

MINUTES of the **ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING OF THE COLAC-OTWAY SHIRE COUNCIL** held at the COPACC - Colac on 24 February 2016 at 4.00pm.

Questions Received in Writing Prior to the Meeting

James Judd

1. The estimated \$330,000 reduction in in rate revenue for 2016-17 year for properties devalued as a result of Christmas day fires 2015. Should these funds not be received from the State government? Was this estimate on 2015-2016 year rate calculations? Is it 2015-2016 valuation plus rate cap increase? Plus allowance for increase in 1-7-2016 to 30-6-2018 valuations? Should funds not be received, how will council pass on these costs over all other ratepayers? Or will it cut services or reduce work hours or a combination of all three.

General Manager Corporate Services to respond

Council is currently preparing its 2016/17 financial year budget and this will include estimates of valuation changes for properties impacted as a result of the Christmas day fires. The estimate has been calculated based on historical data analysis and reviewing future trends and early estimates are that the impact could be in the vicinity of \$270,000. The final outcome and the impact on overall rating will be finalised as part of the 2016/17 budget which will be adopted at the end of June 2016.

Council continues to advocate to the State Government for support in funding this shortfall, due to the extraordinary nature of the impact. There will be no direct financial impact for Council in relation to costs incurred to restore assets and undertake recovery activities in Wye River and Separation Creek, as these will be re-imbursed through the Natural Disaster Recovery and Relief Arrangements.

TABLING OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE AT PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Peter Jacobs – Separation Creek

1. Why are we still in lockdown and will Council please show some initiative and remedy this situation today?

Access to Mr Jacob's property was and continues to be available following the immediate period after the Christmas fire. No fencing remains to prevent access to properties in Stanway Drive.

The fencing erected in Wye River and Separation Creek has at all times been initiated and controlled by the State Government – initially by VicPolice and DELWP in partnership with EMV, Local Government Victoria, and with input from Council, EPA and DHHS. The fence was intended to facilitate the return of evacuated residents where possible, whilst preventing access to parts of the towns which were not considered safe. Control of the restricted area is now with DELWP. Control of the area will move across to Grocon as the contract proceeds for the site clean-up.

Questions Received Verbally at the Meeting

Tony Webber, Otway Forum

1. I found that the CEO's report was really informative and I wonder why it's no longer being included in the agenda or is it in some other publication?

The CEO, Sue Wilkinson, responded that it's great to have the opportunity. I acknowledge that change can create some interest, so it's great to have a chance to talk about this. I made a very careful operational decision based on workload and resourcing for the organisation. As the community knows, it's going to be increasingly important that resource allocation is carefully managed to respond to the rate capping environment. In making this decision, I considered many factors. I checked and found that this type of report is far from common and in fact a quick check found most Council's don't

have a similar report, including Geelong, Wyndham, Queenscliffe, Surf Coast, Monash, Northern Grampians, Yarra, Indigo, Kingston and Dandenong, just to name a few. It follows from these examples that there is also no legal or Statutory requirement to provide a CEO report and I'm glad to have the opportunity to clear this up. I am aware that on social media, this is something that is being said, so it's great to be able to reassure the community that there's no legal breach or issues with regard to not having a CEO report, nor is there an issue with transparency. The original purpose of the report was to highlight the activities of the organisation over the last twelve months. We have worked really hard with the community and responding to community feedback to improve our community engagement and our communications and by extension, our transparency. We've introduced the 'Community Matters' newsletter, which goes to every household in the Shire four times a year. We've introduced the 'service snapshot' which summarises all of the key service activities and much of the data from the CEO report, which also goes to every household. We have far fewer confidential reports which has been achieved by moving contracts and audits into the Ordinary Agenda cycle. We have a substantially increased presence on social media as well as in the mainstream media. We've also introduced a series of conversation events where we have a chance to go out and talk to people face to face and these have been really well received. That's not the end of that though, our work in this space continues and perhaps the next most exciting part of it is going to be the launch of the website, where the community will see much more information in a much more transparent way than they've ever seen before. I think it's fair to say our website pretty much needs a heritage overlay on it because it's so old. I am really looking forward to the day that we can launch the new website, it's looking fantastic and it's not far away. I think the community will see that as a great resource. The other thing is that the various tools we've introduced to ensure that all of the information is available to all of our community and not just the visitors to the chamber and that's been one of the really important points to think about in this. Another factor that I took into account is the concerns that have been regularly raised by Councillors in this forum in relation to the report. It clearly wasn't meeting Councillor's needs and there have been a number of

situations where Councillors have had conflicts and haven't been able to be present for the consideration of the report, which I highlight was for noting only. On balance and just to clarify this was something that was discussed on several occasions at Council briefings. I have made the operational decision to reallocate resources, to respond to other priorities in emerging areas and to maximise value there, such as the Community Conversations and I am confident that there's no compromise to transparency.

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT'S "REGIONAL STATEMENT" AND GREAT SOUTH COAST MEMBERSHIP

AUTHOR:	Sue Wilkinson	ENDORSED:	Sue Wilkinson
DEPARTMENT:	Executive	FILE REF:	F11/3696

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- 1. Notes the new State government regional administrative arrangements in particular the inclusion of Colac Otway Shire in the Barwon region rather than the Great South Coast region.***
- 2. Resolves to cease its membership on the Great South Coast at the expiry of the current term (30 June 2016).***
- 3. Advises the Chair of the Great South Coast Group***

ALTERNATIVE MOTION - MOVED Cr Chris Smith that:

Change the word 'cease' to 'continue' in point 2

- 2. Resolves to continue its membership on the Great South Coast at the expiry of the current term (30 June 2016).***

Motion lapsed due to no seconder

**ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION - MOVED Cr Brian Crook
seconded Cr Terry Woodcroft: CARRIED 6 : 1**