

BUNGENDORE MIRROR

Bungendore's Community Newspaper Wednesday 26 January 2011 Year 2011/ Week 4 www.bungendoremirror.com.au



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Lack of helpers threatens Show



Chief Steward Marion Whalan sorting the ribbons for the horse section of the 2011 Bungendore Show. The section needs stewards for four of the rings and without them some events will not be able to proceed. Marion is appealing for assistance. REPORT PAGE 3

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Ombudsman looking at Upper Lachlan's obstruction

By John Mitchell

The NSW Ombudsman's Office will make a detailed investigation of Upper Lachlan Council's Freedom of Information procedures, following their initial finding that the Council had inadequately responded to an FOI request and overcharged for their effort.

The Council imposed a charge of \$200 on four Collector residents last June when they

wanted to see documents relating to the proposed Collector Bridge demolition and replacement. Council's Works and Operations Manager, claimed at the time that this was due to the need to search and copy numerous files and email records.

In July the Council supplied a mere five documents in addition to three that the residents had previously obtained before the

FOI application. Responding to enquiries from the residents about access to the files and other records, the Council advised that there were no more documents or files and that all the other business had been done 'over the phone'. The Works Manager told the residents "You won't be conducting a trawling exercise through any files you might want to look at."

The Collector residents then

asked for a refund but received no reply. This was repeated several times. In December they referred the matter to the NSW Ombudsman's office.

On 22 December the NSW Ombudsman's Office advised the residents that the Upper Lachlan Council had said they had posted them a refund of \$140. The Ombudsman's office also advised that, while the Council wished to consider the matter closed, their

fees and schedules for FOI were in excess of the statutory requirements. The Council also appeared to be deliberately withholding documents and both of these matters will be investigated.

On 24 January 2011, following further enquiries from the Collector residents about the refund, Council advised that it was still with accounts staff, but it would now be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

"The Works Manager told the residents 'You won't be conducting a trawling exercise through any files you might want to look at.'"

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