BUSINESS PAPER

LITCHFIELD COUNCIL

SPECIAL MEETING TO BE HELD AT 5.00 P.M. WEDNESDAY 3\textsuperscript{RD} JULY 2013
AT THE COUNCILS OFFICE, BEES CREEK ROAD, FREDS PASS

AGENDA:

1. OPENING OF MEETING:

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

3. APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE:

4. MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION:-

4.1 FR13/MP/001: MUNICIPAL PLAN AND BUDGET - SUBMISSIONS

5. CLOSE OF MEETING:
BACKGROUND:


CURRENT SITUATION:

Following the closing date for written submissions on the 24th June 2013, ten submissions were received from, Mr Martin Pigott, Mr Tim Hallen, Mr Bruce Lofts, Ms Brenda Moore, Ms Christine Osborn, Ms Sandra Parker, Ms Carolynne Murrell, Mr Gerry Wood, Ms Barbara Crane and Southport Progress Association Incorporated.

Attached is a summary of all questions from the ten submissions.

Suggested changes to the Litchfield Council Municipal Plan 2013/2014 are as follows:

1. Add to the Introduction and Executive Summary the following words to inform the ratepayers, Council has resolved to allow rates to be paid in two instalments.

   “This year Council approved that rates can be paid in two instalments dates being September 2013 and 28th February 2014.”

2. Change page 6 to reflect the same as page 28 taking the words out “one Student at Taminmin High”.

   On page 28 “Provide encouragement of students within the Municipality by the Provision of an annual scholarship”.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: Nil

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS:

Goal 5 – Effective Council Management.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS: Nil

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS: Nil

PUBLIC RELATIONS IMPLICATIONS: Nil

COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS: Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

1) That Council acknowledge and note the comments received from the ten submissions with a written response,

and

2) That Council adopt the changes as follows to the 2013-2014 Municipal Plan:-

   a) This year Council approved that rates can be paid in two instalments dates being 28th September 2013 and 28th February 2014.

   b) Provide encouragement of students within the Municipality, by the provision of an annual scholarship.

ACTION OFFICER: Diane Chellingworth

MANAGER: Russell Anderson

Corporate Services Manager

Chief Executive Officer

1. Out of the 7446 rateable properties, how many are businesses? Do businesses get charged a different rate? Should it depend on the use of the land as to how much the Council should charge for rates? This has not been made clear.

Page 22 shows the breakdown:

- 7331 ratepayers $4,662,516.00
- 81 Urban properties $85,860.00
- 247 Commercial $354,950.00

The Businesses (Commercial) are being charged a different rate see pages 13 to 14.

2. I only use the dump approx. once a month as I am a single person on a block, who recycles and does not generate much waste anyway – should there be a user pay system for the dump? (I only drop off 3-4 garbags of rubbish too, not a trailer load.)

The three transfer stations are for the whole of the Municipal hence the cost will be equally distributed over all ratepayers in the Municipality.

Council should look into the matter further to make waste management more equitable across the municipality.

3. I do use the dump for my green waste – I understand this is becoming a problem for you – why don’t you drop the prices for mulch, more people may buy it? Or why don’t you offer one free load of mulch for every 10 - 20 loads you dump? (Kind of like the rewards system for coffee clubs) Burning it in my backyard requires a permit, and I do compost as much possible.

In the 2013/2014 Fees and Charges Council has reduced the sale of mulch drop by $5.00 and introduced a fee to dispose of green waste with the charge being $5 per load for Trailers & Utes and Trucks $10.00 per load.

4. Interesting you talk about the 571 km of bitumen road, I was required to pay for my small section...I know of other people who didn’t have to pay a cent!

When I first moved out to the rural area, I lived on a dirt road, I had my own bore and septic, no street lights, had to take my own rubbish to the dump and my road was graded once in 10 years... (just before it was tar sealed). I was happy, I paid $80 year for rates. In the 15 or so years I have lived there my rates have increased over 1000%. I
am now going to pay $976 for the privilege of taking my 3 garbags per month to the dump and maintaining 7 reserves that I do not visit or use? I still have my own bore, septic and no street lights.

Noted.

5. A split payment of 2? Can we pay it off in instalments like other councils offer...deductions fortnightly from my pay (I don’t know if this is an existing option, if it isn’t...it should be.)

At the Special Meeting held on Wednesday 15\textsuperscript{th} May 2013 Council resolved

“accepts two Rate instalments, due dates being 28\textsuperscript{th} September 2013 and 28 February 2014 if rate payer do not pay 1\textsuperscript{st} Instalments interest will be calculated from the 1\textsuperscript{st} of October 2014.”

There are existing options to receive payment from ratepayer pays see back of rates notice, interest will apply if not paid in advance.

6. “a lot of it has to do with the carbon tax” I suggest a breakdown of those costs should go with that statement as a LOT assumes a major cost. The lack of detail to go with that statement shows that perhaps it is just a political statement. Please don’t.

There is no mention of Carbon Tax increasing to the Waste cost in the 2013/2014 Draft Municipal Plan.

The City of Darwin increased waste cost at Shoal Bay in 2012/2013 from $41.00 per tonne to $71.50 per tonne. For 2013/2014 City of Darwin increase for waste cost at Shoal Bay went from $71.50 to $75.50 per tonne.

Council considers this cost will continue to escalate due to the increase cost to landfill management.

7. Why are you planning a change in rates for different areas of the shire, eg Coolalinga and Humpty Doo, where both have the same facilities?
Previous intent of Council to pay a fixed charge failed to address increase in cost of street lighting and power pole maintenance, underground drainage maintenance and footpath cleaning etc.

Humpty Doo underground drainage is maintained by Northern Territory Government (NTG) and the development is without footpaths which don’t attach maintains costs.

8. **Why have Litchfield rates gone up 6%, more than neighbouring municipalities?**

   Council rates did not go up 6% more than neighbouring.

   City of Darwin - 5.5%
   Palmerston City Council – 5.75%
   Katherine Town Council - 9%
   Alice Spring Town Council - 6%

   Cost increase is due to waste costs.

9. **Why are there additional charges for the transfer of property?**

   Council considered to introduce a new administration fee when there is a change of ownership. When a property is purchased, ratepayer details are registered at Northern Territory Titles Office and the new property owner information is also forward to Council to record this information onto the Council’s records. Council would then charge a fee of $63.00 to register this information.

10. **Why are there no plans with regard to dog control and community education?**

    New Dog By-laws are to be considered by council before seeking public comment.

    On page 20 explains the plans to control and manage dogs in the Municipality. Community education is also part of the program.
11. *I note there is a reference to a schools program, but what, where, when and how does this relate to community noise and dangerous or offensive dogs?*

The school program is for the children to be made aware of how to approach their own dogs and care for them. The program will also teach children not to approach unknown dogs. Schools will be notified about the programs in time. This program is not related to community noise and dangerous or offensive dogs.

12. *There is a reference to feral dogs, but most offending dogs are actually owned!*

There is a feral dog program in place to deal with the feral or wild dogs. The by-laws will be applied for offending owned dogs.

13. *Why have you offered burial assistance to the bereaved parents of infant? How do you define an infant? Is this for all such families, or only those who live in Litchfield Shire?*

The last page of Fees and Charges explains the Infant subsidy.

An Infant subsidy is available with the following conditions:

- For burial or cremation costs of children up to the age of two years, including stillborn children.
- The subsidy will be available up to a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the interment cost or 50% of the cremation cost or $900.00 whichever is lesser, at any section of Thorak Regional Cemetery.
- The parent or legal guardian is a resident within the Darwin, Palmerston or Litchfield municipalities.
- The subsidy will be for the interment cost or cremation cost (not both) and will be applicable at the time of service as a one-off only payment. One claim per infant.
- The subsidy will be paid to individual residents only and will not be available to organisations or government agencies carrying out interments or cremations for children in their care.
- The subsidy will only be available on receipt of proof of residence within the Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield Municipalities. Proof of residence will require photo identification with a current address shown, or a letter or account for utilities service including Power Water, a current rental agreement, rates notice or any other identification document as approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

14. *What is the single service charge of $290.00 per annum applied to each allotment, other than commercial, for the management of 3 transfer stations. What is this charge and why and how is it being imposed?*
This to manage the 3 transfer stations, transport waste and dispose of waste to Shoal bay.

Show break down

15. What about the charge of $50, supposedly only for 2011/2012?

In 2009-2010 Council planned to build the Humpty Doo Transfer Station at a cost of $3 million from Council reserves. To repay the loan from reserves ratepayers will be required to pay a $50 levy for the next 10 years.

16. Why are there no plans to encourage ratepayers to minimize refuse and recycle more effectively?

Council has committed $1.7 m in this budget to encourage recycling in the new recycling shed.

17. Why are there plans already to expand Humpty Doo after it first year of operation, as it appears to be coping adequately at the present time?

The expansion is for the recycling to reduce Council cost of cartage and dumping at Shoal Bay.

18. Council annually reviews the community’s concerns by way of a questionnaire then considers opportunities and challenges for service delivery annually as part of its budget process. When, where. How?

Litchfield Council Community Survey in 2012 was used to develop this Municipal Plan. These Community Survey results are on the Council web.

19. Council is considering Business plans to undertake Commercial or Business activities in the 2013/2014 year. What business and or commercial activities are council considering? Council is in the business of running the Shire efficiently, not undertaking commercial enterprises.

Council will need to address the business that is generated by the sale of recyclables in new recycle shed.

20. Overall, I find the draft plan, onerous full of clichés, without detail, highly repetitive eg the Social and Economic Impacts paragraphs.

Noted
21. The values of Council espouse what you believe in and how you will strive to achieve it are listed, but no indication or plan for HOW to do so. Thus it is just a series of platitudes without any substance.

Noted

22. I cannot make any sense out of page 22. It is beyond my understanding and probably the average ratepayer as well. There must be a clearer way to show how you can start from a negative amount and show income and expenditure.

Operation = Expenditure
Revenue = Income
Here is the formula

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Total Operation} & \quad 10,048,811.33 \\
\text{less Total Revenue} & \quad (7,967,913.80) \\
\text{Surplus or (Deficit)} & \quad (2,080,897.53) \\
\text{Add Total Capital} & \quad 4,985,000.00 \\
\text{Surplus or (Deficit)} & \quad (7,094,197.53) \\
\text{Less Total movement of the Reserve money} & \quad (2,060,532.63) \\
\text{Amount required for rates} & \quad (5,033,664.90)
\end{align*}
\]

23. Waste management - nothing mentioned about a ratepayer education program & feedback regarding recycling to reduce costs of waste transferred to Shoal Bay. Other than we'll just be given a leaflet that says you'll be charged $5 if you intend to dump green waste when you turn up at the dump.

Noted - and Council has funded in this budget a waste education position to promote recycling

24. Check out the way Palmerston, Darwin and other councils educate their ratepayers about how to recycle, separate and deliver waste to the dump.


Noted

25. Properties where a commercial enterprise is being conducted will be levied higher rates. We ask how this will be assessed, how will anyone know whether a business is being conducted on a block, and were told at the last meeting that where vehicles come to the property, more will be charged for rates as greater use is made of the road. Hairdresser? Contractor? Accountant? How on earth will council be able to assess/administer the whole shire and feel confident they are capturing the people?

All previous commercial rating has been done by zoning not by businesses being carried out on rural residential zoning excluding the Hairdresser or small contractor.

26. The dog bylaws are to be reviewed – well they’ve been reviewing them now for 12 months, it’s probably time for the changes to be brought about. There is nothing to limit the number of dogs on a block yet. No penalties if un-microchipped (unregistered) dogs are found on a property either. Many people have expressed concern that they should be able to have 3 plus dogs if they wish, well that’s fine too but council could provide a graded fee structure for microchipping, the more dogs the more for registration, and more charged for whole dogs than desexed dogs. Some poor souls are going mad living next to neighbours with 26-30 dogs at any one time with pigs being grown/killed to feed them. Can you imagine the noise and the stench? And council says they can do nothing.

Dog By-laws are currently being drafted to control dog numbers per property.

When dogs are found not micro chipped a notice is issue to the owner. If the owner does not comply there is a $143 fine.

Council has one fee for micro chipping weather de sexed or not this is minimal fee only to cover the cost of the micro chip and its application. The first Review of the Dog By-Laws was held 12th March, 2013 – not 12 months ago.
27. The weed management program needs to include an educational element for land holders to look after weeds on their own blocks. Hire of sprayers from council, access to poisons, information on the website etc.

Weed management is legislated and policed by the Northern Territory Government.

For Council to hire out sprayers it will take extra time and cost for staff to control and Council would be doubling up on these services all ready provided by others.

28. Nothing is mentioned at all for the older ratepayers.
From ABS 2010, if you go to the link, 17.7% of Litchfield’s population is over 55, which is not far behind the % of < 14yrs which is 21.2%.

Council has donated $1,500 towards Palmerston and Rural Seniors Week Committee.

Litchfield Council does not provide community actives or events. For Council to consider this in the future the Budget would have to be increased to consider actives for all ages.

29. How do ratepayers measure the performance of their Councillors against the targets set within their allowance allocation?

Meeting attendance is recorded in the annual report.

30. To whom are the councillors accountable? They do not even have to submit a report on their activities each month.

Council are accountable to the community and provide information as when required.

31. There are several schools (7?) in the Litchfield jurisdiction, why is Taminmin singled out as receiving financial assistance to further students [plural] education? Somewhere else it is mentioned that ONE scholarship is provided to ONE student at Taminmin! One student in the whole of Litchfield?!

On page 28 - In addition, encouragement of students, within the Municipality by the provision of an annual scholarship

Page 6 only refers to one student at Taminmin High school this should be amended to the above statement.
32. Readers are misled by a statement that “Litchfield Council’s outstanding rates have been reduced by the sale of land for unpaid rates” (page 15), this indicates that the sale of land reduces the outstanding rates. This is not the case. When land for which outstanding rates are due is sold, council only receives that portion which equates to the outstanding rates. The rest goes to the NT Govt and is held in trust for a period, in case the rightful owners are found. Not sure how long it is held in trust.

Council outstanding rates have been reduced by the sale of land and the statement quoted is correct.

33. This plan is very much a flat, unexciting, keep the status quo type of plan, with no new initiatives. It leaves a lot to be desired. All it focuses on is income generation. After having read the other councils’ plans, I felt I had a real sense of where they’re at, who’s doing what, what they planned to achieve long term and short term and how they intended to do it. And that they intended to keep the community informed. I had a real sense of their purpose and means.

Noted- Other councils have far greater budgets than Litchfield Council and can provide additional services and projects.

34. Selection of roads for sealing.

I would assume the criteria for the selection would be road safety, reduction of dust for health and value for expenditure (for both ratepayers and council).

With my residence on the corner of South Terrace and Ringwood Street, I witness the route all traffic takes entering and exiting Southport.

My observations of traffic not travelling direct down (sealed) Ringwood St., 75% of local traffic utilising Kersley St., Aldridge St. and all western roads of the Township enter and exit via South Tce.. The other main traffic through the Township, to the boat ramp and tradesmen involved in construction of new residences, also has 75% travelling down South Tce., Kersley St. and Aldridge St., despite the majority of the alternate route directly down Ringwood St. being sealed road. Nearly all heavy vehicles involved with new construction on the western side of the Township (due to the increased development with Councils sales of “Deadmans” blocks) enter via South Tce.. Most importantly the school bus route is Cherry St., Kersley St. and South Tce.. A visual inspection of the potholes and ruts from the Ringwood St. entrance of South Tce. would display the amount of traffic utilising this route.
With regards to safety, health (dust reduction) and value, given that the school bus route (for children’s safety) also carries the most local, heavy and boat ramp traffic, I would expect these would be the roads first considered for sealing. South Tce. and Kersley St. specifically as they carry the majority of traffic.

Barrow St., that Council has currently selected, is a lesser used road on the western side of the Township. Kersley St. from Barrow St. to the boat ramp only partly covers the school bus route. Cherry St. with its traffic to the boat ramp and being part of the school bus route would be the only part of Council’s selection that would be of most benefit to all users. Council’s current selection appears to be of most benefit to users of the boat ramp, which the majority of are not ratepayers from Southport and most likely not even ratepayers within the Litchfield Council area. Given that the majority of users of the boat ramp currently choose the unsealed route of South Tce. and Kersley St. they will most likely still use this unsealed route despite there being a totally sealed option of Ringwood and Cherry Streets.

I ask that Council reconsider the current selection and consider the school bus route of Cherry St., Kersley St. (from Cherry St. to South Tce.) and South Tce. as the first priority for sealing. The second option be Cherry St., South Tce. and part of Kersley St. (the same distance as the current proposal). As a third option the sealing of all of Kersley St. from South Tce. to the boat ramp. This would be one continuous length, the same distance as Councils current selection and cover the majority of the school bus route.

35. WE REFER TO PAGE 31 OF LITCHFIELD COUNCIL MUNICIPAL PLAN 2013/2014 –DRAFT AND IN PARTICULAR PROGRAM 4 – INFRASTRUCTURE, ROAD SEALING PROGRAM SOUTHPORT.

SOUTHPORT BARROW ROAD (FROM RINGWOOD ST TO KERSLEY ST)
SOUTHPORT CHERRY STREET (FROM RINGWOOD ST TO KERSLEY ST)
SOUTHPORT KERSLEY STREET (FROM BARROW ST TO THE BOAT RAMP)

WE ARE NOT SURE IF LITCHFIELD COUNCIL THINK THE ABOVE STREETS ARE ART OF THE SCHOOL BUSES ROUTE.

THE CURRENT SCHOOL BUS ROUTE FOR BOTH PRIMARY AND HIGH SCHOOL BUSES IS, DOWN RINGWOOD STREET (ALREADY SEALED), LEFT INTO CHERRY STREET (UNSEALED), LEFT INTO KERSLEY STREET (UNSEALED), AND THEN LEFT AGAIN INTO
SOUTH TERRACE (UNSEALED) THEN RIGHT, BACK ONTO RINGWOOD STREET, WHICH IS SEALED.

SOUTHPORT PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC HELD THEIR COMMITTEE MEETING TUESDAY 11TH JUNE, 2013.

AFTER DISCUSSION IT WAS MOVED AND SECONDED AND CARRIED BY ALL AT MEETING THAT THE INITIAL SEALING SHOULD BE ON THE FOLLOWING STREETS. CHERRY STREET (FROM RINGWOOD STREET TO KERSLEY STREET.)

KERSLEY STREET (FROM BOAT RAMP ALONG THIS STREET TO HOPEFULLY THE CORNER OF KERSLEY STREET AND SOUTH TERRACE) THIS WILL DEPEND ON THE ACTUAL DISTANCE LITCHFIELD COUNCIL CAN/WILL SEAL.

WITH CHERRY STREET AND KERSLEY STREET SEALED THE ONLY REMAINING GRAVEL STREET FOR THE SCHOOL BUSES TO TRAVEL ON EACH SCHOOL DAY WILL BE SOUTH TERRACE FROM KERSLEY STREET TO RINGWOOD STREET.

BEARING IN MIND THERE ARE TWO BUSES TRAVELLING THIS BUS ROUTE EACH MORNING AND AFTERNOON. OBVIOUSLY BECAUSE OF THE SIZE AND WEIGHT OF THE BUSES, ESPECIALLY DURING THE DRY SEASON, HUGE CLOUDS OF DUST RISE JUST TRAVELLING ALONG, AND WHEN THE BUSES STOP TO COLLECT CHILDREN OR AT ROAD JUNCTIONS, THE DUST IS EVEN WORSE.

IF THE LITCHFIELD COUNCIL ARE CONTINUING TO SEAL ROADS HERE IN SOUTHPORT EACH YEAR, THEN FOR THE YEAR OF 2014/2015 SOUTH TERRACE WILL BE THE TOP OF THE LIST, TO COMPLETE SEALING THE BUS ROUTE.

WE BELIEVE A FIGURE OF OVER $4000.00 HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BY THE LITCHFIELD COUNCIL TO CHARGE EACH BLOCK OWNER IN SOUTHPORT, WHEN THEIR ROAD IS SEALED.

WOULD YOU PLEASE PROVIDE HOW THIS FIGURE IS CALCULATED

Council needs to review its selection of roads to be sealed in Southport.
I note that the cost of seal applied to Southport ratepayers with 32 metre frontage RR zoned property will be $4125, the same as that applied to an R zoned property. Properties on Meade Rd., which Council have also allocated funds to seal, having road frontages of 820 metres and being R zoned, will also be charged $4125. There is no equity in these charges for Southport ratepayers.

Under Councils “fixed rate for all” policy, on a per square of land basis, Southport property owners are among the highest rate payers in the Shire. The majority of the substantial amount recovered from the sale of “Dead Mans” blocks has also been from Southport blocks, of benefit to all Litchfield ratepayers. Despite Southport ratepayers contributions and the extra revenue from Southport “Dead Mans” blocks there has been little or no maintenance on the existing roads over the last four years, Council has flooded the property market, reducing the value of long term residents blocks (their life savings), destroyed the lifestyle of existing residents with the sudden increased population and failed to provide the proper infrastructure (Eg. sealing of roads) to cope with the increase. New unsealed roads have been dozed to allow for further council sales but the contribution of a water cart being the only infrastructure provided to assist existing residents from the considerable money recovered.

Under Councils own policy, “Litchfield Council Policy LC28. Pursuant to “Section 156 – Special Rates” of the Local Government Act. Council may apply an amount for each allotment to defray the cost of works to be undertaken.” (detailed below), Council had the opportunity to set a special rate for sealing of roads in Litchfield’s first town of Southport, that would be fair and equitable to ratepayers, given that it is a Township with 32 metre frontages. At the Budget Meeting of Litchfield Council, held at Council Chambers on the 28th of May the two sole matters resolved were approving the draft plan and adopt for the RR Zone (that would be specifically Southport allotments) a special rate to each lot of $4,125 towards the seal of the road. With full knowledge of the allocation of funds for Southport roads to be sealed in the draft plan, Council once again chose to “rape and pillage” Southport ratepayers with a rate for sealing of roads the same as other R Zoned block ratepayers, yet having less than 4% of road frontage of those ratepayers.

Long term residents of Southport have been quite satisfied with the road structures until the substantial development and resultant dust hazard due to Council’s sales of “Dead Mans” blocks, they will now have considerable costs thrust upon them that are
not fair and equitable. I urge Council to reconsider the Special Rate for Seal of Road costs for RR Zoned properties, specifically the Township of Southport, under policy LC28 and charge a rate that is fair and equitable. Ideally as the development is a direct result of Council recovering substantial amounts of money from Southport at considerable lifestyle change and financial loss to existing long term residents of Southport, I suggest that rate should be very low!

Noted – Council needs to revisit the road sealing levy to ensure that the charge per lot is equitable.

37. After perusing the Litchfield Council Municipal Plan 2013/2014 my view remains the same: that quantifying the amount of recycling and the amount spent on verges is useful for determining how much needs to be spent on them in the projected coming year. And comparing these figures with what was spent in the previous financial year’s budget is instructive.

Noted

38. Looking through the Litchfield Council Municipal Plan 2013/2014 I see no mention of these specific items in 5) Waste Management program and 4) Infrastructure program (page 6). I also note that it is expected over the next 5 years - up to 2017/18 - that these 2 programs are expected to INCREASE in cost (page 22)

Noted

39. While the Program 5 Profile on Waste Management (page 27) DOES mention the provision of viable recycling opportunities and initiatives, it is unclear if there is a target expected to reduce tonnage of waste transferred to Shoal Bay by recycling. The " > 10%" Target figure is an expected increase in the reduction of tonnage of waste transferred?

Council would like to see greater than 10% in reducing of waste to recycling and are able to set target at this time.
40. The Program 4 Profile on Infrastructure (page 26) makes no mention of maintenance of verges.

   The Mobile Work Force Team maintains the Councils road reserves and is part of the Infrastructure Budget.

41. In the interests of informing the community on these costs a breakdown of the figures in the draft 2013 Litchfield Council Municipal Plan that shows specifically what is taken away from the transfer stations by the recycling contractor, and, what is spent on sending out mowers to do verges would be instructive.

   The recycling figure will be reported in the Annual Report not the Municipal Plan.

   No comparison can be made with previous years as the Mobile Work Force Budget includes slashing, fire breaks, weed spraying, culvert maintenance and maintaining Council land.

42. I understand and accept from previous communications with Council that the amount taken away from the transfer stations by the recycling contractor cannot be quantified as these figures are not kept or given to Council. So this is a figure we can maybe look forward to getting in the future.

   The recycling figure will be reported in the Annual Report not the Municipal Plan.

   Tonne is available from the contractors on recycling.

43. In summing up I reiterate that the draft Plan is not detailed enough to give any insight in the issues of recycling and verge maintenance, and, any meaningful look at these issues and how costs in these areas might be more effective in the future is not possible. Perhaps food for thought for members and support staff AS WELL AS ratepayers (who have a role and interest in reducing these costs).

   Noted

44. In the interests of good public relations with the community the issues I have raised need to be talked about and out there. Whether this is via your website, Sun Newspapers column, Litchfield Council Municipal Plan 2013/2014 or public meetings is something to be decided

   Noted - Your questions have been presented to Council for comment before a response has been sent to yourself.
45. Another hole which would be lovely to fill is emergency response. Lots of locals were involved in the search for Patricia. Wheels of govt turn very slowly and it took 2 days before volunteers were effectively catered for. This is not a complaint about NT Police response – they were brilliant. Feeding and watering the volunteers was a big challenge. A trailer set up as an emergency food/watering station to feed the volunteers and NT Police would have been awesome during the search.

This is a Northern Territory Government Legislation and not a core business of Council and additional involvement may incur funding requirements.

Council equipment and staff were involved with the NT Police response to help in the search.

46. Could you advise where Council is at (thinking) in regards to dual residences on individual blocks? I believe they were thinking about charging double rates in some cases not too far in the distant past.

At present the Council are not thinking of charging double rates for dual residences, they are considering charging extra waste for additional residences.

47. Could you also advise whether Council has discussed (taken into account) where residents are already paying to have their garbage picked up at their gate. We only use the transfer station perhaps once every 2 months. User pays would certainly be a better option for us, as we already pay $7/week.

On Waste as a ratepayer, it is your choice to have your waste picked up from your gate. The contractor that picks up your waste is a private contractor who dumps it at the Humpty Doo Transfer Station for Council to transport it into the Shoal Bay at a cost to Council. If the Council should go to road side pick up the transfer station will then charge user pays.

48. Disappointed in what appears to be a tiny part of the budget for community services/support. Not much info to glean in regards to what is supported and what isn’t. Re community support – I was thinking about the local lawn bowls club, and there are probably other small groups which might be considered, such as local fire brigades. It would also be good to see something more for our seniors. Perhaps they get funding elsewhere?

On the Community Budget Council also funds the seven reserves for the community the budgeted amount is $950,450.00 (including the Humpty Doo Lawn Bowls Club) There is also Australia Day and Anzac Day in the budget for the Community. In the $24k in the budget is for the Taminmin Library, Education Assistance and Community Support.
49. *Is the Mayor at his desk (so to speak) 5 working days/week? Or does he have a day job as well?*

The Mayor is fulltime 5 days a week at the office if you require an appointment do not hesitate to ring Council Secretary – Marlene Watt on 08 89830600 for an appointment.

50. *I find it unbelievable you even consider raising rates by 6% when March inflation figures are at 2.5% and inflation for 2012 ran between 1.2% and 2.2%.*

Increasing waste cost to Council has contributed mainly to the 6% increase of rates.

51. *It seems that councils are not expected to operate within a budget - I have to live within mine; I have had the same power increases etc. that you quote as excuses for your excessive rate increases but I have no chance of getting anywhere near a 6% pa pay increase.*

Noted

52. *Looking at the org chart on page 17, it would appear that, for such a tiny shire (tiny not in the sense of physical dimension but in what actually requires to be administrated), the listed admin structure seems to be excessive (x1 mayor, x1 CEO, x6 managers plus x23+ other admin staff - I would assume the rate payer then still has to fork out more to pay the contractors who do the actual work).*

Council are using less contractors then previously with a cost saving by employing staff.

53. *I won’t even start to comment on the pay scales on page 18.*

The pay scale is set by the Minister for Local Government.

54. *Considering that mining and pastoral activities are probably the activities that do most of the damage to the roads within LC, I can’t believe how little they are asked to contribute (p14) when compared with the contribution asked of the ordinary rate payer.*

The Minister for Local Government sets Litchfield Council rate for Mining and Pastoral rating.
55. I consider the cost of addressing green waste to be a core cost for Council that should be within the normal budget appropriation. Addressing domestic waste including domestic green waste is a core Council responsibility undertaken on behalf of rate payers.

Noted

56. The element within 'Measures' to introduce a charge and limitation for domestic waste creates a disincentive to shire residents to responsibly dispose of domestic waste. Such a disincentive can only increase the potential level of hazardous green waste on properties during the dry, 'fire' season and add to an increase in illegal dumping within the Shire. The former creates an increased fire risk for ALL residents, property and livestock the latter degradation of the environment. The Council should note in its consideration that a resident may not necessarily be a rate payer. Absentee landlords and transient residents may not necessarily be motivated to dispose of waste with a cost impost.

A more appropriate element within ‘Measures’ would be to delete reference to a charge and limitation for domestic waste.

Insert within appropriate 'Measures' for other 'Objectives' within the proposed plan reference to Council making available/actively prompting free mulch within the shire to schools, community groups, etcetera to enhance civil assets (road verges including NTG maintained roads) and the broader environment and therefore the amenity of shire residents. I would also ask Council communicate with other local government bodies to see if a joint strategy can be employed to dispose of green waste.

Lastly if the Councils financial circumstances are so poorly structured that a dump fee has to be imposed I would respectfully recommend it be imposed on commercial green waste or at least green waste taken to the facility in commercial quantities, not a private utility or box trailer.

Noted
57. The flat rate should remain the same for all residential blocks – urban or rural. I understand that the council is not going ahead with the UCV component that was proposed for all new rural residential blocks which is welcome. I presume also that those rural blocks will have the General Rate of $636.

I do not accept the argument that people living in Coolalinga should pay more rates than those on rural blocks for the following reasons:

- Residents will not get anymore services than anyone else in the council area.
- Kerb and guttering, storm water, bitumen road, footpath and street lights which were put in by the developer at Coolalinga are found in other parts of the council eg Humpty Doo, Stow Road and parts of Whitewood Road. Rural blocks have culverts maintained by the council but don’t pay more for that privilege.
- The basis behind the flat rate is that it avoids the complications of calculating whether you have dirt road or a sealed road, a suburban type road or a rural road, an open drain and culverts or storm water, street lights or no street lights, the size of your block, an occupied block or a vacant block. It is also reduces administration costs.
- Our rates are used to benefit all residents not just me and that revenue is spread across the ‘shire’.
- The roads and lights in Coolalinga are not there for the exclusive use of residents, just like the roads in Humpty Doo District Centre are not there just for residents. We all use the roads and benefit from street lighting and street lighting is certainly not exclusive to Coolalinga.
- The idea that the rates at Coolalinga should be based on Palmerston rates is irrelevant. Palmerston is not Litchfield and Palmerston has a whole range of services that they provide and Litchfield doesn’t.
- The council will receive a higher income from rates in this area because whereas a 2ha block will give the council one general rate $636, the council will receive for the same area (based on a conservative lot size of 700 sqm and not including duplexes) approximately $17,800 (20,000 sqm ÷ 700 sqm =28 blocks) for the equivalent 2ha of land.
- Charging urban residential blocks in Humpty Doo one rate and a different rate for urban blocks in Coolalinga not only goes against the flat rate principle but creates two levels of rates in the community – a ‘them-and-us’ mentality.
- There one new resident in Coolalinga and they probably have no idea council is going to rate them nearly $300 more than people in Humpty Doo and elsewhere – keep the rates the same.

Noted
58. Commercial Activity Rate

In relation to the proposed new rate for blocks which operate a commercial activity, then I think the Council is looking to make life very difficult for itself and increasing the administration costs unnecessarily. I note from correspondence that the council has not defined ‘commercial activity’. Commercial activity will be extremely difficult to classify but I also note from Council’s correspondence that you will not be regarding home occupation, home contracting and horticulture as ‘commercial activity’. That doesn’t leave much commercial activity to worry about and questions the need for this rate at all. If the reason for this rate is that a certain activity on a block is causing damage to the road then you could apply a special rate to that block for the resealing or repairing of the road damaged. If the activity is illegal then that is the role of the Dept of Lands.

Commercial Rate

Commercial rating has always been a problem because there can be one shop or business on one block and 10 shops on the same sized block next door. Much as I don’t like the flat rate based on UCV levels used in last year’s rates, I think that was fairer system and easier to manage than the new version. As I’ve said before Council might see Woollies as an opportunity to increase revenue but there are a lot of small businesses who can’t afford large rate increases and will pass any rate increases onto the customers who are generally ratepayers. One anomaly in the Commercial Rate is that businesses are not allowed to use the transfer stations for their rubbish which begs the question why are they paying a commercial rate? If council requires businesses to take their rubbish to Shoal Bay then they should not be charging them a Commercial Rate.

Noted

59. Green Waste

My understanding is that the council has decided to charge $5 for dump green waste at the transfer station. Whilst I agree that we should encourage people to leave their green waste at home, council has always provided that service from the rates charged. Feedback I have already is that people will simply dump their green waste on Crown Land which makes matters worse. If it is costing too much for mulching then either just raise the rubbish rate a small amount to cover the mulching cost and let people swap their green waste for a load of mulch to take home or mulch only what has a fair chance of selling and leave the rest rot naturally and only mulch when the mulch supply runs out. I think requiring the staff to ask for $5 at the gate for green waste will only lead to unnecessary stress on staff.
60. **Slashing**

Council obviously has to raise revenue but it also needs to look at efficiencies in its operation. Council has now taken on the slashing operations. It seems that we now have a 12 month slashing and mowing operation whereas before, the slashing contract mainly operated during the wet season. The council is mowing rural roads with ride on mowers which are not designed to slash gamba grass and humidicola. I would have thought all they would be used is around the roads in a district centre and that wouldn’t take a lot of work. It seems that to find work for the mowers we are now using them to make the roads look nice even in the dry season. The reason for slashing rural roads was about road safety – that is making sure road signs and guideposts were visible – not to make the road look pretty. Many residents already look after their verge (Community effort is essential) and if they want a neat verge, they can do that if they want. The council should review whether running two mowers, two tractors and slashers, a quad bike, a truck with weed spraying equipment, etc, that operate for 12 months plus the cost of employment is cheaper than a contractor operating for a much shorter period. Is it true slashers were working on Sunday? If so why and how much did that cost the Council?

Noted - Slashing was carried out on one Sunday by a contractor on our equipment at their normal contract rates.

61. **Administration**

I also think Council needs to look at its general administrative costs as that seems to be going up. With no disrespect to the council education officer why doesn’t the Mayor do that kind of work.

Noted

62. **Business**

Another issue is the statement in the Plan hinting that council is moving into commercial or business activities. Whilst some councils in Australia go down that path, Litchfield has not done that and left commercial activities to private business. I don’t know whether Council is seriously considering operating its own garbage collection but I would not support that as the system of take the rubbish yourself or use a private collector works well. I also would not support council becoming involved in land
development. The Government is just about to release tenders for the industrial land at Humpty Doo and that development will be done by a private contractor. It seems Council is promoting the idea that council is no longer really rural but urban. It seems Palmerston is the model. We are still rural with some limited urban development. If councillors want to abandon the rural living option and support the urbanisation of the rural area, if they want to introduce UCV as the basis of rating, if they want the council to operate businesses or become land developers, then they should either say so before an election not after or put it to ratepayers in the form of a referendum. These are fundamental changes that are being promoted and any changes need to be advertised widely not on the web page.

Noted

63. Summary

I support the original philosophy of the council which is to provide basic services, have a small administration, use contractors, have a flat rate, keep it simple and promote Community Effort is Essential. This is what makes our council unique, special and rural. I am not sure the Management Plan 2013/14 reflects that. I respectfully ask the council consider my comments – and I haven’t had time to comment on everything due to the business of another level of government – and to reconsider its direction

Noted