

PRESIDENT'S WRAP UP 2020

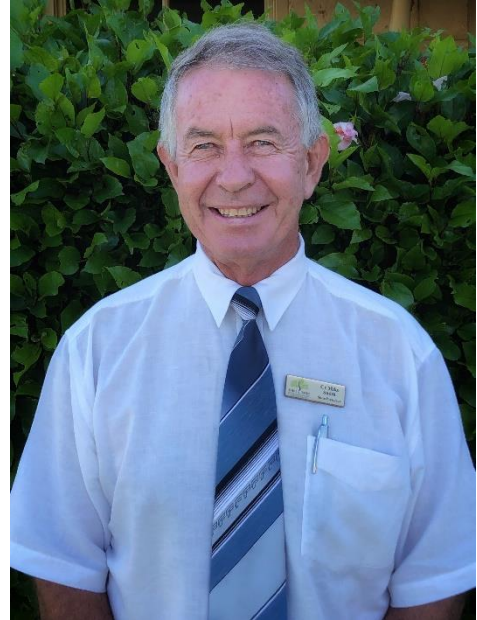
15 December 2020

To the residents of the Shire of Irwin,

Under extreme economic restraints accompanied by a dedicated team of administrative staff and works crew, I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on our achievements this year and touch on our plans for 2021.

A significant challenge the Shire faced at the beginning of 2020 was the closure of the medical centre at very short notice. Through the immense support of the community, an excellent outcome has been achieved with the successful acquisition of the Dongara Medical Centre established with one local GP and the prospect of a second GP commencing in early 2021.

I'd like to thank the community for their support during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the contribution and willingness of each community member to support government directives that has made Australia and Irwin one of the safest places in the world. This is something we should not take for granted. We still have responsibilities to protect everyone's wellbeing and a big part of this responsibility is adhering to the State Government's contact tracing, implemented as a result of the removal of the 'hard' border. Whilst enjoying certain liberties, we must be mindful that the pandemic hasn't gone away and a second wave is a very real prospect, not to mention the huge economic impact this will have on our community. I sincerely thank our local business leaders and I would also like to personally pay tribute to our state leaders for effectively communicating clear guidelines that have put WA in a very good position globally.



The construction of the Two Henry Road independent living units that commenced in September 2019 was completed with all six units tenanted by local seniors in early September 2020. The Two Henry Road units were officially opened 2 September. The Shire received funding through the Southern Inland Health Initiative, made possible by Royalties for Regions, in February 2017. The units have been designed to accommodate seniors with disabilities and dementia and have been awarded Livable Housing Australia's highest level of 'Platinum Certification' for the design. In July 2019, after a state-wide tender process, local company Nordic Builders were awarded the construction contract. 98.6% of the construction costs went to local suppliers, primarily from the Shire of Irwin, which equated to approximately \$1.63 million invested in the local economy.

The Irwin Pump Track was officially opened on 12 September by the Hon. Laurie Graham MLC in the presence of Lotterywest representative Adrian Scatena. This very significant project would not have happened without Lotterywest grant funding. Common Ground Trails were engaged in May this year and commenced construction of the 620 square metre pump track in June. The Shire of Irwin parks and gardens team completed the project with landscaping ready for the grand opening. The Irwin Pump Track is an exciting addition to the skate precinct that has been eagerly anticipated by the local community and will be a major drawcard for visitors to Dongara – Port Denison.

The Shire of Irwin held an Awards Presentation Ceremony to recognise the significant contributions of their Bushfire, Fire and Rescue and Marine Rescue Volunteers. The Shire invited 80 volunteers to attend the ceremony to acknowledge their commitment and service to emergency services. The

yearly service ranges from five to sixty years and includes National Service medals. Of significant importance is the acknowledgement of the retirement of the Shire's Chief Bush Fire Control Officer, Peter Summers. His outstanding contribution spans twenty-one years of dedicated service, leadership, support and direction. DFES Commissioner Mr Darren Klemm and the Hon. Laurie Graham MLC were also in attendance, representing the Minister for Emergency Services.

Finally, in response to the community's expectation for recycling, Council endorsed the implementation of the Container Deposit Scheme. The Shire of Irwin is one of the few local governments in the Midwest that embarked on this project and its implementation has been hugely successful with at times up to 50,000 containers being processed per week.

Now looking forward to 2021, some projects that Council will be working very hard to deliver are:

Moreton Terrace

Moreton Terrace's road surface has deteriorated and is scheduled to be resurfaced in 2021. As part of these works, Council have allocated \$1M drought funding received during the year from the Federal Government to upgrade the footpaths and lighting. This will be presented to the community early 2021 for comments and feedback. The Dongara Port Denison township is one of WA's best kept secrets. Many recent travellers to the townships are absolutely amazed at the beauty of our town and make the comment that they have driven past Dongara Port Denison many times before on the Brand Highway, but had, until now, never visited. Something on the Brand Highway needed to be done to attract visitors to the townships and Council is working on an entry statement concept design for the intersection of Moreton Terrace and Brand Highway. This concept will also be presented to the community for comment and feedback in early 2021.

Irwin River Walk Trails

During the discussion of the Moreton Terrace upgrade, Council identified a large amount of pest plants blocking the view of the Irwin River from Brand Highway. Removing the pest species would reduce fire risk, improve the visual appearance and be a very low cost to implement. Council will also investigate enhancing the existing walking trail system in a way that will celebrate the area's unique cultural and natural identity. Importantly, the design work will be done in coordination with proposed DFES fire management requirements. The design would look to promote principles that protect and enhance biodiversity and the unique landscape of the area. This would include identification of weed species for removal, selection of appropriate revegetation species, supporting healthy and safe trees, plus collaboration with local community groups in protecting, managing and restoring degraded areas.

Foreshore masterplan

Council have been busy simplifying the previous Foreshore Masterplan concept design into smaller packages that are more likely to receive funding. The development of the simplified concept design follows the earlier Port Denison Foreshore Masterplan taking into consideration the findings and outcomes from the original masterplan document together with the aspirations noted by the Shire of Irwin and the community. The masterplan highlights 5 key precincts along the foreshore being Grannies Beach, Foreshore Park, Foreshore Core, the Boat Ramp and the Obelisk. This will be presented to the community early 2021 for comments and feedback.

Having secured an extra \$250K of Local Roads and Community Infrastructure funding and in response to critical coastal erosion at Surf Beach, Council intend to engage In Situ Construction and Maintenance to construct another 150m of stabilisation work just north of Surf Beach commencing in early 2021.

The Dongara Geraldton Northampton Corridor is currently in the community consultation phase facilitated by Main Roads. Council is supportive of the regional approach for a freight corridor and should Main Roads pursue the inland route option after the consultation phase, Council is conscious that Main Roads would also need to give serious consideration to the extension of Indian Ocean Drive.

Lastly, the Shire is on track with implementation of the paid camping model for the southern coastal nodes. Congratulations to the Denison Bowling & Recreation Club on successfully securing a grant to replace two grass greens with synthetic turf. This is a significant achievement for a regional community sporting group. Australia Day 2021 plans are well underway, we have plenty of amazing people and groups in our community that would be worthy recipients of the Citizenship Awards so please get your nominations in by 4 January.

All in all, a lot achieved and a lot to look forward to, particularly by a Shire that receives greatly reduced federal grant funding when compared to Shires of a similar demographic and size.

On behalf of my fellow Councillors, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to the Shire of Irwin community. Travel safe and keep well.

Mike Smith
Shire President