

**MINUTES OF THE COOLAH COMMUNITY CONSULTATION MEETING HELD IN
COOLAH COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON MONDAY 30 OCTOBER 2023 COMMENCING
AT 5:30PM**

PRESENT: Cr Ambrose Doolan, Cr Kathy Rindfleish (Deputy Mayor), Cr Jason Newton, Cr Zoe Holcombe, Cr Denis Todd, Roger Bailey (General Manager, GM), Nicole Benson (Director Technical Services, DTS), Leeanne Ryan (Director Environment and Development Services, DEDES), Steven Friend (Manger Fleet Services), Amanda Wherrett (PA to DCCS, Minutes), Kathryn Reynolds, Lee Doyle, Jo Murphy, Darren Stafford, Michelle Sternbeck, Adrian Rusten, Ann-Louise Capel, C. Furness, Karen Mandeno, Leonie Quick, Jillie Arnott, and Will Arnott.

APOLOGIES: Lindsay Mason (Director Corporate and Community Services, DCCS), Cr Dale Hogden, Cr Carlton Kopke, Cr Aniello Iannuzzi, and Cr Kodi Brady.

INTRODUCTION

Mayor Ambrose Doolan welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced the councillors, General Manager (GM), Director Environment and Development Services (DEDES), Director Technical Services (DTS), Manager Fleet Services, and PA to DCCS (Minutes).

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING MONDAY, 27 MARCH 2023

Correction to Item 9: A community member's name was spelt incorrectly, change spelling to Katie Burgess (not Katie Burges).

BUSINESS ARISING

Relating to Item 5, community member asked what the progress is on upgrades to the Coolah pool timer and temperature regulator.

Cr Rindfleish advised that the Council contracted plumber was working at the Coolah pool earlier today.

ACTION: DTS to investigate the progress of the pool timer and temperature regulator maintenance.

Relating to Item 7, a community member asked for an update on progress of the access road to Coolah Tops National Park.

DTS advised that work to Coolah Tops National Park access road will continue once the road survey is completed. 5km of road is to be sealed starting at the Coolah Creek Road. Works will commence in February 2024. Council is waiting on the Public Gates and Cattle Grids on Public Roads Policy to be completed as there are a number of cattle grid ramps to be replaced during the project.

Relating to Item 9, a community member asked what the update is on the additional funding for the disabled toilets situated behind the old Coolah Shire Hall?

DTS advised that Council is planning to renovate the building at the rear of the old Shire Hall building and build a fully accessible toilet.

Relating to Item 10, a community member asked if the signage for the Coolah Tops National Park is approved by Council.

DTS advised of a delay due to a miscommunication with National Parks and Wildlife

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Services regarding delivery of the signage. The signage is expected to be delivered and installed by the end of the first week of November 2023.

COMMUNITY MATTERS

1. What will be the cumulative effects and loss of visual amenity in regards to Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (CWO REZ)? (Kathryn Reynolds)

DEDS advised that Council has made submissions to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and EnergyCo has not described how cumulative impacts from the development will affect the community.

Community member asked if Council receives funding toward the CWO REZ project?

GM advised that Council is currently receiving funding to assist with dealing with assessing REZ related issues. The commitment is \$250,000 per year for 3 years.

2. Will Council oppose proposed increase in capacity of the CWO REZ? (Kathryn Reynolds)

DEDS advised that Council is working towards a submission focusing on the Transmission Line. Further, each time EnergyCo increases the parameters of the project, they need to seek approval from public.

3. Will Council support the local community seeking to stop EnergyCo's HV transmission infrastructure? (Kathryn Reynolds)

Mayor advised that councillors and Council staff are working to minimise the downside and maximise the benefits for all the Shire residents. Cr Dale Hogden attended the CWO REZ Community Information Session in Dunedoo on 11 October 2023.

DEDS advised that Council is working through the assessment of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), intend to make a submission focused on cumulative impacts to the community.

4. Will Council write to Ministers for Planning and Energy seeking a moratorium on the CWO REZ, including a pause in the acquisition process of easements? (Kathryn Reynolds)

Mayor advised that Council is not of the view to write to the Minister for Planning to seek a moratorium at this point in time.

5. Will Council object to CWO REZ Transmission project currently on exhibition with Dept. of Planning? (Kathryn Reynolds)

GM advised that this question was covered previously.

6. Will Council make a submission supporting undergrounding of power lines in the CWO REZ, in the NSW Legislative Council's Select Committee into the feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects (that closes 10 November)? (Kathryn Reynolds)

Community Member stated that Cate Faehrmann, MLC for the Greens in the Upper House, intends to visit the CWO REZ, and has communicated her strong opposition to the project.

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Kathryn Reynolds to send the GM information regarding details of Greens Minister Cate Faehrmann's proposed visit to the CWO REZ.

7. Will Council make a submission to the Minister for Planning that any decision of the CWO REZ Transmission project needs to be delayed until the undergrounding enquiry presents its findings (March 2024)? (Kathryn Reynolds)

Community member stated that this project should not progress until the enquiry has been finalised.

Council advised that the Minister of Energy, Penny Sharpe, stated that the project will be going ahead.

8. Have the open/closed signs for the Coolah Tops National Park, to be placed on Vinegaroy Road, been approved by Council? (Jo Murphy and Lee Doyle)

This item was covered in discussion previously.

Community member asked where Coolah Tops National Park sign will be placed?

ACTION: DTS to consult with National Parks and Wildlife Service on the location of the sign, and report back to community.

9. Tourism website upgrade. (Jo Murphy and Lee Doyle)

GM advised that the Council website is currently being updated.

Community member suggested that the Council website would be more user-friendly if each town had its own tab.

ACTION: DEDES to consider an upgrade of the Warrumbungle Region website to include a separate tab for each town in the Shire.

10. How can Council support and protect the residents of Coolah and the district from the negative impacts of the multiple renewable developments and transmission lines? (Jo Murphy and Lee Doyle)

This item was covered in discussion previously.

COUNCIL UPDATES AND INFORMATION

11. Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)

DEDS provided an update on the REZ and associated projects.

Council has made submissions on projects raising various concerns including where water will be obtained. Submissions are available on Council's website.

The transmission line project is deemed a State Significant Infrastructure project and the state government can override local government.

There is an EnergyCo steering group including Council members that discuss local issues relating to REZ projects. There is a regional leadership collective including other councils working on submissions to the project application

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process together.

The community will start to see activity in the next 12 months including more workers in communities, and the accommodation camps in action.

Community members may make submissions on the project at planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects.

12. Regional Drought Resilience Plan

Regional Drought Resilience Plan is a project that Council is involved in with Gilgandra Shire council, with Gilgandra being the lead and project manager. The project involves development of a plan that assist communities to become drought resilient going into the future. Community engagement will commence during November, when dates are known we will advertise through the usual channels.

13. Roads Restoration Program

DTS provided an update on the roads and the Natural Disaster Restoration works. Key points:

- Natural Disaster Restoration works are approximately 50% complete.
- \$10,568,493 in Natural Disaster funding has been approved for restorations. Two claims, \$3,004,143 for sealed roads, and \$594,000 for unsealed roads, were recently made and are under assessment.
- Council has engaged contractors, to supply an unsealed road maintenance crew to assist with the Natural Disaster restoration works.
- Three tenders have been advertised for flood damage road repairs: Sandy Creek area; Upper Lahey's Creek Roads; and North of Oxley area Goolhi and surrounds.
- \$864,683 has been received under the Pothole Repair Program, with over 80% of the funding spent so far. Funds must be spent by January 2024. A second Jet Patcher has been hired to assist with the works and staff are working weekends, as well as rostered days, to get the work done.
- \$4,590,978 has been under the Regional and Local Roads Repair program for urgent repairs to the road network. The program has recently been extended from 29 February 2024 to 31 October 2027.
- A Disaster Resilience Strategy is in development. This strategy will be driven by community consultation and will review road assets, such as bridges, culverts, and causeways, then look at the risk communities face due to natural disasters.
- Council has commenced preparation and implementation of a Disaster Resilience Strategy throughout the Shire, driven by community consultation. The Disaster Resilience Strategy will review the road

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infrastructure and associated road assets, such as bridges, culverts, and causeways. Council will consider the risk communities face due to natural disasters.

14. Draft Public Gates and Cattle Grids on Public Roads Policy.

DTS provided an update on Public Gates and Cattle Grids on Public Roads Policy. The policy has been reviewed and aims to support procedures for application, issuing of permits, inspections, assessments, and maintenance of public gates and cattle grids. Once finalised, the draft policy will be placed on public exhibition before it is adopted.

15. Entry to the Pools

DTS provided information on free entry to all pools across the Shire when a pool attendant is rostered on. Season ticket holders will have access from 6am until the pool closes.

16. Projects and Grants

DTS advised that the projects and subsequent budgets for Coolah are:

- Coolah Tennis Club fencing, \$45,000.
- 17a Cole Street – Bathroom Refurbishment, \$15,000.
- Coolah Office Auto Door - Installation of automatic door for access improvements, \$15,000.
- Pandora Gallery & Library – Carpet Replacement, \$50,000.
- Coolah Pool – plant room drainage improvements, \$45,330.
- Coolah Urban Road Reseals – Queensborough Street, \$4,000
- Coolah K&G Rehabilitation, \$50,000.
- Heavy Patching / Pothole Repair - Black Stump Way, \$TBC.
- Coolah Bowen Oval Sporting Facility Upgrades, \$449,911.
- Coolah Pull Up A Stump – Streets as Shared Spaces, \$131,535.
- Shire Wide Bus Stop Upgrades (LRCI4), \$185,000.
- CCTV Installation at Outdoor Pools (LRCI4), \$150,000.
- Shire Wide Playground Upgrades (LRCI4), \$400,000.
- Dog Parks for Coolah, Coonabarabran and Dunedoo (LRCI4), \$50,000.
- Coolah Pool Entrance Building Maintenance and Repair (LRCI4), \$100,000.

17. Budget – Upcoming calls for submissions (External Budget Submissions, Annual Donations, Community Financial Assistance Donations)

DCCS provided information about upcoming opportunities to have input to the 2024/25 Budget.

Additionally, applications will open early in the new year for Annual Donations, and the next round of Community Financial Assistance Donations.

Guidelines for Community Financial Assistance Donations has been reviewed, and moving forward, low priority will be given to groups that have already received a donation in the first round of funding each year.

18. Australia Day

DCCS advised provided information about nominations for the 2024 Australia

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Day Awards. These awards are run in conjunction with the NSW Local Citizen of the Year Awards.

GENERAL BUSINESS

19. Community member asked if there would there be a budget for painting the Bowen Oval entrance.

DTS advised that if the existing oval budget allows, repainting of the entry sign could be conducted in the 2023-2024 financial year.

ACTION: DTS to assess whether the existing oval budget allows for the painting the Bowen Oval entrance.

20. Community member asked what the update is on the road works on Werribee Road.

DTS advised that a survey plan has been prepared. Council was required to provide information to Crown Lands' proposed acquisition notice that was sent to Council. The process with Crown Lands will need to recommence.

21. Community member asked about the update to Pandora Pass Road?

DTS advised that there are plans to work on the flood damaged area on Pandora Pass Road, when the grader is next scheduled to be in that area.

Mayor Ambrose Doolan thanked everyone for attending, and declared the meeting closed.

There being no further business, meeting was closed 6:30pm.