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"Something for everyone"

17th November 2015

An open letter to the Goulburn Community regarding 2016 Goulburn Show

After 135 years of annual shows the Goulburn Show Society has been given no choice but to abandon any prospects of safely holding its 136th annual Show on the weekend of 5th and 6th March next year.

The booking for the 2016 annual show was made with and accepted by Goulburn Mulwaree Council in early March this year and the Show Society widely advertised the dates and commenced the 12 month planning and work process. It was subsequently learned that the Goulburn Harness Racing Club had also booked the Sunday for one of its events.

As safety to our show visitors, volunteers and exhibitors is always the main concern, the Show Society was not convinced that the two events could be safely run together. Under advice from our insurers the Show Society undertook an extensive risk management assessment and impact study which confirmed that the two events could not take place at the showgrounds on the same day due to heightened risks imposed by the harness racing event.

The Show Society has in good faith endeavoured through many meetings and by correspondence with Council to resolve the issue. Council's response was that the two events had to go ahead together. It has been emphasised continually to Council that given the risks involved to the public the Show Society could not get public liability indemnity insurance for the 2016 show.

The matter can be easily resolved by Harness moving its event to another date. The Goulburn Show dates are fixed in the Agricultural Societies Council of NSW show calendar and the local area community calendar and cannot be moved.

Given that after eight months of meetings and correspondence we are no further advanced; and, with the 2016 show only a little over three months away, at a meeting on Monday 16th November 2015 with Mayor Geoff Kettle, General Manager Warwick Bennet and Director Operations Matt O'Rourke the following statement was delivered to Council:

"As a result of the Goulburn Mulwaree Council accepting a double booking for the Recreation Area/Showgrounds for Sunday 6th March 2016 and your reluctance to adjudicate on that, the Goulburn AP&H Society advise Council that we will not be conducting our annual Goulburn Show in 2016.

This decision comes as a result of neither party being able to obtain satisfactory public liability indemnity insurance and due to the significant risk management issues identified, for us to pursue the running of the Goulburn Show without this indemnity would be irresponsible and is beyond the reasonable expectations of the Show Society volunteers, the Show Society membership and of the Goulburn community.

On the basis that Harness Racing apparently have booked the grounds first the Council has left us with no option but to abandon a significant community event that generates considerable financial benefits for the community and the region and as such we will notify our exhibitors and competitors and all our stakeholders, Showmen's Guild, food providers, entertainment providers and community groups that rely on our event to raise their much needed funds of the cancellation.

As Council has acknowledged in previous correspondence its willingness to accept our future bookings for the first weekend in March each year we now require a confirmation that this will be exclusive usage as per past arrangements.

We trust this confirmation will be forthcoming."

The Goulburn AP&H Society Inc, which has been going since 1880, is a small group of dedicated volunteers who give an enormous amount of time, energy and personal sacrifice to put on the biggest annual community event held in the Goulburn area. We do it because we are proud of our community and the community's support to our annual Show.

For eight months now we have tried to convince Council that the 2016 Show can only go ahead if all risks to our visitors are minimised. Irrespective of our concerns Council is adamant that a joint Show/Harness event could go ahead on the Sunday. The Show Committee and our insurers say that the risks are such that a concurrent event is not possible.

Goulburn Mulwaree Council's inability or unwillingness to support us in providing the safest possible environment for our annual two-day community event has led to the Show Committee taking the view that it cannot accept any possibility of harm to our 7,000 show visitors, participants, exhibitors, volunteers and to the public at large.

The only responsible decision that the Goulburn Show Society can take is to abandon the 2016 Goulburn Show.

We trust that the Goulburn community will understand the reasons for this decision which will unfortunately have detrimental social and financial impacts on our local community. We look forward to your support in 2017 and beyond.

The Council media release of 16th November 2015 (which was released by Council only about an hour or so after our meeting on 16/11/2015 concluded) contained some inaccuracies. Instead of accepting its responsibilities to adjudicate in a manner for the best social and financial results for Goulburn and the community, the Council has sought to shift the blame on to the Goulburn Show Society. We will examine the Council's media release and will make further announcements as appropriate.

Jacki Waugh

President – Goulburn Show Society

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