



# Country Mayors Association of NEW SOUTH WALES

Chairperson: Cr Katrina Humphries  
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## MINUTES

### GENERAL MEETING

FRIDAY, 6 MARCH 2020 THEATRETTE, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, SYDNEY

The meeting opened at 9.03 a.m.

#### 1. ATTENDANCE:

Armidale Regional Council, Cr Diane Gray  
Bega Valley Shire Council, Cr Kristy McBain, Mayor  
Bellingen Shire Council, Cr Dominic King, Mayor  
Bellingen Shire Council, Ms Liz Jeremy, General Manager  
Bland Shire Council, Cr Brian Monaghan, Mayor  
Blayney Shire Council, Cr Scott Ferguson, Mayor  
Blayney Shire Council, Ms Rebecca Ryan, General Manager  
Cabonne Shire Council, Cr Kevin Beatty, Mayor  
Cabonne Shire Council, Cr Jamie Jones Deputy Mayor  
Clarence Valley Shire Council, Cr Jim Simmons, Mayor  
Coffs Harbour City Council, Mr Stephen McGrath, General Manager  
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, Cr Abb McAlister  
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, Mr Phil McMurray, General Manager  
Cowra Shire Council, Cr Bill West, Mayor  
Cowra Shire Council, Mr Paul Devery, General Manager  
Dubbo Regional Council, Cr Ben Shields. Mayor  
Edward River Council, Cr Norm Brennan, Mayor  
Edward River Council, Mr Adam McSwain, General Manager  
Forbes Shire Council, Cr Phyllis Miller, Mayor  
Forbes Shire Council, Cr Jenny Webb, Deputy Mayor  
Forbes Shire Council, Mr Steve Loane, General Manager  
Gilgandra Shire Council, Cr Doug Batten, Mayor  
Glen Innes Shire Council, Cr Carol Sparkes, Mayor  
Glen Innes Shire Council, Mr Craig Bennett, General Manager  
Goulburn Mulwaree Council, Mr Warrick Bennett, General Manager  
Griffith City Council, Mr Brett Stonestreet, General Manager  
Gunnedah Shire Council, Cr Jamie Chaffey, Mayor  
Gunnedah Shire Council, Mr Eric Growth, General Manager  
Gwydir Shire Council, Cr John Coulton, Mayor

Gwydir Shire Council, Mr Max Eastcott, General Manager  
Hay Shire Council, Cr David Townsend, Deputy Mayor  
Hay Shire Council, Mr David Webb, General Manager  
Hilltops Council, Cr Brian Ingram, Mayor  
Kempsey Shire Council, Cr Liz Campbell, Mayor  
Kyogle Council, Cr Danielle Mulholland, Mayor  
Kyogle Council, Mr Graham Kennett, General Manager  
Leeton Shire Council, Cr Paul Maytom , Mayor  
Leeton Shire Council, Ms Jackie Kruger, General Manager  
Lithgow City Council, Cr Ray Thompson, Mayor  
Lithgow City Council, Cr Steve Ring, Deputy Mayor  
Moree Plains Shire Council, Cr Katrina Humphries, Mayor  
Murray River Council, Cr Christopher Bilkey, Mayor  
Murray River Council, Mr Des Bilske, General Manager  
Narrabri Shire Council, Cr Catherine Redding, Mayor  
Narrabri Shire Council, Mr Stewart Todd, General Manager  
Narrandera Shire Council, Mr George Cowan, General Manager  
Narromine Shire Council, Cr Craig Davies, Mayor  
Narromine Shire Council, Ms Jane Redden, General Manager  
Oberon Council, Cr Kathy Sajowitz, Mayor  
Oberon Council, Mr Gary Wallace, General Manager  
Orange City Council, Cr Reg Kidd, Mayor  
Parkes Shire Council, Cr Ken Keith, Mayor  
Port Stephens Council, Cr Ryan Palmer, Mayor  
Port Stephens Council, Mr Wayne Wallis, General Manager  
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, Mr Tim Overall, Mayor  
Singleton Council, Cr Sue Moore, Mayor  
Singleton Council, Mr Jason Linnane, General Manager  
Snowy Monaro Regional Council, Cr Peter Beer, Mayor  
Snowy Monaro Regional Council, Mr Peter Bascombe, General Manager  
Snowy Valleys Council, Cr James Hayes, Mayor  
Temora Shire Council, Mr Gary Lavelle, General Manager  
Tenterfield Shire Council, Cr Peter Petty, Mayor  
Uralla Shire Council, Cr Michael Pearce, Mayor  
Wagga Wagga City Council, Cr Greg Conkey, Mayor  
Walcha Council, Cr Eric Noakes, Mayor  
Walcha Council, Ms Anne Moddero, General Manager  
Warren Shire Council, Cr Milton Quigley, Mayor  
Warren Shire Council, Mr Glen Wilcox, General Manager  
Warrumbungle Shire Council, Cr Denis Todd, Mayor  
Warrumbungle Shire Council, Mr Roger Bailey, General Manager  
Wentworth Shire Council, Cr Melisa Hendrics, Mayor  
Wentworth Shire Council, Mr Ken Ross, General manager  
Yass Valley Council, Cr Rowena Abbey, Mayor  
LGNSW, Cr Linda Scott, President  
LGNSW Ms Kylie Yates, Acting CEO

**APOLOGIES:**

As submitted

**SPECIAL GUESTS:**

Hon Melinda Pavey MP, Minister for Water, Property and Housing

Ms Teresa Corbin, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

Mr Rob Rogers, AFSM, Deputy Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service and Rebel Talbert, Assistant Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service

Hon Jennifer Gardiner, Chairperson, NSW Local Government Grants Commission

Dr Lindsay White, Director, Northern Basin, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and Mr Hilary Johnson, Director, Southern Basin, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder

Ms Susan Madden, Board Member, Murray Darling Basin Authority

Mr David Harris, CEO Water NSW

**2. Condolences and Welcome**

Cr Humphries expressed condolences on behalf of the Country Mayors Association to those Councils that were affected by the bush fires and welcomed to the meeting Mary O'Kane and Dave Cowen from the NSW Independent Bushfire Enquiry

**3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the General Meeting held on 1 November 2019 be accepted as a true and accurate record it being noted that Cr Reg Kidd, Mayor of Orange was in attendance (Kyogle Council / Uralla Shire Council).

**4. Hon Melinda Pavey MP, Minister for Water, Property and Housing**

Catchments are not filling up yet which will be a challenge. 180 litres per person are being used in Sydney versus 118 litres in Orange. There are restrictions on flood plain harvesting and there are embargos on rivers but some are being lifted with recent rain. 150 regulators are auditing. 244,000 mega litres have passed Walgett. There are concerns by communities regarding the Murray Darling Basin Plan because there has been a lack of communication but the government is trying to connect. Along with the Victorian Government, New South Wales commissioned a review of the constraints of the Murray Darling Basin Authority which found that if the plan continues there is a big chance of failure. Stakeholder consultations are to take place in March and April. However the basin is in a better condition due to the plan. New metres are being rolled out throughout the State to ensure fair allocations

**5. Ms Teresa Corbin, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network**

The Network is working for communication services and takes issues to communication companies. There are 200 members across Australia. Fires have damaged infrastructure which has created challenges. The network has been fighting hard to keep pay phones which proved their worth during the fires. Regional concerns include higher costs, greater dependency on services, unreliable services, and limited mobile coverage. Goals of the network are guaranteed access, equitable voice, expansion of mobile coverage and digital capacity. A Regional Connectivity Program is being introduced and funding is available similar to the Black Spots Program. The next round of the Black Spots Program is coming

up. 5G next generation for mobile phones needs more base stations so will not go everywhere but will deliver data to the areas where it is providing a service. The 4G footprint needs to be the same as 3G before 3G is switched off. Reliability of services in regional areas means NBN and a land line are required in many areas. Digital literacy solving technical problems in regional areas is more difficult.

## 6. **Membership**

Resolved That Hay Shire Council be admitted as a member of the Association (Forbes Shire Council/ Kyogle Council)

## 7. **CORRESPONDENCE**

Inward

(a)Mr John Cleland, Chief Executive Officer, Essential Energy, regarding Disaster Hardship provisions provided to those that have suffered a loss as a result of a natural disaster

(b)Hon Matt Kean MP, Minister for Energy and Environment, regarding Disaster Hardship provisions provided to those that have suffered a loss as a result of a natural disaster

(c)Mr Gary White, Chief Planner, Planning, Industry and Development, thanking him for his presentation to the 1 November meeting

(d)Mr Matt Fuller, Acting Deputy Secretary, Regional and Outer Metropolitan, Transport for NSW, thanking him and Peter Ryan for their presentation to the 1 November meeting

(e)Mr Rob Rogers AFSM, Deputy Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service, thanking him and Cory Shalkleton for their presentation to the 1 November meeting

(f)Hon Rob Stokes MP, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, requesting information on progress of the Land Negotiation Program concluded in 2017

(g)Hon Matt Kean MP, Minister for Energy and Environment, following up the reply from Andrew Lewis, Executive Director, Energy, Strategy, Planning, Industry and Environment regarding prioritization of electricity grid connections at substations

(h)To all members from CR Humphries, Chairperson, CMA, regarding the recent bushfires, requesting information on what assistance CMA may be able to give to affected Council's

Outward

(a)Hon Rob Stokes, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, advising that Regional Crown Lands falls under the responsibility of the Hon Melinda Pavey MP, Minister for Water, Property and Housing and the Associations correspondence has been forwarded to her for attention

(b)James Griffin MP, Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment and Veterans regarding hazard reduction and water infrastructure for bush fire management (Copy Attached)

(c)Cr Linda Scott, President, Local Government NSW, regarding per capita grants Local Government Financial Assistance Grants Act 1995 (Copy Attached)

(d)John Cleland, Chief Executive Officer, Essential Energy, regarding assets located beyond the customer connection point (Copy Attached)

NOTED

**8. FINANCIAL REPORT**

RESOLVED That the financial reports for the last quarter were tabled and accepted (Tenterfield Shire Council / Singleton Council)

**9. Mr Rob Rogers AFSM, deputy Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service and Ms Rebel Talbert, Assistant Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service**

In the 2019/20 fire season 21 councils commenced bushfire danger period early. September 2019 more than 1300 bush and grass fires. October 2019 significant impact on towns in northern NSW. November 2019 catastrophic fire danger in many areas with fires in Port Macquarie, Taree and Foster. December 2019 three firefighters killed. January 2020 fire activity intensifies in southern NSW and C130 crashes killing three American crew. February 2020 widespread heavy rain begins. During these periods there were more than 200 days of continuous major operations, over 11500 bush and grass fires, 5.5 million hectares burnt, and more than 2400 homes destroyed. Challenges of the RFS are paying invoices, communication risk, NSW RFS website, Fires Near Me NSW, interagency efforts, interstate and international assistance and aviation support.

**10. Hon Jennifer Gardiner, Chairperson, NSW Local Government Grants Commission**

The Grants Commissions recommendations go to the NSW Minister for Local Government and to the Federal Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government. The Commission operates under the Local Government Financial Assistance Act 1995 and the NSW Local Government Act 1993. The Commonwealth Act provides for two funding pools the General Purpose Component and the Local Roads Component. The National Principles require an assessment of Revenue Capacity and Expenditure Needs. They also contain the key elements of Horizontal Equalisation and Effort Neutrality. The minimum grant is based on 30% of the General Purpose component pool. All 17 minimum grants are for metropolitan councils. The Local Roads Component looks at population, local road length, and bridge length on local roads. 73.9% of NSW FAGS distribution is to non metropolitan councils. The NSW Grants Commission does not determine the size of the bucket of money but divides up the bucket in an equitable and objective manner. The total grant is untied. The isolation allowance applies to non metropolitan councils and recognizes additional costs for fuel. The main disability factors are population, no of aboriginals, road length, environment, rainfall, topography and drainage. The length of funding for future years are unknown

**11. Bush Fire Impact**

RESOLVED 1. That the Country Mayors Association acknowledges the financial impact that the 2019/20 bush fires had on a number of councils, but in particular those regional and rural councils impacted in NSW and writes to both the Federal and State Governments to ask them to immediately review financial assistance grants criteria for the benefit of regional and rural councils

2. That the Country Mayors Association provides its support as a lobbying organisation to any of its member councils initiatives during this recovery phase (Bega Valley Shire Council/Yass valley Council)

**12. Waste to Energy**

RESOLVED that The Country Mayors Association follow up its letter dated 3 June 2019 to the Minister for Local Government on Waste to Energy (Bellingen Shire Council/Tenterfield Shire Council)

**13. Additional Contributions Local Government Superannuation**

RESOLVED That Country Mayors write to the Chief Executive and the Board Chair of Local Government Superannuation and appeal to humanitarian and sensitive attitude of this organisation and seek that two year moratorium be placed on these “additional contributions” for the defined benefit plan totalling \$40 million to allow NSW Councils to focus on the devastating natural disasters that need to be managed and funded. It needs to be acknowledged that the payment of over 1% of our annual rate income (\$40,000,000) to Local Government Superannuation would be better spent on essential recovery focus in our destroyed and homeless communities (Goulburn Mulwaree Council/Yass Valley Council)

**14. Letter from GP Synergy Re Contact Persons in Towns for Rural Doctors**

RESOLVED That member councils be encouraged to respond to GP Synergy and nominate a suitable staff member to liaise with them (Kyogle Council/Kempsey Shire Council)

**15. Inland Rail – Level Crossings and Grade Separation of Highway and regional Roads**

RESOLVED 1. That Country Mayors lobby both the Hon John Barrilaro MP, Deputy Premier, and Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade and the Hon Michael McCormack MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, to ensure grade separation to all State Highway crossings intersecting with the Inland Rail is achieved, and

2. A working party be developed with representatives from impacted Councils, in conjunction with Transport NSW Staff, to progress a standardised approach on all rail crossings on private property, local, regional and state roads for Inland Rail route. (Gilgandra Shire Council/Forbes Shire Council)

**16. Coronial Inquests**

RESOLVED That the Association follow up the Minister for Health and Medical Research on the matter of Coronial Inquests (Leeton Shire Council/Tenterfield Shire Council)

**17. General Business**

- (a) an invitation be extended to Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to present to the 29 May meeting regarding returning regional roads to State care
- (b) The Mayor of Yass Cr Rowena Abbey to be given time at the 29 May meeting to up date Country Mayors on Joint Organisation Chairs meeting

The meeting adjourned at 12.50pm for lunch

The meeting resumed at 1.10pm

## **18. Panel Session Murray Darling Basin**

### **Ms Susan Madden, Board Member, Murray Darling Basin Authority**

The Murray Darling Basin is home to 2.6million, produces \$24billion worth of agriculture and \$8billion in tourism. It is the most complex river system in Australia. Inflows to the basin in 1895 was 28,000GL per year fluctuating over the years due to drought and flood. In 2010/11 it was 20,000GL and in 2013/15 it was 10,000GL. The Basin Plan has limits on use, targets for water quality, rules for water trading, water resource planning, environmental water plan, monitoring and evaluation, sustainable diversion limit and water resource plan implementation. Before the Basin Plan 136,236GL was the average amount of water extracted from the basins rivers annually. The new SDL is 10,873GL. Water to be recovered for the environment is 2,700GL. Current issues are water sharing investigation including inflows and supply into the basin, delivery of water, water sharing and potential opportunities for enhancement. Report card water recovery - on track, SDL adjustment mechanism - at risk of delay, water resource plans - good progress, water resource plans NSW - at risk of delay, northern basin initiatives - some progress, planning and delivery of e water - good progress, compliance - good progress

### **Dr Lindsay White, Director, Northern Basin, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and Mr Hilary Johnson, Director, Southern Basin, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder**

The Environmental Water Office are looking to engage more with local Councils. Healthy rivers mean healthy communities and healthy industries. With water for the environment the Department of Agriculture and Water buys the water requirement. The State Governments decides how much it gets each year. Critical human needs include the need for the environment and what is needed for production. Environmental water worth \$3.77billion. Water management options include use it, hold it, or trade it. There six local engagement offices. There are environmental success stories such as introducing fish at the local level and reinvigoration of forests at the catchment level. The recent rainfall is very welcome and is highest north of the basin. Runoff from the fire affected areas are impacting Murray headwaters water quality. Basin watering priorities are Narran Lakes including maintaining habitat because it is a critical waterbird habitat

### **Mr David Harris, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Water**

Water NSW is the States river system manager and looks after source water protection, bulk water supply, system operation, bulk water infrastructure and customer water transactions. Storage levels are generally low enough for coastal drought response. Water NSW controls regulated rivers, and provides infrastructure solutions to optimize water releases. The 20 year infrastructure options study ,Rural Valleys, identifies infrastructure options and is customer focused and developed. In drought they change the way they do things eg Peel pipeline reduced from two and half years to nine months to complete. Water

projects include Nyngan and Cobar Water Security, Lachlan Valley Wyangala dam raising, Macquarie Water security, Macquarie water grid a strategic business case to connect towns and major users to build drought resilience, Bunerong drought resilience, Wilcannia weir raising, Lake Rowlands to Carcoar business case, and Glennies to Lostock water security project. The cost of Wyangala dam is \$650million providing 650GL additional storage, Moll river dam \$355million to provide 100GL storage capacity and Dungowan dam \$480million to provide 22.5GL storage capacity.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 3.00pm.

Cr Katrina Humphries  
Chair – Country Mayor's Association of NSW