

1. TOMINGLEY GOLD OPERATIONS (TGO) – COMMUNITY FUND PANEL

Introduction

This report requests Council to approve the recommendations from the Tomingley Gold Operations (TGO) Community Fund Panel for distribution of the Voluntary Planning Agreement funds.

Background

The Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) with TGO is to provide Council with the following "community funds" as outlined in clause 4.1 of the Agreement –

"\$53,750 per year for 8 years with 50% payable on 1st July and 50% payable on 1st January each year"; a total of \$430,000 over the period.

The VPA also says in clause 4.3 "The Development Contributions paid pursuant to clause 4.1 may be pooled with other monies held by Council which have similar and relevant objectives, subject to the proponent (TGO) having the opportunity to lobby for certain expenditure for the benefit of Tomingley residents and to object to expenditure which may not be in the proponent (TGO) view of community benefits."

The objective of the Community Fund is to satisfy the four elements of:

- Economic Development – directly contribute to the resilience and/or long term economic growth of the community;
- Community Connectivity – promote community togetherness in a positive family focussed way;
- Education and Training – foster the education and up-skilling of members of the community;
- Community Infrastructure.

The TGO Community Fund award funds twice per year with applications due in March and August, and the Panel conferring in April and September to review the applications. The Panel recommends to Council that the following projects receive funding from the Community Fund Round 2:

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Tomingley Advancement Association – landscaping Dicken Park | \$5,000.00 |
| Mungery Amateur Picnic Race Club | \$2,000.00 |
| Narromine Agricultural Show Society | \$2,500.00 |
| St Augustine's School Narromine – sponsorship iHeart Art Show | \$1,000.00 |
| Tomingley Picnic Race Club – Sponsorship Annual Race Day | \$5,000.00 |
| Transfer to Tomingley Future Fund | \$11,375.00 |
| Total | \$26,875.00 |

1. TOMINGLEY GOLD OPERATIONS (TGO) – COMMUNITY FUND PANEL (Cont.)

Issues

- The funds were provided exclusive of GST;
- There were seven (7) applications comprising a value of \$31,115.00;
- Acknowledgement of the successful and unsuccessful applicants will be in a joint letter from Council (signed by the Mayor) and the TGO (signed by the Operations Manager).

Assessment

a) Legal Implications

In accordance with Local Government Act 1993, Council must resolve to approve the allocation of funds for a donation.

b) Financial Implications

VPA Funds of \$53,750 per annum are available, with at least \$26,875 for each half year distribution.

c) Policy Implications

Guidelines adopted by Council on 9 October 2013 for distribution of funds for Tomingley Gold Operations – Community Fund in accordance with the Voluntary Planning Agreement.

d) Strategic Implications

Refer CSP and E1 Delivery Program.

Discussion/Summary

The applications were varied and the recommended projects were determined in accordance with the objectives and assessment criteria for the distribution of the Community Funds agreed to by Council and TGO.

There were several projects that were not considered at this stage as the focus is still on linkages to the Tomingley community.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approves the allocation of funds from the TGO Community Fund as follows:

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Tomingley Advancement Association – landscaping Dicken Park | \$5,000.00 |
| Mungery Amateur Picnic Race Club | \$2,000.00 |
| Narromine Agricultural Show Society | \$2,500.00 |
| St Augustine's School Narromine – sponsorship iHeart Art Show | \$1,000.00 |
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| Transfer to Tomingley Future Fund | \$11,375.00 |
| Total | \$26,875.00 |

2. MACQUARIE VALLEY FAMILY DAY CARE

Introduction

As Council is aware, the Federal Government will be terminating the Community Support Programme (CSP) funding from 1st July 2018 to all Family Day Care Schemes. For Council, this was around \$155,000 pa. The loss of this critical funding means the Macquarie Valley Family Day Care Scheme will no longer be viable long term and as Council became the Licensee then Approved Provider of the Scheme on the basis that it would be cost neutral to Council, a decision needs to be made regarding the termination of the Scheme while there are still sufficient funds to cover finalisation costs.

Background

The Macquarie Valley Family Day Care Scheme has been operating in Narromine for about 35 years. It was commenced by a private operator and as it grew, the operator approached Council to take over the Scheme as the Licensee. The Service was receiving Government funding both for the Child Care Benefit, paid to the Carer and Community Support funding to run the Co-ordination Unit. There was also income received from a Carer Levy and a Parent Admin Levy. With these three sources of funding, the scheme was always cost neutral. On this basis, Council agreed to take on the Scheme with the Finance Department looking after the payments to Educators (originally Carers) and the staff at the Co-ordination Unit were employed by Council with funding from the Scheme.

The Service continued to grow over the years with up to 31 Carers in the Scheme including five from Warren at one stage. At its peak, staff processed 700 timesheets each fortnight. In about 2012, the Children's Services Legislation was changed and the new National Law and Regulations came into force. This brought many changes which were not favourable to the Carers. Licensees became 'Approved Providers' of the Service. Carers became 'Educators'. For the 'Educators', the new Legislation reduced the number of children they could look after each day from 5 to 4, which meant they had to increase their charges to parents to receive the same income or accept less income for their service. For Educators who worked five days a week and were full, it meant the loss of five places/children each week for each Educator.

With the change to 'Educators', came stringent requirements on 'documenting' the activities of each child each day they were in care. The 'Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)' was also introduced at this time. This EYLF had seven extensive elements and the 'Educators' had to design activities for each individual child, in accordance with the EYLF and depending upon the interests of the child, document the activities of each child daily and comment on whether or not they enjoyed the experience, then show they had reflected on this and how they added to the experience of the child the next time with an improved activity. This documentation had to be produced when the Scheme received a 'Rating and Assessment' visit from (originally) DOCS, now NSW Early Childhood Education Directorate (Department of Education). This put a huge impost on the 'Educators' to complete the documentation on each child.

2. MACQUARIE VALLEY FAMILY DAY CARE (Cont.)

There was a huge workload for the MVFDC Co-ordinator who had to 'monitor, train and support' the educators in the scheme, and among other things, teach them how to design and document activities in accordance with the EYLF.

The new legislation also required 'Educators' to complete a minimum of Certificate III in Children's Services through TAFE which originally cost \$500 and is now about \$4,000. Some Carers who had been doing a wonderful job for 20 years decided they would pull out of the scheme as they did not wish to undertake further training etc. and could not see the need for it. Several educators left Family Day Care for a variety of reasons over the next few years. Whenever we had an educator withdraw from the scheme, in their Exit Interview with Council staff, they always complained about the paperwork which was so time consuming, as one of the reasons why they no longer wished to be an 'Educator'.

Like other schemes across the State, it became very hard to attract more people to become Family Day Care Educators and replace those that had left. Council needed more numbers of Educators to attract sufficient Community Support Funding to keep the service viable. The amount of funding is based on the number of EFT (equivalent full time) places of children in the Scheme.

When Council had the opportunity to take on Educators from Bathurst and Sydney who wanted to join the scheme, Council agreed to include them. This still attracted the Community Support Programme funding so long as 51% of the Educators were from the regional or remote area. This arrangement has been very successful and the Bathurst and Sydney Educators have been much happier with the MVFDC Scheme than they were with their previous Approved Provider because of the wonderful support Council's Scheme has provided to them all.

Unfortunately, with the Community Support Programme funding terminating from 30th June 2018, the MVFDC Scheme will no longer be self-funding or cost neutral to Council. It is not only Narromine Council as an Approved Provider of FDC who has this problem, but all FDC schemes will be affected.

Issues

If Council terminates the MVFDC Scheme, it will not mean that there will no longer be a Family Day Care Service in Narromine. The Educators are self-employed and can become registered with another 'Approved Provider' from anywhere in the State and still operate their service in Narromine. When Council surrenders the 'Approved Provider' approval and the MVFDC scheme closes, there may be some educators who decide to retire at that time, however many will wish to continue and Council staff will ensure they are given assistance in transitioning to another Approved Provider to make the transition as simple as possible for them.

2. MACQUARIE VALLEY FAMILY DAY CARE (Cont.)

The Director and I have met with the Narromine Educators and explained Council's position to them and they understand the inevitability of the closure because of the loss of the Commonwealth Government CSP funding for Family Day Care. They also understand that Council cannot subsidise the operation of the Scheme from Ratepayers funds and it must be self-funding to continue. They are naturally disappointed because they were very happy to be part of the MVFDC Scheme and would have liked to see it continue.

Whilst the funding will continue until 30th June 2018, there are finalisation costs and it is important to terminate the scheme while Council still has sufficient in Reserves to meet those costs. For that reason, it is recommended that the Scheme close from 1st January 2018 and staff remain for a further five weeks to finalise all the paperwork and compliance issues involved in the Scheme. January is also a good time to transition because of the school holidays and not so many children in care.

Council has been very fortunate over the years to have had excellent and very dedicated staff in the MVFDC team, who not only had to embrace the new Legislation but to re-do all the MVFDC Policies and Manuals to bring them in line with the new Legislation. They also had to train the Educators in all the changes and continually monitor and support them through it all. All Educators have always spoken very highly of the quality of the service provided to them by the Co-ordination Unit and Council's staff should be congratulated on the fine job they have done over the years.

Assessment

a) *Legal Implications including Directives and Guidelines*

Council will need to follow the legal requirements as the Approved Provider of the MVFDC Service both with the Commonwealth Government legislation for the funding and the State Government as the Licensing authority, in surrendering the Approved Provider approval.

b) *Financial Implications*

If Council was to continue for another year ie 2018/19 without the CSP funding, budget projections show a loss of approximately \$185,000 for the year. At present it is estimated there would be a balance in reserves of around \$150,000 at the finalisation of the Scheme if it was terminated from 1st January 2018 with the staff continuing on for another five weeks to ensure the proper finalisation and compliance issues are met. This reserve may be less if some Educators transition sooner and is only a projected estimate.

The final amount in reserves after finalisation of the Scheme will be known by the March Quarterly Budget Review and will be reported to Council at that time for a decision on the use of those reserves. It is suggested that they should be retained for Youth Services.

2. MACQUARIE VALLEY FAMILY DAY CARE (Cont.)

c) Strategic Implications

This item relates to Item 1.3.2 of the Community Strategic Plan 'Through Family Day Care services, continue to provide high quality family day care which is cost neutral to Council'. Also 1.3.3.1 of the Delivery Program 'Lobby the Government to continue to fund child care services in Narromine Shire to provide affordable child care services within the Shire'.

Summary/Conclusion

With the termination of the Commonwealth Community Support Programme funding in June 2018, which helped to fund the operation of the Co-ordination Unit of Macquarie Valley Family Day Care, it is clear that the Service will be unsustainable from that time without those grant funds.

Lobbying has been undertaken on several occasions with the Local Federal member regarding the loss of the Community Support Funding and his response was that Council will be eligible to apply for the new Child Care grants under the new Community Child Care Fund; however this 'replacement' grant opportunity has three different streams and the only one Council could apply for would be the 'sustainability' grant which has to be applied for each year and present indications are that it would have a maximum amount of \$25,000. This would not help us balance the budget when we require \$150,000.

Council has also made contact with a neighbouring council who has a larger Family Day Care Service and it may be possible for some of the Educators to transition to that Scheme. There is no shortage of Approved Providers across the State who would be happy to take on the additional Educators. It will just be a matter of the Educators seeing who is available and what they have to offer and make a decision on which Scheme to join. Council Staff will assist them with this.

Besides Family Day Care, there are other childcare facilities in the Shire to cater for the needs of parents with young children, including pre-schools and long day care centres in both Narromine and Trangie. Family Day Care will continue to have a role to play.

Whilst it is sad that the MVFDC scheme will close after operating for some 35 years in the Shire, the availability of a family day care service in the Shire will continue with another Approved Provider so long as the local educators wish to continue providing the service to the community.

Council has had some wonderful Educators in the scheme over the years and very competent and dedicated staff operating the Co-ordination Unit and can be justly proud of its contribution to the Family Day Care Service in Narromine Shire since it took on the role of Licensee then Approved Provider of the Service over twenty years ago.

2. MACQUARIE VALLEY FAMILY DAY CARE (Cont.)

Council needs to make a decision on the date for termination of the Service to be notified to all Educators and parents using the Service. It is important that sufficient time is allowed for the Educators to transition to another Approved Provider and that staff have enough notice to finalise the scheme after termination.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council notify the Educators and Parents of the Macquarie Valley Family Day Care Scheme that the Service will terminate from 1st January 2018;
2. That MVFDC staff employment continue after the termination date until all finalisation and compliance issues are complete;
3. That any funds left in the MVFDC Reserves after finalisation be reported to Council in the March QBR for a decision on the use of those funds.

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST RETURNS

Introduction

This report is provided to Council for information as is required under the Local Government Act.

Background

Section 449(3) of the Local Government Act 1993 states that a Councillor or designated person holding that position at 30 June in any year must complete and lodge with the General Manager within 3 months of becoming a Councillor or designated person, a return in the form prescribed by the regulations.

Section 450A(2) of the Act states that returns required to be lodged with the General Manager under section 449 must be tabled at a meeting of the Council, being (b) in the case of a return lodged in accordance with section 449(3) – the first meeting held after the last day for lodgement under that subsection.

Issues

The Disclosure of Interest Returns are tabled at the meeting for perusal in accordance with the Act. All Councillors and designated persons completed the returns by the due date of 30 September 2017.

Assessment

a) *Legal Implications*

Sections 449 and 450A of the Local Government Act 1993

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST RETURNS (Cont.)

b) Financial Implications

None

c) Strategic Implications

This report relates to item 4.2.8 of the Delivery Program – Implement best practice governance standards, transparent decision making and a strong ethical culture.

Summary

All Councillors and designated persons completed the returns by due date. Cr Everingham who was elected to Council on 23 August 2017 will be required to lodge a return to the General Manager by 23 November 2017.

RECOMMENDATION

That the information be noted.

4. STRONGER COUNTRY COMMUNITIES FUND

Introduction

This report is provided to Council in order to confirm priorities for funding applications to be submitted under the Stronger Country Communities Fund.

Background

As outlined at the September Council meeting, the Stronger Country Communities Fund is now available to Narromine Shire Council to apply for funding. This fund is just one of several released recently as part of the NSW State Governments \$1.3 Billion Regional Growth Fund.

The aim of this fund is to support Council and community groups in delivering crucial local infrastructure to improve quality of life. Narromine Shire Council has been invited to apply for up to \$783,500 in the 2017-2018 financial year.

Over the last several weeks Council staff have been working towards developing priorities for this funding and these priorities were discussed recently with Councillors at a Council workshop.

These priorities have been developed after consulting with the Community Strategic Plan to ensure consistency with Council and Community planning over the next several years. Three projects have been developed and staff now seek a formal endorsement of these projects so that a grant application can be submitted.

4. STRONGER COUNTRY COMMUNITIES FUND (Cont.)

These projects are:

- Public Access Enhancements: enhance the Tomingley Hall through refurbishments to the hall and the Trangie Showground through the provision of a Male toilet block.
- Swimming Pool Enhancements: enhance both community pools in Trangie and Narromine through refurbishment works to the pools and surrounds.
- Public Health Activity Enhancements: including the provision of outdoor sporting equipment for Narromine and refurbishments to the Narromine Sports Centre.

Issues

As well as the grant funding that is to be applied for and expended on these projects, an additional \$320,386 is planned to be spent in the 2017-2018 financial year from funds already committed by Narromine Shire Council. Total expenditure including grant funding on these community projects will be \$1.1 Million.

Assessment

a) Legal Implications

Local Government Act 1993

b) Financial Implications

Council has previously committed an additional \$320,386 in 2017/2018 Budget. Depending upon the success of the grant funding applications, Council will spend \$1.1m on community projects.

c) Strategic Implications

This report relates to item 4.3.3 of the Delivery Program – Ensure sufficient resources to meet current and future needs of the community; 4.3.3.1 Maximise opportunities for utilising grants to supplement and support identified Council priorities and projects; and 4.3.3.2 Identify project suitable for grant applications.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Narromine Shire Council confirm that their priorities for funding from the Stronger Community Fund are:
 - Public Access Enhancements for the Trangie Showground and Tomingley Hall;
 - Swimming Pool Enhancements to the Trangie and Narromine pools;
 - Public Health Activity Enhancements with the supply of outdoor recreation equipment in Narromine and refurbishments to the Narromine Sports Centre;
2. That Narromine Shire Council apply for \$783,500 in funding from the Stronger Country Communities Fund.

Jane Redden
General Manager