

Council happenings . . .

with Mayor
Glenn Wall

Winter Fire Risks

Each year about 5,000 Australian homes are destroyed by fire. Most losses occur in winter due to a 30% increased risk factor associated with home heating, either through electrical appliances or burning of fossil fuels. Now is a good time to take a few simple maintenance precautions to safeguard your family and property. Checking of flues and chimneys is an obvious start.

Appliances such as heaters and electric blankets that have not been used throughout the summer should be checked to make sure they are OK. Don't forget to check electrical appliance cords and for lint build up on clothes dryer filters. Also, it's worth following those safety tips given in the operating instructions for electric blankets, which can easily be taken for granted. For instance, don't leave them switched on when leaving the house or going to bed, and don't place items on the bed with the electric blanket switched on.

Another fire hazard, especially for the very young, is the use of clothing made from synthetic fibre, which can catch fire when too close to heating appliances. These situations result in very severe burns. Check labels on clothing for a fire risk rating.

Use of only one appliance per power point greatly reduces the risk of fire. A heavy power use item like an electric heater could otherwise exceed the capacity of the household wiring to cause a fire.

In NSW, there have been 93 residential fires since Christmas Day, eight of them resulting in serious damage. The 1st May this year will earmark the second anniversary since the NSW Government introduced new regulations requiring smoke alarms in all homes including existing homes, and other shared accommodation buildings where people sleep.

If you don't have at least one smoke detector in your home you are breaking the law, however, if there is a fire, you can expect people to die in their sleep from smoke inhalation before they wake up. Although the new law does not require it, every bedroom should have a smoke detector. Smoke detectors are cheap to buy and easily fitted compared with potential losses of life and property. Of course, to save lives they need to be correctly placed and checked regularly.

Advice about the type, location and number of smoke alarms that need to be fitted can be obtained by going to www.fire.nsw.gov.au or by contacting your local NSW Fire Brigade or Rural Fire Station.

Finally, make sure that everybody living at your place knows what to do in a house fire situation. Fire plans save lives.

Tillegra Dam Information

The first of the Tillegra Dam Whole of Government Taskforce meetings was held late February. As I indicated previously the Taskforce has been instigated to facilitate communication between Dungog Shire Council and key Government authorities on matters that are outside the formal planning process for Tillegra Dam.

Representatives from NSW Planning, Roads & Traffic Authority, Department Water & Energy, Department of State & Regional Development and the Community Reference Group were present along with Hunter Water. Issues discussed included the local economy as there has been a direct impact on local business since the announcement and the state of the Councils road and bridge infrastructure as it is seen as an impediment to development and attracting new business.

This is aside from aspects raised in relation to NSW Planning and the effective stagnation of development activity within the Shire due to the ever changing goalposts of the Department and other Agencies. It was emphasised of the need for some economic stimulus to occur within our community at the present moment.

Whilst there has been a number of Council resources engaged in consultation aspects of this project since early 2008 and this does have a direct impact upon the ability of Council to resource our other commitments to the community at large, I am delighted with progress to date.

12 March 2008