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Committee for Ballarat....one year on.

It's been called elitist, even a rich man's club, but such a view of the Committee for Ballarat ignores the very foundation for its existence and, in fact, its structure.

The Committee's branding statement, declared one year ago, reads: ``Working together to enhance the future of Ballarat and region; championing issues to keep Ballarat's region successful.''

There is nothing elitist about that, nor the projects upon which the Committee has embarked.

They are all, quite simply, aimed at ensuring that all people in this region get more opportunity, better amenities, better infrastructure, and a more secure economy in which to work and live.

The structure of the Committee specifically provides for community involvement, with a community membership facility for not-for-profit organisations.

Ballarat and region is strong and developing. The existence and proven effectiveness of the Committee for Ballarat adds substantial impetus to that development.

The Committee for Ballarat makes no apology for its membership and operational structure and nor should it.

It is privileged to be made up of successful people prepared to put their intellectual and, in some cases, financial capital to use in the interests of a better community and region for all.

It blends that by developing close associations with community groups, both through membership and ongoing consultation.

A quick look at the contribution of the Committee in its first year demonstrates that the targets and outcomes are of fundamental value to all in the community.

The Committee provided additional and substantial impetus to the push to bring forward construction of the Deer Park Bypass. That has been achieved. The funding is announced and work set to begin.

It has worked with the community-based Lake Foundation and the City of Ballarat, through the Lake Blitz campaign, to raise the funds needed to revamp the foreshore of Lake Wendouree – a vital community asset.

While the City continues its good work on the foreshore, other sources of government funding have been identified and local fundraising campaigns begun and supported.

The jobsballarat.com.au website, a project specific objective of the Committee, is up and running. At latest count there have been more than 6000 visitors to the site, an average of 250 a day.

The site will be marketed and promoted into Melbourne during the coming year.

The Committee is also lobbying for a dedicated line for the fast rail network between Sunshine and Southern Cross stations, something which will make the journey along the Ballarat corridor faster and more efficient.

There has also been the successful launch and establishment of Leadership Ballarat and Western Region, to ensure the leaders of the future are encouraged and supported.

This momentum in just 12 months does not, in any way, diminish the need for the Committee to set an even more challenging pace for the year ahead.

Water is the most serious infrastructure challenge facing this region.

Ballarat, in particular, has only a window of seven or eight years during which to find additional water supplies.

This Committee will fight – in consultation with all responsible authorities – to ensure sufficient sources are established to meet the city and region’s water needs to 2050 and beyond.

How can we expect to establish new industry and jobs and, perhaps, even retain some existing industries if there is insufficient water?

Having listened to the community, it is obvious to the Committee that there is real concern about police and crime levels in Ballarat.

During the coming 12 months we will push for increased police numbers in the city and seek to have greater attention paid to reducing street and community crime.

We will also, as a priority, work with the university, the hospitals and the Ballarat regional medical fraternity to get the best possible outcome in the establishment of a medical school in the region.

In addition, the Committee will work with the City of Ballarat to ensure the most appropriate future use of the Ballarat Airport precinct.

The Committee for Ballarat is open and transparent. Its vision, in part, is to establish itself as a recognised leader in regional Australia for economic and community development.

In doing so, it will deliver an energy and vitality to the economic and community development of this great region which is the envy of similar places across the nation.

The Committee is convinced it is already achieving this and will continue to do so, in the interests of the whole regional community.

Noel Coxall
Chair