

### Wingham – 20 November 2019

#### Discussion summary

##### Part 1 – bushfire discussions

***For anyone needing support and assistance during the recovery from the recent bushfires, visit the Disaster Welfare Assistance Point, established at 68 Wynter Street, Taree by the NSW Government’s Office of Emergency Management or call 1800 018 444. This service provides advice and support for those who have been impacted by the fires.***

The first section of the Community Conversations session at Wingham provided the community with an opportunity to discuss the recent bushfires and concerns that may have arisen as a result.

At the meeting were representatives from the Office of Emergency Management, Department of Primary Industries, BlazeAid, Insurance Council of Australia, Welfare Services and MidCoast Council.

A number of questions were asked, and a summary of the main topics discussed is provided:

##### **Replacement of rural fencing damaged by fires**

BlazeAid has set up at the Wingham Showground and will work to help farmers recover by rebuilding fences and doing odd jobs. Their policy is to shop locally by purchasing fencing material and supplies from local businesses. BlazeAid is also happy for volunteers both to help work on properties and support the workers through cooking etc. Some people will have insurance for their fencing, however many will not.

##### **Insurance**

This is assessed on an individual basis with insurance companies, however there are also grants for low income non-insured affected property owners. Some people only have their houses insured, and not their sheds and outbuildings. Contact the Disaster Welfare Assistance Point to talk about individual circumstances.

##### **Masters building used for emergency operations**

The former Masters building was used as a staging area for the Rural Fire Service during the emergency and this required no changes to the infrastructure other than several minor things with power.

##### **Debrief with the Rural Fire Service**

Those present indicated a strong desire for the Rural Fire Service to hold a community debrief to allow the community to discuss what did and didn't work well and the opportunity to provide feedback to the RFS. This will be passed on to the RFS.

## **Has there been a big cost to Council in road damage as a result of the fires**

Signage, guideposts and guard rail has been identified as damaged as a result of the fires. Council can make a claim for reimbursement of these repair costs through natural disaster recovery funding arrangements. Most of this work will be carried out by contractors and will not impact on our current road works program.

## **Cleaning up of land**

Council does not have the power to order landowners to clean up their land due to a fire threat. The NSW Rural Fire Service does have this power and if you are concerned about bushfire hazards near you, this can be reported via their website at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/know-your-risk/Bush-fire-hazards-and-your-property/reporting-a-bush-fire-hazard](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/know-your-risk/Bush-fire-hazards-and-your-property/reporting-a-bush-fire-hazard)

Council does have a responsibility to look after its own land and that it manages on behalf of the Crown. Council works with the RFS to undertake control burns when practical.

## **Can Council conduct or authorise backburning?**

No Council cannot authorise a backburn. The NSW Rural Fire Service is the only authority that can do this.

## **How do evacuation centres work?**

Evacuation centres are identified in the local emergency management plan. While locations are authorised evacuation centres, they do not become an evacuation centre until they are established by the NSW Police during an emergency situation. It is up to the person leading the emergency response to determine when evacuation centres are put into operation. This is based on the current situation and the need. There are also a range of neighbourhood safer places listed on the Rural Fire Service website.

## **What is the situation with our water supplies?**

A large amount of water was used in fighting fires, during a time in which we are already in drought and water restrictions. Level four water restrictions have now been introduced to reduce water use to preserve our supplies. [www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/News-Media/Severe-water-restrictions-for-most-MidCoast-areas](http://www.midcoast.nsw.gov.au/News-Media/Severe-water-restrictions-for-most-MidCoast-areas)

## **Part 2 – community conversation**

Council staff reported on how we plan to deliver the top five priorities from the Community Conversation held in Wingham earlier in the year. Those present were invited to contribute suggestions on the detail of these projects to assist in our delivery.

Below are the top five priorities that were raised from the first round of community conversations and the commitment from council.

### **Top five priorities identified in round one**

#### **1. Central Park masterplan**

The development of a masterplan for Central Park has been identified as a project for our recreational planners. We will be starting a design process in the first six months of 2020.

A decision on the way in which former section 94 funds can be spent has meant there is now funding for this type of planning.

## **2. Improve footpaths and cycle ways**

Many communities have asked for improvements to the footpath network in their area, including cycle ways. A Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) is the first step in addressing this. The PAMP will provide a framework for developing pedestrian routes and infrastructure to cater for the needs of all pedestrians; including older persons, people with mobility or visual impairments, young children, tourists, cyclists and recreational pedestrians. There is an emphasis on the development of commuter pathways as well as acknowledging the importance of recreational cycling for a healthy community.

The PAMP is being developed in conjunction with a Bike Plan which will identify opportunities for developing and enhancing pedestrian and cycle related activities and attractions for community members and visitors. The PAMP session in Wingham will be held on 4 December at 6pm at the Wingham Services Club.

## **3. Improve local roads**

We currently have a significant program of works on our roads. This level of investment will continue for at least the next four years before reducing to a lower level.

Our main priority is to manage the greatest risks on the network. This will mean that funding for the next few years will tend to be concentrated on our regional roads. These are the roads that connect our communities. They tend to have high traffic loads, higher speed limits and therefore are greater risk.

As we fix the worst areas on these high risk roads, we will be able to spread our maintenance resources further into the local road network and fix more of the things that are wrong. Over time our roads program will include more and more of the local roads that affect access to residences.

We are working on updating the forward roads program based on the funding levels that we are now projecting as being available into the future. Once this is complete, it will be presented to the community so that everyone can see what section of road is programmed to be done and when. We are also working on better reporting for our minor road maintenance activities so that the community can see what we have been doing in regards to roads maintenance and where.

## **4. Roundabout – Bent and Farquhar Street**

Consultation on the preferred design including a roundabout has been completed. The detailed design is in progress. The new work (including the roundabout) is planned to be completed from February to May 2020.

## **5. CBD beautification**

Many communities have asked for CBD beautification and /or locality based beautification strategies. The importance of these strategies to the vibrancy and quality of our urban and commercial areas is recognised by MidCoast Council.

In response teams from the Liveable Communities and Infrastructure and Engineering Services divisions have recognised the need to develop specific localised beautification plans to increase the aesthetic quality of the natural and built landscapes in our central business districts while welcoming visitors and enhancing quality of life for residents.

Staff have been working with CBD businesses to participate in the Vibrant Spaces initiative to create more engaging and activated public spaces.

A program has started to gather base information such as traffic levels, parking availability and pedestrian activity. This information will help to inform the concept planning and options assessment in future stages.

**Further feedback on top five priorities**

<p><b>Central Park masterplan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toilets need to be checked for people sleeping overnight by contractor locking up</li> <li>• Central Park watering using treated water from sewage plant</li> <li>• Central Park beautification, rebuild old grandstand, add sporting museum (heritage town), similar to Bradman Museum in Bowral</li> <li>• Keep cricket area</li> <li>• Add a cold water bubbler in town would be wonderful</li> <li>• Shade sails on children playground in Central Park</li> <li>• You call it “Central Park” is this historical? If not, the name should be scrapped for something more significant</li> <li>• Shade sails replaced asap</li> <li>• Safety fence needs erecting along the northern edge of Central Park (specifically near children’s playground) as there is a long drop to the footpath</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improve footpaths and cycle ways</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Footpath and bridge over creek at Flett Street near Queen Street North corner, pedestrians on road</li> <li>• Trees, shade and seating</li> <li>• Cycleway/footpath from Wingham Brush to Bight Bridge</li> <li>• Repair footpath Farquhar Street opposite Sheathers tractor yard where path has collapsed</li> <li>• Cycle and footpath opposite abattoir</li> <li>• Original cycle way/ footpath leading to the Wingham Sporting Complex renewed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improve local roads</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No stopping signs needed along Zeal Lane, residents blocked from leaving their properties because of Cuddlepie parking</li> <li>• Bulga Road Wingham outskirts to Wherrol Flat turnoff; no shoulder, poor visibility and rough spots</li> <li>• Gloucester Road Wingham</li> <li>• Nowendoc Road</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zeal Lane is in extremely poor condition, large volume of traffic twice daily 5 days per week because of Cuddlepie centre</li> <li>• Which roads, be more specific</li> <li>• Lane beside Cuddlepie preschool used by parents twice a day (approximately 4-car trips), heavy garbage trucks and delivery vehicles and residents cars. Lane is very rough, narrow and needs “no stopping” signs as in other laneways with less traffic</li> <li>• Isabella Lane</li> <li>• Wingham Road outside landscape supplies (approaching Wingham)</li> <li>• Bungay Road near scout hall, cars always go on other side of the road to avoid dips</li> <li>• Zeal Lane heavy traffic because of Cuddlepie Early Learning Centre. Lane needs no stopping sign</li> <li>• Get council workers to work not stand and talk</li> <li>• Killawarra Street Wingham is desperately in need of repair</li> <li>• Wingham Road from Youngs Road intersection to Cedar Party Bridge</li> <li>• Isabella Street</li> <li>• Bungay Road</li> <li>• Farquhar Street from Bent Street intersection to Dennes Street roundabout</li> <li>• STOP sign needs to be erected on the road leaving the carpark (behind the shops) via Queen Street (near Cleavers). People using the footpath are not visible. It is very dangerous.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Roundabout – Bent and Farquhar Street</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enlarge roundabout towards small park and old house that squatters are in</li> <li>• Roundabout should be mindful of pedestrian and cycleway areas</li> </ul>
<p><b>CBD beautification</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toilet in CBD</li> <li>• Tree lined main street</li> <li>• Main Street (Isabella Street) priority</li> <li>• Main street updated as previously planned</li> <li>• Is the pool repairable, ideally please leave it in the same location</li> <li>• Love to see some four season flags through town and grants to renew shop frontage</li> <li>• Recycling grey water to more trees in town and gardens</li> <li>• The town centre definitely needs shade</li> </ul>

	<p>and better lighting. Love to see a heritage gazebo on town green</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shouldn't the council/government be giving assistance for town houses to set up grey water recycling</li><li>• It is important to have a 50m pool for local schools in the Wingham region for competition. Also, centrally located pool may assist in bringing business to the town especially with the project to beautify the CBD and park</li><li>• Start making plans to fund the replacement of the Wingham pool</li><li>• Paved footpaths</li><li>• Bus shelters need to be renewed</li></ul>
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## Q & A session

### **Q: What is happening with the Cedar Party Bridge**

A: On 23 October Council made a decision to replace the bridge on the current alignment and we are currently in the process of preparing a grant application to do so. Several things are still to be sorted out – such as the heavy vehicle route while the bridge is under construction. Once the bridge is constructed we will be able to move forward with beautification of the central business district including Isabella Street.

### **Q: Will this create disruption for the main street closing the bridge for construction?**

A: We will look at this through the detailed design. Dependent on how the contractor will construct the bridge. We will be looking at the length of disruption that the contractor plans for the community.

### **Q: What is the situation with the Wingham Pool?**

A: The pool will stay at this current time in its current location. It does have a limited life on the facility and at this stage we do not have an accurate lifespan. Given the decision of Council to rebuild the bridge on its current alignment we will be undertaking an assessment on the pool to give us an accurate picture of its condition. We know a replacement pool will cost in the vicinity of \$1.5 - \$2 million. We have looked at lots of sites for the pool, but none have been feasible. The feedback from the previous consultation indicated many people wanted the pool to remain in the town centre. However we will discuss the options with the community in more depth when we have some accurate information on the pool condition, lifespan and possible options.

### **Q: While the pool is managed by YMCA it is a community asset. We would like to ask that the pool is free for those affected by the fires.**

A: The pool is managed by YMCA through a contractual arrangement. We will talk to them and raise that it would be good to offer as a donation to the affected community and express the community feels strongly about it.

### **Q: What is the situation with our water?**

A: We are experiencing unprecedented drought conditions. This is the driest period on record with the lowest average river flow. If we continue to see no rainfall over the coming months we will deplete our normal water storages and have to rely on our emergency bore water supply. This is much less than we currently use and would mean that some things would just not be able to be done. Severe Level 4 water restrictions have been implemented in response to the ongoing dry conditions as well as an increase in water use across the community. We need to reduce our usage so that we can continue to run our water supply system at full capacity until there is a change in the weather conditions and return to average water usage. At the current level of usage we have approximately 70 days of water supplies in Bootawa Dam at full use levels. We need to try to reduce the amount of water we use so that it is much closer to the amount of emergency water supplies we have. This will reduce the impact and increase the length we can continue to supply.

### **Q: How is the Napiac Aquifer helping the situation?**

A: We are expanding the Napiac borefield to increase the amount of water we can get from that source. At the moment it is supplying 25% of our use. By December it will supply over 33%. This capacity will continue to be increased through the addition of new bores where we expect to be able to supply over 50% of normal usage by February 2020.

### **Q: Irrigation on the river – why can it continue when we are on restrictions? Are we going to access water on the river through an irrigation license?**

A: Irrigation out of the river is not regulated through Council – the State Government issues river extraction licences (Council has one for the Bootawa storage and our other storages). It is unclear if irrigation will be banned, however if conditions worsen this is likely.

Landholders with water extraction licences have 'cease to pump' requirements at low river levels - as does Council.

Landowners with riparian rights or domestic bores may continue to draw water for domestic purposes and stock watering in all conditions.

**Q: What about those people outlying who can no longer access the river?**

A: We have put in temporary water points in various locations, particularly for those who have been impacted by the recent fires.

**Q: Are there plans for another dam to supplement Bootawa Dam?**

A: The concept of a second water storage at Peg Leg Creek dam at the back of Tinonee is part of long term water security plans. A project such as this would require considerable funding.

**Q: Are there plans to divert water from the Manning catchment back over the ranges?**

A: A license transfer scheme was mooted many years ago to turn coastal rivers inland, however this would be very difficult both politically and practically. There is currently no water in the area that is talked about, so not something that could happen.