

Gloucester Community Conversation – 17 April 2019

Q1. What are Council's plans to encourage businesses into the Gloucester Industrial area?

- A. When we first merged a prominent discussion point that was raised and is still raised was the industrial area. Since then we have been planning a strategy to resolve the issue and it is also listed in the economic development strategy for the LGA. The reasoning behind the costs of water being so high in the industrial area is not a simple solution however it is a priority for the region and Council. The issue lies with the water pressure from the mains not being strong enough to provide the pressure to the industrial area to meet the Building Code of Australia's regulations to allow business to pass certain fire legislation to operate. If we were to increase the pressure of the water being supplied the residential pipe work would not cope and the entire system would be blown up. To fix the issue, we have to rebuild reservoir system in the town as well as replacing key water pipes in the residential and industrial areas. This will allow the pressure to be increased in the industrial area making it easier for new buildings to meet regulatory standards without the higher costs of providing their own fire protection coverage onsite. The cost of this is roughly \$15 million to complete the reservoir and pipework components project. Further plans are being developed to replace the Water Treatment Plant and provide drought security for the town water supply. In order to encourage businesses to the area, the water pressure issue in the Industrial area will need to be solved first.

Q2. How is Council going to reduce the impost on businesses for developer charges, especially in relation to water supply? Hunter Water does not charge such fees which places Gloucester at a disadvantage.

- A. We are often compared to the Hunter Water costs however both the geographical area and number of connections we service are vastly different and does not allow for a fair comparison. We have a very large area of water services and a small number of communities to pay for it. Urban areas will always have these costs at a lower rate as they are denser with rate paying properties lowering the per unit costings. We are currently trying to change the way we structure our development contributions to better support the business start-up by allowing deferral of the upfront fees for business. This would help businesses to establish until such time as they can afford to contribute without resulting in increased charges to other consumers.

Q3. The heavy truck traffic is increasing through Gloucester, with B-Doubles still going through in the early hours. They travel up/down Ravenshaw Avenue continuing past the high school. These trucks sometimes find it "hard" to slow down at the Philip/Ravenshaw junction. Can these trucks be diverted via Waukivory Road and Jacks Road (with road upgrade) to stop them destroying the old Ravenshaw road, particularly now the new aged care facility is being built. Our aged community need to be protected.

A. We will raise this issue through the local traffic committee and our transport assets team for investigation. New traffic counts will be undertaken in the area to gather more information. Waukivory and Jacks Roads are narrow lightly trafficked roads and would require significant improvement to be able to accommodate heavy vehicles. Ravenshaw Street and Phillip Street are identified as regional roads and part of the Bucketts Way corridor. More information will be presented when it becomes available.

Q4. I run a Triathlon sport session every week with Gloucester High School students and I have trouble planning safe/interesting routes that we can ride and run around town. While we have been supported enthusiastically by Tad and Lee at the pool, getting to the sporting grounds and beyond is an issue. My request is for safe bike and walking paths to be installed around town, specifically, linking schools, hospitals, nursing homes and sporting areas together.

A. We are currently pulling all pre-merger documentation and information from the previous councils to form a Pedestrian Access & Mobility Plan (PAMP). All existing pathways and pedestrian demands in the township areas are being planned out to highlight the gaps in the current facilities and identify the top priorities. A priority list will then clearly state where the work is needed to begin first and the council can work down the list as the resourcing and funding becomes available.

Q5. "What is the future of the caravan park when the lease expires? Will MidCoast Council be purchasing the old Gloucester Machinery Building for a Tourist Information Office?"

A. Council applied for a \$1.5 million grant to upgrade and renovate the caravan park. We were unsuccessful in that grant application which has led us to consider all other options for the future of the caravan park. We need to look at the current infrastructure on the site and determine what can be done with the land after the lease ends. There has been no consideration to sell the land at this stage, only considerations to upgrade the existing facilities however should that opportunity be presented, Council is happy to consider all options that are available.

Q6. Will MidCoast Council be purchasing the old Gloucester Machinery Building for a Tourist Information Office?

A. We understand this is an opportunity for the community and would be a good location for a tourist information centre. There are a range of issues around the building which we are currently investigating.

Q7. How is the council progressing on bringing Gloucester's minimum sub division of 100 "hectare" lots in line with Taree & Greater Lakes 100 "acre" lots?

A. Council is currently undertaking a rural land strategy to address such issues. That study is in progress and is likely to be finished in early 2020. Our website has further detail on the process and strategy if you would like to investigate further.

Q8. Concern around a very large tree near the local water tower in Tyrell Street. Danger to community, a concern was lodged with council and never returned a response.

A. Council has arborists who would have assess the tree through a range of procedures and determined it was safe to be there. This will be checked to ensure that tree and its safety has been assessed. Not being replied to is a separate and concerning issue to all council staff present. A new customer service charter will be released over the

next few months and will go on public exhibition, during which time we will welcome comments from the community.

Q9. How often will activities be held in Gloucester for the youth?

A. Currently we have one youth strengthening officer for the entire local government area. We hold events across the entire area as part of Youth Week each year. The current program is delivered within our current resources; however, we are happy to look at options with Councillors for increasing the funds available in this area.

Q10. If the Thunderbolts Way and Bucketts Way become part of State roads, will it have a significant impact on our spending?

A. This was a pre-election commitment from the NSW Government and we are carefully watching to see how this is delivered. It has the potential to significantly impact our community in the future.

Q11. Environmental levy that we pay – does that come back into Gloucester or is it for the LGA?

A. The Environmental Levy is collected from across the region and funds works across the region. We undertake a lot of work across the local government area as a result of this levy and will endeavour to improve our communication with the community on the works the levy delivers.

Q12. Can you detail what will be done Bucketts Way and Thunderbolts Way

A. There are four stages to Buckets Way project. The first stage is currently underway and it includes 12.5 kilometres of road to be upgraded at 9 sites. Stage two will include a similar level of work. We are hoping to be able to confirm more details on the funding for stage 2 once we know what the federal government had intended for the recently announced \$19.7 million dollars approved in the budget. We are presuming that Stage 2 will proceed if the government is re-elected as per the budget.

Q13. How is rate harmonisation occurring?

A. The Local Government Act requires merged councils to introduce new harmonised rates structures. The Local Government Amendment (Rates – Merged Council Areas) Bill 2017, which legislated the existing rates structures that were in place for the former councils be retained for four years from the date of amalgamation. Merged councils have a deadline of 30 June 2020 to bring the rating structures of the former councils into a new equitable structure that covers the entire council area. The process of developing a new rate structure for the MidCoast Council area has started and community involvement will be an essential part of the implementation.

Q14. Why are developments hard to get through council and the attitude towards assisting businesses navigate the processes to just say no.

A. We now have a dedicated staff member coming to Gloucester every week to assist business owners through the entire development application process. We are also trying change our approach to a customer service focus, to support the community to navigate the process as easily as possible. This is something that doesn't change overnight however we are actively working on it and are positive for the future. We also have a current partnership with Service NSW helping businesses in the food industry to work through that legislative process all in the one application process.

Hopefully this will be expanded to help all businesses in the future pending on the overall results.

Q15. What is the future of the pound facility?

A. There will be no short term pound facility in Gloucester. It will be looked at as part of the overall pound management strategy.

Q16. Why is there not disabled parking in the front of the Senior Citizens?

A. This will be considered as a request and actioned as soon as possible. All regulatory traffic and parking matters must be considered by the Local Traffic Committee.

Q17. Concerns are raised around the communication with local committees/ groups on the way programs and events are run across the LGA post-merger such as Australia Day.

A. We are working to harmonise processes in a range of areas, and Australia Day is one of those instances where things have been previously done in different ways across the Local Government Area. We need to have equity across the area for all of our Civic events such as Australia Day to ensure we are supporting our communities equitably. We are currently reviewing the way Australia Day occurred last year and how it will be delivered in the future.

Q18. Why were there so few events held in Gloucester for the Senior Citizens Week?

A. We held a range of events at nine locations across the local government area as part of Seniors Week, including Gloucester. We will provide feedback to the organisers of the program for their consideration next year.

Q19. Does Council have a water security plan for Gloucester?

A. Several options have been investigated over the last few years to provide long term water security to Gloucester. We have looked at the option of connecting Gloucester to the Manning system, via a pipeline to Krambach. This was not cost effective in the long term, however an option that deserved thorough investigation and costing. We are now decided on the need to construct a water storage for Gloucester and a new water treatment plant. We have just completed a \$1 million upgrade of the current facilities; however, this is only a short-term fix. In the studies that have already taken place, the preferred option moving forward will be to redevelop the current site and add in new facilities to build the reservoir
As we are now part of a large local government area now we are no longer granted the same percentage of overall funding subsidy that Gloucester would have previously been able to apply for as a small council area.
Over the coming year we will be working actively on designing this project, with construction work expected to be undertaken in several stages over the next 5-10 years. We will also be investing in the replacement of the Gloucester Sewage Treatment Plant.

Q20. Will rural water security be kept secure and not be put in jeopardy with the growth of residential areas across the LGA.

A. Like landowners, we are regulated by the government. As soon as the river flows before a certain level we are unable to pump. The Nabiac aquifer reduces the overall amount we need to take across the Manning however a holistic solution is still required to move forward for the future.

Unfortunately, the conversation around planning is too late for the LGA as all the development planning was completed for the catchment area 20 years ago and understanding around that planning could help to educate community members on the issue of water in the area.

Q21. Can Council increase the number of dams in the local catchment area in conjunction with the State Government announcement of looking for potential dam locations?

A. A holistic approach is need to work with irrigators, farmers and developers to come up with a solution that works for the entire region and it will not be a quick fix.

Top priorities

1. Economic Development
 - o Industrial area
 - o Gloucester machinery site
 - o Caravan park
 - o Promotional signage (in line with Barrington Coast)
2. Water security
3. Youth opportunities (equal 3rd)
4. Health Precinct (equal 3rd)
5. Costs (equal 4th)
 - o Rates and water
6. DA processing procedure and event applications (increased help and education) (equal 4th)

Full list of priorities identified

Group one priorities

Group two priorities

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Caravan Park – what is happening with the lease and what are the next steps 2. Gloucester Machinery - across from Gloucester Billabong park needs to be looked at as a council asset opportunity. Currently very dilapidated 3. Water security 4. Swimming pool hours to be looked at 5. Road signs especially at the railway station 6. Taxi services and bus services 7. Advocate for the attention of hospitals and hillcrest 8. Disabled parking in the front of the senior citizen’s hall 9. Men’s shed need to look at other venues in the town 10. Railway station to move to the butter factory 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic development (industrial area) 2. Council work with land owners to explore opportunities with zoning that exists 3. Rates for rural land owners are way too high. 4. Every town needs a good neighbourhood centre 5. No growth opportunity currently – need to improve the area to promote kids to stay 6. Move council office to scout hall – economic opportunity for council building 7. Awareness on neighbourhood violence
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Group three priorities

1. Council to take action on signage on the Bucketts Way, Walcha to Taree and Forster
2. Flood mitigation for the Billabong
3. Tar Waukivory Road to Bulahdelah
4. 100-acre vs 100 Hectare subdivisions – LEP small lot developments
5. Suggestion to close the highway and a divert the traffic along the Bucketts Way to be funded by the Government
6. Improve the Bucketts Way to Thunderbolts Way – make it a state road
7. Make DA process easier and clearer
8. Bring new industry to Gloucester whilst underpinning the businesses already here
9. Fix the water in the industrial area
10. Gloucester's water security and the future security
11. Better signage for tourism – use the signage at the entry points to the roads into town. i.e. 12mile 'Gateway to Barrington Coast'
12. Change Phillip Street bypass to go through the main St (excluding heavy vehicles)

Group four priorities

1. Continue to focus on Thunderbolts and Bucketts Way being upgraded
2. Increase the communication with the locals to help understanding of what is going on
3. Gloucester Machinery – needs to be upgraded and something done about it – move the Information centre, men's shed, community hub, something that council purchases and owns.
4. Rehabilitate the Billabong river bank – tourists walk and Landcare?
5. Bucketts Scenic walk future protection after selling of the land
6. MidCoast water issues (industrial area and costs)
7. Council owned caravan park needs upgrading and opportunities for after the lease expires need to be explored. Is there an opportunity for camping/caravan parking at the showground?
8. Great library – keep up the good work