



MINUTES

SCENIC HILL USER GROUP HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, GRIFFITH ON TUESDAY, 17 JUNE 2025 COMMENCING AT 12:03 PM

PRESENT

Councillor Jenny Ellis (Chair), Denis Couch (Community Representative), Helen Vowles (Community Representative), Sally Bamblett (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 and Minute Secretary, Melanie Hebrok

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Tony O'Grady, Councillor Laurie Testoni and Lachlan Weymouth.

Absent: Bruno Guidolin, Desma Newman and Ronald Anson.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Denis Couch and Timothy Ellis that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 March 2025, having first been circulated amongst all members, be confirmed.

3 BUSINESS ARISING

3.1 Background

Councillor Ellis informed the Committee that when the Minutes were presented to Council, a question was asked whether adopting the Minutes would guarantee \$40,000 to be allocated to the Masterplan development. The Mayor advised that the Masterplan will be included as a budget bid which still needs to be formally adopted by Council when the final budget is adopted on 19 June.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil

5 ITEMS OF BUSINESS

CL01 SCENIC HILL MAINTENANCE COUNCIL BUDGET

Mr Rizzo presented the information which was requested by the Committee, with two job numbers allocated to Scenic Hill - \$12,060 for Maintenance and Repairs and \$31,184 for Bi-Annual Clean Up and Removal Costs. In the current financial year, \$22.50 has been allocated to the Maintenance budget and so far, no money has been spent from the Clean Up and Removal budget. Mr Rizzo noted that this does not mean there have not been any clean up works on Scenic Hill but rather that those works may have been allocated to a different job number, possibly a general clean-up / rubbish removal budget. As Mr King had stated at a previous meeting, the Parks and Gardens department are carrying out regular clean ups at approximately \$6,000 per year.

Mr Ellis raised ongoing concerns regarding illegal rubbish dumping on Scenic Hill. In January, two nearby dump sites were reported to Council - one containing personal identification items, and another with large amounts of tree cuttings. Mr Ellis noted that despite submitting reports with photos and GPS data, only one report was traceable by Council staff. He followed up multiple times but was informed that although the matter had been referred to the Works Department, no action had been taken for over two months. A similar incident occurred 3–4 years ago, where rubbish remained uncollected for months despite repeated reports, and was eventually cleaned up by Mr Ellis. He suggested improvements to Council's reporting and tracking system to ensure better follow-up and accountability.

Ms Bamblett noted a similar illegal dumping incident that occurred either late last year or early this year, involving a dumped bedroom suite with smashed mirrors on a fire trail. After reporting the issue to Council and providing a map via email, the majority of the rubbish was promptly removed—likely using a grader. Some glass remained, which Ms Bamblett later collected. She acknowledged Council's responsive action in this case.

Mr Rizzo stated that unfortunately, Council does not always have the necessary resources available to carry out these tasks promptly when other, higher risk profile jobs would take priority.

Ms Donaldson acknowledged that the current customer request management system is outdated and ineffective however, she confirmed that funding has been identified within existing budgets to replace the system. The new system will offer features such as real-time tracking, immediate customer reference numbers, and a mobile app for submitting and monitoring requests. It will streamline workflows for both customers and staff, replacing the current manual and disconnected process. Implementation planning is currently underway.

Mr Couch highlighted the importance of maintaining clean areas to prevent repeat dumping. As an example, he cited the Rotary Lookout, which remains largely clean due to regular upkeep, including picking up litter like fast food wrappers several times a week. He also raised concerns about the ongoing burden on community service order workers, noting feedback about growing fatigue and the difficulty of staying on top of persistent dumping. He stressed the need for increased support and resources to effectively manage key dumping hotspots.

Ms Vowles raised concerns about a lack of communication and coordination regarding works taking place on Scenic Hill. She cited a recent incident involving significant earthworks behind her property, where she asked both Council and the RFS and neither knew about it. She confirmed later directly with the contractor that the works were RFS-related, highlighting confusion among agencies and Council staff. Ms Vowles proposed that Scenic Hill be included as a regular item in internal toolbox meetings or similar forums, so staff can stay

informed and provide clear updates to the public.

Mr Rizzo acknowledged past communication issues and noted that he and Ms Donaldson joined the Committee to improve coordination. Job numbers for Scenic Hill have now been identified, enabling better tracking and planning of works. He suggested setting regular maintenance schedules that can be communicated to relevant departments. While the RFS does notify Council of activities, this information does not always reach Customer Service. Efforts are being made to improve internal communication to prevent future gaps.

Mr Ellis noted the presence of multiple burnt-out car wrecks on Scenic Hill in early 2023 and inquired about the removal process and associated costs. Mr Rizzo clarified that abandoned or burnt-out vehicles are managed by the Compliance Department under separate budgets. These costs are not reflected in the Scenic Hill job numbers. Removal follows a legally mandated process, including attempts to contact the owner, police notification, and notice placement, even if the vehicle is clearly inoperable.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Helen Vowles and Sally Bamblett that:

- a) The information be received.
- b) The Director of Infrastructure & Operations be asked to report back to the Committee regarding the current maintenance and clean up schedule for Scenic Hill and a program moving forward taking into account the budget numbers identified. .
- c) Any surplus funds from the 2024-25 budget for Scenic Hill be allocated back to the Committee for a targeted rubbish clean-up program to be determined within the next six months.

CL02 VISITOR FEEDBACK REGARDING HERMIT'S CAVE

The Committee noted recent feedback from visitors received by Councillors regarding the poor condition of the Hermit's Cave lookout area.

Mr Couch said in his opinion, the area is in such disrepair that it should be closed off to the public until vast improvements are undertaken.

The Chair asked staff about the timeline for new Hermit's Cave signage. Mr Rizzo advised that, following budget approval, Council will seek quotes from signage contractors, with installation likely dependent on availability—estimated at around six weeks. He also noted that once Mr King reports back on current available resources for Scenic Hill, the Committee can determine priorities for budget allocation. Not all desired projects may be achievable in one year and may need to be staged or submitted for future budget bids. In some cases, such as for infrastructure like guardrails, external contractors may be required.

Councillor Ellis stated that the next clause will ask members to form a working group to walk key sections of Scenic Hill and develop a detailed vision to help inform the Masterplan and guide future decisions.

Ms Vowles suggested enhancing community and school engagement on Scenic Hill through educational activities beyond rubbish collection. She proposed small-scale revegetation projects involving school groups, particularly in areas recently affected by burnouts, where new growth is emerging. She also inquired about the availability of provenance seeds for planting and noted the potential for educational sessions on ecological recovery and fire management.

Ms Donaldson suggested that, as part of the upcoming Masterplan, a clear community engagement and marketing strategy be developed. More than just anti-litter campaigns, the Committee could establish a structured calendar of events and initiatives. This would support more meaningful communication through existing channels like Council Café and COG

meetings. Councillor Ellis proposed a community campaign focused on caring for Scenic Hill, involving schools and local groups in maintaining designated areas. The goal is to foster a sense of ownership and pride in the area, encouraging ongoing care and discouraging littering. The initiative would extend beyond one-off clean-up events, promoting long-term community involvement rather than relying solely on Council.

The Committee discussed the possibility of reallocating unspent budget funds before the June 30 deadline. It was suggested that, pending clarification regarding current spend from Mr King, the funds could be rolled over and allocated to a targeted clean-up program later in the year, rather than attempting to rush works before the financial year ends. Members agreed that regeneration projects would require more planning and should be addressed through the Scenic Hill Master Plan. A clean up initiative was seen as a more immediate and feasible use of surplus funds. Part c) was added to the recommendation in CL01.

Mirella Guidolin left the meeting at 12:59 pm.

Mr Ellis reported recent sightings of vehicles off-track on Scenic Hill and raised concerns about illegal access by 4WDs. Barriers may help, but are often bypassed. Ongoing issues with bin vandalism, including burning, were noted. A suggestion was made to consider reinstating secure 44-gallon drum bins, though maintenance and illegal dumping remain concerns.

Mr Couch supported the use of trail cameras and signage to deter illegal dumping on Scenic Hill. He suggested focusing on high-traffic areas and installing additional bins, including at Rotary Lookout and encouraged the Committee to explore compliance strategies such as issuing fines to improve accountability and deter repeat offenders.

Mr Rizzo confirmed that Council owns trail cameras used for monitoring illegal dumping, but noted past issues with the equipment and lack of budget for replacements. He will investigate their effectiveness and current condition and report back to the Committee on whether they can be used for Scenic Hill compliance efforts.

Mr Ellis suggested refreshing existing surveillance signage on Scenic Hill and recommended targeted education efforts, particularly for non-English speaking residents, through multilingual signage or promoting proper waste disposal options via posters in shopping areas to reduce illegal dumping.

CL03 IDEAS FOR SCENIC HILL MASTERPLAN

Councillor Ellis discussed the need for a coordinated, long-term approach to address issues on Scenic Hill. She suggested a working group be formed to help shape the Scenic Hill Master Plan which would involve site visits and development of a brief to ensure key priorities are included in the \$40,000 budget allocation.

Mr Couch proposed establishing a communication platform to enable collaboration between meetings, suggesting the use of 'Groups.io'. This tool would allow members to share ideas, documents, and updates outside of quarterly meetings. It would operate independently of Council IT systems. Mr Couch offered to set up and moderate the group, pending Committee interest. He suggested invitations be sent to members for consideration.

Ms Donaldson noted that 'Groups.io' is free for 30 days, then costs \$20/month for full features - the free plan is basic email only. If the Committee chooses this platform, the \$220 yearly fee could be charged to the Scenic Hill budget.

Councillor Ellis will send out an invitation for Committee members to be involved in a working group and meet up on Scenic Hill in a couple of weeks to look at the main areas for the

Masterplan.

Joe Rizzo left the meeting at 1:20 pm.

6 OUTSTANDING ACTION REPORT

6.1 Cat Containment

Ms Bamblett noted that the key issue identified is domestic cats roaming and impacting wildlife, rather than feral cats. She acknowledged that while community education is important, Council needs supportive policies to address the problem effectively. Examples from RSPCA and other organisations suggest measures such as mandatory cat registration, desexing bylaws, and 24-hour containment or curfews. It was noted that enforcement is limited under the Companion Animals Act, and community support is critical due to differing views among residents.

Ms Donaldson suggested to start with education and community surveys focused on suburbs around Scenic Hill to gauge support for containment policies, and promoting cat containment for both wildlife protection and cat safety.

Helen Vowles left the meeting at 1:27pm.

Action: Karin Penninga to lead coordination of the campaign with Council's Communications team and potential policy development moving forward.

7 GENERAL BUSINESS

7.1 Grant Opportunities

Mr Ellis suggested exploring a Landcare Grant to support planting more native vegetation on Scenic Hill. Councillor Ellis noted that once the Scenic Hill Master Plan is developed and replanting areas are identified, the Committee can better target relevant grants. Committee members are encouraged to share any grant information, including deadlines and details, to help coordinate future funding opportunities.

8 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Scenic Hill User Group is to be held on Tuesday, 23 September 2025 at 12:00 pm.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 1:37 pm.