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Festival of fig

• Award

Almost 2000 people turned out to the Moreton Bay fig festival on Sunday.

The event was full of entertainment for children and parents alike.

Children had the chance to milk a cow, ride in a fire engine and climb a rock wall.

There were also Scitech robot demonstrations and a circus challenge.

Victoria Park mayor Trevor Vaughan said it was nice seeing people coming out to support community groups.

"It is definitely no chore heading outside when the sun has finally come out of hiding," he said.



Joshua Browne, 5, enjoying the circus challenge on Sunday.

Dacombe takes stand on first day of hearing

• Inquiry

By ANDREA DOWNEY

The first hearing of the inquiry into the City of Canning started on Monday with former chief executive Mark Dacombe the first to take the witness stand.

The hearing was overseen by inquiry panel barrister Christopher Kendall and was assisted by barrister Darren Renton.

Mr Dacombe was questioned by counsel assisting Mr Renton on an array of issues the inquiry was investigating including the relationship of the suspended council with city staff, the alleged mayor's group of councillors, the staff and council's conduct in planning matters such as the Bannister Road/Nicholson Road intersection upgrade and the Willetton child care centre lease.

The inquiry was also look-

ing at the circumstances surrounding the suspension of Mr Dacombe by then mayor Joe Delle Donne, who was found to have "acted without reasonable grounds" in the Department of Local Government's inquiry last year.

Mr Dacombe told the inquiry when he started work as the chief executive it was clear a difficult relationship existed between the council and staff.

"There were indications given that there was an environment of mistrust between the council and staff," he said.

He said he had informal discussions with the staff and the council about the issues that needed immediate attention but no formal briefing took place.

The hearings were due to start last month but due to poorly formulated documents provided by the Department of Local Government and the City of Can-

ning the hearings were delayed until satisfactory documents were obtained.

Mr Kendall said he found it remarkable that entities with legal advisors and large staffing numbers could not provide the inquiry panel with the correct documents.

"People who are not legally trained and were submitting documents on their own asked us questions, why couldn't the department and the city show the same courtesy," he said.

The inquiry will be taking place every day from 10am to 4.30pm.

The examination of witnesses was due to conclude on November 6 and the cross examination of witnesses starting on November 19.

The inquiry panel's final report was expected to be handed to Local Government Minister Tony Simpson in March 2014.

New Victoria Park councillors scrape in local govt elections

• Elections

By HAMISH HASTIE

Keith Hayes was the only incumbent Victoria Park councillor to retain their seat amidst one of the lowest voter turnouts in the state at Saturday's local government election.

Following a nerve-wracking weekend with counting halted because of computer

issues the new councillors were sworn in at a ceremony last night.

In Banksia ward Mr Hayes received 1137 votes from 4228 voters while newcomer Mark Windram received 929 votes to oust incumbent councillor Rowena Skinner by three votes.

Incumbent councillor David Ashton received 756 votes in the Jarrah ward election, losing to Vince

Maxwell by three votes.

Brian Oliver received 16.8

per cent of the votes with 785.

Mr Ashton said he planned to stay active within the community.

"Obviously I'm disappointed that I'm not going to continue to serve the community as a councillor but I guess that's what the community wants," he said.

"The new councillors are

joining the council at an important time in its history but also an exciting time.

"I haven't ruled out having another crack again in the new council."

Banksia ward voter turnout was 24.77 per cent while Jarrah ward voter turnout was 24.46 percent.

Mr Oliver said the voter turnout was concerning.

"There was still a majority of people that weren't en-

gaged in the elections so I think that's something that I'll definitely take on board and find out why people aren't engaged in local government," he said.

"Because at the end of the day I think that local government, out of all three tiers, is the one that most impacts on everyday life."

Mr Maxwell said he expected the number of votes returned would have been

more than 30 per cent.

Acting electoral commissioner Chris Avent said it was disappointing to see low voter turnout statewide.

"It is a worrying trend and one I believe deserves to be the focus of robust discussion in our community," he said.

Victoria Park mayor Trevor Vaughan wished both incumbent and outgoing councillors well.

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