
**SCENIC HILL USER GROUP
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, GRIFFITH ON
TUESDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2025 COMMENCING AT 12:05 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Jenny Ellis (Chair), Denis Couch (Community Representative), Desma Newman (Community Representative, via Zoom), Helen Vowles (Community Representative), Ronald Anson (Community Representative), Sally Bamblett (Community Representative), Timothy Ellis (Community Representative, via Zoom)

Quorum = 3

STAFF

Director Economic & Organisational Development, Shireen Donaldson, Director Infrastructure & Operations, Phil King and Minute Secretary, Melanie Hebrok

Animal Control & Parking Compliance Coordinator, Karin Penninga and Planning & Environment Manager, Carel Potgieter were in attendance for CL05

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Laurie Testoni, Director Sustainable Development, Joe Rizzo and Tourism Manager, Mirella Guidolin.

Absent: Councillor Tony O'Grady, Bruno Guidolin (Community Representative) and Lachlan Weymouth (Community Representative).

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Denis Couch and Sally Bamblett that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 June 2025, having first been circulated amongst all members, be confirmed.

3 BUSINESS ARISING

Nil

4 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 less than significant non-pecuniary interests declared.

5 ITEMS OF BUSINESS

CL01 CARRYOVER OF FUNDS - SCENIC HILL MAINTENANCE & WORK

The Committee noted that following the carryover of funds from the previous FY Scenic Hill budget, the new budget for 2025/26 will be:

- \$22,776 for Maintenance & Repairs
- \$63,452 for Biannual Clean Up.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Ron Anson and Denis Couch that the information be received.

CL02 SCENIC HILL MAINTENANCE

Director of Infrastructure & Operations Phil King reported that Scenic Hill maintenance work is currently done by staff also responsible for Dalton Park and is primarily reactive (litter control), with regular cleanup typically taking place on Monday mornings. The biannual cleanup did not occur last year due to lack of contractor engagement.

The Committee discussed what kind of maintenance activities can be covered by the revised budget noted in CL01, usually tasks such as litter control (most common), graffiti/vandalism removal, tree/weed/garden maintenance. The biannual clean up budget is currently for contractors only, not Council staff. Community Service Order workers also help maintain Scenic Hill at no cost to Council.

Desma Newman entered the meeting remotely via Zoom, the time being 12:11pm.

Mr Couch asked if organisers of an upcoming 'Clean Up Scenic Hill' event have contacted the Committee, with Councillor Ellis noting she has only heard about the event through social media. Ms Donaldson advised Council has not been notified of the event. Councillor Ellis said we should see public interest as a positive, in that the community wants to help clean Scenic Hill.

Discussion was held around how to work with the community while meeting Council's risk management requirements (e.g. high-visibility vests, inductions, supervision of children, avoiding high-risk areas such as cliff edges) to ensure clean ups are done in a safe manner. Any Council-run or supported event must prioritise risk mitigation and legal compliance.

The Committee suggested the use of contractors for heavy lifting tasks (e.g. abandoned cars, large waste), things the community cannot do. Other ideas discussed include:

- Develop a 'reusable' risk assessment and event plan for Council-endorsed community clean-ups.
- Follow the model used by Lachlan Weymouth, who has previously organised a successful and compliant event (with forms, safety procedures, etc.) – 'Clean Up Australia' website
- Plan and schedule clean-ups in advance, ideally twice per year, and tie them to other community events or festivals.

- Turn clean-ups into community events, with involvement from families, joggers, and local groups.

Discussion was also held around signage which needs to be replaced, which is not routinely maintained under standard maintenance tasks. The Committee could recommend conducting a signage audit across the area to assess condition and identify what's needed, prepare a cost estimate for repairing or replacing signage and use this audit to justify additional funding.

Shireen Donaldson left the meeting, the time being 12:46pm.

The Committee debated whether to add a recommendation for a permanent part-time staff allocation to support maintenance tasks. They acknowledged a limited budget of \$12,000, which currently allows for around 300 hours of work, mainly focused on litter control, with occasional tasks like fence repairs. Mr King clarified that bin pickups and mowing costs (e.g., roadside slashing) are separate from this budget. There was general agreement that having a regular staff presence would help maintain cleanliness and community standards.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Ron Anson and Denis Couch that Council:

- (a) Schedule a targeted Scenic Hill clean-up event with community involvement at least twice a year, possibly prior to major tourist events being held (e.g. Spring Fest).
- (b) Undertake an audit of all current signage on Scenic Hill.
- (c) Develop a risk assessment for all Council-endorsed public clean up events.
- (d) Allocate a permanent part-time staff member to Scenic Hill.

At the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on Tuesday, 28 October 2025 the following was resolved:

25/280

RESOLVED on the motion of Councillors Jenny Ellis and Tony O'Grady that the recommendations as detailed in the Minutes of the Scenic Hill User Group meeting held on 23 September 2025 be adopted with the following amendments to the Recommendation in CL02:

Strike out (a) and (d) of Clause 02 recommendations and replace with:

- (a) Council acknowledge that the effective coordination of Scenic Hill maintenance activities, including the biannual clean-up events currently provided for within the budget, would benefit from dedicated staff oversight.
- (d) Council consider, as part of the 2026/2027 budget deliberations, the establishment of a staff position to support the ongoing management and coordination of matters relating to Scenic Hill.

SMT COMMENT

The Terms of Reference of the Scenic Hill User Group do not permit the User Group to implement actions in areas over which Council has responsibility, or to commit or expend any Council funds that are not contained within an adopted budget or subsequent variation of a budget. With regards to item (d) any permanent allocation of staff is an operational matter and subject to budgetary provisions including inclusion for deliberation during the forthcoming 2026/27 Budget. With regards to

item (a), a staff resource would be required to coordinate the event/s, so would also require a resourcing allocation.

Should Council choose to adopt the above recommendations of the User Group, item (a) and (d) more than likely will require additional staff resourcing and accordingly becomes part of the 2026/27 budget prioritisation and approval process.

Council is currently reviewing the Volunteer Management Policy to ensure there are clear guidelines for volunteer duties that encompass Work Health and Safety of volunteers as well as capacity of volunteers. The policy will be presented to Council in due course.

CL03 FORMATION OF FOCUS GROUPS FOR SCENIC HILL MASTERPLAN

Councillor Ellis outlined a plan to divide the Committee into smaller focus groups, each concentrating on a specific area of interest related to Scenic Hill. The goal is to leverage members' passions and expertise to conduct research, gather information, and bring informed suggestions back to the full committee, which would then make recommendations to Council.

The proposed six focus areas/groups and members are:

1. Lookouts – Denis Couch
2. Hermit's Cave Precinct
3. Tracks and Signage - Desma Newman, Sally Bamblett, Helen Vowles, Ron Anson
4. Environmental Management – Helen Vowles, Sally Bamblett, Tim Ellis
5. Rubbish and Waste Control – Denis Couch, Sally Bamblett
6. Wiradjuri Welcome, Education, and Storytelling – Desma Newman, Sally Bamblett, Tim Ellis

Shireen Donaldson returned to the meeting at 1:02pm.

The Chair plans to share the list of focus groups and members' contact details so volunteers can connect, collaborate, and brainstorm on their specific topics between meetings. This will provide the Committee with concrete material to discuss during their regular meetings.

Once a person is appointed to develop the Masterplan, these focus groups will have valuable, volunteer-generated resources and insights to present, helping inform that process.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Councillor Jenny Ellis and Helen Vowles that the Committee:

- (a) Endorse the creation of six focus groups.
- (b) Appoint members for each group.
- (c) Task each group with providing draft recommendations to this Committee, for inclusion in the Scenic Hill Masterplan.

CL04 ACCEPTANCE OF WALKSHOP REPORTS AND REVIEW OF DRAFT EO

The Committee considered a recommendation to receive and accept the Scenic Hill report, which will serve as a foundation document for the Scenic Hill Master Plan and guide the work of the newly formed focus groups.

A draft Request for Quotation (RFQ) for the Master Plan was discussed and members were invited to suggest any additional items for the scope or stakeholders to include in the

consultation.

Ms Newman commented that while the report is comprehensive and a good starting point, one concern was the wording of the “issues” section. Specifically, the report mentioned Aboriginal land claims as an issue. She suggested this be reworded or moved to a more appropriate section. The Committee agreed to change the wording from “issues” to “opportunities”, highlighting potential for improvement, information sharing, or positive change. Ms Newman to prepare a new section on Aboriginal Land Claims as opportunities to be included in the report by the next meeting (mid-December).

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Ron Anson and Tim Ellis that the Committee:

- (a) Receive and accept the Chair’s report on the Scenic Hill workshops held on 5 July and 23 August 2025.
- (b) Note that the report will serve as a foundation document for the development of the Scenic Hill Masterplan and guide the work of the newly formed focus groups.
- (c) Endorse the draft Request for Quotation (RFQ) for the Scenic Hill Masterplan.

CL05 was pushed back to allow relevant staff to attend discussion of the item.

CL06 PROCEDURE FOR SUBMITTING ITEMS TO THE COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Committee members noted that any agenda items should be provided to the Committee Secretary two weeks prior to the meeting, or alternatively they can be brought up in General Business.

Karin Penninga and Carel Potgieter entered the meeting, the time being 1:18pm.

CL07 MEETING DATES FOR 2026

The Committee discussed the meeting dates for 2026, with a request to bring the June meeting forward by one week as Ms Vowles will be unavailable. The following dates were confirmed:

- 24 March 2026
- 16 June 2026
- 22 September 2026
- 15 December 2026.

Phil King left the meeting, the time being 1:21pm.

The Committee further discussed a change in the proposed meeting time in 2026 from 12pm to 4:30pm. Staff availability will need to be investigated prior to a time change.

Phil King returned to the meeting at 1:23pm.

CL05 CAT CONTAINMENT

Ms Penninga provided an update on cat containment initiatives, including:

- A recent media campaign reminding the public of their responsibilities under the law, using social media, Council website and Council Catch-Up publications.
- Plans for another free microchipping day, a major initiative to support responsible pet ownership.
- A potential grant opportunity for local animal rescues to run a desexing drive, which

would ease pressure on Council and help control the cat population.

Tim Ellis left the meeting at 1:24pm.

Ms Penninga clarified that under current legislation, cats are not legally required to be contained, so Council should exercise caution to avoid giving misleading information about enforceability. Council prefers educational messaging over directives until legislation changes. Feral cat trapping is ongoing but not publicised, with efforts focused on known hotspots like CBD areas, preschools, and aged care facilities.

The Committee noted that most cats seen on Scenic Hill are likely domestic rather than feral. Suggestions like night-time camera traps were raised, but Ms Penninga explained that no complaints have been received from that area, so resources are being prioritised elsewhere.

Karin Penninga and Carel Potgieter left the meeting at 1:28pm.

6 OUTSTANDING ACTION REPORT

The Committee discussed using trail cameras to tackle rubbish dumping on Scenic Hill. While some cameras exist, they're currently out of service, and deploying them would require a strategic, integrated approach including signage, education, and clean-ups.

Ranger response is currently reactive, based on reports, but locating dumped rubbish is often hard without clear directions or GPS. Scenic Hill isn't part of regular patrols. The group agreed that cameras could help, but only as part of a broader strategy.

Desma Newman left the meeting at 1:30pm.

7 GENERAL BUSINESS

Nil

8 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Scenic Hill User Group is to be held on Tuesday, 16 December 2025 at 12:00pm.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 1:32pm.

ATTACHMENTS

- (a) Scenic Hill Walkshop Report - Endorsed by Committee (under separate cover)
- (b) Request for Quotation - Endorsed by Committee (under separate cover)