



# **SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING**

## **MINUTES**

**Tuesday 1 August 2023**

**Commencing at 9:00am**

**Remote Via Zoom**

**Wayne O'Toole  
Chief Executive Officer  
Buloke Shire Council**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 1 August 2023 commencing at 9:00am in the Remote Via Zoom****PRESENT****CHAIRPERSON:**

Cr Alan Getley Mallee Ward

**COUNCILLORS:**

Cr Bernadette Hogan	Mallee Ward
Cr David Pollard	Lower Avoca Ward
Cr Graeme Milne	Mount Jeffcott Ward
Cr Bronwyn Simpson	Mount Jeffcott Ward
Cr Daryl Warren	Mount Jeffcott Ward

**OFFICERS:**

Wayne O'Toole	Chief Executive Officer
Hannah Yu	Director Infrastructure and Delivery
Travis Fitzgibbon	Director Community Development
Michelle Stedman	Director Corporate and Organisational Performance

**AGENDA****1. COUNCIL WELCOME****WELCOME**

The Mayor Cr Alan Getley welcomed all in attendance.

**STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to their Elders and to the Elders from other communities who maybe here today.

**2. RECEIPT OF APOLOGIES**

Cr Carolyn Stewart Lower Avoca Ward

**3. DECLARATION of PECUNIARY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Cr Warren - Council Delegate to Birchip Housing Group, deems no Conflict of Interest, and will remain in the meeting for participation in the discussion, but would like it noted that he is part of that committee.

**4. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

<b>4.1</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT REPORTS</b>	<b>4</b>
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**5. MEETING CLOSED****NEXT MEETING**

THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE HELD IN WYCHEPROOF SUPPER ROOM, 367 BROADWAY, WYCHEPROOF ON WEDNESDAY, 9 AUGUST 2023 AT 7:00PM.

**Wayne O'Toole**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

## **4.1 MANAGEMENT REPORTS**

### **4.1.1 BIRCHIP COMMUNITY HOUSING INCORPORATED - REQUEST TO BE GUARANTOR FOR LOAN**

**Author's Title:** Capital Projects Officer

**Department:** Infrastructure and Delivery

**File No:** FM|04|17

**Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025**

**Strategic Objective:** Our Built and Natural Environment

#### **PURPOSE**

This Report is for Council to support an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Growing Regions Program Round 1 and consider the approval for Birchip Community Housing Incorporated to apply for a bank loan for the construction of 3 new housing units to be built at 56 Cumming Avenue, Birchip.

The Report also recommends the Council consider acting as guarantor for a 10-year loan in support of the above construction.

#### **SUMMARY**

The Australian Government's \$600 million investment over 3 years for the Growing Regions Program was established to invest in critical regional infrastructure and community projects across regional and rural Australia that:

- improves equity
- supports diverse social inclusion
- grows local economies and
- enhances amenity and liveability.

The Growing Regions Program Round 1 provides funding of between \$500,000 and \$15 million for capital works projects which deliver community and economic infrastructure. EOIs close on 1 August 2023 with full applications open from 1 November to 12 December 2023.

To be eligible for funding, a proposed project must:

- be aimed at constructing new community infrastructure or expanding or upgrading existing infrastructure for wider community benefit.
- not have commenced construction.
- not have received Commonwealth funding to undertake the same grant activities.

Examples of these activities include but not limited to:

- community hubs and centres (for example youth centres)
- art galleries, libraries, museums, and cultural facilities
- aquatic and sports centres
- social and community infrastructure which encourages economic and social liveability.

Funding is for up to 50 per cent of total eligible project costs and the applicant must contribute the remainder of total eligible project costs in cash, and from any source including state, territory, and local government grants. The project must be investment ready and commence no later than 15 May 2024 and be completed by 31 December 2025.

This Report recommends support be provided to Birchip Community Housing Incorporated to construct 3 new housing units at 56 Cumming Avenue, Birchip (Project). The proposed Project, if successful, will add new rental dwelling stock to the town's vastly under-supplied rental housing and will enable some larger existing dwellings to be made available to relocating staff of local businesses.

The Project will deliver critical rental housing infrastructure to enable Birchip to retain ageing residents in independent living arrangements and to contribute to the ongoing viability of many town businesses and services. The construction of 3 new dwellings will enable some of the residents on the current waiting list to remain in the area and will deliver up to 3 existing 3+ bedroom dwellings for new workers and their households to move to Birchip.

**MOTION:**

That Council:

1. Gives approval to the Birchip Community Housing Incorporated to seek a bank loan of up to \$300,000 to complete the construction, should the funding application be successful;
2. Provides in principle support to act as guarantor for a ten-year loan up to a maximum of \$300,000;
3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate the terms and structure of the guarantor agreement with the Birchip Community Housing Incorporated and the bank.

**MOVED: CR GRAEME MILNE**

**SECONDED: CR DARYL WARREN**

**CARRIED.**

**(R116/23)**

Cr Warren QUESTION - Who is the chair of Birchip Housing Incorporated?

Answered by Councillor Hogan - Brian Hogan, or Sarah Barber, unsure.

Confirmed post meeting to be Connelly Ryan

**Attachments:** Nil

**DISCUSSION****Buloke Shire Council Housing and Economic Development**

Buloke Shire has history of population decline, a trend which had extended for a few decades until the 2020s. However, the region is poised for growth through known developments in leveraging natural assets in agribusiness and food product value-adding, renewable energies, new tourism recognition, and mineral sands mining, as recognised in the Mallee REDS Strategic Directions. This growth trajectory has commenced and is confirmed by the recent 2021 Census of Population and Housing results. However, as the Buloke Shire Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-23 emphatically notes, there is a risk that shortages of sale and rental housing could jeopardise the ability to realise this economic diversification. Providing smaller more fit-for-purpose housing for ageing residents is part of the solution. It will free up larger houses for new and relocating worker households.

Buloke Shire's Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-23 reports "in the next 2 years (and probably beyond) the (Shire's) challenge has shifted from attracting population to a 'housing challenge' with the risk of population stabilisation in jeopardy from lack of sale and rental housing". The

Strategy goes on to remind stakeholders that moving towards population stability in Buloke will generate new housing demand. Reducing household sizes create demand for additional residential dwellings, offsetting the effect of slightly declining populations. During the 5 years between 2016 and 2021, Buloke's residential housing stock increased by 90 dwellings even though there was a small drop in population. Buloke towns have surplus reticulated infrastructure and affordable properties (compared with metropolitan and provincial city markets), but with limited choice and poor return-on-investment incentives to develop new houses.

### **Birchip and the Birchip Community Housing Incorporated Project**

Birchip specifically had a population loss of just 8 people between 2016 and 2021, while the number of occupied dwellings increased by 11 (ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021). Wimmera Development Association population projections for Buloke suggests that, with known economic development opportunities, the town will reverse its population decline and will grow at an average annual rate of 0.5% between 2021 and 2026. This will more than double the demand for housing in Birchip.

The Project will increase the number of dwellings managed by Birchip Community Housing Incorporated to 13, which is considered a healthy stock to run the not-for profit enterprise, supporting annual rental income of around \$108,000 in 2025 and providing a base for further investment in additional dwellings over time.

### **RELEVANT LAW**

The *Building Act 1993* and regulations, the *National Construction Code 2019* and all other applicable laws and standards will apply to the construction of the proposed project.

### **RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS**

Council renewed its commitment to support Birchip Community Housing Incorporated for ongoing developments at its Council Meeting held on 9 November 2022.

### **OPTIONS**

The Council may elect not to support this funding opportunity or act as guarantor for the loan.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed modular facility will incorporate sustainable designs features including utilising natural lighting and ventilation, high efficiency water fixtures and lighting.

Additional housing supply will improve the sustainability of the Birchip population.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Council has had ongoing engagement with Birchip Community Housing Incorporated and has previously support them on similar funding applications in relation to the proposed Project.

### **INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The modular building concept allows for an easily adaptable, recyclable and movable facility if ever required.

### **COLLABORATION**

It is noted that the Council has provided support to the Birchip Community Housing Incorporated in previous projects, including through acting as Guarantor for a loan.

A Notice of Motion at the Council's November 2022 Council Meeting identified options available to the Council and the administration for continued and active support of the proposed Project including but

not limited to activating support options provided for under the Community Support Policy such as support by waiving fees associated with planning and/or building permits for required works.

#### **FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

This request does not require a cash contribution of Council; however, the guarantor and potential liability will sit on Council's financial statements over the life of the grant. The Council is currently acting as guarantor for a loan for Charlton Park Committee, however, does have capacity to guarantee this loan to the value of \$300,000. There is a financial risk on Council if the Committee defaulted on the loan. The Council's Loan Guarantee Policy outlines standards and requirements in relation to requests and agreements which must be met in order for the Council to agree to act as guarantor, including that a guarantor agreement must be negotiated with the Committee to minimise risks associated with loan defaults.

#### **REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES**

The proposed Project aligns with the information released to date by the State Government in relation to the 10-year Strategy for Social and Affordable Housing which is currently being developed in recognition of the need for all Victorians to have access to safe, affordable and appropriate housing.

#### **COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES**

The Shire's Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2022-23 states that "there is a shortage of quality housing for employees (especially in professional and technical service sectors) and retirees or semi-retirees looking to locate in the Shire". The proposed Project will assist in both these areas through directly providing additional rental housing for retirees and freeing up larger dwellings for new employees. The Strategy has nominated "meeting the housing challenge" as one of its explicit strategies.

#### **TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS**

Council has met its transparency obligations by ensuring consultation has been undertaken with relevant stakeholders within the Birchip community.

Council officers have engaged with Birchip Forum and Birchip Community Housing Incorporated regarding the project proposal.

#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No Officers involved in the preparation of this report have been required to declare a conflict of interest.

#### **4.1.2 GROWING REGIONS PROGRAM - WYCHEPROOF RECREATION RESEVE MULTI-SPORT FACILITY**

**Author's Title:** Director Infrastructure and Delivery

**Department:** Infrastructure and Delivery

**File No:** GS|03|50

**Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025**

**Strategic Objective:** Our Built and Natural Environment

##### **PURPOSE**

This report is presented to Council for consideration to access \$70,000 from the \$200,000 Grant Opportunity Reserve FY24 in addition to a \$1,236,795 Council cash commitment over FY25 and FY26 for the purpose of a co-contribution to support an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Growing Regions Program Round 1.

The proposed project to be submitted under the EOI is the Multi-sport facility at the Wycheproof Recreation Reserve. The Grant Opportunity Reserve FY24 was established to provide matching funds for unanticipated grant opportunities outside of the annual budget scope.

A further recommendation seeks Council consideration to grant delegation of authority to the Chief Executive Officer to submit an application for the Expression of Interest funding round.

##### **SUMMARY**

The Australian Government's \$600 million investment over 3 years for the Growing Regions Program was established to invest in critical regional infrastructure and community projects across regional and rural Australia that:

- improves equity
- supports diverse social inclusion
- grows local economies and
- enhances amenity and liveability.

The Growing Regions Program Round 1 provides funding of between \$500,000 and \$15 million for capital works projects which deliver community and economic infrastructure. EOIs close on 1 August 2023 with full applications open from 1 November to 12 December 2023.

To be eligible for funding, a proposed project must:

- be aimed at constructing new community infrastructure or expanding or upgrading existing infrastructure for wider community benefit.
- not have commenced construction.
- not have received Commonwealth funding to undertake the same grant activities.

Examples of these activities include but are not limited to:

- community hubs and centres (for example youth centres)
- art galleries, libraries, museums, and cultural facilities
- aquatic and sports centres
- social and community infrastructure which encourages economic and social liveability.

Funding is for up to 50 per cent of total eligible project costs and the applicant must contribute the remainder of total eligible project costs in cash, and from any source including state, territory, and local



government grants. The project must be investment ready and commence no later than 15 May 2024 and be completed by 31 December 2025.

This Report recommends the Council use this funding opportunity to support delivery of the Wycheproof Recreation Reserve Masterplan. The accessible multi-sport facility proposed will provide the community with the required modern amenities to support current and future growth of recreation and social connection. Existing organised sporting activities including Netball, Hockey, Lawn bowls, Croquet, Football and Cricket will benefit from amenities that are suited to modern design principles and gender inclusiveness, whilst the broader community will utilise the new facility for a variety of purposes through a gymnasium, kitchen and social area. Also included within the works will be a compliant concrete netball court with lighting and shelters, a sealed car park adjoining the proposed facility, connecting walkways and security lighting will complete the project works.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council:

1. Approve a financial co-contribution of \$70,000 from the \$200,000 Grant Opportunity Reserve FY24 in addition to a \$1,236,795 Council cash commitment over FY25 and FY26 for the purposes of submitting an EOI for the Growing Regions Program Round 1.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to apply for the EOI for the Growing Regions Program Round 1; and
3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to sign the funding agreement on behalf of the Council should the application be successful.

#### **AMENDMENT**

##### **MOTION:**

That the Council:

1. Approve a financial co-contribution of \$70,000 from the \$200,000 Grant Opportunity Reserve FY24 in addition to a \$1,529,416 Council cash commitment over FY25 and FY26 for the purposes of submitting an EOI for the Growing Regions Program Round 1.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to apply for the EOI for the Growing Regions Program Round 1; and
3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to sign the funding agreement on behalf of the Council should the application be successful.

**Moved:** CR BERNADETTE HOGAN

**Seconded:** CR DAVID POLLARD

**CARRIED.**  
**(R117/23)**

**Attachments:**

- 1 Wycheproof Recreation Reserve Multi Sports Facility Project Details
- 2 Wycheproof Recreation and Racecourse Reserve Master Plan Summary

## DISCUSSION

The Wycheproof Recreation Reserve and Racecourse Reserve Masterplan 2021-2033 outlines that sport and active recreation plays a major role in the lives of those within the Wycheproof community, providing opportunities for physical fitness, social interaction, enjoyment, and creation of town pride.

The Masterplan established a series of key issues which are relevant to the discussion of this project:

- Ageing infrastructure
- Safety and risk management
- Governance
- Roles and responsibilities
- Rationalisation
- Volunteers
- Parking and Signage

The Masterplan also outlines opportunities identified throughout the process as:

- Increased usage
- Facility improvements
- Environmental sustainability
- Accessibility
- Reduction in cost to deliver sport and active recreation
- Facility development requirements
- Partnership development

As noted within the Master plan, the majority of built facilities at the Wycheproof Recreation Reserve are in poor to fair condition and do not adequately meet the needs of all current user groups, or the general community, regular users as well as tourists and visitors to the reserve. The opportunity to develop a new multi-sport change facility that incorporates universal design features will:

- Support both existing organised sporting user groups (Netball, Hockey, Bowling, Cricket, Croquet and Football) and their future growth in participation through inclusive and accessible design principles for change room facilities and amenities.
- Drive growth for female participation in sport and recreation by providing appropriate changing facilities and family friendly access and amenities.
- Achieve a variety of benefits associated to shared community spaces and resulting cross-generational volunteer collaboration.
- Allow for the removal of deteriorated infrastructure and drastically alter the physical appearance and presentation of the outdated reserve.
- Compliment the environmental improvements established within the Wetlands area of the reserve and support tourism to this attraction by the provision of public amenities.
- Provide opportunities for increased active recreation and positive ageing activities within the proposed accessible gym facility, amenities, access and outdoor public spaces.

Additional specific issues the project seeks to resolve for established organised sporting clubs within the reserve also include:

- The netball change facilities are inadequate, currently offering 1 toilet facility and 3 showers for the largest female participation base for organised sport within the township, along with the visiting sporting teams also regularly utilising the facility. The change facility and spectator areas as well as the court itself are not accessible.

- The hockey club members do not have change facilities and are forced to access the netball facilities or the public toilet block that is in a state of disrepair, exposed to weather and is not suited to changing.
- The bowling club building does not have a disabled toilet or compliant accessibility.
- The hockey club, netball club and cricket club utilise shipping containers for their storage needs, which present significant barriers for access.
- The ramp leading to the football pavilion does not meet DDA requirements and the away football change rooms are in very poor condition.
- The croquet clubrooms are in a very poor state of repair and need to be completely replaced.
- Growing interest in female participation for football and cricket is not supported within the current facilities due to safety concerns and the child safe policy.
- The existing netball court is deteriorating due to age. Currently only one netball court can be utilised. The existing lighting is also not to standard and is preventative of further growth or new opportunities that allow competition standard netball to be played in the evening.

The following recommendations were identified to improve the safety, risk management and overall useability of the reserve:

- Construction of a second netball court that meets regulations to reduce the risk of netballers injuring themselves due to insufficient run-off. The existing court does not meet regulations.
- Removal of any buildings on site that are no longer structurally sound to reduce the chance of them falling down and injuring reserve users.

The proposed multi-use facility will be positioned in close proximity to the proposed new netball court, bowling green, croquet green and hockey field and carefully considers the accessibility paths, vehicle traffic and safe connections from this new facility to other existing facilities and spaces within the reserve.

There is currently a lack of parking around the reserve and very few signs either directing people to the reserve from the Calder Highway or within the reserve. New parking areas need to be established near the proposed new multi-sport change room facility and near the wetlands area.

The project budget is based on costings obtained for the modular prefabricated building which would include the amenities listed within in the attached concept plan. Additional estimates for works including the proposed netball court, adjoining lighting and shedding accompany estimates for the carparking area and supporting concrete pathways and signage. The total project costings include demolition of existing buildings, tree removal, site prep, drainage, an electrical upgrade, sewer and water connection, carpark, and footpaths.

#### **RELEVANT LAW**

The *Building Act 1993* and regulations, the *National Construction Code 2019* and all other applicable laws and standards will apply to the proposed project, including compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

#### **RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS**

The implementation of the Masterplan has been identified within the Buloke Shire Council Advocacy Strategy 2022-23.

The Multi-Sport Facility has been identified in the FY24 Budget as a capital project which is funding dependant.

#### **OPTIONS**

The Council may elect not to pursue this funding opportunity.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed modular facility will incorporate sustainable designs features including utilising natural lighting and ventilation, high efficiency water fixtures and lighting. The modular building will also enable Council to reuse and recycle any materials in the future.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

In the preparation of the Masterplan a variety of community engagement sessions were held including:

- Phone calls with 17 user groups and key stakeholders
- 1 user group workshop with 17 attendees
- 2 Council staff workshop with 10 attendees in each
- 2 listening posts with 40 participants
- 1 user group survey filled out by 3 user groups
- 1 community survey filled out by 114 people (on behalf of 258 people)
- 1 meeting with Sport and Recreation Victoria and Regional Development Victoria staff (2 participants)

Since this time, Council has received various requests for updates of progress upon the actions of the Masterplan from community groups.

**INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The modular building concept allows for an easily adaptable, recyclable and movable facility if ever required. Participation based sport and recreation has changed considerably over the past 20 years, the opportunities the universal and inclusive design principles apply will ensure that the facility can adapt with a wide range of sports and active recreation at any age or ability.

**COLLABORATION**

Landowners consent will be required from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to undertake the proposed works. A planning permit will also be required due to the value of the works and a design and development overlay on the land. These processes will allow community members, regional stakeholders and Traditional Owners the opportunity to give feedback.

Governing bodies of the sporting codes who will utilise the facility and the user groups will be given the opportunity to review the design and confirm their support of the development.

**FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

The Masterplan seeks to effectively plan the development, management, maintenance and renewal costs associated to the proposed facility upgrades on an ongoing basis. Long term projects such as the proposal of the multi-sports facility will combine the needs of a majority of the user community groups within the reserve that have previously been operating within individual facilities that are not financially sustainable. The establishment of this multi-use facility rationalises a number of small, unsuitable facilities that incur significant ongoing maintenance and insurance fees.

The total budget forecast for the project is \$3,013,590 comprising \$1,506,795 funding from the Commonwealth Government, \$200,000 from the Wycheproof Recreation Reserve Committee and \$1,306,795 Council Cash. \$70,000 of this allocation is proposed to be accessed from the Grant Opportunity Reserve FY24, with \$856,315 Council cash contribution in FY25 and \$387,100 Council cash contribution in FY26. Additional funding will be sought from the State Government to complement the council cash requirements.

It should be noted that any spend committed to through successful funding applications will be subtracted from the available Council funds for capital projects in that financial year. Ongoing maintenance and associated costs contained in Council's operational budget.

**REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES**

Key plans the project takes into consideration:

- Fair Play Code
- Female friendly sport infrastructure guidelines
- Guidelines for Preventing Violence against women
- AFL Central Victoria Facilities Strategy
- Active Victoria
- VicHealth Physical Activity Strategy
- Victorian integrity in sport action plan
- Design for everyone guide

**COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES**

The proposal addresses key elements and actions from the Buloke Shire Inclusiveness Plan whilst also complimenting the outcomes of the Masterplan. The adjoining bowling club membership will support the facility as a multi-use, year round asset in addition to the community access from visitors of the nearby wetlands precinct.

The proposal will allow much greater opportunity for community-based events to promote inclusivity in public open spaces and recreational activity that may be supported through the availability of appropriate facilities.

The proposal demonstrates a collaborative approach between community forum, sporting/recreation-based groups and community members with special needs in order to achieve an outcome with highly beneficial long-term effects for the broader Buloke local government area.

**TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS**

Council has met its transparency obligations by ensuring consultation has been undertaken with relevant stakeholders within the Wycheproof community.

Council officers have engaged with Wyche Alive, Committee members of the Wycheproof Narraport Football, Netball, Hockey Club, Cricket Club, Wycheproof Bowling Club and Croquet clubs to seek support and feedback regarding the project proposal.

If Council resolve to accept the recommendations to access the required Council funds and apply for this Growing Regions Program Round 1, officers will:

- Establish a formal project advisory group for the project; and
- Undertake a proactive media engagement strategy to explain the rationale for Council's decision, the application process, and long-term benefits for the community if successful.

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Trevor Rumbold – Coordinator Project Delivery and Jenna Allan – Manager Community Development have declared conflicts of interest due to their positions on Committees of the Wycheproof Narraport Football and Netball Clubs respectively and will complete conflict management plans with their managers.

No other officers involved in the preparation of this report have been required to declare a conflict of interest.

**4. MEETING CLOSED**