



COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES

Wednesday 12 April 2023

Commencing at 7:00pm

Wycheproof Supper Room

367 Broadway, Wycheproof

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 12 April 2023 commencing at 7:00pm in the Wycheproof Supper Room, 367 Broadway, Wycheproof**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
Jenna Allan Manager Community Services

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 (leave of absence)

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**MOTION:**

That Council adopt the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 8 March 2023.

Moved: CR DARYL WARREN

Seconded: CR BERNADETTE HOGAN

**CARRIED.
(R064/23)**

4. REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Nil.

5. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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	If the meeting has been closed it will be brought back into open session by resolution	
10.	MEETING CLOSE	

NEXT MEETING

THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE HELD IN WYCHEPROOF SUPPER ROOM, 367 BROADWAY, WYCHEPROOF ON WEDNESDAY, 10 MAY 2023 AT 7:00PM.

Wayne O’Toole
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

6.1 GLENDA WATTS – VNI WEST PROJECT

QUESTIONS (IN BOLD):

1. What is Council's position on the VNI West Option 5 Proposal?

ANSWER PROVIDED BY MAYOR, CR ALAN GETLEY:

Council has been advocating in the strongest possible terms to ensure the Australian Energy Market Operator conducts a transparent and open consultative process with all affected stakeholders including residents and farmers.

We have spoken to both Federal and State Members of Parliament, as well as senior staff at AEMO in recent weeks about our concerns on the consultation process to date.

We recognise the Option 5 route is currently presented as being somewhere within a 50 kilometre radius through part of Buloke Shire.

We also acknowledge the route is changing by the day, based on feedback from stakeholders.

We await a more detailed plan in the coming month which will narrow the route down. Council will then form a position and make representation at that time.

2. Will Council communicate to the appropriate bodies, its support for their ratepayers?

ANSWER PROVIDED BY MAYOR, CR ALAN GETLEY:

Yes we will.

6.2 TREVOR MCGURK – VNI WEST PROJECT

QUESTIONS (IN BOLD):

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

1. I ask, on behalf of my family and community, for your support to save our district from being carved up by the VNI West project and that you represent your ratepayers, by strenuously opposing this project.

Please emphasise that it has been changed from the most direct route, linking our 2 largest provincial cities, to a far longer route, harvesting less than half of the renewable energy the initial corridor offered.

ANSWER PROVIDED BY MAYOR, CR ALAN GETLEY:

The VNI West project has caused significant anxiety in our community, particularly given the lack of any detail provided by the Australian Energy Market Operator to this point. The documentation provided on the preferred route shows a 50km wide map running from Kerang through parts of our Shire.

Council has been in constant contact with AEMO, including a briefing from their staff last week as well as local Members of Parliament highlighting our concerns about their consultation and limited detail.

We are advised by AEMO to expect more detail in the next month at which time Council will take a position which will reflect the concerns and view of all of our residents.

2. Secondly, ask why your residents in Buloke Shire are less valued and more expendable than those in the Shires of the first chosen corridor?

RESPONSE PROVIDED BY MAYOR, CR ALAN GETLEY:

From Council's perspective, the residents of Buloke are in no way less valued than anyone else, Council will ensure the view of our residents are represented at all times.

6.3 TRADITIONAL OWNERS – MOUNT WYCHEPROOF – PROPER COSTINGS – RE: SACRED EMUS

Background

Traditional Owners, represented by Elders Uncle Gary Murray, Uncle Bobby Nicholls and Uncle Danny Kelly, note the recent discussions held on Mount Wycheproof on Monday 27 March, 2023 with the Mayor, Councillors, State Government representatives, Traditional Owners and other interested parties in attendance. Elder Uncle Bobby Nicholls gave a Welcome to Country.

Following that meeting on Mount Wycheproof, the Mayor, Cr. Alan Getley spoke on ABC Radio Horsham with Rebekah Lowe in relation to the meeting and to the Sacred Emus on Mount Wycheproof. He stated that the Shire ratepayers could not pay for the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of the Emus or their enclosure. He also gave figures that he said would be needed for the maintenance of the emu enclosure and their ongoing care. Traditional Owners say that the figures he quoted were enormous and were not reflected in the Emu Management Plan prepared for the Shire by Southern Fauna Ecology (SFE, Emily Richardson) in July, 2021.

Traditional Owners submitted a detailed Response to that (Draft) Emu Management Plan ("the SFE Plan"). Traditional Owners are of the strong view that:

- even the costings given in the SFE Plan were excessive and not in line with reality. But Traditional Owners believe that the Mayor's costings given on the ABC were over and above the costings quoted in the SFE Plan.
- the Sacred Emus on the Mount have been cared for for over 32 years by Mr. Bernie Orr and Mrs. Kate Orr - and for over some 6 years, Charlton Tourism Inc has been assisting with the cost of food and maintenance of the fencing at the Emu Enclosure.
- Traditional Owners therefore believe there has, to date, been little or no cost to the Shire - or its ratepayers - to maintain the Reserve or to feed/house the Sacred Emus there.
- the SFE Plan only considered two of a possible four or more options (as acknowledged by Emily Richardson at Pages 5, 13 and 19 of the Plan), so that "Plan" has to be regarded as incomplete - and any costings re-assessed.

As part of the Traditional Owners' Response to the Shire and to the SFE Plan, dated 21 October, 2021 Mr. Kevin O'Dea, Chartered Accountant and Hon. Chairman of Charlton Tourism Inc submitted questions in regard to the costings contained in the Plan. The former CEO of the Shire, Mr. Anthony Judd told Mr. O'Dea that the Shire would "**get back**" to him and Traditional Owners with details of how the costings had been calculated. This however has never occurred.

Given that neither Traditional Owners nor Mr. O'Dea have had any contact from the Shire as to the veracity of the costings in the Plan, Traditional Owners now ask the Shire - and the Mayor given his

recent ABC interview - for an urgent and considered response from the Shire to Traditional Owners and to Charlton Tourism Inc - to validate the SFE Plan costings for the maintenance of the emus.

Traditional Owners strongly believe that:

- the Sacred Emus should be celebrated for their spiritual and cultural significance to First Nations peoples;
- the Sacred Emus are protected wildlife under the relevant legislation;
- The Emus should be housed and cared for in a Fauna Park type environment, similar to Kyabram Fauna Park, with its vast tourist potential;
- they must be properly maintained and cared for.

QUESTION (IN BOLD):

Traditional Owners now request on an urgent basis from the Shire a detailed, formal response and to advise the proper costings for the Sacred Emus and their enclosure on Mount Wycheproof.

We thank you in anticipation of your urgent response.

Yours faithfully,

Authorised by: Elder Uncle Gary Murray (Wyrkermilloo);
Elder Uncle Bobby Nicholls; and
Elder Uncle Danny Kelly.

ANSWER PROVIDED BY MAYOR, CR ALAN GETLEY:

Council will take this question on notice, but as per a resultant conversation during a follow up phone call placed by your representative Sherrill O'Connor to Council's Director Community Development today, active participation in the Mount Wycheproof Emu Working Group would address the veracity of the costings in the plan and understand what is required and how best to access funds to provide for the emu population together.

My understanding from our meeting on country is that we are all pulling in the same direction.

7. PROCEDURAL ITEMS**7.1 REPORT OF COUNCILLOR ASSEMBLIES**

Author's Title: Executive Assistant

Department: Office of the CEO

File No: GO/05/04

MOTION:

That the Council note the report of Councillor Assembly Meetings held 1 and 15 March 2023.

MOVED: CR BRONWYN SIMPSON

SECONDED: CR GRAEME MILNE

CARRIED.

(R065/23)

Attachments: 1 Councillor Briefing Record - 1 March 2023
2 Councillor Briefing Record - 15 March 2023

KEY POINTS/ISSUES

Transparency is a fundamental principle of democratic governance.

The Local Government Act 2020 (The Act) Section 9 (2) (i) provides that the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

In accordance with Section 57 of The Act, Council at its September 2020 Ordinary Meeting, adopted a Public Transparency policy, designed to improve public transparency in Council's decision-making processes and to assist the community in understanding the information that is accessible to them.

As per the Council Meeting Schedule adopted 9 November 2022, Councillor Briefings are held for Councillors to meet to consider matters that are likely to be the subject of a Council decision or for the exercise of delegation.

A record of the Councillor Briefings held on 1 and 15 March 2023 is attached for public information.

7.2 CORRESPONDENCE INITIATED BY COUNCIL

Author's Title: Executive Assistant

Department: Office of the CEO

File No: GO/06/06

PURPOSE

This report notes and records correspondence initiated by Council and informs the Council of the responses received from this correspondence.

Nil Resolution – Noting to Report

Attachments: Nil

TABLE OF CORRESPONDENCE

Council Initiative	Sent/to be sent to	Sent	Response	Purpose of Letter/Response
Nil Items				

7.3 LETTERS OF CONGRATULATIONS AND RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT/AWARDS

Author's Title: Executive Assistant

Department: Office of the CEO

File No: CR/13/01

PURPOSE

This report acknowledges and congratulates community persons and/or groups for their success in being recognised for a significant achievement or for being a recipient of an honourable award.

The report also informs Council of any letters of congratulations or any recognition of achievement that Council has received or been awarded in the past month.

MOTION:

That the Council acknowledge and congratulate the persons and/or groups mentioned in the report for their achievements.

MOVED: CR GRAEME MILNE

SECONDED: CR DAVID POLLARD

CARRIED.
(R066/23)

Attachments: Nil

RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT ITEMS

Provider	Recipient	Date	Purpose for Recognition
Wimmera Mallee Cricket Association	Robin Letts OAM		Being awarded a Life Membership for his lifelong dedication to the advancement of cricket for this District, via his family owned and operated Buloke Times (and former entities), as well as on a personal enjoyment level, as a cricket tragic, at every opportunity that arose.
Wimmera Mallee Cricket Association	Daryl Broughton		Being awarded a Life Membership for his continued involvement in the sport of cricket as an umpire, commencing from the formation of the Association, and prior to that as a player.

7.4 BUILDING PERMITS - MONTHLY UPDATE

Author's Title: Statutory Administration Support

Department: Office of the CEO

File No: DB/14/01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information on Building Permits approved by staff from 1 March 2023 to 31 March 2023.

The information published in the list provided, is in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*.

MOTION:

That the Council note information contained in the report on Building Permits approved by staff from 1 March 2023 to 31 March 2023.

MOVED: CR BERNADETTE HOGAN

SECONDED: CR DAVID POLLARD

CARRIED.
(R067/23)

Attachments: Nil

LIST OF BUILDING PERMITS APPROVED BY COUNCIL SURVEYOR

Council Ref.	Permit No.	Address	Project Description	Date Approved
20230006	2438132747761	Johnson Street, Birchip	Pergola	16/03/2023
20230008	4134347143186	Clifton Street, Charlton	Swimming pool & safety barrier	23/03/2023

LIST OF BUILDING PERMITS APPROVED BY PRIVATE BUILDING SURVEYOR

Council Ref.	Permit No.	Address	Project Description	Date Approved

7.5 PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED - MONTHLY UPDATE

Author's Title: Planning Officer

Department: Office of the CEO

File No: LP/09/01

PURPOSE

This report provides information on planning applications under consideration by staff and the status of each of these applications.

MOTION:

That the Council note information contained in the report on planning applications under consideration by staff and the status of each of these applications.

MOVED: CR DAVID POLLARD

SECONDED: CR GRAEME MILNE

CARRIED.

(R068/23)

Attachments: Nil

LIST OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The information published in the list provided, is in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Application No	Address	Date Rec	Summary of Proposal	Status
PPA962/21	Corack Road, Donald (Lot 1&2 PS216306M)	11/11/2021	Use and development of land for a service station, construct and display a business identification sign and create or alter access to Road Zone, Category 1	Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit
PPA986/22	High Street, Charlton (Lot 1 TP 193629)	01/06/2022	Construct and display an 18.26m ² double-sided, externally illuminated major promotion sign	Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit
PA22005	Stannard Road, Watchupga (Lot 1 TP219186)	09/11/2022	Construction of a farrowing shed associated with existing piggery	Permit issued

Application No	Address	Date Rec	Summary of Proposal	Status
PA22006	High Street, Wycheproof (Lot 1 TP516215)	15/11/2022	Extension to a dwelling in HO	Review
PA22007	Campbell Street, Birchip and Hillgrove Street, Birchip (CA 2002, CA 12L Sec. 5, CA 12N Sec. 5 & CA 12O Sec. 5, Township of Birchip, PC166801P)	29/11/2022	Boundary realignment of 5 existing tiles into 2 new titles	Review
PA23008	Cumming Avenue Birchip VIC 3483 (Lot 1 PS210398L, Lot 4 PS439955M)	23/12/2022	Development of land for a residential building	Permit issued
PA23010	Broadway, Wycheproof (Lot 1 PS826773L)	16/01/2023	Six-lot subdivision of land and the development of land for six dwellings	Objection
PA23011	Cheetham Salt Road Bimbourie (CA 2007 Parish of Bimbourie)	19/12/2022	Earthworks to replace a septic system	Permit issued
PA23012	Main Street, Culgoa (Lot 1 TP751938G)	24/01/2023	Extend hours of trade for existing business	Objection
PA23013	Hannon Street, Sea Lake (Lot 1 TP251694)	25/01/2023	Five-lot subdivision of land	Request for further information
PA23014	Hannon Street, Sea Lake (Lot 14 LP004936)	24/01/2023	Five-lot subdivision of land and the development of land for five dwellings	Notice of application Referral
PA23015	Birchip-Wycheproof Road, Narraport	24/01/2023	Two-lot subdivision of land and the use and development of land for a veterinary clinic and associated dwelling	Request for further information
PA23017	Donald Street, Charlton (CA 8, Sec 12, Parish of Charlton)	22/03/2023	Use and development of land for a store (domestic shed Township Zone)	Notice of application
PA23018	Messines Street, Nandaly (CA 3, Sec 3, Parish of Bimbourie)	28/03/2023	Works in a Heritage Overlay (roof mounted solar panels)	Notice of application
PA23016	Jenkins Street, Charlton (Lot 5, Sec C, LP492)	06/03/2023	Building and Works in LSIO (extend carport and construct verandah)	Referral

Application No	Address	Date Rec	Summary of Proposal	Status
PPA928/21	Campbell Street, Birchip (Lots 6, 7, 8 & 9 LP58023)	14/02/2023	Amend application after notice - for the use and development of land for a service station (fuel cell), business identification sign, alter access to TRZ2	Notice of application Referral

7.6 STATUS OF ACTION OF PAST COUNCIL MEETING RESOLUTIONS

Author's Title: Executive Assistant

Department: Office of the CEO

File No: GO/05/04

PURPOSE

To provide Council with a list of the Status of Action (SOA) of Council Resolutions outstanding for action and the SOA for the 8 March 2023 Council Meeting Resolutions.

MOTION:

Council to note the Status of Action Report for Council resolutions documented on this list.

MOVED: CR GRAEME MILNE

SECONDED: CR BRONWYN SIMPSON

CARRIED.
(R069/23)

Attachments: 1 Actions Taken on Council Resolutions - On Outstanding items and 8 March 2023 Council Meeting

KEY POINTS/ISSUES

The Local Government Act 2020 (The Act) Section 9 (2) (i) provides that the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

In accordance with the Council's Governance Rules adopted August 2022, Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.

The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured and is a fundamental principle of democratic governance.

Attached to this report for public information is a list of the SOA of Council Resolutions outstanding and introducing the SOA for the 8 March 2023 Council Meeting Resolutions.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

8.1 POLICY REPORTS

8.1.1 COMMUNITY SUPPORT POLICY

Author's Title: Director Community Development

Department: Community Development

File No: CD/11/09

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Community Wellbeing

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to adopt the Community Support Policy which provides an overarching framework to determine the nature and level of support provided to community groups, organisations, and committees.

SUMMARY

The provision of community support to achieve desired outcomes is critically important; many Buloke communities have a range of events, places and spaces that require assistance from Council to be successful.

The Community Support Policy sets out the type of groups that Council is able to support including Incorporated Associations and Community Asset Committees and also a range of criteria required to be able to assist with community support.

MOTION:

That Council adopts the Community Support Policy.

MOVED: CR BERNADETTE HOGAN

SECONDED: CR DAVID POLLARD

**CARRIED.
(R070/23)**

Attachments: 1 Community Support Policy

DISCUSSION

Council provides support to the community in a number of ways and this Community Support Policy prescribes an overarching framework to determine the nature and level of support available.

The provision of community support to achieve desired outcomes is critically important; many Buloke communities have a range of events, places and spaces that require assistance from Council to be successful.

The attached policy sets out the type of groups that Council is able to support including Incorporated Associations and Community Asset Committees and also a range of criteria required to be able to assist with community support.

The policy includes the following types of support:

1. Fee waiver for hire of Council owned facilities;
2. Direct annual funding agreements with the recreation reserve committees;
3. Community Grants program;
4. Sustainability Grants program;
5. Fee waiver on planning permits required on Council owned or managed land, and Crown Land;
6. Fee waiver (excluding the levy) on a Building Permit required on Council owned or managed land, and Crown Land;
7. Provisions of assistance with events including signage and traffic management controls;
8. Assistance with governance arrangements and grant submissions within operational resources; and
9. Sponsorship allocations as listed in the annually adopted Budget.

RELEVANT LAW

Not applicable.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council adopted its first Community Support Policy in August 2017.

OPTIONS

Council has the option to not adopt the Community Support Policy.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Sustainability considerations will be taken into account in relation to considering planning permit applications and also with community and sustainability grant applications.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Elements that inform this policy undergo strong community engagement. Annual Budgets, Community Grants Programs and Guidelines are examples of these.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Council continuously looks to work alongside community to advance Buloke Shire and its opportunities as it realises its Community Vision.

COLLABORATION

This policy was initially developed through collaboration from each Council directorate. This updated document was reviewed and revised by the Community Development directorate and Council's Executive Management Team.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The community assistance outlined in the policy has a small financial implication with the waiving of some facility hiring fees and some planning and building permit application fees. These and any other implications are factored into annual budgeting.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Local Government Act 2020

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

Buloke Shire Council Annual Budget

Buloke Shire Council Community Grants Guidelines

Buloke Shire Long Term Community Vision and Council Plan 2021-2025

Buloke Shire Council Financial Plan

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

A Community Support Policy and its framework makes transparent the types of support Council can provide and to who.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The officers involved in the preparation of this policy and report have no conflicts of interest.

8.2 MANAGEMENT REPORTS

8.2.1 ADVOCACY STRATEGY 2023

Author's Title: Director Community Development

Department: Community Development

File No: ED/03/02

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Council and Community Leadership

PURPOSE

This report is presented to Council to consider the adoption of an updated Advocacy Strategy to include advocacy efforts related to the flood event of October 2022.

SUMMARY

In line with Council's Long-Term Community Vision and Council Plan and community aspirations, a review and redevelopment of the Advocacy Strategy has been undertaken to include advocacy efforts in relation to the October 2022 flood event. The Advocacy Strategy is to be reviewed annually, or as needed.

MOTION:

That Council:

1. Adopts the Advocacy Strategy 2023; and
2. Will review the Advocacy Strategy within the 2023/2024 financial year.

MOVED: CR BRONWYN SIMPSON

SECONDED: CR DAVID POLLARD

CARRIED.

(R071/23)

Attachments: 1 Buloke Shire Council Advocacy Strategy 2023

DISCUSSION

The Buloke Shire Council Advocacy Strategy outlines the key advocacy projects Council is currently committed to focusing on and seeking partnerships to implement.

Many of the projects presented reflect some of the challenges faced by Buloke Shire as one of the largest municipalities geographically, with an ageing and declining population.

It is acknowledged that many rural councils face similar challenges and therefore it is important to recognise that Council cannot, and does not, work alone – but rather aims to work in partnership with the community, service providers and other levels of government to deliver on its vision for the future.

However, the priority projects presented in the Advocacy Strategy are only some of the issues of Council and the Buloke community; therefore work will continue on a number of other priorities as stated in the Council Plan 2021-25 and Long-Term Community Vision and other adopted policies and strategies.

The Advocacy Strategy outlines the top-tier priorities impacting our community right now and follows the same themes identified by Buloke residents in the development of the Buloke 2030 Community Plan.

The Strategy now also includes advocacy pieces in relation to the October 2022 flood event that affected much of Victoria.

These strategic themes are:

- Our Built and Natural Environment
- Our Community Wellbeing
- Our Economy
- Our Council and Community Leadership

Many of the priorities in the strategy are infrastructure projects that can be staged. Whilst the strategy highlights the strategic priorities, it doesn't prohibit Council from applying for funding and requesting government support on other initiatives.

Key initiatives include:

- Commonwealth Games Tourism and Social Housing outcomes;
- Drainage and flood mitigation;
- Annual Funding for roads of strategic importance;
- Annual funding for Information and Communication Technology;
- Premier sporting facility upgrades including aquatic upgrades;
- Grain receival access upgrades; and
- Construction of a roundabout at the 'five ways' intersection in Birchip.

It also calls for state and federal government policy shifts, particularly around:

- Betterment works to be included in Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements funding schemes;
- A housing investment incentive package for rural areas;
- Increased funding for asset renewal for small rural council;
- Creation of a viable operating model that would guarantee delivery of childcare services over the medium term (five years); and
- Full completion of the Murray Basin Rail project.

It is recommended that this Advocacy Strategy is to be reviewed and updated in the 2023/2024 financial year.

RELEVANT LAW

There are no relevant law implications.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council adopted Advocacy Strategies in May 2020, September 2021 and October 2022. This version is an adaption of the document adopted in October 2022 to capture advocacy efforts related to the flood event of October 2022.

Council moved a Notice of Motion at its November 2022 Council Meeting to advocate for betterment works to be included in Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements funding schemes.

Council adopted its Recovery Plan in December 2022.

OPTIONS

Council could choose not to adopt the Advocacy Strategy. It is worth noting that this document can be reviewed at any time.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The Strategy includes a priority focussed on enhancing the environmental performance of the broader Buloke community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This Advocacy Strategy has been developed through a review of a large range of strategies, plans and consultation efforts of Council in recent years.

A significant amount of community engagement has been undertaken in flood response and recovery that has also informed this update.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Council's Advocacy Strategies have produced extremely positive results from funding providers over the past two years. This document will build on the success of the advocacy efforts of Council in building a better Buloke.

COLLABORATION

This strategy pulls from a range of internal and external strategic documents and the only way for Council to deliver on these community priorities is to do it in partnership with other levels of government, the community, and other stakeholders.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Like all small rural councils, Buloke is heavily reliant on external funding for the delivery of large-scale capital works projects. Ultimately, one of the key aims of this document is to attract external funding for the delivery of the important projects detailed in this Advocacy Strategy. If funding is received, this will form part of future capital works programs.

Policies like the 'no betterment' approach to flood restoration works eat away at the viability of small rural Councils.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

This document will feed into key regional strategic plans, including the Mallee Regional Partnership priorities, State Government's Regional Victorian Commonwealth Games, and Regional Development Australia's work on viable childcare servicing as well as each tier of governments' flood recovery funding guidelines.

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

This Advocacy Strategy has strong alignment with key strategy and policy documents, including the Council Plan, Interim Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, Inclusiveness Plan, Gender Equality Action Plan, Financial Plan, Asset Management Plan, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plan, Municipal Early Years Plan, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and Community Plans and Recovery Plan.

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

This report is being presented in an open Council Meeting.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officer involved in the development of this report has a conflict of interest.

8.2.2 RESPONSE TO COMMONWEALTH AGED CARE REFORMS - FINAL REPORT

Author's Title: Manager Community Services

Department: Community Development

File No: CS/16/24

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Community Wellbeing

PURPOSE

The report seeks Council consideration of the feedback received following an in-principle decision regarding its future role as a provider of services under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) and Victorian Home & Community Care Program for Young People (HACC-PYP).

The in-principle decision taken by Council in February 2023 triggered transparent, engagement and consultation with clients, staff and community. This report provides an overview of the actions taken following the in-principle decision and the feedback received from these processes.

After consideration of feedback, it is recommended that Council proceed to confirm that it will commence an orderly and managed transition out of all funded home-based and community-based service provision for older residents. It is recommended that as part of this transition process, Council ensures that all obligations to clients, families, staff, and funding bodies are recognised and respected.

SUMMARY

Buloke Shire Council is a long-term provider of aged and disability services for its community.

Significant Commonwealth reforms have been implemented in the past decade and future changes to the funding and operating environment will result in Council being ill-equipped and not suited to continuing as a provider.

The current *Commonwealth Home Support Program* (CHSP) transitions to the new *Support at Home Program* after 30 June 2024. Based on this imminent transition and its understanding of community interests and needs, Council made an in-principle decision in February 2023 that it would consult with those affected, based on a transition out of the service delivery function in 2023.

Appointment of a successor provider or providers of these services is the responsibility of the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments, however a period of transition will allow Council to support existing clients through the staged process of change.

Services to the Buloke community will continue to be funded to the same levels and will be delivered under the same National Quality Framework which have applied to Council as a provider.

Council has throughout the process of consultation, remained committed to transparency and engagement with clients, staff and community and has assured all stakeholders that it will respect the service agreement and industrial obligations. Feedback received has been incorporated into planning for implementation of the Council decision.

In undertaking this decision Council understands it has responsibilities to clients and families, long serving staff, and the broader community to manage the transition effectively and to anticipate and mitigate risk.

MOTION:

That Buloke Shire Council:

- (a) Notes that since 2011 the Commonwealth has progressed implementation of a consistent and integrated national aged care service system based on increased consumer choice and control and competition between providers to drive quality improvements and service efficiencies with a final transition date of 1 July 2024.
- (b) Accepts that due to inherent service cost, financial constraints, the National competition policy and other structural challenges, Buloke Shire Council will not be able to play a meaningful future role in service delivery.
- (c) Confirms that it will not accept the service agreement extension for the 2023/24 year and will instead transition out of direct service delivery roles in the following programs:
 - (i) All funded Commonwealth Home Support Programme services
 - i. Domestic Assistance
 - ii. Personal Care
 - iii. Flexible Respite
 - iv. Social Support – Group
 - v. Social Support – Individual
 - vi. Home Maintenance and Modifications
 - vii. Delivered Meals
 - viii. Sector Support & Development
 - (ii) All HACC-PYP funded services
 - i. Domestic Assistance
 - ii. Personal Care
 - iii. Property Maintenance
 - iv. Social Support Group
 - v. Volunteer Coordination
 - vi. Occupational Therapy
 - vii. Centre-based Respite
- (d) Commits to working with the Commonwealth and Victorian governments to negotiate timing and transition processes that will protect the interests of clients, their families, much valued staff, and the broader community.
- (e) Notes that under its service agreements all processes and matters related to the transition process (i.e., names of future providers) will remain confidential until the Commonwealth and Victorian governments provide consent for release of information.
- (f) Reaffirms that in taking this decision it will continue to play an active role in ensuring its community will receive high-quality aged care services and will advocate for the needs of vulnerable members of the community.
- (g) Commits to the values and principles outlined in Appendix A to the report to underpin and support decision making through the transition process.
- (h) Notes that the appointment of a successor provider is the responsibility of the Commonwealth and Council is bound to confidentiality under its service agreement and cannot release any information about the appointment and transition process.
- (i) Realigns its policy direction towards future investment in age-friendly or positive-ageing initiatives and ensuring that Council's universal services and facilities are designed to meet the needs of a growing population of older residents. Further policy work and recommended directions will be referred to the 2023/24 budget process for review and approval.
- (j) Notes that Council's policy objective of ensuring that older adults seeking to live independently in the community will be provided with quality home support services will not be compromised by this decision. Services will continue to be provided and Council will be able to reinvest its current

ratepayer subsidy into alternative strategic priorities.

- (k) Provides delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer, or their nominee, to undertake or commission all tasks and activities related to the implementation of this council decision.
- (l) Appoints the Mayor and CEO as spokespersons for all matters related to the Home Support Transition process.
- (m) Approves immediate notification of its final decision to, and appropriate consultation with:
 - (i) Clients and families
 - (ii) Staff and union representatives
 - (iii) Media and other communications
 - (iv) Broader community

MOVED: CR DAVID POLLARD

SECONDED: CR GRAEME MILNE

**FIVE – IN FAVOUR.
ONE - AGAINST
CARRIED.**

**DIVISION WAS CALLED FOR BY CR WARREN
CRS POLLARD, HOGAN, MILNE, GETLEY AND SIMPSON – IN FAVOUR.
CR WARREN – AGAINST.**

(R072/23)

Attachments: Nil

BACKGROUND/KEY INFORMATION

Buloke Shire Council (the Council) has been an important provider of home and community care services to assist older people to continue to live independently in the community.

The investment and organisational commitment to providing services has over time become emblematic of the supportive relationship between Council and its community. Investment in these services was a means of expressing a strong commitment to many vulnerable members of the community: this included older people, people with a disability or mental illness and people at risk of homelessness.

The National Aged Care reforms

Australia's integrated national aged care program has been undergoing significant reforms over the past 10 years, this followed a Commonwealth commitment to take full responsibility for aged care in August 2011 and establishment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme at a similar time.

The key drivers for the aged care reforms include:

- The number of people in Australia requiring aged care (in some form) would increase by 350% between 2011 and 2050
- Significant system weaknesses (difficult navigation, limited services, variable quality, and no consumer choice) and inefficiencies (duplication of effort, no competition, and high-cost structures) that needed to be eradicated, and
- Real concern that the cost of providing adequate care for older people in future would be unaffordable as a nation.

Attributes of the current aged care model include:

- CHSP – ‘entry level’ basic home support and community-based services – domestic assistance, personal care, shopping etc – this program provides services to 839,400 older Australians nationally
- Home Care – four levels of ‘packaged care’ funded from basic to high care to maintain independence – services were provided to 175,000 older Australians
- Residential Care – funded residential aged care (respite and permanent) – 310,000 older Australians nationally

In 2020/21 governments (not including local government) spent \$23.6 billion or around \$5,000 per older person on aged care related services; this comprised Residential Care \$14.3 billion and Home Care and Home Support \$7.8 billion.

Design principles for the aged care reforms have remained very consistent since initiation, these include:

- **Consumer Choice and Control** – funding is provided directly to the clients based on assessed need to support choice and control – the client purchases services from a range of providers. This has a strong human rights and philosophical basis but introduces competition and signals the end of ‘block funding’ certainty for providers in most circumstances.
- **A Simplified Gateway** – My Aged Care is the single point of entry for all Australians to access aged care services – the 2017 Legislated Review of Aged Care has recommended merging of the RAS (Home Support) and Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACAT) (Residential Aged Care) into a streamlined national assessment service.
- **Demand Driven System** – the current ‘block funded’ and supply driven system will progressively move to a ‘demand driven’ funding system to ensure consistent services are delivered to where they are needed rather than what areas funding is allocated.
- **Competition Policy** – there is a renewed national focus on competition policy to drive economic growth, productivity, and efficiency in service delivery. The future program design will be based on market and competition principles meaning that local government will face direct market exposure and a continuing ratepayer subsidy will be prohibited or unlawful.
- **Monopoly Market** – the current protected market arrangements will be dismantled to facilitate regulated competition and improved efficiency. Council is not equipped to effectively operate under market conditions.
- **Market Efficiencies** – the Commonwealth is seeking to reduce transaction costs by having fewer contracts with larger organisations who can operate across large geographic areas.
- **Client Contribution** – the Commonwealth expects that all Australians will make a consistent contribution to care depending on their capacity and capability.

Recent reform decisions have reinforced the direction of the Commonwealth. In recent budgets the Commonwealth has announced significant additional investment in creating a consistent national aged care system. This included:

- \$6.5 billion for 80,000 additional aged care packages
- \$3.9 billion for improved front line residential care
- \$630 million improved access for vulnerable Australians
- \$365 million for better transition to residential care
- \$230 million to strengthen aged care quality and compliance
- \$49.4 million for aged care training
- \$21 million for improved sector governance
- \$13.4 million to Primary Health Networks to drive better coordination
- \$2.5 billion for guaranteed 24/7 onsite nursing in aged care settings
- \$48 million for a dedicated aged care complaints system

- Commitment to funding a 15% pay increase for aged care workers (decision handed down in November 2022)

During 2022, a further extension of the CHSP program to 30 June 2024 was announced to enable the design and roll-out of the new 'Support at Home' program. The original reform timing was for completion by 30 June 2018, and this has now been subject to five extensions.

The 'Support at Home' program will be a new integrated program commencing 1 July 2024 that combines CHSP, Home Care Packages, Residential Respite and Short-term Restorative Care. This integrated model will most likely be client-directed, offer a range of providers (i.e., a market-based model) and require that providers offer a suite of services across in-home, personal, nursing, and allied health.

The Regional Assessment Service that undertakes intake and assessment for the CHSP and HACCPYP programs was on a pathway to a national streamlined model by 1 July 2020. This initial plan was delayed pending the outcomes of the Aged Care Royal Commission. It is understood that a new unified program will have responsibility for all aged care assessments from July 2024.

KEY ISSUES

Reform Update – Support at Home

The Commonwealth has released a Support at Home Program overview that provided the first look at the architecture of the future Support at Home Program.

This confirms that the proposed program will be radically different from the existing CHSP program, it will include:

- Individualised support plans for clients linked to funding that is based on assessed need
- A new integrated assessment tool that controls access to all aged care services, from home-based to residential-care services
- An increased reliance on technology and digital services for clients, business systems, and payment platforms
- A service list that will better define the outputs and allow flexibility for clients
- Client being allowed choice and control over the time and place services are provided; this assumes multiple providers being available within a geographic area
- The end of block funding and transition to payment for units of service delivered – a completely different business model, and
- Introduction of regulated competition between providers

The information release confirms that Council would not be able to effectively operate under the new Support at Home program without significant investment in changes to its operating model and reduction in operating costs.

The Commonwealth are currently consulting on key design elements of the new system and have indicated informally that the 2023/24 year will be spent working with providers on transition and preparatory activities for the transition into Support at Home.

Engagement and feedback from clients and families

Extensive engagement has occurred with clients and families since Council made its in-principle decision.

- Individual phone calls to all clients receiving service provision with Council have been made and a de-sensitised commentary recorded.
- Letters and Frequently Asked Questions sheets were mailed out to all clients, outlining the in-principle decision and opportunities for further consultation.

- Phone calls have been returned or taken by those who have phoned Council wishing to discuss the situation further.
- Clients and extended families attended Community Drop-In Sessions held in 6 locations, asking questions and speaking with Council staff directly.

Resulting consultation data from direct phone calls was reviewed and summarised in themes as follows:

Existing service provision and staff:

Consistent commentary from clients revealed that the current service was supported and highly valued. Carers are seen as providing good home-based services and have built valuable relationships with their clients over long periods of time.

Examples of commentary themes repeated:

- Current service is valued, carers are seen as providing good home-based services and have built valuable relationships. Current arrangement works well.
- Local carers are essential.
- Having people who know me and the local area is important.
- Happy with current service.
- Concerned for current staff, what will happen to them.
- Concerned for staffing changes, trust for local staff is important.
- Will any new providers retain existing staff?
- Will I have the same carer?

Throughout the calls process, staff felt that generally clients and their supporting family members understood and acknowledged the issues in which the national reforms are aiming to address. Scepticism for positive impacts in the short term particularly were of great concern however, with many comments seeking assurance from Council for a means of support during the period of change for existing clients. There were some comments which reflected a level of trust for a Council provided service, whilst others felt they were comfortable to 'see how it goes' and hope that what is being proposed is in fact a positive reality for a rural area in which there has only ever been one choice of provider.

Future providers:

Consistent commentary from clients revealed that the most common concern was the potential discontinuation of individual services. Other concerns discussed included privatisation and the impact of the new program structure.

Examples of commentary themes repeated:

- "As long as services continue" (most common comment made throughout process)
- Too many services are being centralised, local decision-making is being lost
- Who will the likely new providers be?
- I would prefer things to remain the same
- I am comfortable with the direction
- I went to the local meeting and they explained things well
- I read the letter, I have no concerns
- I went to the local meeting, I don't think some of the examples used were common experiences
- Will there be more than one provider?
- How will we contact the provider for any required changes?
- I've heard this is not working well in other areas
- Service provision should stay with Council
- What will happen to TAC clients?
- Success will depend on who the provider is.
- Will prices be impacted under new providers?

- Will we have to find our own service?

Another clear theme of concern raised throughout the discussions held with clients was the Meals on Wheels program. The prospect of a change towards frozen meals was consistently raised as a major concern to clients and families.

Examples of commentary themes repeated:

- Are they changing to frozen meals? – I don't want that
- The meals we get now are good, we don't want frozen meals
- Getting large amounts of frozen meals dropped off won't work for older people, of whom many don't have microwave ovens.
- Are the meals on wheels services being cut?
- We need to continue meals on wheels from the hospitals
- We need to maintain the quality and standard of meals provided.

Council Advocacy:

Consistent themes surrounding concern for a loss of local decision making and input for servicing local people was evident.

Examples of commentary themes repeated:

- I am concerned about privatisation and potential service cuts in rural areas
- Will services remain funded
- I am worried about the impact of funding on what we pay
- I hope privatisation does not impact quality
- It's important to have local control, I am worried about services moving away from the Council
- Decisions are being made in Melbourne for country communities
- How will the needs of rural and remote areas be met under the new program?
- I am worried that too much service centralisation is taking local decision making away
- I am strongly against any changes and value the existing service

The financial barriers for Council's ability to undertake service provision under the new program was widely understood by a majority of clients and family members upon discussion. Many had not considered the ratepayer subsidy that has previously been applied in conjunction with funding and client fees. Many raised concerns for client fee levels under the new program and a desire for Council to play a large role in advocacy by assisting future and existing clients to access new providers and then ensure there is accountability for those providers to maintain high standards.

Engagement and feedback from staff and unions

Staff have been kept informed through group meetings and individual follow up sessions upon request. A standing offer of support through Council's Employee Assistance Program has been made to all affected staff.

- Two meetings were held for all staff within the Service Provision department.
- Staff received an information pack including a letter and frequently asked questions sheet outlining the situation
- Individual phone calls were made to any staff unable to attend the first staff meeting
- Meetings consisted of sharing of information regarding Council's processes to date and how a potential decision may impact staff and clients, along with broader community. Questions were strongly encouraged throughout these meetings.
- A letter was sent to the union representatives extending an invitation for consultation and feedback.
- Executive and Managerial staff were informed by the project Manager and project Sponsor over an online platform meeting following the initial meeting with service provision staff.

- An all staff email was sent out to all staff within the organisation outlining the in-principle decision and consultation process, along with relevant project staff to discuss any further enquiries with.

Examples of commentary themes repeated:

- The availability for work within the industry through different providers.
- Some staff have expressed that they are not confident they will be engaged by new providers.
- Staff expressed a concern for accuracy in having to discuss the National Reforms and the new changes proposed by the Federal Government to clients through day-to-day work and interactions with clients.
- Staff expressed a desire to maintain connection with existing clients. Service and client continuity will be a priority in the transition process.
- Most staff are reassured they are valued workers and would be an asset to any provider.

Staff consultation reflected a strong desire for a client focussed approach to limit the impact of the hardships of change and support community and clients to adapt to the new program into the future. As is the nature of care-giving, staff within the Buloke Shire Council's service provision team were responsive to the information provided and proactively sought clarification on areas that were unclear in order to better explain and support their clients at this time. The impacts of localised staff in times of emergency and sever strain were also topics of discussion. Covid -19 for instance was a particularly trying period for staff in this field, however the social connection and appreciation for the services provided has had a long lasting effect upon staff that reaffirms their selfless priorities.

Engagement and feedback from community

Council officers conducted 6 public information sessions across the municipality, offered consultation through existing communication channels and prioritised direct communication via phone. Customer service staff were provided information and were able to assist in the appropriate management of privacy control. Council wrote letters to groups of community, including Community forum groups, volunteer groups as well as Council's own Meals on Wheels volunteer base. Regular stakeholder meetings were attended and discussions were extended as point of relevance and updating community members where ever possible. These included the Buloke Disability Support network and associated stakeholders, sporting groups and volunteers, senior citizens members and local neighbourhood houses.

Examples of commentary themes repeated:

- Consistency of service provision – ensuring vulnerable community members were not left without support.
- New providers – who are they likely to be, what would the standard reflect, how would the price be impacted.
- Meals on Wheels, the standard of food should be maintained.
- Meals on Wheels, the volunteer base and social interaction between these volunteers and vulnerable clients is an essential service and is often the only interaction some people may have for the day.
- Access to a vulnerable person's list for times of emergency – how will council support people without that access in future
- Staff do a valuable service for community and should be well supported by Council
- Rate payer subsidy should not be required, considered 'double-dipping'
- How will Council support community in future?
- Can Council influence the decision for new providers?
- How could a transition process be managed?
- When would an exit for service realistically be?
- What discussions have Council had with other surrounding Councils who are also reviewing their position or who have previously exited service?

The discussions with general community members and groups were consistent with many themes identified by clients and staff in addition. There was greater general awareness for economic opportunity identified under the new program model within the community consultation sessions. In many cases a need for optimism to support anxiety and stress associated to major proposed changes for vulnerable community members was agreeable by many in attendance.

RISK MANAGEMENT

A comprehensive risk and community impact analysis has been completed for Buloke Shire Council; the high-level risks associated with this decision have been considered in previous reports to Council.

Key risks previously identified include:

- There is a national shortage of qualified personal care workers, and this has impacted on the capacity of all Councils to sustain service delivery in recent years.
- Due to ongoing financial constraints Council has operated its service model with minimum administrative and management support. This presents as a growing compliance risk due to increasing requirements under national aged care standards.
- Council has previously operated under monopoly conditions with financial and operational certainty provided by block-funding. A move to a demand-led service with client choice and control will introduce unacceptable commercial and financial risk for Council.
- Council would need to invest significant public funds with a very high degree of uncertainty and increased risk to potentially operate in the new Support at Home program. This would also include potentially taking on clinical governance responsibilities that it has never had experience in.

No additional material risks have been identified through consultation and engagement. In making this decision, Council is committed to ensuring that transition related risks are identified on an ongoing basis and addressed in a timely and responsive manner.

RELEVANT LAW AND POLICY

Commonwealth Policy

The Commonwealth took full policy, funding, and commissioning responsibility for an integrated aged care program in August 2011 and has proceeded to implement a range of reforms based on very consistent design principles. The Commonwealth is seeking to design and deliver a nationally consistent consumer centred, integrated, and flexible aged care system that meets the needs of all older Australians.

National Competition Policy

A constraint on Council decision making is the application of National Competition Policy to Local Government in Victoria. The Commonwealth is more than likely to apply market principles to a future Home Support service model and that National Competition Policy and Competitive Neutrality Principles would therefore apply to Local Government operations.

Competitive Neutrality Principles apply to the significant business activities of Councils and not to non-business or non-profit activities. The concept of 'significance' is defined on a case-by-case basis looking at the importance of competition in a specific market.

Given the Commonwealth is more than moving to a market-based model for delivery of future services, it is reasonable to assume that there will be a high degree of focus on ensuring the market is not distorted or disrupted by government subsidised activity.

There is a mandated 'public interest test' that must be undertaken if Council wishes to continue to provide services that are subsidised in competition with other 'not-for-profit' and 'for-profit' providers.

There is no viable or significant public interest in Council continuing to be a provider in competition with more efficient and more effective non-government providers.

Industrial obligations

Council has industrial obligations to staff to ensure notification of change and consultation and engagement on significant decisions that impact the workplace.

The changes anticipated by this in-principle decision will trigger these obligations and therefore Council must be clear on its position around engagement of staff and notification of unions.

A final decision to exit the program will trigger redundancy provisions of the Enterprise Agreement, exploration of redeployment opportunities and payment of retrenchment packages for affected staff.

An industrial risk that Council must be aware of is transfer of business, this is where a Council seeks to transfer its funding agreement directly to another local provider through a sub-contracting or partnership arrangement. A transfer of business occurs where work, operations, employees, and assets transfer from one entity to another. The implications include that some, or all the employment conditions (wage rates, enterprise agreement, flexibility arrangements etc) of the original employer can, in some circumstances transfer to the new employer.

For a “transfer of business” to occur it relies on whether a range of requirements are satisfied, these include:

- employees transfer between the two entities within a 3-month period,
- employees are terminated by the old employer,
- the work is the same or substantially the same as with the old employer, and
- there is an association between the old employer and the new employer.

The risk of a transfer of business is considered much higher in a sub-contracting arrangement as compared with an arrangement where a service agreement is terminated, employees paid retrenchment benefits and service agreement terminated with the Commonwealth.

Human Rights

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council will have resolved to participate in the former Home & Community Care (HACCC) Program in the mid-1980s.

Council resolved on an in-principle basis to transition out of all funded home and community home support services in February 2023. This triggered public transparency and industrial obligations to consult with community and staff. At this time, Council also supported the use of a set of Principles and Values (as per Appendix one) prepared for use in the consultation and decision making related to this matter.

This report now provides feedback from the comprehensive consultation process for Council consideration.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO COUNCIL

The following options are available to Council.

Option 1 – Transition out of direct service delivery and focus on broader policy

This option is recommended as being in the public interest and aligned with Council’s broader obligations to the community.

Council understands that Commonwealth policy is moving towards a consistent national integrated aged care system and that this will require more efficient providers who can deliver services across a broad spectrum of needs.

The decision to transition out of its long-term commitment to service delivery is a significant decision and not taken lightly. Council has an obligation to resource and support an effective transition for clients and staff.

Council will proactively manage an effective transition out of service delivery and ensure that all clients (and especially those clients that are vulnerable or at risk of social isolation) are provided with support.

Council accepts its moral and industrial obligations to all staff affected by this decision.

Council will effectively manage the transition and simultaneously shift focus from service delivery as its primary role to investment in broader age-friendly and positive ageing policy initiatives that are aligned with its health and wellbeing obligations.

Option 2 – Resolve to remain as a CHSP and HACCP-PYP service provider until 30 June 2024

If Council does not resolve on the officer recommendation it will retain its service agreements and continue to deliver funded services until the new Support at Home Program initiates in July 2024.

Council will therefore accept that it will either:

- (a) Transition as part of a wholesale program transition with remaining councils in 2024, or
- (b) Review the possibility of being a provider under the future support at Home Program.

This option is not recommended for the following reasons:

- The Commonwealth has indicated that it prefers to work with providers who have a commitment to transitioning into Support at Home during the 2023/24 financial year
- Council will have little influence and control over the effect and mode of transition to the new program
- Council will continue to be challenged by service and business continuity challenges, and
- The costs of transition and operational barriers to becoming an effective provider under Support at Home are prohibitive.

It is anticipated that amended program and service agreement requirements have been implemented for the 2023/24 financial year and there will be a need for additional investment in business systems and administrative support.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are limited environmental sustainability implications associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

Council's in-principle decision triggered a comprehensive communications and consultation exercise; this included:

- Clients and families were informed via a physical letter (and FAQ sheet) that Council is commencing a decision process and were provided with contact details in which to raise any questions or concerns during the process.
- Clients were phoned directly as a further point of direct consultation to discuss the contents of the letter and help clarify any questions or concerns and record any feedback they wished to pass onto Council.
- A proactive media engagement strategy to explain the rationale for Council's decision, the intended process, and long-term benefits for the community.
- The Australian Services Union, acting as the industrial representatives of staff have been advised of the intention of Council to make an in-principle determination on this matter.

- Council officers hosted 6 Community Drop In Sessions, recording feedback and offering a 'Q&A' approach style public meeting.
- A comprehensive 'Frequently Asked Questions' document were made available via Council's website and customer service centres.
- Community Forum groups received a letter outlining the in-principle decision and inviting them to further engage in the consultation process.
- Community meals-on-wheels volunteers received a letter outlining the in-principle decision and inviting them to further engage in the consultation process.
- A number of additional stakeholder meetings were held or attended to outline the process and obtain feedback.

A summary of outcomes from consultation is included in this report.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS MOVEMENT

The ability to adapt to changing circumstances is essential for contemporary government.

The national aged care reforms are being driven by very significant demographic changes and the desire for an affordable and consistent national aged care system.

COLLABORATION

Not applicable.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

This report has significant financial implications for Council.

The ongoing ratepayer subsidy (calculated at an average of \$250,000 per year) is not required to deliver Commonwealth policy objectives of an integrated aged care program to support older people to live independently in the Buloke community.

Council will need to commit resources to support an effective transition process, this has been estimated over the next 12 to 18 months.

Industrial obligations to staff in the form of redundancy payments have been estimated and will remain confidential to protect the privacy of relevant staff.

It is recommended that Council's Audit Committee receive a review report at the end of the transition process that summarises all costs and addresses lessons learnt.

REGIONAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

The policy and service reforms in disability and aged care have been driven at the national level for the past decade.

The implications of the reforms have been discussed in previous reports.

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

The *Local Government Act 2020* includes service performance principles that mandate that Council services must be responsive to changing needs and emerging trends. This decision is reflective of the radically changed policy environment, anticipates the future design of the Support at Home, and outlines a course of action that will be in the best interests of the community.

TRANSPARENCY

Council has met its transparency obligations by ensuring this final decision has been informed by appropriate client, community, staff, and other stakeholder consultation.

Council officers have engaged with Commonwealth and Victorian government agencies to provide notice and advice of the decision-making process.

Council by taking this confirming decision will trigger a comprehensive communications and consultation exercise; this will include:

- Clients and families will be informed of Council's decision will be provided with information and a priority contact number to raise any questions or concerns during the process.
- A proactive media engagement strategy to explain the rationale for Council's decision, the transition process, and long-term benefits for the community.
- Staff and union, acting as the industrial representatives of staff will be advised of the determination on this matter. An offer to establish a staff working group will be made to ensure clear communication throughout the transition process.
- Council officers will host an information and 'Q & A' session for the general community following Council determination on this matter.
- A comprehensive 'Frequently Asked Questions' document will be updated and made available via Council's website and customer service centres.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 & POLICY LINKAGES

1. Our community wellbeing

Council's transition from being a provider of home support services will potentially strengthen its capacity to invest in positive ageing and health and wellbeing initiatives for older citizens.

Council will continue to play a strong advocacy role to ensure older residents have access to quality aged care services and in not being a provider will be able to take a more active planning and coordination role.

Council will have a future focus on adaptation of universal services (recreation, leisure, libraries, open space etc) to meet the needs of older citizens and people with a disability.

Council will take a strengths-based approach to managing transitions and seek to empower clients, families, and staff in their engagement with the implementation of the decision.

It is in the interests of the Commonwealth and Buloke Shire to have a diverse range of home support and aged care providers servicing regional needs. The aged care system is much larger than home support services and future providers can bring additional benefits and investment.

2. Our economy

It is in the interests of the Commonwealth and Buloke Shire to have a diverse range of home support and aged care providers servicing regional needs. The aged care system is much larger than home support services and future providers can bring additional benefits and investment.

Future providers will deliver across aged care planning regions (8 to 10 LGAs) and deliver services to meet entry-level to complex care needs.

3. Our built and natural environment

Council will focus on ensuring future infrastructure meets the needs of older people and people with a disability in its community.

4. Our Council and community leadership

Under the former HACC program Council had a strong history in delivery of integrated services to its community.

Government reforms, creation of the NDIS and future Support at Home program have challenged this role and Council must now plan for its future policy objectives and potential role.

The Local Government Act 2020 includes service performance principles that mandate that Council services must be responsive to changing needs and emerging trends. This decision is reflective of the radically changed policy environment, anticipates the future design of the Support at Home, and outlines a course of action that will be in the best interests of the community.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

APPENDIX ONE – PRINCIPLES AND VALUES**Communication**

- Council will be timely in all communications and will ensure that all people affected by a decision will have information provided including the rationale and drivers for all decisions.
- Council will provide information (i.e., dates and times) on decision processes to all stakeholders to ensure transparency and opportunity to participate.
- Open and transparent communication between all parties will underpin the partnership and build trust and confidence.

For clients

- If Council determines to change its role in relation to aged care services, the needs of clients will be the highest priority for Council through any future transition process.
- The Council and the Council administration understand the profound nature of the decision and will ensure that the highest standards of professional behaviour and ethics are applied to managing the implementation and limiting the negative impact.
- The individual needs of all clients will be understood and considered during the transition process. It is recognised that some clients will need additional support during the transition process and Council will ensure that special attention is paid to protecting the rights of vulnerable clients.
- Council will act as an advocate for the needs of all clients and will ensure that additional resources are provided to hear and respond to individual, or group needs during transition and an appropriate time following the date of transition.
- Council will ensure that clients are provided with high quality information before, during and after transition and individual private consultations if required.

For staff

- Council values the contribution of all staff and recognises the commitment made to deliver high quality home support services to the Buloke community.
- Council understands the unique relationship that develops between carers and clients and will work towards ensuring the continuity of this relationship where possible.
- Council will identify and implement readiness activities and support that will ensure workers are prepared for the transition process.
- Council will establish a transition working group involving affected staff (and their representatives) to ensure the effective two-way flow of information.
- Council will meet all industrial obligations and will ensure investments are made to provide staff with the support and skills they need to make an effective transition to future work or retirement depending on their individual circumstances.

For the successor provider

- Council will work constructively with the appointed provider to ensure that the service transition occurs in a way that protects the interests of clients, families of clients, staff, and the broader community.

- Council will ensure that quality client and service information will be provided to the appointed provider(s) to inform decisions during the transition process.

For community

- Council will make decisions that are in the best interests of the broader community, this will include understanding the financial, economic, social, health and wellbeing implications of any decision.
- Council will act as an advocate for the needs of the community and will hold accountable Commonwealth and State Governments and the appointed home support providers for the delivery of quality services to the Buloke community.

8.2.3 DELEGATION OF FIRE SERVICES PROPERTY LEVY PAYMENT

Author's Title: Director Corporate and Organisation Performance

Department: Corporate and Organisational Performance **File No:**

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Council and Community Leadership

PURPOSE

To delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to approve the legislated payment of the Fire Services Property Levy to the State Revenue Office up to value of \$725,000 (excluding GST)

SUMMARY

As legislated by the *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012*, Council collects fire services property levies in conjunction with its rates and charges on behalf of the State Government. Every quarter Council makes a statutory payment to the State Revenue Office of levies collected. The required payment of \$720,425.67 (excluding GST) for the third quarter of the 2022/2023 financial year lies outside the Chief Executive Officer's delegation under the *Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer*. As such, a recommendation is made to Council to delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to facilitate this legislated payment.

MOTION:

That Council delegate to the Chief Executive Officer the authority to approve payment of the Fire Services Property Levy to the State Revenue Office up to the value of \$725,000 (excluding GST) for quarter three of the 2022/2023 financial year.

MOVED: CR BERNADETTE HOGAN

SECONDED: CR BRONWYN SIMPSON

CARRIED.

(R073/23)

Attachments: Nil

DISCUSSION

The fire services property levy is a legislated payment that Council collects on behalf of the State Revenue Office (SRO). Property owners pay an annual levy via council rates to support emergency services. The levy is collected by local councils and generally appears on rate notices. Every quarter, Council makes a payment of collected levies to the SRO.

Prior to the introduction of the fire services property levy, Victoria's fire services were funded by financial contributions from insurance companies, the State Government and metropolitan councils. Insurance companies recovered the cost of their contributions by imposing a fire services levy on insurance premiums.

One of the findings of the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission was that this model for fire services funding was inequitable, lacked transparency and discouraged some owners from insuring or fully insuring their property due to the additional cost the levy imposed on premiums. As a result, the Commission recommended that the insurance-based fire services levy be replaced with a property-based levy which would require all property owners, not just those with adequate insurance, to contribute to fire services funding.

On 28 August 2012, the Victorian Government announced that it would implement the Commission's recommendation. The *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012* (the Act) was developed to establish the legal framework for the new fire services property levy. The Act received Royal Assent on 16 October 2012 and has imposed a levy on land in Victoria from 1 July 2013.

The levy for individual rate payers is calculated by a formula set by the State Government which takes into account a fixed charge and a variable rate. The variable rate is based on property classifications and capital improved values. Levy charges may also be eligible for concession discounts or exemptions based on certain criteria.

For quarter three of the 2022/2023 financial year, the required payment to the SRO of \$720,425.67 is outside the Chief Executive Officer's delegation as per the Section 1.2 of the current *Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer* which was endorsed by Council at its 12 October 2022 Council Meeting.

This report is seeking delegated authority for the Chief Executive Officer of Buloke Shire Council to administer this legislated payment on behalf of Council for quarter three of the 2022/2023 financial year.

RELEVANT LAW

Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council's Resolution at the 12 October 2022 Meeting to delegate to the person holding the position, or acting in or performing the duties, of Chief Executive Officer the powers, duties and functions set out in the *Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer*, subject to the conditions and limitations specified in that Instrument.

OPTIONS

Not Applicable – Council is legislated to make this payment to the SRO.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Not Applicable

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Not Applicable

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Not Applicable

COLLABORATION

Not Applicable

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Not Applicable

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Not Applicable

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

Not Applicable

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

The current Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer is available on Council's website. Endorsing this payment at a Council Meeting as it lies outside the Chief Executive Officer's delegation ensures transparency of financial and statutory processes.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No staff member involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest in this matter.

8.2.4 2023 CHANGING PLACES FUNDING ROUND

Author's Title: Capital Projects Officer

Department: Infrastructure and Delivery

File No: PR/04/37

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: Our Community Wellbeing

PURPOSE

This report is presented to Council for consideration of the \$200,000 from the Grant Opportunity Reserve FY23 for the purpose of a co-contribution in order to submit an application for the Changing Places Funding Round 2023. The Grant Opportunity Reserve FY23 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 funding round. If successful, 100% of the fund from FY23 would be required to support the funding application.

SUMMARY

The Changing Places funding round 2023 provides funding of up to \$180,000 per toilet facility. Applications close on 14 April 2023.

Priority will be given to applications from local government areas which do not have an existing Changing Places facility within their municipality. Buloke Shire Council currently does not have a Changing Places facility within the municipality, the closest being located in Kerang, Horsham and Bendigo.

Applications will be required to demonstrate an identified need from people with disability, their families, friends, and carers for a Changing Places facility in their local community and provide evidence of the extent of local support for the proposed facility.

The Changing Places facility must be completed within 18 months of receiving formal funding approval. The funder has not indicated when successful applicants will be notified; for planning purposes it has been assumed that an announcement will be made by 30 June 2023.

The Changing Places facility must be maintained in a safe condition, kept in good repair and be available for use for a minimum period of 5 years.

The proposed Changing Places facility is recommended to be located within the Memorial Park, Park Street, Donald.

MOTION:

That the Council:

1. Approve a financial co-contribution of \$200,000 from the Grant Opportunity Reserve FY23 for the purposes of a funding application towards the Changing Places Funding Round 2023.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to apply for the Changing Places funding round 2023; 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**FOUR – IN FAVOUR.****TWO – AGAINST.****CARRIED.****(R074/23)**

- Attachments:**
- 1 Changing Places Project Details
 - 2 Changing Places Funding Round Guidelines 2023

DISCUSSION

Changing Places are larger than standard accessible toilets with extra features and more space to meet the needs of people with a disability and their carers. Each facility has a height adjustable adult sized change table, a ceiling tracking hoist system, a central (peninsula) toilet with grab rails either side, and additional space for two or more carers to assist a person with high support needs to utilise a bathroom safely and with dignity.

Creating a network of truly accessible public toilets across Victoria will support the 326,400 Victorians with high support needs to participate in their local community and access recreational and tourist attractions, parks, community spaces, entertainment, and sporting venues.

Donald Memorial Park has been identified as an appropriate location for a Changing Places toilet facility to complement the upcoming play space installation which is designed to cater for all abilities.

It is recommended that the facility would be best located in a position which is visible and easily accessible from the play spaces, seating and BBQ shelter areas. The project will also incorporate 'make-good' works in order to complete the functionality of the facility, including off street parking and footpaths linking the existing infrastructure and the adjoining bowling club. The existing toilet block within the park does not include an accessible cubicle and is due for replacement.

Costings are based on an estimate obtained for a modular prefabricated building which would include 1 Changing Places cubicle, 1 Accessible Unisex cubicle and 3 Ambulant Unisex cubicles. A Changing Places facility does not act as an Accessible cubicle; if additional non-accessible cubicles are to be included in the facility, a Changing Places and an Accessible cubicle must be included. The total project costings include demolition of the existing toilet block, an electrical upgrade, sewer and water connection, carpark, footpath and fencing improvements.

RELEVANT LAW

The facility must be built and accredited as a Changing Places facility, to be called a Changing Places toilet in accordance with the *Changing Places Design Specification 2020*. The *Building Act 1993* and regulations, the *National Construction Code 2019* and all other applicable laws and standards will also have application in the proposed project.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

A Changing Places toilet facility has been identified within the Buloke Shire Council Advocacy Strategy 2022-23 with the location proposed for Donald Memorial Park.

Contract No. C114 2021/22 Buloke Playspace Trail Construction works was awarded at the Council meeting Wednesday, 8 February 2023 which includes the improvements to the play space at Donald Memorial Park.

OPTIONS

The Council may elect not to pursue this funding opportunity.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The proposed modular facility will incorporate sustainable design 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 a 2019 survey published by the Victorian Government's Department of Health and Human Services, parks and gardens were identified as the sixth most popular location of which Changing Places toilet facilities are required the most in Victoria and Australia (out of 17 preferences listed).

Council Officers have consulted with the Donald Memorial Park play space project advisory group, the President of the 'Donald 2000' community forum and Committee Members of the adjoining Donald Bowling Club, all of which are supportive of the location and scope of works proposed for the Changing Places facility. Local members of the Buloke Shire Council Disability Support Network have also been consulted and are supportive of Council pursuing an application for the Changing Places Funding Round 2023.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Australia has become the first country in the world to regulate for adult change facilities in its building code. From 1 May 2019, the National Construction Code (NCC 2019) requires a new type of public toilet called 'Accessible Adult Change Facilities' – based on the Changing Places design – to be included in certain classes of public buildings such as:

- Shopping Centres
- Sports stadiums and swimming pools
- Theatres and museums
- Domestic and international airports

Facility managers will be given the option to have their accredited Changing Places facility listed on the National Public Toilet Map. 248 Changing Places are listed Australia wide to date.

COLLABORATION

Landowners consent will be required from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to undertake the proposed works. However, it is not expected that a LUA will be necessary as toilet blocks are listed as an advisory activity.

All Changing Places must be approved by a Changing Places Assessor. The accreditation process ensures the Changing Places' facilities are built to standard so that users can be confident that the design is fit for purpose.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The total budget forecast for the project is \$467,480 comprising \$180,000 funding from the State Government and \$287,480 from Council Cash. \$200,000 of this allocation would be taken from the Grant Opportunity Reserve FY23 and \$87,480 would not be expended until FY25 with an anticipated construction completion date in late 2024. \$40,300 has been included as a contingency amount for the project. Ongoing maintenance requirements will be higher than the existing toilet block due to additional mechanical equipment which requires regular servicing, these costs will be offset somewhat by efficiency improvements in the new building.

The existing toilet block would be demolished once the new facility has been constructed and this has been included in the project budget.

It is noted the total cost of the Changing Places facility can rise or fall if the number of Ambulant Unisex cubicles is increased or decreased.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Creating communities that are welcoming and inclusive underpins Victoria's current plan for making things fairer for people with disability, Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022–2026). The plan is a keyway for the Victorian Government to be accountable for making all parts of the community inclusive and accessible for everyone.

The Victorian Government to date has committed funding to build 70 Changing Places in key locations across the state and will expand the network by another 11 facilities in the 2023 funding.

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

1. Our Built and Natural Environment

Long term aspiration: Accessible buildings and spaces.

Long term strategies:

- Maintain, develop and plan for viable, multi-use infrastructure and assets that respond to community needs and priorities.
- Enhance parks and public spaces so they are welcoming, safe and accessible to encourage active recreation and participation.
- Improve accessibility to buildings and public facilities for all community members.

The proposal addresses key elements and actions from the Buloke Shire Inclusiveness Plan whilst also complimenting the outcomes of the Playspace Masterplan. The adjoining bowling club membership will support the facility as a multi-use asset in addition to the community based public park access.

2. Our Community Wellbeing

Long term aspiration: A well connected and inclusive community that is welcoming of diversity.

Long term strategies:

- Create and support opportunities that encourage community wellbeing, social connections and inclusion and active and healthy lifestyles.

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.

3. Our Council and Community Leadership

Long term aspiration: Active partnerships and good communication with Council.

Long term strategies:

- Partner with community and town forums and other key groups to advance agreed community planning priorities and address emerging issues.

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 Donald community.

Council officers have engaged with the Donald Playspace project advisory group, the President of Donald 2000, Committee members of the Donald Bowling Club and a Donald local member of the Buloke Disability Support Network 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 Changing Places grant program 2023, officers will:

- Establish a formal project advisory group for the Changing Places facility project
- 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

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

QUESTION – CR MILNE – Because the toilet block is to be relocated or located to a different site within the park, does the new one or a replacement one on a new site, or a replacement one on an existing site then require a LUAA (Land Use Activity Agreement)?

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE BY DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT.

8.3 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Nil

8.4 ORGANISATIONAL REPORTS

Nil

8.5 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

Mayor's Month

Meeting with Charlton Camp Draft Committee Re: Charlton Common

ABC interview - Election No Betterment Policy

ABC interview - Flood Recovery

Advance Sea Lake Meeting

Weekly meetings with CEO Wayne O'Toole

Monthly Briefings

Council Meeting

Hip Camp Policy Review Interview (Ken Sauer)

Teams meeting with Wayne & Loddon Campaspe Mayors & CEO's with Deputy Premier (Jacinta Allan, Member for Rippon (Martha Haylett) & Member for Bendigo East (Maree Edwards)

Charlton Gold Cup Trots with Cr Milne

CEO Review

On Country Meeting With First Nations Re Emus

Wimmera Southern Mallee Transport Meeting Horsham

ABC Interview (Horsham) - Mt Wyche Emus

ABC Interview (Swan Hill) - VNI West Transmission lines

CEO & Sal Corp de brief CEO Review

Camp Draft Charlton Pony Club Meeting with Cr Pollard CEO Wayne O'Toole

Nullawil Progress Meeting

Take several Phone calls Rate Payers Emus & AEMO

Culgoa Progress Association

VEC Erap Review Interview

Nullawil walk around with Cr Hogan & Staff

Meeting with Dr Anne Webster

Eatwell Tour of Factory

Cr Alan Getley

Mayor

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 NOTICES OF MOTION

Nil

9.2 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

9.2.1 CR MILNE – VNI WEST SUBMISSION EXTENSION

QUESTION: The extension of the submission date that was negotiated by Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) at the St Arnaud meeting, has that actually been publicised for people to place submissions, and is this only for VFF members.

ANSWER PROVIDED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: I personally saw published on Bendigo Advertiser website the notice of the extension, and I then approached representatives from AEMO (Australian Energy Market Operator) and they advised they would not accept any submissions under that time frame of the extension.

9.2.2 CR MILNE – NEW CENTRE - WATER AND POWER – BIRCHIP MEDIAN STRIP

QUESTION: Asking for a plan to be provided to the Birchip Forum request for the new Centre's nature strip as far as water and electricity goes so they can work out the placement of some artefacts to be put back in.

REQUEST ACKNOWLEDGED BY DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT: The request will be followed up.

9.2.3 CR MILNE – THANK YOU – COUNCIL STAFF – WATCHEM TOWNSHIP LANDSCAPING

Cr Milne to thank Council staff for the notable work that has been carried out and advised that the these works have been well and truly noticed and appreciated by locals.

9.2.4 CR MILNE – DISABILITY RAMP AT WATCHEM HALL – COMPLETION DATE

QUESTION: Watchem Progress Association are following up on the proposed completion date for the disability ramp to be completed at the Watchem Hall.

RESPONSE PROVIDED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: The request will be followed up.

9.2.5 CR MILNE – MOVING OF SILO – WATCHEM TOWNSHIP

QUESTION: Watchem Progress Association are seeking details on the expected timeline for the shifting of the silo.

RESPONSE PROVIDED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: The request will be followed up.

9.2.6 CR WARREN – SEA LAKE – BENDIGO BANK CLOSURE

QUESTION: The Sea Lake community have asked what is Council going to do about the announced closure of the Bendigo Bank Agency in Sea Lake, and if they are going to take some action as to advocate on their behalf to Head Office and try and persuade the Bendigo Bank to keep that Branch open.

ANSWER PROVIDED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: The CEO responded to advise a letter will be sent to Head Office of the Bendigo Bank to find out what their intentions are and if they would consider to continue to provide service to the Sea Lake community.

9.3 URGENT BUSINESS

Nil

9.4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nil

9.5 MATTERS WHICH MAY EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC**MOTION:**

That pursuant to section 66(1) and (2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* the meeting be closed to the public to consider the following reports that are considered to contain confidential information on the grounds provided in section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* as indicated:

- 9.5.1 C116 2022/23 WYCHEPROOF LIBRARY (g(ii)) private commercial information, being
UPGRADE TENDER EVALUATION PANEL information provided by a business,
REPORT commercial or financial undertaking that if
released, would unreasonably expose the
business, commercial or financial undertaking
to disadvantage

MOVED: CR BRONWYN SIMPSON

SECONDED: CR DAVID POLLARD

**CARRIED.
(R075/23)**

10. MEETING CLOSE

Meeting closed at 8:40pm.