



BRAIDWOOD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Comments on the QPRC Draft Operational Plan 2022-23

The Braidwood Community Association (BCA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) [Draft Operational Plan for 2022-23](#) (Draft Plan).

The comments given are also informed by the recent Braidwood community meeting held on 12 May and the supporting documentation which provided further clarity on the Draft Program, and by the information provided by Council on 11 May 2022 in the [‘Questions on Notice’](#) from the Public section.

Summary

- The BCA seeks an assurance from Council that all uncompleted projects, not under review, will be rolled over into the 2022-23 Operational Plan.
- The BCA would welcome a statement from Council regarding what steps it intends to take to improve its project management to ensure a better completion rate of projects.
- The BCA does not believe the provision of the proposed new Pedestrian Refuges provide best value for money, and requests that Council revisit their proposal and focus on the construction of footpaths instead.
- The BCA requests that Council gives an undertaking that there will be no cuts in real terms in annual funding for rural roads in the Draft Plan compared to the previous one, reflecting the importance given by the community to increase real funding for rural roads.
- The BCA welcomes the inclusion of the development of a Braidwood Structure Plan. It trusts that will be an inclusive process with ample time for the community to give input and drive this process.
- The BCA underlines the importance of drought proofing Braidwood’s water supply and requests it be fully consulted on this issue when Council considers the NSW Public Works report.
- The BCA urges Council to undertake more action in implementing the Urban Forest Cooling Strategy and not just have ‘Business as usual’.
- The BCA expects Council to ensure the preservation of Braidwood and its Setting as required by the State Heritage Listing of the town, and by the listing of many sites on the State and Local Heritage Registers.
- The BCA is keen to work with Council not only in the development of an Affordable Housing Strategy but also in its implementation.
- The BCA asks that sufficient time is given to the consultation process on future revenue options, so that organisations like the BCA have time to consult with their members and local community on the options and potentially propose alternative options and obtain feedback on these before decisions are made.
- Should the results of the service review process result in proposals to make cuts in services, the BCA expects that there will be full consultation with the community before any decisions are made.

Rollover of uncompleted existing projects

There are 34 Braidwood and Nerriga projects listed in the 2021-22 Operational Plan and the Delivery Program Update – July-December 2021. According to information provided by Council on 11 May 2022 in Questions on Notice from the Public, the status of these projects are as follows:

Summary of status of 2021-22 BWD & NRG projects				
Status	Number of projects	Value of projects	Number as % of total	Value as % of total
Completed	4	\$1,435,803	11.8%	8.7%
Possible Completion	8	\$2,878,721	23.5%	17.4%
Rolled over	6	\$1,669,000	17.6%	10.1%
To be Rolled-over?	13	\$12,011,830	38.2%	64.2%
To be Reviewed	3	\$250,000	8.8%	1.5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>\$16,576,354</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

The BCA understands that it has been a very difficult year with Covid and unusually wet weather, but to complete only 4 projects, accounting for under 9% of the value of current projects, so far this financial year is a very poor completion rate. Council hopes that a further 8 projects may be completed this year, but with just a month left and work yet to start on some of the projects it is inevitable that some of these will need to be rolled over to next year.

A further 3 projects are under review which all relate to the BWD - Office Refurbish & Smart Hub (see below).

This leaves 19 projects, or over 70% of all projects by value, which should be rolled over to 2022-23. Six projects which have already been rolled over are in the Draft Plan. The BCA is concerned that the other 13 projects which Council knows will not be completed have not been included. Was this a simple oversight or are these projects at risk of being cancelled?

The BCA seeks an assurance from Council that all uncompleted projects, not under review, will be rolled over into the 2022-23 Operational Plan.

The BCA would also welcome a statement from Council about what steps it intends to take to improve its project management to ensure a better completion rate of projects.

Please see Appendix 1 for a listing of the individual projects and their status.

Lascelles Street Upgrade

Lascelles Street is one of the projects which is yet to be rolled over into the draft Plan and is where Braidwood's supermarket is located. Two years ago, in its submission on the 2020-21 Operational Plan, the BCA commented on the state of Lascelles Street then as "Braidwood is known for its quilts, but even they could not design such an intricate pattern as the current road pavement!" The Street has only deteriorated further since then.

A tender to undertake the work was awarded by Council at its meeting held on 25 May. This project has been delayed by years and as a result the tender cost of \$1.5m now significantly exceeds the original estimation of the cost and the grant received for this work of \$800,000. A decision was made previously to allocate a further \$400,000 from the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, when it became clear the original cost estimations were insufficient, giving available funding of \$1.2m for the Lascelles Street upgrade. The solution to this shortfall problem is to shorten the length of work by 100m (originally 230m). The BCA questions whether to half do this project when all the road needs an upgrade is the sensible solution. It also questions whether this is something which residents in Queanbeyan would be expected to tolerate?

The BCA request that Council reassesses its decision to shorten the work on Lascelles Street and undertake the full project.

Carparking

The lack of adequate carparking in Braidwood is a key issue, particularly for businesses as it leads to lost commercial opportunities. Again, the project for BWD - Car park Wallace St with a budget of \$820,000 has not been rolled over with little visible sign of progress, although the BCA acknowledges that Council staff has commenced some informal consultation with the community. A small (25 spaces) carpark is included in the Major Project now called 88 Wallace Street Renewal, which has a projected budget of \$2.25m. The BCA would like to highlight the importance of this project on the main street of Braidwood and community expectations that it will be progressed.

Footpaths and Pedestrian Refuge

The only new projects for Braidwood listed in the Draft Plan are two Pedestrian Refuges, namely:

- 104645 BWD - Pedestrian Refuge Lascelles – Monkittee
- 104646 BWD - Pedestrian Refuge Lascelles – Elrington

These were identified in the [Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan](#) (BFPF) at a cost of \$25,000 each, while in the Draft Program they cost \$381,000 and \$410,000 respectively. In the answer to questions on notice from the Community to the 11 May Council meeting, Council staff stated that to meet Transport for NSW requirements they ‘need to ensure lighting of the refuge island meet standards. The inclusion of streetlights into the design and construction has increased the required budget for the refuge island considerably.’

The BCA agrees that the move of the Chemist to Lascelles Street (the Kings Hwy) has had significant impacts and is aware of concerns of cars having to cross the Kings Highway to park and to reverse onto the Kings Highway to depart. However, it is not aware that pedestrian traffic across Lascelles Street at Monkittee St has become a significant issue. There is also a need for footpaths to the Chemist along Lascelles Street, particularly on the southern side (which was not foreseen in the BFPF). If the principal reason for the refuge is to access the chemist, this will be during the day and the provision of lights is an unnecessary expense which will also delay the delivery of the proposed pedestrian refuge. If some of the funding is to be provided by Transport NSW, the BCA would reconsider its position.

The BCA requests Council staff to outline in their response to this submission what monitoring of pedestrian movements they have undertaken, representations they have received, and consultation conducted about the crossing of Lascelles Street at Monkittee Street to come to this decision.

Regarding the Pedestrian Refuge Lascelles – Elrington, the BCA sees a greater need for a crossing with lights to access the Recreation Grounds, which are used for training and night games when lights are required. Again, we ask what monitoring of pedestrian movements has been undertaken there to make this a priority ahead of footpaths along our residential streets.

The BCA does not believe the provision of the proposed new Pedestrian Refuges provides the best value for money, and that Council should revisit this proposal and focus on the construction of footpaths instead. Our surveys show that our community sees these as a high priority.

Braidwood Office Refurbish & Smart Hub

The BCA notes that the various previous proposals for changes to the Braidwood Office / Library, including new areas for community use, are not included in the draft Plan. This may be because of the need for more space for Council staff following the sale of the Bungendore office. Three previous proposals had different budgets, but none of them have progressed.

The BCA would like to note that it has submitted a proposal for a Braidwood Community Hub Project through QPRC’s Disaster Resilience Grant program. This proposal envisages a hub

which would become a central point for the community to share information, access services and use reliable internet. This hub could be located in the small meeting room in the Braidwood Council building, although a better option is the Old Library in Park Lane.

Rural roads

Better maintenance of unsealed roads was the number one issue in the BCA's survey of key issues for the new Council. This could easily be broadened to all rural roads. Given that the presentation of the various road programs keeps changing between years it is not easy to track changes in funding. An attempt to make a comparison is given below:

Summary of Appendix on Road Reseals, Rehabilitation and Resheeting						
Program	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	% change 2021-22 on 2020-21	% change 2022-23 on 2021-22	Funding Source
Local roads reseal and rehabilitation program	\$1,867,149					
Local roads reseal program		\$734,180	\$1,048,031		42.7	Council rehabilitation
Local roads rehabilitation program		\$968,109				
Local roads stabilisation program			\$1,015,000			
Regional roads reseal program	\$927,913					Council rehabilitation
Regional roads rehabilitation program		\$632,732				
Gravel resheeting program ¹	\$728,000	\$500,000	\$520,000	-31.3	4.0	Council resheeting
Reshape pavement and seal program		\$129,634	\$60,000		-53.7	Council reshape
Asphalt resurfacing		\$884,254	\$385,000		-56.5	Council resurfacing
Roads to Recovery program	\$1,527,709	\$1,527,709	\$1,527,709	0.0	0.0	Roads to Recovery
Regional Roads Repair Program		\$762,000	\$750,000			Regional Roads Repair
Regional Roads Stabilisation Program			\$750,000			
Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement resheeting (Feb + August 2020 floods)		\$7,531,397				Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement
<i>Total</i>	\$5,050,770	\$13,670,015	\$6,055,740	170.7	-55.7	
<i>Total excluding grant funding</i>	\$3,523,061	\$3,848,909	\$3,778,031	9.2	-1.8	

¹ Gravel resheeting program for 2022-23, is given by 'QPR - Local Roads Resheeting Program' as there is no Gravel resheeting program given in the Appendix 1.

The BCA notes that Council has been incredibly busy dealing with disaster recovery of roads and bridges in 2021-22 and received a significant amount of grant funding. Stripping out the grant funding reveals that Council expenditure on rural roads increased in 2021-22 by 9 percent to \$3.8mn. For 2022-23, expenditure looks like it will decline by 2%, when the costs of undertaking such work is escalating. This suggests a significant cut in real terms of the amount of work that can be done on rural roads.

During this period of prolonged exceptionally wet weather, and despite all the work by Council staff and contractors, the state of rural roads has deteriorated significantly and there is a need to step up maintenance, repair and restoration of rural roads.

The BCA requests that Council gives an undertaking that there will be no cuts in real terms in annual funding for rural roads in the Draft Plan compared to the previous one and, reflecting the importance given by the community, to increase real funding for rural roads.

The BCA observes that there is no Gravel resheeting program given in Appendix 1 (p88-95) in the Draft Plan. The BCA requests that it be included in the final plan as in earlier years.

Braidwood Structure Plan

The BCA welcomes the inclusion of an action to develop a Braidwood Structure Plan (p55) with a budget of \$30,000 proposed. The BCA would appreciate clarification of what this expenditure is for.

As the second highest priority for the Braidwood Community, the BCA trusts that this will be an inclusive process with ample time for the community to provide input and drive this process. It would be helpful if Council was to provide an issues paper at the beginning of the process to provide clarity on the scope and role of the Braidwood Structure Plan so the community can focus its attention on the relevant considerations.

The BCA assumes this Structure Plan will consider such vital issues as Braidwood Residential and Commercial Development Zoning and the question of a possible bypass for Braidwood.

The BCA is unclear whether the Structure Plan will consider other live issues of discussion within the Community. Some examples include: expanding Braidwood's water storage capacity; affordable and diversified housing; the location of new residential zones; a shared path around the outskirts of Braidwood; and the planting of trees down Wallace Street.

Braidwood's water supply

The BCA notes that one of the actions proposed is to consider NSW Public Works report on Braidwood's water supply (p68).

This is considered by residents to be one of the most important issues to be addressed following the water restrictions during 2019-20. To recap: following the prolonged drought and the Shoalhaven River ceasing to flow, Stage 2 restrictions were imposed on 22 November 2019, these were raised to stage 3 on 13 December and were escalated to stage 4 restrictions – the highest level possible – on 10 January 2020, with Council having to transport potable water to Braidwood. From 14 February 2020 restrictions were progressively reduced when the Shoalhaven River started to flow again.

Braidwood's water supply is reliant on water being pumped from the Shoalhaven River to a storage dam which holds 80ML. When the river stops flowing the water supply is turned off and the size of the storage dam is no longer adequate for Braidwood's growing population.

The BCA believes that residents in Queanbeyan would find the imposition of stage 4 water restrictions totally unacceptable and there is no reason why it should be considered acceptable for any residents in QPRC on town water.

The BCA underlines the importance of drought proofing Braidwood's water supply and requests it be fully consulted before any decisions are reached on this issue when considering the NSW Public Works report.

Urban Forest Cooling Strategy

The Urban Forest Cooling Strategy was adopted by Council on 23 March 2022 and contains a series of actions which will lead to environmental enhancement. To achieve this further resources are required, including:

- The recruitment of an additional tree officer and a biodiversity officer;
- Funds to purchase and plant a significant number of new trees;
- Funds to undertake the much-needed surveys of the health of the current tree population, the development of the database to manage this information, and importantly the improved maintenance of existing trees.

The draft plan's action in this area is simply to 'Identify and leverage funding opportunities to implement actions from Urban Forest Cooling Strategy' (p55) and is considered as 'Business as usual' with no new resources.

The BCA urges Council to undertake more action to implement the Urban Forest Cooling Strategy and not just have 'Business as usual'. As an example, Council could collaborate with community organisations and individual residents to help fund the purchase and planting of new trees and the replacement of trees as needed. Our active Land Care groups and the Braidwood Garden Club could be encouraged to actively seek opportunities to fund and plant trees, as has already been done on Bombay Rd next to Flood Creek.

Heritage

Heritage tourism is one of the strengths of QPRC, particularly as Braidwood is the only town in NSW to be on the State Heritage Register. In this respect the BCA welcomes in principle the proposed action to 'Draft appropriate heritage management controls for Braidwood township' (p55). However, it is not clear what this entails and the BCA would welcome an elaboration of this action.

The 15 year review of Braidwood's State Heritage listing, currently being undertaken by GML for Heritage NSW, will assist Council and residents to clarify any changes needed to the existing heritage management controls. This review is timely in view of the proposed development of a Braidwood Structure Plan. As part of this, a Braidwood Heritage Conservation Management Plan could be considered.

The BCA notes that Braidwood's heritage listing and the town's historic centre are significant economic assets for QPRC. To preserve the town's unique character, and to realise the economic potential identified in QPRC's tourism strategy, the BCA urges Council to advocate for more funding and assistance for owners of heritage listed properties in Braidwood.

Blackspot mobile/internet issues in QPRC

The BCA welcomes the inclusion of an action to lobby Government (State/Federal) to address blackspot mobile/internet issues in QPRC (p68). This is one of the most significant issues in rural areas and is not only a constraint on economic development, but also on safety and support during times of emergency.

Adopt Affordable Housing Strategy

This is a major and pressing issue at present and is expected to continue into the future. The BCA is very supportive of Council's decision on 9 March 2022 to develop an Affordable Housing Strategy (p55).

The BCA formed a Community Housing Subcommittee in early 2021 and we have been researching the problems and possible solutions for some time. There is much interest in affordable housing from all sections of the local community. The lack of affordable housing affects local businesses, essential workers, event organisers, singles and families now being priced out of the market, the growing number of older women in the community, and people who have lived locally for many years.

The BCA is keen to work with Council, not only in the development of an affordable Housing Strategy, but also in its implementation and the provision of a range of types of accommodation to address the changing needs of the community.

QPRC Budget

Future revenue options

The BCA acknowledges the difficult financial situation of QPRC with an operating deficit of \$8.4m expected in 2022-23 which is about 3% of the combine revenue and capital works of \$283m. Also of concern is that the current unforeseen inflationary pressures may make the actual outcome worse than predicted.

The BCA notes that Council have already implemented a number of austerity measures, such as a 5% reduction in materials and services, deferring recruitment for a number of vacant positions and increasing fees and charges by 4%. The first two actions may already be impacting on service delivery at the expense of ratepayers' and Council staff's welfare.

The BCA also notes that during 2022-23, Council will consider revenue options to take effect from the 2023-24 which will require some tough decisions from Council. The BCA welcomes the statement that these will be made in consultation with the community. We stand ready to be involved in this process.

The BCA asks that sufficient time is given to the consultation process on future revenue options, so that organisations like the BCA have time to consult with their members and local community on the options and potentially propose alternative options and obtain feedback on these before decisions are made.

Service planning and reviews

At the Community meeting held on 12 May, Council staff reported that Council is currently undertaking a comprehensive organisational service review process on a service-by-service basis. This is also included in the Draft Delivery Program (p25), but not currently in the Draft

Operational Plan. The BCA suggests that such an important activity should be spelt out in the plan.

The BCA endorses such a review, especially if it results in increased efficiencies without loss of services. There are a number of aspects where the BCA believes Council can improve its services, notably improving the completion of capital projects on time and on budget; improving how it responds to enquiries and fault reports; and improving the timeliness and ease of the planning application and certification process. The Council's website is also in need of significant upgrade, particularly the search engine.

Should the results of the service review process result in proposals to make cuts in services, the BCA expects that there will be full consultation with the community before any decisions are made.

Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted by Sue Murray

BCA President

On behalf of the Braidwood Community Association

29 May 2022

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Braidwood and Nerriga Projects in 2021-22 Operational Plan		
No	Project description	Status at 11/05/22
101067	BWD - Saleyards Lane Reseal	Completed
102065	NER - Nerriga Rd Section 4 -Reconstruct widen & seal-Durran Durra PJ	Completed
100871	Monkittee Bridge path	Completed
104249	BWD - Blackspot - Araluen Rd – Corridor Safety Treatment	Completed
104245	Braidwood Recreation Ground drainage channel	Possible Completion
102073	BWD - MR270 Cooma Road Jinglemoney Rd to O'Briens - RRRP	Possible Completion
102113	BWD - Cooma Road - Brick Kiln Bridge Replacement	Possible Completion
104369	BWD - Recreation Ground - extend stormwater pipe to enable skatepark	Possible Completion
104518	NER - Bindi Brook Causeway - LRCI	Possible Completion
104506	BWD - Shared path Wallace St to Services Club	Possible Completion
104507	BWD - Shared path Duncan St to Wallace St and Monkittee St	Possible Completion
104508	BWD - Footpath Elrington St between Wilson St and Duncan St	Possible Completion
104105	BWD - Pool Upgrade	Rolled-over
100944	BWD - Braidwood Saleyards upgrade	Rolled-over
102012	BWD - Cooma Rd/Krawaree Rd	Rolled-over
104299	BWD - Depot - Security gates and repair to workshop	Rolled-over
710036	BWD - Landfill reinstatement	Rolled-over
700043	BWD - Shoalhaven Pump station and rising main	Rolled-over
100557	BWD - Braidwood Recreation Ground Construction	To be Rolled-over?
104572	BWD - Braidwood Skatepark - BLERF	To be Rolled-over?
102064	NER - Nerriga Rd Section 3 - Construct & Seal - Ningeenimble Project	To be Rolled-over?
102066	NER - Nerriga Rd Section 5 - Recon widen & seal - Euradux Rd to Tates Ln	To be Rolled-over?
102088	BWD - Nerriga Rd Section 18 – Construct Intersection with MR51	To be Rolled-over?
104161	BWD - Mayfield Road – Reedy Creek Bridge Replacement	To be Rolled-over?
104370	BWD - Lascelles St Upgrade	To be Rolled-over?
104514	BWD - Wallaces Gap Rd - Back Creek Bridge Replacement - FCB	To be Rolled-over?
104515	BWD - River Forest Rd-Mongarlowe River Bridge Replacement - FCB	To be Rolled-over?
710035	NER - Waste Transfer Station	To be Rolled-over?
104540	BWD - Stormwater Improvement Program	To be Rolled-over?
100701	BWD – Lascelles Street upgrade - SCF	To be Rolled-over?
100862	BWD - Car park Wallace St	To be Rolled-over?
100879	BWD - Office smart hub/cultural space	To be Reviewed
104078	BWD - Council Offices - Customer Area	To be Reviewed
100972	BWD - Office Refurbish & Smart Hub	To be Reviewed
104658	NRG - Nerriga Recreation Area and Main Street Upgrade	New
104645	BWD - Pedestrian Refuge Lascelles-Monkittee	New
104646	BWD - Pedestrian Refuge Lascelles - Elrington	New
710035	NRG - Nerriga Waste Transfer Station	New

Sources: [QPRC Operational Plan 2021-22](#); [QPRC Delivery Program Update – July-December 2021](#); [QPRC Draft Operational Plan 2022-23](#); [Questions on Notice on 11 May 2022](#)