

Golden Plains Draft 2017/18 Budget Submission Jen & Kevin Blake

It is with some support and equally considerable concern that we make a submission to the 2017/18 draft Golden Plains Budget.

Whilst understanding the considerable challenge that faces Council working to work within the State Governments Fair Go Rates System we wish to highlight some of the very positive initiatives as well as some of the more worrying elements of this draft budget.

It is pleasing to see development of a playground at Batesford and we trust that a suitable location has been agreed with the community to allow a swift implementation of the funding should the budget measure be passed.

It is pleasing to see considerable funds being expended on rural roads including the Wingeel Road at the Rokewood Shelford end – This road is a major link road from Winchelsea to Warrambeen and then via Lonies Road to Ballarat. The improvements to this road need, as a matter of urgency, to include the widening of the crest close the Banks property as this is very narrow and this together with the increasing size of the many trucks that now traverse this road is a death trap waiting to happen. The widening of this crest is critical to the travelling public's safety. This work needs to be supported with work to improve the drainage along each section at the same time.

The Bells road seals are critical to preserving the ability for people to travel the road especially in wet weather. This also requires improvement to the drainage along each section.

The Pitfield Cressy Road Bridge is also a critical link especially for the cartage of grain and it is hoped that will be realigned and widened as a part of this upgrade.

Drainage

Pg 25 Table of four years spending capital works

Drainage noting that in 2016/17 the spend was \$63K nil in 2017/18 and 33K for the remaining. There will be considerable concern when rural drainage is almost non-existent partially due to the reduction in investment over the past term of council in an effort to balance the budget. It also needs to be recognised that there are township drainage issues that need considerable investment.

The result of underinvestment in rural drainage is gravel roads being severely impacted during wet weather as water washes away gravel due to the total lack of rural drains in workable condition. In the recent heavy autumn rains, it was evident that work needs to be undertaken to improve drainage for example on the Cressy Shelford road and other local roads with improvements to culverts that are currently not coping. Another example is Longs Road at Inverleigh where the water has been washing on the gravel for want of a proper drain – the cost of resheeting this road with gravel could have been averted with proper drainage as historically Gumley

South Road, Rokewood in earlier years where the road washed out several times and had to be replaced. Saving money on drainage is actually coming at an unaffordable cost of subsequent gravel resheeting.

Councillors need to understand that during the drought and following dryer than normal years there was minimal rainfall similar to that that caused recent events, drains were not a priority to clean out and the combined lack of maintenance, grass growth and lack of good road grading practice now sees this as a critical issue. Golden Plains can no longer ignore rural drainage.

P36 lists drainage maintenance notes expenditure of \$445K for Rural and township drainage maintenance.

It also needs to be recognised that there are considerable issues in some townships related to drainage that also require investment.

We humbly suggest there also needs to be a capital investment in drainage in the 2017/18 year.

Redevelopment of the Shire Offices – We need to look at the true costs of this project.

Major Initiative:

Golden Plains Shire Council is focused on providing quality customer service and achieving efficiencies for residents. As part of these efforts, this Budget allocates \$500k for community engagement, and detailed architectural and engineering designs for redevelopment of the existing customer service centre located at 2 Pope Street, Bannockburn.

Buildings – specialised 505 **1,988** 7,410 7,080 2,790

Buildings – unspecialised 4,355 **665** - 750 750

Heritage buildings - - - - -

Building improvements -

This was a project that the previous council deferred due to considerable discomfort about the significant borrowings that would be required to finance such a redevelopment.

Whilst there had been some initial costings prepared in my recollection there was little support for a redevelopment without prior community knowledge and approval. We believe that the community engagement including the conduction of a ratepayer plebiscite should take place prior to any further expenditure on architectural and engineering designs are developed.

It has been recognised that the public spaces within the current buildings provide few spaces for private conversations, but do the people want to find the funds to finance a redevelopment?

Golden Plains Shire is still defined as a small rural shire and as such the question needs to be asked can we afford such a redevelopment on borrowed funds.

A Plebiscite could be forwarded with rate notices with appropriated notification.

Investigation of current city and large business practices such as working from home, hot desking and the more efficient use of existing work spaces at Linton and Smythesdale and Bannockburn should also be undertaken.

Hot desking (sometimes called "non-reservation-based hoteling") is an office organization system which involves multiple workers using a single physical work station or surface during different time periods. In some instances, lockers are provided for non-permanent deskers to enable essential storage of business related items & personal belongings.

It is recognized that within any organization there are a defined number of staff who all day, every day are bound to their workstation but in an organization, such as Local Government this is not the case with all staff many who provide services outside the office and a proper evaluation needs to be undertaken prior to any redevelopment moving forward.

Council has since 1996 moved toward a paperless operation and this would greatly enhance this objective and thus further reduce costs.

This system is now being utilised to enable a more productive workforce that enables staff who do not require a permanent workspace to utilise a workspace without having a permanent desk thus reducing the need to provide this infrastructure and freeing up spaces for utilisation for other purposes. It is being utilized by many Government and non-government entities in order to reduce the cost of providing working spaces. Modern communication technology allows staff to work not only from home, but also across an organisation not just in one space.

The question is there a real need to expand the current offices needs to thoroughly investigated and should not be proceeded until the appointment of a new CEO [understanding and respecting that Mr Nicholls has indicated that he will retire at the end of this current term]. Currently \$500K would greatly contribute to maintenance needs of the current structures.

We need to face the fact that there has been a strong voice from the Batesford community wishing to move into the City of Greater Geelong and we noted at election time and in the years leading up to, there were many in the Bannockburn township who also echoed this sentiment. Equally there is a view heard West of Bannockburn that moving those areas into the City of Greater Geelong would enable

the establishment of a stronger rural municipality that could better meet the needs of those living the farming sector and more isolated rural townships.

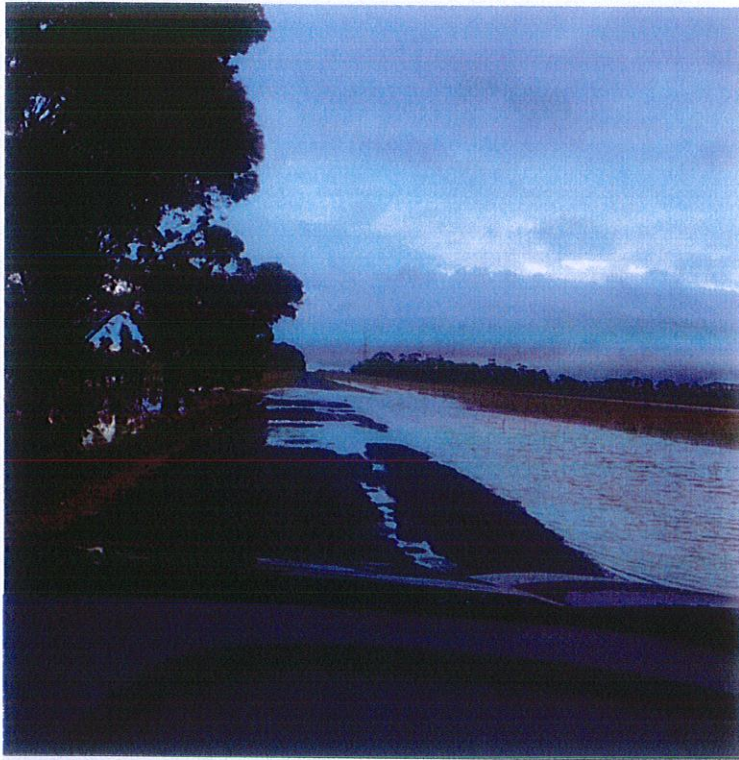
Given the Fair Go Rates System will place increasing pressure on current municipalities it may lead to future amalgamations and do we really need to support a building that in a few years may be redundant?

In conclusion, we wish to thank council for the effort in framing the draft budget within very difficult funding parameters and the opportunity to submit our views. We would value the opportunity to speak to council and provide answers to questions that may arise from our submission.

Regards Jen & Kevin Blake

Attached will be recent photos of roads

Cressy Shelford Road Anzac Day 2017 about 11am prior to this the water had been about 12 inches deep across the road traffic hazard needs culvert attention and possibly additional culvert



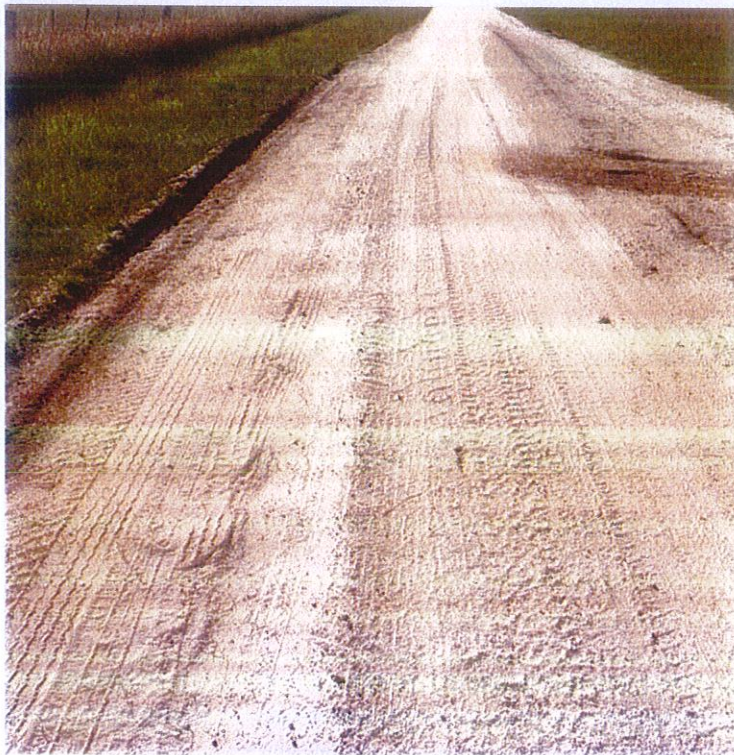
Cressy Shelford Rd



Off Cressy Shelford Road lack of Culverts



Longas Rd Inverleigh water runs on the road no drainage





Longa Rd Inverleigh Needs attention now



