



Sustainability Advisory Committee

**Tuesday 31 January 2023
6.00pm
Council Chambers
209 Comur Street, Yass**

SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of the Sustainability Advisory Committee will be held in Council Chambers, 209 Comur Street, Yass, on Tuesday 31 January 2023, commencing at **6.00pm**

AGENDA

Page No.

Acknowledgement of Country

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declarations of Interests**
- 3. Confirmation of Minutes**
Minutes of Sustainability Advisory Committee held on 7 November 2022
- 4. Staff Reports**
 - 4.1 Revised Draft Sustainability Policy1
 - 4.2 Climate Change Action Plan Working Party6
 - 4.3 Draft South-East and Tablelands Regional Transport Plan7
 - 4.4 Committee Processes and Working Arrangements11
 - 4.5 Waste Management Update..... 12
- 5. Next Meeting – 18 May 2023**

Committee Members: Cr A Cameron, J Connelly, P Davidson, S Ecker, N Elliott, A Elvin, L McAlary, C Nelson, A Tewes, A Wardle



Minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee

Monday 7 November 2022

6.00pm

Annex, Yass Soldiers Memorial Hall, Comur Street, Yass

Table of Contents

No table of contents entries found.

Present

Cr Adrian Cameron (Chair), John Connelly, Peter Davidson, Ana Wardle, Nicole Elliott, Luke McAlary, Caitlin Nelson

Also Present

Chris Berry (General Manager)

1. Apologies

Alex Tewes, Saan Ecker, Alison Elvin

2. Declarations of Interest

Nil

3. Confirmation of Minutes

COMMITTEE DECISION

That the minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee Meetings held on 27 September 2022 taken as read and confirmed.

Davidson/Wardle

4. Staff Reports

4.1 DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

SUMMARY

A key function of the Committee under its 'Terms of Reference' is to update Council's Sustainability Policy. Based upon work and discussions to date the attached draft policy has been prepared for Committee members to review with a view to it being formally presented to a future Council meeting.

COMMITTEE DECISION

That:

- 1. Further work be undertaken on the draft Sustainability Policy.*
- 2. The Sustainability Assessment Framework document be finalised and included in the draft policy.*
- 3. Council staff provide, where possible, additional data to enable the completion of the benchmark points of comparison in the framework document.*
- 4. A Councillor Workshop with representatives from the Sustainability Committee be sought to make a presentation on the draft policy once it is completed.*

McAlary/Elliot

4.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

SUMMARY

Committee members have flagged the benefits of engaging with other Council Committees. Such benefits include the opportunity to potentially work together on shared interests and to build momentum for various Committee projects. It will also help in communicating the role and direction of the Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) across Council's governance structure.

COMMITTEE DECISION

That:

- 1. The Chairperson to approach the Chairpersons of the Youth Council, Economic Development Advisory Committee and Aboriginal Consultative Committee with a view to holding joint forums to enable the Sustainability Advisory Committee to provide a briefing on the Draft Sustainability Policy, the Committee's work priorities and identifying opportunities to work cooperatively.*
- 2. The Committee look to extend consultation arrangements with other Committees on a regular basis following the initial meetings.*

Nelson/Connolly

4.3 PROCESS FOR PROVIDING INPUT INTO UPCOMING POLICIES

SUMMARY

The Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) is charged with embedding financial, environmental, social and cultural sustainability into Council's operations through the continuous review of Council policies, projects and services. It cannot effectively do this unless it is integrated appropriately into the policy development processes and the design of Council services.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. The Sustainability Advisory Committee be given the early opportunity to be consulted on any current and future policy and strategy reviews that are relevant to the sustainability priorities of the Committee.*
- 2. A program of current and future policy and strategy reviews be provided to the Committee and discussed at a future meeting.*
- 3. Future Committee agendas schedule for discussion the identified policy and strategy development work.*

McAlary/Davidson

COMMITTEE DECISION

That a community led climate change action plan working party be established and report back to the Committee.

Nelson/Elliot

4.4 COMMITTEE PROCESSES AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

SUMMARY

The effectiveness of the Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC), particularly once it begins to engage in project work and establishes a program for the ongoing consideration of Council policy and practices, requires a heightened level of secretarial support. It may benefit from a more structured approach to its own work, particularly where it is seeking Council's cooperation in improving policy development.

COMMITTEE DECISION

That the report on Committee Processes and Working Arrangements be considered at a future meeting

Wardle/Davidson

5. Next Meeting

To be determined

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

4.1 REVISED DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

SUMMARY

At its 7 November 2022 meeting the Committee agreed that further work should be undertaken on the draft Sustainability Policy and that the Sustainability Assessment Framework document should be finalised and included with the Policy. Council staff were also to provide, where possible, additional data to enable the completion of benchmarks and points of comparison in the Framework document.

Finally, it was agreed that a Councillor Workshop with representatives from the Sustainability Committee should be sought to make a presentation on the draft policy once it was completed.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. *The revised Sustainability Policy and the finalised Sustainability Assessment Framework be endorsed by Committee members.*
 2. *Representatives of the Sustainability Advisory Committee brief Councillors on the policy at a Councillor Workshop.*
-

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

POLICY & LEGISLATION

- Environmental Sustainability Policy (adopted 2019)
- Draft Sustainability Policy

REPORT

Minor changes have been made to the draft Sustainability Policy (refer **Attachment A**) first tabled in November 2022 reflecting the input of various Committee members.

The Sustainability Assessment Framework (refer **Attachment B**) has also been finalised, however, there remain some data gaps principally related to the inability of Council to provide the requested information. The Framework nevertheless provides a sufficient evidence base for demonstrating how the Committee has determined its works program of short and medium 'priority areas for action' and longer term 'research and engagement activities'.

While the Policy and Framework document are self-explanatory, it is likely that Councillors will wish to be briefed on why the Committee has adopted the approach reflected in the Policy and it would be appropriate for Committee members to make themselves available to respond to any questions or concerns prior to the papers formally going before Council for consideration.

- ATTACHMENTS:**
- A. Revised Sustainability Policy (*Under Separate Cover*) ⇨
 - B. Sustainability Assessment Framework (*Under Separate Cover*) ⇨

4.2 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN WORKING PARTY

SUMMARY

At its November 2022 meeting the Committee discussed the establishment of a Climate Change Action Plan Working Party.

RECOMMENDATION

That the verbal report on the establishment of a Climate Change Action Plan be noted.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

POLICY & LEGISLATION

- Guidelines for Advisory Committees and Committees of Council

REPORT

At its November 2022 meeting the Committee discussed the establishment of a Climate Change Action Plan Working Party.

A verbal report will be presented at the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

4.3 DRAFT SOUTH-EAST AND TABLELANDS REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN

SUMMARY

The NSW Government has published the South East & Tablelands Regional Transport Plan with a horizon of 2041. The Plan is currently on public exhibition and submissions on the draft Plan must be made by Friday 24 February 2023.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

That a submission be made on the draft South East & Tablelands Regional Transport Plan drawing upon the issues raised in this paper; particularly the adverse impacts of Yass not being classified in the draft Plan as a 'strategic centre' as well as the consequences of the draft Plan's underestimation of likely population growth in Yass Valley up to and beyond 2041.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

POLICY & LEGISLATION

Nil

REPORT

The NSW Government has published a draft *South East & Tablelands Regional Transport Plan* (refer **Attachment A**) with a horizon of 2041. The stated objectives of the plan are to:

- (i) Improve connectivity
- (ii) Increase modal options
- (iii) Provide equitable, accessible and secure transport for all
- (iv) Provide a safe network
- (v) Transition to net zero emissions
- (vi) Provide appropriate regional infrastructure
- (vii) Increase the resilience and adaptability of networks to shocks and stresses
- (viii) Provide efficient freight and supply chains across the region
- (ix) Support the visitor economy.

Submissions on the draft Plan must be made by Friday 24 February 2023.

Work on the *draft Regional Transport Plan* has been carried forward throughout 2022 and the release of the latest draft is the final step before the Plan is completed.

It is understood that opportunity to comment earlier in the Plan's formulation has been provided to Council (with a Council staff member participating in at least one workshop) and also to the Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CRJO). The nature of Council's input and that of the CRJO is unknown.

There is a raft of issues raised in the *draft Regional Transport Plan* which have implications for Yass Valley, some of which are identified below. However, the two chief concerns are arguably the fact that Yass is not treated as a 'strategic centre' for the purposes of future transport planning and that Council's own population projections are significantly higher than those used in the draft Plan.

1. Implications of not being considered a Strategic Centre

Yass is not treated as a 'strategic centre' under the *draft Regional Transport Plan* and, given the hierarchical and formulaic approach to regional planning evident throughout the document and how it

flows into NSW and Federal Government funding arrangements, this has serious implications for Council.

For example, Tier 2 connections in the *draft Regional Transport Plan* address connecting towns and villages to the nearest regional city or strategic centre and the need to expand modal options. The objective of the proposed Tier 2 improvements in the *draft Regional Transport Plan* is primarily to improve day -return service frequencies between smaller towns and villages and their nearest strategic centres.

Six examples of Tier 2 connections that will be investigated under the *draft Regional Transport Plan* are listed on page 36 including improving connections between Young, Harden and Boorowa. Yet nothing is said about investigating connections between Yass and its surrounding towns and villages like Murrumbateman, Binalong, Bowning, Bookham, Wee Jasper, Gundaroo or Sutton.

Equally, when it comes to Tier 3 connections that cover the need for better transport connections within centres, Batemans Bay, Bega, Cooma, Goulburn, the Southern Highlands cluster and Young are all considered as sites for the possible expansion of a trial currently being followed through in Queanbeyan under the Regional Cities Services Improvement Program, but not Yass. This is despite its equivalence in size and geographical spread to the likes of Cooma and Young.

Looking at the issue more broadly, there is no consistency as to what is a 'strategic centre' across the NSW planning documents. For example, in the *South-East & Tablelands Regional Plan 2036* the town of Young is deemed to be a 'town centre' but in the *draft Regional Transport Plan* is upgraded to be a 'strategic centre' as is Cowra (admittedly, the current *draft Regional Transport Plan* treats Young as a 'strategic centre' but provides no substantive explanation for this change in classification).

The definition of a 'strategic centre' in the current *Regional Plan 2036* is simply a centre that it is "the largest commercial component of any location in the region and that (it) provide a full range of higher-order services, including access to hospitals and tertiary education services". In the *draft Regional Transport Plan*, it is described as a "hub for surrounding towns and villages" and a centre that "provides day-to-day services". The new *draft Regional Transport Plan* says that 'strategic centres' are "well-serviced centres with opportunities for new housing and employment growth. Each strategic centre has unique characteristics, localised economies and communities that influence change and growth as a 'place'".

All three definitions surely could be applied to Yass; whether measuring in terms of population size, commercial activity, or service offering include health and education facilities.

The fact that Yass is proximate to a capital city in Canberra should not preclude it from being recognised as a 'strategic centre'; which is presumably the chief rationale for it being classified as a 'town centre' only. Indeed, Queanbeyan which is much closer to the ACT is treated as a 'strategic centre' and while, admittedly, its population is larger than that of Yass, its economic position is as dependent as Yass upon its proximity to Canberra, if not more so.

The lesser status ascribed to Yass under the *draft Regional Transport Plan* is also arguably at odds with major actions in the current *Regional Plan 2036* such as 19.1 which speaks of developing "a cross-border transport model that incorporates the ACT and the Queanbeyan-Palerang and Yass Valley Local Government Areas" and 19.2 which proposes the preparation of "an issues and options paper on cross-border public transport that maps public transport services and demand, and addresses legal and contractual barriers".

The inconsistency and incongruity of not treating Yass as a 'strategic centre' is also evident in the discussion of Tier 1 connections on page 32; these being between capital cities, regional cities, and strategic centres alone. In this short discussion Yass is listed as if it is a strategic centre. Moreover, the map on page 33 of the draft Plan shows five Tier 1 connections flowing into Yass from Canberra, Goulburn, Cowra, Young and Albury/Wodonga (more than any other centre identified in the map).

Any submission seeking to change the definition of Yass from a 'town centre' at this late stage in the development of the document is unlikely to be successful. However, the submission should make the case that for all intents and purposes Yass township should be treated as a 'strategic centre'.

Accordingly, Tier 2 and 3 connectivity initiatives in the Plan should explicitly identify Yass Valley as ‘within scope’ to ensure it does not miss out on future funding or service improvements.

2. Population Projections

The *draft Regional Transport Plan* rightly places a strong emphasis on the impact of population growth in meeting future transport needs. However, the projections for the growth of Yass Valley used in the document based upon ABS data and Department of Planning modelling are for a population in 2041 of only 20,684 when Council’s very own projections in the *Yass Valley Settlement Strategy* are for a population by 2036 of near 28,000 with much of this significant growth in Murrumbateman.

The *draft Regional Transport Plan* suggests that the LGA’s with the most significant growth are Queanbeyan-Palerang, Goulburn-Mulwaree, and Wingecarribee and there is a related emphasis on planning for transport needs in these LGA’s, looking particularly at the corridor from Wingecarribee into Greater Sydney and Goulburn and Queanbeyan into Canberra.

None of these three LGA’s have projected increased populations that match the two-thirds increase in population over the period in question projected in Council’s *Settlement Strategy*.

Population growth in Yass Valley, and particularly growth in Murrumbateman and the associated stresses along the corridor to Canberra, does not figure at all in the document other than in recognising the current works to expand the Barton Highway. That is, there is no real appreciation of likely higher demands in the future.

In fact, given the relative proximity of Murrumbateman to Canberra (approximately 40km) as compared to 90km between Goulburn and Canberra, and the presumably higher percentage of workers in the Yass Valley LGA that commute to Canberra daily than do from Goulburn Mulwaree, it seems that the emphasis on the later at the expense of the former is entirely askew.

Meanwhile, in respect of links between Queanbeyan and Canberra consideration is given in the *draft Regional Transport Plan* to investigating rapid public transport links between the two, but no thought seems to have been given to such a service between Murrumbateman and Canberra. Equally consideration is being given in the *draft Regional Transport Plan* to the further trialling of on-demand bus services from the coast through Braidwood, Bungendore and Queanbeyan into Canberra, but no thought is being given to similar trials north-west of Canberra in the growing population centres of Yass Valley.

The failure to recognise Council’s higher population projections in the *draft Regional Transport Plan* is also inconsistent with the recognition and continuous referencing in the current *Regional Plan 2036* of housing pressures in Yass Valley and associated population growth. Indeed, the current *Regional Plan 2036* on page 67 acknowledges explicitly that the “local centre of Murrumbateman will experience substantial growth over the next 20 years” and further identifies an expected increase of at least 6,250 people by 2036 in Yass Valley. That is, much more than the 3,403 increase in the 20 years to 2041 included in the *draft Regional Transport Plan*.

This inconsistency and its implications for Yass Valley should be pointed out in any submission on the *draft Regional Transport Plan* and not only the figures adjusted accordingly, but its implications for future transport design in the Valley incorporated into the final iteration of the Plan.

It is worth noting that the new *draft Regional Transport Plan* ‘walks away’ from speaking of Murrumbateman as a growth centre, rather flagging that growth is contingent upon resolving infrastructure issues like water supply and defaults back to the using the more conservative population projection of 20,684 by 2041. The *draft Regional Transport Plan* is then effectively written on the basis that these obstacles will not be overcome and ‘under-plans’ for the future transport needs of Yass Valley accordingly. At the same time, the new *draft Regional Transport Plan* concedes that Yass may well become a ‘strategic centre’ in the future.

3. Other matters:

- The *draft Regional Transport Plan* proposes the establishment of a NSW – ACT Cross Border Transport Working Group. Council should look to be an active member of this working group.

- The *draft Regional Transport Plan* raises the need for appropriate infrastructure to support net-zero emissions transport and Council should commit itself as much as practical to supporting the provision of such infrastructure across the LGA.
- The *draft Regional Transport Plan* flags that it will work with LGA's to support 'active transport' initiatives including the concept of the 15-minute neighbourhood but, again, the emphasis when it comes to identifying possible future initiatives is on links between Queanbeyan and the ACT. There is no recognition of the numbers of people in Yass Valley who also live close to the border. Council's own work on 'active transport' including funding for development of the Yass Spur line could be flagged as indicative of the potential to create better more sustainable communities through improved transport options.
- The *draft Regional Transport Plan* recognises the likely impact of ageing populations on transport demand but there is little sense in the document that this will have a disproportionate impact upon those LGA's with more aged populations or the impact on those LGA's which are closest to the major health hub that is Canberra.
- In discussing road freight, the *draft Regional Transport Plan* acknowledges the issues regarding 'first and last mile' impacts but says nothing about how those impacts are not properly recognised in local road funding models. It also pays particular attention to the major routes such as the Barton, Federal, Princes and Hume Highways but says little to nothing about the impacts of freight on secondary routes such as Burley Griffin Way or Lachlan Valley Way.
- It is notable that there is no reference in the *draft Regional Transport Plan* to the by-passing of Murrumbateman when specific reference is made to plans to do so in Moss Vale and Moruya.
- While the general impacts of COVID are acknowledged in the *draft Regional Transport Plan*, eg. the growth in people working from home, there is no discussion of the particular impacts of COVID in the region. In particular, the flight from major population centres such as Canberra whilst maintaining proximity to those centres is having and will continue to impact upon housing, lifestyle and transport demands in Yass Valley.
- In relation to the stated objective in the *draft Regional Transport Plan* of increasing the resilience of transport networks to the impact of shocks and climate change, Council could provide some graphic examples of the negative impacts on business activity and community amenity when there is limited or no redundancy in the road network, particularly the recent impacts on wineries and other businesses in and around Murrumbateman.

ATTACHMENTS: A. Draft South East Tablelands Regional Transport Plan (*Under Separate Cover*) [↔](#)

4.4 COMMITTEE PROCESSES AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

SUMMARY

At the November 2022 Committee meeting a report on Committee Processes and Working Arrangements was deferred for further discussion and consideration at a future meeting. The November 2022 report is now re-presented.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Sustainability Advisory Committee formalise roles for the provision of secretarial support and the ongoing work program of the Committee, including the development of meeting agendas, the preparation of minutes and liaison between members and Council, and establishing responsibilities for the ongoing work of the Sustainability Advisory Committee.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Advisory Committees are provided with Council staff support in preparing business papers and minutes. In addition, senior staff are made available to provide advice to the Committees in relation to matters on the agendas. Staff also prepare reports for the Committee on matters referred for input and advice.

There are no additional resources provided for Committees in the Operational Plan.

POLICY & LEGISLATION

- Guidelines for Advisory Committees and Committees of Council

DISCUSSION

Council's resources are limited and its ability to provide secretarial, let alone policy and research support, is stretched across a range of Committees.

However, for the SAC to prove effective it will require not only that members take an active role in project work and regularly convene to consider Council's policy development work but that these efforts are adequately supported, coordination and aligned through the oversight of the SAC.

From early 2023 once the *Sustainability Policy* is adopted, it is likely that Working Groups will need to convene out-of-session, full Committee meetings may need to be scheduled more frequently, papers drafted to focus decision-making and detailed records of discussions kept so that matters don't slide out of sight. There will also be a need for increased engagement with Council staff and Councillors on specific projects and issues and this needs to be both facilitated by the Executive and directed through the SAC to maximise the return on our efforts.

This 'formal' work of course all needs to be backed-up by informal but regular communication; either electronic or face-to-face. In essence, we need to support each other's work and contributions by ensuring we all know our respective roles and where our work is at.

While Councillor Cameron obviously has a key coordinating role in these matters as Chair of the Committee, he cannot personally be expected to take carriage of these administrative tasks given his other Councillor-related responsibilities.

The matter for discussion then is:

- (i) What structure would best support the SAC's work
- (ii) Who else is best placed to help
- (iii) In what roles

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

4.5 WASTE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

SUMMARY

To present an update report on waste management activities.

RECOMMENDATION

That the update report on waste management be noted

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil at this stage

POLICY & LEGISLATION

- Yass Valley 2022/26 Delivery Program & 2022/23 Operational Plan

REPORT

The following update on waste management activities in Yass Valley.

FOGO

From previous discussions on the introduction of a FOGO service this was deferred pending the release of the CRJO Waste Management Strategy. The strategy was expected to be released in December 2022 but this has not yet occurred. The NSW Government has set the target for all households in NSW to have a food waste collection service by 2030

Circular Economy

CRJO Council waste managers have been invited to a workshop being conducted by the ACT Government on a regional approach to growing the circular economy and identifying sites for enterprises to be established.

The workshop is being held on 6 February 2023 and Council's Manager Facility & Waste Assets, Tony Stevens, will be attending on Council's behalf.

Recycling

Council has a contractual arrangement with Regroup to take household recyclables to Canberra for processing. Five other NSW Councils around the ACT have similar arrangements.

As you may be aware on Boxing Day 2022 a fire at the Hume Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) all but destroyed the complex.

The ACT Government and Regroup initiated temporary arrangements to store recycled material from NSW Councils at the Hume site. NSW Councils are continuing to collect household recyclables and transporting them to Hume.

The reestablishment of the ACT MRF is likely to take two years.

In the meantime, Regroup is transporting the recycled material to Sydney and Melbourne to facilities with capacity to process the material from the ACT and surrounding Councils.

Council's Manager Facility & Waste Assets, Tony Stevens, is negotiating with Regroup for a continuation of our current arrangement to transport recyclable material to the ACT. The cost to Council is likely to increase due largely to the increase in transport costs. These increased costs will be considered as part of the 2023/24 Operational Plan and are likely to result in increased waste collection charges.

ATTACHMENTS: Nil