



District Council of Cooper Pedy Newsletter

Welcome to the Opal Capital of the World

May 2020

Message from the Administrator

Welcome to the May edition of Council's newsletter. I trust that you find it interesting and informative.

Frequency of Newsletter

The frequency of the newsletter has been intermittent in recent months. It will in future revert to its monthly frequency.

Pandemic

These are extremely uncertain and challenging times. We must all work together to pull through this. Obviously, looking after yourself and your families is of foremost importance but keep a keen eye out for others who may be struggling.

A number of Town Meetings have been held so far to ensure coordination and to keep citizens informed. The various government and non-government organisations have provided updates. These key individuals and organisations will continue to meet on a regular basis to oversee things and provide regular verbal and written communication to the community.

Obviously, the pandemic will have a significant economic impact on Australia. The Federal and State Governments have made some "big" decisions to avert an economic recession or depression. While Council has limited financial capacity to assist, it will, as usual, be prepared to talk to ratepayers or consumers who are experiencing difficulty in making payments.

Cooper Pedy is a vulnerable community due to its age profile and high number of aboriginal people. The State Emergency Management arrangements have been activated in respect of monitoring the situation in the Far North. The Committee is chaired by SAPOL and will rely on advice from SA Health.

National Volunteer Week

Last week, Australians had an opportunity to recognise and thank

our volunteers who make such an incredible contribution to our society.

On behalf of the town, can I recognise and thank all the volunteers that do so much to make our town a better place to live.

Tourism

Council recently established a Tourism Committee to drive tourism in Cooper Pedy. The Committee is comprised of three representatives of the Retail, Business and Tourism Association and three representatives of Council.

This is a unique arrangement where Council has decided to share its decision-making powers with another organisation. This is consistent with Council's approach of devolving decision-making where appropriate.

While not set up specifically in response to the pandemic, the Committee's creation is timely, as our local tourism industry faces its most significant challenge and needs to identify what needs to be done to recover from the economic impact of the pandemic.

Year To Date Finances

Council has had a history over the last decade of not delivering on its budgets. This financial year is the first full year under the direction of the Administrator.

The graph below shows the projected

result for this financial year. While a deficit will still be incurred, it is a significant improvement on the previous year and will be approximately \$350k better than originally budgeted for this year.

Child Care - Mini Gems

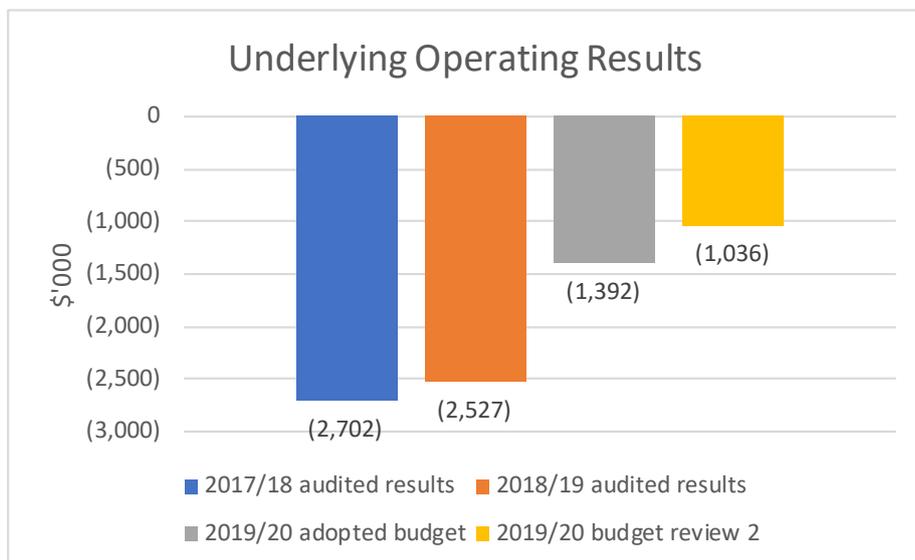
The future of Mini Gems has been under a cloud for many years. The Council recently identified a range of options for the future of the Centre for consultation with citizens, customers and employees. In the interim, a number of staffing measures will be introduced to ensure the centre no longer requires financial support from Council ratepayers. Closure of the Centre, whilst an option, would be a last resort due to the important role the Centre plays in the town.

Shelter SA Report

The *Cooper Pedy Regional Times* recently covered a report on housing in Cooper Pedy prepared by Shelter SA. Shelter SA is a not-for-profit organisation which advocates for better community housing. Council recently decided to approach the State Minister for Human Services and the Chairperson of the South Australian Housing Authority regarding improved housing opportunities in Cooper Pedy.

Legal Status of Councillors

Council has received legal advice which suggests suspended Councillors may have lost their eligibility to be





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reinstated as Councillors during this term. Councillors are required by the *Local Government Act* to disclose their interests by a certain date each year. Due to their suspension, this did not happen last year as it was considered unnecessary.

Consequently, the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal will be asked to advise whether it would consider an application in the future to allow the currently suspended Councillors to hold office should the Minister for Local Government decide to reinstate them.

Working Arrangements and Cost of the Administrator

The Minister for Local Government has approved my request to reduce my hours of work by half due to progress being made in getting the Council back into shape. I commenced my half time role on Monday 16 March. Obviously, my salary is reduced by half also.

I have given a lot of thought as to how I will structure my future working arrangements. Options were to work week-on week-off or to work half weeks. My availability is extremely important so I have decided to work the latter.

Until next time.

Tim Jackson
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Unightly and Dilapidated Buildings

An audit has been carried out on buildings which are unsafe and untidy. Some owners have been served with expiation notices requiring rectification of these unsightly and, in some cases, dangerous premises.

Disabled Parking Spaces

There has been considerable concern expressed by disabled people and the general public at the misuse of disabled parking spaces without the display of Disabled Parking identification on the vehicle. Warnings have been issued for a trial period over the last month which will now be followed by expiation notices. Please respect those who are disabled otherwise you may receive an expiation notice penalty if you do not hold a permit.

Grading of Roads and Driveways damaged as the result of the storm on 1st February 2020

Council has recently agreed to fund the one-off grading of driveways at an estimated cost of up to \$70k. This work has been completed on most properties. If you have a driveway that has been missed, please contact Council staff to have your situation rectified.

Council has engaged auditors to assess the total damage and independently assist in lodging a claim for Natural Disaster funding from the State Government. The cost of these works has been estimated to be approximately \$439,000.

Calthrop Weed

Council's powers are described in the *Pest Plants Act* and it limits Council's ability to spray or remove pest plants to Council property.

Council engaged Murrays Pest and Weed control for 3 days to spray calthrop and baffle grass at a cost of \$3,800 on the week ending 14th February 2020. The storm was two weeks prior. We were too late for some infestations but the resources were not available earlier.

Council staff continue to spot spray outbreaks near play equipment and public areas.

Kanku Breakaways Reservation Park

The Kanku-Breakaways Conservation Park remains OPEN. Permit fees are waived until 31 May 2020 and will be re-evaluated at that time. All visitors are required to follow social distancing and SA Health recommendations on preventing the spread of COVID-19. Kanku-Breakaways staff will continue to update the community on our facebook page with information about the park, plants and animals as well as any further visitor updates. Park inspections will continue to be done by park staff. If you have any questions, please call the Executive Officer on 0499 982 999.

2020 Great Kanku-Breakaways Marathon - Cancelled

The 2020 Great Kanku-Breakaways Marathon, scheduled for 16 May 2020, had to be cancelled. We will continue our planning and look forward to welcoming competitors back into the park for the next event.

Indigenous Land Use Agreement

Native title was recognised in Cooper Pedy in 2011. As a result, an indigenous land use agreement can be entered into to resolve local issues. The parties to the agreement are usually the local aboriginal people, the State Government, in some cases Local Government and other organisations. In the case of Cooper Pedy, the negotiations have involved the local aboriginal people and the State Government.

Council will shortly consult on whether there should be an indigenous land use agreement, and if so, what role Council should play.

