



# District Council of Coober Pedy Newsletter

Welcome to the Opal Capital of the World

September 2019

## School Teacher to Child Ratio

The student to staff ratio for Coober Pedy School was published in the Advertiser on the 16th of September and the results show that Coober Pedy area school has approximately 214 students and has one of the highest student to staff ratios along with Yalata, and Elliston. Whilst this is not a reliable measure and does not take into account the skill set of the teachers and specialised support staff, attendance rates and various other factors play a part it is an interesting statistic that warrants critical review.

## Homelessness Round Table

On Tuesday the 17th September a Homelessness Roundtable Meeting was held in Coober Pedy to discuss housing and homelessness within the Community, facilitated by Shelter SA. Shelter SA is the peak body for housing in South Australia and conducts housing policy and advocacy across the State. As part of our Regional Engagement Strategy, and commitment to visit at least two regional and rural areas per year, Shelter SA visited to Coober Pedy to hear from locals about housing and homelessness issues facing our region.

The roundtable was held to identify the main housing issues in Coober Pedy. A report will then be completed with the issues discussed along with a list of recommendations for State Government.

Discussions arouse around affordable housing for low income earners & pensioners and suitable housing needs for those with large families or those elderly needing a one bedroom homes. Housing SA within Coober Pedy has 55 houses available, 4 leased to NGO's, 51 are tenanted, with 2 of which are available for mainstream clients, with a waiting list of 14 people/families on the category 1 list (priority). Identified was the need for more housing availability out of the private sector for those families or individuals

are either 'couch surfing' causing overcrowding housing, or sleeping rough with the lack of availability.

## Cemetery Vandalism

Council has been made aware of vandalism and theft at the Boot Hill Cemetery. Further information to come.

## Roadworks Program

The upgrade of roads currently underway has been funded by the State Government and has been proceeding on schedule. Many residents have inquired about their road and the timing of works near their homes.

The program was established by the State Government in response to an audit by Tonkin Consulting who estimated the cost of the works following the 2016 flood. Therefor some roads will not be upgraded as the audit did not identify damage as the result of that storm event. Attached is a list of those roads which remain to be treated and which will receive some attention as a result of the audit by Tonkin Consulting in the near future.

Roads to be completed under 2016 Flood Damage Funding		
Road Name - (differing scope of works required on all roads)		
17 Mile Road	Fitzgerald Road	Naylor Place
Amorosi Drive	Fleming Court	Old Water Tank Road
Aylett Place	Grey Street	O'Neill Court
Cactus Court	Halliday Place	Opal Crescent
Catacomb Road	Hospital Road	Reinecke Street
Chadwick Road	Irvine Place	Rowdy Lane
Collins Close	Italian Club Road	Santing Drive
Commachio Close	Jewellers Shop Road	Sexton Court
Crismani Close	Lia Street	Sherman Street
Crowders Gully Road	Lockwood Avenue	Stuart Street
Crystal Place	Marquardt Road	Stutley Parade
Daw Road	Marsh Place	Titheradge Place
Dawes Street	McKenzie Close	Tomcat Hill Road
Elleway Drive	Medway Drive	Tupper Close
Finch Crescent	Morousen Drive	Woolaston Road

## South Australian Regional Showcase

The South Australian Regional Showcase provides an opportunity to celebrate and promote the achievements of individuals, groups and organisations that have made significant contributions to regional South Australia.

Read all about the Drive-In and vote for them!

## 'Volunteers the true stars of Coober Pedy Drive-In'

<https://indaily.com.au/events/regional-showcase/2019/09/02/volunteers-the-true-stars-of-coober-pedy-drive-in/>



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Dear Citizen,

## Congratulations

Congratulation are extended to EDL for taking out the 2019 Asia Power Awards' Environmental Upgrade of the Year. The award recognises EDL's Coober Pedy Hybrid Renewable Project which combined the original diesel power station with wind and solar generation and battery storage.

Regardless of the past controversy surrounding this project this is great recognition for the project and the town.

## Community Reporting

Councils are required to produce an Annual Report of their activities. Coober Pedy has not done this for a number of years which is in contravention of the Local Government Act. This will be rectified this year. The Act requires the Annual Report for 30 June 2019 to be adopted by the Council no later than 30 November.

In addition to producing an Annual Report we will also have an Annual General Meeting to consider the Annual Report which will include the audited financial statements. This is not a mandatory requirement and in fact will be a first for the State and possibly Australia.

From next month we will also produce a quarterly report to the community. Again this will be a first for the State and probably Australia.

## Citizen Polls

A number of citizen polls will be conducted in October. The polls are a key tool in restoring public trust and confidence in the Council as they give the power to determine significant local issues back to electors. During the period of Administration, I will be bound by the decision of electors with the exception of the extension of the period

of Administration which is a decision for the Minister.

There will be four questions. They will require either a yes or no answer. The polls will be conducted by postal ballot. A document setting out the for and against cases will be provided with the voting papers. The polls will be conducted by the State Electoral commission. Voting papers will be delivered early in October with polling day being 21 October.

The poll questions are about who in future controls municipal rate levels, the possible sale of electricity and water assets and businesses to the State Government and the possible extension of the period of Administration.

It is important that as many voters as possible cast their votes.

There will be constant reminders and additional information provided during the lead up to polling day.

## Financial Sustainability

The Council prepared four financial scenarios for community comment as precursor to the finalisation of a Long Term Financial Plan. A key consideration to enable finalisation of the Plan is the State Government's attitude to the Council's proposal for it to purchase the Council's electricity and water assets along with the community's attitude to their sale.

While a decision on the community's attitude to the sale of the essential services assets will be known shortly it is unlikely a decision will be made by the State Government in the foreseeable future. Due to this and the uncertainty about the period of Administration, the Long Term Financial Plan will be prepared and finalised by the end of November.

The Council has adopted a fund approach

to its activities - electricity, municipal and water.

The electricity and water funds will be required to recover all costs and generate an acceptable rate of return on the invested assets.

Currently, the electricity fund is operating within these financial parameters.

The water business is not currently operating within these financial parameters.

Due to uncertainty about the period of Administration, the likely delay in getting a decision from the State Government about the sale of the assets and the Council's financial position, it is proposed to increase water revenue by approximately 40% from 1 January 2020. As a consequence water revenue will increase by approximately \$700k in a full year and \$350k this financial year. This will ensure full cost recovery and an acceptable return on investment.

In respect of the municipal fund, the Council's current view on the level of municipal rates is that it is about right.

This conclusion has been arrived at by looking at the Coober Pedy community's capacity to pay. As Coober Pedy is fourth most disadvantaged community in South Australia it is imperative to have careful regard to this factor. Median household income per week as measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is \$844. Municipal rates per week per capita are \$18. Consequently, municipal rates expressed as a proportion of median household income per week is 2.1%. The figure for the State is 2.7%. The figures for the four nearest disadvantage community range from 1.4% to 2.3%.

As there is little justification for lifting municipal rates, the remaining \$700k





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shortfall will need to come from being more efficient, and failing this service reductions, if the budget is to be balanced.

An external party has been engaged to do a high level efficiency and effectiveness review of the Council's operations with the initial focus being on the municipal and water funds.

### Water Pricing Equity

As stated earlier the price of water will increase significantly shortly.

This will increase prices to approximately three times Adelaide prices. A further increase will be necessary when further borrowings are secured to replace ageing infrastructure, if the assets are not divested to the State Government.

This is an inequitable situation. It is an essential service!

The State Government's current position is that it has not ruled out or in a possible solution to this issue.

The Council has commenced a community campaign to achieve water pricing equity. All members of the Legislative Council have been written to, a petition is being organised for tabling in Parliament and a deputation comprised of the Federal and State Members and the Administrator will be sought to the Water Minister.

The State Government is being called on to provide a temporary subsidy to provide relief to Coober Pedy water consumers while a long term solution is worked out.

The bottom line is that the Council should relinquish its water licence if a long term solution cannot be worked out. In this situation the State Government would become responsible for water supply and could either rent or buy the Council's water infrastructure.

### Recruitment of a CEO

As previously advised an extensive national search for a suitable person has been undertaken over the last five months. This has not been an easy task due to the remoteness of Coober Pedy and the current reputation of the Council.

Last week the Council appointed Dean Miller as its new CEO. He will start his duties on 1st October.

Dean is an experience Local Government CEO having been the CEO of Hindmarsh Shire Council and the Rural City Council of Swan Hill both in Victoria. He has had an extensive career predominantly in Local Government. His leadership and people skills are his main attributes along with very strong financial management and strategic planning experience and skills.

He is fifty one years of age and will move here on his own as he has two adult children. He currently lives in Geelong, Victoria - this explains why he barracks for Geelong!

He has been engaged for three years with a total annual remuneration package of \$200k which includes superannuation. The previous permanent CEO was paid a package of \$208k. Accommodation and private travel costs are not part of the agreement and are the responsibility of the individual.

Due to the high turnover of CEOs the lack of continuity has been a real problem. The Auditor-General pointed this out in his investigation into the Council. Consequently, Dean will be paid a retention bonus of \$50k a year in addition to his remuneration package which is to be repaid if the term of the agreement is not completed.

Performance measures and targets for the CEO will be developed within the first

two months and will be reported to the community.

I wish to place on the public record my thanks to Colin Pitman for performing the Acting CEO role over an extended period of time. This period has been one of the most tumultuous periods that any Council could go through. Colin will return to his substantive role in Water when Dean starts.

As a result of this appointment my role will reduce over time should the State Government extend the period of Administration of the Council.

We hope you will make Dean feel welcomed.

### Audit Committee

Councils are required to have an Audit Committee. The role of an audit committee is to provide financial and risk oversight of the Council. The Committee reports to the Council not the community.

In my first quarterly report to the Minister I recommended that the role of the Audit Committee at Coober Pedy be strengthened significantly to be one of general oversight of the Council with direct access to the community.

To date the Committee has been comprised of four members - three independent members and the Administrator. The three independent members have been local people. This arrangement was established by the previous Council.

Since commencing as Administrator I have been troubled by being a member of the Audit Committee. It seemed inappropriate for me to be a member of a Committee established to provide advice to me as the Administrator. Hence, I recently decided - as the Council - to remove myself from the Committee.



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The Committee in future will be comprised of three independent members with appropriate experience and skills.

Roxby Downs has this model. It's Committee is made up of three non-local people.

As the three independent members recently resigned an opportunity now exists to move to model advocated by me to the Minister.

As previously reported the Audit Committee considered the Annual Business Plan would not deliver financial sustainability. The Committee could not have arrived at any other conclusion as the Annual Business Plan is only a one year plan. The Long Term Financial Plan which is a ten year plan is designed to map out the path to financial sustainability however this has not been finalised for the reasons stated earlier.

The Audit Committee was also concerned about the quality of the financial information being provided to it. The quality of the financial systems were extremely poor as observed by the Auditor-General. There has been significant improvement in the systems but they are still not what they should be.

Coober Pedy's financial and governance issues are complex and require people with commercial and Local Government experience.

In the interim two new temporary members with extensive Local Government experience as senior executives and advisers in Local Government have been identified and have been appointed to the Committee. They are Mark Booth and Steve Mathewson. The new Committee meet

for the first time last Tuesday. A third independent member is being sought.

The fees payable are the same as those payable to the previous members.

Until next time.

Tim Jackson  
Administrator  
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0417 016 161

### SWIMMING POOL SEASON

Get your bathers ready for the 2019/2020 season! swimming pool set to open in October 2019!

### SEEKING LIFEGUARDS

We require pool lifeguards for the upcoming 2019/20 season! If you are interested send us an expression of interest!

This year we will have Pool Lifeguard Training available! Free to the community! Register your interest with us, and to be kept in the loop for upcoming dates!

Successful Applicants will need to have or be willing to complete:

- DCSI Working with Children's Check
- Police Clearance
- Child Safe Environments Training
- Senior First Aid Certificate
- Pool Lifeguard Training

For further information please contact **Sophie on 0427 264 969** or **sreynolds@cpcouncil.sa.gov.au**

### DCCP New Website Design!

Visit:  
[www.cooberpedy.sa.gov.au](http://www.cooberpedy.sa.gov.au)

The LGA are updating the Central Management System (CMS) for Council's websites across the state. This is the move from Unity CMS to Squiz CMS.

DCCP have been lucky enough to be one of the first four Council's to be completed first.

This enabled DCCP to update information and create ease of use of the site for Payments and searching for information.

Any feedback is appreciated, please send onto [sreynolds@cpcouncil.sa.gov.au](mailto:sreynolds@cpcouncil.sa.gov.au)

### Bridgestone World Solar Challenge 2019

Dawin to Adelaide  
13th - 20th October

**The Cars will be here on the Wednesday 16th October Control Point at Oval 8:00am - 5:30pm**

53 teams from 24 countries  
1,500 competitors + volunteers + supporters

**Reminder:  
1st Rates Installment Due  
27th September 2019**

