

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

November/December 2021



The year is winding to an end quite quickly and as I write this, we have already had a bit of a COVID scare from the Territory. It is ironic that we have been wary of the East the whole time and got a surprise from the West. At the moment it is looking good but that could change very quickly as we have seen before. In reality with border restrictions being lifted come the 13th, we are going to have to face the fact that COVID will be in our communities at some point in time. How we prepare to deal with that is a choice we each have to make.

Whether you wait and see, get vaccinated or just stock up on toilet paper is entirely your choice. It was my choice to have the jab and if it all turns to you know what, I can only blame myself for making that choice. By the same token if there is a young child under 5 who has not had a choice, in need of a ventilator that is being used by someone who did have a choice in the first place, what happens then? Unfortunately, resources are going to be limited in these more remote areas and if we get caught out those hard and tough decisions will be made, so my thought is to not have to make them. Both levels of government are going to keep making it harder to be unvaccinated with their restrictions and bans on social interactions and flying etc. so as I said, it is all about choice, but think long and hard before making yours. Unfortunately, COVID is no longer a headline grabber unless a "squeaky wheel" throws a fit, so the mainstream media is not interested anymore. This is a shame because there are still people out there who need the correct information to enable them to make the decision on whether "to have or not to have".

Just a bit of trivia on how I decided on which vaccination to have. My research consisted of waiting to see which one of our political leaders chose (Pfizer) and then I asked my family doctor which one he was getting, (Pfizer again) so guess whatresearch done. I'm not recommending this method by any means, but I just want to point out that sometimes Dr Google and social media can unnecessarily confuse the issue one hundred-fold for the undecided.

There is quite a bit of push back starting from COVID antivaxxers and it is becoming political so whether the rules are relaxed or not, remains to be seen. The bottom line is yes, we are a free country and should have a choice but does that give us the right to endanger the health of others who are more vulnerable. It's a bit like punching a hole in the bottom of your boat. It's your boat and you can do what you like but if it is full of your family and friends, do you still have the same right to gamble?

There has been a request/suggestion put in to Council to provide a person to assist the "computer illiterate" with getting their Vaccination Certificates off MyGov. I personally have had a recent experience doing this and it really isn't an option because of the unfriendly nature of the website. It is also very specific and probing regarding specialist and GP visits which is really a privacy issue that could land the person assisting, and Council in trouble. We are talking to the State regarding this to see if it's possible to have a proof of your vaccination made available through the clinics and other such agencies who are administering it. At the moment it is a watch this space, but I am confident that something can and will be done. The issue was also raised in the Mount Isa Community Forum a

couple of weeks ago and everyone agreed that something has to be done. I guess in the meantime, look after the slip of paper they gave us when we had the job.

I guess an apology for the late Rate Notices won't cut the mustard and I can understand that. There has been a whole heap of IT issues that has been driving the staff almost insane but hopefully they are now on track to have things running smoothly in the future. If you feel as though there is a problem with your rates, please come in and get it sorted asap. The only way to fix this monster (created by very expensive IT companies) is to keep persevering and fix the problems as they arise. This can only happen with your help, so it doesn't matter how trivial you think your issue is, bring it to our attention.

It is old news now but for those who don't know, all the trenching works being carried out down our streets is what we call the Raw Water Project. This is to make raw water available to the big users in town (i.e.: schools, pubs, ovals etc.) and thus relieve the pressure on our treatment plant. This is a far better option than having to keep increasing the size of the treatment plant and associated infrastructure. Most of the work has been done but you will still have the nuisance street closures etc. for awhile yet so please be patient.

Work on the slip lane to Lilyvale has started and will be completed before Christmas so finally the Development Application will be able to be lodged and hopefully in the first quarter of the year you will see the advertisements going out for the sale of the first blocks. I'm sure the weather will hold until the roadworks is completed so Santa will have no excuse not to get cranked up in the New Year. I believe the bitumen crews will be in town to finish the 5km on the Dunbar Road where our stabiliser crew have been for awhile now. They copped a fair bit of interference from storms but persevered and now we are just waiting for the tar to go on.

All our work crews are coming in now as the year comes to an end and the storms become more frequent and severe. The year was quite a challenging one for our works program with labour shortage a major problem. From operators to labourers, it was an uphill battle to recruit and retain all year. Our major contractors suffered the same issues which meant our Works Manager was forever adjusting numbers in the camps to compensate. The shortage of grader operators probably had the biggest impact on the road works.

This resulted in water trucks being stood down as the graders dropped out and also slowed progress and productivity massively. Mick and his crew can take a bow for achieving what they managed to do this year in trying circumstances.

Hopefully next year with border restrictions being lifted, instead of closing us down with COVID it will provide more opportunity for our employers/contractors in the region to get staff on a more permanent basis.

As can be seen from the road into Karumba, the stick rake did a great job of restoring the town's look back to a little bit of how it used to be. The next problem is the regrowth which has started with a vengeance already, but at this time of the year it is hard to find the resources to do the spraying. Ultimately, Council is going to have to get some on the job training for our workforce so that the employees here over the wet can be utilised far more effectively.

The locals in Karumba are probably a bit bemused (and amused) in regard to the drain clearing that started and was abruptly stopped a short while ago. Our friends at DAF put a stop to it for a whole list of reasons that are way too long and involved to be put in a quick newsletter, so the bottom line is, we were actually doing the State's work for them at the expense of the ratepayers for safety reasons in the event of a flood/cyclone. It is State infrastructure after all, so now I guess they can do all the DA's, permissions and scope of works etc. at their expense and we will keep reminding them of the safety issues for the town. Again, a good example of a small under resourced Council being hampered/blocked by red tape and regulations that are put in place to control city Councils and developers etc. You have to ask the question of what is more important, human life or a mangrove that is regrowth on an existing drain anyway?

Apologies are also due for the lack of a pre-season clean up before the break this year. We had our crews working up to the last minute playing catch up but if the weather holds this will be revisited after New Year.

I guess to end this quick message on a positive note it has to be said that the North West has powered through this year with no health outbreaks at all, even down to the common cold and flu. This can only be put down to our improved habits of social distancing, washing hands, watching where you cough etc. so top marks to everyone for that achievement. If it wasn't for our labour shortages, which by the way is not just our problem but a State-wide one, we would have had an excellent year of works. Unfortunately, we now have the unknown of border openings over Christmas so there is a bit of apprehension in that regard. If you go away and finish up with the sniffles or fevers, don't hesitate to go and get tested because we still have a large number of vulnerable in the Gulf.

So, on behalf of your Councillors, CEO, Directors and all the Staff of Carpentaria Shire Council, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Stay Safe

Jack Bawden