

MEDIA RELEASE

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What happened at the Council Meeting in February?

A summary of issues considered at the Council meeting held on 4 February 2014 in Tallangatta is provided below:

Walwa Odour Issue: Council received a petition from Walwa residents in relation to an odour that has been noticed in Walwa. The petition will be considered at Council's 4 March 2014 meeting.

Goats in Mitta Mitta: Council also received a petition from residents of Mitta Mitta in relation to the removal of goats in the Mitta Valley. The petition will also be considered at Council's 4 March 2014 meeting.

Neighbourhood Safer Places: Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP) form part of the recommendations to Councils resulting from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. A NSP is an identified building or space within the community that can provide a higher level of protection from the immediate life threatening effects of a bush fire. It is a place of last resort for people during a bush fire and can be part of resident's contingency plans if their Bush Fire Survival Plan cannot be implemented or has failed. NSPs still entail some risk, both in moving to them and while sheltering in them and cannot be considered completely safe. NSPs are not community fire refuges or emergency relief centres.

Currently there are three designated NSP's within the municipality, Dartmouth Hotel, Tallangatta Triangles and Attree Park (Corryong). Council considered a report which recommended the Mitta Valley Sports Complex, Eskdale as a fourth NSP site within the Shire. Council approved and adopted the recommendation for the Mitta Valley Sports Complex for designation as a Neighbourhood Safer Place.

Towong Planning Scheme Amendment C30 – Environmental Significance Overlay: The Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) within the Towong Planning Scheme seeks to protect high quality agricultural land across the municipality. Council resolved to adopt and request Ministerial approval of Amendment C30 to the Towong Planning Scheme. This Planning Scheme amendment will provide an expanded Environmental Significance Overlay which will better identify high quality agricultural land within Towong Shire. This change to the Towong Planning Scheme was recommended by the *Towong Shire Rural Land Use Study* and should ensure that the Towong Planning Scheme has more accurate ESO mapping and can better achieve the objective of State Planning Policy which is to protect productive farmland which is of strategic significance in the local or regional context

Banking Services Review: Council has undertaken a review of its existing banking services and fees to identify the best path to reducing the overall cost of the service. Council has banked with the ANZ for a number of years. The annual cost of the above services was over \$30,000 in 2012/2013. Over 70% of these costs related to receipt of customer funds predominantly for rates payments with merchant charges, BPAY charges and PostBillPay. In undertaking the review Council carried out market comparisons of existing fees by benchmarking against the State Procurement Contract as well

as the rates of a nearby Council. As a result Council will begin a transition of banking services to Westpac which will see a cost benefit of approximately \$16,000 annually.

Plant Purchase: Council considered a report for the replacement of its 2001 Caterpillar 140H grader. A Tender has been accepted from Hitachi Construction Machinery for a John Deere 670GP Grader. The project is in accordance with Council's plant replacement program and budgeted for in the 2013/2014 financial year. Council is now in the process of arranging for the delivery of the new grader to the Corryong depot where it will be based.

The above information is a summary only of the Council Meeting business. Copies of Council Minutes are available from Council's website www.towong.vic.gov.au, Council Offices and all townships within the Shire (either the Post Office or local store). Should further information be required please contact Diana Snaith on 02 6071 5100.

The next ordinary Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 4 March 2014 at the Mitta Valley Sports Complex, Eskdale commencing at 10.00 am with Open Forum.

Council Meetings are public meetings and all are welcome to attend.