

**MINUTES OF THE COOLAH COMMUNITY CONSULTATION MEETING
ROUND 1 2024/25 HELD IN THE COOLAH COUNCIL CHAMBERS
ON TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2024 COMMENCING AT 5:30PM**

PRESENT: Cr Jason Newton (Deputy Mayor), Cr Denis Todd, Cr Zoe Holcombe, Lindsay Mason (Acting General Manager, A/GM), Nicole Benson (Director Technical Services, DTS), Ngaire Stevens (Acting Director Corporate and Community Services, A/DCCS), Amanda Wherrett (PA to Director Corporate and Community Services, Minutes), Greg Piper, Jo Murphy, Lee Doyle, Kathryn Reynolds, Adam Burgess, Noel Gilbert, and Rodney Parker Wright.

APOLOGIES: Cr Kathy Rindfleish (Mayor), Cr Ray Lewis, Cr Naomi Taylor, Cr Kodi Brady, Leeanne Ryan (Director Environment and Development Services, DEDS), Grant Piper, Annette Piper, Jillie Arnott, and Katie Burgess.

INTRODUCTION

Deputy Mayor Jason Newton welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced the councillors and Council staff in attendance.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING TUESDAY, 26 MARCH 2024

Confirmed as a true and accurate record.

BUSINESS ARISING

Nil.

COMMUNITY MATTERS

Noel Gilbert

1. Update on Coolah town water supply and quality of water studies.

A/GM advised that a technical hydrological investigation has commenced to see if better quality water can be found. Project is funded through the Securing Safe Water Program (SSWP), and is due for finalisation in early 2026.

2. Establishing a more congenial and collaborative community consultation meeting regime.

Noel mentioned that the formality of Community Consultation meetings sometimes separates the community from councillors and Council staff. Noel enquired if there could be an informal process to discuss things, for example, have a BBQ together then a community consultation meeting.

A/GM advised that Council could look at the possibility of Council and Community member meeting informally after Community Consultation Meetings have concluded.

Jo Murphy enquired if the layout of the Council meetings at the Coolah Council Chambers could be addressed, as the current layout separates Council and community members.

Deputy Mayor Jason Newton advised that Ordinary Council meetings are required to be formal so that Council staff can document and record official Council business. In addition, Ordinary Council meetings require a format where the public are invited to observe Council business taking place, however, the public do not participate in discussion. Members of the public may apply to Council to speak at the Public Forum prior to Council meetings. The Coolah

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Community Consultation meeting has the same seating arrangement; however, the community may sit anywhere in the room during the consultation process.

Cr Zoe Holcombe mentioned that some other Shire towns have their meetings in a more informal setting in their local clubs.

Kathryn Reynolds

3. What is the plan for the future disposal of wind turbine components.

Kathryn Reynolds enquired what Council plan to do when the REZ wind turbine blades deteriorate and need replacing, where will the waste go.

A/GM advised that this waste cannot be accepted on Council Transfer Stations, or at Council Landfill in Coonabarabran. A/GM also advised that no information on a waste management plan has been provided by the developers. Council has enquired about these issues and they remain unanswered.

4. What is the plan for the future disposal of degraded battery components.

This question was answered above.

5. What is the plan for the future disposal of damaged/degraded solar panels.

Kathryn mentioned other solar farm developments have had damaged solar panels due to vehicle accidents while in transit. Kathryn enquired about what would happen in Warrumbungle Shire if an accident occurred, where would the waste go. In addition, would Council be responsible for cleaning up solar farm related accidents.

A/GM advised that responding to REZ developer's vehicle accidents on private property is not a Council responsibility. REZ developers are required to create a waste management plan to be submitted to the EPA.

Kathryn mentioned she was called upon by Police to help clean up accident on her property road boundary. Kathryn enquired that, considering this experience, could Council include in the REZ agreement with developers an element of protection for land owners should accidents occur on their property.

COUNCIL UPDATES AND INFORMATION

6. Roads Restoration Program.

DTS provided an update on the roads and the Natural Disaster Recovery program. Key points were:

- \$10,582,454 has been approved for restoration and works are being carried out with 86% funds spent.
- Natural Disaster restorations deadlines for completion of grant funding are: 30 March 2025 for the November 2021 event AGRN 927; and 30 June 2025 for the September 2022 event. AGRN 1034.
- \$21,001,486 worth of claims have been submitted for AGRN 1034. Council and TfNSW are reviewing the claims, and TfNSW has asked for additional information. Additional plant (trucks) have been hired, Council staff are working additional hours and/or up to six (6) days per week to meet the works deadline.

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- Works are currently underway: Wongoni Road; Mancers Road; Box Ridge Road; Prugger North of Oxley (Goolhi and surrounds) such as Reddens Road and Yaminbah Road projected to be finished by January 2025.
- Black stump way road works are currently under way.

7. External Budget Submissions

A/DCCS advised that External Budget Submissions are currently open for the financial year 2025/26, and forms are available on Council website under the Have Your Say tab. The submissions close at 4.30 pm on Friday 6 December 2024.

A/GM mentioned that the community requested for Council to leave External Budget Submissions open to submissions for the full 12 months. The next financial year 2026/2027 Budget submissions will open the following business day.

Cr Zoe Holcombe advised that External Budget Submissions are good way for Council to know what communities want to have improved in their towns. If a submission is not successful, Council have the submission with included costing, brought to their attention for future budget considerations.

8. Australia Day 2025

A/DCCS advised that nominations for Australia Day 2025 Awards opened on Monday 28 October 2024, and will close at 4.30 pm on 25 November 2024. Forms are available on Council's website under the Have Your Say tab, at Council reception in Coonabarabran and Coolah, and available at this meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS

9. Application to speak at the Local Emergency Management Committee - LEMC (Kathryn Reynolds)

Kathryn Reynolds enquired how Grant Piper could apply for time to present information to the LEMC on aerial firefighting within the REZ.

DTS advised Grant Piper to email DTS with his request via Council's email address info@warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au, and Grant may be added to the LEMC meeting agenda as a presenter.

10. Sustainable Farms Audit requirements (Kathryn Reynolds)

Kathryn Reynolds stated that Sustainable Farms Audit requirements includes that farm stock must not have exposure to certain elements relating to solar panels, and if stock do, that prevents farms from passing a Sustainable Farms Audit.

11. Fatal accident at wind farm in Western Victoria (Kathryn Reynolds)

Kathryn Reynolds mentioned an accident that recently occurred at a wind farm in Victoria where a worker died when turbine blade fell on them. Kathryn raised concerns about Coolah's limited resources in medical personnel and facilities, and the potential pressure placed upon these limited resources if incidents were to occur.

DTS advised the issue of potential pressure placed on local town's medical response resources, as a result of the REZ developments, is a standing item on the LEMC agenda, and discussed regularly.

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12. Update on dog park fence project (Lee Doyle)

Lee Doyle enquired about an update on the Dog Park fence.

DTS advised the Dog Park at Jorrocks Park is in progress and Council will consult with the Development Group on final designs before building commences.

13. Update on the toilet block project (Lee Doyle)

Lee Doyle enquired about an update on the toilet block project.

DTS advised that the Project Manager leading this project left Council, and the project was put on hold.

14. Pandora Gallery carpet replacement (Lee Doyle)

Lee Doyle mentioned that funding was allocated for replacement of Pandora Gallery carpet, however the carpet was assessed to not need replacing. Lee enquired if the funding remains available for other projects.

DTS advised that the funding allocated to replace the Pandora Gallery carpet, was not carried over or revoked by Council, leaving no remaining budget for works. DTS mentioned the External Budget Submissions round is open for any new work requests

15. Commendation for Council's Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Meeting in Coolah with Sasha Lennon (Lee Doyle)

Lee Doyle commended Council for the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy meeting held in Coolah on 24 October 2024. Lee mentioned that this process was very positive, with Mr Sasha Lennon and Council's Jeffrey Woo, providing a forum to actively learn about what Coolah community wants and needs for the future.

A/GM noted the commendation from Lee Doyle for the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy meeting held in Coolah.

16. Condition of Bowen oval (Adam Burgess)

Adam Burgess mentioned Bowen Oval has deteriorated in condition due to being waterlogged, and that he had sent an email to Council regarding the condition of the oval. Adam mentioned that water pools between the cricket pitch and the grand stand making half the field wet. Adam mentioned that water runs off the nearby golf course, and enquired if it was possible to install a bank to divert the water.

ACTION: DTS advised staff would follow up the email sent to Council by Adam Burgess regarding maintenance of Bowen Oval, and assess the condition of Bowen Oval.

16.1 Adam Burgess enquired about what the process is with line marking and mowing on Bowen Oval, as the lines are currently difficult to see when playing on the field.

ACTION: DTS to consult with sporting groups as to what they require with line marking and mowing, and formulate a suitable maintenance plan for Bowen Oval.

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**17. Request for Council attendance at the Coolah Development Group meetings
(Lee Doyle spoke on behalf of Katie Burgess)**

Lee Doyle suggested that councillors or Council staff could attend the Coolah and District Development Group meetings at least once a quarter to help break down barriers between Council and community, and open communication opportunities.

A/GM advised to take this on notice.

18. St John's Wort on Vinegaroy Road (Kathryn Reynolds)

Kathryn Reynolds mentioned that the St John's Wort growing on Vinegaroy Road needs spraying, in a location starting 16kms from Coolah post office. Kathryn enquired what the policy of spraying Vinegaroy road is.

Cr Zoe Holcombe advised of her role as committee member of the Castlereagh Macquarie County Council for Noxious Weed Control, and is the Council member to contact regarding noxious weed control.

ACTION: Cr Zoe Holcombe to follow up the issue of St John's Wort growing along Vinegaroy Road, 16 kms out from the Coolah post office.

19. Bowen Oval equipment shed (Rodney Parker Wright)

Rodney Parker Wright enquired when the equipment shed project at Bowen Oval will go ahead.

DTS advised that a contractor has been engaged for the Bowen Oval equipment shed project, and will be under way shortly.

Deputy Mayor Jason Newton thanked everyone for attending, and declared the meeting closed.

There being no further business, meeting was closed 6:25 pm.