

Lightning Ridge Area Opal Reserve

SUMMARY

Board meeting held on Monday, 8 May 2023

Board meeting 14 March 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

Board Handover and Induction meeting

The minutes of the Board Handover and Induction meeting held on 14 March 2023, as amended, were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

Action Items

The Action Items were discussed noting matters listed on the Agenda for consideration, updates provided and items completed and removed from the list

Further discussion followed on:

- Preparing a scope of work and plan for the eradication of Hudson Pear with the intention to spray on the boundaries of the Reserve and utilise the bug on internal areas to contain the spread of Hudson Pear. A weeds expert was to be identified and quotes obtained noting the person would need to be experienced in preparing plans and collating information. Mapping information received by the Reserve could be shared plus any research undertaken with a five (5) year plan required. The Hudson Pear Task Force minutes should be reviewed to obtain the name of the cactus expert.
- Cost of fencing at Muttabun with an insurance claim lodged.

Public Platform - Nil.

Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

Matters for Decision

Report on Interest Rates for Term Deposit

Directors noted and discussed the information provided, including the interest rates offered, the prospect of ongoing interest rate increases, varying the terms and amounts and retaining sufficient funds in the working account.

The Board agreed funds were to be placed on a 12 month term deposit with whichever of the two banks were prepared to offer the highest interest rate, namely Westpac or NAB.

Plan of Management Exhibition Responses

Directors noted and discussed the information provided and suggested amendments which appeared in italics following the public consultation process.

The changes to the Plan of Management (PoM) as discussed were adopted by the Board.

There were a number of specific issues in the PoM to consider with the suggestion a workshop be arranged involving the Board and consultants. The Board requested the Acting Reserve Manager collate the items discussed and prepare a response for Land SAS with a copy circulated to the Board.

Election of Deputy Chairperson

Directors discussed the election of a Deputy Chair and resolved that Rebel Black be appointed Deputy Chair.

Request for Short-Term Licence

Directors discussed the information provided and the conditions to be imposed as part of the terms of the licence granted eg no interference with any activities the Reserve considered reasonable and a prohibition on impeding mining on the area. No title to the land would be granted by the Licence with the use of the land being for the purposes of undertaking revegetation, planting local, native plants (not weeds) and ensuring Hudson Pear was kept under control as proposed. The Acting Reserve Manager would consult with Wendy Spencer on the native vegetation within the area noting there was also vegetation database and mapping available for Walgett. It was suggested the term 'management' not be used in the documentation and no harvesting, collecting or picking of seeds or leaves or sale thereof would be permitted.

Discussion followed on the consequences of non-compliance with licence conditions. The Acting Reserve Manager would need to visit the area to check on compliance noting this may incur additional costs, both monetary and time wise. It was suggested a compliance check be undertaken on a 12 month basis, with any further renewal subject to the compliance with the terms of the licence.

The Board requested the Acting Reserve Manager draft a short-term licence and circulate to the Board for review and approval.

Signatory Policy

Directors noted and discussed the Signatory Policy, record keeping requirements and documentation provided.

Directors requested an internal procedure be developed to ensure any new incoming person was able to follow the process. The delegations limits were in place and an expenditure policy had been approved by the Board noting the development of a Budget was required. Crown Reserves Improvement Fund (CRIF) items were limited to the amount of the grant applied for, noting the usual practice was to obtain three quotes for any items to be purchased or work to be undertaken.

The Signatory Policy, subject to the amendments required, was adopted.

Matters for Decision

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report as at 1 May 2023 was discussed and accepted. A meeting on Budget development was required, with the issue prioritised to have a Budget in place from 1 July 2023.

Manager's Report

The Manager's Report was tabled with the following highlighted:

- Meeting with the Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG), Healthy Waters Forum to gain awareness of the water projects and aspirations of DEG. The Ramsar wetlands protection and Coocoran Lake restrictions were noted with further work being undertaken by DEG to prevent future cultivation of the area.
- Email to Castlereagh Macquarie County Council (CMCC) on the requirement for a short term licence. Fencing and signage was required to be maintained in accordance with the proposed Licence noting payment was not sought by the Reserve.
- Office set up was continuing with an LED lighting subsidy business engaged, however the process was quite involved. Quotes were being obtained for the office signage noting the new phone contact number.
- Maintenance of the Wandella Homestead to be included as a percentage of costs in the Budget to be developed.
- RFS issues including bushfire mitigation, hazard reduction work, containment lines and fire break plans were being addressed.
- Grading works and oversight required by the Acting Reserve Manager including ensuring signs were erected and an assessment of the work completed prior to sign off on payment for the work.

The Manager's Report was accepted.

Mining, Exploration and Geoscience Landholder Detail Issue

Directors noted and discussed the information provided with the Acting Reserve Manager to monitor the matter to ensure notices were forwarded to the Reserve and payment advices received.

Advertising in Lightning Ridge's Prospector

Directors discussed and agreed to the listing of the Reserve in the Prospector as recommended with a business ad to be prepared for next year's publication.

Enquiry to Run Stock on Reserve

Directors discussed and agreed stock was not permitted on the Reserve due to the risks in spreading Hudson Pear.

Reserve's EOI for Part-Time Spray Job

Directors noted and discussed the information provided. The position could be considered under the PoM for engaging staff, delegating tasks and the like with funding yet to be obtained to determine if the work was economical for the Reserve to undertake.

Plan of Management

Directors discussed the information provided noting issues already considered for the response on the PoM amendments. The PoM was reviewed every five years from formal adoption noting the action plans would need to be addressed and prioritised for completion. The matter was to be retained as a standing agenda item.

The Board agreed that following the Minister's sign off of the PoM, noting a new State Government was now in place, a separate meeting was to be organised for Directors to discuss and agree the action priorities.

Roads and Tracks

Directors discussed the information provided noting Mundaroo Road was not included and all costs would be included in reports provided.

Funding/Grants

Directors noted and discussed the information provided. There appeared to be no limitation on the Club Grants NSW amounts and consideration was required for applying for funding and grants for roads and maintenance costs as part of business operations and Budget considerations. The aim should be to fund projects to add significant value long term with the involvement of all parties including State Government, local Council and Crown Land.

Hudson Pear

Directors noted the information provided and prior discussions on Hudson Pear.

Allawah Exclusion Zone - noted.

Crown Land Licences

Directors discussed the information provided noting it was in the Reserve's interests for the Walgett Shire Council to manage the tip, ensure fencing was erected and assume responsibilities for the waste area. A licence had been granted by the Reserve pending the grant of the lease to Council by Crown Land with the need for the process to be finalised in a timely manner. It was suggested the Reserve contact Council to offer assistance with the process to have the tip area removed from the Reserve's land and responsibilities.

The annual fee for the licence had been waived with the nil invoices still to be recorded. The benefits and subsidies provided by the Reserve to the Community should be acknowledged as a local community contribution by the Reserve and included in any Annual Report.

People needed to be informed on the availability of the Public Forum with a contact form required to add to the website. Samples of forms from other organisations should be reviewed noting consideration would also be required on the conduct and conditions for the forum.

Occupational Health and Safety

Cochineal Tubs a Hazard - noted.

Cochineal Tubs Fall off Trailer while Transporting - noted.

Large-Scale Bushfire on Reserve - noted.

Grawin Hazard Reduction Burn - noted.

Fire Break Plan at Coocoran - noted.

Subsidence on Yellow Car Door Tour Road - noted.

Fatality on Emu's Field

Directors noted the fatality had occurred outside the Reserve, with the Department now investigating the matter.

Directors' Updates

Wendy Spencer advised one of the Aboriginal Groups should be included in any review of environmental factors and requested the Reserve write to MEG requesting information on the REF if new areas were being opened up for mining. The Reserve was the land manager, a stakeholder and on behalf of members, a copy of the new REF should be requested for consultation and comment.

Ormond Molyneux advised LRMA had written to the Reserve regarding concerns on the changes for local titles and the need for action to be taken. The current policies by MEG were affecting the whole mining industry and mining was an important part of the management of the Reserve with income received from opal mining. The Department's website was confusing and the titles process and renewals were not being completed in a timely manner.

The Chair suggested LRMA should contact the Council's new General Manager with a united front required to approach the Minister on the issue. The Crown Land contact details and bullet points on the issues to address were to be forwarded to the Acting Reserve Manager with further discussions to be held on a response.

Correspondence In/Out - noted.

END