7.2 Mudgee Bicentenary Celebrations

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR COMMUNITY
TO 21 FEBRUARY 2018 ORDINARY MEETING
GOV400066, CMR200039

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. receive the report by the Director Community on the Mudgee Bicentenary Celebrations;

2. determine that the gazettal of Mudgee as a town in January 1838 is the best date available for historic periodic celebrations; and

3. explore the option through the budget process of providing funding to the Camping Tree for the enhancement of this area in recognition of the early pioneering days.

Executive summary

Over the years, different Councils have determined that 1821 was an important and landmark year for the township of Mudgee and the region. This was the year of the first recorded white exploration of the region. Centenary celebrations were held in March 1921 and Sesqui-centenary celebrations were held in March 1971. In more recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on understanding the history of white settlement in the region and the impact that it had on the indigenous population of the area. It is suggested that Council may wish to consider a date that is more inclusive and also more definitive in terms of the establishment and founding of the town.

Disclosure of Interest

Nil

Detailed report

There has been some discussion in the community regarding planning for the Bicentenary of Mudgee in 2021. This report seeks some guidance from Council on this issue and proposes to celebrate the Bicentenary of Mudgee on 12 January, 1838, which was the date that the town was gazetted as the “Village of Mudgee”.

The township of Mudgee and the Mid-Western Region as a whole is something that brings us together and allows for a sense of pride in the community that we have all helped to build. Recognition of this from time to time is an important part of the fabric of our culture and our community. Previous Councils have focused on dates of discovery of parts of the region for these celebrations. Records show that the Centenary was celebrated in 1921 and that 1971 brought the Mudgee Sesqui-Centenary Celebrations.

In exploring the nineteenth century of the region, there are a number of factors that provide an opportunity to re-think these dates and perhaps suggest a date that can be accurate and also more inclusive as a date for celebration for the whole community. There is a lack of clarity around actual
dates and locations. Interestingly, the 1921 and 1971 celebrations were held in March, although it seems unlikely that Mudgee, or even the Mudgee district had been explored to any great extent until later in 1821, around October and November. There will no doubt be some debate around these dates and facts. Ultimately, the focus of the early years of the region was also on the Menah district, a few miles from the future Mudgee township. As such, there is an argument that future celebrations of Mudgee as a township should be related to the date of Gazettal in 1838.

While there may be some views in the community that the proposed change is an example of “political correctness”, it is important to recognise our history and clearly articulate that, for the indigenous people already living in the region, there was little to celebrate in the discovery of the area by white settlers. The early years of the region had a significant impact on the local population, both in numbers and in spirit. It is recommend that celebrations could be presented within the context of a much more inclusive date such as 1838.

It is also worth noting that the recent Centenary celebrations in Kandos were related to the gazettal of the town in 1914 rather than initial exploration.

There are numerous other potential celebration dates to be considered across the Mid-Western Region. In 1970, Rylstone held a Sesqui-Centenary. This would mean that the Rylstone Bicentenary would be due to be held in 2020. Again, the Rylstone town was originally laid out in 1846, although not formally proclaimed a town until 1885. There are a number of publications that talk of the Rylstone being founded in 1846.

Research indicates that a range of potential dates could be used as a starting point for Mudgee: 1821, 1822, 1837, 1838 or even the formation of the Municipality of Mudgee in 1860. The date that the new township was gazetted under the name of the “Village of Mudgee” is the recommended date and also represents the change in focus of settlement from Menah to Mudgee.

There are a number of well-written histories of the region and a number of these have been researched in the consideration of this matter. These have included but are not limited to:

- Mudgee Centenary Souvenir publication of the Mudgee Guardian 1921;
- Mudgee Sesqui-Centenary Celebrations 1821 – 1971- Research officers of the Mudgee Historical Society;
- News from Mudgee - A chronological history of Mudgee 1821- 1921, Author Peter Johnson;
- Over Cherry Tree Hill, Editor Margaret Piddington.

Council has been approached by a number of people regarding proposed celebrations in 1821 and it is necessary to make a decision on this matter in the near future. If Council is of a mind to continue with the 2021 Bicentenary date then it would be appropriate to consider the formation of a Bicentenary Committee that would consider a range of topics such as events, budgetary proposals and commemorations. A resolution to this effect would be useful to ensure that relevant planning can take place and that Council will be in a position to make timely decisions on this matter.

Determining similar dates for Rylstone and Gulgong will also be required in the future.

The involvement of the relevant historical societies and passionate members of the community can only enhance the development of ideas for these future celebrations. There is also the opportunity for engagement for aboriginal groups and community members which can also be enhanced by celebrating dates that are more inclusive and less a reminder of the impact of early exploration and settlement.
Community Plan implications

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Strategic implications

**Council Strategies**
Community Strategic Plan

**Council Policies**
Not applicable

**Legislation**
Not applicable

Financial implications

While there would be no immediate budgetary impact through the discussion of this item, it is likely that there will be an impact in future years in providing funds for relevant celebrations, events and commemorations.

Associated Risks

There are reputational risks associated with this decision. Acknowledgement of our history is important and to see no value in exploring our history could ultimately lead to a denial of the character of the towns and the way that they have developed. There are important considerations as well in our relationship with the aboriginal community and in forging stronger bonds into the future.

SIMON JONES
DIRECTOR COMMUNITY

5 February 2018

**Attachments:**
1. Offer of service to help organise Bicentenary of Mudgee.

**APPROVED FOR SUBMISSION:**

BRAD CAM
GENERAL MANAGER
Mayor Des Kennedy
c/- Mid-Western Regional Council
PO Box 156
Mudgee NSW 2850.

Dear Mayor Kennedy,

As a six year old my most significant memory was the extraordinary celebrations the community of Mudgee delivered over a several day festival, commemorating the sesquicentenary of this town. The CBD was closed to vehicles and all public areas and parks etc., were utilized day and night with an untold number of events including concerts, balls, parades, exhibitions, re-enactments and so much more. The entire community celebrated. Even now, as I recollect details, I am astonished that nearly fifty years ago a small isolated country town delivered a world class event.

In less then four years time the bicentenary has to eclipse the magical efforts achieved half a century ago. As my roots are so deeply entwined into the fabric of this town beginning with my mothers ancestry stretching back a staggering one hundred and eighty years plus with the family names of Potts, Blackman, Wright and Cox. My fathers family has a more recent association beginning in the mid 1800’s with a pioneering Scottish minister of religion setting up a Church of England parish and congregation outside Bathurst and after generations producing my grandfather Angus Lang, a pastoralist with land holding reaching as far as the Hunter Valley in one direction down to Moss Vale and Bowral in the other. I believe he was also a local councillor. The inveterate family foundations with my hometown urge me to participate in celebrating the two hundred year celebration.

The purpose of this letter is to offer my services for the planning of this event by perhaps joining committees or associations no doubt already in motion. Enclosed is my CV outlining some of my involvements with large scale events and projects. Should you in anyway desire my enthusiastic participation and input please contact me by any of these means. PO Box 720 Mudgee 2850. Telephone 0475 438 990. Email: dpi1964@hotmail.com.

Many thanks,

David Lang.
From: Hugh
To: Brad Cam
Subject: re B Centenary
Date: Monday, 23 November 2015 7:39:59 PM

Sir,
In just 6 years time Mudgee will hopefully celebrate 200 years of settlement.
Given that it should be a planned 12 month celebration, I write to enquire what Council
proposes to do in order to fund the period of celebration?
In the main, should Council be now allocating funding annually in its budget for a planned
series of events?
Events such as street parades, monthly events, gala ball, inviting descendants for a
function, co hosting functions in conjunction with the local Historical Society for the
period, etc should be considered.

Yours faithfully
Hugh Bateman
Mudgee

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