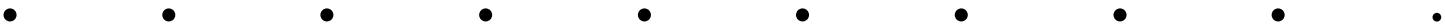




Bilby Shire Council



*Briefing Report on Issues Related to
Proposed Hospital Project: Bilby*

Compiled by Bilby Shire Council Information Office



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1.0 Background to the Project

There are funds of \$127 million (from the regional infrastructure fund and Commonwealth regional initiatives) to develop the proposed hospital at Bilby. The government has appointed the company Transpaddock Yokomoto as the developer, after an extensive tender process. The company will subcontract to Tringling and Co. for actual site project management. All infrastructure is complete and the initial development has been completed. Transpaddock Yokomoto has indicated that the actual construction will take three months, with an additional three months for finalizing environmental studies, community consultation and final site planning. This timeline is dependent on the current proposed site of the graveyard.

2.0 Project Contractors

The development site will be project managed by Ross Tring, of Tringling and Co, a Bendalong development company which has also carried out several government contracts to a high standard. The company has pledged to employ local builders and other workers on the site. Ross Tring has lived and worked in the region for 30 years – his reputation in completing projects to time and to budget is well known.

3.0 Environmental Issues

The hospital plans have been developed, and incorporate environmentally sensitive approaches to both the building and operation. These include:

- the development of solar power for general lighting and some heating;
- appropriate siting of the building to catch maximum natural light and ensure blending with the surrounding environment;
- a car park which is not visible from the street and is well-planted with local trees and shrubs;
- development of gardens/nature reserves within the hospital site.
- an extensive recycling program as well as environmentally sound trade waste management processes.

Further issues will be considered in consultation with the local community during final development. All plans will be available for

viewing at the shire offices. Current plans are available from the Department of Regional Infrastructure.

4.0 Graveyard Site

The graveyard site has been proposed as most appropriate because of the ease of access, less cost for developing roads/parking and best location for a 2-3 storey building requiring reasonable depth in the foundations. Other areas close to the river flats have a problem with silt.

There have been initial investigations by the Regional Infrastructure Department concerning the clearing of the graveyard site. The Department has established that the site can be cleared and decontaminated within the budget as currently established. A process for the clearing was outlined in the tender by Transpaddock Yokomoto, and includes the establishment of a new graveyard, at a picturesque site overlooking Bilby, to be finalised through community consultation. Transpaddock Yokomoto is aware that this is a sensitive issue and has prepared strategies within the tender documentation to ensure that both the establishment of a new site and the removal and reinterment will be handled appropriately. (*Study – Moving Graveyards*, Department of Regional Infrastructure, January 2001.)

5.0 Regional Infrastructure Department Recommendations

The Regional Infrastructure Department has reviewed a range of sites in the district, and has recommended the town and environs of Bilby only. Funds will be put into another region altogether if no agreement can be reached on this development at Bilby within the next three months. (*Surveying the Future: Bilby or Else? a Report on Regional Needs for the View District*, December 2000, Department of Regional Infrastructure.)

6.0 Demographic Study Community Health Services Department

A recent demographic study conducted by the Community and Health Services Department has established that the current Bilby bush nursing hospital will be insufficient for the community needs within six months. An interim measure involves the attachment of two additional ambulances to the Bendalong District Hospital, with specific links to the Bilby community

emergency calls. The Bendalong District Hospital has indicated that currently it has 85% of capacity bed usage, so this measure could only continue for the short term. (*Report on Bilby Community and Health Services Needs*, April 2001, Department of Community and Health Services.)

7.0 Recommendations of Trust Society

The Trust Society of Victoria suggests that the graveyard is worthy of consideration as an historic site; this process will take approximately 3 years. The group submitting the graveyard as an historic site will need to indicate clear links with the waves of settlement, with gravestones in reasonable preservation and histories of local characters available. The graveyard needs to maintain an unbroken link from early settlement in the 1850s to the current day. Supporting evidence should include early letters, photographs, church registers, etc. The Trust Society recommends that other sites in Bilby, such as the old railway station and Town Hall, should also be put forward as historic sites. (Information from Trust Society of Victoria, *Historic Perspectives on Bilby*, April 2001)

8.0 Environmental Study

An environmental study developed, by an independent company Regional Aussie Land, *Bilby Environment Survey Report* (May 2001) was commissioned by Bilby Landcare. This indicates that the growling grass frog (found at the waterhole and in the graveyard) is in danger of extinction. The Western Plains grasslands are also unique to this area. However there has been some degradation of the area by imported weeds etc. Further details are in the report, available from Bilby Landcare.

9.0 Television production in Bilby

The production company Geranini Productions has been funded for an additional season of *City Stress*, *Country Pleasures*, and will be continuing to use Bilby and surrounds as the location. Key location sites will be: the waterhole, the historic old railway station which now houses the radio station, the main street incorporating the reopened bank and post office, several cafes and bric-a-brac shops, the fabric print shop, the

farmhouse on the plateau overlooking the valley, the local school and police station, the old town hall and community hall, the bush nursing hospital and the graveyard. The producers have indicated that they are concerned about the growth of Bilby, however, and wish to maintain the country town atmosphere in the series.

10.0 Economic Growth of the Region

Economic growth in Bilby has been indicated by several factors. Unemployment has decreased since 1990 from 9.5% to 5.9%, below the national average. Unemployment in the 18-25 age group has decreased from 17.5% to 9.1% in the same time. This is completely against national regional trends. There has been a 15% increase in building applications for private homes, and 35% increase in commercial building since 1990. This has resulted in an increase of 25% in small construction businesses, and 21% increase in other small businesses such as shops or other service industries. Businesses in Bilby have registered an average 37% growth in turnover over the last 5 years. (*Figures supplied by Australian Bureau of Statistics*).

11.0 Commonwealth Green Paper on Regional Issues

Diversity of industries and businesses in regional areas has been supported by the *Commonwealth Green Paper on Regional Issues* (September 2000), which indicated the need for:

- decentralising services such as hospitals and power utilities into smaller towns to encourage local employment;
- developing sensitive ecotourism projects which support the unique qualities of the region;
- developing a range of smaller businesses (5-10 people) which would sustain employment and maintain diversity of industry within the region – tourism, hospitality, specialist secondary and/or primary industry business, etc;
- developing an infrastructure which supports projected growth and development of smaller towns.

12.0 Water Requirements of the Region

The Environment Department has been conducting several surveys of the area's water needs, and its report has stated that the water needs of the current population of Bilby require some minor works to the dam, which can be carried out without disturbing the waterhole. However, with the development of the hospital, the Environment Department indicates additional water resources will be required. There are two options presented:

- a new small reservoir to be constructed higher up the Hundred Nugget Creek, increasing capacity to support both the hospital and a projected population growth of 35%, but which will affect the waterhole (the creek runs into the View Valley River and the meeting point forms the waterhole) – cost to be met by state funding and slightly increased water rates

a series of special tanks and advanced piping systems be set up specifically for the hospital (this will increase the cost of the project by \$20 million). The Commonwealth has indicated that it will meet half this cost if the state government and local community can raise the other half.

13.0 Regional Wastewater Issues

A new wastewater plant was planned to be constructed for Bilby in two years. This has been brought forward to the start of next year. The View Region Water Authority has prioritised according to population growth, and the water authority plan has moved the Bilby Wastewater Treatment Plant up the list. Funding is from state sources, and has been allocated to View Region Water Authority for the next three years, to be allocated as appropriate. (*View Region Water Authority Annual Report 2000*)