

## 5.2 OPERATIONAL PLAN 2014/15 - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REPORT

As indicated in the initial report to council (distributed with the meeting agenda) the closing date for receipt of public submissions in respect of the Operational Plan 2014/15 was 18 June 2014. The following is information in respect to public submissions received after the preparation of the initial agenda (and need to be considered in conjunction with adoption of the final Operational Plan):

- **Sunset Strip Progress Association (SSPA)**; the submission from SSPA raises a number of matters relating to the previous decisions of council and funding needs/ expectations of the Sunset Strip community. A petition form requesting council to review decisions in relation to the Operational Plan affecting the community of Sunset Strip forms part of the submission. The petition states that the budget has been determined in a discriminatory approach that does not provide a fair share to Sunset Strip. The issues raised (and comments relating to same) are summarised as follows:
  - an alternative option of a differential rate for Sunset Strip as limited funds are allocated by council to that area and in view of the fact that SSPA Inc undertake a range of council functions for the community. **The implementation of a differential rate in any location would need to be modelled/ considered/ included as part of the public exhibition process of councils' operational plan; accordingly, it cannot be implemented for 2014/15.**
  - SSPA have requested (as part of LG Independent Panel Review) that the CDSC boundary be amended to place Sunset Strip into the unincorporated area. **This is not an issue that council can deal with as part of the Operational Plan.**
  - Discrimination by council highlighted by “the artificial creation of town and village statues by CDSC to justify their spending. Councillors are drawn from these towns and this formula ensures their communities receive the bulk of the funding but pay the least rates.” It is stated that Sunset Strip contributes 25% of the rate base and also refers to the proposed capital funding distribution in the proposed budget. **The current operational plan has been prepared whilst an Acting General Manager and an Administrator (who have no affiliation within any community location in the CDSC area) have been in place. The preparation of the operational plan has been based on known information, the judgement of needs and available finances. In preparing planning processes it is up to respective councils to cater for their whole areas with the actual allocation of funds likely to vary between different locations from year to**

year. Information provided by councils' Revenue Officer on 13 June 2014 indicates that there are 135 property assessments at Sunset Strip (1445 in CDSC), which is estimated to yield in the order of \$76,000 for rates in 2014 (out of \$721,000 across the council area). On that basis Sunset Strip represents 9.5% ratepayers contributing 10.5% of rate income for council. As has been indicated in the correspondence from SSPA the land valuation of properties at Sunset Strip would contribute to that circumstance. Differing land valuations have an impact in local government areas across NSW and is not a discriminatory act but rather compliance with legislative requirements.

- Reference is made to a decision by council in March 2013 which resolved “ that Sunset Strip township be allocated \$25,000 this year and each year there after through the Sunset Strip Works funding, to be sourced from the local roads component of the Financial Assistance Grants.” **Research on this matter indicates that the decision of council in March 2013 regarding Sunset Strip was made in conjunction with the receipt and notation of a Roads Report (which referenced town improvement program funding previously allocated across the council area) i.e. there was no report identifying the issues and rationale for the decision. As is the case with any council decision they are not binding forever, however changes to such a decision should be communicated to those concerned. Council records indicate a payment was made to Sunset Strip for the 2012/13 year in line with the council resolution. No reference has been identified to any specific allocation for that purpose in the 2013/14 Operational Plan. During the public exhibition period of the 2014/15 Operational Plan the Acting General Manager visited Menindee (27 May) and was available to meet with members of the community. It was understood that a representative of Sunset Strip would attend Menindee on that day to raise issues but that did not eventuate. Nevertheless the previous understanding of SSPA in relation to ongoing council funding assistance needs to be respected; in that regard it is proposed that council request a submission from SSPA detailing the proposed use of the \$25,000 requested for 2014/15. It is necessary that council be responsible in its' allocation of funds and the substantiation of the proposed use of funds needs to be provided. This can then be considered by council and if necessary adjustments made to the 2014/15 budget as part of the September Quarterly Review. In addition it is proposed that SSPA make a submission by the end of February each year detailing their request for funding assistance from council in the following financial year. This can then be incorporated as part of financial planning processes.**

- There is reference made to the proposed Financial Assistance Grant funds in the draft operational plan i.e. seeking separate allocations for Sunset Strip in respect to the Seniors and Community Christmas functions and not a combined allocation with Menindee. The submission also referred to an increase in the allocation of funds for maintenance of toilets at Sunset Strip and Copi Hollow. **As indicated in the submission these issues were considered at a council meeting in July 2012 with a decision to provide for a separate allocation for the community Christmas function and to increase the public toilet maintenance allocations to \$600 each; however that resolution only referred to the 2012/13 Operational Plan allocations. Given the history on these issues it is proposed that Sunset Strip be provided with a separate allocation for the community Christmas function (\$200), that the allocations for the maintenance of the Sunset Strip and Copi Hollow toilets be amended to \$600 each (an increase of \$200 in total) with this funding to be absorbed within existing budget allocations. It is not proposed that a separate allocation be made for the Seniors Christmas function at Sunset Strip (given the numbers of residents). It is also appropriate that Council review all of its' historical financial assistance grants to assess whether they are warranted and are being utilised for the purposes allocated.**
- The difference between the waste management charge for Sunset Strip and White Cliffs was raised. **The proposed Waste Management Charges for Sunset Strip and White Cliffs are \$35 and \$25 respectively. As indicated in the Operational Plan these charges are to contribute to the running and cost of replacement of the Waste depots. Based on the number of properties at each location the application of the charges above will yield a total of \$4,725 at Sunset Strip and \$4,950 at White Cliffs. Accordingly, the difference is that the fewer property owners at Sunset Strip require a payment above White Cliffs to ensure that sufficient funds are generated for current and future waste operations/ facilities. The differences in these charges have existed in previous years.**
- A request to allocate funds of \$15,000 to Sunset Strip out of the Boat Ramps Capital Project funding (of \$156,000) was requested. **As indicated in the Operational Plan documents \$117,000 of the Boat Ramp Capital funding is being provided by grants. The grant funding has been obtained for specific projects and therefore cannot be re-allocated. SSPA will be advised to liaise with council regarding potential grant funding for their projects.**
- **Paul Brown;** this submission raised issues in relation to the reporting processes of council (e.g. financial allocations, service levels, performance indicators) and mentions the focus on

a balanced budget as a guiding criteria for the preparation of the 2014/15 Operational Plan. It was requested that Council document current initially considered service levels, the levels of service actually provided in 2014/15, and savings attributed to the reduction in service levels. It was suggested that this information be available to ratepayers at the end of the third quarter of 2014/15. **This submission raises a number of issues that are relevant to council operations/ management/ reporting (which have been mentioned in reports to council and discussions with staff by the Acting General Manager in recent months) i.e. that councils' strategic plan and delivery program documents need review, that council needs to review each of its' programs and services to understand and define what is being provided and at what cost (and to look at improved ways of delivering services), and that council needs to facilitate more engagement with its' communities. This aspect should be noted by council for future reference/ action as part of its' organizational improvement processes.**

- Kathy Holmes; raises issues included in the Sunset Strip PA submission i.e. regarding \$25,000 allocation, discriminatory approach, Independent Review Panel Report. **Refer comments above relating to Sunset Strip PA submission.**
- **White Cliffs Community Members (Proponents: Richard Allen, Gaye Nicholls, Enid Black);** proposing an alternate structure for running council facilities at White Cliffs i.e. the Swimming Pool, Community Hall, Caravan Park which are currently undertaken through Section 355 Committees. The alternate structure proposed is a White Cliffs Community Development Board (W.C.C.D.B) which would be a community based incorporated non-profit association. The submission outlines a proposed structure, purpose and other processes for the W.C.C.D.B. **The submission is one that would need to be explored further with the proponents of the concept, the existing S355 Committees, and the White Cliffs community. In that regard the concept does "link" to the proposed changes to the Swimming Pool Program referred to in recent Operational Plan reports and also affiliates with the need of Council to review all its' programs and services and how they are delivered.**
- **Ann Johnson:** The submission refers to page 19 of the Draft Operational Plan which includes proposed Actions as part of Councils' Delivery Program i.e. "Maintain consistent animal control practices". The submitter expresses the view that animal control practices are not undertaken consistently (owners treated differently) and alleges differences in action taken by council in different locations of Wilcannia. Reference was also made to the possibility of trucks being involved in accidents when animals are on the road. Councils' **Delivery Program on "Page 19" also states as an action that Council will "encourage and maintain micro chipping register". The performance measure for both actions is to increase the level of registration and micro chipping of dogs. Animal and Regulatory control is a difficult area with structured processes in relation to same commencing in recent years. Staff have been encouraged to ensure the consistent application of processes in animal control and to follow established regulatory processes which will assist consistency.**

- **Karin Donaldson**; this submission raises issues relating to the state of the Wilcannia Tip, the opening hours of the tip, weed management (riverbank and Baker Park), street trees (sort removal of dead trees in various locations and encouraged more shade trees), the maintenance of community assets (footpaths/ public areas), Culture and Art (encouraged council participation in art organisations so that programs can be accessed, etc), proposed the provision of gym facilities and the establishment of a teenagers' evening club. **The matters raised in this submission relate in the main to the Delivery Program component of the documents exhibited by council. As has been indicated in reports to council in recent months the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program that were previously adopted by council need to be reviewed and updated. In that regard those documents were correctly prepared in a strategic context; however, due to financial constraints/ issues the ability of council to provide budget allocations to match the strategies has been limited and as a result actions that back up the strategy have not occurred. The contents of this submission are valid and can be issues that council continue to pursue when funding permits.**
- **Bill and Chris Elliott**; following is a summary of the issues raised in this submission and comments relating to same:
  - Discrepancies with figures in the Income and Expenditure by Function information; **as stated in the submission these are rounding "errors" in the software program used that do not affect the overall figures.**
  - Recommended that no decision on any expenditure relating to the Town Special Rate be made until 6 months into the financial year and that expenditure under this program be for a long term benefit requiring no ongoing expenditure. It was also suggested that some of the funds be used for the various cemeteries; **the Town Special Rates (as indicated in the Operational Plan) are raised "to fund town improvement projects and community activities. These funds are also designated to specific town beautification projects."** It is agreed that the use of funds should be subject to specific consideration by Council to ensure that the funds are appropriately utilised and aligned to the purpose for which they are raised. **It is proposed that the Director of Shire Services prepare a report for consideration by Council on "known" projects in each town that can achieve outcomes related to the purpose of the special rates.**
  - Suggested that an amount of \$4,500 (based on 4 towns @\$1,000 and Tilpa @\$500) be provided for tourist related activities such as reprinting brochures or maintain website with payment only made on invoices relating to such items. Communications between local town tourism groups were suggested to clarify how marketing is done (individually or as a group). Council was advised not to commit to Regional Tourism until clear details of membership/ structure/funding are known. It was also commented that the maintenance of town parks and public facilities are critical in increasing visitor stops/ stays. It was also suggested that any council contribution to the Long Paddock Project should be kept to a minimum as the infrastructure/ website/ brochures for that project are underway from ongoing funding. **The comments made on tourism align with the report to council by the Acting General Manager which indicates that the specific purpose for the allocation of the \$15,000**

**included in Councils' budget for Area Promotion will need to be based on getting value for the funds allocated. This will include communicating with tourism stakeholders as part of decision making on the use of the Area Promotion funds.**

- Financial Assistance Grants; commented that Senior Citizens functions are not well advertised (in Wilcannia) and funding should only be provided if functions are promoted for all. Youth Week grant funding should be provided only if evidence of activity is provided. Suggested deletion of the City to Surf contribution. Also suggested that council review contributions being made. **It is agreed that council should ensure that funds provided to any community group are appropriately used and that a review of community grant funding should be undertaken. In addition it is also agreed that the \$500 allocated for the City to Surf Run need not be allocated; this can be used to offset the minor funding changes made as part of the Sunset Strip submission.**
- Hire of Council Facilities; comment made on non- charging for use of ovals/ parks/ reserves by community groups which does not ensure users leave facilities in appropriate condition after use (which requires council or residents to clean up). The use of an annual user bond was suggested. The difference between hall hiring charges across the shire area and the definitions in those charge structures were also raised. **Council currently issues Activity Approvals for those users of council facilities such as parks/ ovals, etc. It is an area of council operations that needs a review of processes to ensure that users comply with use approvals. Similarly with the hall hire charge structures some anomalies are recognised and some steps have been taken to align charges in different locations (where there are not substantial differences in the facilities available).**
- Note: Council will provide responses to the submission received in relation to the Draft Operational Plan. A total of nine submissions were received.