



District Council of Cooper Pedy Newsletter

Welcome to the Opal Capital of the World

May 2019

Dear Citizen,

This week is National Volunteer Week. Our communities would not function anywhere near as well if it was not for our volunteers. Formal volunteers number almost six million people in Australia. Their contribution is valued at almost \$300 billion per year. To put that into some perspective the Federal Government spends \$700 billion annually.

On behalf of the Cooper Pedy community I say a big **thank you** to all our volunteers. They are great Australians and Cooper Pedy citizens.

Rebuilding trust and confidence in the Council is my biggest task.

Allegations of corruption and mal administration continue to be made and they need to be dealt with. I have from the outset said this is not my job. It is the job of the various anti-corruption and mal administration authorities set up by the State Government to do this.

Having said this, at its meeting last week the Council resolved to encourage citizens to refer such matters to the Office of Public Integrity and to request the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption and the Ombudsman to consider ways to facilitate the reporting of matters of concern about the Council by Cooper Pedy citizens.

The objective of this resolution is to have the Commissioner and the Ombudsman visit Cooper Pedy to provide an opportunity for local people to raise their concerns. I will keep you informed of progress towards this objective.

Our four financial scenarios have been out for comment for about a fortnight now. Thank you to those that have provided comment already.

Early feedback is that we are moving too quickly.

As a consequence the finalisation of the scenarios will now **not** occur until 30 September. This will mean any municipal rate increase or water decrease will **not** occur until 1 July 2020.

Can I stress at the outset while I have an opinion on the scenarios it is imperative that my final decision reflects the views of the majority of citizens.

Essentially the Council operates three funds - electricity, municipal and water. Currently only the electricity fund breaks even due to significant financial assistance from the State Government. It is proposed that all funds break even in future.

The municipal fund will only break even if municipal rates are brought into line with what the Council spends on services. The necessary decisions are squarely in the court of the Council and its citizens. The scenarios will be further refined and then put to a poll of voters. **The Council will only adopt the scenario determined by the poll.**

The water fund will only break even if the State Government recognises that price equity should exist in Cooper Pedy and as a consequence subsidises the cost of water as it does with electricity or assumes responsibility for water supply.

As you know one of the financial scenarios proposes the disposal of the electricity and water businesses. The published material did not make it clear enough who they would be sold to. **They will not be sold to the private sector.** It is proposed to transfer them to the State Government. The State Government is yet to consider its position on this. If it agrees, **the transfer will only occur if it is supported by a poll of voters.**

Towns generally only exist to service their citizens. The required services create employment. The local TAFE is an important part of this. The last State budget contained a proposal to close our TAFE. I have followed up the Minister for Education regarding this decision and have been informed that the decision is under review. I will keep you informed.

The recruitment of a new CEO is underway. As I have said previously this will not be an easy task having regard for the current reputation of the Council and the town's remoteness.

I hope to see you at the Town Meeting on Tuesday night.

Until next time.

Tim Jackson
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Next Town Meeting

**Tuesday 28th May 2019
@ the Croatian Club
7:00pm**

We urge you to attend, where in, an open forum questions and answers session will be provided. The rating scenarios will be discussed.



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Employment program

The employment program is being jointly coordinated by Council in partnership with Complete Personnel. The work on the Olive plantation is being implemented with the oversight of an experienced Olive Tree pruner. Other work will involve the painting of infrastructure and a tidy-up of the cemetery.

Outstanding Rates:

Drinking Water, Sewage, Power and Council rates

The Council has referred all services, including rates, water, and electricity that are outstanding more than 90 days to our debt recovery agency, this may lead to power disconnection water restriction and legal action to recover the debt. Please contact Council to make arrangement for payment to avoid this action if your payments are in arrears.

Audit Committee

Subject to an approved work plan the audit committee of the council have new terms of reference which in addition to being the financial watchdog include an oversight role on the governance of the Council, which includes, reviewing independently Councils policies.

Opal Festival

The opal festival will be held on the 22nd and 23rd of June and will feature the street parade, fireworks games and competitions, food stalls, AP Antonio, Clowns and Climbing walls.

Prepayment Metering

Council is investigating the option of voluntarily introducing for customers a prepayment metering system. The investigation is heavily reliant on the experience of the use of such systems elsewhere. As the

system options evolve Council will keep the community informed.

Solar Panels

Council staff have been experiencing difficulties with quality of workmanship associated with solar panel infrastructure installations. Whilst installers are required to hold certification qualifications this does not guarantee the quality workmanship.

In an attempt to offer the community the best price and quality negotiations have commenced to secure by tender the best price and quality for the community. Council will advise you on progress on this matter as it evolves.

In the meantime the government through the Minister has decided to impose a special tariff on solar installations where regional subsidies on power applies (REAS). This includes Cooper Pedy. The implication for existing solar and new installations is that the meters will require a special peak load meter to be installed and invoicing will reflect in the near future a reference to the peak load tariff imposed by the state government. Council have asked for this matter to be independently investigated as Council was only recently informed of the tariff. Whilst the initial indication has been that the impact of the tariff is minimal it will impact on the savings to the consumer who has invested in solar systems.

Native Title

The Council have recently considered a letter from the Premier in response to a detailed letter from the Council requesting the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs enter into negotiations with the representative Indigenous land holders to secure for the parties

a respectful Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). The negotiation on this matter is complex and involves lands generally within the Council boundary which are not dedicated and in some cases are the subject of crown lease. Council have requested participation in the negotiations because of the interest the Council has in resolving the service access to and from leasehold and or Torrens Titled land via crown land.

Ombudsman Report

The council have received a report from the Ombudsman number 2017/122677 relating to:

- Differential rating of commercial properties
- Sewerage rates
- The administration of the Development ACT
- The grant of \$80000 to the miners association
- THE grant of \$20000 to the Opal symposium

The report can be viewed on the council web site or the Ombudsman's web site.

Flood Damage Funding 2016

We are informing the community road reconstructions will be taking place over the next few months and there may be some road disruptions during this period of time. We apologise to the community in advance.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Expressions of Interest are being sought from the Community for the 2018/19 EDL Community Grants.

Applications to be submitted by 5:00pm

Friday 7th June 2019

Visit the DCCP Website www.cooperpedy.sa.gov.au for further information