

SHIRE OF MERREDIN



Heart of the Wheatbelt



ANNUAL REPORT

For the Financial Year ending 30 June 2007

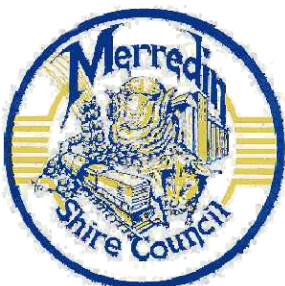
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ANNUAL REPORT

For the Financial Year ending 30 June 2007

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FB Ludovico
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



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Shire President's Report

It is with pleasure that I present my report for the 2006-2007 financial year.

The new Merredin Regional Community & Leisure Centre which commenced construction in 2005-2006 is nearing completion. Its official opening date set as 20 October 2007. The opening is planned to coincide with the Merredin Agricultural Show and many other activities will be associated with the opening.

Council is genuinely proud of what we have been able to achieve with this facility which has been almost 20 years in the making. We anticipate Recreation Centre staff moving into the Centre in July and there will be a period of settling in before programmes and activities can commence.

There has been significant community/volunteer contribution to this project which includes assisting with sand pads, fencing, community cropping and many other activities. I, on behalf of Council, wish to thank those community members for their contribution to this project.

Last year I reported that Council was undertaking a semi-rural sub division of Whitfield Way. I am pleased to advise that thirteen rural lifestyle lots were sold within 48 hours of being made available for sale in November 2006. Unfortunately issues with the underground power contract meant that landholders could not commence a development on their properties until March/April 2007. These issues will also mean that the projected profit we had with this development will not occur. Our initial forecasts are that the loss will be in the vicinity of \$20,000.00.

In respect to Medical Services, Council in partnership with the WA Country Health Services has jointly employed a new doctor to work at the Merredin Medical Practice. Dr Gabriel Adeniyi commenced at the Practice in December 2006. Dr Freeman's contract was also restructured so that he is also jointly employed by the Shire of Merredin and the WA Country Health Service.

Council is working cooperatively with the WA Country Health Service to provide a 24/7 coverage at the Merredin Hospital. Rostering of doctors is becoming an issue as doctors are being called away to work at the Hospital and are increasingly unable to provide a service or generate enough income to enable the Medical Practice to make a profit. The operating loss for the Medical Centre for 2006-2007 is approximately \$119,000.00. This does not include the expenses associated with doctor housing, doctor vehicle expenses, interest for housing and medical practice, purchase of plant and equipment and furniture which amounted to approximately \$81,000.00.

Council continues to make significant investment into Council's Road Network and in 2006-2007 undertook work on:

- Armstrong Road
- Baandee South Road
- Bates Street
- Burracoppin South Road
- Chandler Road
- Duff Street
- Hines Hill Korbel Road
- Merredin Naremben Road
- Nokanning West Road
- Pitt Road

Council also continued to be associated with the Rural Towns Liquid Assets project and we are proud to be associated with the Merredin Water Initiative where a consortium of Shire of Merredin, Aline East, Department of Agriculture and Food and Avon Catchment Council work cooperatively together to pump saline water from beneath Merredin into a desalinization plant for this water to be used on the upgrade of the Great Eastern Highway. Council believes that this could be a model that could be used for other projects that can use the saline water beneath Merredin. When the final report on the Initiative is prepared Council will be able to use the facts and figures to develop other projects that can use this "liquid asset".

The normal Local Government Elections scheduled for May 2007 were altered and will now be held in October 2007.

During the year Council's Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Mr James McGovern, resigned to take up an appointment with the City of Bassendean. Council took that opportunity to review this position and has re-structured the Shire into a four division organisation. These divisions being Finance and Administration, Community Services, Development Services and Engineering Services. Council believes that this restructuring will provide clearer lines of responsibility and make the organisation more efficient and productive.

In summary I would like to thank the Shire Councillors and Staff for all their efforts during the year. There are numerous people to thank who make a contribution in Administration, Parks and Gardens, Engineering Services, Library, Medical Centre, Visitors Centre, Cummins Theatre, Swimming Pool and all other major services. Those people are as committed as your Councillors are to improving the quality of services available in Merredin. This cannot be achieved with the support and input of the community.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a prosperous 12 months and beyond.

Cr Ken Hooper
Shire President

Chief Executive Officer's Report

2006-2007 has been a very exciting and busy year for the Shire of Merredin.

The Merredin Regional Community & Leisure Centre has been a significant part of our activities during the year. The project is almost complete at 30 June 2007 with only minor fitouts needed before staff can occupy the building.

The other pleasing note with the project is that Council's original budget of \$3.7 million dollars for the structure will not be exceeded even though it was prepared some eighteen months/two years ago. This is a credit to Council's Building Project Manager, Mr John Gearing who has had take responsibility of the day to day management of the construction phase of this project.

As reported last year, the Council has installed a new financial management system in October/November 2006 and this investment provided Council the latest technology for the financial management of the organisation. The installation of any major systems such as this caused major disruptions to our work and I would like to thank all the staff who worked tirelessly to implement and bed down the system.

Unfortunately a number of programs Council proposed for the 2006-2007 year were not completed. The purchase of the land at East Barrack Street for an industrial sub division from the Public Transport Authority did not occur. The Authority appears to be unwilling or unable to deal with Council's request to purchase this land. The second major project was the building of the second unit at Mary Street. This project was postponed due to delays associated with the Merredin Regional Community & Leisure Centre. The construction of a new Fire Station at Hines Hill for the local Bush Fire Brigade was also delayed. Land tenure issues and availability of trades have also contributed to the delays with these projects.

A report was prepared for Council reviewing its Waste Management Strategy which has clearly indicated the need for recycling activities. Investigations will continue into this aspect with a view of developing a proposal in 2007-2008.

In 2006/2007 another successful initiative developed was the establishment of the Central Wheatbelt Visitors Centre. The North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisations of Council, the Wheatbelt East Regional Organisations of Council, Roe Regional Organisations of Council were approached with a view of becoming participants in the Merredin and Districts Visitors Centre. We believe that this regional cooperation will enhance visitor servicing in the eastern wheatbelt by providing a one-stop shop for visitors. In order to accommodate this new initiative, funding has been received from the Wheatbelt Development Commission and Tourism WA to expand and rebrand the Visitors Centre. This project will not be undertaken until the 2007-2008 year.

The Shire of Merredin has had continued difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff to undertake the many range of activities that Council performs. Specialised staff in all areas are becoming increasingly difficult to recruit, and remuneration packages are growing significantly to attract these staff. It does not appear that the recruitment of local government staff will become easier or less costly for the future.

The departure of Mr James McGovern, Council's Deputy Chief Executive Officer (to the Town of Bassendean) and Mr Warren Bow, Manager of Development Services (to the Town of Narrogin) within 3 months of each other left a significant gap in the senior ranks of the staff. This along with the departures and resignation of other staff within the organisation created extreme difficulties in attending to the day to day activities as well as undertaking major development projects such as Whitfield Way, Merredin Regional Community & Leisure Centre and Road Works Programmes.

Another positive initiative has been Councils' development of the Strategic Plan/Plan for the Future. This was adopted in June 2007 and is designed to provide Council with a blueprint of activities for the 2007-2012 period.

Staff within Council continues to provide excellent customer service in all aspects of our operations from Administration, Parks and Gardens, Library, Medical Centre, Cummins Theatre and Road Construction and Maintenance.

Finally I would like to thank all Councillors and Staff for their hard work and dedication to the Shire of Merredin. Without their collective commitment we would not be able to achieve the outcomes that we have, and through their continued dedication above and beyond the call of duty we will continue to realise the opportunities before us.

Frank Ludovico
Chief Executive Officer

Plan for the Future

Introduction

Associated with the Shire's Strategic Planning process, due for completion in the next financial year, the Plan for the Future will reflect major activities planned for the period from 2006 – 2015. Section 5.56 of the Local Government Act 1995 requires a local government to plan for the future of its district.

Overview of Activities Proposed to Commence or Continue:

- **Recreation Facilities** – The Merredin Regional Community and Leisure Centre Planning is currently under construction with alterations to the Merredin Recreation Ground planned for coming years, resulting in a vast improvement to recreation facilities
- **Carrington Way Sub-division** – This residential sub-division development within the Merredin townsite, likely to commence in the 2007/2008 financial year, will provide much needed residential land to the market.
- **Road Construction/Maintenance** – Road Construction/Maintenance continues to be a major activity for the Shire of Merredin with approximately one third of Council's budget being allocated to this program
- **Visitor Servicing** – an upgrade is planned for the Central Wheatbelt Visitor Centre. A new public toilet is also planned for the precinct.
- **East Barrack Street Light Industrial Land** – This light industrial land sub-division is part of a current Town Planning Scheme amendment which has had to undergo a number of environmental assessments before developing further. It is proposed to purchase this land from the Public Transport Authority once the sub-division is approved.
- **Housing** – The construction of professional staff housing remains a priority of Council. Construction of a 2 x 1 dwelling in Coronation Street was completed in the 2005-2006 financial year and another 2 X 1 dwelling is proposed for 2007/2008.

National Competition Policy

The Shire of Merredin has incorporated the principles and assessment of National Competition Policy into its practices and activities, and does not believe to have undertaken activities that have been anti-competitive in nature.

State Records Act

2006/07 Achievements

The Shire continued the consolidation of its adopted Record Keeping Plan, as required by the State Records Act 2000, with implementation of improved records keeping, particularly property-based information. This achievement assisted with customer service for building, health and town planning enquiries as records were for the first time, managed in a systematic fashion that improve identification of critical details.

Future Objectives – Compliance with SRO Principle 6

Minimum reporting requirements for local governments are detailed in Principle 6 of the Recordkeeping Plan :

1. The efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation's recordkeeping systems is evaluated not less than once every 5 years.
2. The organisation conducts a recordkeeping training program.
- 3 The efficiency and effectiveness of the recordkeeping training program is reviewed from time to time.
- 4 The organisation's induction program addresses employee roles and responsibilities in regard to their compliance with the organisation's recordkeeping plan.
- 5 The organisation includes within its annual report an appropriate section that addresses points 1-4.

Disability Services Plan

The Disability Services Amendment Act (1999) requires Council to report on its Disability Services Plan achievements within its Annual Report. The Shire of Merredin Disability Services Plan was adopted in 1995 and Revised in February 2001. Many of the outcomes and strategies identified within the plan are being implemented on an ongoing basis or have been fully implemented. Currently the Manager of Development Services is responsible for the implementation of the principles and projects within the Plan. When Council are addressing the issue of accessibility to Council's facilities and functions they are aware that by providing better access for people with disabilities they are providing better access for the whole community. Work continues to improve footpaths and accessways around the townsite as part of recognising the Disability Services Plan. Further information can be obtained by contacting Mr John Mitchell, Manager of Development Services at the Council administration centre on 08 9041 1611 or email mds@merredin.wa.gov.au.

Merredin Shire Council



Councillor Ken Hooper Shire President
Councillor Mark Crees Deputy Shire President

Councillor Neil Hooper
Councillor Janelle Jones
Councillor Wayne Wallace
Councillor Grant Astbury
Councillor David Morley

Councillor Julie Townrow
Councillor Stephen Marley
Councillor Martin Morris
Councillor John Simmonds

Council Offices:

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SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Shire Chief Executive Officer – Frank Ludovico
Manager Community Services – Skye Price
Manager Development Services – John Mitchell
Manager Finance and Administration – Emma Hooper
Manager Works – Jim Garrett

SUPERVISORS, MANAGERS & SPECIALISED STAFF:

Construction Supervisor - Troy Davey
Road / Town Maintenance Supervisor - Rodney Robertson
Mechanic - Mick Fiegert
Recreation Ground Curator - Graham Motzel
Regional Librarian - VACANT
Ranger - Brian Willcox
Visitor Centre Manager - Pam Masters
Medical Centre Manager - Josie Duffield

Cummins Theatre Manager - Jane Bandurski
Swimming Pool Manager - Terry Robartson
Building Project Manager - John Gearing
Natural Resource Management Officer
vacant
Community & Economic Development Officers - Debbie Morris and Jeff Walker
Recreation Centre Manager – Tricia Martin