



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES - THE MAYOR

In last week's column I said that I would write on the topic of Roles and Responsibilities, so I'm starting with the role of Mayor.



At the 2012 local government election in Orange there was a referendum that asked:

'The Mayor of Orange is currently elected each year by the 12 Councillors. Do you approve of the direct election of the Mayor by the voters of Orange, for a four year term?'

The yes vote was - 62% and Councillor Reg Kidd was elected as Orange's first popularly elected Mayor in 2017, and he will be in office until the 2020 local government elections. Orange City Council has 11 Councillors plus the Mayor.

As a result of the amalgamations debate delaying elections the current term for our councils is 3 years rather than 4.

The Mayors of Cabonne and Blayney Shire are elected by the Councillors normally for a period of 2 years and are currently Councillor Kevin Beatty and Councillor Scott Ferguson are the Mayors of Cabonne and Blayney. Cabonne has 12 Councillors and Blayney Shire has 7 Councillors.

Roles and responsibilities have been clarified by changes to the NSW Local Government Act in 2016 and these were a result of a substantial review that was undertaken and published in 2013. This was the Independent Local Government Review that had the goal to develop:

A more sustainable system of democratic local government with added capacity to meet the needs of local and regional communities, and to be a valued partner of State and federal governments.

Recommendations made by the Panel on Political Leadership and Good Governance included:

The Panel has concluded that enhancing the role of

mayors could make a major contribution to focusing councils on strategic issues, improving governance and strengthening inter-government relations and partnerships with key stakeholders. The Panel's focus is on better defined responsibilities which will add stature and authority to the role of mayors, but not increased powers.

The Position Description for Mayors is now:

- to be the leader of the council and a leader in the local community,
- to advance community cohesion and promote civic awareness,
- to be the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body,
- to preside at meetings of the council, and ensure that meetings of the council are conducted efficiently and effectively,
- to ensure the timely development and adoption of the strategic plans, programs and policies of the council,
- to promote the effective and consistent implementation of the strategic plans, programs and policies of the council,
- to promote partnerships between the council and key stakeholders,
- to advise, consult with and provide strategic direction to the general manager
- in conjunction with the general manager, to ensure adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between the council and the local community,
- to carry out the civic and ceremonial functions of the

mayoral office,

- to represent the council on regional organisations and at inter-governmental forums at regional, State and Commonwealth level,
- in consultation with the councillors, to lead performance appraisals of the general manager,
- to exercise any other functions of the council that the council determines.

The Position Description - the role of the Mayor - does not differ between a popularly elected Mayor and a Mayor elected by Councillors.

The Deputy Mayor may be elected from amongst the Councillors and may be elected for the mayoral term or a shorter term.

The deputy mayor may exercise any function of the mayor at the request of the mayor or if the mayor is prevented by illness, absence or otherwise from exercising the function or if there is a casual vacancy in the office of mayor.

The current Deputy Mayors are:

Orange City Council - Councillor Sam Romano

Cabonne Council - Councillor Anthony Durkin

Blayney Shire Council - Councillor Allan Erwin

So, after the period of avid community interest and conflict over the proposed amalgamations of Orange, Cabonne and Blayney has the newly described role of Mayor achieved the changes foreseen of enhancing the role of mayors to make a major contribution to focusing councils on strategic issues, improving governance and strengthening inter-government relations and partnerships with key stakeholders?

I am happy to receive comments from readers about this column and other issues you would like me to cover so please either contact me at Orange City Life or aes@amandaspaldingconsulting.com

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