



## **MEDIA RELEASE | WEDDIN SHIRE COUNCIL**

### **WHERE HAS THE TRUTH GONE? PART II – RESPONSE TO WEDDIN SHIRE COUNCIL WORKERS PROTEST JOB INSECURITY ALLEGATIONS BY THE UNITED SERVICES UNION**

Workers at Weddin Shire Council were encouraged to stand in a photo at the Weddin Shire Depot on Monday 16 December 2024. When staff members questioned the reason for the photo, it was stated by the United Services Union (USU) Organiser to show “unity”. “I have it on good authority that several staff walked from the photo opportunity citing that they did not understand why photos were being taken”, stated General Manager, Ms Noreen Vu. Others have since stated they were unaware that a protest was being staged. “I ask the question, ‘Where has the truth gone? What about consent? Why are we wasting our staff’s time in these antics that are costing our ratepayers, in wages and time off the job?’”, Ms Vu continues.

Council has had several conversations with the United Services Union (USU) over the last few months. Accusations of “no response” is untrue. “The USU are also encouraged to ensure that the correct email address is utilised when contacting Council Officers, but never get in a way of a good story”, said Ms Vu.

“Council has always employed a small number of casuals to undertake several roles when the business requires it.” This includes seasonal workers who operate our pools, staff who run our Visitor Information Centre and Library as well as staff to assist with our Parks and Gardens and Road Maintenance teams.

“We proudly engage employees within our means as our financial budgets allow us to. Following the Natural Disaster Events in 2022, Council has seen an uplift in annual grant income to assist in the repairing of roads as well as other capital works program funding from the State and Federal Government. We have welcomed this additional income. To be clear, this will not last forever and we have always communicated this to our workforce”, said Ms Vu.

“Casual employees were employed for casual purposes. These appointments were not used for permanent staff positions”, stated Ms Vu. “Our casual workforce is part of our family and it is disappointing to see the avenue taken by the USU, when a sit-down conversation to go through the Council’s Workforce Plan and their Letter of Employment could have helped all parties understand the casual employment conditions. We will continue to work with our small casual workforce in assisting them with their future employment opportunities”.

“The Council has a responsibility of financial sustainability to its community to ensure that it is viable into the future. We must ensure that we operate within our means. Weddin Shire Council is a business, and we need to make strategic business decisions,” stated Mayor Paul Best.



“It is unfortunate that the actions by the USU have come at a time, where Council is about to advertise a number of apprenticeships and traineeships that will be open for our casual employees to apply for,” stated Mayor Best.

“Council employed casual workers to assist in areas like traffic control. We had previously spent over \$1.457m on out-of-town contractors in 2022-2023. By employing local casuals, we reduced our contractors cost to \$131,000 in 2023-2024”, said Ms Vu

“I believe our community would want and expect the Council to operate sensibly and to make decisions that are good for the entire community. We refute the USU’s claims that these employees were recruited casually to fill permanent positions, I welcome anyone to read the Council’s Workforce Plan to see the truth and reality” said Mayor Best.

“Council will formally respond to the USU’s request for information, although it has been shared multiple times with them to refer to the Council’s Workforce Plan. The USU have also demanded to see position descriptions of all employees which we have refused. We believe this would require consultation with staff for their consent”, stated Ms Vu.

“Council’s Policy for Salary System highlights one salary system with a 24-Grading structure in line with the Local Government Award 2023. It is again untrue that Council operates multiple salary systems”. stated Ms Vu.

“In moving forward, we hope that the actions by some, do not outweigh the positive actions by our workforce in moving our organisation forward. We hope that the USU’s tactics do not deter good applicants in our future apprenticeship and traineeship program”, said Ms Vu.

“Weddin Shire Council will simply not be bullied or intimidated into making decisions that impact on our community”, stated Ms Vu.

Noreen Vu  
**GENERAL MANAGER**

16 December 2024

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