



Council News

Winter 2007 Community Report from Cessnock City Council



Dangerous dogs targeted

Cessnock City Council has started the biggest animal enforcement program ever undertaken within the Cessnock Local Government Area. The Companion Animal Management Program has identified and is targeting all Dangerous, Restricted and Declared Restricted dogs.

Recent changes to the NSW Companion Animals legislation have increased control provisions for the housing of Dangerous, Restricted and Declared Restricted dogs, as well as introduced higher penalties for non compliance with the legislation. Penalties under the legislation may include the seizure and/or destruction of a dog in certain circumstances.

Paws n Laws

Council and Hunter Animal Watch have joined forces to offer the 'Paws n Laws' program of free microchipping and/or \$50 desexing for Restricted Breed dogs, more commonly known as Pitbull Terriers or Pitbull Crosses. For further information please contact

Council on 4993 4100.

"Owning a dog is a big responsibility and if you choose to own a dog that is classified as a dangerous or restricted breed, you have an even bigger legal and moral obligation to the entire community to keep it under strict control," said Darryl Fitzgerald, Council's Acting Director Corporate and Regulatory Services.

Council Rangers are carrying out compliance inspections on every property containing Dangerous, Restricted or Declared Restricted dogs to ensure that the owners are abiding by the legislation and to ensure both personal and community safety.

Requirements of owning a Restricted dog include that the dog must be desexed, must be in the sole charge of a person over 18 years, must be kept in an enclosure with a minimum fence height of 1.8 metres and reflective 'Warning: dangerous dog' signs clearly displayed and the dog must at all times wear a reflective red and yellow striped collar.

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Did you know?

- * Council delivered over 200 tube stock trees to primary schools in our LGA to plant in their grounds on National Tree Day in July.
- * Branxton and Cessnock Pools will reopen for Summer on Saturday 29 September 2007.

Working together - see back page for details on how our community benefits from Council officers working with other organisations and groups

LEP on display soon

It is anticipated that Council will shortly consider for public exhibition the provisions of the new Local Environmental Plan (LEP) for Cessnock.

An LEP is the planning tool used to identify what developments or activities are permissible with or without Council consent or prohibited in particular land use zones.

Senior Planning Officer Darryll Quigley says the new LEP provides an opportunity for Council to correct anomalies, undertake general housekeeping and rezoning of a number of sites of local importance identified in the City Wide Settlement Strategy.

"By putting the draft Local Environmental Plan on public exhibition Council is providing an opportunity for comment and review by the public on the LEP prior to making a final decision," Mr Quigley said.

Freemen of the City

Mrs Elsie Doyle and Mr John Munro were granted the title of Freeman of the City at a ceremony held on 25 July 2007 at East Cessnock Bowling Club.

“To be granted the title of Freeman of the City is a mark of distinction upon the person whom the Council wishes to honour,” explained Mayor of Cessnock, Councillor John Clarence.

“Mrs Elsie Doyle and Mr John Munro are outstanding Cessnock citizens who have given much to the people of our community in a quiet and unpretentious manner.”

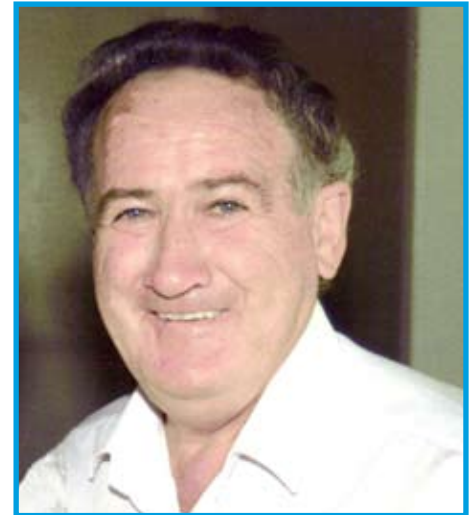
The title of Freeman of the City itself carries no privilege and is purely an honour, reflecting the eminence of the person on whom it is conferred or as recognition of significant and valuable services rendered to the city by that person.

Mrs Doyle is a well known and respected member of the community of Cessnock and has given a life long commitment to the service of others in her local Church and the wider community.

The Parish community of St Joseph’s has been the focus of a life long commitment for Mrs Doyle. Her outstanding qualities were recognised by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, when he bestowed on her an Apostolic Blessing, in August 2006, for many years of faithful ministry and service to the people of St Joseph’s Parish.

Mr Munro is a well known and respected member of the community of Cessnock for his outstanding commitment and involvement throughout the Hunter Region and beyond.

Renowned throughout the football world, Mr Munro has looked after players from all codes and assisted them in rapid recovery from injuries received playing the game. He is well known to members of the Newcastle Knights, numerous NRL teams, NSW State of Origin and Australian teams, and Newcastle Local Rugby League players.



Storm wreaks havoc

The clean up is still continuing following the devastation caused by the storms during the June long weekend this year.

“We had parts of our LGA which were severely affected including homes in Abermain and Weston, Cessnock, Greta and Branxton,” explained Council’s General Manager, Mr Bernie Mortomore. “Some residents in the Wollombi and Laguna areas were isolated for several weeks due to the flooding and damage to roads.”



Whitebridge Road Bridge, Mulbring is still closed. A middle pylon was moved by the force of the water.

Council staff worked tirelessly in the weeks following the storms to repair major damage to roads and bridges as well as storm water drains and creek beds.

“Council staff were also helping residents where ever they could,” Mr Mortomore said. “Our building inspectors offered free inspections of homes which were damaged and our Onsite Sewage Officer offered advice to residents to make sure possible health risks were minimised. As well, our outdoor staff not only carried out infrastructure repairs but also helped residents dispose of their damaged household goods.”

“The cost to our community in terms of personal as well as civic loss and damage is enormous,” Mr Mortomore said. “Council has estimated that damage to community assets such as roads and bridges alone has cost over \$4 million. Thankfully the State Government has agreed to financially assist each of the councils which were affected.”

Dangerous dogs targeted *from page 1*

“Owners of dogs classified as Dangerous, Restricted or Declared Restricted, need to recognise that Council Rangers are required to enforce the new legislation and that ignorance of the new requirements will not be a valid excuse or defense,” Mr Fitzgerald said.

Owners of these dogs will need to comply with the extensive control requirements or possibly face fines in excess of \$1,000 and/or the loss of their animal. A maximum penalty of \$55,000, two years of imprisonment or both can be applied if the dog attacks or bites another person.

For the specific compliance housing details which are required for your particular dog or to make an appointment for an inspection, please contact Council’s Ranger Services on 4993 4100 or visit the website www.dlg.nsw.gov.au for a copy of the ‘Restricted and Dangerous Dogs in NSW’ brochure.

Check fire safety

Cessnock City Council is actively encouraging business and commercial and industrial building owners to check the fire safety measures installed on their premises. Some more common building fire safety measures are smoke detectors, exit signs, portable fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and hose reels.

“Council has a register of buildings which require certification annually and we are in the process of notifying the owners of their obligations,” Council’s Acting Director of Corporate and Regulatory Services, Mr Darryl Fitzgerald said. “The fire safety measures should be checked and inspected by a fire safety consultant and satisfactory results sent to Council in the form of an ‘Annual Fire Safety Statement’.”

“Council takes building fire safety very seriously and has the ability to issue fines of up to \$2,000 to building owners for failure to supply fire statements to Council, although that is a last resort and we would prefer owners to meet their obligations willingly for the sake of the public and their employee’s safety.”

Further information is available by contacting Council’s Fire Safety Information Line on Mondays or Wednesdays on 4993 4288 or alternatively by email to firesafety@cessnock.nsw.gov.au.

drumMUSTER

The national drumMUSTER program was initiated in 1998 for the collection and recycling of empty, cleaned, non-returnable crop production and on-farm animal health chemical containers. By providing a free collection service, the amount of chemical containers and associated risk of contamination going into landfill or being dumped on private properties is reduced substantially.

Cessnock Council has been involved in the collection of the containers since the inception of the program, with the first collection being held in 1999.

A special compound has been established at Council’s waste facility where cleaned containers suitable for recycling can be dropped off. Approximately 10,000 containers have been collected and reprocessed into new products, with approximately 1,400 currently awaiting delivery to the recycling centre.

Council runs the collection program year round, with those wishing to dispose of containers being able to contact Council weeds officers to arrange a drop off time. It is important to make an appointment for the drop off - please phone 4993 4370.

Recreation roundup



Greening our City

There was a sea of red jumpers on a crisp, clear morning recently at Miller Park, Branxton when a team of over 50 Bunnings managers took time out from a conference they were attending to provide a community service.

The Bunnings managers joined forces with Branxton Tidy Towns and Council staff to plant 100 tube stock

trees and 50 advanced specimens as well as spreading 10 cubic metres of mulch, as part of the Masterplan for the Park.

What’s more, the brand new tools which were used that morning have been donated to the community Landcare Trailer to assist all groups in maintaining areas across the LGA.

NEW Online recreation applications available

Application forms for the use of Council’s sporting facilities, playing fields, parks and recreation areas as well as Cessnock and Branxton Pools are now all available online on Council’s website.

“The ability for everyone from sporting clubs to wedding parties being able to fill out an application online will make life easier and the process of allocation and bookings far quicker,” explained Council’s Community Facilities Planner, Ms Kate Jordan.

“Throughout the year Council receives a large number of requests for using our recreation facilities from summer and winter sporting groups, youth groups, market organisers, wedding parties - the list goes on. The online application forms will save time for these people.”

Forms online can be found at www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au. Just click on Council Services and then click on Parks and Recreation. For further information please contact Kate Jordan on phone 4993 4235.



Just some of the containers collected in the Cessnock LGA recently



Designing affordable housing

Council is involved in an exciting initiative in partnership with the Centre for Affordable Housing, a business unit of the State Government.

Affordable housing is housing that costs an average household 30 per cent or less of their household income. It does not mean public housing but can include public housing.

Council has been developing an "Affordable Housing Strategy for the LGA". This will inform Council on appropriate strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing in the LGA over the next 15 years.

One strategy is to develop affordable housing in a relatively small subdivision that Council has been working on over the last two years.

Council has developed strategic partnerships with Newmacq Community Housing (a Hunter based non profit affordable housing provider) and the University of Newcastle.

At the end of July, 60 Architecture students visited Hebburn Estate at Weston to be briefed so they can start work on a design project.

University Lecturer Chris Tucker, Council's Affordable Housing Officer Larry O'Brien and CEO of Newmacq Housing Greg Budworth briefed the students on Affordable Housing and the site at Weston.

As part of their Architecture program, the students will design affordable housing options and, in future, some of the innovative designs may be built at the Estate.



Regional forum benefits all

On 24 July Council hosted an Economic Development Forum. The forums were conceptualised by the Minister for the Hunter, the Hon. Michael Costa two years ago and are chaired by the State Government's Premier's Department.

Eleven members representing Upper and Lower Hunter councils gathered with representatives from Hunter Area Consultative Committee, Aus Industry, the Department of State and Regional Development, and the Premier's

Department to discuss regional issues such as the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy, infrastructure issues and also to have some input into a regional marketing strategy.

The forums' key function is to raise issues, disseminate information and ideas to and from the Hunter Economic Development Corporation (HEDC), by providing clear communications between the HEDC Board, regional organisations, state and local governments and Hunter communities.

Council contacts

Administration Building

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Phone: 02 4993 4100

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Email: council@cessnock.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au

General Manager:

Bernie Mortomore

Council Departments

Corporate and Regulatory Services

Acting Director: Darryl Fitzgerald

Strategic and Community Services

Acting Director: Simon Eade

Works and Services

Director: Lewis Oldfield

Councillors

To contact Councillors, please phone Council's Administration Office on 02 4993 4100.

Mayor: Councillor John Clarence

Ward A

Robert Bedford
Alison Davey
Rachel Main

Ward B

Ian Olsen
Bob Pynsent (*Deputy Mayor*)
Bruce Scott

Ward C

Catherine Parsons
Jeff Maybury
Dale Troy

Ward D

Ron Besoff
James Ryan
Graham Smith

Council meetings

Council meetings are open to the public and all are welcome to attend.

Meetings are held in the Council Chambers and start at 6.30pm.

Upcoming Council meetings:

5 and 19 September,
3 and 17 October,
7 and 21 November
and 12 December.