
**SCENIC HILL USER GROUP
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, GRIFFITH ON
TUESDAY, 25 MARCH 2025 COMMENCING AT 12:03 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Jenny Ellis (Chair), Councillor Laurie Testoni, Councillor Tony O'Grady, Bruno Guidolin (Community Representative), Denis Couch (Community Representative), Helen Vowles (Community Representative), Timothy Ellis (Community Representative, via Zoom)

Quorum = 3

STAFF

Director Sustainable Development, Joe Rizzo, Director Economic & Organisational Development, Shireen Donaldson, Tourism Manager, Mirella Guidolin, Animal Control and Parking Compliance Coordinator, Karin Penninga (by invitation) and Minute Secretary, Melanie Hebrok

Leanne Austin (Governance Manager) was present for CL01.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Desma Newman, Lachlan Weymouth and Sally Bamblett.

Absent: Ronald Anson.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pecuniary Interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared.

Significant Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no significant non-pecuniary interests declared.

Less Than Significant Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no significant non-pecuniary interests declared.

3 ITEMS OF BUSINESS

CL01 INDUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS – MANDATORY

Governance Manager Leanne Austin provided an overview of the Committee induction process which Committee members may access on Council's website. Committee members are required to read the Code of Conduct policy and procedures, Code of Meeting Practice policy, Statements to the Media Policy, Social Media Policy, Information Protection Principles and Child Safe policy. Committee members are also required to complete the online policy acknowledgment form. Explanation was provided in relation to the requirement to declare any Conflicts of Interest Committee members may have in their consideration of Committee matters.

Councillor Laurie Testoni entered the meeting, the time being 12:08pm.

Leanne Austin left the meeting at 12:11pm.

CL02 INTRODUCTION

Committee members provided a short introduction including qualifications, interest in the Committee and job description (for staff).

The Chair, Councillor Jenny Ellis, welcomed new and returning members to the Committee and provided a brief overview of the remaining members who were unable to attend today.

CL03 PROPOSED MEETING DATES 2025

The Chair noted that while quarterly meeting dates have been proposed for all Council Committees, there will be opportunities for Working Groups to be formed within this Committee to work on different issues and report back to the scheduled meetings.

The proposed meeting dates for the remainder of 2025 are:

- 24 June
- 23 September
- 16 December

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Denis Couch and Councillor Tony O'Grady that the Committee note the proposed meeting dates for 2025.

CL04 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee discussed the draft Terms of Reference, particularly highlighting the Purpose and Scope as well as the Authority to Act, which states that the Committee has no delegated authority to make management decisions but can make recommendations to Council including budget submissions through the minutes of the meeting.

Mr Couch suggested that a clause be added regarding the formation of working groups within the Committee.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Councillor Tony O'Grady and Tim Ellis that the Committee adopt the Terms of Reference attached to the report, with the addition of the following under section 5.1: *Working Groups may be convened at the discretion of the Committee when required (Council staff will not be required to attend meetings of Working Groups).*

CL05 BACKGROUND

The Chair presented a summary of the previous Council term's Scenic Hill User Group and the current issues for this Committee (see Attachment a), including:

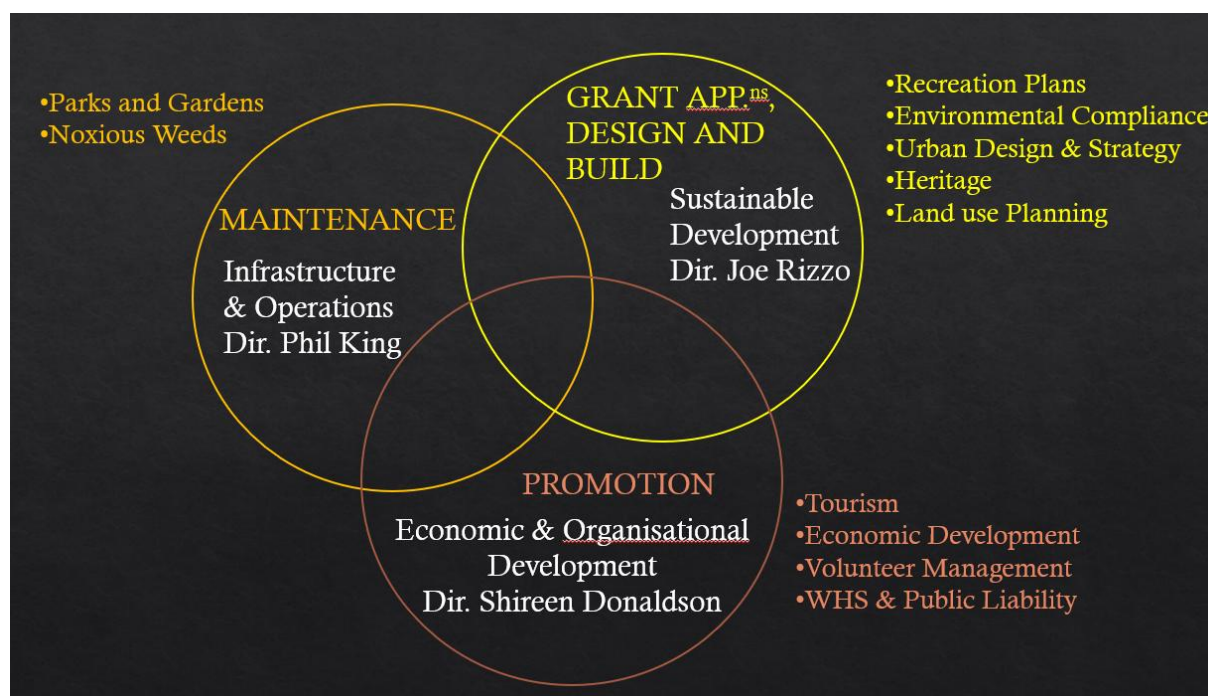
Lack of dedicated Council leadership and funding

Overlapping responsibilities for Scenic Hill management in three Council directorates:

- Infrastructure & Operations – Parks & Gardens / Noxious Weeds
- Sustainable Development – Environmental Compliance, Land Use Planning, Urban Design, Heritage and Recreation Plans
- Economic & Organisational Development – Volunteer Management, WHS & Public Liability, Tourism & Economic Development.

Discussion was held about the current budget for clean-up and maintenance of Scenic Hill. Mr Rizzo to confirm how much is currently budgeted versus how much has actually been spent on relevant job numbers and report back to the Committee.

Current bids for the next Council FY budget are \$30,000 for signage and \$40,000 for a Masterplan for Scenic Hill. The Committee discussed the interconnected roles of the Council departments when it comes to budgeting for projects: Urban Design designs and builds an asset, Parks & Gardens maintains the asset, Tourism promotes the asset – all of these areas of responsibility need a budget component as well which needs to be factored into project budget bids. Ms Vowles asked if a process chart could be created to show these linkages (below).



Mr Couch noted that the previous Committee had faced many roadblocks and to move forward the group will need to focus on achievable outcomes. Councillor Testoni agreed that common goals need to be set to work towards.

Mixed Land Ownership

Ownership issues across Scenic Hill involve Aboriginal Land Claims, Crown Lands NSW and Council-managed Crown Land.

GLALC's aims are to preserve the land for cultural heritage, Indigenous tourism as well as cultural gathering places. GLALC have applied for a grant for Indigenous Rangers to look

after the hill and other areas of concern, with the Chair to follow up on the progress of this.

The Rotary Lookout area is connected to a Crown Lands NSW trigonometry station which makes improvement projects difficult.

Rubbish and Illegal Dumping

Blocking off car access to fire trails and unofficial lookouts by using boulders, for example, could reduce some rubbish dumping. Grants are available for clean-up works and education.

Cat Containment

A previous report prepared by Ms Bamblett highlighted the benefits of cat containment measures. Ms Penninga was invited to address these suggestions. She advised:

- Cats are free to roam under the NSW Companion Animals Act, so suggested measures cannot be enforced legally
- Responsible pet ownership / education campaigns can certainly be promoted
- Grants are actively sought for cat desexing programs
- No feral cat problem on Scenic Hill, more in CBD.

Bruno Guidolin entered the meeting, the time being 1:07pm.

The Chair asked if Ms Penninga would be willing to allow Ms Bamblett to work with her on an educational campaign for responsible cat ownership.

Hermit's Cave Complex

- Listed on the State Heritage Register 2007
- Most visited site in Griffith
- Most complained about site in Griffith.

Grants & Funding Opportunities

The Committee discussed different grant funding opportunities, including the NSW Heritage Funding, with the next round of applications opening in 2027. A Masterplan would help with concrete plans and scope of works.

Mr Guidolin enquired about opportunities for private sector funding / sponsorship of signage at Hermit's Cave. Mr Rizzo said he can look into options, however Council may be reluctant to be perceived to favour certain businesses. Mrs Donaldson suggested to call for Expressions of Interest from businesses once projects (e.g. seating) are identified to ensure a level playing field.

Vision

The Chair read out a vision for Scenic Hill based upon the desires of the last Committee (see Attachment b), which includes a lookout garden with BBQ facilities, walking trails with artworks, a Wiradjuri Cultural Centre and Café, among other well maintained cultural and tourism facilities. She stressed the importance of combining these ideas in an overall Masterplan for Scenic Hill and read out the draft motion to Council for the development of the Masterplan.

The Committee discussed the need for a Masterplan versus the existing Plan of Management for Scenic Hill. Mrs Donaldson advised that the existing PoM is a Crown Lands NSW document and statutory requirement, which does not include specific projects or costings that would aid in Grant Applications as discussed.

Ms Vowles questioned whether an external consultant is needed, with Mr Rizzo and Ms Donaldson advising that there are currently no Council staff and resources available to develop a Masterplan in house, however staff will work with the consultant to ensure the final plan aligns with the goals identified.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Denis Couch and Helen Vowles that Griffith City Council:

- (a) Allocates funding of \$40,000 in the 2025/26 budget for the development of a Scenic Hill Master Plan to guide future improvements and management of the site.
- (b) Engages relevant stakeholders, including the Scenic Hill User Group Committee, Griffith Local Aboriginal Land Council, and other key community groups, to ensure the Master Plan reflects the needs and aspirations of all users.
- (c) Ensures the Master Plan aligns with the existing Plan of Management for Scenic Hill and includes scope of works and costings on:
 - Signage improvements
 - Lookout and walking track upgrades
 - Heritage and cultural site protection
 - Rubbish mitigation and environmental management.
- (d) Uses the completed Master Plan to support future capital works budget bids (2026/27 and beyond) and external grant applications, including Crown Reserves Improvement Fund, EPA Illegal Dumping Grants, and other opportunities that arise.

Rationale: Scenic Hill is a highly valued but underfunded community and tourist asset. This Master Plan will provide a strategic, well-informed framework for ensuring its long-term preservation, accessibility, and sustainability. A clear vision and structured approach will enhance funding opportunities and ensure the site continues to be a place of cultural, recreational, and environmental significance for Griffith.

Attachments

- (a) Scenic Hill User Group Background Presentation (Under Separate Cover)
- (b) Vision for Scenic Hill (Under Separate Cover)

CL06 FOLLOW UP ITEMS FROM LAST TERM

Ms Donaldson advised that platforms such as Google Docs can be used by Committee members (or Working Group members within the Committee) with a personal login to share information. An extract could then be provided to the Committee secretary for a summary to be added to the Agenda. An Outstanding Action Report is also provided to each meeting, so shared notes can be included or added to this report.

Ms Vowles suggested that the SmartyGrants platform be explored as a tool for access to grant applications and documentation. Ms Donaldson to look into an upcoming webinar.

4 GENERAL BUSINESS

4.1 Action List

Mr Rizzo acknowledged the frustration of the Committee with the lack of dedicated Council responsibilities for Scenic Hill overall. He advised that an Action Report will be provided at each meeting and staff will ensure it is actioned and updated regularly with the latest information.

4.2 Committee Vision

Councillor Ellis asked that Committee members look for a picture of what they would like to see on Scenic Hill and send it to her to develop a 'vision board'.

5 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Scenic Hill User Group is to be held on 17 June 2025 at 12 pm.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 2:02 pm.