

Lightning Ridge Area Opal Reserve

SUMMARY

Board meeting held on Monday, 10 July 2023

Request for Bulk Fill

Discussion followed on the request for the supply of bulk fill with the Board agreeing 16,600m³ fill stockpiled on the Reserve be provided to the AOC, with the Acting Reserve Manager authorised to negotiate the terms of the gift of the bulk fill, including suitable recognition of the Reserve and remediation of the site.

Welcome to Country

Brenda McBride provided the Welcome to Country and acknowledged and paid respects to the traditional owners of the land where the meeting was being held. One minutes silence was observed.

Previous Minutes

Board meeting 8 May 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2023 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.

Public Platform – nil.

Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

Matters for Decision

Budget for 2023-2024

Directors discussed the information provided, with the following highlighted:

- Mining claims fees may be lower.
- Costs for Hudson Pear and Roads are expected to increase.
- Road maintenance schedule remained as is. No corresponding funding was provided by Council or Crown Lands although licence fees were collected, with efforts to continue to obtain further road funding. A base line road maintenance budget plus a five year plan would be maintained with people requested to contact Council if there were any issues.
- Bushfire mitigation amount estimated. The Glengarry hazard reduction was scheduled for later this year and a fire risk mitigation plan had been completed for the next five years.
- Income producing assets or profitable commercial enterprise or idea was required. If additional funding was not received there would be no additional funds for fire mitigation or Hudson Pear eradication.
- Costs for delivering Government services.
- A campaign was required to promote opal mining or tours.

The Board adopted the Budget presented.

Acquisition of Quarry

Directors noted further investigation was required and more information obtained, together with a site inspection. The Acting Reserve Manager was authorised to investigate the matter further including the Quarry licence in place and the terms, together with a diagram of the site location and boundaries.

Fencing Materials from Transport NSW

Directors noted the information and previous agreement to acquire the materials.

Walgett Shire Council Development Proposal

Directors noted the information provided with submissions on the development proposal due by 13 July 2023. Directors agreed the Reserve lodge a submission on the Walgett Shire Council Development Proposal requesting a fence be installed around the development site and for native plants to be used.

Request for a Short-Term Licence

Directors discussed the information provided noting the unusual circumstances. The Board approved a Short-Term Licence of 12 months to enable a site investigation to be conducted at a cost of \$500 plus GST.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report as at 29 June 2023 was discussed and accepted. It was noted no mining licences were able to be applied for and no compensation payments or expected income had been received from the Government. There were 1,800 claims on the Reserve and the issues would continue to be pursued.

Manager's Report

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

- Unauthorised removal of trees noting even removal for use as firewood required a permit.
- Unauthorised clearing of vegetation with the matter referred to the Compliance team.

The Chair advised a meeting had been held with the Minister for Natural Resources to discuss the blocked mining claims and the negative impact on the Budget and income of the Reserve due to no monies being received.

Promotional Material

Directors discussed the information provided noting positive feedback had been received on displays by the Acting Reserve Manager. It was suggested a pull up banner and sign be organised and a double sided or trifold brochure printed.

Crown Land Signage

Directors noted the information provided with discussion following on whether the Reserve should purchase and erect the signs on the Reserve. Financial assistance would be sought from Crown Lands.

The following suggestions were made:

- A flyer be produced to promote the work the Reserve had completed over a 12 month period.
- QR codes to be added to the signage.
- Develop a map with points of interest on the Reserve.
- Educational strategy with material and signs developed on topics, noting a balance was required.

Directors agreed a total campaign be undertaken including signage, Facebook posts and radio ads.

Request for Approval to Construct New Track - noted.

Mapping Technology for the Reserve

Directors noted the information provided with the consensus appropriate programs and technology for use by the Reserve be considered.

Funding/Grants

Directors noted the next round of Crown Reserves Improvement Fund (CRIF) funding was due to open around August 2023, with consideration to be given to priority areas. It was suggested areas of funding could relate to educational programs and projects on valuing the environment, native vegetation and managing country.

Plan of Management

Directors noted the Plan of Management had been sent to the Minister.

Roads and Tracks – noted.

Hudson Pear

Directors noted and discussed the information provided with the Acting Reserve Manager thanked for her efforts and ceasing the unsatisfactory work.

Bushfire Mitigation

Directors noted the information provided with Facebook and post office box drops to occur before September 2023.

Allawah Exclusion Zone - noted.

Crown Land Licences - noted.

Occupational Health and Safety

Grassfires Deliberately Lit - noted.

Directors' Updates

Wendy Spencer provided an update noting Minister Plibersek had been written to foreshadowing the need to extend the boundaries and areas of interest for better protection around Narran Lakes, which was Ramsar listed wetlands. Coocoran Lake was also important to the Dharriwaa and it was proposed to remove some weirs from the Narran River. A proposal would be provided to the Reserve on better environmental management of Coocoran Lake noting the Dharriwaa Elders Group were opposed to any farming or cultivation on or around Coocoran lake, with other options to be considered to manage environmental and Aboriginal heritage matters. Directors noted the area was gazetted outside the Reserve and there was no conflict or issue of concern.

It was noted cropping can assist to feed people with the practice having been conducted in the area from at least the late 1960's. There was a lot of lignum in the area and scientists were mapping the water birds noting the rivers around Walgett were important habitats for breeding and sustaining birdlife.

Any economic modelling or cross benefits analysis would be valuable to understand the economic benefits and cashflow to the community from farming/cropping noting some benefits relating to health, cultural and environmental may not be able to be monetised. The Reserve could ask for a cost analysis to be undertaken on the use of the Blacksoil region.

Other Business

Orchid Track Repair Request

Directors noted the information provided with the Acting Reserve Manager advising a considerable amount of work would be required for any repairs. It was suggested the owner be advised to also contact Council with any support to advocate on the provision of funding appreciated. No funds were available to undertake work at this time. However, if the grader was in the area assistance could be offered to grade a drain.

The Reserve was unable to fix all roads with the suggestion a policy and process was required which the public would be able to access and send through requests for work which could be included in a Five Year Plan of Management. Local contractors or fee for service providers could be engaged with the same communication and standard response provided to all.

Correspondence In/Out - noted.

Meeting Close

The next meeting is scheduled for 11 September 2023 and would be held in the Shed next to the Reserve's office.