

Responses to Braidwood Community Association's list of six priority projects

The Braidwood Community Association (BCA) wrote to lead candidate Councillors for the upcoming QPRC elections on 28 August inviting them to endorse the BCA's list of six priority projects and commit to pursuing these issues over the life of the next Council should they and/or anyone from their ticket be elected as a Councillor (see proforma letter attached). The responses received are as follows:

Group A, WINCHESTER Independents

Thank you to the BCA for the hard work you do for the greater Braidwood community. Group A is proud to provide the brief responses below to the priority areas. With your support, Bill Waterhouse, our number 2 candidate, can become the first ever Braidwood and villages-based Councillor. We need people like Bill elected to Council who can strongly advocate on behalf of Braidwood and region. All Group A candidates look forward to continuing the strong relationship between Council and the BCA into the future.

1. Council has recently funded a third grading crew to help ensure our rural roads are maintained to a higher standard, to ensure the grading schedule is met and to better respond to weather events as required. We have also secured significant funding (\$13 million) from the Federal Government to spend on our rural road network. We have secured \$4.5 million from Steve Whan MP to finish the sealing of Nerriga Road.
2. The Braidwood Structure Plan has been a priority of the current Council, and the draft plan will be exhibited in December. We have worked with the BCA, BAVBC and the community when developing the draft plan. As we all know, Braidwood has its own unique planning issues which we will work together to address.
3. Water security is a vitally important issues for Braidwood and its future. As we know, the Shoalhaven had all but run dry just before the 2019 fires – since then the weather has turned and the Bombay Bridge has gone under over a dozen times. We will continue to work with the greater Braidwood community, and our State and Federal MPs to investigate storage options and the funding of these.
4. Harmonisation of water and sewer charges is on the agenda and will be addressed by the next Council. One of the benefits of the merger (and I am not saying there haven't been negatives) is the ability for Council to harmonise charges across the entire electorate, and to better 'share the load' as it were across the entire LGA.
5. We are very happy to work with the Community and progress projects that enhance the natural environment and have a strong track record of doing this throughout the last term of Council. We definitely need to progress projects to increase shade in town – Council has an Urban Forest and Cooling Strategy and we need to ensure it is implemented.
6. This is something I have worked to address but is not an easy fix – the BCA have been leading the charge to address the current transport issues, and we will continue to work together on this.

Kenrick Winchester, WINCHESTER Independents

Group B, SUSTAINABLE AUSTRALIA PARTY

Thank you for the opportunity to endorse the priority projects as outlined in the results of your recent survey, including the 'top 6' relating to better maintenance of roads; long-term strategic planning; securing Braidwood's water supply; harmonisation of water, sewerage and waste charges across QPRC; environmental enhancement; and community transport.

I will seek to deliver tangible results in all these areas while addressing the significant funding challenges currently facing the council and in a way that balances competing priorities across the QPRC Local Government Area.

I acknowledge there are justified concerns that the council may be 'Queanbeyan focussed' and I will diligently consider recent and ongoing projects that ensures equity and fairness for all communities across the LGA. All projects must be affordable, environmentally responsible and deliver results.

The Sustainable Australia Party is the only political party to put our environment first - and therefore our health, economy and quality of life. We are an independent community movement with a science and evidence-based policy platform. Not left. Not right. It is time to serve the interests of our communities by stopping overdevelopment and corruption.

I support the direction of the projects outlined and will work constructively with the new council to deliver responsible and equitable allocation of resources.

James Holgate, Sustainable Australia Party

Group C, LIBERAL

I am pleased to endorse the top issues identified in the BCA's survey and commit to fighting for each in the next term of Council. This will continue my record of successfully arguing for better roads maintenance, particularly in rural and regional towns and villages and my record of arguing for a better deal for Braidwood's residents, environment and future.

Ross Macdonald, Councillor, Liberals

Group D, LABOR

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the six key issues raised in the survey. Our response is below:

1. Over the last term of council, the Labor team advocated for and secured funding for an additional grading crew for the LGA. Doing so affirms our commitment to meeting the maintenance schedule for unsealed roads and we will continue our commitment to funding this crew during the next term of council. Labor councillors supported moves to clarify existing reporting requirements for both councillors and ratepayers about the roads maintenance schedule including reporting on what was achieved in the previous reporting period and what is planned for the future. We believe this demonstrates our commitment to keeping the community informed about this core council responsibility.
2. The Braidwood community has consistently shown their commitment to Braidwood and surrounding areas including for sustainable development and the support for tourism and business in the region. The Labor team is committed to matching the community's commitment to the whole range of strategic planning issues that impact the region. We have consistently championed heritage protection, and affordable and social housing in Braidwood and look forward to continuing this commitment towards a long-term strategic vision for the area.
3. A secure and reliable water supply is another core part of council business and the Labor team will continue to support efforts to achieve secure and reliable supply for Braidwood. We note that there have been several attempts to improve water security in the township, including an audit of non-chargeable water use from infrastructure defects and initial planning regarding the raising of the weir on the Shoalhaven River. Labor will continue to support measures to ensure water supply to the region.

4. The Labor team will support council staff in their endeavours to harmonise the water and sewerage strategy across the LGA. The intent to have an LGA-wide Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy is overdue and Labor will continue to support and advocate for this as a priority during the next term of council. We note that the path to harmonisation has included an unwelcome cost increase in Braidwood and reviewing fees and charges across the LGA will be an important piece of the IWCMS work.

5. The Labor team has specifically committed to a plan to beautify and enhance the treescape within the village. This includes developing and supporting a tree planting plan for Wallace Street. We note that an enhanced canopy has environmental and liveability benefits for the region and the Labor team is committed to supporting a cleaner, greener, and healthier LGA.

6. The Labor team is committed to support schemes that will encourage and facilitate community transport schemes in Braidwood and will commission staff to investigate schemes run in other similar areas. During the next term of council the Labor team will monitor council expenditure to recognise any opportunities there may be to improve transport infrastructure in the region while acknowledging that this is a particular challenge for our more remote communities where the provision of services incurs larger investment. We will work with council staff and the community to seek State and Federal government funding that may become available to support community transportation initiatives.

John Preston, for The QPRC Labor Team

Group E, HICKS Independents

Thanks for conducting the survey, knowing what people want is half the battle. Can I say, that these issues will be getting my full support should I be elected. Braidwood has missed out for far too long, and needs certainty about where we are going. I will look forward to working with local and community groups to establish what needs we have, and to get input on how to achieve the results. Rest assured I will be looking to push these issues over the next Council term.

Scott Hart #2, HICKS Independents

Group F, MACDONALD Independents

1. Better maintenance of rural roads

Yes. Our roads are the links people rely on for life. The schedule needs to be communicated so residents can see and manage their own schedule around this if possible. Transparency and accountability through clear communication is a large part of our platform. Some of the roads in our area are not safe for cars let alone in an emergency trying to get an ambulance to someone in need.

2. Long-term strategic plan for Braidwood

Yes, we are committed to the long-term strategic plan for Braidwood. For too long Braidwood has been the easy target for budget savings. With a local voice, Braidwood and our district will get the input we need. With Council putting pressure on Small Business owners, making it harder and potentially too expensive to run a business from home, there needs to be alternatives to their mandates such as rezoning and the ability to purchase / lease industrial land for development. Braidwood's heritage and tourism will also be high on our agenda within Council as this is part of the heart of Braidwood and should be taken seriously.

3. Securing Braidwood's water supply.

Yes. We all felt the impact of the 2019/2020 drought where water needed to be brought to Braidwood to maintain basic living standards. We will work with relevant experts to find the right solution to secure water for the future.

4. Harmonisation of water and sewerage charges across QPRC.

Yes. With the current water access charges increasing in Braidwood by 15.6% and Queanbeyan by 4.5% this is where fairness across all rates needs to focus, and we are committed to that. Queanbeyan need to spend in excess of \$110M on the required upgrade to the sewer management system which has been an issue for several terms of the Council and is now an urgent matter. Harmonisation across all rates and categories is required.

5. Environmental enhancement

Yes. It is well researched that tree planting in towns help to mitigate the climate impact of rising temperatures as well as the other significant benefits to the environment. Some of these local significant trees have Indigenous Cultural significance as well that needs to be recognised. These activities don't necessarily need Council funding, with a budget that is currently stretched beyond means, however they do need council support, with grants and approvals. Our aim is to remove any roadblocks for these environmental works to make it an easier and shorter process.

6. Community Transport

Yes. With an aging population in our township, we know first-hand how difficult it is getting our elders to appointments. Some of the federal government providers don't service this area and our council needs to fight hard for this to change. There are several other Council's in NSW who do help facilitate transport and community care that we will work with to find a solution. This is one area we are extremely passionate about.

Rachael MacDonald, MACDONALD Independents

Group G, THE GREENS

1. Better maintenance of rural roads

The Greens supported the 2024/25 budget allocation to fund a third council road crew to improve local road maintenance. A road grading schedule is available on Council's website. We would welcome any suggestions that the BCA has for improving public communication about road grading activity.

2. Long-term strategic plan for Braidwood

The Greens support the timely delivery of the Braidwood Structure Plan. We supported the 24/25 Operational Plan that provides staff resources to complete this work. We secured a commitment from QPRC Executive staff at the 28 August 24 council meeting to commence community feedback on the draft plan after the Christmas-New Year holiday break.

3. Securing Braidwood's water supply

Water security is a priority matter to accommodate new residents and businesses especially given climate change projections for the NSW south-east region. We worked to secure the publication of the NSW Public Works report on water security for Braidwood that QPRC commissioned after water could not be pumped from the Shoalhaven River in late 2019. Publication of this report gave this issue a focus and profile it seemed to be lacking until that point.

4. Harmonisation of water and sewerage charges across QPRC.

These charges remain different because Palerang and Queanbeyan are covered by separate Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) strategies. The Greens did attempt in June

2024 to reduce the 24/25 percentage increase in the Palerang charge on the basis that the works for which the charge was increased substantially have not proceeded, as QPRC, the NSW and ACT governments are exploring the possibility of building a potable water pipeline from Queanbeyan to Bungendore.

Harmonisation could occur by replacing two IWCM strategies with one LGA-wide strategy, as the NSW Government seems to prefer for merged councils. However, the full cost and pricing impacts need to be explored with the community before council makes any decision. For example, if the two IWCM strategies were merged into a single strategy, how would this affect cross-subsidy between towns for a potable water pipeline from Queanbeyan to Bungendore (which is proposed) and the temporary higher charge for users of the Queanbeyan Sewerage Treatment plant to help finance the plant replacement. In addition, there is the unknown cost of improving water security for Braidwood.

The Greens don't support imposing 'dividends' on the water and sewer funds, as the previous council approved, as this in effect an extra charge to users for essential services. The current Council has not imposed dividends.

5. Environmental enhancement

The Greens supported QPRC's Urban Forest and Cooling Strategy adopted in early 2022 and the formation of the Braidwood Common s355 committee to strengthen management of this community asset. We also endorsed Council's first policy and plan to better manage native roadside vegetation.

Funds for environmental improvements are meagre and we would like to see funding increased. Grant funding and volunteer involvement can supplement council funds but should not be a substitute for core funding to better care for the local environment.

6. Community Transport

The Greens agree that community transport is a missing component of our public transport system. It is of particular concern to elderly residents, people living with a disability and other residents unable to get themselves to medical appointments using private arrangements or limited public services. A good community transport service could also support more social activities. For example, if council is able to finance an indoor pool for Bungendore, community transport could make such a facility accessible for Braidwood residents during winter. The challenge will be sourcing funding. We note that Eurobodalla Shire Council operates a service that appears to rely on volunteer drivers. It would be better for the NSW government to fund services to improve access given that transport is an important service for regional and rural towns particularly those with limited medical services.

Katrina Willis, Councillor, The Greens

Group H, TASKOVSKI Independents

We appreciate the Braidwood Community Association's comprehensive survey and the clear articulation of the community's priorities. The six issues and projects outlined are indeed crucial for the future development and well-being of Braidwood and its surrounding areas. I am pleased to confirm that the TASKOVSKI Independent Group fully endorses these priorities and commits to advocating for them throughout the next Council term. Any questions please let me know.

Steve Taskovski, TASKOVSKI Independent Group

Group I, GRUNDY Independents.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comment on the recent BCA survey.

Firstly, I commend the BCA for conducting such a survey in the interest of the community. Such findings are vital in helping to forge QPRC related decision making so that it is relevant to the needs and aspirations of the community.

Group I, Grundy Independents, are very pleased to endorse this list and commit to pursuing these issues over the life of the next Council if elected. As lead candidate of Group I, and having engaged extensively with members of the local Braidwood community during my time as a Councillor, I can say that these issues are consistent with what the community tells me are the priority local issues.

1. Better maintenance of rural roads
2. Long-term strategic plan for Braidwood
3. Securing Braidwood's water supply
4. Harmonisation of water and sewerage charges across QPRC
5. Environmental enhancement
6. Community Transport

Sealed and unsealed roads have been a particular priority for me as a councillor. I have consistently followed up on behalf of residents, and have firmly maintained that all residents deserve safe, accessible roads to and from home, school and work.

The Long-term Strategic Plan, and a secure water supply are essential to provide coordinated planning and targeted development to give business and residents certainty and make for a well-connected, well-functioning community.

The recent harmonisation of water and sewerage charges, I believe, did not represent fairness for Braidwood residents. It was a shame that the related rescission motion proposed by Cr Macdonald, and cosigned by myself, was deemed unacceptable to take to Council.

Enhancing environmental aspects is integral in complementing Braidwood's innate aesthetic appeal while providing obvious practical advantages.

Community transport, must be in the mix as our population ages and if our residents are to remain independent, engaged and well.

Cr Mareeta Grundy, Councillor, GRUNDY Independents

Independent Candidate, GRAHAM, Richard

Thank you for the opportunity to receive the survey results setting out the top 6 issues and projects the BCA want the new Council to deal with, and seeking out my position on them.

Firstly, let me say the context of my running for council is to rollback Council's excessive 64% rate rise and councillor pay rises, stop vanity and pork barrel spending. I aim is get the Council on a sustainable economic footing that can keep all its core obligations to residents. The cost to do that must be within the means of residents to pay given all their other costs of life's necessities and pleasures.

That said, I have in the past, and I continue to support now the top survey items of: 1. Better Maintenance of Rural Roads, and 3. Securing Braidwood's Water Supply.

Regarding item 2, Long-term strategic Plan for Braidwood, this too I support, but I separated it from the others as I read the point as saying 'Council, tell us how we are going to be'. Of course, the local government council is the designated authority for such plans, but I do not

support a top-down dictate from Queanbeyan onto Braidwood. The genesis of such a plan should be from the people of the community.

Regarding item 4, Harmonising Water and Sewage Charges Across QPRC I advise, Be Careful What You Wish For! I've recently become aware of the huge disparity between Queanbeyan and Braidwood charges which is not acceptable in my opinion, but I'm not deep enough into the detail to yet understand why that is. Regarding my warning, presently Queanbeyan and the old Palerang water and sewage infrastructure is treated for accounting purposes separately. Old Palerang pays for its systems, while Queanbeyan (region) pays for its.

Queanbeyan is just about to embark on an estimated \$110 million new waste treatment project. Given the Council's track record of cost overruns, we should expect that to come in over \$150 million. The way things are now, that entire debt will be contained within the Queanbeyan (region) usage area. The risk of Braidwood promoting rate harmonization, would be if the seemingly innumerate councillors were returned, they could vote to economically merge the two systems, and instead of getting a lower rate in Braidwood, they could go much higher as you would then be paying for that new Queanbeyan system.

My personal track record of ecological stewardship through my work at Landtasia, projects with Landcare, and my membership in Mulloon Institute and involvement in the Mulloon Rehydration Project, would indicate that I would be supportive of Item 5, Environmental Enhancement.

For the reasons I stated in my opening to this reply, I don't support item 6, Council's involvement in public transportation. That is better performed by a private operator.

In conclusion, my campaign is about rolling back excessive rate hikes, cutting wasteful spending, and ensuring Council operates within a budget that reflects the financial realities of its residents. I'm not running to promise new projects, but to deliver essential services responsibly and affordably.

Richard Graham, Candidate for QPRC Council

Proforma letter

Dear [First Name]

I am writing to you again because the Braidwood Community Association (BCA), as with the previous Council elections, has been engaging with our local community to determine what are our priority issues and projects for Braidwood and district which we want the new Council to pursue.

The results of the survey are attached and represent the views of approaching 9% of the potential voters in our district, with the top 6 issues and projects we want on the new Council to progress being:

- 1) Better maintenance of rural roads – including fully meeting the maintenance schedule for unsealed roads and better communication of the grading schedule.
- 2) Long-term strategic plan for Braidwood - eg locations of future housing and industrial development, rezoning, possible bypass/ring road, social housing, commitment to heritage protection and beautification, tourism development etc.
- 3) Securing Braidwood's water supply - QPRC is undertaking a review of water security for Braidwood, which may consider additional source / storage options.
- 4) Harmonisation of water and sewerage charges across QPRC. Overall Braidwood charges are significantly higher than those charged in Queanbeyan. In 2024-25 they will be \$676 higher.
- 5) Environmental enhancement - eg. more tree planting for shade within town and along roads, protection of significant trees, management of creeks to improve public access, and encourage birdwatching and platypus viewing.
- 6) Community Transport – Council to investigate ways to provide or facilitate community transport for medical appointments and outings as done by other LGAs.

I would like to invite the [Group] to endorse this list and commit to pursuing these issues over the life of the next Council, should any other members of your group be elected as a Councillor. We will be publicising your response through the local media, social media, and our email list.

Please be aware that the BCA as a non-partisan organisation will not be endorsing any particular candidate or group.

Your group will also have an opportunity make a statement supporting these community issues at the forthcoming 'meet the candidates' meeting in Braidwood on 5 September at the Braidwood Servicemens Club at 6.30pm to which you have been invited.

I look forward to your written response by midnight on Monday 2 September please, so we can disseminate your response before the meeting on 5 September.

Thanks in anticipation.

Kind Regards

Sue Murray
President, Braidwood Community Association