

Councillors at Mitchell Shire - [REDACTED]@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au

Justin Harding [REDACTED]@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au

Dear Mayor, Councillors and Justin,

RE: Landscape Assessment Study – Vote Against This Motion to create new SLOs

I am writing to express my deep concern about the proposed Significant Landscape Overlays (SLOs) that will severely impact the farming operations and the viability of land of a large number of our customers, our neighbours and community members. Currently, the land I own with my husband is not affected.

The threat of an SLO being imposed on my properties is a real issue as well, possible in the future given the undisclosed breadth of the historical decisions made by Council surrounding the RLAR and Landscape Assessment Survey. Consultation has not occurred effectively so far in this project and it threatens to continue, as the scope of the Landscape Assessment Study is almost entirely covering Mitchell Shire.

As a landholder in Pyalong and Tooborac (three Farming Zone FZ properties), I strongly urge you to vote AGAINST these changes for the following reasons, many of which have already been outlined by the collaborative group Protect our Farms Inc and many other farmers:

- **Significant Landscape Overlays affect property value** – for sale or mortgage or loans. This decision will affect people's borrowings and future including their superannuation and their succession planning. Existing borrowings will be affected, directly impacting people's income and able to support themselves and maintain farming operations and family life. **SLO decisions will affect people like you, their children and if and when they can retire.**
- **Significant Landscape Overlays like those proposed will have costly and time-consuming permit processes, which may involve public safety issues.** Every time a farmer with an SLO wants to do something they will likely need to consult Council, and right now we have no idea how much this will cost, and how long permits make take, and what other costly requirements may be needed eg Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP), Business Plan, Farm Management Plans and so on. In addition, how are farmers supposed to document the age of EVERY native vegetation removed without ridiculous and unworkable bureaucratic process. Given farmers may remove thousands of suckers on a yearly basis, how do we actually prove how old a tree is before we remove it?
- **Significant Landscape Overlays like those proposed completely ignore the stewardship and cultural value of farmers, and the true history of farming towns.** We have spent thousands of dollars over many years planting trees, as have so many of our community. We have removed trees from roads after emergencies, used equipment to help gain access to our property and roads. We don't look for handouts to do so, Council does not offer any sort of encouragement or rebate and that is not why we do it. The imposition of an SLO says to the public that the land needs to be protected FROM the farmer that owns it. The reports commissioned by Mitchell Shire do not accurately detail any of the farming, mining, logging or agricultural history of the area, and the origin of the small towns like Pyalong, Tooborac and Tallarook that exist WHOLLY because of agriculture NOT in spite of it. There is no value placed on the roles that farmers play in our community that keeps these areas alive, and attractive to those trying to move here in droves. Nor any value attributed in these reports to the efforts of farming families offering funds and time to the myriad of services and groups they sustain including Landcare, CFA, school P&C, sporting and charity groups - activities which should be celebrated and reflected in an accurate report.

- **Significant Landscape Overlays like these proposed affect the workplace and homes of farmers, their economic value and add barriers to farmers earning a living on their land.**

The public does not own or manage private farmland, and cannot be expected to appreciate its value as a business. Farms exist because they produce commodities and not because of how they look from a road. Farms generate income and a livelihood, they are employment and often a home. Changing someone's workplace and their ability to earn a living is incompatible with reasonable community expectation of Council's role.

These SLOs will directly affect the wellbeing of farming ratepayers.

Farming Zone land has clearly understood schedules and rules, and has done for decades.

Farmers with a new SLO may neighbour a property without, simply because of an arbitrary line and a decision to include their landscape type and area. This is despite many of the farms with SLOs having operated within existing Farming rules for many decades.

- **Significant Landscape Overlays like these proposed are discriminatory and uncompetitive in nature, and contradict Council's own objectives for the project and contradicting State Govt allowances** In the FAQs (1), it mentions that an SLO cannot "change how land is currently being used" but does that mean that if a farmer wants to start running sheep and building a shearing shed, that there are additional hurdles to obtaining the permit, whereas a property without SLO can go through a much less onerous process? Despite both being normal expected farming activities. The fact people aren't sure and are in doubt they can respond to market opportunities or changes in consumer behaviour, animal disease emergencies or even climate change by quickly pursuing different farming activities means they are discriminated against even though they own Farming Zone Land. Given the work of the Victorian State Government in 2023 to [ease rules for farmers on building permits](#) with Amendment VC231, why is farming potentially being made harder and more bureaucratic for those with an SLO in Mitchell Shire?

"Amendment VC231 is required to reduce unnecessary planning permit triggers, delays and workloads at rural and regional councils. It will also make it easier for farmers and rural and regional households to add extensions to their homes and allow farmers, and businesses to more easily construct buildings that contribute to agricultural productivity." [VC231 Explanatory](#)

Perhaps most alarmingly, restricting farm activities on farming land is also not consistent with one of the published intentions of the project, which states in Volume 1:

"Landscape Area 3.2 (Pyalong Granitic Uplands) is located within Policy Area 1.

The statement of intent for Policy Area 1 includes:

- *To protect the most high-quality agricultural land within the shire*
- *To promote commercial scale and intensive agricultural uses*
- *To only support the construction of dwellings where they have a direct relationship with a legitimate agricultural use "(2)*

- **Significant Landscape Overlays like those proposed have been poorly consulted and ratepayers and landholders have been notified too late to find information or make an informed decision.**

Referring to the document on Engaging Mitchell, "*Landscape Assessment Study: Consultation Summary Report 13 June 2024*", this project resulting in the SLOs being mapped on Mitchell Shire land commenced in 2021.

Actually, in October 2019, I was invited to join a Community Liaison Reference Group (Attachment A) with regard to the Rural Land and Activity Review, which includes Volume 1 of the Landscape Assessment Study. It was published in 2020.

I also sat on the Mitchell Environmental Advisory Committee (MEAC) from 2018 to 2020.

(Attachment B)

Yet I would reflect that the first I or any resident really knew about these new SLOs being imposed in Pyalong, Tooborac and Tallarook was in March 2023, although detailed mapping was only available after October 2023. And only residents in parts of Mitchell Shire received the March 2023 mailout, I did not but was made aware by other concerned residents.

I assert that that RLAR actually commenced in 2019, not 2021. The [Hansen Partnership Report](#) of July 2019 is the important precursor document to the RLAR and LAS. Then came Vol 1 of the Landscape Assessment Study – Character in 2020.

So in all those years, there wasn't time to inform landholders of their properties potentially being mapped with SLOs, and now a decision is being voted on in less than 12 months from detailed mapping in October 2023 to August 2024? How is this good consultation? Why the rush when the project has really been happening in evolving stages since 2019?

That is despite so many other parties (KADRRA, BEAM, Wallan Environment Group) being given specific briefings about the project, but never the actual affected landholders prior to March 2023, according to the Consultation Summary Report of June 2024. (3)

From 2018 until March 2023, I will state that Council's specific intention to create these Significant Landscape Overlays in Pyalong, Tooborac and Tallarook, to my recollection, was never mentioned in any discussion I had or email to me whilst I was on the CLG, MEAC or just a ratepayer.

In fact, the failed Conservation Zone debacle in Macedon Ranges was mentioned to Councillors and council officers on a number of occasions in terms of it being a poor example of councils dealing with farmers. (Their project sought to impose conservation rezoning on farmland without discussions with farmers and was abandoned after [significant outcry from Macedon farmers](#).) This event occurred in 2021, the same time as the Landscape Assessment Study was being pursued by Mitchell Shire, so why weren't these SLOs flagged then to ratepayers? Surely Mitchell Shire farmers could have been alerted to specific outlined SLOs earlier than March or October 2023, i.e. before Vol 3 of LAS was published in Sept 23 and while it was being drafted?

Surely Councillors can wait and allow the landholders time to assess the impact of an SLO. Even if we agree the Landscape Assessment Study project commenced in 2021 and not 2019, then giving landholders more time to speak to their banking institutions, their legal counsel, their accountants and their farming advisors and families is only fair and reasonable? What is the hurry on Council to make a decision that will impact farmers for generations to come?

There are no big residential developments slated for Pyalong, Tooborac or Tallarook (that ratepayers know of) and given the proximity to Council Elections, is it fairer and more responsible to consider the decision which will impact hundreds of your ratepayer constituents?

The breadth of the decisions Councillors have made, to pursue the RLAR and the Landscape Assessment Survey has brought us to where we are today. This means that anything within the exhibited documents thus far may come to fruition. This is particularly concerning, given that on Page 16 of Volume 3, the need for a permit is disclosed as a future planning requirement across a

huge swathe of farmland bordering the Northern Highway from Tooborac to High Camp....

“...a permit is triggered within 100 metres of a main road (TZ2), 40 metres of a secondary road (TZ3), or 20 metres of any other road, for the following key road corridors and views.

Policy name: Protection of scenic outviews from key road corridors

Objective To minimise the visual impact of development on the foreground of views to significant landscape features from the following key road corridors:

- *Views to the range including Tooborac Hill and Pyalong Hill from the Northern Highway”(4)*

Not to mention all the roads listed on pp 85-86 of Vol 3, which encompasses thousands more farms that exist along this “Hume viewshed” area **that might have SLOs mapped on them in the future?**

“Viewing corridors have been identified as the primary roads from where significant landscapes can be seen. These are mostly the main roads (freeways, arterials and rural connectors). Visually sensitive landscapes have been identified by running a viewshed analysis on each of the following view corridors:

Hume Freeway • Northern Highway • Upper Goulburn Road • Goulburn Valley Highway • Strath Creek – Broadford Road • Heathcote East Baynton Road • Seymour – Tooborac Road • Lancefield – Tooborac Road • Lancefield – Pyalong Road • Kilmore - Lancefield Road • Darraweit Road • Wandong Road • Highlands Road • Spur Road • Broadford – Kilmore Road • Whittlesea – Yea Road • Old Sydney Road” (5)

I urge you to **vote No at this time** to any motion to adopt and implement the Landscape Assessment Study and the creation of these new SLOs.

And I urge at least 12 months until the matter is raised again for a vote, to allow both landholders and Councillors to fully understand the implications and impacts. And allow for SLOs to be disclosed and circulated effectively to all residents and ratepayers. A full explanation of the SLO permit application processes, the costs and exact requirements MUST be part of this, well explained policies that do not overly burden council staff or farmers. And a process should occur to fully disclose any possibility of future plans that may create new SLOs along the listed roads in the above “Hume viewshed” catchment, or anywhere in Mitchell Shire, so all parties may be informed and equipped to make good decisions. All Mitchell Shire ratepayers, farmers, and yourselves as our Councillors, deserve no less.

Pyalong

References

- (1) Landscape Assessment Consultation Summary, 13 June 2024, [Landscape Assessment Study | Engaging Mitchell \(engagingmitchellshire.com\)](#)
 - (2) Landscape Assessment Study, Volume 1 - Character, Claire Scott Planning, 2020 [Landscape Assessment Study | Engaging Mitchell \(engagingmitchellshire.com\)](#) and [Rural Land and Activities Review 2022 | Engaging Mitchell \(engagingmitchellshire.com\)](#)
 - (3) Landscape Assessment Consultation Summary, 13 June 2024, [Landscape Assessment Study | Engaging Mitchell \(engagingmitchellshire.com\)](#)
 - (4) Landscape Assessment Study, Volume 3 – Landscape Protection and Management, Claire Scott Planning, [Landscape Assessment Study | Engaging Mitchell \(engagingmitchellshire.com\)](#), page 16
 - (5) Landscape Assessment Study, Volume 3 – Landscape Protection and Management, Claire Scott Planning, [Landscape Assessment Study | Engaging Mitchell \(engagingmitchellshire.com\)](#), pages 85-86
- Attachment A- Rural Land and Activity Review 2019 – Community Liaison Group membership
Attachment B – MEAC 2018-2020 membership

9.2 RURAL LAND AND ACTIVITIES REVIEW COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Author: Justin Harding - Strategic Planner

File No: PL/09/168

Attachments: 1. Rural Land and Activities Review Community Liaison Group Terms of Reference

SUMMARY

This report details the public advertising and application process undertaken for the creation of the Rural Land and Activities Review Community Liaison Group (CLG).

Applications for the CLG were sought during Stage 1: Issues and Opportunities consultation for the Rural Land and Activities Review. Five (5) applications have been received for membership onto the CLG. This report recommends membership for the Rural Land and Activities Review CLG for Council's consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council: Endorses the following individuals as members of the Rural Land and Activities Review Community Liaison Group for a 1-year period (area of interest in brackets).

- [REDACTED] (Pyalong area, primary producer, business owner, MEAC member)
- [REDACTED] (Bylands area, rural residential)
- [REDACTED] (Seymour area, primary producer)
- [REDACTED] (Pyalong area, equine)
- [REDACTED] (Tallarook area, rural residential, rural policy)

Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to appoint additional members to the Community Liaison Group should additional nominations be received during the project.

BACKGROUND

Applications for the CLG were sought during Stage 1: Issues and Opportunities consultation for the Rural Land and Activities Review. Applications were sought between 30 July 2019 and 9 September 2019 and five (5) applications have been received.

Community Liaison Groups have been successfully utilised for several major strategic planning projects, including for township structure plans. CLGs provide a sounding board for the direction and preparation of future strategic planning and can identify areas of investigation and focus that are of importance to the community. Membership is generally comprised of community leaders with diverse interests and links to

RURAL LAND AND ACTIVITIES REVIEW COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUP MEMBERSHIP (CONT.)

community groups in order to raise awareness of projects and encourage broader community involvement.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Following the application period, the following selection criteria was considered:

- Diversity of interests and knowledge including environment, farming, equine, land management, rural residential living and economic growth.
- Live, work, study and/or volunteer within the township.
- Representation comprising a mix of genders and age groups.
- A mix of skills and attributes to complement other members of the committee.
- Ability to regularly attend and participate in meetings as scheduled.

The proposed membership meets the selection criteria and brings a diversity of skills and attributes that complement each other. The applicants are from Pyalong, Bylands, Seymour and Tallarook, covering a wide area of the shire.

Membership is proposed for the duration of the Rural Land and Activities Review project, until adoption by Council, as per the CLG Terms of Reference (Attachment 1). The Terms of Reference were also publicly available during the consultation period.

The Terms of Reference sought a minimum of 8 community members to comprise the CLG. As this has not been filled, there is scope for additional members to join the CLG during the project.

CONSULTATION

Applications were advertised in all local papers between 30 July 2019 and 13 August 2019. Application forms were made available via the following:

- Online <https://engagingmitchellshire.com/rural-land> via the Engaging Mitchell website
- At community drop-in sessions held at Tallarook, Tooborac, Pyalong, Waterford Park and Reedy Creek. Residents were encouraged to apply at these drop-in sessions
- At all Customer Service and Library Centres

Applications were open from 30 July 2019 to 9 September 2019.

FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There is sufficient budget allocation provided to support and coordinate the CLG meetings through the Rural Land and Activities Review project budget.

RURAL LAND AND ACTIVITIES REVIEW COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUP MEMBERSHIP (CONT.)

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Action 3.10.1 of the Council Plan is to prepare the Rural Land and Activities Review *“in consultation with residents and communities”*.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

Risk Ranking is determined using [ROHS201-G1- Corporate Risk Matrix](#). Risk is identified as Low, Medium, High or Very High.

Risk	Risk Ranking	Proposed Treatments	Within Existing Resources?
That the CLG membership does not represent the views of all rural residents.	Medium	Continue wide community consultation to ensure as broad a range of views as possible are heard.	Yes

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL)

The purpose of the CLG is to provide community advice in respect to the Rural Land and Activities Review project which aims to provide planning policy recommendations for rural land within the Shire.

CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The rights protected in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* were considered in preparing this report and it's determined that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

Council Officers will continue to brief and seek the views of the Youth Council during preparation and community consultation of the Rural Land and Activities Review.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

Applications for the CLG closed on 9 September 2019. Five (5) applications were received. An evaluation process has been undertaken and the membership for the CLG is presented for Council's consideration.

MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL

Council Meeting Attachment

DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

21 OCTOBER 2019

9.2

RURAL LAND AND ACTIVITIES REVIEW COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Attachment No: 1

**Rural Land and Activities Review Community
Liaison Group Terms of Reference**



Rural Land and Activities Review Community Liaison Group Terms of Reference

Introduction

Mitchell Shire is preparing a Rural Land and Activities Review. This work forms an important part of Council's long-term strategic land use planning commitments as outlined in the Council Plan 2017 – 2021.

The primary aims of the Rural Land and Activities Review is to provide:

- A vision for the principles of rural land use in Mitchell Shire
- Analysis of current Mitchell Shire rural land Planning Scheme Policy
- Recommendations for sustainable and appropriate land use policy informed by environmental, social and economic drivers.
- Recommendations for peri-urban land use policy.

The preparation of the project will involve three key stages:

- Stage 1: Issues and Opportunities
- Stage 2: Future Directions for the Rural Land and Activities Review
- Stage 3: Adopt the Rural Land and Activities Review

Terms of Reference

Purpose	The purpose of the Community Liaison Group is to provide input into the project to assist in delivering planning outcomes that are most valued by the community.
Objectives	<p>The objectives of the Community Liaison Group are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide high level guidance on the issues and outcomes of the project • Review and provide feedback at key project milestones • Communicate with members of the community on key project issues and outcomes
Function of the Community Liaison Group	<p>The role of the Community Liaison Group is to provide input into the project to assist in delivering planning outcomes most valued by the community.</p> <p>The Groups will meet at key project milestones to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and provide feedback on the consultation outcomes from Stage 1: Issues and Opportunities • Provide input and guidance in respect to the development of the Future Directions for the Rural Land and Activities Review • Review and provide feedback on the final Rural Land and Activities Review. <p>The Group will have no decision-making power as the approval process will remain with the Council.</p>



Rural Land and Activities Review Community Liaison Group Terms of Reference

Composition	The Group will be chaired by a Council officer or by a project consultant. Five (5) applications were received from community members during the Expressions of Interest process.
Selection Criteria	<p>Mitchell Shire sought Expressions of Interest from community members and representatives during Stage 1 exhibition of the Issues and Opportunities Paper.</p> <p>The following criteria will be used to select appropriate members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection, involvement and knowledge of the local community • Ability to network and communicate with the wider community
Mitchell Shire's Commitment to the Group	<p>Mitchell Shire is committed to engaging and working closely with the community to ensure the Rural Land and Activities Review identifies and strategically addresses rural land issues in a manner that is consistent with the values of the current community and meets the needs of future communities. The Community Liaison Group will play a key role in delivering this.</p> <p>The Community Liaison Group will act in an advisory capacity and will not be a decision-making body. Mitchell Shire has the statutory obligation to approve any plans, reports or related documents. Any decision-making process will consider the views of the Community Liaison Group.</p> <p>Mitchell Shire will make the following commitments to the Community Liaison Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish a transparent community engagement process to assist in delivering the desired outcomes of the project. • To provide the Community Liaison Group with appropriate access to available reports, papers and plans when reviewing and providing feedback at key milestones in the project. • To give respectful consideration to the comments and guidance provided during the process. • To report back to the Community Liaison Group on how the comments have been considered as part of the preparation of the project. • To communicate the minutes and notes of the CLG to Councillors and senior Council Officers.



Rural Land and Activities Review Community Liaison Group Terms of Reference

Mitchell Shire's Expectations of the Group	<p>It is expected that the members of the Community Liaison Group will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the role of the Community Liaison Group • Attend and participate in Community Liaison Group meetings • Review project documents and provide feedback where appropriate in the time frames required • Respect the role of Council officers and consultants involved in the project • Respect the comments of all members of the group and provide an atmosphere where all members feel comfortable to participate • Seek to achieve outcomes and solutions that benefit the community as a whole • Comply with the Community Liaison Group's terms of reference
Engagement Methodology	<p>Stage 1: Investigate Issues and Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early in the planning process, the community will be consulted to identify and/or reaffirm issues facing the rural land. This will involve: • Engaging with the community to gather information on the issues faced by rural land users and residents. • Engaging with the community to gather information on what rural land users and residents see as desirable outcomes of the structure planning process <p>By engaging with the community at this point, it will provide context for the Rural Land and Activities Review as tools for responding to issues to ensure the best outcomes for the community, economy and environment in Mitchell.</p> <p>The Community Liaison Group will be engaged to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the outcomes of the community consultation process and provide commentary on the outcomes • Provide guidance as to how the outcomes of the community consultation process can be considered as part of Stage 2: Future Directions for the Rural Land and Activities Review. <p>Stage 2: Future Directions for the Rural Land and Activities Review</p> <p>Following on from the initial community engagement and the identification of context and issues for rural land, a Future Directions Report will be developed. The Future Directions Report will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential changes to rural zonings, schedules,



Rural Land and Activities Review Community Liaison Group Terms of Reference

	<p>overlays and local policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas for further investigation and additional strategic work, including potential sites for the Rural Conservation Zone, reduced or increased lot size minimum schedules based on land uses and agricultural land quality <p>The Community Liaison Group will be engaged to provide feedback as to how the proposed Future Directions will affect different sections of the community</p> <p>The community will be consulted to discuss and provide feedback on the Future Directions Report. This will provide direction as to the preparation of the draft structure plan. There is likely to be 2-3 Community Liaison Group meetings during this stage.</p>
Project Timeframe	<p>The project commenced in March 2019 and will run for approximately 18 months. It is expected that the stages of the project will occur as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage 1: Investigate Issues and Opportunities: September - November 2019 Stage 2: Future Directions: Early 2020 Stage 3: Finalise of the Review: Late 2020
Meetings	<p>The Community Liaison Group will meet at key milestones in the project outlined in the engagement methodology. It is envisaged that there will be at least three meetings throughout the project. It is expected that group members will make a commitment to attend meetings. Meetings may be held during or after business hours depending on the availability of the majority of group members. It is envisaged that meetings will be held at meeting spaces within Broadford.</p>
Chairperson	<p>Meetings will be chaired and facilitated by a Council officer.</p>
Confidentiality	<p>Confidential information will be clearly identified as being confidential and the confidential nature of the information will be made clear to members. Members must not release publicly any information that has been identified as confidential.</p>
Information Dissemination	<p>All information made available to the public via media releases or publicity statements is to be managed by Mitchell Shire Council.</p>
Public Comment	<p>Membership of the Community Liaison Group by any person or organisation does not preclude the ability of that person or</p>



Rural Land and Activities Review Community Liaison Group Terms of Reference

	organisation to make formal comment on issues when public comments are invited.
Administration	Mitchell Shire will provide services for all administration associated with the group's activities, including the provision of meeting spaces, agendas, minutes and relevant reports, papers and plans.

9.4 PROPOSED MITCHELL ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Author: Elyse Kelly - Environmental Programs Coordinator

File No: ET/03/003

Attachments: Nil

SUMMARY

This report proposes to extend the membership term of the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee (MEAC) for an additional six (6) months due to difficulties with community engagement and induction during COVID-19.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorses the extension of the current membership of the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee until 23 November 2020 being the date of the November Council meeting.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee, as stipulated in the Terms of Reference is to capitalise “...on the knowledge, experience and skill available in the community to provide Mitchell Shire Council with strategic advice in respect to environmental sustainability and management issues and initiatives within the municipality.”

The applications for the community positions on the Committee have been assessed against this purpose and other measures identified in the Terms of Reference.

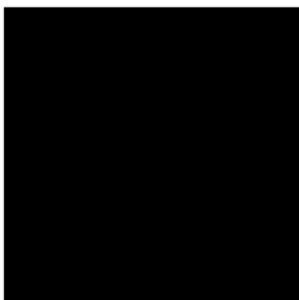
The current membership was endorsed by Council on 18 May 2018 and was due to conclude on 18 May 2020.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Given the current circumstances with COVID-19, this report recommends that the current committee continues for an additional six (6) months for consistency and to avoid the advertising and induction process of a new committee during the pandemic.

Ten of the eleven current membership have agreed to continue as part of MEAC until November 2020, which is in accordance with the Terms of Reference ‘that there must be a minimum of six (6) and maximum of twelve (12) community members.’

The members committed to continuing their term on the Committee are;



PROPOSED MITCHELL ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (CONT.)

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The Terms of Reference for MEAC includes a clause that “A *matter that cannot safely or conveniently be deferred until the next meeting be resolved via email*”. This means that MEAC can continue to operate remotely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONSULTATION

Officers have liaised with the current members of MEAC including Cr. Eldridge who is the chair of the committee in the preparation of this report.

FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There is an annual budget allocation provided to support and co-ordinate the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee meetings.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The operation of the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee assists Council in delivering a strategic objective of the *Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2017-2021*, specifically the following actions;

- *Increase the use of the Environment Advisory Committee as a mechanism for community engagement on relevant environment matters;*
- *The Environment Advisory Committee is engaged on environmental matters impacting the community;*
- *Support Council’s Advisory Committee members; and*
- *Support the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee.*

The continued operation of the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee also assists Council in achieving the aims and purpose of the Mitchell Shire Community *Mitchell Shire Engagement Framework 2016* and the *Mitchell Shire Environment Strategy 2014-2024*.

The Advisory Committees have been established by Council in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*. They have been established to provide specific external expertise and input into strategy development and implementation and comprises of one or more Councillors, Council Officers, and several community representatives.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL)

The purpose of the Mitchell Shire Environment Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice in respect to environmental sustainability within the municipality.

PROPOSED MITCHELL ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (CONT.)

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

The term of the current membership of the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee is due to conclude on 18 May 2020, however given the current COVID-19 pandemic it is recommended that the membership term is extended until the 23 November 2020, being the date of the November Council meeting.