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## 47 Years in the Job

*Brian Blake has certainly left his mark on Circular Head - helping to bring treated water to the region and low injuries in the workforce being two of his proudest achievements.*

Brian has been with Works Plus, Circular Head Council's civil maintenance and construction business for 47 years, and while he is about to change roles, he will continue to make a difference in the community.

Well known for his role as Works Plus Manager for the past 25 years, Brian started at Council on 7 March 1972, a day he said he "can recall like yesterday".

Saying he was very proud of the fact that lost time injury at Works Plus was "extremely low and we never had major accidents", Brian will be moving to a different role at Circular Head Council, having helped pave the way for current Works Plus Manager Darren Swain to put his own stamp on the future of the works unit and its role with Council.

Brian started with Council's water team when it was untreated and the "bucket man" was still a thing.

"As a kid you used to be out kicking the football and here comes the night bucket man ... going from that to being able to flush the toilet was an incredible change," Brian said.

"We used to have pick up chlorine bottles from the train, but then of course the treatment plant was built and (later) extended to Stanley ... it opened up the place for all sorts of development and a better living standard."

He said those days were tough, but it had ended up being a positive.

"For 10 years I worked just purely in water and at that stage it was pick and shovel work, we didn't have any backhoes ... (and) we had really tough bosses back then," Brian said.

"But this taught me a lot about how to treat people."

He said while there had been some difficult times, he had been given a number of training opportunities.

"Training has always been pretty big in local government," he said.

"I have undertaken a lot of training to ensure I kept up to speed with technology."



Brian said he was “fortunate enough” to be given job of a leading hand in water and sewer at a critical time in transition for the business.

“I diversified in that role and took on stormwater, sewer, street construction and that sort of thing.”

For about 20 years, Brian learnt a range of skills and literally paved Circular Head’s roads.

“We sealed Woolnorth Road as part of the wind farm project and another big one was Arthur River Rd from Marawah to Arthur River,” Brian said.

“They were very rewarding jobs.

“Some of the roads we built are still there – they’ve been resealed obviously but they are still there.”

Whether he thought this was his legacy, Brian said he was simply “a small part of a bigger team.”

“We were building things in accordance with the consultant engineers designs, but you played your part,” he said.

Brian was part of the transition of the civil workforce into what is now Works Plus

“I was in the job as Works Manager for about six months when Works Plus was born,” Brian said.

“We had a talk about changing the organisation to be more productive (mainly because) Council’s financial position wasn’t sustainable if we didn’t.

“The model we chose was new to local government. It meant we were only paid for the work we did ... it was a whole big change for me and everyone.”

Brian met his wife at Council in 1975, where they worked together at the old depot.

“We are still together – she has been a great support,” he said.

He said he will miss his colleagues greatly.

“I’ve worked in the same environment for 47 years and now I’m going to say goodbye to those guys and while you still work for the same organisation you aren’t at the same place,” he said.



“It’s not easy because I’m close to the end of my career.”

He said he knew there would be more changes ahead for Works Plus with Council reviewing the current model.

“The change (to Works Plus) did make it more sustainable, but nothing goes on forever and Councils have to continue to invest in training their people and make sure we are using the correct work practices so the ratepayer gets value for money,” he said.

“Keeping abreast of technology – that’s the biggest change – from more physical labour to more pressure mentally – you’re now expected to work with technology and in different ways.”

Circular Head Director Infrastructure and Development Services Daniel Summers said Brian was a good example of someone who could work with “all people from all walks of life”.

“He takes a collaborative approach – it’s a lasting lesson for me – particularly when we are setting service standards and our approach to asset management,” Daniel said.

“The cost of service provided during his time was always at or below CPI, he was always able to deliver efficiencies.”

Daniel said while Brian focused on value for money, his approach was also about quality and what needed doing in the community.

“During his time with Council Brian has gone above and beyond to ensure that the community and local economy have roads for transport, playgrounds and sporting grounds for recreation amongst the many infrastructure services that Council provide.”

Over the last 12 months Brian has transitioned to phased in retirement in a new role with the Council’s Asset Management team.

This role has enabled the 47 years of Brian’s experience to be captured in Council’s forward Asset management planning.

The legacy that Brian will leave in this last phase of his career with Council will be incredibly important for Council and the community.

“The capturing of a lifetime of knowledge will ensure that moving forward the communities infrastructure based needs can continue to be met in a financially sustainable manner,” Daniel said.

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