

Response given by QPRC staff on 26 June 2024

#	Submission	Council Response	Recommendation
12	<p>SUMMARY – Full Submission Attached ⁶</p> <p>Draft Revenue Plan The 18% increase in general rates as a result of the SRV will further exacerbate the hardship being suffered by households in QPRC and it is therefore even more important that Council delivers, and be seen to deliver, its services to ratepayers in an efficient, timely and cost-effective manner.</p> <p>a. The proposed 15.6% increase in Palerang water access charge is not justified because of the changed situation regarding investment in new growth infrastructure in</p>	<p>a. The increase is in accordance with the adopted IWCM strategy. It is considered that the most prudent course of action is to continue with</p>	
	<p>Bungendore. The increase was required and approved by the previous Council 'as a result of the staged borrowing proposed'. But no additional borrowings have been taken out and so there is simply no justification for the proposed increase. The BCA therefore requests that Council overturns the decision of the previous Council and instead resolves that water charges increase by 4.5%, the same as for Queanbeyan water users. This is our most significant point in the submission.</p> <p>b. The BCA welcomes the continuation of the pensioner rebates and encourages QPRC to take all steps to bring this to the attention of eligible pensioner ratepayers.</p> <p>Draft Operational Plan: The BCA welcomes funding for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the carpark behind 88 Wallace St upgrades to Nerriga and Cooma Rds the review of the Braidwood Pedestrian Access and Mobility drainage at the Braidwood Recreation Ground Wasp control <p>The BCA is pleased that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Braidwood's water supply is being considered as part of the refresh of the Palerang IWCM Plan the Affordable Housing Strategy is progressing and the BCA has been involved in the process. Council is continuing to encourage people to join the Family Day Care program <p>c. The 15 Year Review of Braidwood's Heritage Listing by Heritage NSW is dragging on into its third year. The BCA appreciates the action taken by QPRC to date but urges Council to continue to lobby the NSW Government to get this review completed expeditiously.</p> <p>d. Blackspot mobile/internet issues remain real problems for residents in rural areas and the BCA is disappointed that the Draft Plan is again silent on this issue. We note that the 2022-23 Operational Plan had an action to 'lobby Government (State/Federal) to address blackspot mobile/internet issues in QPRC'. The BCA requests that such an action again be included in the final Operational Plan.</p> <p>e. Action DP4.2 of the Delivery Program 2022-26 is to 'Improve Council's network of unsealed roads' with activities planned every year. There has been no reporting on what has been done to achieve this action. The Delivery Program Updates and Annual Reports issued state that the annual target for grading roads is 749.6km. The performance given for 2020-21 is 97%, 2021-22 is 72% and 2022-23 is 106% and for July-December 2023 is 30%. This is quite variable and, in some cases, would be considered as 'Critical' in the traffic light system used. It is difficult to know the cause of this, but no doubt the heavy rains will have been a significant factor and so some allowance should be given.</p> <p>Draft Long-Term Financial Plan</p> <p>f. The BCA fully agrees with the decision by Council not to take a dividend from the water and sewer funds. The BCA urges Council to minimise the use of loans to fund major projects and believes it would be prudent to consider the</p>	<p>the adopted charging strategy in its current form and review as part of this current IWCM refresh, which may also consider an amalgamation of the Queanbeyan and Palerang Water funds.</p> <p>b. Noted</p> <p>c. Noted.</p> <p>d. A list of mobile black spots and priorities is being compiled for the Federal Government, in response to a request from local MP the Hon Kristy McBain.</p> <p>e. Maintenance grading activities are affected by weather, the availability of suitably trained staff and damage caused by natural disasters. The amount graded each year will vary and Council will continue to report on this metric to enable the community to see the work completed each year.</p> <p>f. Noted</p>	

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	<p>consequences of a water pipeline to Bungendore in its planning activities sooner rather than later.</p> <p>g. To facilitate the use of grants the BCA believes QPRC should consider creating a second grant officer position.</p> <p>Other reviews</p> <p>h. The BCA notes that there are a range of other reviews underway, namely: Braidwood Structure Plan, Braidwood Community Plan, Heritage NSW '15-Year Management Review of the State Heritage Register listing of Braidwood and its Setting', and the next stage of the Transport NSW 'Braidwood and Bungendore Transport Study'. The BCA urges that the synergies arising from these four processes are fully exploited.</p> <p>Progress by Council to advance the 6 Braidwood priority projects/issues</p> <p>i. In a review of the effort and progress by Council to advance the 6 Braidwood priority projects/issues identified by the BCA in consultation with the Braidwood community prior to the last election, the BCA rates Council's performance as 'Just under Average' in aggregate. See Appendix 1 for full review rubric.</p>	<p>g. The current resource is considered adequate for the demands and workload.</p> <p>h. Noted. The Braidwood Community Plan is currently with the Braidwood Community Association for review.</p> <p>i. Council appreciates the feedback from the BCA and will take the information on board. This will also be made available to the new council following the September 2024 election.</p>	

1 Appendix 1: Braidwood Community Association Rubric

Projects / issues Rating

Better maintenance of unsealed roads	Good, with staff effort 'Very Good' at times
Long-term strategic plan for Braidwood	Average
Securing Braidwood's water supply	Average
Environmental enhancement	Poor-Average
Preservation of Braidwood's heritage	Average
Harmonisation of water, sewage, and waste charges across QPRC	Very Poor

Response given by QPRC staff on 24 July 2024

'Questions on Notice' from the Public

1. Question submitted by the Braidwood Community Association

There were a number of unanswered questions and lack of feedback from the submission made on the draft QPRC Integrated Plans which answers would now be appreciated. Also, there are some statements made by the BCA to which staff did not respond to:

Off-street Carparking and Renewal of 88 Wallace Street

The BCA would appreciate confirmation that the associated project Stage 1 of [Renewal - 88 Wallace Street](#), with funding of \$1.4m from NSW RHF and \$800,000 from QPRC, will be rolled over into the 2024-25 Operational Plan. (p5)

Yes, subject to approval by the NSW RHF to amend the deed. An information report will be provided to Council on this project.

Roads

The BCA asked whether Council considers that the Wyanbene Causeway is also need of replacement? (p5)

Council will be undertaking a feasibility study to determine associated costs for replacement of the existing causeway Wyanbene Causeway with a bridge structure over the Shoalhaven River.

A recreational path around the outskirts of Braidwood for the benefit of residents and visitors alike remains a priority for the community, including the concreting of the current washed out gravel path along Bombay Road to Garvey Street' (p6). Feedback please?

The Braidwood Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan (2020) which is available on Council's website, <https://www.qprc.nsw.gov.au/Policies-Strategies-and-Plans/Strategies-and-Plans>, guides the current work programs of the projects identified as higher priority by the community at that time. Paths in the town that received high priority rating through the consultation and have been completed included:

- Wallace across Monkitee Bridge (including pedestrian fencing)
- Wilson Street along Ryrie Park through to the Hospital
- Coronation Avenue between Ryrie Street and the Servicemen's Club
- Elrington Street between Wilson Street and the Recreation Ground
- Lascelles Street between the Chemist and the Supermarket

While the shared path along Coghill Street and Bombay Road was identified as a route it didn't receive a high priority from the community consultation.

Council is currently seeking funding to review these plans and there will be an opportunity for the community to contribute and give feedback about the next phase of pedestrian and bicycle path priorities.

There is a need to have better and safer access to footpaths from roads. This issue has been raised many times by our residents, especially those who use mobility scooters or walking frames. We believe this would only require a small investment in concrete verges at intersections' (p6).

We acknowledge that it can be difficult to integrate concrete paths with gravel shoulders within the heritage town. Several ramps have been installed at the request of mobility scooter users, along with more than 20 new pram ramps. Residents are encouraged to notify these gaps directly with Council to provide clarity on the location of further issues.

Braidwood's water supply

The BCA again asks for a firm commitment from Council that existing water users in Palerang will never have to contribute towards the cost of the installation of Bungendore's water supply pipeline. (p6)

If Council decides to proceed with the Queanbeyan to Bungendore bulk water pipeline project, and unless it is then 100% funded from an external grant source, it is almost a certainty that existing Palerang Water Users will make some financial contribution to the project.

This is because of the simple fact of servicing any loan that might be required to forward fund the receipt of offsetting development contributions. Furthermore, the ongoing general user charges would also contribute to the operation and maintenance of the system. None of these prospects are inconsistent with the historical operation of the Palerang Water and Sewerage funds in any case and one need look no further than the substantial improvements made to the Braidwood Water and Sewerage schemes between 2006 and 2016. In that 10-year period many tens of millions of dollars were expended on the following initiatives:

Water

- New 2ML/d Dissolved Air Flotation and Filtration water treatment plant (WTP)
- Additional 1.5ML storage reservoir and the complete refurbishment and roofing of the 2 existing 0.55ML concrete reservoirs
- Replacement of the 2.2km trunk main from the WTP to Sandholes Road
- Reconstruction of the Shoalhaven Water Pump station
- Replacement of numerous reticulation mains
- The current program of replacement of all revenue water meters with NBIOT meters
- Implementation of digital telemetry system Sewer
- New 2000EP (equivalent persons) Sewage Treatment Plant (STP)
- Construction of new rising 1.5km sewer rising main from Coghill St to STP
- Replacement of all 3 pre-existing Sewage Pump Stations (SPS)
- Construction of reticulation and servicing of Victory Street creating catchment 4 together with new SPS (SPS#4)
- Construction and reticulation of West Braidwood including 2km+ of reticulation, 2 rising mains and 2 new pumping stations.
- New SPS#2 rising main.
- Implementation of digital telemetry system

Whilst some of these works were the subject of grants, they were also the subject of loan funds, the servicing of which fell to the responsibility of the respective Palerang Water and Sewerage customers more widely. On top of this, and in the light that growth had not yielded much in the way of development contributions, general W&S reserves funds were also used as appropriate. These reserves were drawn from all W&S customers and not just those from Braidwood.

The works above were identified early in the existence of the former Palerang Council through the commissioning of the Eastern Capital City Regional Council Braidwood Sewerage Status Report (2004) and the Palerang Council Braidwood Water Supply Status report (2005). Ultimately, these reports were the evidence needed to undertake the works described above and provided the argument for the amalgamation (circa 2006) of the former standalone Bungendore, Braidwood and Captains Flat Water and Sewerage funds into the single Palerang Water and Sewerage funds of today. Without this, it is unlikely that the full scope of the above works could have been undertaken, not without even more impact on individual user charges in the event that they remained quarantined on a scheme basis.

These works and their costs have been the beneficiary of the moderating effects of the Palerang Water & Sewerage fund models and so it would be if Queanbeyan to Bungendore proceeds. This is as it should be.

Heritage

The BCA notes that the Draft Plan has \$26,000 allocated for Heritage Grants, up slightly from \$25,000 in 2023-24, which is savagely down from \$150,000 in 2021-22. The BCA understands that it is easier to make cuts to discretionary spending like community grants in a period of budgetary austerity but hopes Council will be able to increase the funding for these grants as soon as it is feasible (p6-7).

Feedback please.

We are unable to provide a detailed response at this time. Increased funding for heritage grants would need to be a component of future Council budgets.

Environmental Programs

The BCA notes with concern that environmental actions appear to be continuing to be cut at a time when the effects of climate change are exacerbating extreme weather events, thus increasing the need for action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the varying impacts of a changing climate. This is illustrated by the table below showing extracts on the income and expenditure on Environmental Health for the last 3 years [for 2024-25 see p58].

Environmental Health Income and Expenditure (\$000)			
Year	Income	Expenditure	Net Cost
2022-23	302	1,580	(1,278)
2023-24	325	1,412	(1,087)
2024-25	537	1,290	(753)

The BCA does not know why this is happening but given the priority many ratepayers put on environmental enhancement this is of concern. The BCA would like to receive an explanation for this downward trend (p8).

Answer please.

The environmental health budget covers specific regulatory programs. The specific regulatory programs covered by this budget include investigation of pollution incidents, regular inspection

of onsite sewage management systems and monitoring of the reticulated water supply. It is not used for environmental enhancement or climate change action and mitigation programs – see page 39 of Councils Service Statement Document for more detail on areas covered under this budget.

Climate change mitigation and adaption is covered by the Sustainability Service Statement – see page 60.

Flooding at Braidwood Rec Ground and Braidwood Life Centre

The BCA is pleased that Council is allocating \$150,000 for drainage design and \$50,000 for sportsground drainage. The BCA would appreciate advice on whether this will solve the problem of the Life Centre flooding? Similarly, given the bulk of the funding is for design, what are the next steps in this process and the timelines? (p8).

A design has been completed; the funding is to carry out the works with a view to it providing the solution.

Community Transport

There is no public transport and limited private bus transport from Braidwood to regional cities. The BCA has researched the Community Transport system operated by Eurobodalla Shire Council and other Councils. This is funded from a number of sources and provides a successful model that could be followed by QPRC. The BCA urges Council to investigate the need for this service, and ways to implement it.’ (p8)

Feedback please?

Community transport is included as a priority in Braidwood’s Community Plan. More details about the Eurobodalla Community Transport System will be sought.

15.6% increase in Palerang water access charge

The BCA is grateful to Council staff for providing some recent data on some of the key indicators for the water fund, even though our questions were received too late to be considered as a Question on Notice. The data provided and the assumptions used in the modelling to determine the water charges are given below.

Year	Balance on water fund	Developer Contributions (\$000)		Residential Assessments (No)		Non-Residential Assessments (No)		Pensioner Assessments (No)	
		Actual	Modelling	Actual	Modelling	Actual	Modelling	Actual	Modelling
2018-19			800	2279		239		270	
			Average of previous 3 years in current prices		2018+19 2.7%pa		2018+19 2.7%pa		2018+19 2.7%pa
2020-21	TBC	403	824	2,389	2,404	373	252	330	285
2021-22	TBC	1,934	861	2,458	2,469	349	259	333	292
2022-23	TBC	147	921	2,469	2,535	349	266	332	300
2023-04	TBC	2,626	962	2,617	2,604	351	273	334	308
Total 2020-24		5,110	3,568						

As a result of our questions Council staff identified a minor error in the calculation of the closing balance on the water fund and so this data could not be provided until the

error is rectified. This will provide important information on the financial health of the Palerang Water Fund.’(p3).

Q. Has the minor error in the balance on the Water Fund been rectified? If so, what are the balances on the Palerang Water Fund from 2020-21 to 2023-24? If not, what is the error and how long will it take to rectify this?

While we don't report separately on Queanbeyan Water Fund and Palerang Water fund, we are able to identify this figure in our ledger. The figure reported for the 2023-24 year below is only a draft as the final end of year processing and reconciling has not yet occurred, as such this figure may change.

20/21 - \$8,775,170

21/22 - \$2,291,160

22/23 - \$160,424

23/24 - \$3,973,870 (draft)

Q. We neglected to ask previously for the actual water usage per assessment in Palerang, which is a further critical indicator for the operation of the Water Fund. Can staff please provide the actual water usage per assessment in Palerang from 2020-21 to 2023-24?

Results are an average kL for the reporting period across all assessments (both residential and non-residential). We are unable to provide the actual usage per assessment as this would be a breach of privacy.

2020 – 180kL/assessment

2021 – 149kL/assessment

2022 – 149kL/assessment

2023 – 288kL/assessment

2024 – We do not have all the results yet.

Q. In the past staff shared their estimate / forecast of the water funds' income and expenditure for the current year. Can staff please share the estimate / forecast of the Palerang water fund's income and expenditure for 2024-25, together with the estimate of the closing balance on the water fund and loans at end of June 2025?

Council does not report separately on Queanbeyan Water Fund and Palerang Water Fund. We do have forecast income and expenditure for the QPRC Water fund, and this can be found in Councils long term financial plan. Income and expenditure can be found in the Income Statement. The cash balances for this fund can be found in the Statement of Financial Performance. The Cashflow statement will provide further information on the cash movements for the QPRC Water Fund.

While separate information may have been provided in the past, this is not something that we regularly keep reports for so to be able to generate this now would require significant resources. Council's finance team is focussed on preparing the annual financial statements for 2023/24 and as such are unable to produce this information currently.

Loan information can be found in the quarterly budget review reports that are presented to Council.

Response given by QPRC staff on 14 August 2024

'Questions on Notice' from the Public

Question submitted by: Braidwood Community Association

An incomplete answer was provided to the following question in the Questions on Notice at the 24 July Ordinary Meeting of Council. A more complete answer has been provided below.

- 1. The BCA notes that the Draft Plan has \$26,000 allocated for Heritage Grants, up slightly from \$25,000 in 2023-24, which is savagely down from \$150,000 in 2021-22. The BCA understands that it is easier to make cuts to discretionary spending like community grants in a period of budgetary austerity but hopes Council will be able to increase the funding for these grants as soon as it is feasible (p6-7).**

Feedback please.

Council's Heritage Grants are part of a program of activity which has been supported through the annual budget process. The following sets out the Council's budget commitments in relation to the Heritage Program:

2024-25

Heritage Grants	\$12,500 (Council), \$12,500 (Heritage NSW)
Heritage Advisor	\$50,000
Review of Schedule 5 of the QPRLEP2022	\$200,000 over 3 years
Heritage Week and Awards	\$10,000