

Questions Submitted in Writing – Council Meeting – 27 April 2022

Jan Ratcliff, Forrest

1. **The latest IPCC report makes it clear that we urgently need to reduce carbon emissions to avoid catastrophic effects of global warming. One way to do this is to electrify everything, including cars.**

The council buys cars regularly. Will it buy EVs whenever possible from now on and if not, why not?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Council is committed to reducing emissions and is committed to the reduction in the use of fossil fuels. Pool vehicles at present consist of Hybrid and Plug in Hybrid.

Council has moved to a position of introducing more hybrid vehicles in the fleet to reduce emissions with the view of introducing electric vehicles in the near future with the advent of better vehicle battery life and more charging infrastructure.

Vehicle supply times at present are lengthy due to global issues and we hope that normalises in the next 12 months.

James Judd, Colac

1. **Since the Colac Otway Shire Council has claimed it only has a 10 year warranty on some solar panels put in by Council, plus these will have to be replaced prior to the warranty expiring, when will Council be faced with a bill to replace them since some of these panels were put in years ago and will soon need replacing even though Council had claimed these had a 40 year life span prior to the 10 year admission and claim they would have to be replaced prior to the warranty expiring?**

Response from General Manager, Environment and Infrastructure

As stated at the December 2021 Council Meeting, all solar panels and inverters installed by Council have a 10 year product and workmanship warranty at minimum with a 10 year power output warranty based on 90% of warranted minimum power and 25 years at 80% of warranted minimum power. While under warranty if any component is faulty it is replaced under warranty at no cost to Council. After the warranty expires any fault or replacement costs are born by Council as the asset owner just like many other electrical infrastructure such as generators, air conditioning and ventilation systems and hot water services. Council's solar photovoltaic systems including the solar panels, inverters and mounting system undergo an annual electrical safety and maintenance check as well as cleaning to ensure safe and optimum system performance during and after the warranty period.

2. **If the Colac Otway Shire Council is to do away with the 15.1 Committees of Management of the drainage systems please promptly advise all in the community how and to what section of Council any matter relating to the drainage system must be reported to? Now the Council is promoting "The Colac 2050 Growth Plan" that calls for an increased population, far more people will be around to notice any defects in the drainage system. Plus a recent official report made the claim once in 100 year storms and floods will be far worse and more frequent in future years. We must know how to report matters that need urgent action on.**

Response from General Manager, Environment and Infrastructure

Issues relating to Council's drainage system can be reported to Council or by phoning 5232 9400. Depending on the nature of the issue, the request will be referred to the relevant department of Council for further investigation or maintenance.

Ms Nagorcka-Smith, Birregurra

Council advised 25/8/21 that they couldn't fly a rainbow flag for IDAHOBIT Day, but that the issue may be considered when the flag protocol policy was reviewed. What are Council's timelines for reviewing this policy, and will you consult the community? Do you have other plans to mark IDAHOBIT Day?

Response from General Manager Corporate Services

Unfortunately due to increased priorities during Council's response to COVID-19, the Flag Protocol Policy has not yet been reviewed. It is anticipated that the review will be undertaken this calendar year and will include a consideration of the flying of flags outside of the current protocols. Community consultation will be undertaken. Council has a number of activities planned to celebrate IDAHOBIT day including a staff afternoon tea, the distribution of rainbow lanyards for employees and the promotion of gender pro-nouns on email signatures.

Belinda Conning, Apollo Bay

Re: GORCAPA development proposed for the hillside adjacent to Gambier St

How will Council manage problems associated with the parking requirement for extra cars along Gambier Street in peak periods, when there is already narrow access for local cars and pedestrians? - How will the local koala population be impacted, as koalas are now listed as a 'vulnerable' species?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Expanding car parking in this area is not something Council is currently considering and as a result it is not thought that koalas will be impacted as a result of the proposal.

John and Marlene Verey, Apollo Bay

Re: Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve, Camping Upgrade and Expansion

- 1. Has Council been consulted by GORCAPA and does Council intend to issue notifications and offers for community consultation?**

Response from General Manager Development and Community Services

Both the Camping Uplift project and the Recreation Reserve Masterplan project are being led by the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, and that includes all elements of community consultation. Council, as a project stakeholder, is committed to working closely with both the Authority and the community on these projects.

- 2. Will Council push for a fully-developed master plan to be created prior to commencement of works?**

Response from General Manager Development and Community Services

Whilst it would have been beneficial to complete the masterplan for the recreation reserve prior to the Camping Uplift project, there is still scope for Council to work with the Authority and community to achieve good outcomes through the upcoming mater planning process. The Authority has confirmed that it is commencing work on the Masterplan in coming weeks, and that the project will involve broad community engagement.

Ms Harris, Apollo Bay

If Councillors again vote tonight to reject the opportunities that membership of the Barwon South West Climate Alliance could bring to the Shire, what other sources of expert staffing, lobbying and funding will Council access in order to take the urgent actions needed on climate change?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Council will continue to find opportunities to work together with other Local governments, state and federal government agencies and community groups to take action on climate change, continue to reduce carbon emissions and apply for funding on a project by project basis.

This matter will be discussed by Councillors at today's meeting.

Prabha Kutty, Colac

The proposed Governance Rules, that Councillors are to consider at this meeting, retains provisions stating that the public are not to direct questions at individual councillors, and from my experience not even through the Chair.

While there may be some merit in the view that council decisions are made collectively and not individually, questions to Councillors could relate to matters other than Council decisions.

From my understanding Councillors at Geelong City Council meetings are asked questions by the public and do personally respond to them. Further in our federal parliament the PM and his Ministers have questions put to them directly by the people's representatives, which they then answer.

So, what is the reasoning behind this undemocratic rule that prevents the public from directly communicating with their councillors at our Council meetings?

Also, it would be of interest to know, through the Chair of course, whether any Councillor has objections to the public asking them questions that are respectfully put and relevant to their role at Council?

Response from Manager Governance and Communications

Questions should not be directed to individual Councillors, but to the collective Council group. Formal Council meetings are not the forum for members of the public to question individual Councillors about their decisions or individual opinions and/or reasons for them.

The contact details of all individual Councillors are publicly available and people are encouraged to contact individual Councillors directly if they want to discuss any matter.

David Brown, Apollo Bay

1. The carbon neutral status of Colac Otway Shire operations

At the Council Meeting 23 March 2022, in response to a question regarding the COS claim for its carbon neutral status in 2021, the General Manager Environment and Infrastructure said the Council was 'still completing its emissions inventory and that following that report further offsets would be purchased to account for the remaining emissions and those offsets would be purchased by the end of April 2022'.

Given this response from the General Manager, it is clear that the Colac Otway Shire did not achieve its publicly stated objective of being carbon neutral by 2020 and was not, despite public Council boasts to the contrary, carbon neutral in 2021 ... and was in fact still not carbon neutral at the end of March 2022.

Accordingly, will the Council:

(1) publicly withdraw its untrue and misleading claim that has achieved carbon neutral status in its operations?

(2) publicly announce the new objective (year date) for when it will actually achieve carbon neutral status in its operations?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

(1) Council is committed to its Carbon Neutral claim for the 2021-2022 financial year. Emissions inventories and their verification is always retrospective and Council is currently finalising the verification work to national carbon neutral standards and will be purchasing the required revegetation based offsets shortly.

(2) Council intends and committed to maintaining its Carbon neutral status for 2021-2022 and beyond.

2. Outcomes of the Colac Otway Shire carbon emissions audit

Following the General Manager Environment and Infrastructure's advice of 23 March (above), as at 27 April:

(1) what are the findings of the Council's 'emissions inventory verification'?

(2) what is the extent of residual Council emissions (tonnes) that still need to be offset to support the COS claim for carbon neutrality?

(3) where, with whom and at what cost have those offsets been purchased?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

As previously stated, as part of Council's carbon neutral claim for 2020-2021, 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.

Tim Cobb, Skenes Creek

In 2021/2 the average residential rate in Colac/Elliminyt was \$1285. The average in the balance of the Shire was 17% higher at \$1511. The rating strategy and budget proposed by Council Officers would see 2022/3 Colac/Elliminyt average residential rate unchanged.

In 2022/3 Balance of Shire residential rates are budgeted to increase by another 7.8% on average to \$1630. That is \$345 per household more - 27% higher than Colac/Elliminyt.

(All figures sourced from Agenda P157.)

1. Will Councillors support average household rates in the Balance of Shire being 27% higher than in Colac/Elliminyt as ratepayers are already acutely aware of the significantly lower level of services provided outside Colac/Elliminyt.

Response from General Manager Corporate Services

Rates are a property tax based on the valuation of the property. A fundamental premise of rating is that higher valued properties pay higher rates. The 2022 valuations for the “Residential-Balance of Shire” category increased by an average of \$183,414 compared to \$91,663 for properties in “Residential-Colac Elliminyt” category (being a difference of 100%). As a result, the average valuation in the “Residential-Balance of Shire” category became \$671,111 compared to \$449,169 in the Colac/Elliminyt category (being a difference of 49.4%).

Given the extent of the valuation increases, the only way to mitigate rates increases for the “Residential-Balance of Shire” category would have been to shift the burden to other categories, regardless of the fact their valuations did not increase as much. This was considered to be unfair, given Colac was identified as having a significantly greater level of economic disadvantage than all other areas of the shire and that the “Commercial” and “Holiday Rental” categories had been particularly affected by the effects of COVID.

- 2. Do Councillors think that reducing the rating strategy % for residential Balance of Shire to 80% would 'share the pain' more appropriately or will they vote for the proposed extra burden of \$800k on Balance of Shire residential ratepayers - paying for ALL the overall COS spending increase plus rate reductions for many other ratepayers.**

Response from General Manager Corporate Services

In 2022-23, the “Residential-Balance of Shire” category will contribute 33% of the total rates revenue from 35.3% of the total valuations. In contrast, the “Residential-Colac/Elliminyt” category will contribute 28% of the total rates revenue from 25.5% for the total valuations.

The “Residential- Balance of Shire” category therefore has a slightly more advantageous comparative ratio than “Colac/Elliminyt”.

The proportion of rates to valuation is therefore considered to be fair and equitable. As mentioned above, it was considered *unfair* to shift the rates burden to other categories, such as “Residential – Colac/Elliminyt”.

Mr Dunsmuir, Apollo Bay

I'd like to ask the Council what the Shire's response is to the proposed extension to camping sites that are at the top of the Recreation Reserve Hill, with frontage to Gambier Street, Apollo Bay.

- 1. How will the Shire manage the extra traffic that will travel along Gambier Street, Cartwright Street, and Noel Street, Apollo Bay as a result of a new road entrance from Gambier Street to access proposed camping and glamping sites on ‘the hill’ of the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve?**

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority has been in discussions with Council regarding potential development at the Recreation Reserve, in particular on the land abutting Gambier Street. These discussions are ongoing and have included potential traffic and road infrastructure impacts.

- 2. How will the Shire ensure pedestrian safety in these streets as there are currently no footpaths in these streets, meaning that pedestrians (with children and dogs) routinely walk on these roads?**

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority has been in discussions with Council regarding potential development at the Recreation Reserve, in particular on the land abutting Gambier Street. These discussions are ongoing and pedestrian safety will be a key factor in any works to support any development at this site.

Mr/s Rees, Apollo Bay

Gambier Street in Apollo Bay has no footpaths and is narrow with open drains along the verge. How will Council ensure the safety of vehicle and pedestrian traffic if GORCAPA uses Gambier St for entry, exit and overflow parking for the intended hillside camping expansion at the Recreation Reserve?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority has been in discussions with Council regarding potential development at the Recreation Reserve, in particular on the land abutting Gambier Street. As stated previously, pedestrian safety will be a key factor in any works to support any development at this site.

Mr/s Birkett

GORCAPA intends to convert public land, designated for recreation, into expanded tourist accommodation at the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve. Will Council support the Apollo Bay community's right to full and proper consultation on this proposal prior to any works being undertaken?

Response from General Manager Development and Community Services

Council understands that the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority continues to undertake consultation with the community on the Camping Uplift project. Council supports the need for consultation with the broader Apollo Bay and district community, and the Authority has confirmed that the masterplan project will involve broad community engagement.

Matthew Gilchrist, Apollo Bay

With a new road access to the Apollo Bay Caravan Park off Gambier Street planned under the GORCAPA Camping Uplift project, what is the councils plan to address to lack of existing kerbing and channelling and footpaths, that will be required to support the extra vehicle and foot traffic, additional street parking for Campers, and appropriate footpaths.

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority has been in discussions with Council regarding potential development at the Recreation Reserve, in particular on the land abutting Gambier Street. As stated previously, pedestrian safety, parking and traffic management will key factors in any works to support any development at this site.

Ms Carty, Apollo Bay

Have council received notification that the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) intend to relocate the Pony Club, skate park and playground from their current locations in Apollo Bay? If so what alternative venue has been proposed, who will pay the cost of the relocation and what community consultation will occur prior to any decision being made?

Given the lack of community consultation GORCAPA have undertaken in regard to the Apollo Bay Camping Uplift project, many residents are extremely concerned that these valued community facilities will be relocated with no community consultation.

Response from General Manager Development and Community Services

Council is not aware of any short-term plan by the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority to move the pony club, skate park or playground from their current locations. If in the future any of these were to be proposed for another location, this would require community consultation.

Ms Longmore, Climate Action Team

United Nations Secretary-General Guterres recently warned that the world needs to triple the speed of a shift to renewable energy to avoid environmental catastrophe.

In light of current and worsening impacts of climate change, immediate leadership from Council, such as timely purchase of electric vehicles, and facilitating increased rooftop solar energy across the shire, would assist in boosting the community's confidence that meaningful emissions reductions can be made.

Given Council's response to a question at the April 20th meeting, the community can assume we will not see a Climate Change Action Plan this year.

My question is: what actions will Council take in the meantime to reduce greenhouse emissions here?

Response from General Manager Environment and Infrastructure

Council's commitment to reducing greenhouse emissions is demonstrated by the more than 65% reduction in its own direct corporate emissions over the last ten years. Council continues to explore, investigate and seek funding for greenhouse emission reduction projects and opportunities and supports local community sustainability and environment groups with their projects.

Mr Curry, Camberwell

- 1. Why is a proposal for new camping facilities being considered by the Council in conjunction with Great Ocean Road Authority, when the present camping facilities at the recreational reserve are dilapidated and need much renewal and maintenance?**

Response from General Manager Development and Community Services

The Camping Uplift project is being led by the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, not Council. Council understands that one of the key aims of the project is to improve the condition of existing camping facilities including amenities, kitchens and play facilities.

- 2. Why has there been no general public consultation with ratepayers in Apollo Bay concerning the proposal to develop land in Gambier Street Apollo Bay for camping purposes in conjunction with the Great Ocean Road Authority?**

Response from General Manager Development and Community Services

The Camping Uplift Project is being led by the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority. The Authority is responsible for leading the community engagement components of this project. Council understands that the Authority continues to undertake consultation with the community on the project.