

WARRUMBUNGLE SHIRE COUNCIL

Ordinary Meeting – 20 February 2020

Item 23 Home for Coolah Historical Society and Coolah Men's Shed

Division:	Technical Services
Management Area:	Technical Services Management
Author:	Director Technical Services – Kevin Tighe
CSP Key Focus Area:	Public Infrastructure and Services
Priority:	PI5 Council manages its assets and infrastructure to meet the agreed service levels.

Reason for Report

Two volunteer groups in Coolah want to lease the VRA shed in Campbell Street and a resolution on the requests is being sought from Council.

Background

Currently the Coolah Volunteer Rescue Association occupies a shed on Council owned land in Campbell Street, Coolah (referred to in this report as the old VRA shed). The shed is on the same lot as Council's works depot. The size of the shed is just big enough to house a truck, a ute and an office, there is not enough room for a work bench or storage of large equipment. A new shed for the VRA is being constructed alongside the RFS building on land owned by Council in Booyamurra Street. The new VRA shed is expected to be completed by the end of March 2020.

The Coolah & District Historical Society is seeking an agreement with Council to occupy the shed in Campbell Street, when it is vacated by the VRA. The Society has already moved filing cabinets containing historical information into the office area of the shed. The Society is an incorporated organisation, however they have no public liability insurance. The society has a goal to develop the old VRA shed into a museum that not only displays historical records but also contains displays of old equipment and memorabilia.

The Coolah Men's Shed has also approached Council to occupy the Campbell Street shed when it is vacated by the VRA. Currently the Coolah Men's Shed occupies a section of Council's depot that faces Martin Street. The occupation is under a licence agreement with Council that was created in 2015. The licence agreement is renewable every 12 months, subject to application by Coolah Men's Shed. The site comprises a small office, an even smaller store room, a small compound area and a small domestic style garden shed. The site has no shed capable of housing large machinery items such as drill presses, lathes or work benches and in this regard the site seems unsuitable for activities typically undertaken in a Men's Shed.

Issues

The occupation of the Campbell Street shed, when vacated by the Coolah VRA, by either the Historical Society or the Men's Shed is a change of use and approval through the Development Application process will be necessary.

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The Campbell Street shed was built to house trucks and equipment associated with the VRA, it was not built to house and display historical documents and artefacts. There will be significant demand on Council to upgrade the building to make it suitable for use by the Coolah Historical Society, for example there will be a need to make it resilient to dust ingress.

The Campbell Street shed does appear to suit the needs of the Coolah Men's Shed, although there is no formal confirmation from the Men's Shed that this is the case and that the group would not require upgrades to the site.

Options

Council has a number of options in response to requests by the Coolah Historical Society and the Coolah Men's Shed to occupy the old VRA shed in Campbell Street. The options include choosing between the two groups as to who is offered a lease agreement for the site, not making any immediate decision, working with either group to find another site owned by Council, offering one of Council's houses to the Historical Society, brokering an agreement with owners of the Coolah Youth & Community Centre to allow one of the groups to occupy a section of that property.

Council also has the option of not doing anything with the old VRA shed and the option also exists to call for expressions of interest from other groups in Coolah and the district who may want to utilise the shed.

The old VRA shed as a structure does not appear to meet standards required to house historical records and documents. There may be other buildings in Coolah more suited to the current and future needs of the Coolah Historical Society.

Given that the VRA shed in Campbell Street is on the same lot as the Council depot, it is not possible to sell the shed unless the site is subdivided. The shed is not required for Council operations.

Council may also determine not to make a decision on the requests and ask the Historical Society to vacate the VRA building in Campbell Street. Council may also allow the Historical Society to occupy the office area only, subject to the Group obtaining public liability insurance.

Financial Considerations

There are no immediate impacts on Council's budget in relation to granting a licence agreement for either the Historical Society or the Men's Shed to occupy the old VRA shed in Campbell Street, Coolah. However, should the Historical Society occupy the site there is likely to be ongoing demand to make improvements to the building.

Attachments

Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. The Coolah Men's Shed is given access to the old VRA shed in Campbell Street, Coolah subject to the following conditions:
 - a. Written confirmation from the Coolah Men's Shed that the site is suitable for their needs.

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- b. A change of use Development Application is submitted and paid for by the Coolah Men's Shed.
 - c. A lease agreement is in place before the site is occupied by the Coolah Men's Shed. Occupation of the site will not take place until the VRA has vacated the site.
 - d. The Coolah Men's Shed is responsible for legal costs associated with preparing the lease agreement. The rental fee is \$1.00 per year.
 - e. The Coolah Men's Shed as tenant is responsible for all utility charges, maintenance expenses and building improvements associated with the old VRA building in Campbell Street, Coolah.
 - f. The period of lease is for 5 years renewable for another 5 years upon application to Council.
2. The Coolah & District Historical Society is required to vacate the old VRA building in Campbell Street, Coolah within six months.