

MEETING MINUTES



MEETING NAME: Agriculture and Rural Advisory Group

MEETING PLACE: Council Chambers / Boardroom, located within the Shire Hall, Menangle Street Picton or online via Teams link (which will be provided in the outlook calendar meeting invitation)

MEETING DATE: Wednesday 27 September 2023

MEETING TIME: 6pm – 8pm

Present:

Members	Present	Apology
Mayor Matt Gould – (Chair)		✓
Cr Matthew Deeth – Deputy Mayor (Acting Chair)	✓	
Stephen Gardiner - Manager Sustainable Growth	✓	
Carolyn Whitten - Strategic Planning Team Leader	✓	
Mark Ruddiman – Senior Strategic Planner	✓	
Rob Seidel – Chief Financial Officer	✓	
Andrew Elliott – Acting Team Leader (Revenue)	✓	
Senior Detective Graeme Begley	✓	
Richard Stephens – Local Land Services	✓	
James Bell – Member	✓	
Vince Hewson – Member	✓	
Phil Bartolo – Member	✓	
Anthony Biffin – Member	✓	
John Fairley – Member	✓	
Marwan El-Chamy – Member	✓	
Pam Browne – Member	✓	
Mark Silm – Member	✓	
Chris Keanelly – Member ????	✓	



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Agenda Items		Notes	Actions
	Acknowledgement of Country	Meeting commence at 6.00pm with Acknowledgement of Country	
	Disclosure of Interests	Nil	
	Attendance and Apologies	Mayor Matt Gould	
	Minutes from Previous meeting	Carried - Vince Secunder - John	
<i>Workshop</i>			
5.1	Draft Updated Farmland Policy	<p>Andrew provided a presentation on the update to the Draft Farmland Policy.</p> <p>The Policy was discussed amongst members.</p> <p>The work so far is based on in-house research.</p> <p>Encouraged members to provide further feedback (in detail) separately. Cover high level points tonight.</p> <p>Feedback provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a number of terms in the policy are outdated. Need to clarify what type of animal in terms of references to 'number of head'. • It is Councils call on the category • Carrals – Not appropriate language. Suggested alternative – stock yards etc • Remove Dairy Industry Marketing Board – no longer exists 	<p><u>Action:</u> <i>Andrew will consider feedback from Committee</i></p> <p><u>Action:</u> <i>Andrew to arrange separate meeting with committee as a working group to collect feedback.</i></p> <p><u>Action:</u> <i>Notice of potential extraordinary meeting if there are significant changes to the policy that can be run through prior to exhibition.</i></p>

Agenda Items	Notes	Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agistment and cropping; suggested smaller than 20 could be useful. • Council noted that If it is reduced to anything further (say 5ha) the land size won't be large enough to carry the stock. • The AG members noted that the land will carry what its carrying capacity determines. in any given season. • No allowance for situations where there are two different agricultural enterprises operating on the one parcel of land, • Need to coordinate rating with Local Land Services • Need a supplementary feedlot definition. • 4.31 Crop growing. Noted that a farmer could rotate their crops and have a different type of crop that doesn't meet the criteria (market gardens). • Drought changes the whole aspect of how we farms are managed and should be reflected. • There needs to be more flexibility and a different way to pick up where there is agricultural activity that meets the requirements of the legislation. • Horticulture - It was clarified that some for of evidence of the sale will need to be provided in terms of units per annum or total sale. • It was clarified that there needs to be evidence that it has been wiped out and that infrastructure has been rebuilt (Natural Disaster). • AG noted that it can take years to bounce back, and there was some agreement to include some notation in terms of natural disasters. • Viability is a key issue. Wollondilly are trying to be productive from small areas of land. 	

Agenda Items		Notes	Actions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback will be collated and distributed to the group. 	
5.2	Rural Lands Registry of land available for lease or rent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposing a way to develop communication between land holders where under-utilised land can be leased by and maintained by someone else. Not sure on what the commercial arrangement would look like. There needs to be formal arrangements in place (this is where Council or LLS could assist) Used example, of rural land owner who moves into the area and the reality of managing stock/ or small landholdings results in no stock on the property (realisation that worming and tagging is required, during a drought that feed needs to be purchased). There are dams with water licences that are no longer being utilised. Example in the Murray, nearly every almond farm along the Murray lease their land. Temporary leases on the water. Discussion around the cost of land being too expensive in Wollondilly for new operations. Noted that there are other industries where businesses no longer own their properties. Proposal could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stock on a property Developers who don't want to maintain their property Someone looking to rent property along the river and grow horticulture How this would be established (LLS or Council) is not clear. It would need to be locally implemented. 	

Agenda Items		Notes	Actions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another issue to consider is farmland rating and earning an income off someone else's property. • Horticulture flagged as not viable for this as there is too much red tape and planning consent is required. • Noted there are two incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A reduction in rates ○ Land tax rules • Gherkin farm mentioned as an example of where this sort of model has been successful in Wollondilly. • There needs to be a long-term commitment due to the level of investment required. A minimum of 3 years was suggested. • The land would be left in a better state. 	<p><u>Action</u> <i>Discussion paper to be included on the agenda for the next meeting.</i></p>
<i>Briefings and Updates</i>			
6.1	Fire Arm Usage / Pest Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is currently a national fire arms amnesty. • It doesn't protect people 'found in possession' of an unregistered fire arm. • If you have a bush block or uninhabited farm. You cannot have firearms stored there. There are controls that need to be in place if there are fire arms stored on an uninhabited dwelling. Nothing has changed. • There is no minimum land size in terms of culling animals but it must be <u>rural</u>. You can't shoot in a residential area. • Acknowledged that Local Land Services have been of great assistance in this space for years. They also monitor the numbers. • Committee member has used them for controlling wild pigs. 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted that pigs, rabbits and kangaroos are destroying farm infrastructure (fencing, etc) Pigs are coming down from the Blue Mountains via the waterways. Myxomatosis for rabbits is not effective. Richard Stephens will need to look into what is the next step. DPI have recently announced that the Varroa mite bee parasite cannot be eradicated and have transitioned to 'management'. 	
6.2	Local Land Service	<p>Richard Stephens introduced himself and his role is the Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator.</p> <p>Distributed publications (hardcopies). For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property Planning Soil Workshop Managing drought Ten ways to increase soil carbon Building – for small farms <p>Richard encouraged AG members to be signed up to receive information distributed to the small farms network</p> <p>Resilience for farming discussed.</p> <p>Following concerns were noted by AG Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It takes too long to get money back from Government reprieve The paperwork is so long to justify it. the battle is the frustration and time. Council does not understand the reality of living on the land. Request that Council assist to streamline the services and that Council better advocate for farmers in Wollondilly noting droughts and floods. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Droughts don't get recognised. Floods are recognised quickly. • There was discussion around what role Council can fulfil (help- rather than assistance, don't have monetary resources other than rates) • Rural Assistance Authority- has a Rural Liaison Officer - Mathew Nicholson • There was a previous offer to speak at a Community Briefing. AG members requested Council to send Mathew an invitation to speak. • Noted the referral for discussion from the Economy SRG. • Feral animals are becoming out of control; major 4 are foxes, pigs, deer, and roos. • Hobby farmers are not doing anything about and the burden is on agricultural producers. • Biosecurity on individual farms is of no use when feral animals are out of control at a regional level.. • AG members requested for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ the reintroduction of Councils Agriculture Liaison Officer. ◦ Consideration of planners in Council recruitment that have some rural and agriculture knowledge. • Could be potential opportunity for a cadetship to work for Council. • SG noted a new team within Council that will have a focus on Rural industry and employment. • Fire ants are a current issue with carriers not checking their trucks before they cross the border. • This pest is causing significant financial damage in Queensland. 	<p><i>Action:</i> <i>Council to send Mathew Nicholson an invitation to speak at a community Forum</i></p> <p><i>Action</i> <i>Richard Stephens will raise fire ant education as part of LLS swag of districts.</i></p> <p><i>Action:</i> <i>Request SRG to consider recommending that Council write to State Government seeking funding</i></p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A request by AG members for LLS provide education on this pest? The importance of cleaning vehicles, the movement of feed. • Richard Stephens happy to raise this as part of LLS swag of districts. • Ag Members suggested roadside billboards in key major corridor locations for biosecurity and pest issues and suggesting advocating to the State Government to fund this. • Update on Varroa mite virus. Richard Stephens confirmed they have found some in Hawkesbury. Not aware that it has been found in the Wollondilly region. • The management practices are being redrafted as present. The approach is 'manage' and funding no longer available for 'eradicate' <p>- Based on the New Zealand experience, Pollination impact may be 3-5 years</p> <p>- There is potentially a greater impact in Australia as we don't have other insect pollinators.</p> <p>Recommendation that Richard Stephens be invited ... and a standing agenda item included.</p>	<p><i>and support for roadside billboards in key major corridor locations for biosecurity and pest issues</i></p> <p><i>Actions:</i> <i>SRG consider advice to Council to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>focus on resources to build resilience</i> • <i>Council reconsider reinstating /advocating for a rural liaison officer</i> • <i>Request for coordination/c entrualisation of information on Councils website. (for example, its really hard to find the farmland rating policy).</i>
General Business		

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7.1	Tiny Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the expectation that Council has for exempt development for tiny homes under the recent agritourism changes? What does this look like in Wollondilly? SG noted that Council are intending to develop some fact sheets in this space. Richard noted that he thought Wingecarribee had developed some fact sheets. 	<p><u>Action:</u> <i>Circulate some information before the next meeting about the Government Changes for agri tourism</i></p> <p><i>Council staff to contact John Fairley</i></p>
7.2	Horticulture permissible without DA requirement where is it at and when it is to be implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still progressing in the background. Noted that there have been some issues that have needed to be resolved in terms of the interaction of legislation with the aerotropolis and SEPP. A short list of criteria has been drafted to be workshopped. Once a framework has been drafted, we then need to go through the formal process to change the legislation. Timeframe; workshops to happen this year. Planning proposal won't be progressed until next year. Implications from SEPP on agriculture in the northern part of the shire discussed. Mark to circulate dates for workshop prior to the next meeting to provide a timeline for progressing the project up to planning proposal stage. 	<p><u>Action:</u> <i>Workshop (Extraordinary meeting) to be held in November</i></p>
7.3	Rural Viability Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted for delivery this year but is unfunded. Committee could consider recommending to Council to fund this work in the next financial year. 	<p><u>Action:</u> <i>Item to be kept on next meeting</i></p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A request by AG members to understand what it is and why it is needed. A summary sheet will be circulated for next meeting. Brief background provided. In light of the earlier briefing, one member noted that the farmland rating policy was related to this. To be kept on the Agenda for the next meeting. 	<p><i>Action</i> <i>Rural Viability Study and briefing note to be tabled for next meeting</i></p>
7.4	Rural Road Side Drainage Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted that the Mayor has pushed to improve roadside drainage so it doesn't undermine the road surface. Noted challenges with EPA requirements 	<p><i>Action:</i> <i>Circulate report on this topic and advocacy to EPA to use spoil at our tips.</i></p>
7.5	Acknowledgement of Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledgment of Country and what meetings is it carried out was discussed. SG noted that Council was looking into its procedure, and when it is appropriate to acknowledge. 	
		Meeting finish: 8.40pm	