

MERRIWA DISTRICT PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

MEETING



AGENDA

WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2022

Venue: Squatters' Corner, Merriwa RSL Club

Scheduled to Commence: 6:00 PM

Chair: Stephen Gowlland, President

Attendance: (Members and guests)

Apologies:

Special Item:

1. Non-members' Privileges

There has been an issue raised about the privileges of non-members (that is, parties who attend MDPA meetings as observers). Our meetings are open to the general public to attend, but only financial members should be entitled to vote on motions and receive an Agenda and Minutes of our meetings.

Minutes of Previous meeting:

Are the draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 December 2021 an accurate record of that meeting?

Ongoing Business Matters:

2. Reverse Vending Machine

With a very big thank-you to John and Cheryl Dallimore and businesses in Merriwa, Cassilis and Sandy Hollow, we have been collecting signatures on a Petition to be presented to State Member David Layzell, who will present it to TOMRA in a bid to convince them to install a RVM in Merriwa. To date we have collected over 650 signatures, which shows the proposal has a high level of local support. John and Cheryl occupied a stall at the Merriwa Pharmacy (thanks to Rob Smith for his assistance) on 28 January, 4 and 11 February.



We also located signing boards in: Merriwa Pharmacy; IGA Merriwa; Home Hardware; Merriwa Newsagency; Merriwa Post Office; Merriwa RSL Club; Eat@153; Royal Hotel, Cassilis; Cassilis Bowling Club; Cassilis Post Office; and Tourist Hotel, Sandy Hollow. A big thank-you to all those businesses for their cooperation.

3. Wool Processing Plant

There have been few developments in regard to the proposed wool processing plant. We are still awaiting advice from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment in regard to our 'Expression of Interest' for grant funding of \$6,600 for a feasibility study.

Meantime, we have been in contact with Jimmy Jackson for his advice whether his feasibility study is still necessary following advice of an Australia-wide feasibility study to be commissioned by Wool Producers Australia with a \$662,000 grant from the Federal Government.



Wool Producers Australia has called tenders for organisations to carry out the study entitled *Ensuring a Sustainable Australian Wool Industry Through Market Diversification and Risk Management*, which is scheduled for completion by 30 September 2022. The two primary aims of the study are:

- Economic analysis of early-stage domestic wool processing in Australia
- Assess opportunities to develop and / or enhance early-stage processing capacity in diversified onshore and offshore locations.

We have been in discussions with Adam Dawes, General Manager of Wool Producers Australia, expressing our interest in establishing a wool processing plant in Merriwa. He advised of similar interest from Blackall in Queensland and two locations in Victoria.

4. Clean-Up Australia Day

In response to our letter to the Upper Hunter Shire Council to resume responsibility for organising Clean-Up Australia Day in Merriwa, Council has advertised on their Facebook page for community groups to assume that responsibility. We are advised that Council supplies interested groups with gloves, bags, etc for use on the day. A copy of their Facebook entry appears below.

<p> Upper Hunter Shire Council January 18 at 12:11 PM · 🌐</p> <p>With Clean up Australia Day coming up on March 6 we're calling on community members and groups to take part to help keep Australia clean.</p> <p>If you're a community group, individual, business or school and would like to #StepUpToCleanUp then follow the link below to register a clean up event.</p> <p>https://www.cleanup.org.au/register</p> <p>Those who register will be sent a free starter kit that contains bags, gloves and everything you need to create a safe, fun and effective Clean Up.</p>	
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5. Merriwa Tourism and Promotion Committee

In response to a letter to Council, with a copy emailed to all new Councillors, promoting the idea of community group representation on the MTPC, Maurice Collison responded, saying "I will discuss both your emails with the GM next week and try and work out a way forward re your suggestions" Also, Ron Campbell responded with "Your suggestion of representatives from all of the little committees is a common sense approach which I have long supported and will advocate. There is so much that can be achieved by working together, we all want the best for Merriwa, coming from different angles to achieve the best result."

At Council's meeting on 31 January 2022, it was resolved to:

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| <p>5. review the current Section 355/Advisory Committee Structure with a draft proposal to be presented to Councillors in February 2022.</p> |
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Councillor Liz Flaherty has called for public opinion on the formation of a) Town-Based Committees and b) a Roads Committee.

Town-based committees

To give better voice to each town in the Shire it is proposed that each major town have it's own Council committee, which I think is a great idea. There are specific issues for each town and town-based committees will mean those issues can be given the time and focus they deserve.

Roads Committee

I've also proposed a specific roads committee. My thinking is that it is consistently the number one issue that is raised by residents across the Shire and a dedicated Roads Committee could have a representative from each major town/village to represent the interests of their town/village and work collaboratively to fairly understand the needs across the whole Shire. While the budget for roads can't be changed at this point, if we start the committee now, by the time budget is being allocated again, the committee could be up to speed with the issues, constraints and opportunities for roads and be in an informed position to give Council practical advice.

So far, Council has not made any proposed details public. It will be up to Councillors to vote on this proposal at the February Council meeting.

6. Under-Tree Lighting for CBD

We wrote to Council on 15 January 2022 suggesting the installation of under-tree lighting in parts of the Merriwa CBD. A copy of the letter was also emailed to all Councillors. In response to this letter, Maurice Collison replied with "This is something that could be considered in the Delivery Program & Operation Plan, along with some grant funding happy to discuss."

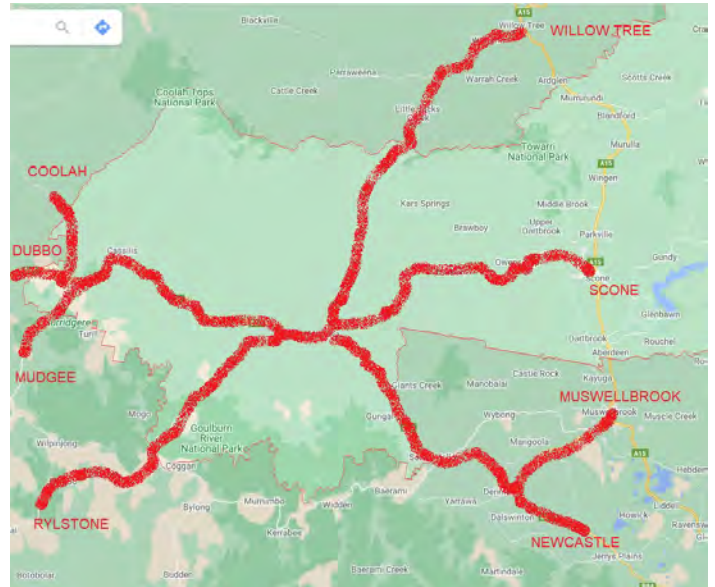
To date, this matter has not appeared on a Council meeting Agenda, nor have we had any feedback from Council.

7. Merriwa As a Transport Hub

At our last meeting it was proposed that we promote the sealing of the Ringwood Road / Wollar Road to improve the route from Merriwa to Rylstone and Mudgee. The map illustrates how Merriwa can be considered a 'hub' of regional roads.

It was agreed to write to Barnaby Joyce asking for funding for this road to be improved. However, the Upper Hunter Shire Council should also be included in this proposal. As it links up with the Mid-Western Regional Council, their concurrence would also be beneficial.

At the Councillor Candidates Forum, Maurice Collison said a condition of consent for approval of the Goulburn River Solar Farm Project would be to seal the Wollar Road. The current status of this development application is unknown.

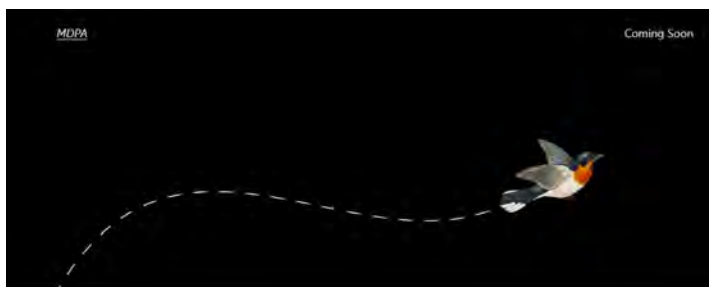


8. MDPA Website

Thanks to Liz Griffiths there is now some preliminary content on the MDPA website at: <https://www.mdpa.org.au/> as shown here.

Although we have draft plans for pages containing the following, suggestions from members are very welcome.

- Who We Are
- Press Releases
- Projects
- Publications
- Contact Us



Merriwa District Progress Association

Coming soon - Merriwa District Progress Association website.

9. Heavy Vehicle Bypass (Counting heavy vehicle movements)

At the meeting on 29 October 2021 in Scone that Col and Steve attended with UHSC and Transport NSW, Jeff Bush (Council's Assets Manager) agreed to install a traffic counter at the bridge over the Merriwa River. This device is intended to count all heavy vehicles travelling through Merriwa instead of just those that pass under the traffic counter on the Wappinguy hill. As this has not yet occurred, Jeff was prompted on 1 February 2022 and said he would try to get it in place.

10. Traffic Speed Through Merriwa

On 1 February 2022, Jeff Bush was also asked when the speed radar board would next be deployed to Merriwa. He said he would investigate and advise us.

11. Destination Management Plan

To our knowledge, the Upper Hunter Country Tourism has not yet met to discuss implementation of the Destination Management Plan.

12. Pedestrian Crossing Lighting - Vennacher St Between Royal Hotel and Regional Australia Bank

Great news! We have received a Council letter via David Layzell's office that advises:

I can confirm that there is an allocation for these works in Council's 2021/2022 Delivery Program and Operational Plan (DPOP).

This project is currently in the planning phase and quotes for the works are being sought. Some difficulty has been encountered due to the location of the lighting and the requirement to access electricity (a solar solution was explored, however this was found to be an inappropriate solution).

Council projects these works to be completed by June 2022.

We have thanked David Layzell for the part he played in expediting the delivery of this project. We first raised the matter with Council on 9 July 2018.

13. Bridge Railings

We have asked Transport NSW for an update on the likely timing of replacing the railings on the bridge over the Merriwa River. After consulting with their Network and Assets Maintenance Team it has been confirmed that replacement of the railing is preferred to painting, but that this would not occur for another three to five years due to funding availability.

14. Reduced Speed Limit - Eastern Approach to Merriwa

We have asked Council's Traffic Officer for an update on this matter.

15. Water Restrictions

In November 2020, we lobbied Council to lift the Level 1 water restrictions for the towns of Merriwa and Cassilis, as we showed there was no shortage of potable water through the town's reticulation system. At Council's meeting on 31 January 2022, it was recommended:

That Council remove all water restrictions across the Upper Hunter Shire Council area, effective from Monday, 7 February 2022, noting Water Wise Rules will remain in place.

However, Council:

RESOLVED That Council remain on Level 1 water restrictions until the Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan (DMERP) is created and Council is informed on its impact.

16. Any other ongoing business matters.

Correspondence:

[NOTE: Items of incoming or outgoing correspondence can be viewed by members upon request.]

INCOMING

Elizabeth Flaherty - Email re doctor shortage

OUTGOING

- Regional Australia Bank - Thanks for donation
- UHSC - Merriwa Tourism & Promotion Committee Membership
- UHSC - Under-Tree Lighting for Merriwa CBD
- Merriwa RSL Club - Booking meeting venues for 2022
- EPA, Director Container Deposit Scheme - (Email) Help with TOMRA
- Tony Proust - (Email) Rejecting proposal for Rail Trail
- UHSC (Councillors - Email re Doctor Shortage

Treasurer's Report:

	CR	DB	BAL
b/f			\$2,620.00
Subscriptions	\$40.00		
RSL Finger Food - December meeting		\$150.00	
Register MDPA website/s		\$70.00	
Post Office box rental		\$49.00	
c/f			\$2,391.00

This meeting is the cut-off for members to pay their \$5.00 annual subscriptions to remain on the mailing list. New members are welcome to join at any time, and members can pay their subs at any time to rejoin the mailing list.

General (New) Business:

17. Merriwa Ringer / Newsletter

Regrettably, the likely future of a printed publication (The Ringer) appears doubtful. The small number of volunteers that formed a steering group have stumbled on hurdles such as incorporation, content, editing, production, advertising, etc. There is a shortfall in likely sponsorship and production crew. Emma Sparrow has been doing a great job attempting to resuscitate The Ringer, but needs a lot more support. There was a meeting planned for Thursday 10 February, but the outcome of this meeting is not yet known.

18. Brainstorming 2019

In 2019, members conducted a 'brainstorming' activity to identify matters of interest to the Association. The table below lists those matters in order of priority determined at the time. It may be timely to revisit this list to review any progress on the matters and to review the list.

PRIORITY	PROPOSAL
1	Transport around and into town for seniors
1	After hours doctors
2	Promote tourism in Merriwa
2	Improve reliability of electricity supply to Merriwa
2	Introduce a receiving machine to recycle cans, bottles, etc
2	Reduce odours from livestock trucks passing through CBD
2	Incorporate attractive designs in new footpaths
2	Independent living
2	Better disabled access (eg: footpaths, ramps, etc)
3	Erect flagpoles supporting banners promoting various seasonal themes in the main street
3	More seats in the main street
3	Assistance to communicate with organisations
4	'Fast-charging' bowsers for electric cars
4	More entertainment and/or activities for seniors
4	Heated swimming pool
5	Erect a statue to an important / local identity
5	Introduce live or piped music broadcast in CBD areas

Consideration should be given to holding a public forum for ratepayers and residents in the western portion of the Upper Hunter Shire to gather a list of suggestions for maintenance and improvement of infrastructure and services in the Shire. The list of suggestions could be provided to Council in March or April with a recommendation to include funding for priority projects in the 2022 DPOP (Draft Delivery Program 2022/2023 - 2026/2027 & Operational Plan 2022/2023).

19. Doctor Shortages

Published in the Agenda for Council's ordinary meeting on 31 January 2022 was a motion:

That Council write to The Hon. David Layzell MP to request NSW Health ensure there is continuity of visiting medical officer (VMO) coverage at the Scott Memorial Hospital during the Christmas – New Year period.

This motion appeared to completely ignore the ongoing doctor shortage in Merriwa. So, we emailed all Councillors pointing out the current situation in Merriwa, attaching a copy of the letter we sent to David Layzell and Barnaby Joyce on this matter. We asked that any representations to Hunter New England Health regarding doctor shortages in the Shire also include Merriwa.

In response to this email, we had a very encouraging response from Elizabeth Flaherty (who initiated the motion). It read in part:

Since putting this motion on the agenda, I've also had feedback from constituents in Murrurundi ...

It would be good to have a better understanding of the broader issues at play in Murrurundi and Merriwa with VMO service provision. As while the Scone situation was temporary and hopefully easy to remedy, it seems the situation in Merriwa and Murrurundi are more complex and deserves more focus from the community and state government to explore solutions.

Previously Council has been very active in attracting and retaining GPs in Scone, with the development of the SMP building and ensuring there is accommodation available for doctors in Scone and perhaps we need to assess how Council may be able to assist the communities of Merriwa and Murrurundi.

At the Council meeting it was:

RESOLVED That Council write to The Hon David Layzell MP to request NSW Health ensure there is continuity of visiting medical officer (VMO) coverage at all hospitals in the Upper Hunter Shire Hospitals during the Christmas – New Year period.

This is very disappointing because the doctor shortage exists in Merriwa all year long, not just at Christmas time. After the meeting, we received a further email from Elizabeth Flaherty that said:

We amended the motion last night for VMO coverage in Scone to also include Murrurundi and Merriwa. I'll put together a few dot points for staff to included in the letter to Dave Layzell and my understanding is Scone and Murrurundi have VMO positions, but Merriwa's issue is more broadly the provision of medical services (not just VMO).

20. Roadside Trees On Scone Road

There have been many comments about the 'quirky' trees on the approach to Merriwa from Scone. They have been continually pruned on one side to clear the adjacent power lines. Do you think they should be retained, pruned into lower trees, or removed and replaced with low growing shrubs?



21. Any other matters of general business.

Date and time of next meeting: 6:00 PM Wednesday, 16 March 2022 @ Merriwa RSL Club.

The meeting dates for 2022 are:

- Wednesday 16 February 2022
- Wednesday 16 March 2022
- Wednesday 20 April 2022
- Wednesday 18 May 2022
- Wednesday 15 June 2022
- Wednesday 20 July 2022
- Wednesday 17 August 2022
- Wednesday 21 September 2022
- Wednesday 19 October 2022
- Wednesday 16 November 2022
- Wednesday 21 December 2022

Meeting Concludes:

Status of Current Projects

The table below lists the current projects and their status to make it easier to track their progress. They appear in reverse order of the last action taken. All complete items will be removed from the list.

Title	Description	Status	Latest Action
Muswellbrook & Cassilis signs	Add to green directional signs in Merriwa	Council is liaising with RMS	13 Nov 2020
Future of VIC	Review of VICs in Upper Hunter Shire	DPOP 2021 foreshadows VIC review	26 Apr 2021
VIC Hours of Operation	Return to pre COVID-19 times	Council reluctant to comply	15 Jun 2021
Destination Management Plan	Design to improve tourism across Shire	Referred to Upper Hunter Country Tourism	15 Nov 2021
Wool processing plant	Attract business to relocate to Merriwa	Australia-wide feasibility study underway	22 Nov 2021
Tourism brochures	Review of Merriwa tourism literature	New brochures printed COMPLETE	15 Jan 2022
Vennacher St pedestrian lighting	Illuminate pedestrian crossing	Council has found funds. To be completed by June 2022	27 Jan 2022
Heavy vehicle bypass	Divert heavy vehicles (esp.) around main street	Heavy vehicle counter promised	31 Jan 2022
Doctor shortage	Availability of doctors in Merriwa (esp. after-hours)	UHS Council endorsing situation	2 Feb 2022
Reverse vending machine	Automated means of reclaiming 10c deposit	Petition underway	11 Feb 2022

Aims and Objectives of the Merriwa District Progress Association Inc (Est. 2004)

To maintain, encourage and promote the social, economic, environmental, cultural and educational progress of Merriwa and district.