



Vincent Street
CESSNOCK 2325.

27 October 2008

To All Councillors

You are hereby notified that the next Ordinary Council Meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chambers, on Wednesday, 5 November 2008, commencing at 6.30pm for the purpose of transacting the undermentioned business.

**B R MORTOMORE
GENERAL MANAGER**

AGENDA:

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(1) APOLOGIES.

(2) CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES.

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(3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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(5) COUNCILLORS' REPORTS.

(6) QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

**(7) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD ON
5 NOVEMBER 2008**

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 51/2008

SUBJECT: DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

The provisions of chapter 14 of the Local Government Act, 1993 regulate the way in which Councillors and nominated staff of Council conduct themselves to ensure that there is no conflict between their private interests and their public trust.

The Act prescribes that where a member of Council (or a Committee of Council) has a direct or indirect financial (pecuniary) interest in a matter to be considered at a meeting of the Council (or Committee), that interest must be disclosed as soon as practicable after the start of the meeting and the reasons for declaring such interest.

As members are aware, the provisions of the Local Government Act restrict any member who has declared a pecuniary interest in any matter from participating in the discussions, voting on that matter, and require that member to vacate the Chamber.

Council's Code of Conduct provides that if members have a non-pecuniary conflict of interest, the nature of the conflict must be disclosed. The code also provides for a number of ways in which a member may manage non pecuniary conflicts of interest.

RECOMMENDATION that Councillors now disclose any interests and reasons for declaring such interest in the matters under consideration by Council at this meeting.

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
5 November 2008

B R MORTOMORE
GENERAL MANAGER
27 October 2008

OFFICER'S REPORTS

DIRECTOR CITY PLANNING REPORT NO. 4/2008

SUBJECT: RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF ALCOHOL FREE ZONES

Acting Regulatory Services Manager (Environmental Health), Ms J Lange, reports:-

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to re-establish Alcohol Free Zones within the townships of Cessnock, Weston and Kurri Kurri with the objective of reducing the public visibility of drunkenness, anti-social behaviours and malicious damage that can be associated with the consumption of alcohol.

BACKGROUND

Council has previously established Alcohol Free Zones in specific locations in Cessnock, Weston and Kurri Kurri and these Zones expired on 31 December 2007.

These zones comprised:-

Cessnock

- Vincent Street, from Maitland Road to Cessnock Street, including cross-sections of Hall Street and Snape Street;
- Charlton Street from Snape Street to the area in front of the cinema and cinema carpark;
- Cooper Street, from Vincent Street to Keene Street;
- Keen Street to the Rugby League Supporters Club parking area;
- The sealed carpark in Vernon Street and Vernon Street from the intersection of Quarrybylong Street to Allan Street;
- Maitland Road in front of the Cessnock Hotel, public laneway adjoining the public carpark at the rear.

Kurri Kurri

- Lang Street, from Allworth Street to Mitchell Avenue, including cross-street section to Mitchell Avenue/Victoria Street and Hampden Street;
- Barton Street, from Hampden Street to Allworth Street;
- Allworth Street to the laneway and including the laneway behind the Kurri Kurri Community Centre.

Weston

- Cessnock Road, between Hall Street and unnamed land west of Station Street;
- Station Street, between First Street and Cessnock Road;
- Overhead walkway over railway line and Embleton Street to Appleton Avenue.

A copy of the plans indicating the Zones are contained within the Enclosures.

The power for Council to establish Alcohol Free Zones is contained within Section 644-646 of the Local Government Act 1993. Ministerial Guidelines have been established which Council's must follow when establishing Alcohol Free Zones. The Guidelines also apply when Zones are being re-established.

The Alcohol Free zones were first established to reduce irresponsible behaviour associated with the consumption of alcohol in public places. The following reasons were also cited as evidence of the need to introduce Alcohol Free Zones in these areas:-

- a) It will reduce the visibility of drunkenness within the township;
- b) It may reduce the incidence of violence involving the consumption of alcohol;
- c) It should reduce street offences resulting from the consumption of alcohol;
- d) It would reduce the incidence of broken glass and litter offences;
- e) Children, of tender years will not be subjected to observing the above offences being committed within the shopping centre or parks near their schools;
- f) It would reduce incidents of persons acting in an intimidatory and abusive manner.

REPORT

The previously established Alcohol Free Zones established in Cessnock, Weston and Kurri Kurri expired on 31 December 2007. The Ministerial Guidelines provides that there is no general provision for a Zone to be extended. However, the roads or carparks comprising a Zone may be included in another Zone of the same or different configuration following the cessation of a Zone.

All the requirements for the valid establishment of a Zone apply in this case including community consultation.

Each proposed individual zoning is to be considered according to its particular circumstances. Alcohol Free Zones should primarily be located adjacent to outlets supplying alcohol where drinkers congregate. A Zone may be established for a maximum period of three (3) years and once established, it applies twenty-four (24) hours per day. The Police are able to confiscate liquor from people who, after a warning, continue drinking in an Alcohol Free Zone and are able to issue a Penalty Infringement Notice for the offence.

In accordance with the Ministerial Guidelines, the Police Local Area Commander has been consulted regarding the proposal that the Alcohol Free Zones be re-established.

Verbal advice received from the Licensing Sergeant has indicated that the police support the re-establishment of the Zones to address on-going alcohol related issues as the Zones will provide police the powers to stop persons from consuming and to move people away from the area. Written confirmation will be forwarded to Council shortly.

Before establishing a Zone, Council is also required to undertake a public consultation process, including publishing notice of the proposal in a newspaper circulating in the area, allow inspection of the proposal and invite representations or objections. The Officer in Charge of the police station within or nearest the proposed Zone must also be consulted, as are liquor licensees and secretaries of registered clubs. Identifiable Aboriginal or ethnic groups within the local areas are also to be consulted.

The matter has been discussed at recent Liquor Accord meetings and members are supportive of the need for the Zones to be re-established with many noting a number of persons drinking in the Zones since the expiration of the Alcohol Free Zones. Individual licensees may choose to lodge representations during the consultation period if they desire.

RECOMMENDATION that Council:-

- 1) Advertise its intention to re-establish the Alcohol Free Zones located at:-

Cessnock

- Vincent Street, from Maitland Road to Cessnock Street, including cross-sections of Hall Street and Snape Street;
- Charlton Street from Snape Street to the area in front of the cinema and cinema carpark;
- Cooper Street, from Vincent Street to Keene Street;
- Keen Street to the Rugby League Supporters Club parking area;
- The sealed carpark in Vernon Street and Vernon Street from the intersection of Quarrybylong Street to Allan Street;
- Maitland Road in front of the Cessnock Hotel, public laneway adjoining the public carpark at the rear.

Kurri Kurri

- Lang Street, from Allworth Street to Mitchell Avenue, including cross-street section to Mitchell Avenue/Victoria Street and Hampden Street;
- Barton Street, from Hampden Street to Allworth Street;
- Allworth Street to the laneway and including the laneway behind the Kurri Kurri Community Centre.

Weston

- Cessnock Road, between Hall Street and unnamed land west of Station Street;
 - Station Street, between First Street and Cessnock Road;
 - Overhead walkway over railway line and Embleton Street to Appleton Avenue.
- 2) Consult with the Officer in Charge of the police station within or nearest the proposed Zones, liquor licensees and secretaries of registered clubs, aboriginal and ethnic groups within eh areas, and
- 3) Following the above consultation processes, a further report be submitted to Council in relation to the determination of the proposed Alcohol Free Zones.

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
5 November 2008

D FITZGERALD
DIRECTOR CITY PLANNING
22 October 2008

DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES REPORT NO. 12/2008

SUBJECT: DRAFT MASTERPLAN FOR WESTON BEARS PARK

Community Facilities Planner, Ms K Jordan, reports:-

At its meeting on 2 July 2008 Council considered DI&S Report No. 58/2008, Draft Masterplan for Weston Bears Park. Council resolved to place the draft Masterplan for Weston Bears Park on public exhibition for a period of 42 days, upon which a further report be prepared for Council's consideration. A copy of the draft Masterplan has been included with the Enclosure Documents.

The draft Masterplan for Weston Bears Park to cater for the relocation of the Weston Junior Soccer Club from Varty Park (Weston) to the site contains the following key components:-

- The establishment of four additional sporting fields including two full size fields (90m x 60m) and two mod size fields (50m x 35m);
- Installation of automatic irrigation systems on each of the four fields;
- Installation of floodlighting poles and floodlights to Australian Standards;
- Upgrade to the existing grandstand/amenity block;
- Construction of an additional amenities block incorporating changerooms, kiosk, storage, first aid/referee's room and male, female and accessible toilets;
- Improvements to existing carparking areas and establishment of additional formalised carparking;
- Construction of retaining walls;
- Internal and boundary fencing; and
- General improvements to the layout of the site and aesthetic appearance.

The draft Masterplan was on public exhibition for a period of forty two (42) days from Wednesday 9 July, 2008 to Thursday 4 September, 2008. There was one (1) written submission received during the exhibition period and it has been included within the Enclosure Documents.

The written submission was received from the Weston Bears Football Club who are currently the sole users of Weston Bears Park. Minor amendments to the draft Masterplan were proposed by the club and included items such as additional fencing at the site and improved spectator facilities. These were considered to be reasonable requests and have now been reflected in the draft Masterplan.

The Weston Bears Football Club also provided comment on behalf of the Weston Junior Soccer Club, requesting that the mod size fields be located side by side as a result of recent changes in junior soccer where small sided games are now occurring. Following consultation with the landscape architect who developed the plans this can not be achieved due to the triangular nature of this portion of the site. Northern NSW Soccer were consulted on the matter and advised that mod fields are not required to be located side by side. Considering this feedback as well as the constraints of the site no changes are able to be made to the current layout of the mod fields.

It is important to note that prior to implementing the draft Masterplan, the redevelopment of Weston Bears Park will be subject to the assessment of a development application due to the presence of an endangered ecological community at the site; the proximity to state roads; and engineering requirements in relation to stormwater drainage.

An estimate to lodge a development application and construction certificate has been prepared by Council staff in conjunction with licenced contractors and consultants and is expected to be in the vicinity of \$80,500. This includes preparation of Statement of Environmental Effects, Seven Part Test, Council Administration Fees, Hunter Water Developer Charges, preparation of Geotechnical Report, Stormwater Management Plan and a Traffic and Parking Report.

The Weston Bears Park Masterplan will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with the preparation of prioritised capital works program as well land releases and future developments which may alter the recreational needs of the area.

Council approval is now required to adopt the Masterplan.

RECOMMENDATION that:

1. The information be noted
2. Council adopt the Masterplan for Weston Bears Park, Weston

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05 November 2008

L OLDFIELD
DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE &
SERVICES
24 October 2008

DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES REPORT NO. 13/2008

SUBJECT: CESSNOCK PCYC: REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDOOR SPORTS FACILITY

Community Facilities Planner, Ms K Jordan, reports:-

BACKGROUND

In April 2008, Council met with representatives of the Cessnock Police & Community Youth Club (PCYC) regarding the establishment of a new indoor sports facility and relocation of Cessnock Pool to the PCYC site. A written proposal was submitted to Council by the PCYC in June 2008 which provided a brief history of Cessnock PCYC, an overview of existing facilities, and details of the proposed redevelopment of the site incorporating a request for Council to assist in funding a proposed indoor sports facility. A copy of the proposal is included with the Enclosure Documents.

Approximate costs associated with the proposed redevelopment of the PCYC site incorporating construction of an indoor sports centre, was estimated by PCYC to be minimum of \$3M. The PCYC currently has \$300,000 to contribute to the project (provided by PCYC State Office), and aim to raise the remaining funds over the next 3 -5 years. The proposal submitted to Council seeks \$1M from Council allocated over 3-5 financial years either in the form of cash or in kind works towards the construction of the indoor sports centre. Additional to this the PCYC proposal seeks a partnership with Council to relocate the Cessnock Public Swimming Pool to the site.

Following a review of Councils adopted Aquatics Strategy in December 2006 Council resolved to commence investigations into the relocation of Cessnock Public Swimming Pool to a suitable centrally located position within the township of Cessnock.

REPORT

With Council's resolution to investigate the relocation of Cessnock Pool in mind, the proposal from Cessnock PCYC to co-locate the PCYC and Cessnock Pool; as well as the joint construction of indoor sports facilities was investigated by Council officers and identified the following:-

Indoor Sports Facilities

- Council has recently completed the redevelopment of the Cessnock Civic Indoor Sports Centre on Mount View Road which was designed to address the demand for indoor sports including basketball, netball, soccer, volleyball and hockey.
- Through community surveys and face to face consultation with sporting clubs and special interest groups Council officers have noted that the community has a preference for high quality, centralised facilities, rather than many small facilities spread over a large area.
- In line with Council's draft 2008 Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan there is not an identified demand for additional indoor sporting facilities within the Cessnock area.
- Facilities at the PCYC are meeting the current needs for indoor sports such as futsal, karate, gymnastics and boxing.

Aquatic Facilities

- Any new aquatic centre to cater for the City of Cessnock should have the capacity for an outdoor 50m pool as well as an indoor 25m pool and purpose built program/leisure pool, car parking; and ideally future expansion. The absolute minimum area of space required for this type of centre is 23,000m².
- Much of the anticipated residential development in the city is expected to occur in the Bellbird and West Cessnock areas, essentially shifting the residential centre of the township in that direction. The subsequent viability of locations such as adjacent to the existing Cessnock Civic Indoor Sports Centre for a new aquatic centre are becoming more palatable from a demographic centralised perspective.

PCYC Site

- The PCYC site is considered to be in a central location in the township of Cessnock.
- The area of the PCYC site including playing fields and existing buildings is approximately 21,000m².
- Lack of car parking for the site is an existing issue.
- A concrete stormwater channel borders the PCYC site at the northern end. In line with drainage policies, construction must not occur within 3.5m of the channel, thereby, constraining size of any proposed facilities.

Following the investigations and findings Council wrote back to the Cessnock PCYC in May 2008 advising that the existing PCYC land was not large enough to accommodate indoor and outdoor public swimming facilities as well as an indoor sporting facility.

CONCLUSION

The existing PCYC land is considered far too constrained to construct an indoor/outdoor aquatic facility and separate indoor sports centre. The establishment of another indoor sports facility within close proximity to the Cessnock Civic Indoor Sports Centre has the potential to duplicate community facilities that already exist within the Cessnock area.

Investigations regarding the relocation of Cessnock Pool are winding up with structural engineering reports being prepared on the condition of the existing pool plant and surrounds. This report will provide Council with information about the condition of the plant and buildings as well as make recommendations regarding replacement of plant etc. This information will be provided to Council as part of the development of the 2009/2010 Recreation Services budget.

In terms of Council's level of involvement in the establishment of an indoor sports facility at the PCYC site it is proposed that Council continue to liaise with the PCYC as a means to provide assistance in seeking additional funding and/or identify opportunities for the redevelopment of the site.

RECOMMENDATION that the information be noted.

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05 November 2008

L OLDFIELD
DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE &
SERVICES
24 October 2008

DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES REPORT NO. 14/2008

SUBJECT: 2007/08 STATE OF ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Manager Environment & Waste, Mr M Alexander, reports:-

The New South Wales (NSW) Local Government Act 1993 (Section 428 (2) (c)) requires all Local Government Councils to produce an annual report on the State of the Environment (SoE). This report covers the period from 1st July 2007 to 30th June 2008 and is a Supplementary Report. A comprehensive report is required in 2008/09. (The SoE report is presented as Appendix 1 of Councils Annual Report.)

As outlined by the Department of Local Government, a supplementary SoE report must:

- Identify any new environmental impacts since the last comprehensive SoE report, and;
- Update the trends in environmental impacts that are important to each environment sector.

SoE Reports contain information about the condition of the environment (state), pressures the environment is subject to (pressure) and measures taken to alleviate those pressures (response) during the reporting period. They outline what is and has been done to address adverse impacts and whether those actions are or have been successful in delivering results.

This report is structured into several environmental sectors in accordance with the Local Government Act. These are: Human Settlements; Land; Air; Water; Biodiversity; and, Heritage.

“At a Glance” tables provided at the start of each section follow the usual State-Pressure-Response model (developed by the Department of Local Government), giving a brief summary of the key points and identify any data gaps that need to be explored in the future.

This report also begins the process of the transition from environmental reporting to sustainability reporting with the inclusion of economic development information in the Human Settlements chapter. Future reports will continue this process which will include more details on social and economic factors affecting the LGA in addition to the environmental factors.

CONCLUSION

The Local Government Act 1993 requires the Council to be well informed about the environmental circumstances of its area and to apply the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development in a fully integrated way through the Council’s strategic management cycle of direction, action and accountability. The State of Environment Report provides a mechanism for assessing Council’s progress towards sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION that the report be received and adopted.

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5 November 2008

L OLDFIELD
DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE &
SERVICES
24 October 2008

DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES REPORT NO. 15/2008

**SUBJECT: REQUEST TO AFFIX COUNCIL'S SEAL - POSITIVE COVENANT LOT 1
 DP 960644 & LOT 2 DP 165744**

Recreation Services Manager, Ms N Benson, reports:-

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to seal a positive covenant for the land on which the Cessnock Community Performing Arts Centre has been constructed.

In accordance with Condition No 34 of the terms of the Development Consent pursuant to Development Application No 8/2006/961/1 granted 15 August 2007 and prior to the release of the Occupancy Certificate for the Cessnock Community Performing Arts Centre Council is required to enter into a positive covenant over the land comprised within the development.

The covenant specifically relates to the management of stormwater detention facilities on the site and a copy has been included within the Enclosure Documents.

RECOMMENDATION that:-

1. Council authorise the Common Seal of the Cessnock City Council to be affixed to the Positive Covenant Lot 1 DP 960644 & Lot 2 DP 165744
2. Council authorise the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor and the General Manager and/or representative to execute all documents relating to the Positive Covenant Lot 1 DP 960644 & Lot 2 DP 165744

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
 05 November 2008

L OLDFIELD
DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE &
SERVICES
24 October 2008

DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES REPORT NO. 16/2008

SUBJECT: REGIONAL WEED MANAGEMENT IN THE HUNTER & CENTRAL COAST

Recreation Operations Coordinator, Ms A Sander, reports:-

BACKGROUND

In 2008 Councils in the Hunter and Central Coast regions sought a more strategic approach to the management of noxious weeds throughout these areas. An initiative from the General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) identified a need to develop a cooperative regional partnership for the consistent and effective management of weeds in the Hunter and Central Coast over the next three (3) years.

REPORT

A Regional Weed Management Professional Team (RWMPT) was developed to drive the GMAC initiative. The RWMPT meets on a quarterly basis and a representative from each Hunter and Central Coast Council has been appointed as a member of the team and there are fourteen (14) members. The RWMPT drafted the Regional Weed Management Professional Team Management Plan at the first two (2) meetings that identified four (4) major objectives to manage noxious weed operations throughout the Hunter and Central Coast.

A copy of the draft plan is included with the Enclosure Documents and the objectives are as follows:-

- Objective 1: To enhance cooperation between Councils, State Authorities, and the corporate and community sectors.
- Objective 2: Raise the profile of weeds as a major environmental management issue (and the benefits of regional collaboration)
- Objective 3: Engage and educate the broader community
- Objective 4: Facilitate consistency in weed management responses in the Hunter and Central Coast.

An action plan containing specific actions aligned with each objective has been developed and will be used to implement and monitor the management plan. Performance indicators contained within the plan will be reviewed quarterly and reports prepared and distributed to all key stakeholders and the Local Control Authorities (Councils).

The RWMPT identified a need for advice from the teams carrying out on ground weed management works throughout the Hunter and Central Coast regions. As such a Technical Committee was initiated with one (1) Noxious Weed Officer from each participating Council being part of this committee. The Technical Committee provides advice to the RWMPT in regard to operations work, new initiatives and opportunities for promoting noxious weed awareness throughout the communities serviced by Hunter and Central Coast Councils.

The RWMPT seek funding opportunities from State and Federal government departments and the corporate sector to assist with noxious weed management. Submissions for funding opportunities for projects have already, or are planned to go to the following departments:-

- Department of Primary Industries (DPI)
- Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC)
- Environment and Noxious Weed Advisory Committee (ENWAC)
- Hunter and Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority (CMA)
- NSW Environmental Trust.

All submissions must be outcome based with specific projects, targets and outcomes for completion of works identified. The regional strategic approach offers a greater opportunity for funding to be released for specific projects over a number of Councils instead of individual Council's submitting projects as a one-off.

A collaborative effort allows for resources to be shared across the Councils. Weeds do not identify boundaries, therefore Councils in the Hunter and Central Coast region share many weed infestations. The development and sharing of information, in regard to new technology, advancement in chemical applications and improved processes are the key to advancing weed management throughout the region.

As weed management evolves and new mechanisms for weed control are developed the strategy and action plan will be amended. Weed management is dynamic with changes being made to legislation and funding sources being erratic. The teams must be proactive by having "projects on the shelf" to take every opportunity of funding that becomes available, often at short notice.

CONCLUSION

The promotion of a collaborative approach for noxious weed management throughout the Hunter and Central Coast will enhance the cooperation throughout the designated Government Departments dealing with noxious weed issues.

The regional weed management and technical teams have a consistent agenda that promotes cooperation and the implementation of the three (3) year strategy for Weed Management that seeks to:

- Integrate consideration of weeds management issues into mapping of all weeds throughout the region and State of the Environment reporting.
- Raise the profile of and commitment to weeds management amongst Councils, the Community and the Catchment Management Authority.
- Build the capacity of Councils to address weed issues in an informed, integrated and co-ordinated manner that achieves more strategic and effective outcomes on the ground.

The draft Management Plan is expected to be considered by GMAC for adoption on December 4, 2008 and implementation will commence soon after. Outcomes of the management plan will be reported to Council after each quarterly meeting of the RWMPT.

RECOMMENDATION that:

1. The report be noted
2. Outcomes of the Regional Weed Management Professional Team Management Plan be reported to Council on a quarterly basis

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05 November 2008

L OLDFIELD
DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE &
SERVICES
24 October 2008

DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES REPORT NO. 17/2008

**SUBJECT: NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY GRETA - PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES
BETWEEN WYNDHAM STREET AND NELSON STREET**

Traffic Engineering Officer, Mr J Carey, reports:-

PURPOSE

For the information of Council regarding a request for the provision of pedestrian facilities on the New England Highway at Greta.

BACKGROUND

Council has received representations from Councillor Chris Parker, on behalf of residents of the eastern end of Greta, to investigate the provision of pedestrian facilities on the New England Highway between Wyndham Street and Nelson Street.

A brief overview of Councillor Parker's representations is provided below.

"During the lead up to the recent election, I spoke with some of the residents of the eastern end of Greta on the northern side of the [New England] Highway and several were concerned with the safety of children and the elderly in crossing the New England Highway, especially in peak times, to the shops and motel complex on the southern side. As we all know, the Highway in this area is becoming a serious problem, especially in peak times. Pedestrian lights are situated down the hill at Wyndham Street, which involves a two block walk down and back uphill again to the shop. Could Council please explore the possibility of a pedestrian crossing over the Highway, considering that a sports ground is also in this area on the northern side."

INFORMATION

As the New England Highway remains a State Road (State Highway 9), the installation of all new traffic and pedestrian facilities remains the responsibility of the Roads & Traffic Authority.

The existing pedestrian traffic signals on the New England Highway, located 20m to the west of Wyndham Street, provides the closest controlled pedestrian crossing point to Nelson Street (some 495m to the east). Nelson Street forms part of Regional Road 7766, a classified road under Council's control, linking Greta to Kurri Kurri.

The installation of a crossing facility at Nelson Street would ideally require the installation of intersection traffic signals (with dedicated pedestrian phases), due to the speed of vehicles in off peak hours and the large volume of vehicles in peak hours. The installation of traffic signals at this location has been identified as necessary in submissions to Council's Strategic Development Section, as part of the Wyndham Street Re-Zoning Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA). While the installation of a crossing facility (in the short term) will be delayed by the regulatory planning and approval processes, traffic signals remain the better medium-term solution to pedestrian safety across the highway. It is anticipated that this process would entail a review of the existing pedestrian signals at Wyndham Street, with a view to relocating the signals to the east (to the Wyndham Street intersection) and a re-configuration of their operation to incorporate the intersection control and pedestrian movements. Traffic signals at this intersection would also provide easier access across the Highway for Greta Public School patrons and nearby residents.

Without reference to the Wyndam Street Re-Zoning Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA), signalised intersection treatments at the New England Highway intersections of Wyndham Street and Nelson Street would offer reasonable access to and across the New England Highway for future growth areas along the Wyndham Street and Nelson Street corridors.

RECOMMENDATION that:-

1. The Roads & Traffic Authority be requested to investigate the provision of traffic signals (incorporating dedicated pedestrian phases) on the New England Highway Greta at the Nelson Street intersection;
2. The Roads & Traffic Authority also be requested to undertake a review of the existing pedestrian traffic signals at Wyndham Street, with a view to relocating the signals easterly to the Wyndham Street intersection.

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
5 November 2008

L OLDFIELD
DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE &
SERVICES
27 October 2008

DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES REPORT NO. 18/2008

SUBJECT: CESSNOCK COMMUNITY PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

Recreation Services Manager, Ms Nicole Benson, and Acting Community and Cultural Programs Manager, Mr Simon Eade report:-

PURPOSE

At its meeting on 8 October 2008 Council considered Director Infrastructure & Services Report No. 74/2008 Cessnock Community Performing Arts Centre Progress Report 8. At the meeting Council resolved that:-

1. The report be accepted
2. Within the next month Councillors are provided with a report which includes a profit and loss projection for the Performing Arts Centre over the next twelve months and such a report would include an estimate of operating costs expected over the next twelve months. A section on the justification for the Performing Arts Centre also be included within the report.

BACKGROUND

The Cessnock Community Performing Arts Centre (CCPAC) is a key component of the Cessnock Civic Precinct. Civic Precinct is the term given to the establishment of a full range of improved community facilities within close proximity with the aim being to address a number of community needs through one (1) integrated plan. The concept of the establishment of the Civic Precinct stems from Council's commitment to establishing a new community centre following the sale and demolition of the former town hall as part of the establishment of the Cessnock City Centre (shopping mall).

The Civic Precinct is fundamentally made up of three (3) key developments:-

- a Multi purpose community centre;
- b Civic park; and
- c Baddeley Park Regional Sporting Centre.

Investigations into the Civic Precinct commenced in 2000 with the preferred site being the former Aberdare Colliery. Subsequent investigations and negotiations with the landowner determined that the site was unsuitable and alternate options were investigated by Council and in 2003 Council determined to proceed with the Cessnock Civic Precinct based around the intersection of Aberdare Road and Vincent Street. This option was seen as advantageous as it would provide a number of benefits including an improved gateway into the township, revitalisation of the southern end of the CBD, complement the Main Street upgrade and facilitate the long term option of establishing a green corridor from Vincent Street through to Aberdare Road.

In terms of justification for the centre, the construction of a multi purpose community centre for the Cessnock local government area was identified through a range of consultation and planning processes undertaken by Council prior to the demolition of the former town hall.

These include:-

- Social and community planning with regard to the provision of community services;
- The need to enhance economic and employment opportunities to accommodate changes in social characteristics due to the downturn of the mining industry and to capitalise on opportunities such as growth in the tourist market;
- Feasibility study undertaken by GHD; and
- Cessnock planning study undertaken by GHD.

The outcome of the above consultations identified:-

- The need to develop a centralised Civic Precinct which is able to cater for a diverse range of community services and cater for service growth;
- The need to develop a centralised Civic Precinct which is able to cater for a diverse range of social activities including public meetings, gatherings and performing arts;
- The need to develop service systems which reduce duplication of program planning and provision; and
- Improved provisions of accessible community facilities.

The Cessnock Community Performing Arts Centre has been designed and constructed to meet the abovementioned needs.

Regarding the progress of the two other components of the Civic Precinct, the construction of Baddeley Park Regional Sporting Centre (Cessnock Sportsground) was completed in 2004. Since then the facility has been operated by the Cessnock Rugby League Football Club via a licence agreement with Council. The Baddeley Park Management Committee comprising of Councillors, the General Manager and representatives of the league also assist in the operation, management and promotion of the Sportsground.

Detailed concept and design plans for Civic Park have been finalised with a view to revise construction costs and confirm cashflow with Council prior to placing on public exhibition and lodging a DA/CC. Council purchased the Cessnock Car Detailing site in 2006 and is finalising the purchase of the Samaritans building with a report on the acquisition to be presented to the December Council meeting.

REPORT

On 17 April 2008, Council's Major Projects Committee considered General Manager's Report No. 6 Cessnock Community Performing Arts Centre – Proposed Management and Operation Framework. The Committee noted the information contained in the report, and the Minutes of that meeting were subsequently endorsed by Council at its meeting held 7 May 2008 (General Manager's Report No 18/2008). A copy of the report has been included with the Enclosure Documents.

The above mentioned report included information regarding the proposed operations of the CCPAC, a draft budget of anticipated expenditure and income for its operation in the 2008/2009 financial year (considering operation from October 2008 to 30 June 2009), staffing, fees and charges and a draft projected income for the first twelve months of operation. In summary the cost to operate the centre for a twelve month period has been estimated at \$46,000 and income has been estimated to be \$50,133.

It is important to note that it is difficult to project the operating costs of a facility such as the CCPAC before it becomes operational as there is no identifiable pattern of usage. Furthermore, this facility does not have anything comparable in the LGA, with its proposed mix of uses, which contributes to the difficulty of estimating running costs. In order to gauge the operational costs, a comparison was been made with the costs of other larger Council owned facilities in the LGA, eg Cessnock Library, Kurri Kurri Community Centre and Cessnock Sportsground.

With the CCPAC now almost completed, promotion of and bookings for use of the facility are underway. There is a strong level of interest, and the opening week of activities and performances being programmed for late November will increase the profile of and interest in the facility.

At this time, it is not proposed to adjust the anticipated budget of expenditure and income detailed in the previously mentioned report, as the level of usage cannot yet be accurately determined.

Following discussions with other Councils and recent visits to similar performing arts centres in Queanbeyan and Griffith it has become apparent that there may be a need for a staff resource to be deployed on site to supervise and coordinate a number of functions for the facility including:-

- Bookings and inquiries
- Ensuring that users and hirers of the facility are acting in accordance with their hire agreements
- Reporting on building issues that relate to the post-construction phase of the building contract
- Promotion of the facility to the community and potential user groups
- Ensuring that appropriate resources are provided to satisfy the operational and hiring requirements of users
- Providing regular reports on usage and budget
- Assisting in the development of future strategies to maximise the usage of the facility

In terms of informing Council of progress in the operation and usage of the CCPAC, it is proposed that for the first year of operation, regular updates be submitted to Council's Cultural Planning and Development Committee on a quarterly basis. It is further proposed that an evaluation report and review of that first year be prepared by the end of 2009, with consideration being given to future management models, operational requirements and budget.

RECOMMENDATION that the report be noted.

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
5 November 2008

L OLDFIELD
DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE &
SERVICES
27 October 2008

DIRECTOR CORPORATE & COMMUNITY REPORT NO. 13/2008

SUBJECT: CESSNOCK COMMUNITY RENEWAL STRATEGY FINAL REPORT

Community Worker, Ms J Forbes, reports:-

SUMMARY

This report has been prepared for Council to advise of the completion of the final report for the Cessnock Community Renewal Strategy.

In 2001, the Cessnock LGA was identified as a community experiencing considerable social disadvantage. As a result of this, the Cessnock Community Renewal Strategy (CCRS) was established in the area in partnership with the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The approach of CCRS was to focus on social and economic issues and utilise existing resources, knowledge and strengths in the community to ensure sustainability. Principles of the strategy were that it be outcome focussed; achievable and measurable; be built on existing foundations and assets, and that it address community need.

BACKGROUND

The data used to assess the level of disadvantage within the Cessnock LGA was from organisations which included NSW Police, Department of Community Services, Hunter New England Area Health Service (HNEAH), Department of Education and Training and the Australian Bureau of Statistics economic indicators. From this process it was decided that a Community Renewal Strategy would be developed and implemented in the Cessnock LGA.

The CCRS was developed using an Asset Based Community Development approach and was a partnership which involved Federal and State Government Agencies, Local Non-Government Organisations, Community Groups and Council.

The CCRS aimed to address five (5) Key Result Areas (KRAs):

1. Maximising Employment;
2. Transport Development;
3. Early Intervention and Prevention;
4. Community Ownership and Pride; and
5. Natural Resources

Overall, there were many initiatives undertaken in line with strategies outlined in the action plans for the five (5) KRAs. The action plans for each of the strategies were overseen on a quarterly basis by two committees. The Directions Committee, established to oversee the strategy and be responsible for the reporting and monitoring of the action plans, included representatives at the senior executive level from agencies including NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, TAFE, NSW Department of Community Services, NSW Department of Housing, NSW Department of Corrective Services, Hunter New England Area Health Service (HNEAH), Ministry of Transport, Department of Education and Training, Samaritans and Department of State and Regional Development.

The Regional Coordination Management Group (RCMG), the second committee's role was in the delivery of the action plans and comprised Senior Managers of all Government Departments in the Hunter Region such as Department of Water and Energy, Department of Planning, Department of Environment and Conservation, Department of Fair Trading, NSW Police, Department of Sport and Recreation, NSW Department of Housing, NSW Department of Corrective Services, Department of Education and Training, NSW Fire Brigade, HNEAH, Work Cover NSW, Department of State and Regional Development, NSW Maritime Authority, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Department of Community Services and TAFE.

The implementation of the action plans was the responsibility of established working groups for each of the five (5) KRAs. Additionally, it was endorsed by the Directions Committee that the Local Area Planning Team (LAPT) would be the group to oversee the ongoing projects (excluding those related to Maximising Employment) and would assist in identifying future gaps. The LAPT is convened by Council's Social Planner and aims to address community need and is represented by a number of local human services.

The CCRS is now complete and the Directions Committee meetings have ceased. A final report on the strategies achievements and identified gaps was submitted in February 2008 to the Human Services Regional Officer's Group (HS ROG – a sub-group of the RCMG) and has subsequently been endorsed. A verification of this endorsement is included in the enclosure documents. It needs to be noted that since the awarding of the funds six (6) years ago, the project has been labelled at times a strategy and at other times a program. This difference in word use is evident in the enclosed verification whereby the term 'program' is instead used by the HS ROG.

There were many successful projects that were implemented in line with strategies outlined in the action plans. Detailed information about each project delivered is contained within the attached final report. Below are examples of successful projects that were achieved through the CCRS:

KRA 1:- Maximising Employment

The Maximising Employment component of the CCRS was auspiced separately by Council's Economic Development Manager and in conjunction with the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet. As such the outcomes of this component were reported directly to the RCMG and independently of the other four (4) KRAs. The outcomes of the Maximising Employment component were finalised with the RCMG earlier this year.

A key goal in this area was to achieve a continued decrease in the unemployment rates in the Cessnock LGA through creating more local jobs for local people. A direct outcome of the Maximising Employment KRA shows a continuing decrease in the unemployment rate from 13.1% in December 2001 to 8.2% in December 2006. The direct job outcomes or training places achieved or facilitated by the Partnership Coordinator (a position reporting to the Economic Development Manager and funded through CCRS) totalled 357 which exceeded the target of 250.

Separate to this;

- Industry Advisory Groups were established to better inform on tertiary courses to address skills shortages.
- Cessnock Hospitality Industry Preparation Scheme (CHIPS) was developed. Over 50% of participants in the CHIPS have found employment in local industry.

KRA 2:- Transport Development

A taxi voucher scheme was developed and administered by the Transport Working Group to assist young people, young parents and socio-economically disadvantaged people access transport. This project has now ceased as it did not receive recurrent funding but assisted short term to alleviate transport disadvantage for some members of the community and served as a good pilot project if funding were to become available.

KRA 3:- Early Intervention and Prevention

Another positive initiative was the development of the Cessnock Anti Violence Network with broad representation from various agencies. This group had a key role in the community and aimed to promote awareness of domestic violence and its effect on individuals and the community as a whole.

Koe-Nara Schools as Community Centre developed and administered many local projects targeted to infants, students and parents focused on early education and learning. This centre continues to deliver early intervention projects.

KRA 4:- Community Ownership and Pride

A neighbourhood centre was established at East Cessnock Cottage with its operations assisted by the East Cessnock Residents Committee. The committee has undertaken many projects within the local community some of which have included Market Stalls at Weston Primary School, Christmas Party & Clean Up Day on the East Cessnock Estate (40 cubic metres of rubbish were removed) and 'Safer Streets' which aims to slow traffic on the estate.

Additionally, the Cessnock Shed and Community Garden were developed. Since the shed's inception, a course has been held in Furniture Restoration in addition to 'Work for the Dole' being engaged to complete upgrade works to the site on Allandale Road Cessnock. The shed serves as a useful site for community engagement and offers a venue for mentoring of young people.

KRA 5:- Natural Resources

In terms of Natural Resources, environmental restoration and rehabilitation was undertaken of natural areas and former mine sites. For instance, Peace Park was further developed through the community renewal process and provides an attractive area for people to engage in community life. Further, water and energy efficient fittings were installed into 140 homes in the East Cessnock and Weston area to improve the water and energy use of its residents. This re-fit involved the installation of dual flush toilets and electric hot water systems.

In addition to the above mentioned projects that were a success, there are also areas of social need identified from the community renewal process that still are evident. For instance access to crisis and affordable accommodation and health services are very complex issues that are being experienced in Cessnock and in many other LGAs. Therefore these issues will continue to be considered in a collaborative way with local welfare and social service providers in the Cessnock LGA and through forums such as the LAPT. Additionally, the gaps that continue to exist will be further considered in the future Social and Community planning process.

CONSULTATION

The following Council Officers have been consulted in preparation of this report:

Social Planner

Community and Cultural Programs Manager
Recreation Services Manager
Economic Development Manager
Management Accountant

STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

Legislative Implications

There are no legislative implications.

Financial Implications

A final budget acquittal has been endorsed by the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet. In total, it cost \$590,338.09 to deliver the CCRS. The total grant income received by Council was \$575,151.32. Therefore, Cessnock City Council spent \$15,186.77 of its own funds in delivering the strategy. The acquitted budget has been attached in the enclosure documents.

Policy Implications

The CCRS is in line with Council's Management Plan. The Management Plan states that Council is to be a professionally managed and customer focused organisation which provides leadership through partnerships with the community. The CCRS was developed in partnership with the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet in addition to local service providers in the Cessnock LGA.

From a Social Planning perspective the CCRS meets the objectives outlined in the Management Plan by undertaking an identification of the community services and facilities needed by people throughout the City of Cessnock and promotion of action to meet these needs.

Some of the strategies and issues outlined in the 2000 Crime Prevention Plan were addressed through the CCRS. An example of this is the establishment of a neighbourhood centre at the East Cessnock Cottage.

The recommendations identified in the CCRS final report will be considered further when Council is to deliver its new Cessnock LGA Social and Community Plan. The current Social and Community Plan expires November 2009, hence it is expected that the drafting of the new Social and Community Plan will begin early 2009.

CONCLUSION

This six (6) year community renewal strategy is finalised with the enclosed report now endorsed by the HS ROG. Overall many advantageous projects were initiated and in turn positive outcomes have been secured for the residents and service providers in the Cessnock LGA. However, some proposed initiatives were not able to be delivered due to the complex nature of the issues. Therefore these issues will continue to be considered in a collaborative way with local welfare and social service providers in the Cessnock LGA through forums such as the LAPT and future social planning processes.

RECOMMENDATION that the information be noted.

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
5 November 2008

C BENNETT
DIRECTOR CORPORATE & COMMUNITY
20 October 2008

**DIRECTOR CORPORATE & COMMUNITY
REPORT NO. 14/2008**

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED RESTRUCTURE OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION
 SYSTEM (GIS) SUPPORT FUNCTION**

Information Systems Manager, Mr S J Hepple, reports:-

SUMMARY

The Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Officer manages and provides support for the MapInfo Geographical Information System. The MapInfo System is used across Council and is critical to the efficient and effective operations of Council.

The accurate and up to date mapping of features such as flooding, bushfire, threatened species, heritage items, rezoning proposals and the like, is fundamental to Councils operations and a necessity with regard to the day to day management of the property information system. The MapInfo System is also used in the production of Section 149 Planning Certificates which provide information, including the statutory planning controls that apply to a parcel of land; maintaining the mapping component of the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan 1989 (LEP) which is the legal instrument that regulates land use and development. The MapInfo GIS also provides a baseline of information that supports many of Councils functions for asset management i.e. roads, signs, footpaths and bus shelters.

Council has been unable to recruit a suitable replacement GIS Officer, despite several concerted efforts. This report provides recommendations to restructure the GIS section in order to create a Senior GIS Officer and a GIS trainee role. The current position of GIS Officer would be removed from the current structure. This restructure should allow for the successful recruitment of GIS Staff.

BACKGROUND

The previous GIS Officer resigned from Council on Friday 14 June, 2008. He was employed by Council for over 10 years. He resigned to take up a role at Hunter Councils as the role offered him the opportunity to broaden his skills and provided for career progression.

He indicated in his exit interview dissatisfaction with the support Council provided for such a critical position and recommended that a GIS Trainee be engaged to provide back up and succession planning for the GIS Officer. The addition of a trainee would also allow the time for strategic GIS improvements to be implemented. Federal and State governments are driving the provision of online tools which will change the services provided by Local Government. GIS underpins the system changes required to support these initiatives.

Council advertised the vacant GIS Officer twice and conducted two unsuccessful recruitment exercises. When these were unsuccessful a recruitment company was engaged to assist in recruiting a GIS Officer. After the first company struggled to provide suitable candidates another two recruitment companies were engaged by Council. These companies were also unsuccessful in finding suitable candidates for the vacant position.

The recruitment companies identified that people with GIS skills are scarce and are in very high demand. Salaries for people with these skills are on the increase. Two of the recruitment companies were unable to offer any candidates. One of these recruitment firms specialised in local government recruitment. The other agency did present two junior level candidates requiring professional development. Council is not in a position to provide professional development as the GIS Officer position is the only role in Council capable of performing the GIS development.

REPORT

Expanding the GIS Officer role by adding property management duties will increase the responsibility of the position. This should enable Council to attract higher level candidates. Changing the role will allow an increase in remuneration which should also assist Council in attracting suitable candidates.

Accurate GIS data is critical to Council. The move to a map based LEP in 2006 increased this further. All the strategic and ongoing planning decisions made by Council are based on the LEP. This information is recorded in the Councils MapInfo GIS. To enable current LEP work to progress Council had to engage the previous GIS Officer as a consultant to perform these critical tasks. Council was unable to source any other suitable person to perform these duties. The previous GIS Officer has also been engaged to enable Flood Studies to proceed. As part of Council's legislative requirements Flood Management Plans must be put in place for flood prone areas. GIS information is critical to the ability to perform the Flood Studies that underpin the Flood Management Plans. The current studies suffered delays whilst Council searched for a suitably skilled GIS Officer. When this was unsuccessful the previous GIS Officer was engaged to perform the work. This is a high risk for Council.

Production of 149 certificates is a common Council process that relies heavily on accurate GIS data. Failure to attract a replacement GIS Officer has resulted in this process being more labour intensive (20 minutes to complete versus 2 minutes). This efficiency impact is secondary to the risk of a mistake being made in the production of a certificate.

Previously, the GIS Officer supplied maps to the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service to assist them in performing their duties. This service cannot be performed without a skilled GIS Officer.

Incorporation of Council Maps on the Council Website is a heavily utilised service. Without a skilled GIS Officer this service will not be able to be updated. Customer service will need to field more requests for information.

GIS duties are not currently being performed which has resulted in data being out of date. This is having a heavy impact on the performance of staff and increases the probability of errors being made in decisions and the provisions of services to the public.

ORGANISATION CHARTS

Details of the current and proposed organisational charts for the Information Systems Section are included in the Enclosures.

A comprehensive report detailing the final proposed organisational structure for Cessnock City Council following the restructure presented to Council in March 2008, is expected to be reported to Council at the Ordinary Council Meeting scheduled for 10 December 2008.

CONSULTATION

The following Council Officers have been consulted during the preparation of this Council report :

General Manager
Director Infrastructure and Services
Director City Planning
Business Support Co-ordinator
Engineering Officer – Traffic Assets
Land Use Planning Manager
Roads, Bridges and Drainage Manager

IMPLICATIONS

a. Risk Implications

Council has identified numerous risks from not having a GIS Officer employed at Council. The extreme risks include:

- Legal action initiated against Council for providing incorrect information leading to substantial damages payments and negative media attention.
- Incorrect LEP information leading to severe planning errors.
- Incorrect mapping information leading to errors in 149 Certificates provided to customers

The formal risk assessment completed by Council Officers is included in the enclosures. An opportunity analysis is also included in the enclosures.

b. Financial Implications

Reviewing the grade of the GIS Officer role and changing to a Senior GIS Officer will increase the salary costs to Council by approximately \$15K per year. In the 2008-2009 financial year this increased cost can be funded by salary savings resulting from the vacant GIS Officer position.

Provision of a GIS trainee will have a salary cost of \$25,600 p.a. + TAFE fees of \$600 per year. This cost can be fully funded by the GIS Officer salary saving for the 2008-2009 financial year.

The increased costs from the upgraded role of Senior GIS Officer and the addition of a GIS Trainee into the structure will need to be incorporated in the budget deliberations for subsequent financial years.

A table showing the budget impact of the recommended changes to the GIS function is included in the enclosures.

c. Legislative Implications

Council is required to maintain a map based LEP. The GIS Officer performs this very critical function. Council cannot meet the ongoing legislative requirements without having a skilled GIS Officer.

Council is required to prepare flood management plans for the flood prone areas in the LGA. These cannot be prepared without the skills of a GIS Officer.

d. Other Implications

Nil

OPTIONS

a. Outsource the GIS role

The possibility of outsourcing the duties of the GIS Officer was investigated. This option was not viable as no service provider could be identified who could provide the services required.

b. Continue recruitment with current position entitlements

Council can continue the recruitment process with the same position entitlements. The likelihood is that recruitment will continue to be unsuccessful.

c. Upgrade the position to a Senior GIS Officer

Expand the responsibility of the role to include property duties previously performed by the Senior Property Officer. A subsequent regrade/redesign to reflect this expansion in the salary will make the position more attractive. The title would then be changed to Senior GIS Officer.

This option has the possibility of being successful however doesn't resolve the issue of Council having no back up for the critical GIS role. Whenever staff turnover occurs Council will be without GIS skills for an extended period whilst the recruitment process is conducted. Also the previous GIS Officer expressed a view that increasing the role and salary still may not attract suitable candidates to the position. His view was Council needed to relieve the GIS Officer of basic functions so that GIS could be taken forward strategically to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Council.

d. Upgrade the position to a Senior GIS Officer and add a GIS Trainee position.

Expand the responsibility of the role to include property duties previously performed by the Senior Property Officer. A subsequent regrade/redesign to reflect this expansion in the salary will make the position more attractive. The title would then be changed to Senior GIS Officer.

Inclusion of a trainee into the GIS area will add supervisory requirements for the Senior GIS Officer. This will attract higher quality candidates and provide succession planning for the section. During his exit interview the previous GIS Officer indicated he would not have left Council if the GIS area was supported with a trainee.

CONCLUSION

Council needs an accurate and up to date Geographical Information System for efficient and effective operations. The GIS Officer is integral in performing the duties required to meet this need. Recruitment for a replacement GIS Officer has not been successful using the current organisational structure and remuneration levels. The organisational structure and remuneration levels must be changed so that Council can attract suitable employees to perform the GIS functions.

The lack of a suitable GIS Officer is forcing Council officers to revert to old manual work processes which lower efficiency and increase the risk of mistakes. There is an extreme risk of errors being made that could result in litigation against Council. Successful recruitment of a skilled GIS Officer will mitigate this risk.

Council cannot continue to rely on the good will of the previous GIS Officer's new employer. His services have been engaged by Council numerous times since his departure to perform critical tasks. Investigations to source a suitable person, other than the previous GIS Officer, to perform these tasks have been unsuccessful.

Option d is the only realistic option for Council if it wishes to safeguard the risks in GIS both now and into the future.

RECOMMENDATION that:-

1. Council note the intention to recruit a Senior GIS Officer immediately.
2. Council authorise the addition of a GIS Trainee into the Organisational Structure.
3. Council authorise the recruitment of a GIS Trainee upon the successful recruitment of a Senior GIS Officer.

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
5 November 2008

C BENNETT
DIRECTOR CORPORATE & COMMUNITY
20 October 2008

DIRECTOR CORPORATE & COMMUNITY REPORT NO. 15/2008

SUBJECT: GRETA RURAL TRANSACTION CENTRE RE-LOCATION

Community Worker, Ms J Forbes, reports:-

SUMMARY

The Greta Rural Transaction Centre (RTC) has been in operation at the Greta Arts & Sports Community Hall since May 2007. The usage of the centre by the community has been very low since the beginning of 2008. Centrelink has recently invited expressions of interest from businesses and organisations to provide the service at an alternate location in Greta. It has been decided by Council Officers not to submit an expression of interest to deliver the service at the Greta Arts & Sports Community Hall due to the limited use by customers.

BACKGROUND

The Greta Arts & Sports Community Hall was officially opened in November 2006. The construction of the centre was funded via a number of sources including a grant from the Department of Transport and Regional Services to establish a RTC at the site. The RTC has now been in operation at the hall for approximately seventeen (17) months. Its operation is facilitated by Council in partnership with Centrelink and the Greta Arts & Sports Community Hall Management Committee.

The hall was developed because the Greta, Branxton and North Rothbury communities were identified as isolated communities that had very little access to facilities that could offer opportunities in the areas of business, training, technological, social welfare and recreational activities. More specifically, the RTC offers a service to Centrelink customers in that they can use a telephone to speak to a Centrelink Customer Service Officer, use a fax machine to send information to Centrelink or resumes to prospective employers and be provided with brochures or information products.

Since the service commenced in May 2007 there has been an average of five (5) customers per month. However, the months of May and September 2008 saw numbers as low as one (1) customer. The service requires volunteers to staff the facility and over the period of its operation Council has engaged a total of seven (7) volunteers from across the LGA at different times to operate the centre. During the seventeen (17) months, depending on volunteer availability, the centre has been open for an average of fourteen to sixteen (14-16) hours per week.

In spite of regular promotion in the local as well as regional media, customers have not been able to be engaged to participate in the service on a regular basis. This is evident in the extremely low numbers of use and personal comments of the volunteers that the customers are different people every month.

Due to the low usage of the service at its current location, Centrelink has called for new tenders for businesses to deliver the service. As the use of the service is very limited, Council Officers have decided not to submit a renewed tender for the service. Conversations with Centrelink have suggested that they are currently part way through the tendering process with regards to establishing a new venue. Therefore, Council's contract with Centrelink will end on 31 October 2008. This will mean that the room at the Greta Arts & Sports Community Hall that is currently being used for Centrelink business will be available from that time for use by other community groups.

CONSULTATION

The following Council Officers have been consulted during the preparation of this Council report:

Manager Community and Cultural Programs

STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

Legislative Implications

Council has a contract with Centrelink for delivery of the Greta RTC. This contract will end on 31 October 2008.

Financial Implications

Council receives funds to deliver the RTC. In the 2007/2008 financial year Council received \$3,744.26 and in the 2008/2009 financial year to date Council has received \$877.15. The funds received to deliver the service are placed in general revenue. However, there is the in-kind contribution of Council of staff time required to supervise the delivery of the contract and volunteer arrangements on an annual basis. This is estimated to amount to \$1,000 per annum.

Policy Implications

The development and implementation of this service has been consistent with Council's Management Plan. The Management Plan states that Council is to be a customer focused organisation which provides leadership through partnerships with the community. Council has been working in partnership with Centrelink and the Greta Arts & Sports Community Hall Management Committee to deliver a service whereby residents have access to Centrelink services. The relocation of the RTC is also in line with the Management Plan. Council needs to be driven by the needs of the community and it is evident from the low usage of the centre at its current location that the community would benefit from the service being in a more visible location in the Greta community.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has been identified that this service is valuable for residents of the Greta, Branxton and North Rothbury communities as it gives them access to Centrelink services without having to travel to the neighbouring areas of Maitland or Cessnock.

Due to the low usage of the centre it has been determined that this service could potentially be of more benefit to the community in a more visible location within Greta. Therefore Council Officers have decided to end the partnership with Centrelink in regards to delivering the RTC.

RECOMMENDATION that Council endorse Council Officers' decision to cease the operation of the Greta RTC at the Greta Arts & Sports Community Hall so that the service can be provided at a more suitable location in Greta.

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
5 November 2008

C BENNETT
DIRECTOR CORPORATE & COMMUNITY
22 October 2008

DIRECTOR CORPORATE & COMMUNITY REPORT NO. 16/2008

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF MOTION – ANDREW JOHNS WALK FOR THE BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

Community Worker, Ms J Forbes, reports:-

Following a Notice of Motion carried at Council's meeting held 8 October 2008 Council resolved "that a donation towards the Andrew Johns' walk for the Black Dog Institute on October 19 be referred to Council staff for investigation in line with Council's Donations Policy."

SUMMARY

Correspondence received from the Black Dog Institute indicates that the Institute has delivered an activity in Cessnock in the past, and it has also indicated its willingness to work in the Cessnock area in the future. The funds raised by Andrew Johns' walk will be directed to the Black Dog Institute. Therefore consideration of a Council donation towards the walk is regarded by Council Officers to be valid under Criterion 3 of Council's Donations Policy No. F12.12 "Charitable projects directly focused on Cessnock LGA" (Policy included in enclosure document).

BACKGROUND

Andrew Johns' walk for the Black Dog Institute commenced on 19 October 2008. The walk continued for six (6) days, starting in Newcastle and ending in Sydney. The aim of the walk was to raise funds for the Black Dog Institute in addition to raising awareness of Bipolar Disorder.

Following a request from Council Officers to the Black Dog Institute for information on Andrew Johns' walk and any Institute activities which might be directly focused on the Cessnock LGA, correspondence was received from the Institute on 27 October 2008 detailing its overall services and activities. A copy of the correspondence is included in the Enclosure documents.

Whilst the Black Dog Institute does not have programs in place in the Cessnock LGA on a permanent basis its letter does state that "at this time one community education presentation has been delivered in Cessnock, though no additional requests have been made of the Institute". The letter goes on to say that "the Black Dog Institute seeks to form productive partnerships in regional and rural areas, and would embrace an opportunity to do so in the Cessnock area."

Given this information, Council Officers believe that Andrew Johns' walk to raise funds for the Black Dog Institute does meet Criterion 3 of Council's Donations Policy No. F12.12 "Charitable projects directly focused on Cessnock LGA" as the Institute has delivered a presentation locally and appears willing to deliver further activities in the Cessnock LGA in the future.

CONSULTATION

The following Council Officers have been consulted during the preparation of this Council report:

Community and Cultural Programs Manager

STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

Legislative Implications

Section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993 allows a Council to financially assist others by contributing money or granting financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions.

Financial Implications

The current balance in the Donations budget is \$18,065.82. (This is the balance after the donation has been deducted as per Council's resolution at its meeting on 22 October 2008)

Policy Implications

This request has been assessed as meeting Council's adopted Donations Policy No. F12.12. as it has been determined that funds raised from the event could be directly focused on the Cessnock LGA.

CONCLUSION

Andrew Johns' walk to raise funds for the Black Dog Institute in addition to raising awareness of Bipolar Disorder meets Criterion 3 in Council's Donations Policy No. F12.12 as funds that are raised by the walk could be directly focused on the Cessnock LGA.

RECOMMENDATION that the information be noted.

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
5 November 2008

C BENNETT
DIRECTOR CORPORATE & COMMUNITY
27 October 2008

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 53/2008

SUBJECT: INFORMATION NEWS SHEET

Included in the Enclosure document is the Information News Sheet relative to:

Staff Appointments
Outstanding Questions Without Notice

RECOMMENDATION that the information be noted.

To: **Ordinary Council Meeting**
5 November 2008

B R MORTOMORE
GENERAL MANAGER
24 October 2008