieces of legislation; from Occupational Health and Safety, to Bush Fires to Animal Welfare, Roads, Recordkeeping, Waste and the list goes on. Whilst the administration and reporting that goes on is often unseen in the wider community, it still generates a significant workload for our team and – as a public organisation – we leave ourselves open to significant financial and reputational risk if we don't take these aspects of our operations seriously.

The scrutiny that Local Government comes under from the State and associated regulators has been increasing year on year and from 1 July 2019 the WA Office of the Auditor General, who are taking responsibility for Local Government audit in the state, will assume control of the Shire of Mingenew's external audit function. While this ostensibly means that we will be subject to a broader, more rigorous audit, it also means that we have an increased requirement to be able to demonstrate that our governance structures are sound and that we are meeting our legislative obligations.

1 May 2019 marked the first meeting of our Audit and Risk Committee under a new terms of reference, with an independent member. The meeting saw a review of the Shire's updated Risk Management Framework, as well as the endorsement of a 3-year internal Audit Plan. The adoption and implementation this plan will assist the Shire to improve key governance items, while also investigating opportunities for improved operational efficiency and service delivery. Whilst these activities rarely attract much community interest, internally we are very proud of the improvements that we have made in this area as they represent significant modernization for the organisation and will help to ensure that we meet auditor expectations and our many legislative requirements.

Website and Communications

Another reminder: We are also in the process of updating our contact lists for our email and text message database, so if you want to receive (or continue to receive) emails and text messages with Shire updates, please complete the 'Community Register' form at <https://mingenew.wa.gov.au/resources/>, or simply come into the Shire office for a form.

Likewise, if you haven't already, be sure to follow the Shire on Facebook for a range of regular updates. We are at <https://www.facebook.com/pg/ShireofMingenew>.



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