

Central Darling Shire Council

Message from the ADMINISTRATOR - Bob Stewart

The year seems to be going at a fast pace and this continues to impact the organisation and our communities.

The big news was the commitment of additional funding to enable the delivery of three modern water treatment Plants for White cliffs, Wilcannia and Ivanhoe. This is critical infrastructure that will ensure that treated water meets the public health standards for these communities.

Senator Deborah O'Neill was in Wilcannia to announce the funding. Along with community representatives we took the opportunity to meet the Senator to detail our concerns about the State Government's redesigned weir proposal. Community concerns expressed included the cultural significance of the river water and impacts when it is dry. Council is seeking further ministerial meetings. Council is also making

representations for a change in the guidelines for the requirements for Natural Disaster Declarations for remote Councils. The reality is that the guidelines do not allow consideration of natural disasters in remote areas with low population and sparse settlement where a multi-agency approach may not be required. Be assured the ongoing commitment and dedication of our volunteers is appreciated and never taken for granted.

Treatment plants funding welcome



Council has welcomed the Australian and NSW Government funding of \$10 million which secures work on new water treatment plants at White Cliffs, Ivanhoe and Wilcannia, and the installation of new potable water reticulation system at White Cliffs. Pictured - Department of Climate Change, Energy

and the Environment representative Brendan Miller, Water Treatment Plant Operator, Wilcannia, Jarid Cattermole, NSW Senator Deb O'Neill, Council General Manager, Greg Hill, Administrator Bob Stewart, Shire Services Director Reece Wilson and Utilities Engineer Thai Hoang Dang.



Work on the White Cliffs Water Treatment Plant, above, is about 50 per cent completed. The White Cliffs new potable water reticulation system is 70 per cent completed.

With the Ivanhoe water treatment plant, preliminary works have commenced with electrical power upgrade to the site.

Draft Budget documents exhibited - comments invited

The Council draft 2024-25 Financial Year Budget and associated documents are on Public Exhibition. These draft documents are: [Operational Plan and Budget 2024 -2025 Incorporating, draft Fees and Charges \(2024-2025\) and Operational Budget \(2024-2025\)](#), [Delivery Program \(2022-2026\)](#) and [Central Darling Shire Long-Term Financial Plan 2025 -2034](#). The draft Operating Budget indicates that Council will have an operating deficit (after

capital grants) of \$1.225M for 2024/2025. This is a result of the potential return of elected members, and associated costs, and a reduction in private works forecasted for next year.

To view the documents visit Council's website or Council offices. Public comments will be received up until 4pm on Wednesday 20 June 2024. Submissions must be made in writing to: The General Manager, Central Darling Shire Council, PO Box 165, Wilcannia NSW 2836 or via email council@centraldarling.nsw.gov.au

Key Points

- Operating deficit (after capital grants) of \$1.225M for 2024/2025.
- Total 2024-2025 budgeted operating expenditure will be \$24.372 million, capital expenditure will be \$18.099 million. Total revenue is expected to be \$36.006 million.
- Ordinary rates will increase by the approved IPART rate peg of 4.5 percent and apply to water, sewerage, and waste collection. Statutory fees and charges are applied as per legislation. All other fees and charges have been increased by 4.5 per cent.

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Disaster funding denied

Council Administrator, Bob Stewart, has written to the National Emergency Management Agency Coordinator-General asking for an urgent review of the Natural Disaster Declaration guidelines. It comes after a storm event on 5-6 February 2024 impacted the northern areas of Central Darling Shire, including White Cliffs. Despite causing \$1.3 million in damages the storm was

deemed not eligible for Natural Disaster assistance. This is because, as Council understands, there was no coordinated multi-agency response to the natural disaster.

The situation highlights the fact that Central Darling and other rural and remote Councils are at an unfair disadvantage when applying for Natural Disaster Assistance.



The February 2024 storm event in the Central Darling Shire did not meet criteria for funding under the Natural Disaster Declaration Assistance program.

White Cliffs Golf Course needs support

A grant will be needed to repair White Cliffs Golf Course after it sustained substantial damage in the February storm, which has been denied Natural Disaster Declaration Assistance. Council is looking for an alternative funding option because at the moment the course is virtually unusable as every hole is riddled with washouts.

The club Captain, Dick Wagner said they were in the unfortunate position of having to advise



tourists that it is extremely difficult to play and be able to get around and have an enjoyable game of golf. This is because the storm created washouts on every hole. The extent of the damage is at a level beyond that of the local club of volunteers, and abilities of Council, to fix without state or Australian government funding.

Money needed for Infrastructure and local services

Council has made a submission to an inquiry into the ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services. At the May Council meeting a report outlined the desperate situation facing Central Darling Shire which is economically disadvantaged and in urgent need of a new financial model which includes government funding support to ensure infrastructure and services can be provided to meet community expectations.



Public Notices

Exhibition Documents

Council has several documents on exhibition for public comment at the moment.

This follows the May Council meeting. Details are on Council's website or via Council Offices.

- Draft Control of Access to Restricted Locations Policy.
- Draft Council Budget and Long-Term Plan.
- Draft Central Darling Development Control Plan 2024.

Projects approved to proceed

The Office Local Government have reviewed Council's program of works for the Local Government Recovery Grant – NSW Severe Weather and Floods – August -September 2022.

Six projects have been reviewed and determined consistent with the provisions of the program guidelines to proceed:

- Construction of Public Toilets at Menindee Airstrip \$93,250.
- Ivanhoe Community Golf Course Revitalisation \$151,662.
- Victory Park Amenity Block Replacement \$320,000.

- White Cliffs Caravan Park Septic Upgrade \$250,940.

Two projects remain under review:

- White Cliffs Community Hub Activation - Council have advised this project may be withdrawn. Project not assessed at this stage (\$99,000).
- Sunset Strip Playground Upgrade - Project has been reviewed by the Principal Program Officer and further information will be requested from Council regarding the project. \$85,148.