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MEDIA RELEASE

COUNCIL PURCHASES HISTORIC MANNUM INSTITUTE, PLANS TO REOPEN TO PUBLIC

Following community support, the Mid Murray Council has purchased the historic Mannum Institute and started the process to reopen it to the public for community use.

This will be the first time in more than 40 years that the grand old building has been under public ownership after being held privately since the mid-1970s.

The process to review, inspect and purchase the building has been underway since February this year, when the previous owners placed an advertisement in the local Mannum Mag community newsletter seeking expressions of interest. Since then, Council has been following appropriate processes to ensure a smooth and supported transition of the building ownership, and made the \$180,000 property purchase late last month. This was following an extensive building report on the condition of the premises being undertaken.

Negotiations are not easy often, but they are better when there is goodwill between the parties. The vendor acknowledges that the offer is for the benefit of the community for many years to come. The vendor is also appreciative of CE Property Group's professionalism throughout the expression of interest process and is very pleased with the outcome.

The purchase price of \$180,000 was less \$35,000 paid for the property in 2005 and \$55,000 less than the capital value of \$235,000 in Council records. The vendor believes genuine consideration has been taken into account for the interests of Council, citizens of Mannum and community interest groups for the maintenance and use of the iconic building.

Council also recognised income from land sales last year of \$545,000, including \$135,000 for a block in Mannum which will help with the purchase.

Mid Murray Mayor Dave Burgess said the community benefits that lay ahead for the town's historic building were exciting.

"The Council recognises the significance of the Mannum Institute to the district and we're looking forward to bringing this beautiful old building back to life," Mayor Burgess says.

"Already a range of excited community groups have engaged with Council on possible uses for the venue, and we have the support of both the Mannum Progress Association and Mannum History Group to explore best ways to open up the grandeur of the historic building.

"Mannum's main street, township appeal and Murray River culture are steeped in incredible history, and now the institute can form a part of continuing to showcase this to our community and visitors."

The Council will now prepare a repair plan for the building, outlining urgent structural works and other planned building remediation to be undertaken over a 10-year period. Early estimates show that initial repair works required for structural stability are likely to cost up to \$200,000 (not including electrical, plumbing or fit out costs).

Mid Murray Council Chief Executive Officer Russell Peate said that while the inside of the building was in better condition than he had first expected, there is a significant amount of work to do.

“There are two major projects that lie ahead for us now to ensure we make best use of the Mannum Institute. Firstly, we need to ensure structural integrity of the building, and secondly decide on an approach for its future use for the medium and long term,” Mr Peate says.

“In the coming months, we will begin a community consultation process, which will include open days for the public to view the building’s interior and make comment on its possible future use.

“We will also be working alongside key community interest groups – the Mannum Progress Association and Mannum History Group - to ensure their views are considered on use of the premises.”

Following the community consultation process, a report will be prepared on possible future uses of the Mannum Institute, which will help lead ongoing remediation activities on site.

“We expect this change of ownership to be a real coup for the town, with the main street icon potentially being opened up for events and celebrations of all kinds,” Mr Peate says.

“Once both the repair plans and future use report are complete, we can start to explore opportunities to access external grants to support the activities.



L to R: Graham Hill (Mannum History Group), Cr Adriaan Sakko, Mayor Dave Burgess, Cr Jeff Hall, Neil Warhurst (Mannum Progress Association), Kay Stevenson (Mannum History Group), Cr Peter Raison, Mid Murray Council Chief Executive Officer Russell Peate.

HISTORICAL NOTES:

The original Mannum Institute was first constructed as single storey building in 1882 (now 136 years old).

Upgrades occurred in 1910-11 when the ‘Mannum Institute Committee’ at the time decided to erect a suitably important building to reflect the ‘growth and prosperity’ of Mannum, adding a second storey for the concert hall and large balcony.

By the early 1920s the Institute was also used as a picture theatre, and after the 1956 flood, the balcony was replaced with a more ‘modest’ and narrow version – this balcony remains today.

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