

EUROBODALLA SHIRE COUNCIL

PUBLIC FORUM

All members of the community who have registered have been advised that they have a **maximum of seven minutes** to put their case.

Ordinary Meeting of Council on **26 May 2020**

Name	Subject/Comments
Public Forum – 9.30am	
Marina Kendal (TAFE NSW)	CCS20/020 TAFE NSW - Connected Learning Centre - Batemans Bay
Matthew Findlay	NOM20/004 Reintroduction of Council meetings
David Grace	NOM20/003 Livestreaming of Council meetings
Jim Bright	GM20/011 Council Meeting Dates
Not presenting	
Ian Hitchcock	CCS20/022 – Sale of Council Land -Lower Surfside

Eurobodalla Shire Council Meeting 26 May 2020

CCS20/020 TAFE NSW Connected Learning Centre Batemans Bay Public Forum, Speaker: Marina Kendal, TAFE NSW

- Connected Learning Centres (CLCs) deliver world-class, digitally enabled and flexible learning opportunities to our communities, and have been designed with principles of next generation learning in mind.
- The NSW Government is significantly investing in TAFE NSW to increase its service and reach across regional NSW through new, modern campuses known as Connected Learning Centres (CLCs).
- The NSW Government has established 14 CLCs across the state, and is now investing a further \$61.7 million to deliver eight new CLCs, including at Batemans Bay.
- When completed, the Batemans Bay CLC will provide local students with personalised learning experiences, access to teachers both on and off-site, simulated work environments, and relevant training for jobs of the future.
- Expanded course offerings and digital access to flexible learning options from the state-wide TAFE NSW network mean many local students won't need to travel to bigger centres to study their chosen course.
- CLCs provide local students access to a greater range of learning and course options, so students can get the skills and jobs they want.
- Across the first fourteen CLCs built by the NSW Government, twice as many courses are now available to local students.
- These new courses are backed up by a full-range of Mobile Training Units (MTUs) that deliver the high-quality practical training TAFE NSW is known for and equip students with hands-on skills.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How were the CLC locations selected?

Strategic planning for new facilities considers a range of factors including student demand, community needs, industry growth, and local economic development.

CLC locations were also selected on the basis of population growth in identified areas, and the identified skills needs of those areas. Each site must also be able to support the relevant IT network and bandwidth requirements needed for the associated digital technology that will support learning.

Q. What has determined the course offerings for the Connected Learning Centres?

The Connected Learning Centres will deliver courses that have high demand across the state through blended, facilitated and online learning. TAFE NSW is currently monitoring the economic profiles for each of our locations to ensure that our Connected Learning Centres are providing the skills required to support jobs in the regions.

Connected Learning Centre Batemans Bay TAFE NSW

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Q. How will course offerings be determined for the CLC moving forward?

TAFE NSW will continue to monitor and assess economic profiles for future opportunities and ensure each CLC is providing the skills needed to support jobs in the regions.

CLCs and Mobile Training Units will enable TAFE NSW to rapidly respond to changing skills needs to support jobs and regional economies.

Q. Why are you introducing Connected Learning Centres?

CLCs have been designed with principles of next generation learning in mind. Key components include on-demand flexible delivery attuned to customer convenience, supported by the latest adaptable, virtual and interoperable digital platforms and technologies e.g. Bring Your Own Device capability, Mobile Training Units and operable/retractable walls to accommodate learning and events of different sizes.

Q. How were Connected Learning Centres designed and who has been consulted?

Students, teaching and learning have been at the centre of the design to ensure the CLCs provide an active learning environment supported by physical space, technology and hands on training.

The design also reflects the principles of next generation learning spaces with the components of a CLC being adaptive, flexible, multi-purpose and digitally enabled.

Q. How will the CLC benefit students?

These facilities will enable more students to undertake their training locally instead of having to travel to TAFE NSW campuses in a larger regional centre.

CLCs enable students to connect into TAFE NSW's state-wide network of campuses and courses, significantly expanding course options in smaller regional towns compared to what is offered at existing TAFE NSW campuses.

The state of art digital technologies that will be part of the new facility will further enhance our ability to connect our students with industry-specific specialists across NSW.

Good Morning, My name is Matthew Findlay. I live in Batemans Bay.

I'm here today to speak in support of the motion by Councillor McGinlay, in which he has proposed the reinstatement of the council meetings and related forums that had been cancelled by this council at your meeting on 24 March 2020.

My reading of the Mayor's recommendation to the 24 March meeting, for a reduction in scheduled meetings, indicates it was based solely on the Covid-19 risks associated with the legal requirement, as it still was at that time, for councillors to conduct their meetings face-to-face in the council chambers.

Consistent with that reasoning, I also note the following statement that was contained in Mayor's recommendation that was before you on 24 March -

"The proposed new schedule may be reconsidered if electronic voting at Council Meetings is allowed."

In this regard, the very next day on 25 March, our Council was notified that the NSW Parliament had in fact taken the urgent action necessary to amend the Local Government Act to immediately allow council meetings to be held remotely by electronic means.

Despite this, it seems no attempts have been made by the Mayor or the General Manager - either to have the previous day's decision immediately rescinded or even to have the matter addressed at the next scheduled council meeting some 13 days later on 7 April. As the community now knows, Councillor McGinlay's attempts to address this matter at that meeting were rebuffed by the Mayor and the General Manager.

I'm not angry, just disappointed. Why has our community not been given an explanation for this complete failure to act in a timely fashion? Even the General Manager's report, that is in front of you today, regarding the adoption of a new meeting schedule for the rest of the year, makes no attempt to explain the reasons why nothing has happened until now.

Incredibly, even the recommendations contained in the General Manager's report do not see the restoration of any of the cancelled meetings until the cancelled meeting of 14 July - three and a half months after the NSW Parliament specifically gave our council the ability to resume its normal meeting arrangements!

On top of that, the report before you actually has the audacity to propose the cancellation of the scheduled meeting on 13 October 2020.

Now, there have been reports that some Councillors and senior staff are not concerned about the lack of meetings, because they suggest that our council can quickly convene to discuss urgent matters. That's not the point! The Council has many important issues to resolve, including the New Year bushfires, the prospect of the drought returning and now the COVID virus, which has been devastating to both individuals and businesses in Eurobodalla.

The effects of these disasters are being felt now by the shire, and this Council is essential to providing a swift response for the community, so that no more damage is done, and we can all look optimistically to the future.

Alas, this cannot be done if the Council is not operating to its full potential. The Councillors need to be able to meet at least at the normal frequency to make decisions about how to deal with the disasters that have plagued 2020.

An example is the bushfire funds. According to an ABC report on 17 May, Council has only allocated \$230,000 of the \$1.6 million allocated to it for bushfire relief. Apparently, the balance of the funds are "allocated into current and future budgets". These funds are needed now, to assist people to recover from the bushfires, and the Councillors need to meet to make decisions about how these funds are to be allocated over the next few months.

This situation is totally unacceptable and you must now immediately adopt Councillor McGinlay's motion.

Thank you for your time.

I am David Grace from Broulee. I am speaking in support of Cr Mayne's motion (NOM20/003) to re-introduce livestreaming Public Forums.

Over the last decades active involvement in politics has declined, and with that decline we have seen increasing cynicism about our political system, and the rise of more populist leaders who exploit the cynicism and sense of powerlessness of many people.

Transparency and engagement are potent antidotes to this trend, and at Local Government level, public forums are a highly effective tool to provide direct community engagement with the Council. Livestreaming these forums to the general community adds to its potency.

As Cr Mayne states in his motion, there are strong reasons for livestreaming to be re-introduced by the Council, including providing Council transparency, and allowing Eurobodalla residents to take a more active interest in Council business. In a rural/regional environment such as ours, livestreaming (and the recording of it) provides the opportunity for those who are housebound; those who are at work; those living some distance from Moruya; and those who are otherwise unable to attend Council meetings, to hear the debate on the issues being considered by Council.

Livestreaming provides residents, the Councillors and Council staff with the opportunity to hear a range of views on the issues they are considering, which may not have been raised without the Forums.

From Cr Mayne's figures, livestreaming of public forums encouraged interested residents to present their views to Council at the Council meetings. It is important for both transparency and for community engagement that the Council provides every realistic opportunity to allow residents to air their views on issues that concern them.

The OLG in its *Guide to Webcasting Council and Committee Meetings* advises that Public Forums are not required to be webcast, unless they are part of a Council meeting, and in its advice, raises issues of privacy, confidentiality, defamation and copyright as risks which need to be addressed if Public Forums are to be webcast. These are risks which apply to any webcast, which can be addressed in a number of ways. Many of these are detailed in the *Guide*. All other nearby councils livestream their Public Forums and appear to have accepted and managed any perceived risks associated with the livestreaming of Public Forums. If the issue of risks is a concern to Councillors or senior staff, there may be value in discussing risk management strategies with these Councils.

Everyone will benefit if the Public Forums are livestreamed. Councillors and senior staff will have the benefit of hearing a range of views from residents interested in the matters before the Council; Residents will be able to take an active role in Council matters, and those who cannot be physically present at Council meetings can at least hear and see the views of their fellow residents on Council issues.

I consider that the benefits of Council transparency and increased public engagement with the Council are clear. Anything that is shown to generate greater community input to the decision-making processes of our elected representatives should obviously be encouraged, and for this reason I support Cr Mayne's motion.

David Grace

E.S.C. MEETING - 26 MAY 2020
PUBLIC FORUM PRESENTATION
GMR20/011 – COUNCIL MEETING DATES FOR 2020

My name is Jim Bright. I'm a resident of Narooma.

I'm here today to make a few of comments regarding the Staff Report that is on today's agenda recommending a new schedule of meeting dates for the remainder of this year.

Before getting down to the details of some of the things that are wrong with this report, I will preface my presentation with the following comment.

It is fundamental to our Australian system of representative democracy that the advice that public servants give to our elected representatives is (to quote the NSW Ombudsman) "accurate, impartial, complete and timely".

Now to the details.

First comment.

When this council approved the modified 2020 schedule of meetings at the ESC meeting on 24 March this year, it did so in the context of (a) the Covid-19 risks associated with face-to-face meetings in council chambers and (b) the legal obligations that still existed at that point in time for valid meetings to take place only in a physical face-to-face manner.

It is also relevant to note that that mayoral report contained the following statement.

"The proposed new schedule may be reconsidered if electronic voting at Council Meetings is allowed."

For reasons that are not immediately apparent, today's Staff Report fails to make it clear that one of the two OLG Circulars that were issued the next day (ie on 25 March) specifically advised the council of the urgent action that had been taken by the NSW Parliament to immediately allow meetings to occur over the internet. The important fact that this council has been able, since as long ago as 25 March, to therefore resume its normal schedule has not been acknowledged or admitted anywhere in this report.

Second comment.

The new schedule that has been recommended by the GM does not propose the restoration of the next (9 June) meeting, yet there is no explanation for this anywhere in her report.

Given that the original reason given for the cancellation of that (and other) meetings no longer exists, a properly prepared report would have provided councillors and the community with an explanation for this recommendation.

Third comment.

The original schedule of 2020 meetings approved by you last year included a meeting for 13 October 2020.

The recommended schedule before you today no longer provides for that meeting. The only reason contained in the report is the words “No Meeting – break”.

The ‘Considerations’ section of the report does mention “October school holidays” as one of the factors that were taken into consideration by the GM in developing her recommended new schedule, but the fact is that 13 October does not fall within the school holidays that will occur in September/October this year.

And even if that wasn’t the case, why wouldn’t “October school holidays” have already been a known factor when deciding the original 2020 meeting schedule last year?

This report fails to explain to councillors and the community why there are no meetings recommended for 9 June and 13 October and it fails to explain why action wasn’t taken at least 3 months ago to restore normal meeting frequencies.

Jim Bright

Agenda Item CCS20/022 – Sale of Council Land -Lower Surfside

If I read this agenda Item correctly, Council management is proposing to sell four commercial blocks at Lower Surfside.

According to the proponents, the land is not subject to erosion and the market is favourable.

I would suggest that the real estate market is not favourable given that we are currently in the midst of a Covid 19 pandemic and the market response is still unknown.

I would further suggest that the sudden urge for Council to sell these sites relates to the decision of the Local Member Andrew Constance to dump the Lower Surfside community, and transfer responsibility for resolution of the Surfside erosion problem to a task force headed by NSW Planning, and including the Eurobodalla Shire Council. Council knows only too well that this task force will decide the future of Wharf Road and Lower Surfside as the next stage of the Coastal Management Plan (CMP), and if as expected, a policy of “managed retreat” is implemented, Council’s land, along with the rest of the land in that area, will plummet in value.

In case you have not kept up with the Lower Surfside saga, have a read of the attachment. Go to the webpage of the NSW Coastal Alliance if you wish to read the damning report prepared by the appointed Surfside Project Reference Group (PRG) and their call for an inquiry into the process.

The Council-owned Surfside land may not be subject to immediate coastal erosion, but it has been classified vulnerable to coastal hazards and inundation, and the NSW Coastal Alliance will insist that Council abides by its duty of disclosure in the sale of this real estate. If Council markets the land prior to finalisation of the CMP, prospective purchasers must be fully informed of the implications of a “vulnerable area” classification under the new Act. They must also be informed of the restrictions Council has applied to Lower Surfside /Wharf Road DA’s, including lightweight construction and the raising of the buildings above projected sea levels (a difficult call for a commercial building). Council’s requirement for a covenant on the land title forcing the owner to remove all structures and forfeit the land, if it is affected by four high tides in any one year, must be revealed.

The NSW Coastal Alliance and the various Groups representing the Surfside community are unimpressed by Transport for NSW and its failure to deliver the Independent Surfside Erosion Study promised by Andrew Constance. They were even less impressed to learn that Council staff and other bureaucrats were involved in the study in full knowledge that Mr Constance directed that it was to be prepared independently of all government and semi government regulatory bodies.

If Council now tries to capitalise on the early sale of its land, in anticipation of bringing down the curtain on the Lower Surfside area in its CMP, you can be assured that there will be repercussions.

As an aside, I note that the proponent of the land sale has widely consulted the Surfside community on the sale of this community land. Can I ask why none of the Surfside Groups with whom I work were ever consulted? Perhaps Council staff believe that Lower Surfside has no need for a men’s shed, community hall, or other public facilities because they have no intention of providing coastal protection, and the area will be under water in a few years time.

Ian Hitchcock
Eurobodalla Regional Coordinator
NSW Coastal Alliance