

Questions Submitted in Writing – Council Meeting – 23 March 2022

James Judd, Colac

1. **Why did the Colac Otway Shire Council roll out the purple lid glass only bin when instructions on what is allowed in this bin includes items prohibited from being made of glass for many decades in this country yet items of glass in general use glass milk bottles excluded? We do have some milk outlets only using glass milk bottles and refusing to use plastic milk bottles. The only way to find some bottles mentioned as glass is from private bottle collections of many years ago, or, from contents of long unused tips. Beer bottles ceased to be glass before stubbies were introduced. Also, the product they are manufactured from has qualities glass never had. There were very many hospital, police and court reports on the shocking injuries inflicted on people before glass only was outlawed from being used to produce beer bottles.**

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Council has commenced separate collection of glass recycling for two reasons:

- Firstly, it is a stage Government Direction to do so.
- And secondly, this will be better for the environment because other recycling resources will not be contaminated by the glass.

2. **Since the Colac Otway Shire Council has claimed it has no back-up for the solar panels at the Bluewater complex in Colac, how is it going to keep heating water used in the hydrotherapy pool when it reduces gas use at this site? As Council had promised the community that this pool would be available it is unacceptable if a guaranteed service is cut so Council can make other savings plus reduce services required for the communities health.**

Response from General Manager Development and Community Services

All water heating equipment at Bluewater is currently gas operated. If electricity was required in the future for heating of the pools, this would be provided from solar or mains power supply.

3. **What portion of the time the Bluewater complex in Colac was open for in February 2022 was taken by public use and what portion was closed to the general public so other groups could use the facilities? Plus, what portion of the power requirements at Bluewater is now being provided by the solar panels at the site? Also, will opening hours be again be reduced as daylight hours reduce so the hours solar panels will work is reduced when it is also proposed to reduce the amount of gas being used at this site to provide some heating service.**

Response from General Manager Development and Community Services

Bluewater facility open times and availability can be viewed on the Bluewater website. In some instances, the facility is utilised exclusively by specific groups for community purposes (for example, school swimming, basketball tournament etc.) where general community access is limited. However, for the vast majority of the time, the facility is open to the general public.

As previously stated by Council, Bluewater is not reliant on solar panels for power, so daylight savings will have no impact on centre opening times.

4. During the past two months has the Colac Otway Shire Council done any major drainage upgrade works in this Shire? If so what were the locations of these works? The residents of this Shire have been kept in the dark about regular works by this Council for many years now since Council ceased including the CEO's report in all monthly Council meeting agendas.

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Council has undertaken a major drainage project this year being the Bass Crescent outfall in Skenes Creek. These works were identified as a priority to help control coastal erosion and ensure the protection of the Great Ocean Road.

5. Of the Colac Otway Shire Council's long term development plans, how does it rate the following if to be done as all of these are on Council books:

(a) Extension of the centre strip on Murray Street down to Armstrong Street

(b) Provision of usable open space and playing fields prior to 2050 to meet requirements under the Colac 2050 Growth Plan

(c) Upgrade of all drainage systems so they are fully usable prior to areas opened up under the Colac 2050 Growth Plan as soon as development authorised

Plus, has Council yet taken into account warning from official circles that once in 100 year storms and floods will be far more dangerous and frequent in future years? This is going to mean far more money will have to be spent every year to upgrade all drainage systems in urban areas of this Shire?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Council takes all of these issues very seriously. The upgrade of Murray Street west of Corangamite Street will rely on future Government funding support.

On an ongoing basis, Council works with developers to identify opportunities to set aside land for open space or payment-in-lieu of land for our community's future open space needs.

Drainage upgrades are required to be provided in newly developed areas under planning permit conditions as they occur, and Council continues to invest funds annually to renew and improve existing drainage assets in accordance with the adopted Stormwater Management Strategy for Colac as funding allows. Planning and design of drainage infrastructure takes into account anticipated climate change impacts.

Mary Dracup, Forrest

1. COS is one of very few councils still outside the greenhouse alliance system, leaving us outside many opportunities that such alliances offer. (G21 is not going to operate as a greenhouse alliance.) Is COS going to take up the invitation to become a member of the Barwon South West Climate Alliance?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

The Barwon South West Climate Alliance was officially formed and incorporated in late October 2021. The Barwon South West Climate Alliance indicated that formal invitations to become a member for the 2022-23 Financial Year will be sent prior to the end of the financial year and we anticipate that Council will consider this invitation at a future Council Meeting.

Jeff Cooke, Colac

1. In the Council minutes of the April 2021 meeting it was stated that:
"Council can reduce the residual emissions, (Gas 466 and Fleet 1,333) further in the future through the electrification of fleet and the exploration of alternatives to mains gas, however these upgrades will take time

and additional investment to implement. Accordingly, to achieve Carbon Neutrality Council needs to invest in an ongoing carbon-offsetting program.”

Given that the residual emissions for gas usage and fleet operation total 1799 tonnes (CO₂ –e) can Council show us where the evidence is as of how it has used carbon off sets to reduce these to zero so as to claim its carbon neutral status.”

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Council undertakes a corporate carbon emissions inventory each year, after the close of the financial year. The most recent results were made publicly available when Council published its Annual Report 2020-21 in November 2021. As part of Council’s carbon neutral claim for 2021, Council is currently in the final stages of completing an emissions inventory verification according to national standards. Once the verification is finalised the offsets will be purchased through an appropriately accredited and certified revegetation-based offset scheme. It is anticipated that the required offsets will be purchased by the end of April 2022.

2. In the Annual Report 2020-21 on page 18 it is stated that:

“Working closely with the Project Delivery and Bluewater teams, the Environment Team have provided significant project guidance and technical advice, promoting the advantages of highly efficient electric heat pumps as an alternative to the current gas boilers and in April 2021 allocated funds to undertake this energy efficiency and emissions reduction upgrade. “

Approval of these funds of \$150,000 was made at the Council meeting of the 28th April 2021 by unanimous vote. How is it that the gas boilers, which account for 13% of the Shire’s operational emissions, have not been replaced, and, when will this occur?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

The high efficiency gas boilers were installed as part of the Bluewater redevelopment in 2015-16 and they still have 5-10 years of useful operational life before they would be due for replacement. The heat pumps are a separate project and Council officers are currently working through some feasibility issues with that project.

Rosamund Longmore, Colac

1. I appreciate that Council is currently developing the Environment Strategy, and I would like to know what is the likely date for the community to view the draft of that strategy?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Council officers recently completed a comprehensive review of Council’s current Environment Strategy 2010-2018. The Review Report was presented to Council in early February 2022 and made publicly available on Council’s website shortly after. Officers are currently planning the development of Council’s new Environment Strategy which will include community engagement and consultation prior to and also after the development of the new Draft Environment Strategy, in line with Council’s Community Engagement Policy. Community engagement opportunities will commence in May 2022 and will be widely advertised to ensure wide reaching and meaningful consultation as the new strategy is developed.

2. Can Council assure the community that an explicit Climate Change Action Plan will be produced by mid 2022 as previously stated?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Council officers are currently reviewing the timeline set by the Council Plan for the delivery of Council’s Climate Change Action Plan within available resources, as it is unlikely that the Climate Change Action Plan will be delivered by mid-2022 as this timeline does not provide adequate time to undertake the required community consultation in line with Council’s Community Engagement Policy.