

AMENDED ITEM

Item No: 5.1
Title: Questions with Notice
Department: Governance

13 July 2020 Ordinary Council Meeting

Reference: F2020/00039 - D14028581



Questions with Notice

The following question was submitted by Councillor Gale:

Audit of the Water and sewer infrastructure of Davistown

Can Council expediate a comprehensive audit of the water and sewer infrastructure of Davistown?

The basis for this request has come from Davistown Progress Association for the following reasons:

- The small size of some of the main outlets to Brisbane water are of insufficient size to take the water from surrounding tributary drains. Some outlets need to be like larger 'Monsoon' drains, sealed with concrete, waterproofing and have the appropriate one-way gate filters to stop clogging from debris of inward backflowing water.*
- The current street drains are of insufficient size to take larger water volumes and overflow, many streets are unsealed and water floods numerous locations.*
- The whole of Davistown's drains needs to be regularly, and systematically cleaned, and maintained to ensure efficiency of stormwater outflow.*
- There needs to be a comprehensive smoking of all the drains in Davistown to locate any illegal stormwater connections to the sewer, which causes unhygienic overflow and street flooding following heavier rain.*
- Recent flood studies have been undertaken, implement some of those findings. Or have a program to do this.*

Response provided by the Director Roads Transport Drainage and Waste:

Can Council expediate a comprehensive audit of the water and sewer infrastructure of Davistown?

Previously answered by W&S under separate QWN.

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The basis for this request has come from Davistown Progress Association for the following reasons:

The small size of some of the main outlets to Brisbane water are of insufficient size to take the water from surrounding tributary drains.

Drainage infrastructure in the Davistown area has been constructed and sized in line with the adopted drainage design specifications of the time. While drainage methods, materials and technology have changed over the years - drainage system design capacity has remained relatively consistent and is likely similar to the current capacity provided in the Davistown area. The level of service provided in the Davistown area is consistent with many other low lying areas in the Local Government Area where drainage system capacity may be impacted by topographic constraints i.e. very flat grades on drainage pipes and storm surge or tidal effects.

Some outlets need to be like larger 'Monsoon' drains, sealed with concrete, waterproofing and have the appropriate one-way gate filters to stop clogging from debris of inward backflowing water.

Council's Civil Works Specification requires the use of drainage pipes with rubber seals between each pipe segment. This has been Council and industry standard since the 1980's. Prior to this, drainage pipe systems were constructed with butt-jointed pipes which were not sealed and allowed surrounding soils to enter the drainage system and contribute to blockage. The sealing of older drainage pipe systems is undertaken as part of the planned replacement or upgrade of the drainage systems. While concrete drainage pipes can last over 100 years, replacement works are sometimes brought forward to address known maintenance or public safety issues i.e. blockages or dislocations in the system.

The use of one-way filters or 'floodgates' are strategically identified and installed in line with Council's Floodplain Risk Management Plans or via engineering investigations. The design and installation of floodgates needs to be carefully considered as they can make the flooding situation worse if they become blocked or the outlet is too low lying. There are currently no floodgates planned for installation in the Davistown area. If there is a specific location that the community thinks warrants consideration, they should contact Council and request investigation of the matter.

The current street drains are of insufficient size to take larger water volumes and overflow, many streets are unsealed and water floods numerous locations.

The upgrade or expansion of existing drainage systems is strategically prioritised via Council's Floodplain Risk Management Planning processes.

Whilst there are no drainage upgrade projects planned in the Davistown area in the 2020-21 financial year, works will continue on the upgrade of Davistown Road which includes drainage improvements associated with the road project. Council also has some capacity to undertake smaller local drainage improvements via the Minor Drainage Improvement

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capital works budget. If there are any specific flooding locations that the community thinks warrants consideration, they should contact Council and request investigation of the matter. Residents may contact Council by emailing ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au or telephoning the Customer Service Centre on 1300 463 954.

The whole of Davistown's drains needs to be regularly, and systematically cleaned, and maintained to ensure efficiency of stormwater outflow.

Council's Maintenance staff undertake inspections of the drainage network in response to issues related to significant road and/or property flooding. As part of these inspections any defects are recorded with an appropriate action undertaken to schedule maintenance works. The cleaning of drains is considered as part of these maintenance works. The timing for undertaking works to address these identified defects is assessed on a risk basis.

There needs to be a comprehensive smoking of all the drains in Davistown to locate any illegal stormwater connections to the sewer, which causes unhygienic overflow and street flooding following heavier rain.

This part of the question was previously answered by Director Water and Sewer under a separate Questions with Notice in the 27 July 2020 agenda.

Recent flood studies have been undertaken, implement some of those findings. Or have a program to do this.

The upgrade or expansion of existing drainage systems is strategically prioritised via Council's Floodplain Risk Management Planning processes. This is a formal and regulated process whereby flood risks are modelled at a catchment level to identify priority locations for drainage upgrade or expansion. Once identified, the drainage upgrade or expansion projects are individually prioritised using set technical criteria to establish a project ranking which is used to inform future capital works programs. As Council's funding is limited, only the projects with the highest priority are programmed for delivery.

Whilst there are no drainage upgrade projects planned in the Davistown area in the 2020-21 financial year, works will continue on the upgrade of Davistown Road which includes drainage improvements associated with the road project.

The following question was submitted by Councillor Gale:

Streets as Shared Spaces Program

Did Council apply for the NSW Government Safer Pathways grant to complete the missing link shared pathway between Henderson Rd Saratoga along Malinya Rd to Coomal Ave Davistown?

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Response provided by the Director, Roads Transport Drainage and Waste:

The Streets as Shared Spaces Program opened around mid-year with Council receiving documentation including Program Guidelines, a Fact Sheet and Application Forms. Council Officers reviewed these documents to identify eligible projects for inclusion in a submission under this grant funding program which closed on 10 June 2020.

The Program Guidelines advised that this grant funding stream was available to provide one-off grant funding to support local councils to test and pilot new and innovative ideas for streets as safe, shared public spaces. An aim of the Program was to provide grant funding for projects which increased the amount of public space to allow pedestrians to maintain physical distancing requirements. Funding is available under two (2) categories: Category 1 is for quick response demonstration projects that test, pilot or incubate changes to streets up to a maximum of \$100,000, Category 2 is for medium term projects that improve or activate streets as shared public spaces up to a maximum of \$1,000,000. Council were able to submit one application for each category.

The Guidelines stated that eligible projects must provide improvements that are temporary or semi-permanent (not fixed and easily removed). Therefore, Council Officers considered that the provision of concrete shared pathway projects would be ineligible for consideration of funding under this grant funding program. This was confirmed in discussions with the Funding Program Co-ordinator. As such, no shared pathway projects including Malinya Road were submitted under the Streets as Shared Spaces Program.

Notwithstanding the above, Council Officers proactively identify grant funding programs and submit applicable projects. This project has been included in submissions seeking grant funding under State Government grant funding opportunities including Active Transport; Walking and Cycling; Stronger Country Communities; and Regional Communities Development; which may accelerate the delivery of this project.

To-date Council has been unsuccessful in securing grant funding, however will continue to seek financial assistance through suitable grant funding opportunities to deliver this missing link shared pathway.

The following question was submitted by Councillor Gale:

Council Reserve Umina

Residents on the Peninsula are requesting official permission from Council to be able to protect their properties and maintain Council Reserve.

The Council Reserve is Coastal Sand Swamp Forest and the area is currently being maintained by the residents.

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Residents request official permission from Council to personally maintain a 20 metre Asset Protection Zone from rear boundaries at Yarrabin Road Umina which backs directly onto Kahiba Creek. Residents are committed to maintaining this Council Reserve at their own expense and risk through mowing the existing lawn and raking fallen branches and leaves. The resulting green litter is proposed to be disposed in the resident's green waste bin.

Response provided by the Director Environment and Planning:

Bush fire risk management is a shared responsibility. Council has responsibilities for managing bush fire risk on land it manages under the Rural Fires Act 1997. Council is an active member of the Central Coast Bush Fire Management Committee and has responsibilities to deliver actions identified in the Rural Fire Service's Bush Fire Risk Management Plan.

Residents are best placed to prepare their homes prior to the bush fire season and are also best placed to prepare a bush fire survival plan so that the members of their household know in advance what they will do if bush fire threatens their area. The Rural Fire Service website provides advice to property owners about preparing their properties as well as preparing bush fire survival plans for their households.

The establishment and on-going management of the appropriate bush fire mitigation works on Council managed land is the responsibility of Council and delegating that responsibility to third parties presents unnecessary complexity and potential risks. Council has an evolving bush fire management program which currently delivers on its responsibilities under the Bush Fire Risk Management Plan including by managing approximately 250 asset protection zones and 210 fire trails.

Should residents have particular bush fire risk concerns they should complete a bush fire hazard form on the Rural Fire Service website. Council works closely with the Rural Fire Service in assessing reported bush fire hazards associated with Council managed land. Should an asset protection zone be recommended by the Rural Fire Service at the rear of the properties on Yarrabin Road, Umina Beach, its establishment and maintenance will be incorporated into Council's existing bush fire management program.

Council has a legal obligation to implement the principles of ecologically sustainable development and it is important that the bush fire risk mitigation measures in place are commensurate with the actual level of risk. Based on the most recent Draft Bush Fire Protection for Existing Development Guidelines produced by NSW RFS and an assessment of local vegetation type, effective slope and the short fire run as well as the separation distance of 10 metres between the hazard (i.e. the vegetation) and the external walls of the houses, in this case the requested APZ of 20 metres from the property boundary (which would result in a 60m separation distance for some houses with a large rear setback) is far in excess of what could be considered reasonable or necessary.

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With the exception of the dwellings at numbers 50, 52 and 62 Yarrabin the recommended 10m separation distance from the external walls can be accommodated wholly within the boundaries of private properties. For these houses extending the APZ onto Council land is not an option due to the proximity of the creek. Clearing of riparian vegetation will invariably lead to an increase in erosion, sedimentation and eutrophication and is specifically excluded under the Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code. The only practicable means of improving the bushfire resilience of these homes is through building upgrades, property maintenance and implementing a robust bushfire emergency plan.

Council staff do not propose implementing additional bush fire hazard reduction activities on the land at the rear of these properties, or authorising private landowners to undertake these activities on Council's behalf.

The Environmental Volunteer Program Strategy prioritises the establishment of Conservation Groups, defined as 'those whose primary objective is to conserve and regenerate natural reserves...through controlling exotic weed species and native planting activities where required'. The works proposed by residents in this location are not consistent with the priorities of the strategy, and therefore inclusion of these residents in the program to undertake the activities proposed would not be supported.

The following question was submitted by Councillor MacGregor:

Staffing Levels

What were the combined staffing levels of Gosford and Wyong Councils in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015 and how does this compare to Central Coast Councils staffing levels in 2020?

Response provided by the Executive Manager, People and Culture:

The full time equivalent (FTE) figures are presented below from 2007/2008 to May 2020 and provide insight into changes over the years. Historical information for years prior to 2007/2008 is still being sought.

It is proposed to provide this additional information for inclusion in the August 2020 Business Paper. Additional supporting information will also be included in the Business Paper to provide greater insight into the current workforce breakdown.

It is important to note that the former two organisations had varying approaches to FTE management.

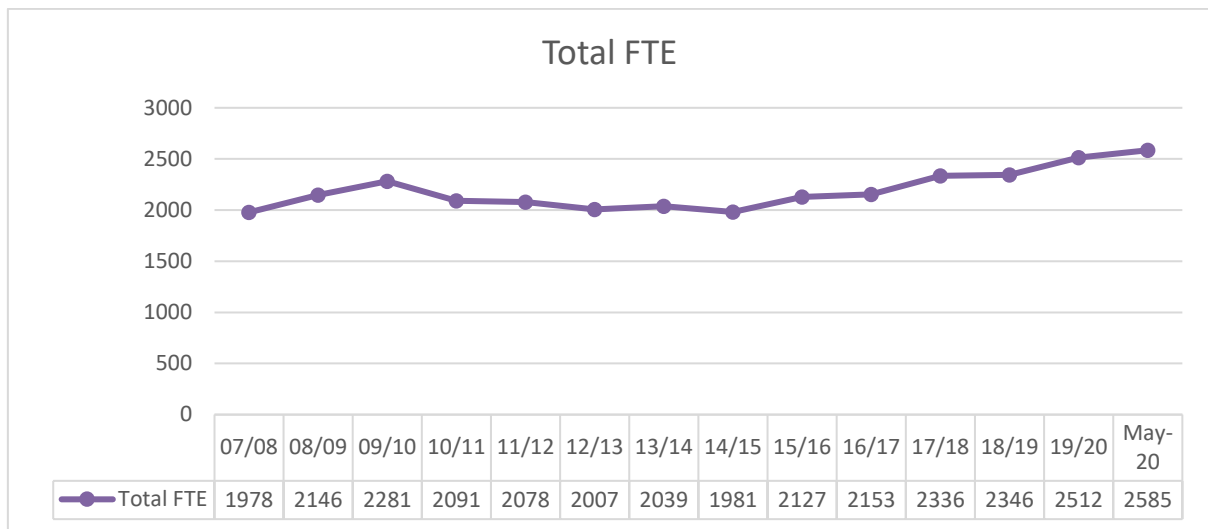
Prior to 2013/2014, the former Gosford City Council did not include temporary staff in the FTE figure presented in the Annual Financial Statements. This was rectified in the 2015 Annual Financial Statements.

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In addition, neither former organisation included casual staff within their FTE figures. This was identified upon amalgamating and was corrected at that time.

As such, historical reported FTE figures will be less than the actual workforce engaged at that time.

Since the amalgamation of the two Councils, FTE reporting includes budgeted permanent, temporary and casual positions.



The following question was submitted by Councillor MacGregor:

Cost Shifting

What has been the total cost to Council of cost shifting from the NSW Government to Central Coast Council in the period 2016 - 2020 and does this reflect trends illuminated in 2018 LGNSW report on cost shifting that revealed State Governments had shifted over 6.2 billion dollars worth of costs to local councils over the previous 10 years?

Response provided by the Acting Chief Financial Officer:

LGNSW conduct the Cost Shifting Survey every 2 years, the last survey conducted in 2017-18 with the latest due for 2019-20. LGNSW compiles the information from Councils after the lodgement of their annual Financial Statements. As such we anticipate the timing of the 2019-20 survey results is likely to be January-March 2021.

The total cost to Council of cost shifting from the NSW Government to Central Coast Council in 2017-18 was \$44.7M and in 2018-19 \$47.8M. Cost shifting results for 2019-20 will be available once the 2019-20 financial statements are completed.

The following question was submitted by Councillor McLachlan:

Regional Tourism Destination Funding and Promotion

Can Councillors be advised if Central Coast Council applied for a NSW co funding Tourism Grant for Promotion of our Region, as a destination, similar to Port Stephens Council may have successfully done.

If not, then what plans do we have to capitalise of domestic Tourism opportunity Covid travel restrictions have presented the Coast Tourism industry.

Response provided by Director Connected Communities:

Two streams of funding were available through Destination New South Wales' Regional Tourism Fund between 2016-2019; the Regional Cooperative Tourism Marketing Program and the Regional Tourism Product Development Program. Applications have now closed. Port Stephen's campaign was delayed due to COVID-19 impacts.

Central Coast initially liaised with Destination New South Wales when funding opened to investigate and scope opportunities for the Central Coast, however made the decision not to progress with an application due to alignment with strategic priorities at the time. Central Coast Council instead went ahead with the successful 'Have a Little Adventure' cooperative funding campaign with the local tourism industry in 2019.

Council have recently applied to participate in Destination New South Wales' Now's The Time To Love NSW Spring / Summer 2020 marketing program as a Content and Editorial Partner. Now's The Time To Love NSW is a multi-year marketing program encouraging people to stay 'locally' and spend 'locally' in New South Wales.

Council are investigating a cooperative marketing campaign led by Newcastle Airport sponsored by Destination New South Wales, which is an out of region marketing campaign focused on the Victoria, South East Queensland and ACT markets aimed at driving tourism to a number of regions via Newcastle, including Central Coast, Port Stephens, Newcastle and Hunter Valley.

The final 'Have A Little Adventure' campaign that was due to launch in March but was postponed due to COVID will also be rolling out across key out of region markets including Sydney from August to October 2020, and will be activated via out of home (billboards) and television commercials. BAU paid social activity focused on driving visitation to the region will continue to run as an always on marketing activity.

Finally, Council's Destination Brand campaign will launch in region in July followed by an out of region launch in October. This campaign will activate a 360 degree above, below and through the line marketing campaign activating all key channels including out of home (billboards), digital (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube), in cinema advertising, event activations and content. Out of region marketing for the Destination Brand campaign will begin in October 2020.

The following question was submitted by Councillor Hogan:

Waste Levy Payments / Advocacy

Cost shifting by the State Government is one of the most significant problems faced by our Council. Millions of dollars are lost because the NSW Government have not fully reinvested the waste levy, paid by councils, back into local government environmental programs.

- 1 *What did we receive in waste levies and how much did we pay to the State in the last financial year.*
- 2 *What advocacy and lobbying has Council undertaken to address the inequity?*

The response provided by the Director Roads Transport Drainage:

The following addresses the questions individually.

1 *What did we receive in waste levies and how much did we pay to the State in the last financial year.*

Section 88 of the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 requires certain licensed waste facilities (both public and private owned and operated) within a defined region of NSW to pay a waste levy. Central Coast Council collects the levy on behalf of the NSW State Government for each tonne of waste landfilled and is required to be paid to the NSW State Government monthly.

In 2019/20 the waste levy payable by Central Coast Council is \$29,871,329. Approximately \$13,548,062 of this total is directly attributable to the waste delivered from Councils domestic waste management services. The remainder of the levy is collected on behalf of the state government as part of the gate fee payable by the community and businesses directly using Council's waste management facilities.

In 2019/20 Central Coast Council directly received approximately \$323,774 of grant funding, which identified the waste levy as the source of funds. This funding has been used for a wide range of projects, including a soft plastics baler, forklift to facilitate resource recovery activities, collection of problem wastes such as sharps and batteries, the love food hate waste avoidance program, school education and green living workshops.

In addition to direct grant funding, Council has indirectly received a range of services and resources (as opposed to direct funding) through the NSW EPA, which were identified as being funded through the waste levy. These included chemical collection days, regional illegal dumping resources, regional education initiatives and training.

2 What advocacy and lobbying has Council undertaken to address the inequity?

Council has been involved in a range of advocacy and lobbying initiatives over recent years to increase the share of waste levy returned to Local Government. Examples over the past 12 months include:

- At the October 2019 NSW Local Government Conference Central Coast Council raised the matter of the NSW Waste Levy and supported the following resolution:

That Local Government NSW calls on the NSW Government to reinvest the waste levy to:

- 1 Fund regions of councils to develop regional waste plans for the future of waste and resource recovery in their regions, which include infrastructure and circular economy solutions to address the needs of our cities and regions.*
- 2 Fund the delivery of priority infrastructure and other projects, procured by local government, that are needed to deliver the regional-scale plans, particularly where there is market failure identified in the regional plans.*
- 3 Increase local and state government procurement of recycled goods made with domestic content, for example by:*
 - a) adopting recycled content targets to help drive demand and provide incentives to deliver on these targets.*
 - b) funding further research, development and delivery of recycling technologies and products generated from recyclables, particularly by local or regional councils.*
- 4 Fund and deliver state-wide education campaigns on the importance of recycling to encourage the right way to recycle, the purchase of products with recycled content, as well as promote waste avoidance.*
- 5 Work with the Federal Government to introduce producer responsibility schemes for soft plastics and other emerging problem wastes.*

- At the Ordinary meeting of Council on the 29th October 2019 in considering a Mayoral Minute – Plan to Save Our Recycling, Council resolved in part

996/19 *That Council endorses Local Government NSW's sector-wide Save our Recycling campaign, and asks the State Government to reinvest the Waste Levy in:*

- a Funding councils to collaboratively develop regional-scale plans for the future of waste and recycling in their regions*
- b the delivery of the priority infrastructure and other local government projects needed to deliver regional-scale plans, particularly where a market failure has been identified*

- c *support for the purchase of recycled content by all levels of government, to help create new markets*
- d *Funding and delivery of a state-wide education campaign on the importance of recycling, including the right way to recycle, the purchase of products with recycled content and the importance of waste avoidance.*

997/19 *That Council write to all the local State Members on the Central Coast - Adam Crouch MP, Member for Terrigal, Liesl Tesch MP, Member for Gosford, David Mehan MP, Member for The Entrance, David Harris MP, Member for Wyong and Yasmin Catley MP, Member for Swansea, outlining the urgent need to educate, innovate and invest in local waste and recycling services via the waste levy and calling for their support for recycling.*

998/19 *That Council write to the relevant NSW State Ministers including the Minister for Energy and Environment the Hon Matthew Kean MP, Local Government Minister Shelley Hancock, NSW Treasurer the Hon Dominic Perrottet MP, Premier the Hon Gladys Berejiklian MP, Opposition Leader Jodi McKay MP, Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage Kate Washington MP, and Shadow Minister for Local Government Greg Warren MP, outlining the urgent need to educate, innovate and invest in local waste and recycling services via the waste levy and calling for their support for recycling.*

999/19 *That Council formally write to its own Youth Action Team, Y4Y, advising them of Council's support for the Save Our Recycling campaign, and asking them to consider endorsing and sharing it their own networks across the Central Coast local government area.*

1000/19 *That Council advise LGNSW President Linda Scott of the passage of this Mayoral Minute.*

1001/19 *That Council develop and implement a communications campaign to promote Council's support for the Save Our Recycling campaign.*

- Council staff actioned the above resolution and provided letters of support to stakeholders and participated in a wide range of media communications to support the above initiatives and resolution.
- The Mayor attended ABC Radio to discuss Save Our Recycling Campaign and gain support for 100% reinvestment of Waste Levy into education, innovation and investment in local waste and recycling services.
- Staff made a submission during the initial issues survey phase of the NSW Government's 20-year waste strategy referencing the NSW Waste levy. It was suggested that the waste levy needs to be restructured and include full reinvestment into the waste sector to achieve sustainability outcomes. It also

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included the suggestion to fund research and development of the innovation sector, including the co-funding of innovation hubs dedicated to waste.

- Council's Waste Resource Management Strategy was submitted to Council in draft form to progress to public exhibition. This document will be a key instrument in supporting future grant funding applications to the State Government as the Central Coast will now have a community influenced waste avoidance and resource recovery strategic direction and associated action plans from which to derive projects for funding.
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Attachments

Nil