

RAPAD Celebrates 30 Years

The Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) celebrated its 30th anniversary at its annual Friends of RAPAD event in Brisbane on 24 November 2022.

The Friends of RAPAD concept started six years ago, providing an occasion that allows us to show our appreciation to a whole range of government and non-government groups who support, fund, assist and partner with RAPAD, and our local government member councils.

As we celebrate this significant milestone, it's timely to take a look back through the archives and highlight the evolution of our organisation over the past three decades.

The Remote Area Planning and Development Board resulted from the work of the then 'Remote Area Committee' established in August 1990, under the auspices of the 'Centre for Development of Regional Opportunities'. Through the work of the Remote Area Committee the "Bush Problems – Bush Solutions" conference was conducted in July 1991 and from that conference, the seeds of RAPAD were sown.

That conference established that there was a need for an innovative, and perhaps unique, organisation to coordinate both private and public planning and development in the Central Western Queensland region. That conference also suggested the organisation needed to be a grassroots organisation, guided by the people of the region, for the region.

On 2 November 1992, RAPAD was legally established with the shareholders of the company being the then eleven shires of Central Western Queensland and the Great Western Region Opportunities Organisation.

To ensure co-operation and ownership of the new organisation the Board in those early days consisted of local governments, the private sector, government, and community groups.

A bold mission was defined by the newly established Board, and it read:

"To serve as a wholly community-based organisation whose sole purpose is to enhance economically, socially, culturally and environmentally the quality of life of the people of Central Western Qld by enabling through its actions the realisation of the full potential inherent in both the human and natural resources of the region".

Back then the Board was chaired by prominent Longreach doctor, Dr Tom Murphy, and in his chairman's report, from the 1995 annual general meeting, he made mention that the then Deputy Premier, the Honourable Tom Burns AO, said in 1992 that: "he'd give the Board three years to prove itself".

Dr Murphy in response to this challenge from the Deputy Premier went onto say: "In my opinion we have certainly done this, and we can feel satisfied with our accomplishment."

 (07) 4652 5600

 info@rapad.com.au

 100 Galah Street | PO Box 592
Longreach Q 4730



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Dr Murphy further elaborated: “We have proved what we initially set out to do, and that is, it was possible to create a regional body that would win the support of all shires in the Central West, it would establish a regional perspective, could win credibility from all tiers of government, and acceptance from the community”.

He said RAPAD would be a powerful instrument for regional growth and change.

Fast forward and those words from a Board Chair 27 years ago still ring true today.

Since that time of Dr Murphy, RAPAD has been chaired by Dougal Davidson, Joan Moloney, Mike Chuk, Gary Peoples, Ed Warren, Rob Chandler, Andrew Martin and now Tony Rayner.

While there have been nine Chairs, RAPAD has only had two CEOs. From shortly after inception, through to 2002, Mr Lawrie Cremin was the CEO, and from 2003 our current CEO, David Arnold has been at the helm, taking on the role for what was initially as a 12 month position.

RAPAD has and will continue to mould to the changing environment, however, while Boards, Chairs, and staff come and go, RAPAD’s fundamental reason for being remains steadfast. Those foundations and principles identified back in 1991-92, hold true today and while we always look forward, it’s important to occasionally look back and appreciate where we came from, and why.

Contact:

David Arnold, CEO

ceo@rapad.com.au | 0428 583 301