QUESTIONS RAISED

Budget Discussion Forums – March 2019

How are we developing tourism businesses to attract visitors to the Upper Murray from Albury-Wodonga?

We work closely with Tourism North East to support tourism operators throughout the Shire. Our partnership relationship with TNE includes training sessions and business development opportunities for business owners, regional promotion through a shared website, promotional activity and regional campaigns.

In the Upper Murray, we are working closely with the Upper Murray 2030 Committee to implement the Upper Murray 2030 Vision Plan and its 5 key strategic plans (Great River Road, Branding the Upper Murray, Agriculture, Town Trails and Tourism). This work includes the Great River Road development and new Upper Murray branding as well as further developing products and experiences to attract visitors to our region.

Across the Shire, we know improving the liveability of our towns for residents also enhances our appeal to visitors. That’s why we’re investing in redeveloping our main retail centres. In 2019/20, this will include improvements to Towong Street shopfronts via the Destination Tallangatta Project, and commencing planning for further streetscaping works in the Mitta Valley. We hope these improvements will deliver a boost to businesses and make our beautiful towns even more inviting for tourism.

What is Council doing to drive population growth?

Maintaining and where possible growing the population of our communities is a key focus for Council. This underpins the work we do as an organisation across the board. We know that attracting new residents to Towong Shire requires supply of housing, suitable jobs, and thriving townships with access to essential services like schools, sporting and community facilities, and health care and child care.

We know maintaining and improving key infrastructure is important to attracting residents and visitors to our towns. This kind of investment is an ongoing focus for Council, which is reflected in the Budget for the 2019/20 Financial Year. Projects like the Tallangatta Shopfront Revitalisation Project, improvements to Hanson Street in Corryong and the streetscape works in many of our townships improve the appeal of our towns to visitors and potential residents.

We are required to work within State planning and zoning regulations. Council is actively pursuing an amendment to the planning scheme which would unlock new opportunities for land development, particularly in our rural areas.

How are Council tender and procurement opportunities made available to local businesses?

As outlined in our Procurement Policy, we advertise any tender and procurement opportunities locally and prioritise working with local businesses. Any supplier interested in working with Council is also welcome to join our supplier register at any time. The register means we can contact any suitable suppliers when procurement opportunities become available. We will look to promote this opportunity more broadly early in the new financial year so that local businesses have a good understanding of what’s involved when working with Council and are well placed to act as preferred suppliers. More information is available on the Council website. https://www.towong.vic.gov.au/tenders-eoi/eoi/suppliers.asp
**What’s happening with the Bellbridge Walking Track?**

The walking track is an important asset along the Bellbridge foreshore. The land occupied by the Bellbridge Walking Track is owned by Goulburn-Murray Water. There is an agreement in place for sections of the Track along the foreshore to be maintained by the Bellbridge Lake Hume Rotary Club on behalf of Goulburn-Murray Water. Council has supported minor works in recent years, as part of the works at the Foreshore. Improvements to the track will also be considered as part of Stage 2 of the Our Bellbridge Masterplan implementation.

**What are Council’s plans for Stage 2 of Our Bellbridge?**

Council will work with the community to review the Our Bellbridge Masterplan and plan Stage 2. Community consultation for this work will take place in the 2020/21 Financial Year, with a view to seeking State or Federal funding for further project delivery.

**How do we know which government agency owns and manages which assets across the Shire?**

We know it can be confusing to understand how government assets are owned and managed. Customer Service staff at Council can provide information on which assets are managed by Council and direct you to the right agency if maintenance issues need to be logged with other agencies. It is important that any issues are logged with the correct agency so that resources can be managed effectively across all assets within the Shire. We’re also exploring ways to make this clearer via digital means. The full register of Council Roads is on Council’s website along with our Road Management Plan. [https://www.towong.vic.gov.au/about-council/asset-management/images/RM-Plan-ADOPTED-OCT-20171.pdf](https://www.towong.vic.gov.au/about-council/asset-management/images/RM-Plan-ADOPTED-OCT-20171.pdf)

**How much does it cost to seal 1 km of Corryong-Benambra Road?**

Different state and federal agencies manage different assets throughout the Shire. This road is managed by VicRoads. Costs to reseal a similar road can provide an indication of estimated cost. The recent works at Shelley-Walwa Road came in at a total project cost of $7.6 million for 7 kilometres of sealed road.

This cost is not necessarily comparable to the cost of upgrading Council owned and managed roads. As a major arterial road Corryong-Benambra Road carries higher traffic volumes and heavier loads than many Council roads so is built to different standards. It also requires more frequent maintenance.

**Could Council install noticeboards in all townships across the Shire to ensure information is made available to those who aren’t online?**

Many years ago, Council installed noticeboards in a number of towns including Shelley, Tallangatta Valley and Koetong to distribute information, but feedback from the community was that these were not particularly effective channels for communication. In recent years, community managed Facebook groups play a similar role, but Council recognises that not all community members use these digital platforms.

Council uses existing networks to distribute information – often this includes placing posters and printouts on noticeboards in local post offices, community spaces, public buildings or centralised retail spaces (general stores, etc). These aren’t necessarily dedicated Council noticeboards, but often areas where spots in our townships where local people visit day to day. We will continue to add new distribution points to our list, as advised by our community members.
What is Council doing to ensure continuity of service for Maternal and Child Health in Corryong?

The difficulty in recruiting appropriately qualified staff for Corryong’s Maternal and Child Health Service has been a long-term challenge. Certain qualifications are required by the State Government and attracting staff with these qualifications to the Upper Murray is proving a challenge. While we continue to actively pursue recruitment of staff for the service, we’re also thinking outside the box to ensure availability of services in the area.

We’re now supporting 16 families via our Supported Playgroup program and we’ve recently appointed two new kindergarten teachers to the Corryong Early Years Centre. We’ve also successfully applied for funding from the Department of Education to appoint a family support officer to help identify and connect service needs, and we’re working with Gateway Health and other service agency networks to deliver services in Corryong and across the Shire.

How can we run a playgroup in Bellbridge given the community centre is now used for childcare?

Council is very pleased that we’ve been able to retain the childcare service at Bellbridge. However we realise this has had an impact on the availability of the Berringa Community Centre. We are very willing to consider a community led playgroup on a Saturday morning which can accommodate working parents, similar to our Saturday Songs and Stories program in Tallangatta.

With library services in our smaller towns being replaced by digital alternatives, how do we help older people develop the skills to access digital libraries?

Sessions to learn a range of digital skills are hosted by neighbourhood houses in Tallangatta and Corryong. We also share other opportunities to learn with other agencies in the region when they are available.

Council is about to undertake a review into our current Library Services - including how we service our smaller townships. We’re hoping for participation from community members to give us a clear picture of needs and how we can best meet them – in our larger and smaller towns. More information will be shared in coming weeks.

What’s happening with Talgarno Playground?

Council officers have been in consultation with the Talgarno community about what they’d like to see in a new playground since May. Draft plans have presented to the Talgarno community for feedback and installation is anticipated in October.

Will extra opening hours for our Waste Transfer Stations be considered?

A review of landfill operating hours took place in 2016/17. Based on current service demand, extension of opening hours (particularly on weekends) isn’t viable at this stage.

What’s planned for Mitta Mitta in the next few years to attract visitors?

Officers are assisting Mitta Valley Inc deliver on the Mitta Valley Destination Action Plan. In addition, work is underway on new branding for the Omeo Highway to attract visitors to the region, in partnership with East Gippsland Shire Council.

Thanks to successful Pick My Project funding, Council is also working with a project group to deliver the Mitta Valley Mountain Bike Park Masterplan and Trail Head.
When will the redevelopment of the wall at the Man from Snowy River Arcade (Riley’s Arcade) be completed?

Concept designs were presented to key stakeholders including the Man from Snowy River Tourist Association and Hanson Street retailers in May. Draft designs were made available for public feedback in June, with works underway in July.

Can Council arrange a bi-annual catch up with community groups in Bellbridge?

Any community group is welcome to extend an invitation to a Council representative to attend a community meeting. Council officers are also very willing to attend scheduled community meetings upon invitation. Email your invitation to info@towong.vic.gov.au and it will be shared with the most appropriate person.

What can we do about lack of safe parking in Mitta Mitta, especially when there are so many caravans around?

Planning for streetscape works in Mitta Mitta will commence this financial year for work in the 2020/21 Financial Year, in partnership with Regional Roads Victoria. We’ll be seeking input from community members as part of consultation for this project.

Can we have a rubbish bin at the Memorial Hall and Post Office in Corryong?

These requests have been logged and are being considered by staff. A review of all our waste services is also currently being undertaken.

Can the bike track from Corryong to Colac Colac be improved?

Work to improve the bike track, including track improvements and installation of culverts to improve drainage is in the planning stage.

How can we make sure feedback from the Upper Murray Tourist Association is taken on board?

Council works with a range of stakeholders in gathering feedback when planning our Economic Development and Tourism activities. All feedback is always taken on board. Often consultation involves competing priorities and perspectives so it isn’t always possible for all feedback to be accommodated or actioned.

Can we have signage installed in Mitta Mitta and Eskdale to ensure RV visitors are aware of the dump point at Dartmouth?

Signage was installed at the public toilet blocks at Eskdale Information Centre and Paddies Reserve, Mitta Mitta in May to direct RV visitors to available dump points in Dartmouth and Tallangatta.

Where is the Great River Road signage to Kurrajong Gap Lookout at Bethanga?

The Great River Road Steering Group (who are leading the Great River Road project) didn’t identify signage to Kurrajong Gap Lookout as a priority. Officers are now concentrating on developing the Great River Road website, which may be able to include Bethanga and other areas in promotional opportunities for the Great River Road.