

Minutes

Special Meeting of Council

Held at 10:30am, Wednesday 12 February 2025
Council Chamber, Tallangatta Council Office
32 Towong Street, Tallangatta, Victoria

Our Community Vision

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities with quality facilities and services.

This information is available in alternative formats on request

**Minutes for the Special Meeting of Council held at
32 Towong Street, Tallangatta, Victoria
on Wednesday 12 February 2025 commenced at 10:30am**

Commonly Used Acronyms

Abbreviation	Title
Council Officers	
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DIE	Director Infrastructure and Environment
DCP	Director Community and Planning
DCOD	Director Corporate and Organisational Development
MF	Manager Finance
SAE	Senior Asset Engineer
Government/Organisation	
CH	Corryong Health (formerly Upper Murray Health and Community Services)
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DJSIR	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
GMW	Goulburn Murray Water
HRGLN	Hume Region Local Government Network
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
NECMA	North East Catchment Management Authority
NERPEN	North East Regional Procurement Excellence Network
NEW	North East Water
NEWRRG	North East Waste and Resource Recovery Group
RCV	Rural Councils Victoria
RDA	Regional Development Australia
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
THS	Tallangatta Health Service
VGC	Victorian Grants Commission

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The Mayor declared the meeting open, the time being 10:44 am.

1 Opening Prayer

"Almighty God, we ask that you be present at this meeting to assist us in our service to the Community through Local Government.

We pray that our decisions will be wise and taken with goodwill and clear conscience.

Amen."

2 Councillor and Officer Presence at the Meeting

Councillor Attendance

Crs Whitehead, Wortmann, Anderson, Pitman, Tolsher

Officer Attendance:	Title:
Ms Taylor	Acting Chief Executive Officer
Mr Heritage	Director Infrastructure and Environment
Mr Florence	Director Community and Planning
Mr Stanton	Manager Community Wellbeing

3 Apologies and Granting of Leave of Absence

Nil.

4 Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

Section 130 of the Act requires that a 'Relevant person' (which means a person who is a Councillor, a member of a delegated committee who is not a Councillor or a member of Council staff) disclose any conflict of interest in the manner required by Council's Governance Rules and exclude themselves from the decision making process in relation to the matter including any discussion or vote on the matter at any Council meeting.

Council's Governance Rules state as follows:

A2 Obligations with regards to conflict of interest

Councillors, members of delegated committee, and Council staff are required to:

- a. Avoid all situations which may give rise to conflicts of interest;*
- b. Identify any conflicts of interest; and*
- c. Disclose or declare all conflicts of interest.*

A3 Disclosure of a conflict of interest at a Council meeting

A Councillor who has a conflict of interest in a matter being considered at a Council meeting at which he or she:

A3.1 is present must disclose that conflict of interest by explaining the nature of the conflict of interest to those present at the Council meeting immediately before the matter is considered; or

A3.2 intends to be present must disclose that conflict of interest by providing to the Chief Executive Officer before the Council meeting commences a written notice:

A3.2.1 advising of the conflict of interest;

A3.2.2 explaining the nature of the conflict of interest; and

A3.2.3 detailing, if the nature of the conflict of interest involves a Councillor's relationship with or a gift from another person, the:

- a. name of the other person;*
- b. nature of the relationship with that other person or the date of receipt, value and type of gift received from the other person; and*
- c. nature of that other person's interest in the matter, and then immediately before the matter is considered at the meeting announcing to those present that he or she has a conflict of interest and that a written notice has been given to the Chief Executive Officer under this sub-Rule.*

The Councillor must, in either event, leave the Council meeting immediately after giving the explanation or making the announcement (as the case may be) and not return to the meeting until after the matter has been disposed of.

There were no disclosures of any conflicts of interest.

5 Community Wellbeing

5.1 Bethanga Recreation Reserve Pavilion Development - RCSIF Grant Application (DCP)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms Miranda Mouat, Co-ordinator Recreation and Community Development.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to apply for funding through the *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund* for funds to build a new Pavilion at the Bethanga Recreation Reserve. It is also seeking approval for a Council contribution to the project of up to \$2 million.

Summary:

This report seeks Council's approval for pursuing funding through the Victorian State Government's *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund* to build a new Bethanga Pavilion at the Bethanga Recreation Reserve.

The Bethanga Pavilion is the highest priority infrastructure development outlined in the *Bethanga Recreation Reserve Masterplan 2022-2031*. Council has funded, through Bushfire Recovery funds, a community engagement process including the detailed development, designs and cost estimates for the project. The cost of construction for the Bethanga Pavilion is estimated at \$3 million.

In December 2023, The Victoria Government announced the *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund*, offering grants of up to \$1 million for the delivery of new and upgraded community sports infrastructure. The second and final round of this funding stream closes in March 2025.

While the funding ratio only requires a 4:1 contribution, the \$3 million cost estimate of this project and the \$1 million maximum grant amount, requires Council to commit \$2 million to the project to support the funding application and subsequent construction if the funding bid is successful.

Recommendation:

That:

1. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to submit an application to the Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund for the maximum grant amount of \$1 million for the Bethanga Pavilion project;
2. Council commit up to \$2 million to the project, subject to the grant application being successful; and
3. During the 2025/26 Budget deliberations, consideration be given to borrowing all or part of the Council contribution given the intergenerational nature of the project.

Attachment:

1. Bethanga Pavillion Design [5.1.1 - 6 pages]

Background/History:

Bethanga Recreation Reserve is the key recreational facility for the community of Bethanga and serves the township of Bellbridge and the surrounding Peninsula area. The area is a Crown Land site managed by an active and motivated Committee of Management.

The Reserve features a football oval, cricket nets, tennis courts, netball court, equine facilities, events space, free camping / caravanning space and a pavilion. It is home to various clubs and organisations including Bethanga Cricket Club, Bethanga Tennis Club, Bethanga Pony Club, and a variety of events including the annual gymkhana and SR500 Rally. The Reserve is used for training activities by the local fire brigade and the Community Emergency Response Team. There is casual use of the facility for activities such as walking and jogging.

In 2021, key stakeholders and the broader community, along with Council, were engaged in the development of a ten-year strategic master plan for the Reserve. The *Bethanga Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2022-2031* identifies priorities of critical importance in ensuring the sustainability and continuation of quality sport and active recreation opportunities.

The number one infrastructure priority of the Master Plan is the development of the new Bethanga Pavilion. The primary purpose of the pavilion is to provide facilities for the sports clubs that currently utilise the Reserve (cricket, tennis and football), and

encourage expanded opportunities for the development of additional sports and active recreation at the site. The new pavilion will also serve as a community hub catering for community and private events, providing a space for meetings and visiting health professionals, and expanding facilities for camping.

Council has recognised that Bethanga is the one remaining township in Towong Shire that is yet to receive a major Recreation Reserve infrastructure development, and therefore prioritised this project.

In 2023, Council funded and appointed *Four 18 Architecture* to undertake a community consultation process to prepare designs and documentation for the Bethanga Pavilion. This process has enabled a detailed cost estimate to be prepared for Council's consideration and decision-making, which will inform the grant application to fund the construction stage of the pavilion. The community-based Project Working Group established at the commencement of this process has been actively engaged through the design development.

A purpose-built community facility is vital for the future of sport and active recreation, events, and other community activities in Bethanga, Bellbridge and the surrounding Peninsula area. A new Pavillion would service these areas, and particularly enhance the liveability and community amenity. A Development Plan for a 90 lot residential subdivision in Bellbridge has recently been approved which has the potential to double the population of the area.

Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):

Not applicable.

Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):

Several options are proposed for consideration, with Option 1 considered the preference in terms of achieving the best outcome for the community, including future generations:

- That Council approves the submission of a grant application to the *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund* in March 2025 for the maximum grant of \$1 million, to fund construction of the Bethanga Pavilion at an estimated cost of \$3 million. Council would make a financial commitment of \$2 million to this funding application, and to the project construction if the grant is approved.
- That Council does not make a submission to the *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund* and instead seeks alternative funding through other sources, with the aim of securing a higher level of funding requiring less financial

investment from Council.

- That Council does not pursue the development of the Bethanga Pavilion project.

Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):

If the *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund* application is successful, various sustainability implications will be considered.

Economic

The ongoing maintenance of the Bethanga Pavilion following construction will be the responsibility of the Committee of Management. The Committee and other user groups currently meet all maintenance requirements and costs at the Reserve to a high standard. The improved facilities provided by the Bethanga Pavilion are expected to attract increased income for the Committee which will further support the ongoing maintenance and operating costs. The project construction is expected to use local contractors, providing a positive impact on the local economy.

Social

The successful completion of this project will significantly improve opportunities for sporting and recreation activities, and community events for the local community and visitors alike.

Environmental/Climate Change

The pavilion design will be visually attractive and in keeping with the natural environment, maximising natural light and views to the surrounding hillsides and to the cricket pitch and tennis courts. Water efficiency will be a key consideration for the building due to the self-sufficient nature of the water source. The building will utilise energy efficient lights and fittings. The solar system on the existing building will be retained, and possibly upgraded, to supply electricity to the new pavilion. Acoustics will minimise reverberation and minimise sound transference to residential properties. The design will endeavour to exceed the *National Construction Code Part J: 1* Energy efficiency performance requirements.

Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):

The Bethanga Pavilion project was developed through strong partnerships between Council, Bethanga Recreation Reserve Committee of Management, local community groups which use the Reserve for sporting and other activities, and the broader community. A Project Working Group comprising representatives from all Reserve user groups was established in the early stages of the project development, and this group has engaged consistently and constructively throughout the planning process. The final project design and delivery will realise the aspirations of the community, and the

commitment of Council to providing the community with a high-quality facility. Council will maintain contact and engagement with the Project Working Group throughout the construction phase of this project.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):

The proposed design of the Bethanga Pavilion will provide vastly improved facilities for the community and offer amenities and features that are currently not available at the Bethanga Recreation Reserve. This design will include all functional elements which align with the infrastructure requirements outlined in the *Cricket Australia Community Cricket Facility Guidelines* for a Club (Home) level. This is essential for the project to satisfy funding requirements under the *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund*.

Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):

The development of this project has demonstrated excellent collaboration between Council and the local community, working closely with the consultant architect to achieve designs that meet community needs and satisfy infrastructure requirements for relevant sporting codes and funding guidelines. Regular reporting and consultation between officers and Council has ensured a shared understanding of project scope, purpose and financial commitment.

There has been regular engagement with Sport and Recreation Victoria throughout the project development. As manager of this Crown Land reserve, the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (DEECA) will be involved in all further development of this project.

Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):

The community consultation, design and development phase of the Bethanga Pavilion project has been funded through Council's Bushfire Recovery and Resilience fund. Council committed funds for this purpose, of which the current scope of project development undertaken by Four 18 Architecture will utilise \$149,000.

The construction of the Bethanga Pavilion will cost an estimated \$3 million. The *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund* has a funding ratio of 4:1 (State:Local) contribution. However, the \$3 million cost estimate of this project and the \$1 million maximum grant amount, will require Council to make a contribution of \$2 million to support the funding application, and subsequent construction if the funding bid is successful.

Financial contributions will be provided by Bethanga Recreation Reserve user groups,

including sporting clubs and community organisations. Financial contributions are also being sought from relevant organisations with a strong interest in the project, including Cricket Albury Wodonga and Cricket Victoria. While the local financial contributions will be a small percentage of the overall project cost, they will represent significant 'buy in' to the Bethanga Pavilion, indicating strong community support for development.

In terms of funding the Council contribution, Council does not currently have any borrowings and accordingly there is capacity to borrow up to \$2 million if there are inadequate cash reserves. Given the intergenerational nature of this project, borrowing would be an appropriate means of funding the Council contribution. The funding of Council's contribution will be considered during the 2025/26 Budget deliberations.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):

Construction of the Bethanga Pavilion aligns with several state plans and strategies, which are critical for it to be considered for this funding program, including:

- *Victorian Cricket Infrastructure Strategy 2018-2028* – This project aligns with Cricket Victoria's five strategic infrastructure pillars and seeks to address the identified disadvantage experienced by cricket participants in Country Victoria, where the overall condition of facilities was "on average of a lower standard than those in Metropolitan Melbourne".
- *Tennis Victoria Strategy 2024* – This project aligns with Tennis Victoria's purpose to "Create safe, inclusive and thriving Victorian tennis communities, enabling more people to play more often". Strategic Pillars 1 and 2 are particularly relevant - P1: Optimising the use, management, and access to facilities, thereby creating a sustainable future for venues, and P2: Provide opportunities to ensure everyone can play more often, how and when they want.

Council Plans and Policies:

Council Plans

This project supports the following *Council Plan 2021-2025* priorities:

2. Community Wellbeing - Encourage and support all people in our Shire to be healthy, happy, connected and resilient.
- 2.4 Support the development of recreational activities and infrastructure to encourage active lifestyles for all ages and stages.

The *Bethanga Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2022-2031* recognises the Bethanga

Pavilion project as the highest priority infrastructure upgrade for the Reserve.

The *Bethanga Recreation Reserve – The B-Hive Master Plan Report (2012)* identified that the poor state of the clubhouse, changerooms and facilities could no longer, practically or safely, cater to the needs of the large number of varied continuous users at the reserve.

The *Recreation Strategy for Towong Shire 2022-2033* identifies cricket and tennis as recreation activities of importance and highlights the barriers to participation in recreation, including inadequate facilities and lack of opportunities for participation. This plan also identifies the existing Bethanga pavilion as being of a poor standard.

The *Towong Shire Council Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025* supports this project primarily through *Goal 1: A community that is safe and healthy - Priority 1.1 people are supported to eat well and be physically active.*

Council Policies

External Grants Policy

Under the external grants application policy, Council officers must seek approval from Council for any projects greater than \$150,000 and/or where a Council contribution of \$50,000 or more is required that has not been included in the annual budget.

Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)) :

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in a Council meeting that is open to the public.

Risk Assessment:

The risks associated with the Bethanga Pavilion project have been significantly reduced by the thorough planning process undertaken over the past 12 months. Community engagement and detailed design work has enabled realistic costs estimates for project construction. Escalations and contingencies have been included in the project's construction budget. However, a price escalation risk remains, with the total cost of construction not certain until all elements of the building are fully tendered. Officers will work to keep within the current estimated construction cost of up to \$3 million and make savings where possible.

Officer's View:

The Bethanga Pavilion development has been identified by Council and the community as a project of high importance in strategic planning over many years.

The recent development and design process funded by Council for this project has been an excellent example of respectful community engagement and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. This process has resulted in all members of the Project Working Group being strong advocates for the Bethanga Pavilion project.

The funding opportunity presented through the Victorian State Government's *Regional Community Sporting Infrastructure Fund* is a rare opportunity to access grant funding of such a significant amount.

With Council's investment, and a successful funding outcome, the Bethanga Pavilion project could be delivered as a genuine community sporting and active recreation hub for Bethanga and the broader Peninsula communities.

Council Resolution:

**CR WORTMANN
CR ANDERSON**

THAT:

- 1. THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER BE AUTHORISED TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY SPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND FOR THE MAXIMUM GRANT AMOUNT OF \$1 MILLION FOR THE BETHANGA PAVILION PROJECT;**
- 2. COUNCIL COMMIT UP TO \$2 MILLION TO THE PROJECT, SUBJECT TO THE GRANT APPLICATION BEING SUCCESSFUL;**
- 3. DURING THE 2025/26 BUDGET DELIBERATIONS, CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO BORROWING ALL OR PART OF THE COUNCIL CONTRIBUTION GIVEN THE INTERGENERATIONAL NATURE OF THE PROJECT; AND**
- 4. FUNDING BE SOUGHT FROM THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT AND OTHER SOURCES TO REDUCE THE CONTRIBUTION REQUIRED BY COUNCIL.**

CARRIED

6 Closure of Meeting

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting closed, the time being 10:52 am.

Confirmed