



District Council of Cooper Pedy Newsletter

Welcome to the Opal Capital of the World

August 2020

Message from the Administrator

Welcome to the August edition of Council's newsletter. This is the first edition to include a 'Community News' section (shown in blue type). The objective is to give community groups an opportunity to publicise important information and events at no cost. If you would like to promote your organisation in future editions, please contact Jill Maden on 8672 4600. I trust that you find this newsletter interesting and informative.

Tim Jackson
Administrator
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The Cooper Pedy Deal

In the July edition, the need to have the State Government approve a package of measures to ensure the future of the town was covered. An extended meeting with then Minister Knoll was organised for 4 August. Unfortunately, due to a reshuffle of ministerial responsibilities, this meeting was cancelled. The new Local Government Minister is the Deputy Premier, Vickie Chapman. The same extended meeting has been sought with the new Minister.

Annual Business Plan Timetable

Council intends to submit its draft Budget and Annual Business Plan to the Audit Committee on 9 September, and to Council on 15 September. Community consultation will occur between 16 September and 7 October. We expect the budget to be adopted by Council on 13 October.

Planning Development and Infrastructure Act

The implementation of the new Planning System, the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act, Regulations and Code*, took effect on the 31 July 2020. The new system is a complete rewrite of the current *Development Act, Regulations and*

Development Plan designed to standardise the definitions of zones across the State. The terminology will significantly change as will the lodgement of applications process.

Prior to activation, the Code was refined and improved following the Minister for Planning's approval of the Commission's formal Engagement Report. The report, released in June, summarises how the Code for the State's rural areas has been altered following an 8-week public consultation period. During the public consultation period more than 230 submissions were lodged, including a submission from Cooper Pedy, following which over 70 consultation events were conducted, with all feedback considered by the State Planning Commission. Lodgement of applications will be online via a Government portal.

The 31 July 2020 system is known as Phase 2, being rural areas. Phase 1 related to out of Council areas and was introduced previously. Phase 3 relates to metropolitan and larger rural towns and is anticipated to take effect in September.

The ePlanning platform brings together the new PlanSA Portal, the online Planning and Design Code (the Code), the South Australian Property and Planning Atlas and the electronic Development Application Processing system. The online ePlanning platform can be accessed via www.plan.sa.gov.au.

Following the launch of the new planning system, the Commission will be hosting a series of weekly webinars, designed to help inform and guide the public through the ePlanning platform. Community members can register their interest for the upcoming webinar series by heading to the Have Your Say section of the SA Planning Portal - www.plan.sa.gov.au/have_your_say.

Cooper Pedy residents or developers who, after viewing the portal, have difficulty in lodging their application on-line, may wish to attend the Council office and staff will assist you.

It should be noted that fees have standardised across the State. Applications will remain unprocessed until the appropriate payment has been made.

Answers in response to Cooper Pedy Regional Times

The purpose of this Q & A is to respond to a number of questions posed by the Editor of the Cooper Pedy Regional Times (CPRT) either explicitly or implicitly, regarding articles in 24 July edition of the CPRT.

Q. Did the Administrator and CEO certify the 2017/18 financial statements?

A. No. The approval of the Minister for Local Government not to certify them due to the auditor not being able to satisfy himself that they were a true representation of the Council's financial position, was obtained.

Q. Is progress in respect of addressing the Ombudsman's findings into the Council in 2018 reported to the community?

A. Yes. They are contained in the Administrator's Quarterly Report to the Local Government Minister which is tabled at a Council meeting.

Q. What did the auditor find in respect of the 2018/19 financial statements?

A. The 2018/19 figures in the 2018/19 financial statements were unqualified by the Council's auditor. This was the first time in five years that this has occurred. The Administrator commenced midway through this year. The auditor found that eight of the nine risks that were tested were satisfactory.





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Q. Are the Administrator and the CEO happy with the satisfactory findings?

A. Of course. And we are continuing to improve our internal controls.

Q. Was the financial report that was withdrawn by the CEO the draft budget for 2020/21 as suggested by the CPRT?

A. No. It was a periodical review of the 2019/20 budget - referred to as a budget review.

Q. Should the report have been presented to the Council?

A. No. The error should have been picked up prior to the report being made public.

Q. Is the officer who prepared the report still with the Council?

A. The officer responsible for the report based his report on information that was prepared by the former Finance Manager who no longer works for Council.

Q. Will the operating result for 2019/20 be a surplus?

A. Yes. There will be a significant surplus due to one-off funding for the repair of flood-damaged roads. This is the reason the Council also reports its underlying result - which takes into account one-off items. The underlying result will be a deficit. The Council is under no obligation to report its underlying result.

Q. Will the Audit Committee provide its views on the draft 2020/21 budget to the Council and the community?

A. Yes.

Q. Will the Audit Committee provide its views on budget reviews to the Council and the the community in future?

A. Yes.

Q. Are the Administrator's Quarterly Reports to the Local Government Minister available to the community?

A. Yes. They are considered at an open Council meeting.

Q. Is the Administrator and/or CEO available to the CPRT to talk to about Council reports before, at and after Council meetings?

A. Yes, we always have made ourselves available.

Greater dialogue between the Council and the CPRT would result in better information being provided to Coober Pedy citizens.

Visitor Information Centre

In the 7 August 2020 edition of the Coober Pedy Regional Times, an opinion piece by Brett Trueman was published about the Visitor Information Centre (VIC).

The purpose of a Visitor Information Centre is to provide a central point where visitors can obtain information about tourism businesses in a town. As such, there is an established network of VICs throughout South Australia, Australia and the world. Through the use of the globally recognised 'i' symbol, people from all over the world can easily locate a town's VIC. The Coober Pedy VIC is part of the South Australian Visitor Information Centre Network (SAVICN) and, therefore, needs to meet stringent operating standards. In the past the VIC has struggled to meet these standards, but this year, it met all 19 of the accreditation standards required.

Mr Trueman made a number of statements in regards to the Coober Pedy VIC which are incorrect.

"No merchandise has ever been sold at the VIC except for the Centenary year."

In addition to Centenary merchandise, *Coober Pedy, Opal Capital, Get Outback, Get Underground* branded merchandise has been sold at the VIC for the last 2 years as well as a small selection of

books and maps.

"From c. 2017 - 2019 the VIC was un-staffed and fell into the doldrums."

The only time that the VIC has been un-staffed was from March to June 2020 due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

"The 'Chamber of Commerce', until recently, has more or less been inactive at the VIC."

The Coober Pedy Retail, Business and Tourism Association (CPRBTA) created the www.cooberpedy.com website, Coober Pedy Visitor Guide, Coober Pedy Map and Tourism Directories for Accommodation, Tours and Attractions, all of which are distributed at the VIC. They are in regular contact with VIC staff who feed back changes from tourism operators to these publications.

"Recently a DCCP 'newsletter' advised of the VIC's intention to sell 'local produce' from the VIC."

The VIC, through the Tourism Committee, is considering introducing additional products to sell. These are likely to include souvenirs, postcards, additional books and maps, and locally produced products such as arts and crafts. If suppliers can be found, it may also consider stocking preserved foods such as jams and pickles. The Tourism Committee will discuss this topic further. An opal shop will not be located at the VIC.

"On Tuesday 07.07.20, I attended a s.41 committee meeting ... physically attended by the ex-manageress of the Mud Hut and the manager of Waffles and Gems; i.e. 2 only." "... there were also DCCP employees present and assumedly being paid."

The Tourism Committee was established in February 2020. It comprises 6 members - 3 from the CPRBTA (elected by CPRBTA members annually) and 3 from Council (the Administrator, the CEO and the Economic and Community Devel-





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opment Officer). Five members were present at the meeting to which Mr Trueman referred.

“This small group of three seemed to have plans to build a “shop” at the VIC to sell their “local produce”, and are calling upon the government to give them tax payer’s money to fund their commercial venture (including retail staff). Let’s face it, they want to run a business from inside council and everyone else will finance it!”

Until this year, operating costs at the VIC were approximately \$100,000 per annum and this was directly funded out of rates. To offset some of these costs, Council is looking at ways to reduce the burden on rates and to generate income from the VIC, including selling products and local produce. The Wadlatta Centre in Port Augusta, the Port Pirie VIC, the Alice Springs VIC and most other VICs in Australia sell tourism products to help cover their operating costs. Council would be irresponsible for not exploring these opportunities.

“... which, in turn, would allow him to impose an economic levy or tourism levy on commercial businesses.”

The idea of an economic levy was first mooted in 2019. As yet there have been no discussions by the Tourism Committee as to how this may work.

“... the levy is being investigated by his Tourism Committee of three, that we also hear may not want to perform the roles voluntarily forever!”

Community representatives of the Tourism Committee will always be volunteers. The Administrator and Council employees on the Committee are paid from the general revenue of Council and will not be funded from any economic levy. The levy will not be introduced in 2020/21.

“... the CEO expressed an opinion that the VIC costs ratepayers \$100K PA. No statistical data was presented to the meeting.”

After the 2019/20 financial statements have been audited, the CEO will provide details of the actual costs. The annual labour savings alone will be at least \$50,000.

“Was it not found that after trying their hand at advertising for the businesses the DCCP/VIC hadn’t sent out invoices after 10 yrs and the ratepayers absorbed the debt?”

It is correct that advertisers have not been charged in the past for having their marketing materials at the VIC. The introduction of the VIC Advertising Policy addresses this. Tourism operators have been asked to upgrade their posters, for which there is a charge of \$40 per poster. Advertising fees for the 2020/21 financial year are being waived to assist operators struggling with the impact of Covid-19.

Aussie Backyard Bird Count

The Aussie Backyard Bird Count is back from 19-25 October 2020. Now in its seventh year, the Aussie Backyard Bird Count has proven hugely popular and is growing year on year. This national event runs each October, when everyone from school children, senior citizens, families and community are invited to count how many birds they see within a 20-minute period in their backyard, local park or any other outdoor area, and record this data using the Aussie Backyard Bird Count app or website. This provides a snapshot of Australian birds at the same time each year, which allows Birdlife Australia to look at the trends in our bird communities over time. Participants report an improved sense of well-being and lowered stress levels.

Especially important in 2020, the Bird Count is a fun, safe activity that can be enjoyed no matter the Covid-19 situation in your area. All it takes is 20 minutes in your backyard, local park, or favourite outdoor

space – anywhere you can count birds.

Council will be participating by promoting the event and more information can be gained from the Aussie Bird Count website: <https://aussiebirdcount.org.au/>

ABC’s ‘Back Roads’ Program is coming to Coober Pedy

The ABC’s *Back Roads* program will be filming in Coober Pedy between 25 August and 31 August. The special guest presenter will be celebrity chef Poh.

The program will focus on the town’s unique multicultural community as well as its unique history and landscape. There will be a number of interviews with local personalities from all walks of life and a number of local events and facilities will be showcased.

A Twilight Golf night will be held at the Golf Club from 5.30 pm on Wednesday 26 August and a Movie Night will be held at the Drive-In on Thursday 27 August. This will feature a special film compiled by the ABC of clips of Coober Pedy taken from many of the programs they have made over the years which have featured the town. Gates open at 6 pm with the main feature, *Red Dog*, being screened at 6.30 pm. Locals are invited to attend both events and everyone is encouraged to bring their dogs to the Drive-In.

Citizenship Ceremony

On 14 August 2020, Council had the honour of conferring five local residents as Australian Citizens. Coober Pedy has a long history of migrant workers and we are delighted to officially welcome them to our multicultural town.





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*** COMMUNITY NEWS ***

Dusty Radio

Dusty Radio was established in 1997 by Bob Pryce. Sadly, Bob passed away in 2018, leaving Dusty without leadership. Therefore, in 2019, a Management Committee was formed to take the station forward. One of the first things they did was develop a Five Year Strategic Plan. This identified upgrading the on-air studio as a high priority. A grant application for this, and another for producing a series of podcasts about Cooper Pedy, were submitted to the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF). Both grants were successful and in February 2020 the studio was upgraded. In March a Broadcast Training course commenced to teach the Management Committee how to use the new equipment and produce programs. No sooner had this begun than it had to be put on hold because of Covid-19 restrictions, however, it re-started in June and is now entering its final stages. On completion, Dusty hopes to re-establish a regular program schedule.

The Christmas Fair in December 2019 raised \$1,602 and donations from the book swap at the Second Hand Store raised another \$60, both of which have been put towards the costs of equipping an off-air training studio. Another grant application to CBF to upgrade the transmitter has also been successful and a further grant application to the EDL Community Grant program has been submitted to develop a website for Dusty.

During the upgrade of our on-air studio, we had to install a new playout system. This automates the playing of music when presenters aren't available. However, the new system selects music randomly, hence the reason some very unusual tracks have been playing recently. We have now created a new playlist which only features popular artists so hopefully this will produce a better selection.

Our AGM is scheduled for Saturday 29 August at 2pm at Dusty's offices. If you would like to volunteer with Dusty, please contact us via radiodusty@gmail.com or come to the AGM and fill in an application form. Training will be provided to all successful applicants.

Kupi Kupi Cooper Pedy Gliding Club

So where are we at? We have been working on our Emergency Management Safety Plan for the Australian Gliding Federation. With a bit of tweaking it will be ready to submit.

We have two twin Astirs, two seater training gliders which will be perfect. One is in Waikerie having a final inspection. The other one is in Millicent. They should be here by early next year.

We will be winch-launching our gliders. The airstrips are set up but they need some more work before being operational.

Our club area and the gliding field are 11kms south of CP on the right. You can see the start of our club rooms from the Stuart Highway.

We welcome new members, contact Peter Butler or Jayden Watts.

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) 86724 626

On Call Numbers
Aerodrome
0400 108 230

Dog Control
0408 693 672

Electricity
0417 814 617

Water
0417 811 470

Works
0417 813 571

