

Council happenings . . .

with Mayor
Glenn Wall

Community Water Grants.

The Australian Government's \$200 million Community Water Grants aim to promote a culture of conserving water through community engagement and awareness, encouraging best practice measures and demonstrating water wise solutions.

As part of the \$2 billion Australian Government Water Fund, grants are available for projects related to water saving and efficiency, water recycling and water treatment, and improving surface and groundwater health. They are open to community-based organisations wanting to implement practical, on-the-ground projects that help solve local problems.

Eligible groups include; councils or incorporated associations; rural organisations; schools, universities and childcare facilities; Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander corporations; fundraising organisations such as Rotary or Lions; sporting and recreation clubs; religious organisations; health care organisations such as nursing homes and environmental and conservation groups.

Regular grants are capped at \$50,000, but the programme now offers larger grants of between \$100,000 and \$250,000 subject to stricter eligibility criteria. Applications close on Wednesday 4 July 2007, but applicants must register online before 22 June on www.communitywatergrants.gov.au.

Roads to Recovery Program.

The Federal Government has announced the much-awaited extension of its Roads to Recovery Program with another \$2.5 billion in funding over the next seven years. Local government will receive \$1.75 Billion under Roads to Recovery (for local roads), \$350 million under the Blackspot Program, and \$300 million from the Auslink Strategic Regional Program.

Although Dungog Council's allocation is unknown at this point in time, in the past these excellent programs have delivered many millions of much needed extra funding as witnessed by signs displayed throughout the Shire at numerous road and bridge projects.

To its great credit, the Federal Government introduced the Strategic Regional Programme in order to upgrade roads providing essential social and economic links to major centres. Our Regional Roads are classified as such by the RTA, but inadequate State funding has resulted in their current substandard condition.

In our case, the Strategic Regional Program is the only means by which we can attract the necessary funding, and in 2004 we were allocated \$6 million for upgrading regional roads between Dungog and Maitland, and Dungog and Raymond Terrace. These works will continue for another two years, and we will make further applications under this Program for the extra \$10 million we would need to complete the upgrading of these roads.

Also as part of the recent federal Budget they announced an extra \$250 million under the Strategic Regional Program to be allocated before 30th June 2007. They are reconsidering applications that missed out last time, and among these was our joint application with Singleton Council to upgrade substandard sections of Glendonbrook Road - announcements are expected shortly.

These commitments mean that by 2014, some 14 years after it commenced, about \$4 billion will have been provided throughout Australia for local roads under the Roads to Recovery and the AusLink Strategic Regional Programs.

Council extends our sincere gratitude to the Federal Government for extending the funding and to the Hon. Bob Baldwin MP, Member for Paterson, for his continuing representations on our behalf.

23 May 2007