

**REPORT OF A MEETING OF GUNDAROO RESIDENTS HELD ON 4 OCTOBER 2010
IN RESPONSE TO THE YASS VALLEY COUNCIL DRAFT TOWN AND VILLAGES STUDY 2010**

INTRODUCTION

1. The Gundaroo Community Association (GCA) convened a public meeting in the Soldier's Memorial Hall in Gundaroo at 7:30pm on Monday the 4th of October 2010. 36 village residents attended the meeting which was chaired by the President of the GCA, Clive Mitchell-Taylor.
2. The purpose of the meeting was to enable the GCA to gather and validly represent opinion concerning the Yass Valley Council's (YVC) Draft Town and Villages Study (the Study) as it relates to Gundaroo (the Village).
3. The GCA anticipated that the meeting would reveal some consensus and some conflict – matters on which Village residents hold opposing views.
4. This report is a summary of the meeting and the views expressed. The meeting commenced with a general discussion of the Study. Issues raised were as follows.



GENERAL

5. **Acknowledgement of the 2020 Vision Plan.** The meeting noted with approval that that Gundaroo 2020 Vision Plan was acknowledged within the draft Study. Those attending were also aware that despite this acknowledgement, certain recommendations within the Study directly countered aspects of the Vision Plan.
6. **Alienation of productive rural land.** The community reinforced the fact that the presently undeveloped Village borders include significant areas of productive rural land. In addition to the RU1 (Section 7) river flats identified in Figure 41 of the Study, these areas include the RU1 (Sections 9 and 10) and the area south of the Village (RU5) but not presently developed.
7. **Geotechnical report.** A Gunning Shire Council (GSC) geotechnical report (date unknown but presumably handed over to the YVC) focussed on the capacity of the soil in the Village area to absorb the moisture generated through household waste and determined that an area greater than 0.2ha (0.5 acre) was required. The present infill of unused blocks puts increasing pressure on soil absorption and the underlying water table which may be pushing them to a critical point.
8. **Sewerage and water infrastructure.** There is a strong underlying theme within the Study that expansion of the Village will involve the introduction of sewerage and water reticulation infrastructure. The cost of establishing the infrastructure can then be used as justification for expansion of the Village. Should the infrastructure involve developer(s), the cost recovery may become more difficult.
9. **Cost recovery under S94.** It is a State government requirement that users will fund 100% of sewerage and water reticulation. The Council needs to be sustainable in terms of Section 94 (of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979) cost recovery for infrastructure but there is a danger that the level of cost recovery necessary for both sewerage and water may be financially damaging to many families and consequently act directly against the interests of the Village and the Council.
10. **Subsumption of the Common in a previous proposal.** A sewerage proposal in the 1990s by the Gunning Shire Council was based upon subsuming one third of the Common for the sewerage works. This was not well received by the community.

11. **Targeting expansion to areas contiguous with the ACT.** If one of the drivers for this study is expansion of the Shire with the aim of growing the population base, this expansion should logically be focussed at the areas contiguous to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). This would provide the opportunity to leverage off existing ACT water, sewerage and power infrastructure at a far lower cost to residents than would otherwise be the case.
12. **Demographic issues.** The view was expressed by a minority that some expansion is both necessary and good, as it would mean that more young families would be able to reside in the Village. This was balanced by the opinion that the demographics of the Village are far from stable and while there is some aging of the population which mirrors national trends, older residents are more likely to move to the ACT or other urban areas where medical support is closer.
13. **Statistical anomalies.** Table 4 of the report gives the population of Gundaroo in the 2006 census as 335, while the Bureau of Statistics web site reports the population as 331. While the variation is trivial, the fact that there is any variance at all casts doubt upon the research and the statistical data used and developed within the report. There are similar variations for Binalong (268 in the report compared with 269 on the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] web site), Bowning (334 cf 411!), Murrumbateman (1759 cf 1759), Sutton (258 cf 220) and Yass (5,332 cf 5,333).
14. **Critical mass achieved.** A majority felt that the Village had already (albeit recently) reached a critical mass which facilitated activities such as Cubs/Scouts/Venturers and sporting teams. The Village is economically viable and a more attractive place to live for young families. There is no evidence to suggest that the Village is unsustainable simply because we live within our boundary as it is presently defined.
15. **Lack of defined process leads to lack of control.** Another strong underlying theme is that YVC has no defined processes to deal with responses to the study or outcomes from the study, where potential outcomes include expansion of the Village. Without process there is no control.
16. **Benefits to Gundaroo undefined.** The study defines no specific benefits for the Village or Villagers, either collectively or individually. This, combined with the fact that there are no costings (not even first pass costings), timetable or schedule means that no cost/benefit analysis is possible. It makes the study itself a black box, with no visibility of the inputs, modifications or transformations which contribute to the outcomes, and no statement of "what's in it for Gundaroo".
17. **Role of previous study.** Mention was made of an urban development study from one or two years ago, and which dealt with urban development for non-Village population aggregation areas like Belmont Forest. Has that study been considered and does it influence or contribute to the proposals in the Study?
18. **Affordable housing options and development caveats.** Options for affordable housing were discussed, together with caveats on developers to return value to the community through, for example, expansion of the common or other amenity.
19. **Maintaining current configuration of Gundaroo is a legitimate aspiration.** The villagers have a strong desire to maintain the special nature of Gundaroo and this is a legitimate aspiration. A mix of zones on the edges of the Village acts directly counter to the principles which the Village residents have reinforced at every opportunity. YVC should not underestimate the depth of feeling that this principle engenders in Village residents.

20. **Planning for the west of the Yass River.** There is no planning for the area west of the Yass River. What plans, if any, does YVC have for this zone? A proposal was voiced during the meeting that the west bank of the Yass River could be a logical area of expansion for the Village. Mr Jed Johnson of Belmont Forest has developed this idea further and intends to make a separate submission based on this proposal. Some highlights of that submission have been included in this paper.
21. **Gundaroo treasures its heritage.** The residents see Gundaroo as a smart community which treasures its heritage.

PROPOSED STANDARD INSTRUMENT – PRINCIPAL LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PLAN (LEP) ZONES

Item (1) page 135, Para 1

22. **Sub-division of blocks between Lute and Judith Streets.** Rezoning and sub-division of the blocks to the immediate east of the Village adjacent to Lute Street ie, between Lute Street and the gazetted but unformed Judith Street, is seen as something of a windfall for the present owners, but a potential cost to those who would not or could not sub-divide.
23. **Upstream sub-divisions impact groundwater.** The proposed sub-divisions are all upstream of the Village proper and will contribute to the groundwater contamination and water absorption issues already discussed.
24. **Existing blocks as transitional buffers.** The existing 2ha (5 acre) allotments provide a transition and buffer between the grassland of the common and the semi-urban Village and contribute to the present heterogeneous nature of the Village.
25. **Sub-division variable.** Due to the variable positioning of the houses now on these blocks, not all can be sub-divided in a way which mirrors the sub-division of the remainder of the Village.
26. **160 new blocks are a radical strategy.** Introducing a potential 160 new building blocks to the Village is a radical strategy which acts against the conservative nature of this community.

Item (1) p 135, Para 2

27. **Rezoning south of Faithfull Street a possible option.** Some participants expressed the view that rezoning the land on the southern side of Faithfull Street as the most viable and preferable option for any immediate expansion, particularly if this included reserves (see para 16).
28. **Support for *status quo*.** There was a body of opinion clearly in support of the *status quo* and which did not favour any expansion of the Village beyond its current boundaries.

Item (2) p 135

29. **Graduated rezoning establishes an unacceptable precedent.** The proposal to rezone the rural lots to the south and south-east of the Village drew much criticism. It would provide only four more dwellings and is consequently hardly worth-while, particularly as the land concerned is outside the urban plan. The much stronger view is that this sort of development establishes a precedent for graduated rezoning which acts directly against the established opinion of the community. There is little or no support for this rezoning proposal.
30. **Bad examples of graduated zoning.** Murrumbateman and Palerang Shire's Elmlea development outside Bungendore were cited as examples of the type of graduated land use and zoning that Gundaroo residents were anxious to avoid.

Item (3) p 135

31. **Sub-division of rural land upstream of the Village impacts water flow.** Again, this proposal drew concerted disapproval. This is good rural land (see para 6) and more houses would limit flow through the creek because a condition of expansion is access to water.
32. **Impact on the Superb Parrot as an endangered species.** It was also pointed out that this is a key nesting site for the Superb Parrot (*polytelis swainsonii*) which is identified as an endangered species. Such environmental issues militate against further development.
33. **Graduated rezoning establishes an unacceptable precedent.** This proposal again introduces a precedent for graduated rezoning that was discussed in para 22 and consequently condemned.

Item (4) pps 135, 136

34. **Status quo supported.** The meeting supported the maintenance of the *status quo* for the lots on the northern side of Marked Tree Road.

Item (5) p 136

35. **Public recreation zoning supported.** The meeting supported the proposal to rezone the Recreation Ground (the sports oval) and Police Paddock as Public Recreation areas.

Item (6) p 136

36. **Infrastructure zones supported but boundaries to be defined.** The meeting supported this proposal to rezone the Tip and Cemetery as SP2 Infrastructure but noted that about half of the land presently fenced into the Tip is gazetted to the Common. It was suggested that there may be an opportunity for YVC to negotiate a *quid pro quo* which enables it to retain the fenced area.
37. **Naming convention for the Tip.** Villagers noted the recent change of nomenclature in YVC documentation from “Tip” to “Transfer Station/Tip”, and observed that this may be due to concern about the viability of the tip in its present configuration and usage patterns.

38.

Item (7) p 136

39. **Floodplain retained as agricultural land.** The meeting supported this proposal but queried the phrase “significant scenic values” which was used to describe the tract. There is a strong feeling that the market garden at the southern entrance to Gundaroo is far from scenic and there have been a number of issues, both long-standing and recent, including the accumulation of gutted vehicle bodies (now resolved) which contribute to this opinion.

Item (8) p 136

40. **Area identified as National Parkland.** YVC appears to be unaware that the 149 acres (60ha) in the easternmost portion of the investigation area is gazetted to become National Park lands with effect March 2011. This takes the area out of the ambit of the Study.

Items (9) and (10) pps 136 & 137

41. **Graduated rezoning establishes an unacceptable precedent.** Future investigation of the land to the north and south of the Village at present zoned RU1 Primary Production for possible use as a mix of RU5 Village and R5 Large Lot Residential again runs directly counter to the basic premise that Gundaroo is a residential Village in broad-acre farmland.



THE 'WEST BANK' PROPOSAL IN BRIEF

42. This proposal was raised at the meeting but not discussed in detail and is included for information only and a demonstration of non-linear thinking applied to the topic.
43. Duplicating the Village in the west would:
 - a. preserve the 0.2ha buffer lots in the east;
 - b. place no additional groundwater stress on the existing Village;
 - c. preserve the existing approaches and vista as the western development is not easily viewed from the main thoroughfare;
 - d. establish river as the main focal point of the Village (a central theme of the 2020 Vision Plan) rather than the main road as it is now; and
 - e. provide the opportunity to use the Allen truss bridge as a Village-only crossing point.



SUMMARY

44. **Controlled and gradual development.** The most enduring theme which emerged from this meeting is that development is ideally a controlled and gradual process which has as its first principles the preservation of the nature of the Village and maintenance of the amenity which attracts new residents.
45. **Incomplete and dramatic proposals establish resistance.** Acknowledging that the Study is indeed a draft, it has been difficult for ratepayers of Gundaroo to deal with a full gamut of incomplete and at times dramatic proposals for change and to put them into a realistic context in a relatively short time-frame. As the study is further developed, the GCA, on behalf of the community, hopes to see the revised zoning proposals presented together with priorities and timelines.
46. **Mixed rezoning an unacceptable option.** The meeting reinforced at every opportunity the unacceptability of mixed rezoning on the periphery of the Village proper.
47. **Imposition of S94 costs a significant deterrent.** Introduction of town sewerage and town water under the auspices of S94 has the potential to impose a significant cost on current and new residents.
48. **Villagers accept existing arrangements.** Existing groundwater and absorption issues are known but there is no evidence that they are actually unsustainable within the present development regime. Neither is there any evidence that residents wish to forego the limitations imposed by the present arrangements for sewerage disposal and collection of household water into tanks. In fact, the present arrangements are a part of the conditions that hallmark Gundaroo as an archetypal Australian rural village.
49. **GCA will contribute to any future forums.** The Gundaroo Community Association remains ready to contribute to whatever consultative forums may arise from formal future development of this draft study of the towns and villages within the Yass Valley Council.

