
**SCENIC HILL USER GROUP
TO BE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, GRIFFITH ON
TUESDAY, 17 JUNE 2025 AT 12:00 PM**

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Confirmation of Minutes
- 3 Business Arising
- 4 Declarations of Interest
- 5 Items of Business
- CL01 p8 Scenic Hill Maintenance Council Budget
- CL02 p9 Visitor Feedback regarding Hermit's Cave
- CL03 p11 Ideas for Scenic Hill Masterplan
- 6 p12 Outstanding Action Report
- 7 General Business
- 8 Next Meeting

DISTRIBUTION LIST

Councillor Jenny Ellis (Chair), Councillor Laurie Testoni, Councillor Tony O'Grady, Bruno Guidolin (Community Representative), Denis Couch (Community Representative), Desma Newman (Community Representative), Helen Vowles (Community Representative), Lachlan Weymouth (Community Representative), Ronald Anson (Community Representative), Sally Bamblett (Community Representative), Timothy Ellis (Community Representative)

Director Sustainable Development, Joe Rizzo; Director Economic & Organisational Development, Shireen Donaldson; Tourism Manager, Mirella Guidolin and Minute Secretary, Melanie Hebrok

Quorum = 3

If you are unable to attend this meeting please notify the Minute Secretary prior to commencement of the meeting by email or by telephoning Council on 1300 176 077.

This Committee meeting may be attended remotely and recorded by audio or audio-visual means for administrative purposes. No other recording is permitted.

Acknowledgement of Country

Griffith City Council acknowledges the Wiradjuri people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters, and their deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal community.

Council further pays respect to the local Wiradjuri Elders, past, present and those emerging, for whom we acknowledge have responsibilities for the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of the local Wiradjuri people.

**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:

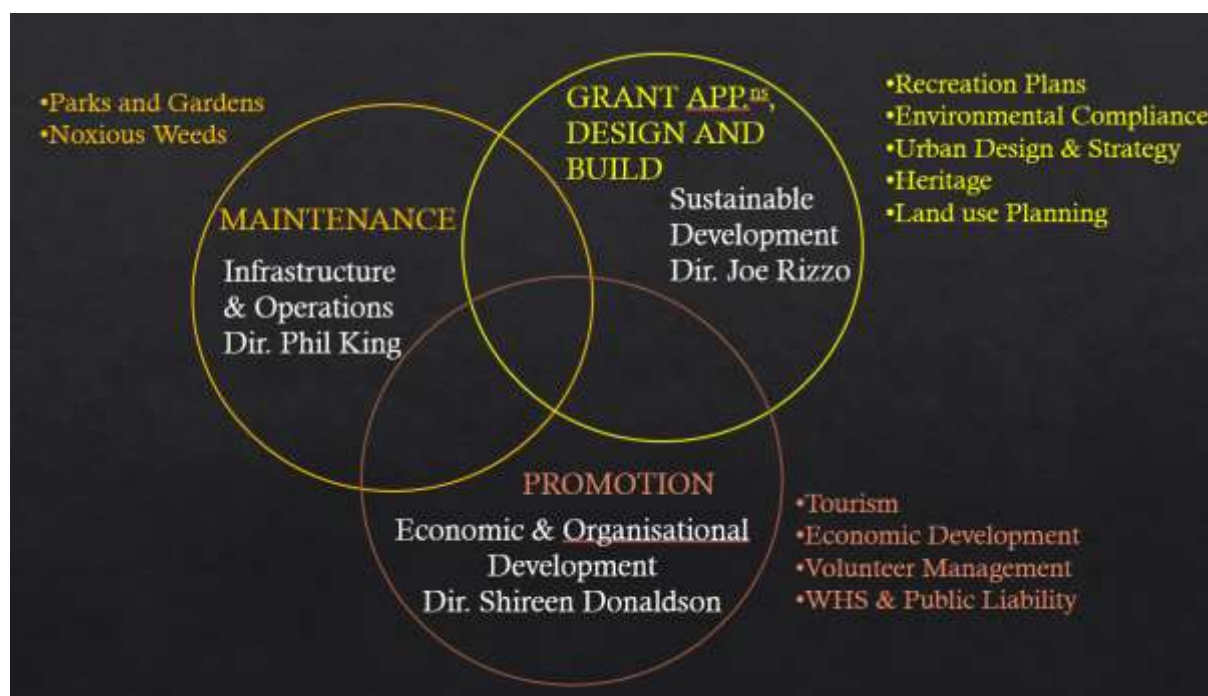
Lack of dedicated Council leadership and funding

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.

CLAUSE **CL01**

TITLE **Scenic Hill Maintenance Council Budget**

FROM **Joe Rizzo, Director Sustainable Development**

TRIM REF **25/66079**

SUMMARY

At the Scenic Hill Committee meeting held on 25 March 2025, the current budget available for the clean-up and maintenance of Scenic Hill was discussed. It was requested that a report be presented to the committee to confirm the budgeted amount versus the actual expenditure.

Table 1 below details the current job numbers that are budgeted for Scenic Hil.

Table 1: Scenic Hill Maintenance & Work FY 24/25

064702 Scenic Hill Maintenance & Work		
064702.0177	Maintenance/Repairs	\$12,060
064702.0326	Bi-Annual Clean Up/Removal Costs	\$31,184
Total Scenic Hill Maintenance & Work		\$43,244

Attachment 1 and Attachment 2 detail the amount that has been spent from the job numbers allocated for Scenic Hill for FY 21/22 (Year 2022) to FY 24/25 (Year 2025).

RECOMMENDATION

That the information be received.

ATTACHMENTS

- (a) Attachment 1 – Ledger Account 64702.0177 Scenic Hill Maintenance & Work Maintenance/Repairs (confidential)
- (b) Attachment 2 – Ledger Account 64702.0326 Scenic Hill Maintenance & Work Bi-Annual Clean Up/Removal Costs (confidential)

CLAUSE **CL02**

TITLE **Visitor Feedback regarding Hermit's Cave**

FROM **Melanie Hebrok, Senior Governance Officer**

TRIM REF **25/65996**

SUMMARY

Attached are recent complaints by visitors which highlight the poor state of the Hermit's Cave lookout area. Councillor Ellis would like to brainstorm ideas on what could be done to address the issue, in addition to the already discussed signage updates and Masterplan development.

RECOMMENDATION

For discussion.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This item links to Council's Strategic Plan item 5.6 Promote Griffith as a desirable visitor destination.

ATTACHMENTS

- (a) Feedback received (names and addresses withheld) [↓](#) 10

Complaint 1:

As a first time tourist to the beautiful region of Griffith there was one disappointment and that was when I visited the tourist spot of The Hermits cave. It was extremely disappointing to see the neglect of overgrown pathways that were poorly signed and as for the track, well that is an accident waiting to happen as there are no rails or added steps that are manageable to climb up and down on so the safety issue does not exist and if somebody was to fall and break a limb which by the way is highly likely, then a case against the council would be costly. I ask that you take a close look and see for yourselves the dangers that are currently there but could easily be fixed for this amazing historical site in Griffith.

Better signage
Safety rails
Maintained grass & weed control
Added steps to the original steps
Be proud of this area!!!!

Complaint 2:

Visited Hermits Cave 2 days ago. What an utter disappointment! The place should either be cleaned up or closed to the public as it is unsafe in its present condition. There is broken glass everywhere the paths are overgrown and difficult to follow and the plaques to describe the various features have been removed. There is rubbish everywhere even though bins are provided. This site is important to preserve not only as part of Griffiths history but also as a representation of Griffiths rich Italian history.

This site could be gorgeous with some regular maintenance instead I fear it will be closed, lost and forgotten. Please don't let this happen.

Complaint 3:

To Griffith City Council,
To Whom It May Concern,
Dear Councillors,
My wife and I have travelled to Griffith on several occasions and always enjoyed the many wonderful things your city and surrounds have to offer. I'm sure we don't need to tell you what a great part of the world you live in. However when we walked up to the escarpment to visit the Hermit's Cave and the beautiful views overlooking the city we were overwhelmed by the sheer amount of rubbish strewn around. Both sides of the road were covered with assorted pieces of rubbish which in our view was a shame as this area should be a showpiece for Griffith. Similarly we walked down Banna Lane to enjoy the murals only to discover the same thing. We think this is such a shame as both these areas should be proudly promoted but unfortunately in the present state they are more a source of embarrassment. Please investigate this issue as it is obvious that it is not a recent occurrence and has been happening for a while now. Whilst most of the city and its surrounding areas present impressively we felt it important that we highlight this matter as we love visiting the area.
Regards

CLAUSE **CL03**

TITLE **Ideas for Scenic Hill Masterplan**

TRIM REF **25/66021**

To be discussed by the Committee.

TITLE Outstanding Action Report


TRIM REF 25/66084

RECOMMENDATION

The report be noted.

ATTACHMENTS

(a) Outstanding Action Report - Scenic Hill User Group - 17 Jun 2025 [↓](#) 13

Scenic Hill User Group Outstanding Action Report 17 June 2025				
Date of Meeting	Item	Action/Recommendation	Officer	Comment
25 March 2025	CL05 Background – Lack of dedicated Council leadership and funding	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.	Joe Rizzo	
25 March 2025	CL05 Background – Lack of dedicated Council leadership and funding	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	Staff	
25 March 2025	CL05 Background – Cat Containment	The Chair asked if Ms Penninga would be willing to allow Ms Bamblett to work with her to work on an educational campaign for responsible cat ownership.	Karin Penninga / Sally Bamblett	
25 March 2025	CL06 Follow Up Items From Last Term	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.	Shireen Donaldson	