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# West Wyalong Advocate

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The West Wyalong Advocate  
PO Box 231, West Wyalong 2671  
Email: wwadvoc@bigpond.net.au

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Fax 6972 4777  
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PHONE: (02) 6972 2033

Email: wwadvoc@bigpond.net.au

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INSIDE



- Council supports mine life extension proposal
- Rates pegged at 1.5%
- Here for the Beer "bottles" first win



TODAY



## One day closure raises more concerns

Banking services in West Wyalong could well be on the decline once again with the National Australia Bank (NAB) changing opening hours from this week.

As of yesterday, December 5, the West Wyalong branch will close its doors every Tuesday which has raised numerous concerns by local residents and customers.

First and foremost customers are worried the one day a week closure will lead to further reduced services, the branch becoming an agency or eventual closure, just as Westpac did over time.

It is a situation customers are desperate to avoid and therefore raised other questions.

One major concern some customers relayed to the Advocate is that some accounts being opened by local residents are being put under the Temora branch 'Business Unit Identifier' (BUID), therefore boosting the Temora branch's targets but not West Wyalong's.

Just like retail operations, banks also operate with strict business guidelines and in a competitive market.

Some local customers who have noticed their accounts have been opened under the Temora BUID instead of West Wyalong have questioned why, believing the Temora branch needs to be more competitive with four full bank branches in the town and a credit union and therefore need to keep their targets up.

If that proves to be the case they are worried it could spell the eventual end of the West Wyalong branch which many say they will fight to save.

Even the closure of one day a week will have

consequences on other banking facilities in West Wyalong such as the South West Slopes Credit Union and Bendigo Bank which use the NAB as a clearing centre for cheques.

The one-day closure could possibly have an impact on the length of time it takes cheques to be cleared.

Following up on customer's concerns, the Advocate contacted the regional manager for NAB but were quickly referred to their corporate affairs department in Victoria, which offered the following statement:

"We continually monitor our physical network to ensure it aligns with the changing way our customers are choosing to access and use their money.

"More and more customers are using our online and mobile banking platforms to make deposits, pay bills, check balances or run their business.

"Responding to these customer preferences means that from Monday, December 5, 2016 we will change the operating hours of our West Wyalong branch.

"Our new opening hours are: 9.30am-4pm Monday, Wednesday and Thursdays, and 9.30am-5pm Fridays, closing from 1.30-2pm for lunch.

"We remain committed to supporting our customers in the Central West region."

The response clearly does not address some of the concerns which were raised therefore local customers are urged to check their BUID with the bank and if not listed under the West Wyalong branch, question why and request it be changed to West Wyalong.

## Status quo for economy and tourism

Bland Shire Council has announced it plans to move in a different direction in regards to the Shire's economic and tourism future after rejecting the formation of a new committee.

Cr Murray Thomas brought a motion to a recent council meeting that a joint economic development and tourism committee be formed at the earliest opportunity.

At the previous meeting Council resolved to postpone appointments to Bland Shire committees until the new year in order to give new councillors time to acclimatise to their representative roles.

Presenting his motion to the chamber, Cr Thomas said he had been asked to expedite the request from local businesses to form a new committee, comprised of five councillors and five community representatives, and not wait for the new year.

"The current community perception is that Bland Shire is not exploiting the full potential of the visitor and traveller trade which is currently estimated at \$20 million a year," said Cr Thomas.

"Many local businesses and primary producers are suffering losses from both the direct impact of flood damage, and indirectly through loss of business caused by the reduction in traffic due to flood damage to the major highway and other roads."

Cr Thomas added the committee would help more of the community's ideas to be considered and hopefully "provide some much needed confidence and direction to some very concerned residents".

Cr Thomas also said economic development and tourism go hand-in-hand and considering each to have a different committee would be setting both up to fail.

Cr Rod Crowe threw his support behind the motion.

"I feel we need to look at it and form the committee sooner rather than later," he said.

Cr Crowe said with only one more meeting

left this year and no meeting for early in the new year, nothing will be done in regards to the matter until May if the committee isn't formed immediately.

Not all councillors, however, were behind the move with Cr Liz McGlynn moving a motion the status quo remain in place until the idea can be workshopped as the last committee failed to yield significant results.

"I was on the previous committee for five years and we've had no real economic development or tourism," said Cr McGlynn "so we need to change the way we do things."

"We need to take the idea and workshop it for a couple of months and really think about it."

Cr McGlynn suggested all councillors should be on the committee, not just a selective five.

In reply Cr Thomas said that having the full council on the committee is virtually impossible and the committee would also have scope to contain an impartial economic tourism advisor.

Cr Kerry Keatley agreed with Cr McGlynn, saying the community did not get behind the previous committee.

"We've been down this path before and we weren't getting the support we needed from the community in this field."

At the same time Crs Brian Monaghan and Jan Wyse said there is definitely a need for such an initiative, but the idea needs to be thrown about and should go to the next workshop for discussion.

Before the motion to look at the committee or committees' set-up in the new year went to vote, Cr Thomas urged the council to at least be looking at putting the scope and limitations of the idea in place by working on the terms of reference.

Mayor Tony Lord moved it put Cr McGlynn's motion to a vote.

The decision to effectively leave the idea until it can be worked in the new year was passed with Crs Thomas and Crowe recording dissenting votes.

## Argent drilling a step closer

Argent Minerals has made further progress toward drilling at its West Wyalong project with access agreements progressing in preparation for a mid-February start, to fit in with local farming schedules.

The finalisation of a further agreement on November 17 leaves just one more agreement to be executed.

Once all of the relevant Land Access Agreements have been executed, an ESF4 will be submitted for approval and drilling can commence.

In October this year Argent announced it had been awarded

\$200,000 of heavily contested NSW Government funding for the West Wyalong drilling program.

The purpose of the award is to fund 50 percent of the direct drilling costs of six diamond holes for a total of 2150 metres for testing the Theia and Narragudgil copper-gold and epithermal gold targets.

This is the second award of funding to Argent by the NSW Government, having been granted \$158,400 for Kempfield in NSW Cooperative Drilling Round 1, announced by Argent in September, 2014.

In addition to the welcome funding, the selection of these projects by the merit-based advisory panel process is a direct reflection of the prospectivity and technical basis of the Kempfield and West Wyalong projects, as well as the soundness of the Company's financial management.

Completion of the West Wyalong drilling campaign before June 30 next year will also advance Argent's interest in the project from 51 percent to 70 percent.

Argent is looking forward to an intensified season of drilling activity and exploration results.