



CommunityNewsletter

June/July 2022

www.cooperpedy.sa.gov.au

District Council
of Cooper Pedy

welcome to the opal capital of the world

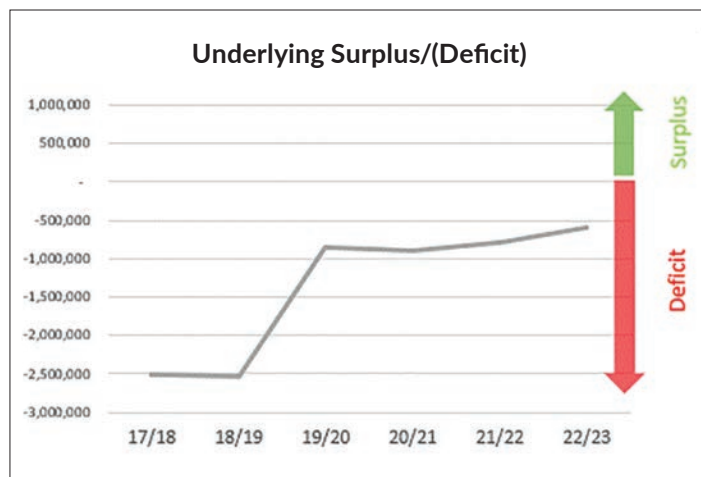


From the Administrator

Annual Business Plan

Councils in South Australia are required to prepare an annual business plan each year. The plans set out what Councils want to achieve over the next 12 months and detail how this will be funded. Councils are required to consult their communities on the plans.

Council's financial challenges was one of the reasons an Administrator was appointed. The graph below indicates the improvement in Council's financial performance over recent years.



You will notice that the improvement has plateaued. Any further improvement will depend on the provision of a subsidy from the State Government to Council to enable it to reduce water prices to Adelaide prices and a corresponding increase in municipal rates – refer to my letter to the Minister for Local Government, included from page 3 of this newsletter.

The proposed significant increase in water prices is not required at this stage as Council has made improvements to the operation of the system which may reduce operating costs. A further assessment of the system's operation and its costs will be undertaken in September to coincide with the next billing period.

The introduction of financial support for the opal mining industry has generated some interest in the community. The level of financial support will, in future, be at the same level as the tourism industry. These sectors are of equal importance to the town. Council will work with the opal industry to determine how the money is spent. Council will control all expenditure of Council funds as it does with the tourism industry.

A copy of the Annual Business Plan is available on Council's website or from the Council Office.

Anti-social behaviour

Council wrote to the Premier in June calling on the State Government to urgently introduce a raft of measures to address this issue as the current approach is not working. A meeting with the Premier was sought. No response has been received at the time of writing.

Census

The Census is conducted every five years. The results of the census conducted last year have recently been released. We will summarise these in the next newsletter. The information collected is vital in terms of planning for the town, the region, the State and the Country.

CEO update

Since October last year, our General Managers, Desley Culpin and Stephen Staines, have performed the Acting CEO role on a rotational basis. We are extremely grateful for their efforts.

Council has advertised for a Transition CEO to get us through the next 12 months – refer to the letter to the Local Government Minister, included from page 3 of this newsletter. An appointment is imminent. ➔

→ Coober Pedy Together

The *Coober Pedy Together* process is about getting everyone to work together to make Coober Pedy a better place. It is a unique and bold experiment in community governance. While initiated and funded by Council, it is vital that it is led by the town's citizens. It will be part of the overall governance arrangements for Coober Pedy in the future.

Planning is well advanced to hold the next Coober Pedy Roundtable. The Roundtable is a forum where the citizens of Coober Pedy hold their federal, local and state members to account. Further details will be provided in the next newsletter.



COVID – Unacceptable behaviour

The number of people with COVID in Coober Pedy and the Far North continues to be high as is the case in the rest of Australia. Please continue to adhere to the Health SA directives and guidelines.

Unfortunately, in my capacity as the Presiding Member of the Far North Health Advisory Council, I have been made aware of recent incidences where our health staff have been subjected to unacceptable behaviour by patients. **THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.** The demands being placed on the health system are the most significant in the last fifty years and we should all be extremely grateful for our health workers who work tirelessly under very difficult circumstances to keep us safe and well.

Dusty Radio

Cooper Pedy is very fortunate to have a community radio station. There are only 30 in the state. Community radio is owned by the community. Dusty Radio was established in 1997, and its existence is totally dependent on volunteers. There are many roles on offer – on air or behind the scenes. A community radio station requires between \$5k and \$10k to stay on air each year. Your support, either as a volunteer, a donor or a customer will ensure its continuation.

Elections

No decision has been made by the State Government regarding whether or not Local Government elections will be held in Coober Pedy in November. If the Government decides that it's preferred position is for Council to continue to be run by an Administrator this will require the Parliament to legislate.

This will take time and unfortunately Council will have to ensure arrangements are in place to run an election should the legislation not pass.

As stated previously, I am not available for this role if it continues.

Future municipal and essential services governance in Coober Pedy

Council has written to the Minister for Local Government regarding its views on this subject. A copy of the letter is included elsewhere in this newsletter. Meetings have been held with the Minister and the Shadow Minister.

My view is that if the Parliament decides to continue with an Administrator, a poll of voters should be held to determine if the community wants to elect a Council once the changes proposed in my letter are implemented.

The proposal to separate the business into a municipal and commercial entities should be made during the period of the Administrator after community consultation.

These arrangements will be part of an overall community governance arrangement for Coober Pedy which includes *Coober Pedy Together*. _____

NAIDOC

Congratulations to all involved in the recent celebration of NAIDOC Week in Coober Pedy. Of course NAIDOC Week is a celebration of the history, culture and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.



Q&A

Just a reminder that you can pose questions to Council on any subject within its sphere of responsibility by either coming along to the Council meeting on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7pm or by submitting your questions in writing to dccp@cpccouncil.sa.gov.au

Water equity and security

The letter to the Minister for Local Government referred to earlier indicates that Council's preferred position on water is to sell it to the State Government. Should this not be achievable, the system will be sold to the private sector with a requirement that it makes the necessary investment in the system to ensure water security. At the end of the contract period the system would revert to the ownership of Council.

While this is being sorted out, Council will continue to advocate for an immediate State Government subsidy to bring the cost of water in Coober Pedy down to Adelaide prices. Our campaign for this will be stepped up in coming weeks and will involve approaching all upper house members of Parliament.



DISTRICT COUNCIL OF COOPER PEDY

"Opal Capital of the World"

PO BOX 425 COOPER PEDY
SOUTH AUSTRALIA 5723

PHONE: (08) 8672 4600

FAX: (08) 8672 5699

E-mail: dccp@cpccouncil.sa.gov.au

www.cooperpedy.sa.gov.au

The Honourable Geoff Brock MP
Minister for Local Government
GPO Box 1533
Adelaide SA 5000

Dear Minister,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister for Local Government. I look forward to working with you to progress the turnaround of Cooper Pedy and its Council.

The purpose of this letter is to outline a proposed future municipal governance model for Cooper Pedy.

It has been more than three years since the District Council of Cooper Pedy was suspended. While significant progress has been made on public integrity systems and processes and improving the financial position, little progress has been made on the future governance model.

Due to the lack of interest or action by the previous Government, the water situation in Cooper Pedy is now untenable. The rate of water leakage and bursts from the ageing infrastructure is at a point that between 30% and 50% of water is wasted each year. As a result, consumers pay three times what SA Water customers pay. This is inequitable and unacceptable. A petition signed by 900 citizens was tabled in the State Parliament in late 2019 calling on then government to recognise this inequity and to immediately introduce a subsidy to eliminate it. Nothing happened. The previous State Government's position was that it had no interest in assuming responsibility for the water system in Cooper Pedy and that the Council should find a private sector investor and when found it would consider the issue of a subsidy. As a consequence, the Council sought expressions of interest from the private sector last year. The level of interest was good. Following this step, the Council called tenders for the purchase, investment, operation and transfer of the system to the Council at the conclusion of the term. This is commonly referred to as a BOOT Scheme. Unfortunately, it was necessary to postpone the process due to inadequate documentation. The Council has engaged the City of Playford to manage the project, including the tender, on behalf of the Council. We should be in a position, if necessary, to reactivate the tender process in the next three months. In addition to this, the Council has been working on a subsidiary model under the Local Government Act to manage its commercial undertakings such as electricity and water, again should this be necessary.

The recent change of government has opened up the possibility of a solution where the State Government acquires the Council's electricity and water businesses. This would have a significant impact on the future municipal governance model.

As you know the next Local Government elections in South Australia are scheduled for November this year. As a result, the State Government will need to make some significant decisions in the coming months regarding the future municipal governance model for Cooper Pedy.

After just under three and a half years as Administrator I see four possible models for future municipal governance in Coober Pedy.

Model One is for the State Government to take on responsibility for electricity and water supply. This would result in a much smaller and simpler Council. It would reduce the Council's annual turnover from \$16 million to \$4 million and would result in assets being reduced from \$30 million to \$18 million. It would require the State Government to purchase the Council's electricity and water assets at their current value of \$12 million. This would enable the Council to clear its debt obligations of approximately \$10 million. Four citizen polls were conducted in 2019 by the Australian Election Commission on a range of subjects. The possible sale of the electricity and water business were polled and the majority of voters supported their sale provided it was financially prudent to do so.

If the State Government decides not to acquire the electricity and water businesses, **Model Two** would require the State Government to agree to establish a separate entity to provide these activities along with other commercial activities such as the airport, childcare and private works etc. The subsidiary would operate independently of the Council with a skills-based Board. This solution may require legislation to ensure proper oversight of these activities. The entity would be responsible for retailing water. It would not be responsible for production or reticulation of water provided a private sector partner can be found.

If the State Government will not agree to take responsibility for electricity and water or establish a subsidiary, **Model Three** is for the Council to establish a committee under the Local Government Act to manage the commercial undertakings of the Council. The committee members would be required to have appropriate commercial experience and knowledge.

Model Four would involve the Council overseeing the municipal and commercial undertakings of the Council. This is the status quo.

In all models the possibility of again having an elected Council could be entertained possibly next year. It might require a hybrid model in the first instance where an Administrator guides and mentors the new elected members as there would not have been an elected Council for four years.

Alternatively, the citizens may decide by a poll that they would prefer the continuation of an administrator.

Minister, I request an urgent meeting with you to discuss my proposed model so the citizens of Coober Pedy have access to good local governance. Our local State member, Eddie Hughes, has been consulted on this model and should be present at our meeting.

I strongly support the **Model One**. This will require the following:

- The State Government to acknowledge the inequity that currently exists in Coober Pedy in terms of water pricing compared to SA Water customers and in so doing immediately provide a temporary subsidiary of \$1.3 million per annum to enable the Council to provide water at SA Water prices.
- The State Government to immediately guarantee the Council's borrowings from the Local Government Finance Authority until it acquires the electricity and water assets.

- The State Government to assume responsibility for electricity and water, including reuse water, and purchase the assets at their current written down value of approximately \$12 million.
- The Council to repay its borrowings of approximately \$10 million.
- The Council to conduct a poll of citizens to increase municipal rates by more than CPI to adequately fund its asset replacement program from revenue.
- The State Government to delay the next scheduled election in Coober Pedy.
- The Council to conduct a poll of citizens to determine their preference for the return of a voter elected Council.
- The Council to recruit a Transition CEO for a period of six to twelve months to manage the divestment of electricity and water.
- The Council recruit a CEO to lead the much smaller and simpler municipal operation once the divestment has been completed.

Many components of the recommended model have been raised unsuccessfully with the previous government at various times.

The regulator, ESCOSA, and the Local Government Finance Authority have been consulted during the development of these models.

Obviously, more detailed work will be required on some aspects of the model if it is supported in principle.

Coober Pedy has endured a long period of dysfunction and financial instability and this proposal presents a once in a life time opportunity to fix it.

Yours Sincerely
Tim Jackson



Administrator

Opal Festival a roaring success

The 2022 Coober Pedy Opal Festival was held on 18 June. The festival began over 40 years ago, and its original purpose was to celebrate the beginning of the opal mining season.

Back in the old days, long before our community had running water and air-conditioning, Coober Pedy would largely become a ghost town from November through to March each year. It was simply too hot to mine for opals. By Easter though the temperature had cooled and the search for the world's most beautiful and elusive gemstone would begin again! This year, the Opal Festival Committee decided to start bringing the festival back to its roots. It was all about bringing our community together and celebrating our collective love of opal and opal mining.

The festivities started on Friday night with a spit roast dinner at the Serbian Hall. Locals and visitors put on their dancing shoes with live five-piece band, the Baker Boys. The night had a family focus with all the kids entertained by Mr Kaboodle's Kids Circus.



Opal Festival a roaring success

On Saturday, the festival began with Welcome to Country by Julie O'Toole. Julie truly inspired the crowd with her heartfelt welcoming of all the visitors, and a tribute to not only the Traditional Owners but also all the nationalities that she grew up with in Coober Pedy. Her Welcome to Country was warm, welcoming and inclusive, and received a thunderous applause from the crowd.

Well-known local, Ralph Adamo, was on the mic for the day as the masterful Master of Ceremonies. A seasoned MC, Mr Adamo did a great job keeping the crowd informed of all the goings on throughout the day.



The Grand Parade saw floats from community groups, emergency services, local businesses, the school and Mini Gems Children's Centre in the parade. Each float representing their unique identity and artistic flare in the community. Mini Gems Children's Centre won the overall best float (sponsored by IGA), Coober Pedy Greek School for best use of colour/decoration (sponsored by Umoona Opal Mine and Museum) and The Coober Pedy Motorclub for most creative (sponsored by Opalios).

Opal Festival a roaring success



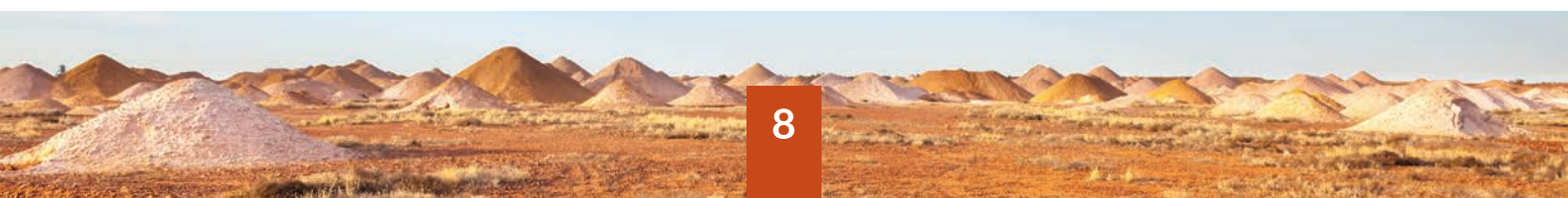
In January this year, Jacqui Boland was awarded the prestigious title of Coober Pedy's Citizen of the Year. Unfortunately she got stranded south of the Great Glendambo Puddle, so was finally able to collect her award at the festival. Jacqui is a passionate and active member of our community. It was great to see her recognised for all her hard work, dedication, leadership and love for our town!

After 15 years, the Opal Miners Hall of Fame was reintroduced to the festival. This year we had 14 people inducted into the Hall of Fame through nominations from friends and family. Opal mining is the heart of Coober Pedy and what better way to celebrate the industry than honouring our opal mining pioneers! Congratulations to the 2022 Opal Miners Hall of Fame inductees:

Keith Bartram, Kenneth Helfand, Yanni Athanasiadis, Daniel Zelenko, Vinko Simudvarac, Vojislav (Voja) Mistic, Geoff Ferguson, Brigitte Hammermeister, Markus Hammermeister, Bob Watson, Carol Shearer, Peter Watson, Bill Korbetis and Rod Wells.

There was no shortage of games and activities for the young and old(er)! Classic Opal Festival games like toss the sausage, hold the bag of opal, guess the parcel weight and a raffle, with prizes generously donated by local businesses. Congratulations to the winners for each event:

- Toss the sausage, sponsored by Perry's – Rana
- Hold the bag of opal, sponsored by Perry's – Men: Andrew Kay – Women: Christina Pakis
- Guess the parcel weight, sponsored by Perry's – Max Jones



Opal Festival a roaring success

The Coober Pedy Shooters Club ran the air-rifle shooting range which was popular with kids and adults alike. Not for the fainthearted, skydiving was brought back this year with 30 jumpers making it completely booked out.

The jumping castle, obstacle course, face painting, Mr Kaboodle's Kids Circus and box car pageant kept the kids entertained throughout the day. Keeping with the theme of opals and opal mining, the theme for the box car pageant was mining machinery. Congratulations to Xael, Noah, Jack, Nitika, Josef and Chelsea on winning a gift voucher from John's Pizza Bar. Musical performances by The Baker Boys Band and John D'Antonio kept the crowd entertained throughout the day.

Event goers were spoilt for choice with the range of stalls on the day. From local food vendors to candles and metal artwork, there was something for everyone. The array of food was a treat with scrumptious meals being consumed by all.



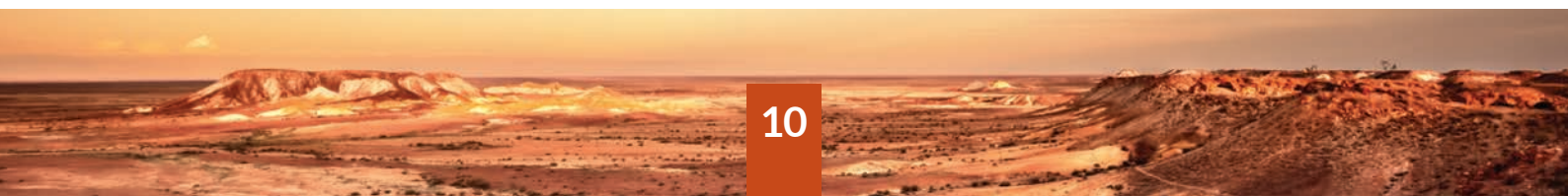
Opal Festival a roaring success

As the sun went down, the entertainment continued with fire breathers followed by the Peak Iron Mines' fireworks finale! It was a perfect way to end the day.

The party rocked on long after the festival finished with the afterparty at the Italian Club. It was a great atmosphere with all the locals catching up and rekindling old friendships whilst sharing our hospitality with all the visitors.

Events continued Sunday with more skydiving, the speedway and dinner at the RSL with a musical performance by Barry Lewis.

The Opal Festival Committee, a subcommittee of the Coober Pedy Retail Business and Tourism Association Inc. would like to thank the sponsors for their contribution to this year's event and the volunteers who helped over the weekend. Events like this aren't possible without the help of all the volunteers that pitched in to make the festival the success that it was!



Opal Festival a roaring success

Peak Iron Mines would like to thank the Coober Pedy Council for inviting us to support and be involved in the Coober Pedy Opal Festival from Friday 17 to Sunday 19 June 2022.

The weekend of activities was well organised and supported by a great community turnout, the main event on Saturday 18 June at the Coober Pedy Oz Minerals Oval proving a resounding success. After a day of festivities that included a community parade showcasing the best of Coober Pedy, the carnival-like atmosphere of stalls and music was capped off with an explosion of fireworks that delighted young and old.

Thank you must also go to all the out-of-towners who brought the delicious food, amazing music, and colourful knick-knacks, all of it contributing to a wonderful day out.

Peak Iron personnel supported (and thoroughly enjoyed!) as many events as possible across the weekend, including drinks and dancing at the Serbian Club on Friday night, dinner at the Italian Club on Saturday night, a Come'n'Try at the Shooting Club, a mine tour at Umoona Museum Tours, the Speedway, and finally a dinner with the Coober Pedy Together Facilitation Group on Sunday. All in all, we packed a lot in and met and chatted with a lot of Coober Pedy locals, all of it great fun!

Thank you to Steve Staines (A/CEO Coober Pedy Council) for the invitation to participate and thank you to the Coober Pedy community for making us feel so welcome.

Best wishes

Maria Fantasia
Peak Iron Mines Stakeholder Manager

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Regional Development Australia (RDA) leadership training

RDA Far North recently visited Coober Pedy to discuss the development of leadership training in Coober Pedy and the Far North.

Leadership Program Manager, Renata Hackett met with community members to find out what the needs of the town were and seek feedback on leadership training courses that would benefit the community.

The training will be available to all with a focus around those in our community that volunteer their time on the many committees, clubs and associations that support Coober Pedy. Training provided will develop regional leadership and enhance skills.

If you missed the chance to speak to Renata and would like to provide some feedback, please contact Renata directly at lpn@rdafn.com.au

Regional
Development
Australia
FAR NORTH



Environmental health update

Environmental Health Officer Mr David Hooper reports that during his visit in May, 15 food premises were inspected. Of these businesses a vast majority continue to maintain a very high standard of food safety practices.

It was noted that there was a small increase in small private boutique accommodation providers in Coober Pedy. It is reported that at the accommodation inspected, a high standard of hygiene was observed. Accommodation providers are required to be inspected to ensure the appropriate food safety practices are maintained in accordance with the South Australian Food Act 2001, and other general hygiene requirements under the South Australian Public Health Act.

Inspections were also undertaken to confirm the installation of wastewater control systems previously approved by Council. Technical advice was also provided to property owners in relation to the maintenance of wastewater systems and for their potential upgrade in the future to meet South Australian legislative and Code requirements.

Thank you!

DCCP (in particular parks and gardens) would like to thank Carol Oerzmann for her time in propagation and donation of 40 native plants which were planted along the walking track and within the native park area.



**District Council
of Coober Pedy**

Service contact numbers

**Administration
Office**
(08) 8672 4600

**Mini Gems
Children's Centre**
(08) 8672 4623

Library
(08) 8672 4635

**Electricity, Water,
Works Depot**
(08) 8672 4626

On-call numbers

Aerodrome
0400 108 230

Dog Control
0408 693 672

Electricity
0417 814 617

Water
0417 811 470

Works
0417 813 571