

**MEETING OF THE HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM
ON MONDAY 18 JULY 2022 COMMENCING AT 6.02PM**

PRESENT: Cr Ambrose Doolan (Mayor), Cr Aniello Iannuzzi (Deputy Mayor), Cr Dale Hogden, Cr Kathryn Rindfleish, Dr Sally Plunkett (Dunedoo) and Roger Bailey (General Manager)

APOLOGIES: Cr Denis Todd

AGENDA ITEMS

Item 1 Parliamentary Inquiry into Health Outcomes & Access to Health & Hospital Services in Rural, Regional & Remote NSW

The Committee discussed the inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales.

The Committee was provided with Council's submission, the Final Report, the original terms of reference and the Parliament's Findings and Recommendations

The NSW Government's response is scheduled for 7 November 2022.

The Committee Resolved to note the status of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Health Outcomes & Access to Health & Hospital Services in Rural, Regional & Remote NSW.

Rindfleish/Hogden

Item 2 Warren Shire Council Briefing Note

The Committee discussed Warren Shire Council's Briefing Note from Alliance Western Councils Board Meeting held 30 March 2022.

The Committee Resolved to note the Warren Shire Council Briefing Note.

Doolan/Rindfleish

Item 3 Medical Accommodation

The Committee discussed the following Council owned buildings located across the Shire:

- i. 141 Martin Street, Coolah house currently rented to Brenshaw Medical
- ii. 2 Digilah Street, Dunedoo, the building leased to a doctor
- iii. 4 Digilah Street, Dunedoo
- iv. Health building available 57 Bandulla Street, Mendooran
- v. Medical Centre 61 Cassilis Street, Coonabarabran

The Committee Resolved to note the current Council health buildings across the Warrumbungle Shire.

Rindfleish/Hogden

Item 4 NSW Country Mayors Association – Rural Health Forum Presentation Slides

The Committee noted the slides from the Rural Health Forum of the Country Mayors Association of NSW held 26 May 2022.

The Committee Resolved to note the slide package from NSW Country Mayors Association – Rural Health Forum.

Doolan/Rindfleish

Item 5 Local Government NSW Policy

The committee discussed Local Government NSW (LGNSW) advocacy positions on health, which included:

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- 4.4 New models for rural and regional infrastructure, service delivery, health and mental health care, including consideration of council coordination and/or implementation that avoids cost shifting and is built on close collaboration between local, state and federal governments and NGOs.
- 14.11 The NSW and Australian Governments to address the mental health crisis and ensure adequate access to care across NSW.
- 19.6 NSW Health to retain ownership of its aged care and disability facilities.

The Committee Resolved to note the advocacy undertaken by Local Government NSW in relation to health-related issues.

Hogden/Rindfleish

**Item 6 Local Government NSW position on the 2022 NSW State Budget –
Improve Rural and Regional Health Services**

Information was provided to the Committee in relation to the LGNSW Position Paper.

The Committee Resolved to note the information on LGNSW 2022 State Budget.

Doolan/Hogden

Item 7 Incentives for Visiting Medical Officers

Council previously sought to make representations to the NSW Minister for Health seeking a greater level of energy and resources being placed into rural health services and the Warrumbungle Shire, this is to include greater incentives for Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs).

An opportunity exists for the Committee to express views on what these incentives should be.

The Committee Resolved that a submission be made to NSW Minister Health and Federal Health Minister on incentives for Visiting Medical Officers.

Rindfleish/Hogden

Item 8 Warrumbungle Community Health Workers

The Council previously considered consideration for the development of a program to help our communities be more attractive to doctors and health workers.

In March 2021 Council held a public meeting in Dunedoo to discuss a number of health-related issues across the Warrumbungle Local Government Area in recent times, particularly at Coolah and Dunedoo. This meeting had been held following approaches by a number of residents expressing concern about some of these issues, and particularly about the availability of doctors and issues at our health service facilities (hospitals). About 110 residents were in attendance along with officials, including:

- Dr Sally Plunkett, Dunedoo Doctor
- Mark Coulton MP, Member for Parkes and Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government (appointed February 2020)
- Professor Ruth Stewart MBBS, National Rural Health Commissioner (appointed as the second National Rural Health Commissioner for Australia in July 2020)
- Scott McLachlan, Chief Executive of Western NSW Local Health District
- Dr Shannon Nott, Rural Health Director of Medical Services, Western NSW Local Health District

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- Robert Strickland Acting Chief Executive Officer Western NSW Primary Health Network

A lot of matters were brought to the attention of the meeting during the meeting including an insufficient number of doctors being available; staff burnt out; the need for permanent staff and not a reliance on agency staff; more support is needed for smaller hospitals; more investment is required in doctors and nurses; and virtual GPs do not fill needs and people still need to travel to Dubbo.

It was widely acknowledged that the health issues are not easy to approach and similarly the problems are not unique to the Warrumbungle Shire. It was recognised that: there are not enough doctors in the system; country people will return to the bush so more country people need to be trained; an environment needs to be created for people to work here; the changes in the training of doctors will take time; and there is strong competition for the services of doctors.

Councillors in attendance were disappointed to hear some of the senior presenters suggest that the Dunedoo community was not sufficiently welcoming to clinicians.

The question that was raised was 'What do we need to do, in conjunction with the State and Federal Governments, to make the Warrumbungle Shire attractive for doctors and health professionals to work within?'

The Committee Resolved that the Committee consider options for making the Warrumbungle Shire attractive for doctors and health professionals.

Hogden/Doolan

Item 9 Dunedoo Doctor Recruitment

The Committee discussed the recruitment of a doctor for Dunedoo.

The Committee noted the situation with doctor recruitment in Dunedoo.

Iannuzzi/Hogden

Item 10 Impacts on Health Services by the Impacts of Development

The committee discussed how the Shire will soon be significantly impacted by a number of developments, the main developments here will be from the Inland Rail around Baradine in the northern part of the LGA and also from the Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) in the southern areas of the LGA, mostly on Dunedoo.

Inland Rail – approximately 42kms of the Inland Rail project will be located within the Warrumbungle Shire following a route just north of Baradine. The development is expected to include a workers camp in Baradine accommodating up to 500 people at its peak. The camp is expected to be in place for a 2-3 year period during the construction of the project.

REZ – the Central-West Orana REZ is approximately 20,000 square kilometres in the Dubbo, Gilgandra, Mid Western and Warrumbungle local government areas. With this we have already seen the growth in solar and wind energy farms across this area and it is expected that at its peak there will be an additional 3,500 workers. It is not clear at this stage where these workers will be located.

The Committee Resolved that:

1. The Committee note the large scale developments expected to impact on the Warrumbungle Shire in the near future.

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2. Council write to State and Federal governments expressing concern for the impact of the large scale development and seeking assistance for local towns.
Rindfleish/Doolan

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.41pm.